ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE JOURNEY IN A MILE: AN EXPLORATION OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK MALES AT AN HBCU

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Several research studies have suggested that support and out-of-the-class engagement are significant predictors of outcomes for Black college student achievement and psychosocial development (c.f., Harper et al., 2004; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). This study explored the experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based leadership initiatives at HBCUs. Specifically, owing to the lack of qualitative research focused on the leadership identity development of Black males at HBCUs, the study adds to the body of knowledge concerning the leadership experiences of Black males in higher education. Further, the study examines in detail the social and academic support received and its contribution to college-student achievement in relation to leadership identity development. Using the phenomenological approach, I answered the following research questions through a series of interviews: (a) What are the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based initiatives at an HBCU? (b) How do participants in campus-based initiatives perceive themselves as

leaders? (c) In what ways have their leadership experiences influenced their identity development? The study was framed by Komives' (2005) Leadership Identity Development (LID) model.

The findings of the study revealed how participants experience and understand their leadership identity development through participation in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. The development of five core themes indicate that interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development; student leadership at HBCUs creates resiliency and a personal transformation. In addition, there is significant value in experiencing leadership challenges and understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism. The knowledge gained from this study can be valuable to administrators in higher education, advocacy groups, and Black men who choose to enroll at an HBCU. Additionally, this study can provide a better understanding of how student-affairs professionals and campus-based initiatives should be designed for the intentional exploration, engagement, and development of the leadership identity of Black males at HBCUs.

THE JOURNEY IN A MILE: AN EXPLORATION OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK MALES AT AN HBCU

by

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DEDICATION

First, I would like to give all honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the head of my life. I know none of this would be possible without the gifts, talents, and covering you have provided me throughout my life's journey. Author, Linda Hogan, proclaimed, *"Walking, I am listening in a deeper way. Suddenly all my ancestors are behind me. Be Still, they say. Watch and listen. You are the result of the LOVE of thousands."* I dedicate my dissertation to my ancestors that have come before me and shown such great strength and resiliency. Specifically, I dedicate this dissertation to my paternal grandparents, Rudell and Doris Molock, Sr., and my maternal grandparents, Fredrick Nichols and Helen Elizabeth Crumble Jones.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Many researchers have found that engagement matters (Astin, 1984; Chang, 2000) and that student engagement during the first year of college is key to fostering positive interactions between peers and integrating them into the life and culture of a college campus (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004; Kuh & Pace, 1998). Student engagement for historically underserved students has yielded especially powerful benefits during the first year of the collegiate experience (Kuh, Boruff-Jones, & Mark, 2007). Some researchers (Flowers, 2002; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002) have found that the engagement of students of color can vary depending upon the type of institution they attend. Research on students of color in the United States higher education system is discussed with quantitative data on enrollment and attrition (Ancar, 2008). A review of the literature on student engagement reveals that minimal research is conducted on the qualitative experiences of this population regarding engagement on the nation's campuses.

Other studies have shown that high levels of student engagement are associated with specific practices by universities (Astin, 1999; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, 2001; Kuh & Gonyea, 2008; Parcarella, 2001). Specifically, research shows that "students gain more from their collegiate experience when they are at institutions that they perceive as inclusive and affirming and where performance expectations are clearly communicated and set at reasonably high levels" (Nelson Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Salinas Holmes, 2007, p. 3). Also, institutions that add value to students' experiences typically direct students' efforts and energy toward appropriate

tasks, activities, behaviors, and engage them in these activities at a high level (Education Commission of the States, 1995).

Over the last twenty years, there has been a surge in research examining the experiences of Black males in higher education. Researchers have focused on retention and graduation rates (Ancar, 2008; Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2013; Cuyjet, 2006; Flowers, 2004; Sedlacek, 1999, 2004), engagement (Barker & Avery, 1997; Chickering et al., 2006; Harper, Byars, & Jelke, 2005; Hawkins & Larabee, 2009), leadership (Bledsoe & Rome, 2006; Monschella, 2013; Oldham, 2008), and identity development (Bohr, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1995; Fries-Britt, 2000; Gurin & Epps, 1975). Currently, Black men are underrepresented in higher education institutions across the country, making up less than 5% of all undergraduate college students in America (Horn & Berger, 2004; Porter, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Several researchers (Brooks et al., 2013; Cuyjet, 1997; Harper & Davis, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2011; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Zell, 2011) found that although overall college enrollment has increased for African American males, graduation rates are still significantly lower than those of African American females and Caucasian males and females (as cited in Hill & Boes, 2013). Educational attainment data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) show that "individuals [of] age 25 years and older indicate that 17.7% of African American males graduated from college with a bachelor's degree or higher. This rate is markedly lower in comparison to [those of] their White male, White female, and Black female peers who graduated from college at 30.8%, 29.9%, and 21.4%, respectively" (Hill & Boes, 2013, p. 39). Researchers have found that there is a connection between the engagement of African American males and their persistence in

higher education (Allen, 1985). African American males who frequently engaged in student activities are more likely to be involved at the university (Allen, 1985). Additionally, Black male experience with engagement can contribute significantly to Black male retention and persistence (Palmer, Wood, & Arroyo, 2015).

Background of the Study

Researchers have found that the engagement of students of color can vary, depending upon the type of institution they attend (Harper, 2005). The majority of the studies in the literature focus on comparing the experiences of African American students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to those of African American students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Nelson Laird et al. (2004) stated that "most research on the HBCU experience is comparative in nature illuminating the different experiences of African American students at both types of institutions" (p. 4). Studies have also examined the academic gains (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Flowers, 2002; Kim, 2002); environmental impact on learning (Bohr et al., 1995); and the psychosocial gains (Berger & Milem, 2000; Cheatham, 1990) of students attending HBCUs versus attending PWIs (Nelson Laird et al., 2004).

Research suggests that attending an HBCU contributes significantly to the engagement of students of color, mainly African Americans (Flowers, 2002; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002). Allen, Jewell, Griffin, and Wolf (2007) found that while HBCUs comprise less than 3% of all higher education institutions, they enroll 16% of all undergraduates, and graduate 20% of Blacks in higher education. Although HBCUs impact the educational outcomes of Black students and provide a supportive campus

climate, they (HBCUs) continue to experience problems with Black male enrollment, campus engagement, retention, success, and graduation (Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Harper & Gasman, 2008; Palmer, Davis, & Maramba, 2011; Palmer & Young, 2009; Roach, 2001). Since 2000, studies have examined the engagement of African American males (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper et al., 2004; Kim & Hargrove, 2013; Strayhorn, 2008), but few have focused directly on the experiences of African American males at HBCUs alone (Palmer et al., 2011; Palmer, Davis, & Peters, 2008; Palmer & Young, 2009).

Researchers have examined the engagement of African American students and found that students who engage in formal and informal educational activities enhance their educational outcomes, academic achievement, college satisfaction, and increase their chances of a healthy identity development (Astin, 1985; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Rocconi, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008). Throughout the literature, benefits of engagement in campus activities have been reported (Flowers, 2004), "but there is a relatively small body of literature on the importance of student involvement experiences for Black male students" (Moschella, 2013, p. 3). Researchers have found that Black men reported that opportunities for, and participation in, leadership activities were essential to their campus experience (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Sankofa, Hurley, Allen, & Boykins, 2005). Cuyjet (2006) reported that Black men involved in positions of leadership on campuses recounted "better experiences and higher gains from attending college than did their peers who do not hold such positions" (as cited in Moschella, 2013, p. 2). Further, increased student retention, satisfaction, and persistence have been linked to holding leadership positions and participation in campus-based student organizations and activities (Cooper,

Healy, & Simpson, 1994; Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001; Flowers & Pascarella, 2003; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Moschella, 2013).

The literature shows that students who fail to form sufficient formal and informal social connections to others on campus can be significantly more likely to drop out of the institution (Dancy & Brown, 2008; Palmer & Davis, 2012; Schwartz & Washington, 2002; Tinto, 1987, 1997). Subsequent to these findings, universities began to include campus-wide strategic planning to address the engagement of African American male students to impact retention rates and perception of their self-efficacy and potential. Some of those strategies include academic support services (i.e., mentoring, tutoring) to establish a welcoming campus environment with the hopes of producing well-rounded college students (Flowers, 2004). By the mid-2000s, universities were developing campus-based male initiatives to impact the retention and graduation rates and identity development of African American male students (Bledsoe & Rome, 2006). Ultimately, these initiatives helped prepare students for academic and future success (Barker & Avery, 2012). Some of the existing male initiatives that have been successful in their mission are the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), Brother2Brother Program, Georgia University System's African American Male Initiatives (AAMI), The City University of New York's Black Male Initiative, Fayetteville State University's Bronco Male Initiative on Leadership and Excellence (MILE), and Morgan State University's Male Initiative of Leadership and Excellence (MILE).

The outcomes of these campus-based initiatives include engaging participants in a variety of leadership development, value building, and intentional learning strategies to promote their academic and personal success (Palmer et al., 2011), as well as providing

their members with academic support services and social opportunities to create a healthy and holistic campus experience. Peer groups such as these facilitate academic integration and persistence (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). Additionally, peer groups that are positive and supportive create opportunities for students to gain new skills and earn admiration from their peers and faculty (White & Cones, 1999; Zell, 2011). Also, campus-based initiatives provide an enriching educational experience that helps students become intentional, purposeful, and self-directed learners (Chickering, Peters, & Palmer, 2006).

Unfortunately, there is little research that addresses the leadership identity development of Black males who participate in such campus-based initiatives in higher education. Further, there is even less literature that discusses the experiences of Black male student leaders at HBCUs outside of their involvement in historically Black Greek-Letter Organizations (BGLOs). If student involvement among our Black males at Historically Black Colleges is to improve, then more attention should be focused on the experiences of engaged student leaders who participate in these programs throughout their undergraduate matriculation. Bringing forth the voices and experiences of those Black student leaders is imperative to higher education administrators who can implement and improve programming and mentorship designed to further their student leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the leadership experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. Specifically, owing to the lack of qualitative research focused on the leadership identity development of Black males at HBCUs, the proposed study is designed to add to the body of knowledge

concerning the leadership experiences of Black males in higher education. Being able to understand how leadership identity is developed is a complex phenomenon. A phenomenon is defined as a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen (Creswell, 2013). This will be a phenomenological study in which, through a series of interviews, the researcher hopes to gain insight into the experiences of Black males who are developing as student leaders on HBCU campuses while participating in campus-based initiatives.

Research Questions

Apart from seeking to understand the experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based leadership initiatives at HBCUs, this study attempts to examine, in detail, the social and academic support and its contribution to college student achievement in relation to leadership identity development. Several research studies have suggested that support and out-of-the-class engagement are significant predictors of outcomes for Black college student achievement and psychosocial development (Harper, 2004; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). After completing a review of the literature on Black male identity development and identifying the gaps in the literature, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based initiatives at an HBCU?
2. How do participants in campus-based initiatives perceive themselves as leaders?
3. In what ways have their leadership experiences influenced their identity development?

Research Design

The research questions will be answered using the phenomenology tradition of qualitative research. Moustakas (1994) stated "a phenomenological account gets inside the common experience of a group of people and describes what the participants have experienced, how they have experienced it" (as cited in Harper & Quaye, 2007, p.131), and the meaning they make of their shared experiences. Interviews with participants of campus-based initiatives will allow me as the researcher to explore the students' perception of their leadership experiences, perception of leadership, and the role of leadership experiences on identity development. Further, exploration of their experiences in developing appropriate leadership development skills that will assist them in their future pursuits. Exploring the experiences of interviewees will provide insight into what events, organizations, or skills, if any, played a part in their overall development. These data will uncover and provide context for the experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives. Understanding the journey and experiences of the interviewees will allow their story to be shared and best practices to be developed. In a phenomenological research study, both the readers and the researchers should be able to articulate that, "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46). The data collected from the interviews of participants of campus-based initiatives will allow an interpretation of the experiences deemed most significant in their leadership identity development.

As an administrator of a campus-based leadership development program, I adopted the role as an "insider" which will allow the interviewees to build trust in, and to establish a rapport with, me as an interviewer. "Insider researchers" are those who

choose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider researchers do not belong to the group under study (Breen, 2007, p. 164). I sought to understand and interpret how participants experience engagement in leadership activities and the impact it has on their identity development as leaders. It is essential that the voices of the participants be central to the narrative the researcher produces. Their experiences will provide clarity on the perception of leadership and the role of leadership experiences on their identity development (Beatty, 2014). Patton (2002) stated that phenomenology explores "how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness" (p. 104). Overall, the transcendental phenomenology approach, which consists of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing (out) one's experiences and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon, will guide the research process (Creswell, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

A number of college student development theories continue to shape the field of higher education and inform student affairs professionals on how to engage in the development of our students. The Leadership Identity Development (LID) model was formed through a grounded theory study aimed at enhancing understanding of leadership development as an intersection of student development and leadership (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005) and serves as the framework for this study. The LID model consists of stages which students progress through one at a time. The stages of this model are both linear and cyclical, which allows students to experience them repeatedly. Further, each time the model is repeated, individuals experience it with a

deeper understanding and formation of the stage (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). The stages of the LID model include:

- Awareness (Stage One): becoming aware that there are leaders "out there" who are external to oneself, such as the president of the United States, a sports coach, one's mother, or a teacher;
- Exploration/Engagement (Stage Two): a period of immersion in group experiences, usually to make friends; a time of learning to engage with others (e.g., swim team, boy scouts, church choir);
- Leader Identified (Stage Three): viewing leadership as the actions of a group's positional leader; an awareness of the hierarchical nature of relationships in groups;
- Leadership Differentiated (Stage Four): viewing leadership also as non-positional and as a shared group process;
- Generativity (Stage Five): a commitment to developing leadership in others and having a passion for issues or group objectives that one wants to influence; and
- Integration/Synthesis (Stage Six): acknowledging the personal capacity for leadership in diverse contexts and claiming the identity of a leader without having to hold a positional role. (Komives et al., 2005, p. 14)

Leadership Identity Development (Komives et al., 2006) will be used to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of Black males in a campus-based initiative program. When researching the experiences of students and their leadership identity development, much attention has to be focused on the intersection of race and gender identities. To date, many research studies have failed to address accurately the

intersection of race in their examinations (Cole, 2009). Students of color may experience the LID stages differently from the way in which their White peers experience them, and challenging gender stereotypes may lead to students seeking leadership roles and experiences (Komives et al., 2005).

Owing to the nature of this model, developing a leadership identity is a purposeful framework for assessing the impact of a student's involvement in a campus-based leadership program on another person. Odom, Boyd, and Williams (2012) maintained that the original study by Komives et al. (2005) linked "student development theories with the process of leadership development to build a model for assisting leadership educators in facilitating leadership development in students" (p. 52). Day (2001) asserted that leadership development is used "as an integration strategy by helping people understand how to relate to others, coordinate their efforts, build commitments, and develop extended social networks" (p. 586). For this reason, leadership identity development serves as a useful framework for learning from the participants' experiences.

Significance of the Study

Although the literature on African Americans in American higher education is increasing, the study of Black males at HBCUs comprises a very small part of the studies produced. Literature specific to the experiences of Black males at HBCUs fails to voice the process in which leadership is developed. This is partially caused by the lack of research on HBCUs. Brown and Freedman (2002) stated "HBCUs have existed for more than 100 years without becoming serious subjects for academic research and inquiry" (p. 238). Wagner (2011) described leadership development as adapting qualitatively

different ways of thinking, being, and doing versus the traditional adding of a long list of skills. The development of the LID model is a new way of examining the leadership development process. Komives et al. (2005) claimed that "understanding the process of LID is central to the teaching and facilitating of leadership" (p. 1). The researchers of the LID model used thirteen diverse college students in their study, but they made clear that "more participants of color would have allowed for more saturation in diverse experiences. Although diverse perspectives were incorporated a more diverse research team might have analyzed the data differently" (Komives et al., 2005, p. 610). Opsina and Foldy (2009) indicated that Whiteness is often the central or normative view or leadership. The present study adds to the literature examining the experiences of Black students in the process of leadership identity development. Black males' experiences in leadership development are different from those of their female counterparts and should be included in the body of literature (Cuyjet, 1997). Further, Black males have very different experiences from those of their majority peers (Cuyjet, 1997).

The LID model is a comprehensive framework designed to inform leadership development programs that meet the various needs of college students at each stage of their leadership identity development. If higher education administrators are to design programs and initiatives to develop leaders intentionally, it is essential that they understand how to foster this development in students of color. Further, the LID model "provides support for the developmental environment of the group or organization and for expanding the group's capacity to engage in leadership" (Komives et al., 2006, p. 415). The present study will use the experiences of Black males at Historically Black Institutions to understand better how they become leaders and develop their leadership

identity. Moreover, this understanding will potentially uncover obstacles or challenges faced during matriculation. It also adds to the growing body of research that relates to the racial and cultural factors of leadership identity development.

Delimitations/Limitations

A delimitation of this study is that only upperclassmen males (that is, males beyond the first year) involved in campus-based leadership programs will be included. This selection excludes MILE participants that are in their freshman year of matriculation at the university or upperclassmen in their first year participating in the program because they have not been immersed in the program for at least one year. A limitation of the study is that unlike previous studies that are overarching and encompass multiple ethnic/racial backgrounds about leadership identity development, this study is specific, in that, it focuses on Black undergraduate males who have participated in campus-based leadership initiatives for at least a year at an HBCU.

Summary

Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the study, and themes in the literature regarding African American males in Higher Education were presented. This includes out-of-the-classroom engagement, retention, and graduation rates of African American males. The leadership identity development of African American males at HBCUs was presented as the basis of the study. Also included in the discussion was the purpose of the study, which is to provide knowledge of the leadership identity development of participants involved in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. The LID model of Komives et al. (2005) was introduced as the theoretical foundation for this study. Finally, the research design and limitations were presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature on some of the issues facing African American males in American Higher Education. A synthesis of the published material relevant to African American male students who are involved in campus-based leadership programs will set the context for this study. Beginning with the state of African American men in American Higher Education reveals that there are serious concerns regarding graduation and retention rates (Cuyjet, 2006; Sedlacek, 1999; Sedlacek, 2004), enrollment (Horn & Berger, 2004; Palmer, Wood, & Arroyo, 2015; Porter, 2006), and institutional engagement (DeSousa & Kuh, 1996; Harper, 2005, Tinto 1993). Same race-genders (African American men and women) with respect to campus involvement and engagement at four-year universities are drastically different (Cuyjet, 1997), Black women are more engaged in purposeful activities than their Black male counterparts (Cuyjet, 1997; Harper & Quaye, 2009). These findings suggest that the experiences of Black men and women differ based on the activities in which they are involved during their college years.

Since the landscape of higher education at various types of institutions across the country differs, specific focus has been placed on the contextual environment of America's HBCUs for African American males. The literature reveals that HBCUs foster nurturing, supportive, family-like environments that engender Black students' success (Davis, 2006; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Strayhorn, 2014). Along with the atmosphere that HBCUs create for their students, the engagement of students in

purposeful activities can increase students' desires to persevere (Allen, 1992; Fleming, 1984; Zell, 2011).

Additionally, scholars have pointed out the importance of out-of-the-classroom engagement and identity development. Numerous authors have reported the positive effects of engagement in student organizations and out-of-the-classroom activities on identity development, retention, and other outcomes for college students of color (Cokley, 2001; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Flowers, 2004; Fries-Britt, 2000; Harper, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Howard-Hamilton, 1997). Further, while understanding that out-of-the-classroom engagement has positive effects on racial identity (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995), such engagement is equally important to the development of leadership skills in all students (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000).

Most important, this chapter explores the gaps in the current literature regarding Black males and how their leadership identity is developed. The chapter will also define leadership and the leadership development process, and situate leadership as an identity. Understanding the positive impact that leadership initiatives can have on a student's self-awareness and confidence is necessary (Muir, 2014; Oldham, 2008; Owen, 2012). Using Komives Leadership Identity Development model (Komives et al., 2005), I will situate the study adequately to explore the leadership identity development experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based leadership programs at HBCUs.

African American Males in Higher Education

Over the last twenty years, there have been many research studies examining the experiences of Black males in higher education. Some researchers have focused on the retention and graduation rates (Cuyjet, 2006; Sedlacek, 1999; Sedlacek, 2004).

Comprising less than 5% of all undergraduate college students in America (Horn & Berger, 2004; Porter, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2006), Black men are currently underrepresented in higher education institutions across the country. Many researchers (Brooks et al., 2013; Cuyjet, 1997; Harper & Davis, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2011; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Zell, 2011) found that although overall college enrollment has increased for African American males, graduation rates are still significantly lower than those of African American females and Caucasian males and females (as cited in Hill & Boes, 2013). As mentioned earlier, educational attainment data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) show that "individuals [of] age 25 years and older indicate that 17.7% of African American males graduated from college with a bachelor's degree or higher. This rate is markedly lower in comparison to [those of] their White male, White female, and Black female peers who graduated from college at a rate of 30.8%, 29.9%, and 21.4%, respectively" (Hill & Boes, 2013, p. 39). The statistics surrounding the enrollment and retention of African American males are alarming and raise concerns about the overall experience of African American males in American Higher Education.

In addition to lower graduation rates, Black males increasingly withdraw from campus leadership positions (Roach, 2001). Harper and Quaye (2009) found that "Black women were more engaged on campus in all areas (studying, student organizations, and faculty involvement) than their Black male counterparts, whose only areas on the survey that showed higher levels of engagement include playing recreation sports and using campus athletic facilities" (p. 143). Studies have found that Black men were spending most of their time investing minimal efforts in out-of-class time to their academic

endeavors, while Black women benefited from leadership and engagement with the campus community (Harper 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2009).

Results from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, Cuyjet (1997) reflected the differences between genders in relation to campus involvement and engagement at four-year universities. This report was a nationwide survey of undergraduate collegians consisting of 6,756 Black student participants. In his study, Cuyjet (1997) found there were many challenges to the retention and graduation of Black male students. One of the challenges concerning Black men is the lack of a university environment that is supportive and conducive to their growth (Cuyjet, 1997). He stated that "broad acceptance and institutionalization of the negative perceptions of Black men as threatening, unfriendly, and less intelligent than any other distinguishable segment of the American population" (Cuyjet, 1997, p. 8) must be addressed.

African American Males at HBCUs

For over one hundred fifty years, HBCUs have been producers of African American scholars. HBCUs were founded during the late 1800s because African Americans were not allowed to attend the traditionally white institutions. In the mid-twentieth century, enrollment at HBCUs consisted of more than 90% of all African American students enrolled in the American higher education system (Kim & Conrad, 2006). After the Civil Rights Movement, African American students were afforded the opportunity to attend traditionally White institutions in the pursuit of higher education, and, as a result, enrollment at HBCUs declined drastically, with only 17% of African American college students attending HBCUs (Kim & Conrad, 2006). Still, with less than 20% of African American college students attending HBCUs, these institutions continue

to award more than one third of all bachelor's degrees earned by Blacks each year, and 20% of all first professional degrees although HBCUs account for only 3% of all degree-granting higher education institutions in the country (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003; Strayhorn, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Underrepresented students' ethnicity and race play a significant role in their college choice. Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) indicated that African American students make the decision to go to college later than other groups and that race and ethnicity influence the types of institutions students deem realistic to include in their final list. Freeman (2005) noted that African American students are more likely than any other group to choose HBCUs, and Hispanics are more likely than other students to choose Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). There is a cultural factor that is influenced by family characteristics, school ties, and community environment. This cultural factor mediates the college choice process of students of color (Arnold, Crawford, & Muhammad, 2016). Students need to feel that they "fit" on campus is a major part of the college choice process. For racial and ethnic minority students at PWIs, this is extremely important because not feeling like they "fit" on campus can result in student dissatisfaction and disengagement (Cabrera et al., 1999).

Further, a student's social identity is influenced by the "feel" of the university or campus climate. Cabrera et al. (1999) explained that the "feel" of the campus influences a student's involvement on campus both academically and socially. A campus environment with a negative "feel" can discourage a student's involvement and lead to a disconnection with the university. This can lead to a student becoming isolated from the campus community or feeling alienated. Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996) reported that

racial/ethnic minority students often feel like outsiders in certain areas of the campuses and quickly discover which areas of a campus are unwelcoming and socially exclusive (Hawkins & Larabee, 2009). Other research studies (Eimers, 2001; Harper, Byars, & Jelke, 2005) showed that PWIs with actual and perceivably higher levels of prejudice not only diminish the sense of fit among these students but also affects the frequency and quality of their engagement in out-of-classroom activities.

Within the past several decades, a significant focus has been on the experiences and engagement of African American students at Historically Black Universities versus their experiences and engagement at traditionally White Institutions (Bohr et al., 1995; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). Some researchers have revealed that the engagement of students of color can vary, depending upon the type of institution they attend. For example, research suggests that attending an HBCU contributes significantly to the engagement of students of color, mainly African Americans (Flowers, 2002; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002). Furthermore, there are significant research efforts (Allen, 1992; Davis, 1994; Flowers, 2002) that compare "different ethnic group experiences by campus type, but the primary focus is on the African American student experience at HBCUs versus Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)" (Hill & Boes, 2013, p. 4).

At both HBCUs and PWIs, African American male college students face challenges during their matriculation up to graduation. Research over the last thirty years (e.g., Fleming, 1984; Heard-Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Strayhorn, 2009; Strayhorn 2014) has shown that Black students at PWIs report feelings of isolation and culture shock when adjusting to the new campus environment where the experience is drastically different from that in their home. Furthermore, experiences with racism and discrimination by peers and faculty/staff can be additional challenges for Black students

at PWIs. Although Black students at HBCUs face challenges concerning traditions, inadequate financial resources, and infrastructure (Gasman, 2008; Harper & Quaye, 2008), these institutions continue to educate and prepare them for the greater world.

Despite the challenges that HBCUs face, one of the reasons students succeed during their matriculation is the family-like environment provided at these institutions. Some research studies have found that HBCUs foster nurturing environments that promote Black students' success (Davis, 2006; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). In a qualitative study, Palmer and Gasman (2008) reported that social support at the university helps students to succeed. Some significant findings emerged from the Palmer and Gasman (2008) study, including faculty relationships, displaying empathy and support, going above and beyond the call of duty (supportive administrators and academic success), relying on peers for motivation and encouragement, participating in a supportive campus community and effecting success, and following role models and mentors: using wisdom, dedication, and experience to illuminate the pathway toward success. These findings included participants' reflections on how the overall climate on the campus impacted their social capital and academic success.

According to the study by Palmer and Gasman (2008), not only did faculty and staff at HBCUs help students realize their potential but also many participants expressed relying on their peers for motivation and inspiration. One male participant of that study stated, "People that you hang around, they could lead you into doing things you do not want to do, so you have to hang around people who have the same goals and drive as you" (p. 61). He went on to say:

> One of my good friends he has a 0.7 [GPA] . . . As friends . . . if somebody is down, we have to bring them up by talking to them, encouraging them . . . making sure that they are doing their work. Even though they might be of age, you still have to [be a father figure and say], "Did you do your work . . . Did you do your homework?" (Palmer & Gasman, 2008, p. 61)

This statement is important because students are striving to create a community as peers who are motivated and encouraged to succeed. Other researchers (Bonner, 2010; Bonner & Bailey, 2006) asserted that "positive peer groups foster students' positive self-perception, and provide corrective feedback at the academic level" (Zell, 2011, p. 216). Zell further stated that "positive peer communities are supportive audiences for emerging skills and new ways of being, providing opportunities for students to gain admiration from peers and administrators" (p. 216).

In this discussion, Palmer and Gasman (2008) explained how having role models and mentors added to the overall academic and social success on all campuses. Mentors are essential because they provide a sense of guidance and direction to students who are often looking for someone to help them throughout their collegiate journey. One participant declared, "I say have more Black role models; you will look at them and say, 'This person has been in the same situation I have, and look how successful he is'" (p. 62). Further, Palmer and Gasman also held that "commonalities between mentors and mentees, such as gender, race, educational background, and socioeconomic status, can foster a sense of self-efficacy" (p. 62). This form of mentorship positively enhances student success because they have access to an experienced person to help them navigate

the rough terrain of college life and circumvent the pitfalls that lead to poor academic performance (Palmer & Gasman, 2008).

Building upon the literature provided, Palmer, Maramba, and Lee (2010) conducted a qualitative study on the role of an HBCU in supporting academic success for underprepared Black males. It is important to note that supportive environments of HBCUs are a recurrent theme in the literature. Specifically, they investigated the academic and social experiences of Black males who entered a public HBCU through a remedial or developmental program and continued to graduation from the university (Palmer et al., 2010). Palmer and his colleagues (2010) found a few themes with a focus on the impact of an HBCU that facilitates Black male academic and social success. Generally, the impact is strengthened by the university's racial composition and support from peers, faculty, and role models.

Specifically, one of the findings of the Palmer et al. (2010) study was the significance of involvement on campus and its impact on the students' success. In the study, nine of 11 participants noticed that most of their fellow male peers were disengaged on campus; one participant accordingly stated:

> I hated the [university] when I first came here . . . but once I realized [I am] here to stay. . . that is when I became really active. That helped me a lot because I felt I was a part of the university. The thing that was critical to my academic success was simply being involved. (Palmer et al., 2010, p. 92)

This statement is significant because if students do not feel connected to the university, they are less likely to be involved. From this experience, the participant of the program developed a commitment to and appreciation of the university once he became

involved; he credits his success to this. Connection to the university is necessary because this relationship fosters an environment conducive to academic and social success. Several researchers (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) added that African American students at HBCUs are more satisfied, engaged in the community, and well adjusted.

Another finding by Palmer et al. (2010) was the impact that an HBCU community had on helping to enhance the success of its young men. As shown in various research studies (Fleming, 1984; Kim & Conrad, 2006; Palmer & Gasman, 2008), HBCUs continue to have a value-added impact for African American students who have more contact with faculty, experience greater satisfaction with their academic lives and exhibit higher career aspirations. Further, Palmer et al. (2010) revealed that seven of the 11 participants reported favorably on the relation between HBCU faculty and staff members and their academic and social success. In this regard, one participant stated:

> It is just the environment that the [university] fosters . . . I think it was the administration and the faculty and staff that helped me out. From talking to maintenance staff who tells you to stay in school because education is important to talk to a doctoral student, telling you to file your taxes. (Palmer et al., 2010, p. 94)

This student's statement declares that the entire environment is supportive from the day-to-day staff to the students at the highest level of education at the university. Further, the participant explains that he cannot credit just one area of the campus as both academic and student affairs personnel provided a source of support, motivation, and words of encouragement (Palmer et al., 2010). Another participant noted, "this helped

me realize my potential [to succeed in college], which helped my confidence and self-efficacy" (p. 94).

Student Involvement

According to Astin (1984), the theory of student involvement is defined as the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to the academic and social aspects of campus life. Astin (1984) stated that "a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends a lot of time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and frequently interacts with faculty members and other students" (p. 297). Astin (1985) stated that "an uninvolved student may neglect studies, spend little time on campus, abstain from extracurricular activities, and have little contact with faculty members or other students" (p. 134). Hawkins and Larabee (2009) noted that it is important to remember that Astin's theory is based on a broad definition of involvement that extends far beyond memberships in clubs and student organizations (p. 187). Astin's theory focuses on looking at the students' time as a resource during the collegiate years, and how the student spends that time affects what they gain from the collegiate experience (Hawkins & Larabee, 2009).

Within the student development literature, the terms of student engagement, involvement, and integration are often used interchangeably and sometimes are presented unclearly. Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinize (2009) defined each term separately and assessed their similarities and difference by interviewing the theorist who developed the concepts. Astin's (1984) model of student involvement is typically utilized in research using the Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) model. According to Astin, "the advent of involvement theory led to the elaboration of the IEO model to include 'involvement'

(also called ‘intermediate outcomes’) as an additional construct situated between Environment and Outcome (IEO)” (p. 298). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) highlight activities, such as working on campus, living on campus, engaging with peers, membership in clubs and organizations, and interaction with faculty members, all of which are usually measured by Astin’s theory.

In his original study, Astin (1984) concluded that student involvement leads to retention. Student development begins with the influence and interaction of the environment. The contribution of students who are actively participating in programs and events result in benefits to their personal, academic, and social development. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), students are in a continuous state of growth and change. Students enter college with particular characteristics. After being exposed to the college environment (various programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences), their initial characteristics often change (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The involvement of the student in college has to be both academic and social. Some authors conducting retention research in higher education contend that student involvement leads to greater integration into the social and academic systems of the college, which in turn promotes persistence (Astin, 1984; Milem & Berger, 1997; Tinto, 1987). Kuh and Pace (1998) used Pace’s (1998) college student experiences questionnaire to study the effects of the college environment on student development outcomes of African American and White students at HBCUs and PWIs respectively. The study revealed that the college environment has a significant influence on almost all outcomes for African American students. This is important because, in that study, an unsupportive environment can affect the development of college students, particularly

African Americans. Astin (1984) suggests that student learning and development are positively impacted by such environmental engagements as interactions with faculty, courses offered, mode of instructional delivery (lecture, discussion, research, seminars, etc.), academic support (tutoring, remediation, and labs), and amount of time spent studying.

Social involvement is another important factor influencing student's success in college. According to Pascarella and Terenzini (1983), students who believe that they fit in socially have a perseverance rate that is higher than that of students who do not believe that they fit in. Because many measures of social involvement focus on student behavior, social involvement has become an active component of research studies (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997). From the literature, it can be seen that social involvement includes behaviors, such as building peer relationships at an institution, developing informal relationships with faculty, and participating in extracurricular activities (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1987).

A student's social identity develops from his or her social involvement. Erikson (1968) defined "identity" as the sense of a continuous self. From this concept derived the many identities a person can assume including race, sexual orientation, gender and class; and the interactions among these identities (Komives et al., 2006). Tajfel (1982) defined social identity as "that part of the individual's self-concept or personal identity which derives from their membership in a social group or groups together with the value and emotional significance attached to their membership" (p. 2). Further, Tajfel explains that the term "social identity doesn't cover the full extent of the many complexities of surrounding development; but it asserts the notion that perceptions of self-care are

influenced somewhat by membership in social groups, and that membership in each group varies in salience for the individual by time and context" (p. 2).

Out-of-the-classroom Engagement and Identity Development

Building upon research between faculty and students, several authors explored the positive effects of engagement in student organizations and out-of-classroom activities on identity development, retention, and other outcomes produced in college for students of color (Cokley, 2001; Evans et al., 1998; Flowers, 2004; Fries-Britt, 2000; Harper, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Howard-Hamilton, 1997). Taylor and Howard-Hamilton (1995) examined the relationship between racial identity attitudes and student engagement among African American male students at PWIs. Taylor and Howard-Hamilton (1995) found that higher levels of out-of-classroom engagement contribute to stronger racial identity attitudes. Further, they found that students who were highly involved tended to be at the Immersion–Emersion and Internalization stages of Cross's (1995) model, while less engaged participants reported higher levels of Pre-Encounter attitudes (Harper and Quaye, 2007). Another study by Mitchell and Dell (1992) showed high correlations between Black identity, psychosocial development, and participation in campus organizations. Harper (2009) reported that researchers Mitchell and Dell (1992) "discovered a negative relationship between Pre-Encounter attitudes and participation in cultural activities, whereas Encounter, Immersion, and Internalization attitudes were positively correlated" (p. 130).

Out-of-the-classroom engagement (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995) is equally crucial to the development of leadership skills in all students (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Harper and Quaye (2007) cited the American College Personnel Association and the

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2011) who noted that participation in student organizations, residence hall groups, and other campus activities enable students to "learn through action, contemplation, reflection, and emotional engagement" (p. 11). Komives et al. (2005) stated that applying these new skills, such as public speaking, delegating, motivating, team building, and facilitating, which are learned from being involved in different experiences, is acquired through multiple engagement experiences. Besides, these experiences are vital to student development, as "every student club or organization provides learning opportunities for its participants to develop and practice these skills leadership, time management, collaboration, and goal setting" (The American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2011, p. 11).

In their phenomenological study, Harper and Quaye (2007) explored the experiences of high achieving African American undergraduate men who were actively involved and held multiple leadership positions in multiple student organizations at PWIs. They sought to explore how identity expression and development were impacted. The findings from the data included development and expression of the identities of Black participants within the student organizations and ways in which student organizations provided participants the opportunities to develop skills.

One of the findings surrounded the notion of advancement of the African American community. A participant noted, "If you look at the retention rates of African Americans on this campus, especially the guys you'd be like, Wow this is really messed up; that's why I get involved" (p. 135). Through this example, the student leaders are

looking for ways to navigate current challenges they and their peers face and how they can play a part in improving them. Another participant commented:

> I felt the need to do something, starting here on campus as a student leader, to help my brothers and sisters, just like the people who had come before me had done things that got me introduced to certain opportunities. I committed myself to helping other African Americans gain access to more of those opportunities. (Harper & Quaye, 2007, p. 135)

The commitment of the students to help someone else achieve and succeed is notable because regardless of the organization or positions each student leader held, each of them articulated uplifting the African American community both on and off campus (Harper & Quaye, 2007).

Although research suggests there are high achieving Black males on college campuses who are assuming leadership positions and getting involved on campus, there are alarming differences between genders when it comes to campus involvement and engagement. Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, several researchers found that Black men were more engaged in the classroom and interacted more with faculty than their Black women counterparts (Allen, 1986; Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975); more recent research (Roach, 2001) found that more women were leading and engaged in leadership positions on the campus.

Specifically, at HBCUs, the trend of Black women being more engaged than their counterparts in leadership and campus activities is more prevalent than ever (Harper, 2006). Kimbrough and Harper (2006) conducted a qualitative study where they collected data from various student leaders at HBCUs. The student leaders interviewed included

student government association presidents, fraternity chapter leaders, and resident assistants (RAs) at nine different HBCUs. The overall results of the study revealed that the Black men were highly unengaged with the campus community (Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). Of the 49 student leaders interviewed at the various HBCUs, only seven of them were men, and these men were located at two different institutions. This disparity alone is reason enough to look at gender differences in the engagement of Black collegians. Although this study was completed with students at HBCUs, the gender disparities exist at PWIs as well (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper & Harris, 2006; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001).

From the results of their study, Kimbrough and Harper (2006) provided five explanations for the trends of Black male disengagement at both HBCUs and PWIs. Harper (2009) reported those trends as follows:

> Men deem sports, physical activity, and athleticism more socially acceptable and "cooler" than campus leadership and purposeful engagement; (2) male students typically encounter difficulty working together, which is often required in student organizations; (3) many Black men come to college having already been socialized to devalue purposeful engagement; (4) there is a shortage of Black male role models and mentors on campus who actively and strategically promote purposeful engagement; and (5) many Black men are unable to meet the minimum 2.5 grade point average requirement for membership in one of the five Historically Black fraternities. (p. 144)

The listed trends shown above provide context to the experiences of Black males at both HBCUs and PWIs. Further, the trends provide information to colleges and

universities on how to engage Black males more effectively and the present challenges that are impeding their engagement with the university.

Campus Based Initiatives

Although many colleges and universities have student organizations and student-led programs that serve Black male students, various institutions have developed male initiative programs that focus on Black male development throughout their matriculation in college (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper & Kuykendall, 2012). Because of the gap in the engagement of Black men and women on campus, which has been recorded in the literature (Cuyjet, 1997; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006), several researchers have stated, "that the gap will continue to widen if immediate action is not taken by universities to develop programs and services that foster identity development among Black males, cultural connections to the institution, and opportunities for Black males to explore leadership and community outreach" (Barker & Avery, 2012, p. 74).

In response to many of the disengagement trends of Black males in higher education, several PWIs (Kennesaw State University, Louisiana State University, Ohio State University, University of Maryland College Park) and HBCUs alike (Morgan State University, Morehouse College, Bowie State University, Fayetteville State University, and North Carolina Central University) have implemented campus-wide initiatives for the institutionalization of the engagement of Black males. These male initiative programs often provide academic support, personal and social development, and financial and career counseling. The majority of the programs and initiatives are coordinated by various offices, departments, and administrators on the campus. These same initiatives give African American males a place of support and identity. It is imperative that higher

education institutions make an effort to provide these programs for African American males because many of these young men will need that helping hand as a guide when entering college.

The Educational Opportunity Program combines access, academic support and supplemental financial assistance to make higher education possible for students who have the potential to succeed, despite poor preparation and limited financial resources (State University of New York, 2019). The ultimate plan of the Educational Opportunity Program was to commit that every student capable of completing a program of higher education shall have the opportunity to do so (Educational Opportunity Program, 1970).

Another program that supports the development of African American males in higher education includes Brother2Brother (B2B). Zell (2011) commented as follows:

> B2B is a peer-based academic and social integration program modeled after the nationally known Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB). B2B is designed to encourage persistence from freshman to sophomore years by attending to participant's social, emotional, and cultural needs. In the vision of its founder, Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe, these factors are essential to increase African American male collegians chances to achieve academic and social success (Bledsoe & Rome, 2006). Also, the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) states that B2B helps participants identify career goals, builds support networks, promotes student's involvement in campus activities, and instills a desire to "give back" to their communities (SAAB, 2010). A focus on accountability, proactive leadership, self-discipline, and intellectual development are hallmarks of SAAB's B2B (Ray, Carley, & Brown, 2009), all of which are

considered essential to the development of productive and responsible citizens. (p. 216)

Zell (2011) conducted a study focusing on the matriculation, retention, and graduation rates of African American male collegians involved with B2B. In that study, she examined the perceived effects that B2B had on the participants' psychosocial, academic, and personal experiences. The data collected derived from seven focus groups consisting of three to nine individuals ranging in ages between 18 and 23 years, inclusive (Zell, 2011). The majority of participants were sophomores from a variety of B2B chapters at various institutions including five junior colleges and two four-year universities.

After the researcher's analysis of the data, six core themes emerged, including academic motivation, personal presentation, emerging skills, personal growth, the ethics of collaboration, and reward through accountability (Zell, 2011). The participants expressed that through their involvement with the B2B program they were improving their presentation. "Dressing for success," or wearing professional attire in the program created an atmosphere where students saw themselves in a different light. One participant stated, "A tie changes your state of mind, and signifies that you are willing to learn" (Zell, 2011, p. 220). This statement is significant because participants were able to recognize that professional attire was a hallmark of the program and the value of presenting a professional image through their appearance (Zell, 2011). Further, this relates to my study because a students' self-perception has a significant impact on their self-efficacy and identity development. Evans et al. (2016) noted that establishing identity "includes comfort with body and appearance, a clear self-concept and comfort

with one's roles and lifestyle, a secure sense of feedback from others, self-acceptance and self-esteem, and personal stability and integration" (p. 296).

Another finding in Zell's (2011) study explored the validation of emerging skills developed by participants in the B2B program. Several B2B members interviewed reported assuming leadership roles in other groups such as student clubs and organizations (Zell, 2011). Further, participants credited the B2B program for the gains of leadership roles. Participants expressed the B2B program was "pivotal in supporting their emerging skills or validating those already possessed, but not yet exercised" (p. 220). In other words, some students had the potential, and they recognize that [B2B] program brought their potential into reality and caused them to act upon their skills. Additionally, researchers identified a skill for guiding others or mentoring as a subtheme within the validation of emerging skills. One participant stated, "One reason why I joined was to influence people . . . because other people might be going through the same struggles that you are going through or went through" (Zell, 2011, p. 220). This opportunity to mentor both younger students and peers changed the participant's view of himself from being in a dependent mode when in the follower role to feeling independent when in the leader role (Komives et al., 2009). Throughout students' leadership identity development, they are becoming aware of themselves and developing confidence at each stage of their process.

Of Zell's (2011) study, the last finding that is important to highlight relates to personal growth. Respondents of the study reported that personal growth was explored through increased levels of problem-solving, resource mobilization and networking, self-organization and being accountable to oneself and peers. One student expressed that the

leadership skills he learned in the group brought him “out of the shell to take on more responsibility and the desire to give back” (Zell, 2011, p. 221). Komives et al. (2009) describe stages three and four of the LID model as the emerging phase where students try “new attitudes, practiced new skills, and made decisions about what groups they would commit to and the level of that commitment” (p.21). Further, their values and actions become balanced by a sense of social responsibility within their community (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009).

Barker and Avery (2012) also conducted a study to explore how a Black male leadership program promoted academic and social engagement for Black male college students. In this study, the authors investigated the differences in the college experiences of sophomore and junior college students after a year of involvement with the program. Adopting a phenomenological approach, the researchers conducted focus groups with eight participants of a piloted Black male leadership program at a southern, very high research-oriented PWI (Barker & Avery, 2012).

The findings of the study included two significant themes—getting connected [forming cultural connections] through the Black male leadership program and connecting the dots [students’ exploration of race, gender, and engagement] (Barker & Avery, 2012). Within the themes of getting connected or formation of cultural connection through the Black male leadership program emerged a subtheme of the increased level of institutional engagement. Many participants credited the program for providing them with more significant exposure to “other faculty and staff on campus who are Black and providing them access to these individuals (Barker & Avery, 2012). This connection to staff and faculty who looked like their students was necessary as the

students felt more connected to the university then. Several researchers (Astin, 1984; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, 2001; Tinto, 1993) have reported that higher connectivity to the campus leads to higher levels of persistence and retention of students.

Similar to Zell's (2011) study, participants in the study by Barker and Avery (2012) reported how staff members of the Black male leadership program served as role models and because of their interaction they reconsidered their educational trajectory to pursue post-bachelor degree education. One of the participants noted, "our role models show us we can make it . . . they give us inspiration" (Barker & Avery, 2012, p. 80). This example of role models showed students how to turn motivation into success. All of these examples in the findings support current research studies indicating that culture-specific organizations facilitate the role of engagement of students (Flowers, 2004; Guiffrida, 2006; Palmer et al., 2010; Zell, 2011).

Several researchers (Davis, 2006; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Palmer & Gasman, 2008) have shown that HBCUs provide a supportive environment but are still challenged by Black male enrollment, retention, and graduation rates; this provided a need for researchers to explore the programs developed on HBCU campuses. Palmer, Maramba, and Dancy (2013) discussed the Morgan MILE and its impact on retention and persistence of Black men at an HBCU. This study was executed to "inspire administrators and student affairs practitioners at HBCUs to adopt a similar initiative to positively increase academic success among Black men on their campuses" (Palmer et al., 2013, p. 65). This study was conducted as an evaluation of the MILE program consisting of mixed methods research (qualitative and quantitative). The authors employed five focus groups of the 53 participants, and each session lasted 110 minutes.

Further, the authors used descriptive statistics including an examination of students' cumulative grade point averages.

Chickering et al. (2006) noted that using both the qualitative element and descriptive statistics, the study "revealed that the program had a positive impact on students' academic success" (as cited in Palmer et al., 2013, p. 69). The findings of the study included a positive influence on how participants approached their academics, and the impact of the director's passion and unwavering commitment to their desire to be academically successful (Palmer et al., 2013). Several participants of the study stated, "the MILE promoted male bonding and increased their willingness to seek support from other males affiliated with the MILE for academic or social concerns" (Palmer et al., 2013, p. 69). Another result of the study was that implementing a program was not enough to facilitate student success, but having a supportive and cohesive program director and the staff is equally important in creating that atmosphere for student success (Palmer et al., 2013).

The Palmer et al. (2013) study is relevant to my proposed study and the current literature for several reasons. The researchers are exploring the impact of campus-based initiatives on Black male students at an HBCU. As the literature has shown, male initiative programs provide a space for the development and growth of Black males (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Zell, 2011), coupled with the supportive environment HBCUs (Allen et al., 2007; Palmer et al., 2011) provide for significant impacts on students' academic and social success. Likewise, many previous studies indicated that out-of-the-classroom activities, such as the MILE, develop students' ways of thinking and life experiences. However, an assessment of leadership development or

reflections of leadership in participants involved in initiatives at HBCUs has not been a topic of discussion in the literature. For one thing, the study by Palmer et al. (2013) ignored the primary basis of what the proposed study seeks to explore. Knowing the impact on a student's social and academic success is important, but understanding how students view leadership, and how they see themselves and the campus environment through the frame of leadership development is also important.

Leadership Development

Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) define leadership "as a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish change" (p. 33). Further, the authors describe two types of leaders: (1) a positional leader; and (2) a participant, collaborator, or group member. Positional leaders are those individuals who are in a leadership position. This position could have been selected, appointed, elected or hired to assume responsibility for a group working towards change (Komives et al., 2013). The participant, collaborator, or group member leader is one who actively engages with others to accomplish change (Komives et al., 2013). Regardless of the leadership role an individual assumes, "a person is defined as a leader by taking the initiative and making a difference in moving the group forward toward positive change" (Komives et al., 2013, p. 22).

The process of a student's leadership development is a growing body of knowledge (London, 2009; Odom et al., 2012; Oldham, 2008) that has leadership educators focusing on the personal, individual, and other aspects of development, as well as designing purposeful environments that provide the optimal level of support and challenge to spur development (Owen, 2012; Sanford & Adelson, 1962).

Oldham (2008) conducted a case study that explored the developmental influences that facilitate leadership identity in African American undergraduate students. Drawing a sample of African American male students from a small private PWI, Oldham (2008) employed a mixed-method research design including one-on-one interviews and focus groups with the participants. Applying the LID model, Oldham was able to examine the developmental influences of leadership identity through adult and peer influences, meaningful involvement and reflective learning. She also found that African American students could experience growth in leadership identity development through a variety of experiences and involvements at a PWI.

Building upon Oldham's (2008) research, Muir (2014) conducted a study exploring the influence of a formal mentoring program on the leader identity development of participants. Further, Muir (2014) sought to explain how each participant developed his or her identity as a leader throughout their involvement with the program. Muir (2014) used a qualitative case-study methodology employing in-depth interviews with 25 participants. Of the participants interviewed, 11 served as mentors to the other participants of the study. This allowed for the researcher to gain access to the differing perspectives of the mentors and mentees within the program.

After an analysis of the data, three themes emerged from Muir's (2014) study including (1) the development of mentor partnership-leader identity, (2) leader identity developed through critical learning moments, and (3) leader identity development through self-knowledge. These findings showed how participants discover their leadership identity, which leads to their ability to actualize themselves as a leader. Leadership development is mostly comprised of personal growth "becoming more aware

of one's self is a necessary component of personal development" (Day, Zaccaro, & Haplin, 2004, p. 50). Moreover, participants expressed that owing to the environment created by the program, they believed that the mentoring they were receiving added substantially to their self-awareness. A mixed-methods study conducted by Finkelstein, Allen, and Rhoton (2003) showed that mentor-protege relationships added learning as a benefit of mentoring and leadership development. Their study expressed that in the mentor-mentee relationship, where the mentor was much older than the mentee, more mutual learning was reported. Through this exchange between mentor / role models and the mentees, they were developing their leader identity as their mentors guided them through critical moments. Lastly, the participants of Muir's (2004) study reported that the program they were involved in had positively affected their development as a leader and that they had grown in confidence and self-knowledge.

Odom et al. (2012) carried out a qualitative research study that assessed the Personal Growth Projects (PGP) assignments in a personal leadership education collegiate course. To frame this study, Odom et al. (2012) employed the qualitative inquiry of phenomenology. The authors used the LID model as their lens to understand the experiences of how students see themselves as leaders. Using a random sample of 90 Texas A&M University undergraduate students' reflection papers, the researchers examined student development as it relates to the development self-component of the LID model (Komives et al., 2005). Within the developing self-component of the LID model are five subcategories including deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence, establishing interpersonal efficacy, applying new skills, and expanding motivations.

One of the findings of the study was that more than one-half of the participants reported an increase in their level of self-confidence (Odom et al., 2012). One participant credited, "their increase in self-confidence within their desire to continue attempting new things and move out of their comfort zone" (p. 56). Another finding of the study noted that participants reported learning new skills throughout the program and assignments. One participant reported on "their ability to listen and learn from other students and apply these skills to their life" (p. 56). Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2009) stated that "an important part of leadership development involves how someone thinks about leadership influences and enhances his or her adaptability to a new situation" (p. 117).

Moschella (2013) sought to understand the process in which Black undergraduate men on a predominantly white college campus became leaders of predominantly white organizations. Using a grounded theory method, the researcher interviewed nine Black men at two large research universities. From the analysis of data, the researcher discovered several findings and developed a new model. The model that emerged from this grounded theory study is the Black Male Leadership Emergence on predominantly White Campuses (BMLEPWC) and includes a five-stage process that explores the process of leadership for the participants (Moschella, 2013). In the BMLEPWC Model

> participants undergo a process of leader development that begins with the support and mentorship of the African American community, progresses through emerging leadership with its cycle of exploration, engagement and cultural comparison, encounters threats to leadership emergence that necessitate leaders to develop strategies for leadership success, and ultimately concludes when

emergent establish a leader identity in a Predominantly White Organization. (Moschella, 2013 p. 81)

Although this model is helpful when examining the process of African American undergraduates becoming student leaders at a PWI within a predominantly white organization, it does not describe the ways in which African American students at Historically Black colleges process their identity as leaders. Currently, there is only one student development model that examines leadership as an identity. Leadership development is a continual growth process of a person (London, 2009). Leadership development has been defined as "a self-initiated, discretionary, planned, and proactive pattern of formal or informal activities that are sustained over time to apply or transporting knowledge for career development" (London & Smither, 1999, p. 81). Since this is a self-initiated process, the notion of Astin's (1984) theory asserts that learning experiences pay off in terms of what you invest in them. Further, Day (2001) stated that leadership is constructed through social interactions within social environments. Therefore, "consideration of the organizational context is important and can provide insights into the various influences that are developing leaders encounter in a particular setting" (Muir, 2014, p. 358). The research presented is imperative to the discussion on the exploration of the engagement and leadership development of Black males. The reoccurring theme of HBCUs supportive, nurturing, and family-like environment (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Gasman, 2008; Palmer et al., 2016) supports the proposed research site. Building upon current literature of student involvement and out-of-the-classroom engagement, it becomes clear that institutionalized programs and initiatives that target

Black males are positively impacting their academic achievement and persistence (Allen, 1985).

Theoretical Framework

The theory that informs and shapes the present study is the Leadership Identity Development (LID) model (Komives et al., 2005). This theory was intentionally selected for its ability to intersect and support this study. The majority of studies surrounding student involvement and engagement reference Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement. Astin's (1984) work is essential to understanding the campus environment whether academically or socially. However, the LID model examines how students can integrate their leadership identity with other aspects of their personal identity, and it helps inform how they develops leadership expertise (Owen, 2012).

The LID model was formed through a grounded theory study to enhance understanding of leadership development as an intersection of student development and leadership (Komives et al., 2005). Komives et al. (2005) interviewed 13 diverse students at a large mid-Atlantic university who were identified as relational leaders in a nomination process. It was the results of the grounded theory study that resulted in the development of the LID model. This model consists of stages in which students progress through one at a time before moving on to the next. The stages of this model are linear and cyclical, which allows for students to experience them repeatedly. Besides, each time the model is repeated, individuals experience it with a deeper understanding and formation of the stage (Komives et al., 2006). The stages of the LID model include:

- Awareness (stage one): becoming aware that there are leaders "out there" who are external to oneself, such as the president of the United States, a sports coach, one's mother, or a teacher;
- Exploration/engagement (stage two): a period of immersion in group experiences, usually to make friends; a time of learning to engage with others (e.g., swim team, boy scouts, church choir);
- Leader identified (stage 3): viewing leadership as the actions of a group's positional leader; an awareness of the hierarchical nature of relationships in groups;
- Leadership differentiated (stage four): viewing leadership also as non-positional and as a shared group process;
- Generativity (stage five): a commitment to developing leadership in others and having a passion for issues or group objectives that one wants to influence; and
- Integration/synthesis (stage six): acknowledging the personal capacity for leadership in diverse contexts and claiming the identity of a leader without having to hold a positional role. (Komives et al., 2006 p. 14)

Komives et al. (2005) expressed that leadership identity develops through the six stages mentioned above, moving from awareness to integration/synthesis. In addition, to these six stages, the LID model provides five organizational categories for the process of developing identity. These stages include (1) developmental influences, (2) developing self, (3) group influences, (4) changing view of self with others, and (5) broadening the view of leadership (Komives et al., 2005, p. 52-53). Komives et al. (2006) described:

> Students broadening the view of leadership changed from perceiving leadership as the external other, as positional, as well as a process. Developing self is identified as deepening self-awareness, building self-confidence establishing interpersonal efficacy, applying new skills, and expanding motivations. Group influences included engaging in groups, learning from membership continuity, and changing perceptions of groups. The developmental influences that facilitated the development of a leadership identity included adult influences, peer influences, meaningful involvement, and reflective learning. Developing self and group influences interact to influence the category of changing the view of self with others. (p. 403-404)

Hall (2004) asserts that "identity" is probably the most important aspect of leadership development (p. 154). As such, it is important to situate the many identities students possess as they develop themselves as leaders. Although the model was developed by a group of diverse college students, it is important to discuss the ways in which "leadership identity intersects with other dimensions of identity such as race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and social class" (Owen, 2012, p. 29).

Further, when researching the experiences of students and their leadership identity development much attention has to be focused on the intersection of race and gender identities. Intersectionality is a sociocultural theoretical framework that focuses on the interlocking system of race, gender, and social class (Byrd & Stanley, 2009; Crenshaw, 2000; Davis, 2012; Hill-Collins, 2004). This term, coined by Crenshaw (1989), refers to the ways in which "race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences" (p. 139). This theory, in turn, articulates a

framework for understanding the complexities of minority identities and experiences, which can be related to the process by which they become leaders. Owen (2012) stated that "identity is situated socially, historically, politically, and culturally constructed" (p. 31) when using the social constructivist approach to identity development.

Social identities such as race and gender reflect one's membership in groups of commonality (Hogg, 2001). Helms (1990) defined racial identity as "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3). Based on the LID model, students of color may experience the stages of the model differently from the way in which their White peers do, and challenging gender stereotypes may lead to students seeking leadership roles and experiences (Komives et al., 2005). Komives et al. (2009) stated that in developing the LID grounded theory model, many of the "participants of color described their experience of stage three (leader identified) in a more collectivist approach than other study participants" (p. 21).

The theoretical framework—Leadership Identity Development (Komives et al., 2006) allows me to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of Black males in a campus-based initiative program. When researching the experiences of students and their leadership identity development, much attention has to be focused on the intersection of race and gender identities. The nature of this model determines that developing a leadership identity is a purposeful framework for assessing the impact of a student's involvement in a campus-based leadership program on an individual.

Odom et al. (2012) reported that the original study by Komives et al. (2005) made a connection to "student development theories with the process of leadership

development to build a model for assisting leadership educators in facilitating leadership development in students" (p. 52). Day (2001) asserted that leadership development is used "as an integration strategy by helping people understand how to relate to others, coordinate their efforts, build commitments and develop extended social networks" (p. 586). For this reason, leadership identity development serves as the framework for learning from participants' experiences.

Summary

A review of the literature was presented to provide insight into some of the experiences of African American males in higher education at various universities across the country. Understanding the supportive environment that HBCUs provide for Black students, as well as the many resources and institutional initiatives developed to combat the disengagement trends of Black males in higher education is extremely important. I believe this review clearly identified gaps that exist in the current literature, and that the present proposed research will add knowledge that will be helpful to administrators and practitioners at HBCUs and PWIs alike.

Utilizing the LID model will allow for the personal experiences of those who participate in campus-based leadership programs specifically at HBCUs to reflect on their journey to and through the leadership development process. This journey begins with students' awareness of themselves in relation to leadership and their ability to be a leader in the campus community. The use of the constructivist approach will allow me to see how participants learned from their life experiences, how their experiences within the group (campus-based leadership program) impact others, and how they were able to

construct a leader identity. The LID model discussed set the stage for how participants were selected, the interview protocols established, and how the data were interpreted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter begins with the purpose of the study followed by a discussion of the general research design. Consequently, this section will outline the rationale for qualitative inquiry—more specifically the phenomenological approach—followed by the research questions, and my positionality and assumptions. Next, the research site, sample criteria, and procedures for data collection, data analysis, and data management will be displayed. Finally, the chapter concludes with an explanation of the validity, reliability, credibility, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the leadership experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Specifically, because of the lack of qualitative research focused on the leadership identity development of Black males at HBCUs, I designed the proposed study to add to the body of knowledge concerning the leadership experiences of Black males in higher education. Being able to understand how leadership identity is developed is a complex experience or phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, a phenomenon is defined as a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen (Creswell, 2013). This is a phenomenological study in which, I hoped, through a series of interviews, to gain insight into the untold experiences of Black males who are developing as student leaders on HBCU campuses while participating in campus-based initiatives there.

General Design of Study

Qualitative research begins with a set of assumptions and the application of theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems (Creswell, 2013). These studies then address the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world and, through interpretive material practices, makes the world visible (Creswell, 2013). Once a research problem has been identified, qualitative research attempts to study issues in their natural settings and attempt to make sense of, or interpret, the phenomena regarding the meaning people bring to them (Creswell, 2013).

The tradition of phenomenology in qualitative research seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the lived experience of participants involved in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). A phenomenological account gets inside the shared experience of a group of people: "how they perceive it, describe it, feel it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). I opted for phenomenology as the research approach because it examines "how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). The analysis of phenomenological data usually provides full, detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By the end of a phenomenological research study, both the researcher and the readers should be able to say, "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

There are two approaches for conducting phenomenological research, hermeneutic phenomenology and transcendental phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). For the present study, I used the transcendental phenomenology approach, which consists of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing (out) one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Using procedures outlined by Moustakas (1994) a researcher should analyze the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and then combining the statements into themes. After the researcher collects the information, he or she must categorize it into textural and structural descriptions. Textural descriptions are defined as what participants experienced, and structural descriptions are defined as how the participants experienced it regarding the conditions, situations, or context (Creswell, 2013). A combination of both textural and structural descriptions will give a rich insight into the participants' experience.

Research Questions

The present study seeks to understand the experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based leadership initiatives at HBCUs. Further, the study attempts to examine, in detail, the social and academic support and its contribution to college student achievement in relation to leadership identity development. Several research studies have suggested that support and out of the class engagement are significant predictors of outcomes for Black college student achievement and psychosocial development (Harper, 2004; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). After completing a review of the literature on Black male identity development and identifying the gaps in the literature, I developed the following research questions:

1. What are the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based initiatives at an HBCU?
2. How do participants in campus-based initiatives perceive themselves as leaders?
3. In what ways have their leadership experiences influenced their identity development?

Research Site and Sample

This research study takes place at a Mid-Atlantic HBCU, which is a doctoral urban research university located in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States. For the purposes of this study, I named the university Denton University. Denton University enrolls approximately 6,327 undergraduate and 1,500 graduate students (U.S. News & World Report, 2015). Of the institution's total undergraduate enrollment, there are 5,758 full-time students and 569 part-time students (U.S. News & World Report, 2015). There are over 100 student organizations and clubs inclusive of fraternities, sororities, social fellowships, student government, academic/professional honor societies, and religious organizations. Leadership is conducted through social interactions within social environments (Day, 2001). Therefore, having an organizational context can provide insight into the various influences that developing leaders encounter in a particular setting (Muir, 2014). Since Denton University is home to the students who will participate in my study, I considered the research site a strength because students will be in their familiar natural setting.

The Office of Residence Life and Housing offered Denton University's Male Initiative on Leadership and Excellence (MILE) and seeks to enhance the quality of student life and engagement for participants at Denton University. Situated within the

Academic Enrichment Program (AEP), the MILE is viewed as the flagship male leadership development organization on the campus and provides its members with academic support services and social opportunities to create a healthy and holistic campus experience. Peer groups, such as the MILE, promote academic integration and persistence (Swail et al., 2003) since positive peer communities are supportive audiences for emerging skills and new ways of being. Furthermore, peer groups of this kind do provide opportunities for students to earn admiration from peers and faculty (White & Cones, 1999). Through these experiences, the MILE aims to improve the academic success and graduation rates of Denton University's male student population, enhance their perception of their self-efficacy and potential, and to help them develop appropriate leadership development skills that will assist them in their future pursuits (MILE, 2012).

The population for the present study is Black male undergraduates who participate in the MILE at Denton University. For this study, I used purposive sampling techniques, which require "particular settings, persons, or activities that are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). The criteria based sampling for participation in this study require active involvement in the MILE for at least one academic year. Therefore, I solicited participants from among eligible sophomores, juniors, and seniors as well as students who have graduated within the past year. Besides, eligible participants must be identified as MILE mentors. MILE mentors must meet the following criteria: (1) maintaining the minimum grade point average of 2.8; (2) be an upperclassman (sophomore, junior, senior) or previously graduated within one year of their interview date; (3) be in good disciplinary standing

with the university. The responsibilities of a MILE mentor include: (1) introducing first-year participants to university and community resources; (2) supporting and encouraging participants to maintain a good academic standing and participate in institutional activities; (3) conducting team building and leadership development exercise among participants; (4) identifying and implementing specific networking activities for participants.

I have selected this method of sampling intentionally because upperclassmen in the MILE have successfully engaged in all the activities (general body meetings, thought-provoking Thursday sessions, and excursions) for at least one year, while first-year students have not. Since the MILE has existed for 13 years, students who have recently graduated can provide insight into their experiences as participants in the MILE and as MILE mentors. Further, this selection was developed hoping to capture this particular group's experience of the following: (1) their identity as a leader, (2) how they have grown in their identity as a leader, and (3) what has impacted their development of their identity as a leader.

Creswell (1998) suggested that a phenomenology study that has five to 25 participants provides rich data that will offer the best insight into the phenomenon (p. 64). While I would like to get responses for between 12 and 25, I have to keep in context the selection of possible participants this study aims to interview. Since the MILE mentor position has only been in effect for the past four years, it limits the number of students that can be considered for this study. Each year there is an average of eight MILE mentors, with at least four MILE mentors repeating their role for three to four years until graduation. Over the past four years, there has been a total of 22 MILE mentors. Teddlie

and Tashakkori (2009) state that though study participant numbers may vary from as few as six to 10, and Morse (1994) suggest at least six study participants (p. 225), rich data typically includes less than 26 participants (Miller & Salkind, 2002).

To identify eight to 12 study participants, I contacted the administrators of the program to request a list of eligible students who fit the sampling criteria. From that list, I notified students, via their Denton University email accounts, of the opportunity to participate in the study. This formal email (see Appendix A) contained a flyer that advertised the study and how to sign up to participate. Furthermore, the email explained to participants the purpose of the proposed study, the selection criteria, and the process to gain the consent of the participant, according to the University Institutional Review Board. Since I am employed at an HBCU in the Mid-Atlantic region and work with a campus-based leadership initiative, my employment provides an opportunity to work with participants of the MILE program and establish their trust in me. Although this is convenient for relationship building, it can lead to insider bias, which brings me to the matter of mitigating the Hawthorne Effect.

Participants in an experiment tend to adjust their behavior at the point where they realize that they are being studied. This behavior modification is the phenomenon known as the Hawthorne Effect. Realizing that they are adjusting their behavior, the participants react to the social conditions of the data-collection process instead of to those of the experiment of the study. The end-result, then, is a lessening in the internal validity of the experiment (Chiesa & Hobbs, 2008).

The potential for my interviews to be influenced by the Hawthorne Effect is not a major concern even if no neutrality may be involved. There was no doubt in my mind

that my potential interviewees would react differently depending on who the interviewer was and what the interview consisted of. I expected to have their cooperation since their situation will be studied by an insider researcher who is also from an HBCU and a MILE program just like themselves.

Data Collection

I asked the participants to participate in one 60-minute face-to-face interview. I first contacted them by email and followed up with phone calls two weeks before the interview. Based on the interviewees' availability, appointments were scheduled. The individual interviews took place at the MILE lounge on the campus of Denton University. I chose the MILE lounge as the location because participants will be more likely to express themselves in a familiar setting (Eggenberger & Nelms, 2007). The MILE lounge is a haven for all MILE students. It is a place of relaxation and space for communal interaction opened in the evenings and weekends. I held interviews during the morning and afternoon hours before the MILE lounge becomes an open space for all of its members.

I asked each student to sign a consent form (see Appendix B), and I used a brief demographic survey (see Appendix C) to gather basic demographic information before each interview. In the face-to-face interview sessions, which simultaneously permit data collection and authentic participant reflection (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), I used a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix D). To ensure consistency across all interviews, I designed an interview guide of semi-structured interview questions (Patton, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews allow for the interviewer to ask questions and make clarifications. Also, it allows the interviewer to ask probing questions based on the subjects' responses (Berg, 2007). I used the semi-structured interview protocol with the hope that discussions would become conversational, allowing the participants to reflect on the experiences they deemed most significant in their leadership identity development. Standard questions allow a sense of uniformity and continuity in all interviews, but the semi-structured interview technique provides the researcher the opportunity to ask new questions or follow up prompts in response to statements made by the interviewee.

The theoretical framework, Leadership Identity Development (Komives, 2006) informed the interview questions, which I organized around the perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of Black males in a campus-based initiative program. Day (2001) asserted that leadership development is used as an integration strategy by helping people understand how to relate to others, coordinate their efforts, build commitments and develop extended social networks (p. 586). For this reason, leadership identity development serves as the framework for interview participants. The use of follow-up questions were necessary to understand themes and concepts brought up by participants for clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

I audio recorded and stored all interviews in a private Google Drive account and thereafter transcribed them. I recorded each interview by using a digital recorder and a smartphone as a backup. In the private Google Drive account that I created, I stored both recordings and used a professional transcription service. Then, I reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. Also, to ensure the accuracy of the interviews, I sent the full transcript of each interview session to its respective participant for revision confirmation.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the interview data, I used a step-by-step technique designed by Moustakas (1994). However, before analyzing any data, it was important to make sure that all information was organized in the form of files. Morse and Richards (2002) indicated that the amount of data that qualitative researchers have to manage is enormous. Therefore, I organized and labeled each set of data that I collected and detailed its origin. Patton (2002) suggested that data management is the collection, protection, and manipulation of data gathered for the proposed study. For the present study, I stored in a Google Drive folder all personal notes, reflective journal, and all interview recordings and transcriptions. The reason for this choice of storage is that Google Drive is an online storage management system that requires a unique username and password combination for secure access. Additionally, I managed all records about the study in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The first step in the analysis process includes the researcher's describing his personal experiences with the phenomenon under the study (Creswell, 2013). By recording my thoughts and experiences in the reflective journal and personal notes, I was able to acknowledge and set aside any personal experiences or opinions. This allowed readers to see my findings and ability to work through personal doubts and assumptions.

Creswell (2013) states that coding is the heart of qualitative analysis. Using coding, data displays, and computer programs will allow me to organize and classify the data. Classifying is the process of taking qualitative data apart and looking for themes or categories (Creswell, 2013). Coding is sorting all data sets according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study (Stake, 2010). To be successful in coding the amount of

data retrieved from the interviews and reflective journal, I had to read all data thoroughly. Miles and Huberman (1984) suggested that researchers make margin notes on each transcript after the initial reading to record initial thoughts on the data as well as mark potential categories. Thus, using NVivo software and descriptive codes, I encoded these data.

The second step in Moustakas's (1994) process is to develop a list of significant statements. By developing significant statements, I was be able to group them according to certain themes or in meaning units. Next, I "found statements (in interviews or other data sources) about how individuals are experiencing the topic, listed these significant statements (horizontalization of the data) and treated each statement as having equal worth, and worked to develop a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). Following the creation of themes, I developed sub-themes by the descriptions of "what" the participants in the study experienced and "how" the experience happened (Creswell, 2013, p. 194).

Finally, I composed a complete narrative of textural and structural descriptions; I needed both of these types of descriptions in order to move the researcher into the next stage of the research process. Creswell (2013) described this step as the essence of the experience and noted that the step itself represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study. Thus, I included this essence in a narrative passage with a thick description, which is typically a long paragraph that tells the readers "what" the participants experienced with the phenomenon and "how" they experienced it (Creswell, 2013, pg. 194).

Positionality Statement

As a young man in high school, while working as a Peer Academic Coach at a junior high after school program, I began to develop an interest in the identity development and educational experiences of African American male students. It was during that time that I began to pay attention to the development of the African American middle school male students as they were learning how to become responsible and take ownership of their academics and forming their individual and group identities. This interest in the development of African American male students deepened during my collegiate experience during my social work internships in Baltimore City Public Schools. During classroom observations, group therapy sessions, and one-on-one supervision meetings, I remembered thinking about how students made decisions and what issues were pushing them to develop positively or negatively and, more important, how those decisions impacted their educational journey.

As a result of this interest, I accepted a position as the Program Coordinator for the MILE at my alma mater directly after completing my master's degree. In that position, I was responsible for event planning and monitoring the academic progress of African American male undergraduate students who participated in the program. This opportunity to interact with students at the collegiate level intrigued me. I had never really thought about my college experience and how much the involvement (in- and out-of-the-classroom-activities) enhanced my educational journey and leadership development. After much inquiry and observation during that first academic year working at the University, I decided to pursue a career in Higher Education Administration. Student development and engagement were important to me, and I

looked for any way to gain as much experience, working with that population. This desire led me to become a Resident Director for a traditional freshman male residence hall at the University. Throughout my day-to-day work activities, I could see students' transformation throughout their time at the university. A lot of what I observed, working evenings and weekends as a Resident Director, related to students' involvement in various activities, both in and out of the classroom. Serving as an advisor to several student organizations, the student government association, and fraternity groups, I witnessed what I perceived as the growth and development of students during their time at the university.

During this work experience, I was inundated with requests from supervisors and stakeholders at the university to provide outcomes and reports on the students involved in the various campus-based initiative. One thing I noticed was that the focus on the quantitative outcomes of students was greater than that on their qualitative outcomes. Since this is an area of interest for me, I wanted to explore further the various areas of identity development for undergraduate African American male students at an HBCU. I was specifically interested in exploring the leadership identity development of the students who participate in campus-based leadership initiatives because these students tend to become the leaders on campus in a variety of campus-based organizations. From my readings of current literature on the identity development of African American male students, I have discovered that researchers have paid little attention to student experiences at HBCU outside of their participation in Black Greek-Letter Organizations and issues of retention and persistence. As a student affairs professional and scholar working with undergraduate African American males at an HBCU, I believe my

responsibility is to identify the struggles and efforts toward students' leadership identity development and convey them in a manner that sheds light on the phenomenon.

As a researcher, my role as an "insider" allowed me to build trust in the students and established a rapport as an interviewer. However, I had to remember that the voices of the participants are what is critical to the study. "Insider researchers" are those who choose to study a group to which they belong, and outsider researchers do not belong to the group under study (Breen, 2007, p. 164). As an administrator of a campus-based leadership development program, I am intrigued by the notion that my work could have some impact on the leadership identity development of its participants. Gunasekaia (2007) remarked that the informed perspective of the researcher may influence both observations and interpretations. Kvale (1996) asserted that insider research is an approach that enhances understanding through rational discourse and reciprocal critique among those identifying and interpreting a phenomenon. Since I have an informed perspective, it was substantial for me to keep a reflective journal.

Reflective Journal

By recording my thoughts and experiences in my reflective journal and personal notes, I became more aware of any personal assumptions and biases. This ensured that the focus remained directly on the participants of the study. This will also allow readers to see my findings and process of working through my doubts and assumptions. As an administrator of the MILE, I needed to acknowledge my role as the researcher. Patton (2002) states that qualitative researchers learn from participants' lives but maintain a stance of empathic neutrality to collect data and provide descriptive representations (p. 49). To achieve empathic neutrality, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the

study. Ortlipp (2008) described the purpose of a reflective journal in qualitative research as "a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity, whereby researchers can use their journals to examine the personal assumptions and goals and clarify individual belief systems and subjectivities" (p. 695). This allowed me to see my experience throughout the research process and separate my thoughts from the voices of the participants.

Validity, Reliability, Credibility, and Trustworthiness

In any form of qualitative inquiry, it is important to explore how the position of the researcher influences data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Reason (1994) noted, "critical subjectivity involves self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing" (p. 327). As the researcher, I had to acknowledge my personal experience as a Black male who matriculated at an HBCU and who served as a coordinator for a flagship male leadership program. Baca Zinn (1979) reported that members of minority groups, to some extent, have an insider advantage of soliciting more detailed candid responses from participants. Because of my personal experience, I was motivated to conduct the study and add to the body of knowledge of this population within higher education. As a researcher engaging in this study uncovering the experiences of Black undergraduate men, I believed the participants of the study had an increased level of trust (in me as the interviewer) and comfort while sharing their everyday experiences.

For this reason, I took several steps to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of this study. Lincoln and Guba (1986) developed four measures whereby the researcher will be able to evaluate methodological rigor and accuracy in this qualitative research study. These are creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Denzin

and Lincoln (2000) used these four measures to “replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity” used to ensure quality in quantitative studies (p. 21).

I applied the measure of credibility through member checks, peer reviewers, and referential adequacy (e.g., the storage of audio tapes from the interviews, full transcripts). To further ensure credibility, Creswell (2013) suggested that peer review entails the use of professional or research colleagues to read and comment on findings “so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher” (p. 196). Therefore, I gained feedback from two peer reviewers who are experienced qualitative researchers and are familiar with the engagement of students participating in campus-based initiatives. I gave the selected reviewers the full transcript of the interviews although the individual textural and structural descriptions are written for the study participants. Also, the reviewers and I had discussions around the possible meanings made of the participants’ experiences. The reviewers also acted as auditors of the research process to ensure validity.

Transferability will begin with, and be guaranteed by, the preceding description of the data collection site. The findings from the study may transfer to other HBCUs that are similar in size, culture, and other demographics that have similar campus-based initiative programs.

Finally, I ensured that there is dependability and confirmability through audits conducted by members of the reviewing team. By using the member checking of reports, I was able to confirm that what I was interpreting is factual and not assumed. Stake (2010) described member checking as presenting a recording or draft copy of observation

or interview to the persons providing the information and asking for correction and comment. Although member checking is a slow process, it is imperative to the successful completion of the data analysis process.

Limitations/Delimitations

Although there are several efforts to ensure credibility, there are two limitations to this study. The first limitation of the study is that purposive sampling is being used to identify only a certain population within the MILE at a single institution. This selection excludes MILE participants that are in their freshman year of matriculation at the university or upperclassmen who are in their first year participating in the program because they have not been immersed in the program for at least one year. Although the administrators of the program generated a list of qualified participants who meet the selection criteria, selection bias prohibits certain students from being nominated to participate in the study. Furthermore, the identified participants may consist of students with whom the administrators are familiar and have closely worked. Finally, with respect to delimitations of this study, unlike previous studies that are overarching and encompass multiple ethnic/racial backgrounds about leadership identity development, this study is specific, focusing on Black undergraduate males who participate in campus-based leadership initiatives at HBCUs.

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the qualitative inquiry for research. More specifically, I presented the phenomenology approach and adopted it for the proposed study on the leadership experiences of Black males in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. I also detailed and presented, with the research questions that will guide the

study, a plan of action for site and sample selection. Additionally, I outlined methods for data collection and provided a detailed account of the procedure for the data analysis and verification of findings. The chapter concludes with the steps to be taken to promote the integrity of the findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the narratives of twelve Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives at a HBCU. First, I will present the demographic information for the participants who self-identify as Black males and who participated in the study. The participants include a diverse representation of academic majors, university classification, and different levels of campus leadership involvement. Second, I will present their narratives.

Summary of Participants

The participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling which required them to be actively involved in the MILE for at least one academic year and identify as a MILE mentor. The study sought to identify eight to 12 participants who met the purposive sampling criteria. Phenomenological studies suggest that sample sizes range from six (Morse, 1994) to 10 (Creswell, 1998). Morse suggested that studies include at least six study participants (p. 225) and rich data typically includes fewer than 26 participants (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Over the past four years, there has been a total of 22 MILE mentors, and I was successful in interviewing more than half of the eligible participants for the study.

Overall, I contacted 12 participants, via their Denton University email accounts, to invite them to participate in the study. All participants in their interviews provided demographic information inclusive of their university classification, academic major, and self-identification of their ethnic and racial identity. To protect each participant's identity, I assigned each of them a pseudonym. Table 1 presents demographic

information about each participant and shows the diversity within university classification, academic major, and their ethnic and racial identity. For university classification, the 12 participants were identified as three sophomores, three juniors, two seniors, four alumni. The participants were diverse in their academic majors with representations from six of the nine university colleges and schools for their academic majors. Each of the following majors was represented by two participants in the study: Business-Accounting, Construction Management, Elementary Education, Political Science. The remaining majors each were represented by one participant: Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Information Systems, and Service and Supply Chain Management. Ten of the twelve participants identified as Black / African American, and two participants identified as Black / Bi- or Multiracial.

Table 1. Summary of the Participants' Self-Reported Demographics

Name	**Classification**	**Major**	**Race/Ethnicity**
Reggie	Sophomore	Computer Science	Black / African American
Craig	Alumnus	Construction Management	Black / African American
David	Alumnus	Construction Management	Black / African American
Adrian	Sophomore	Elementary Education	Black / African American
Walter	Alumnus	Information Systems	Black / African American
Devin	Senior	Business	Black / African American
Lance	Senior	Political Science	Black / African American

Quinton	Sophomore	Service & Supply Chain Management	Black / African American
Chris	Junior	Elementary Education	Black / African American
Everett	Junior	Political Science	Black / Bi-Racial
Clarvonte	Junior	Engineering	Black / African American
Domanick	Alumnus	Accounting	Black / Multi-Racial

The Participants' Narratives

The participants' narratives provide the background and contextual information about each participant in the study. Their stories enable a better understanding of how each participant formed his leadership identity development. To explore the experiences of each participant, I discuss each of the narratives in four categories: (a) early pre-collegiate experiences, (b) collegiate experiences, (c) changing notions of leadership and roles, and (d) future forecasting. The narratives are as follows:

Reggie

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Reggie is a sophomore, computer science major, who identifies as Black/African American. A native of Charles County, Maryland, he believes that he always had the self-initiative to become a leader but held himself back because of his speech impediment. He shared that his mother never forced leadership on him. Instead, she encouraged him to try leadership activities and for him not to allow his speech impediment to stop his pursuit of leadership roles in the classroom or among his peers. When Reggie decided during his senior year of high school that he was going to attend Denton University, his vice principal informed him

about the Denton University MILE. She encouraged him to participate in the initiative when he arrived on campus as her son was a member of the MILE when he attended Denton University.

Collegiate Experiences. While attending Denton University, Reggie got involved in the MILE through his interactions with his resident assistants and resident director in O'Connell Hall. He recalled that his resident director informed him of the MILE retreat and encouraged him to join the initiative. Reggie described how his participation in the MILE led him to overcome his fear of heights and to try a new experience. While at the MILE retreat, he engaged in a physical challenge sharing, "It made me face my fear of heights . . . but my friend asked me to do it with him . . . that showed me that you couldn't do anything in life by yourself . . . you're always gonna need a person by your side."

Reggie believes he pursued leadership opportunities at Denton University because it made his mother and older brother very happy. His older brother did not have the opportunity to attend college, so he takes pride in watching Reggie excel in different organizations. Currently, Reggie serves in leadership roles as a MILE mentor and as the Mister Denton University MILE. He reported hosting a "Thought Provoking Thursday" program for the Denton University MILE about Title IX consent. Reggie explained:

> Mr. Chad [resident director] actually asked me to host it, but I wasn't sure if I wanted to mainly because of my stutter, and I just called my mom saying, "I want to host this, but I don't know," and what she said was, "Everyone already knows that you have a stutter because you've had a conversation with every person in the

MILE. They all know you. So, there's no reason as to why it should hold you back."

Reggie expressed that leadership success in the MILE motivates him to serve in other leadership roles throughout the campus. He currently serves as a resident assistant for a male residence hall on the campus. He divulged, "I don't let anything hold me back . . . if I don't achieve on the first time . . . when I try to go and achieve it next time, I have to think about what I didn't do so I can do it."

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Reggie defined his understanding of leadership prior to being a part of the MILE as being a person that everyone can admire. He stated leadership is "being a person that other people can look up to and say, 'I want to be like them' doing your everyday tasks, not because you're supposed to, but because it's a part of you." As a campus leader, Reggie learned that his actions and behavior were constantly observed by others. He stated that there are "certain things that I knew I could not do anymore. I can't do everything just out and about." He believes that "there is a time and a place for everything" and that accountability is essential when becoming a leader. He commented that he " . . . was going to be held to a certain standard."

Reggie's advice to other leaders centered around facing fears and taking advantage of opportunities afforded to them as leaders. He passionately stated:

Don't try and settle for [just] anything. So, don't just say, "Oh I'm in the MILE; that's the only thing I'm gonna do for this school year". You never know what God has planned for you, but feel like He has your entire life already planned. And so, He's gonna put everything in life whenever you are ready for it . . . so,

> when it comes, don't try and avoid it and say, "Whoa, I don't know if I want to do it." If it was something that's on your mind, just do it, because He wouldn't put it in your mind if you couldn't do it.

Future Forecasting. Reggie discussed his future in terms of educational and professional goals. After college, he plans to attend law school and has dreams of establishing his own law firm. He predicted, "In two years, I'll be a rising senior, and I see myself having already taken the LSAT and having the score that I need to be accepted into the law school I want to attend." He mentioned his desire to be a person who gives back to the African American community and noted, "I don't want to give back for fame or to get praise from other people . . . I give back a lot now. So, when I'm 29, I will be able to make service to my community a norm for my life."

Craig

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Craig, who identifies as Black/African American, is a recent alumnus of Denton University. Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he shared that being a first-generation college student led him to an awareness of what it means to become a leader. His interest in this direction was piqued. Craig emphasized that he was always pushed by his family and his friends to be a leader and that motivated him to go to college and "make something of himself." Another motivation for becoming a leader was that he noticed that his leadership roles at school were impacting his little brother. He commented as follows:

> He's nine years old now. One of the things about me that he's not experiencing is growing up; I did not have a father figure that was always there. But . . . as . . . I'm able to do that for my brother . . . he's on the right track in a private school . .

> . , so just keeping my foot on the gas, pedal to the metal to allow him to have things I wasn't able to have [while I was] growing up.

Craig was also deeply involved in sports in high school, which helped him understand leadership roles. He noted:

> When the team captain graduated, I knew that I needed to step up. So, it made me really take on the big brother/leadership role . . . in our team and our high school, just around getting some of the players to do homework or to do things that they needed to do so they could play . . . I was always in charge of the team. So, I became a captain there.

Collegiate Experiences. During his undergraduate years at Denton University, he majored in construction management and was an honors student. He recalled being a freshman and not being involved in any activities. Craig revealed that during his first semester of college, he was often homesick and spent most of his time in his room, which resulted in his not being involved on campus. It was not until his interaction with his resident director that he got involved with the MILE. Craig pointed out:

> My freshman year, my roommate and I, always stayed in our room. Literally. I went to practice. I came back. He [roommate] was already in the room . . . We would play the game, order food, do homework, go to sleep and do the same thing over and over, until one day my resident director basically asked, "Why you always stay in your room? Stop past the desk sometime; stop past my office; come talk to me." And, I did just that. My roommate did the same thing. Being able to have that person to push you to get out of your comfort zone to make you

feel uncomfortable; that was everything I needed right there, so that's what forced me, not even forced me, but that's what encouraged me to join the MILE.

Craig identified that his interest in becoming a leader piqued in college owing to his having observed the actions of his resident assistant. Craig believes that seeing his resident assistant in leadership roles on campus and hearing his life story allowed him to believe he could accomplish the same thing. Craig added that his resident assistant was from Chicago and observed that his experience coming from there is similar to his experience coming from Philadelphia.

Craig admitted that since he got involved in the MILE during his second semester of his freshman year when he went home for summer break, he couldn't wait to return to campus the next semester. As an undergraduate, he served in several leadership capacities including being a MILE mentor and serving as a former Mister Denton University MILE. Craig clarified, "If you join the MILE, your matriculation at Denton University will be completely seamless . . . join the MILE as soon as possible. That will make your time even more viable, and it will change everything about your experience at Denton University." Craig's pivotal moment in becoming a leader was his participation in the MILE Alternative Spring Break Trip. "It was eye-opening for me! . . . to be able to go to Alabama where Martin Luther King marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and see the stories they had to go through for me meant a lot!" Craig said.

He claimed that the MILE allowed him to grow and grasp leadership opportunities that placed him in a positive light on campus. Besides, he held roles as the head ambassador for the Office of Admissions Student Ambassador Program, secretary for his fraternity Alpha Nu Omega, Inc., and a desk attendant and resident assistant in a

male residence hall. Craig attributed his becoming a desk attendant and resident assistant to his involvement in the MILE. Describing his pushing through and persevering as it related to being a leader at an HBCU, he asserted:

> Being a student leader on the HBCU campus, especially being a Black male, many people, I don't want to say, underestimate you but may not see it in you. And you have to be your own motivation. You may have those one or two people or even a handful of people that see it in you. But then, you have a whole bunch of people that don't see it in you. So that number outweighs the number [of] people who do see it in you. But as tough and hard as it gets, you gotta push through. It's always gonna be a better day, and one thing I always pride myself on is no matter how bad of a day I'm having, someone is always having a worse day than you. So, to know that someone else had a worse day than you, whether it was financially, academically, socially, psychologically, whatever it can be, keep pushing. Keep pushing through to become that leader. Find what you do best. Find your niche. Find your role, and master it. And once you master that, then you move onto the next. If you focus on one thing at a time, you shall see it through.

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles.

Before joining the MILE, Craig described a leader as someone whom he identified as "cool." Craig was of the opinion that a leader was someone who had lots of material things. After his involvement in the MILE, Craig realized that leadership was not about the "cool" things people had. Instead, he viewed leaders as those who make a change that impacts others and have integrity. Craig strongly argues leaders should be

the same way consistently even when no one is watching them. Craig's leadership takeaway involved overcoming challenges and pushing himself to try something he had never done before. He explained:

> I never wanted to get on a boat. I told myself I would never get on any boat . . . . But, my whole entire time in the MILE we went on a fishing trip, and I would never go because we were fishing in the middle of the ocean. During my senior year in the MILE, everyone was like this is the last chance you might as well go and they all encouraged me, and everything was fine. I would say having my brothers on the boat with me throughout the entire experience made things a lot smoother and seamless for me. I wasn't thinking about being in the middle of the ocean. But they also did try to play a little prank on me, like we were gonna drown, so it was fun to see that they'd walk me through it, once they felt I was comfortable with being in the middle of the ocean, so that's something I would say, challenge yourself and break outside your comfort zone.

Future Forecasting. Craig now resides in New Jersey and is pursuing a graduate degree in engineering management. Additionally, he now serves as a graduate assistant for the residential room assignments coordinator. Craig credits his involvement in the MILE and strongly argues that it led him to get into his current graduate school program and job. In the next two years, Craig will have completed his master's degree and has ambitions of becoming an entrepreneur having multiple businesses and investing in real estate.

Craig also expressed the desire to become a family man and get married in his late twenties. He discussed plans to build generational wealth for his family and help his

mother to move out of her current environment and become financially independent. Further, he aspires to being a person to whom people can go for help without his expecting anything in return. Craig concluded, "When I become that man, I wanna share my story, shed light for others and let them know I went through obstacles, but I made it through [them]"

David

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. David, a recent alumnus of Denton University, identifies as Black / African American. Like Craig, he is a first-generation college student and is also originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. David shared how being the only child in his home led him to become interested in being a leader. In David's words, "I am an only child. So, a lot of stuff I had to do on my own. My mom always worked. So, it was up to me to figure out what I was going to eat or do." In his view, being self-sufficient was an extremely important quality of a leader. He related his self-sufficiency to the leadership style that he observed in his mother at her job and with her family. He recalled that observing his mother in leadership with her siblings influenced him to want to be a leader too. "They [her siblings] always come to her [my mom] for different things; she is also a supervisor in her job. I see the leadership traits in her, which push me to become a leader."

Collegiate Experiences. During his undergraduate years, he majored in construction management. When David first arrived at Denton University, he utterly "hated school and contemplated dropping out." David mentioned that he had a routine of nothing more than basically going to class and then going back to his room with his roommate and not engaging in any activities on campus. He emphasized that joining the

MILE helped him to graduate and pushed him to become a better person throughout his matriculation. David commented, "When I first got there [to the MILE events], I didn't know anybody, but it [MILE] forces you to network and introduced yourself, talk to others and learn about their different experience . . . you get to meet and mingle with different people."

David pointed out that his pivotal moment in becoming a leader was his participation in the MILE Alternative Spring Break Trip. He reported:

> Our first stop was the Lorraine Motel where Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated. That experience was one that I probably will never forget. I learned so much during that trip. Yes, it was fun. But most importantly it was an educational trip. We learned so much. Every night we had to write a journal; some of us were upset about writing a journal. But it wasn't until we came back and was like, "Those journals are what helped us understand what we went through that day." Just the connections, the bonds, the laughter, the moments and the memories of the whole trip will always be something I will always remember. Being tight in the van, packed together. Different roommates every night was another thing that I think the coordinators thought about while planning the trip out, was us getting to know each other differently. It was never a time where I could say I didn't know anybody that went on the trip. It was somebody that I stayed with every night when we went to different hotels. Learning about the coordinators, it was a great experience. I think that was one of the critical experiences for me.

As an undergraduate, David served in several leadership capacities, including being a MILE mentor and serving as a former Mister Denton University MILE. He also held roles as the senior class senator for the Student Government Association, president for his fraternity Alpha Nu Omega, Inc., and a resident assistant in a male residence hall. David described pushing through and persevering as that related to being a leader at an HBCU. He disclosed:

> Being a student leader is truly hard. There's a lot about service and serving the campus when sometimes you don't even want to. Sometimes you wanna go to class or go to sleep, but you gotta go to this meeting or go to this event. I salute everybody who is a student leader today or whoever was a student leader because I know that it was truly hard for me, and it's nothing that I regret doing. It's something that has indeed pushed me to the man I'm becoming, and it's something that I would, when I have kids, push them to be . . . student leaders at [Denton University].

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Prior to joining the MILE, David realized that his most understanding challenge of leadership was serving in a position of authority. He remarked, "Leadership was leading a group of people. Before joining the MILE, I thought I was a leader because I was an assistant coach for a youth baseball team. I thought me leading them to the games made me a leader." David held the view that through his participation in the MILE, he learned about leadership at the events and through his mentorship with the MILE coordinators / resident directors.

David recalled the Denton University MILE affirmation as his biggest leadership takeaway proclaiming:

> The part of the affirmation that I will always live by is that "I aspire to greatness. For there are no limits to what I can become." That is something that I would teach my kids, that I would teach my staff. I think everybody should live by . . . when everybody doubts you, when you got nobody helping you or in your corner, that there are no limits to what you [can] become if you put your mind to it.

Future Forecasting. David now serves as a resident director at his graduate school. He credited his involvement in the MILE for becoming a resident assistant. In his view:

> Because of the MILE, I became an RA, and because of me being an RA, I became a resident director . . . where I lead a co-ed freshman residence hall, which holds about 375 students. This year was my first year being a resident director, and it was successful. I had a staff of 12, a lot of resident assistants and one assistant resident director, and yes, we had hardships. Yes, we had problems, but we got through [them] together, and I with the help of others had the best staff on campus, which was recognized by our department. And because of the staff, we were able to cultivate a wonderful community here. So, I would say this is one of the most significant leadership experiences for me being a resident director here for the first time.

Within the next two years, David will have completed his master's degree in engineering management and become a project manager. When asked where he saw himself in the next ten years, David said he wanted to be a family man and an executive within a construction firm. At that time, he wants to be able to help other young Black men to attend college. He firmly believed, "College may not be for everyone, but

sometimes finances stop us from attending. So, I want to be able to help in any way. Even if it's just a book scholarship." He verified his claim by revealing that sponsorship from a donor helped him be able to graduate from Denton University. For this reason, he desires to do the same for another person who wishes to attend college.

Adrian

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Adrian is a sophomore, elementary education major who identifies as Black / African American. He is a native of Baltimore, Maryland. During his elementary through high school years, he did not consider himself a leader because he had never assumed any leadership roles, such as class president or team captain. He was not involved in many extracurricular activities and only participated in sports he was extremely interested in throughout high school. He took school very seriously, and his grades were his only focus. He asserted that he just wanted "to be a regular student, do my part and go to class." As a youth, he did not observe many Black men in leadership roles because he "never saw many men further their education beyond high school, if they completed high school." Further, he did not see the importance of leadership because those whom he observed in leadership only focused on themselves and on what the benefits of becoming a leader could do for them as individuals.

Collegiate Experiences. Adrian joined the MILE because of his resident director who served as a MILE coordinator and his resident assistant who was a MILE mentor. Adrian shared, " [My resident director] was telling me . . . I should go to the [MILE] meeting . . . I thought that it would be good for me to get involved. So, I went with one of my friends, and since then, I've loved being part of the MILE." During his

involvement with the MILE, Adrian described his development of leadership skills during the MILE retreat. He learned that the MILE retreat experience "forced you to be a leader . . . you have to be accountable, not for just your actions, but everybody around you. You can't lead a group to a place and then disappear on them . . . you gotta be able to push through; they're relying on you". Adrian highlighted his most outstanding pivotal moment in becoming a leader in the MILE as facing his fears and establishing trust with others while on a physical challenge at the MILE retreat:

> We were on the retreat, and we had to climb a tree. And I said because I have a deep fear of heights . . . . at first, I wasn't gonna do it at all, but with the support of my MILE brothers, and my friend, Alex, was also part of the MILE. He just said, "At least try." And I made it further than I thought I would have, and now, Alex is one of my closest friends on campus.

Adrian maintained that his membership in the MILE made him want to "start taking more initiative and stop sitting back." He asserted that the MILE is beneficial and represents a structure that should be in place for all young Black men who come to college. He also believed the MILE provides members with a great deal of fun activities, but everything has a purpose and teaches its participants about commitment and dedication. Adrian became president of the Residence Hall Council in his residential community and became a peer mentor for the summer orientation program. Currently, he holds the leadership roles of being a MILE mentor and serves as the Mister for his class within the Royal Court of the Student Government Association. Adrian believed that none of his leadership success in his sophomore year of college would have been possible

if he had not joined the MILE. He asserted, "I wouldn't have built the connections for becoming an RA or peer mentor. I would like to thank the MILE for that."

Adrian pointed out that being a leader at an HBCU can cause an internal conflict for students. He emphasized that "you can feel like you are in a box, and you can't do the same things you used to because you know you will be heavily scrutinized for things a regular student could get away with." Further, he stated, "society fails to realize that just because you hold a title position, you are still a person." He believed he has pushed the person he truly is to the background because "sometimes you have to be a person they put on a pedestal and be displayed as something else."

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Before joining the MILE, Adrian viewed leaders as those in a position of authority, such as principals of a school or a president of a university. While in the MILE, Adrian claimed he learned that "leaders build genuine connections with their followers and it's easier to trust somebody when they help you out." Adrian commented that as he learned more about leadership, he realized, "a leader didn't have to hold a major position. Instead, a leader was someone who made way for someone else." Further, as he learned about leadership, there was an affirmation of his character. Adrian reported, "When being a leader, you have to remove your personal from your business because if you make personal decisions while leading a group of people, you don't have the right intentions." Also, he stated, "You have to make a clear distinction between your leadership life and then your other life."

Adrian communicated his advice to others in leadership by encouraging them to break out of their shell. He expressed, "I know it might be scary, but just take a leap of faith and break out your shell. Just jump right in because the only thing stopping you is

you." Adrian claimed a lesson he learned, "is not to hold back your ideas and limit yourself to a box."

Future Forecasting. As a sophomore, Adrian discussed his immediate future as being a senior at Denton University. He expressed interest in top leadership positions on the campus including student regent and Mister Denton University. He believed that both positions can influence significant change in the university community. Adrian asserted, "I wouldn't be interested or be thinking about future leadership opportunities if it wasn't for the MILE."

For professional goals, Adrian envisioned himself as an administrator in a school system. He claimed that in ten years he desires to become a more patient and self-confident leader. Adrian mentioned he is tough on himself that he does not realize his own accomplishments. He authentically stated, "I'm working on being a vocal leader . . . improving my public speaking. The person I want to be in ten years will be more creative, and he's going to be an innovator."

Walter

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Walter is a recent alumnus of Denton University who identifies as Black / African American. During his undergraduate years, he majored in Information Systems. He is originally from Prince George's County, Maryland. Recalling how his father influenced him to become a leader, he commented, "He told me, as a Black man in America, I must always be ten steps ahead. It's called Black taxes . . . and that's just part of us being better than the competition, and to set me apart as a leader." Walter considers his father his role model in life. Also, he mentioned that his mother always pushed him to "go harder" and "be a leader." Accordingly, Walter

shared that the only extracurricular activity he was involved in during high school was the ROTC. Although the ROTC did expose him to some aspects of leadership, he admitted to disliking the program.

Collegiate Experiences. Walter got involved with the MILE through a friend who told him about the meeting one day. So, he decided to attend one meeting. Walter admitted he was "intrigued and decided to get involved." During his freshman year, he was not looking to join any organizations and just wanted to go to class and get good grades. However, he decided to take a "leap of faith and go to the MILE retreat." Walter explained,

> I missed a party that weekend to go to the [MILE] retreat, and when I was at the retreat, I was like, "CJ, I can't believe you dragged me into this. I'm missing a party that I wanted to go to." And he was like, "You're a grown man. I didn't make you do this. You did this on your own." When I think about it . . . I made the right decision and would make that decision over again if I had to.

While in undergrad, Walter served as MILE mentor and a committee planning member for the MILE. Additionally, he holds leadership roles in his church youth group and young adult ministry. He believes his pivotal moment in becoming a leader was serving as the Social and Cultural chair for the MILE. He noticed that, as his peers saw him on campus, they looked to him for advice and information about the MILE program. Also, in this role, he was able to plan and lead programs for the MILE but also direct younger MILE members on what classes to take, teachers to choose, and how to get involved in activities on campus.

Walter views his leadership in the MILE as different from that of other student organizations on campus because the sole focus of the MILE is outreach in the Denton University community and the surrounding city. He claimed that as a student leader at an HBCU, you have to "be yourself and remain true to yourself." But at the same time, he pointed out that "it is hard to remain true to yourself because someone will always want you to do something another way or the way they want it done."

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles.

Prior to Walter's involvement in the MILE, he defined leadership as being in a position to help someone else. Walter believed a leader was "somebody that you knew you could count on, and you could come to for advice or anything. He not only helps himself but he helps others." He continued stating that before he joined the MILE, he did not have a good concept of leadership. He added he considered a leader to be, "somebody that stepped up to the plate and made sure everything was taken care of. If it wasn't, they found a solution to it."

After his participation in the MILE, he saw a leader as the "Next man up; it's like they do in sports. It's up to the next man. If the star player goes down or gets traded, the next man must step up and be a leader for the team." He continued:

> As the seniors graduate and leave, the underclassmen that continued to matriculate became upperclassman and leaders who stand up for the MILE. I want to say during my junior year we had leaders like Domanick, Walter, and Reggie . . . When they left, it was like okay, now it's time to pick up where they left off. As they left, we went into their positions, and when new people joined

the MILE, it was our job to get them up to speed and let them know what was going on with the MILE.

Walter asserted that his becoming a leader has meant a great deal to not only him but to his peers. He added, "I'm very proud of who I'm becoming. A lot of my friends come to me and tell me how proud they are of me and how I inspire them to do better. It helps me and makes me wanna do better." Walter's advice to others in leadership is simply, "Don't be scared to break out of your shell. Don't be that person that bottles everything up." He claims that one should want to leave a lifelong impact and not miss opportunities to connect with and lead others because he did not take advantage of the time he had in the MILE. Further, he held the view that a leader should always strive for excellence and take the initiative, not waiting for anyone to tell you to do something about a situation you see that you can impact positively.

Future Forecasting. Walter is currently pursuing a graduate degree in Business Administration and plans to graduate within the next two years. He has ambitions of purchasing a home and moving up through the company ranks at his current job or finding career advancement elsewhere in his field. When asked where he envisioned himself in ten years, Walter responded that he desires to be married with children. He commented, "There are certain things I do now I won't be doing anymore. I'll just let it go, and I want to be a good husband, a better man, friend, brother, leader, . . . on God's green earth."

Devin

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Devin, a senior at Denton University who identifies as Black / African American, is also a first-generation college student. Devin is

majoring in business administration and is a native of Prince George's County, Maryland. He attended a predominately white high school and became the team captain of the swim team during his senior year. He believes this was one of his pivotal leadership experiences. Devin observed:

> It showed me that going to a predominately white school, in a white neighborhood, and since swimming is considered a white sport, when people saw me as a young African American male, captain of the swim team, it made more African American people want to join the swim team and step out of the comfort zone, like, oh I'm not going to get picked on for doing this or that. Because he did it so can I.

Devin believes that leadership was instilled in him by his mother and other prominent figures in his life at a young age. He claimed that his desire to become a leader was shaped by seeing his mom "work hard and bust her butt" to make sure he had everything he needed to be successful in life. Also, Devin shared, "My Mom, Grandmother, and teachers always told me in elementary and high school I was a class clown. They always told me you could do more with yourself if you focused and just became a leader. So I transitioned into that in college."

Collegiate Experiences. Devin transferred to Denton University in his sophomore year from a local community college. During college, he joined the MILE his first year at Denton University owing to his interaction with his resident assistants. Devin recalled:

> Living in O'Connell Hall, I was around the RAs, and I liked how it was like a brotherhood. It was like one big family, and I wanted to be more a part of that

> family . . . The RAs took me under their umbrella and, because I was a transfer student, I was like, I want to be an RA and all of those male RA's that were in O'Connell, Amir, Cornelius, Darius, all them were members of the MILE, and I just liked how they carried themselves.

Devin expressed his participation in the MILE community service events as an influence on his identity as a leader. Devin justified his claim by sharing, "We went to mentor kids in neighborhoods that needed help . . . they're like, oh, sheesh, because they're used to drug dealers, the gang bangers. And then them seeing a positive role model like, oh, there's another side."

Devin has served in several leadership capacities including being a MILE mentor and a Resident Assistant for an upperclassmen co-ed nontraditional residence hall. Devin recalled, "Becoming a [Denton University] MILE mentor was a big stepping stone because now I'm that big brother figure people look up to, and it feels good." Devin expressed that growing up without a father or a male mentor figure pushed him to want to become a MILE mentor. He takes the view that positive male presence is essential to the development of a young Black man.

In addition to his position with the MILE program, he held roles as Mister National Society of Leadership and Success and two-time promotions executive for the Campus Activities Board. Devin believed that his becoming a leader has impacted others' lives because he was a living testimony. Devin noted:

> I wasn't even supposed to be at [Denton University]. I wasn't supposed to finish college. So, I feel like living testimony and me sharing my story and all the leadership skills I learned with other people could help someone who is in the

> same shoes I was once [in], and they can look at me and be like, "he did it! So can I!"

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Before joining the MILE, Devin held the view that being a leader was doing the right thing or doing what a person was supposed to do so others would follow their actions. He described leadership as "A younger person looking up to you saying, 'I want to be like them.' Being a good role model and somebody you can always go to for that helping hand when you don't know how to do it yourself." As a member of the MILE, Devin maintained that his understanding of leadership broadened. He claims that the MILE showed him that anyone could be a leader and that there are multiple ways to stand out. He further explained:

> As an RA, I'm not just a leader because I have students on a floor that look up to me. What makes me a leader is that when people come to the desk or up to me for assistance, whether they need counseling or a tutor . . . . it's the fact that I will help them and be a positive leader or role model. I have an open-door policy where my residents could come knock on my door any time of day or night.

Devin's advice to other leaders is "Don't be afraid to ask for help. By asking for help, you'll open up doors down the line that can help you more than you could imagine." He commented that when he was younger, he never asked for helped and "always ended up with the short end of the stick." He conceded that asking for help made it possible for him to be where he is today in life.

Future Forecasting. After graduation from Denton University, Devin envisioned himself as a leader in his workplace. He described becoming a leader that stays overtime

and is punctual in completing tasks and assignments. He concluded, "I want to take on tasks that other people don't want to do. I want to explore new areas for growth and become the best at what I do." In ten years, Devin desires to be financially independent and have the ability to start a foundation or scholarships for students who need extra funding to complete their education at Denton University and his former high school. He aspires to becoming the Alumnus that goes back to share his story with others and to check on the University and people who helped him be successful.

Lance

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Lance is a senior at Denton University who identifies as Black / African American and is a first-generation college student. He disclosed that he first became interested in becoming a leader in high school because "I played football and one of the biggest things was for us to win, and we needed a great leader." Also, he commented on how his grandfather instilled leadership in him while growing up:

> My granddad always told me, "Always be a leader and not a follower" because I have younger siblings . . . .My grandfather always put that pressure on my shoulders like somebody is always watching. So, you need just to go ahead and be the man of the house, not only for him but [also] for my younger sisters. He always coached me up and gave me core values to live by, including tenacity, integrity, commitment, and knowledge.

Collegiate Experiences. During college, Lance majored in political science and is a native of Chicago, Illinois, who transferred to Denton University in his sophomore year from an Illinois community college. Describing the whole matter of having to adjust

to a new location for college, Lance disclosed, “Coming from home [Chicago] to here [Denton University] was a big transition for me because I don’t have family on the East Coast . . . just for me to come and thrive . . . I didn’t think I was going to do that.” As a transfer student, he decided to get involved with the MILE because of his interactions with MILE members who motivated him to become a member of the organization:

> I decided to join the MILE, honestly, because I saw a lot of stuff that they were doing on campus, and then I saw the trips they would go on . . . I saw some people with a MILE shirt on, they were cool, or they knew what they wanted to do. But then again, I saw some of them that just wasn’t quite there, and I saw myself as being just a not-quite-there person. So, I saw some of the people that were in the MILE that wasn’t “quite there” getting mentored by the people that had it together. So, I was just like, maybe I need some guidance in my life from men that actually transitioned from where I was to where I wanted to be.

Lance discussed his experience at a MILE paintballing event as having an impact on his identity as a leader. In his discussion about teambuilding, he remarked, “We actually had to work as a team, so nobody got shot with the paintballs . . . leadership is not a one-way thing . . . . We have to work as a team. So, if you got an idea, share, and I’d share mine too.”

Lance has served in several leadership capacities including being a MILE mentor and a resident assistant for an upperclassmen co-ed nontraditional residence hall. Additionally, he held roles as president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Mister for the Political Science Association. He discussed the importance of having a social life and balance relating to being in

leadership at an HBCU. He maintained, “you need a social life just as much as you need academics because, honestly, your social life is what keeps you sane, ’cause if you just keep pushing in class, you don’t get the full experience of college.”

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Prior to college, Lance viewed leadership as only concerning family. He shared, “ It was a family thing. It was a big thing to take care of your own.” He describes his style of leadership as silent and logistical. He hel the view that leadership was something that should be done naturally, such as by helping people and that it could be done behind the scenes. He asserted, “being in control of my future . . . .always doing the best for others working towards the greater good.”

Lance described having learned that he could not always “just be a logistical leader.” He proclaimed in confidence, “I learned when I needed to be outspoken and when I needed to lead from the front or the back . . . sometimes I have to step down and let someone else be the leader.” He added, “at one point it was all about myself . . ., but I had to understand that for me to succeed in society I have to help bring up the next generation, not just my family but also my peers.”

Future Forecasting. After graduation, Lance will be working for the Baltimore City government. He began pursuing a graduate degree in public administration. He realized how his involvement in the MILE led to him get into graduate school. He also recalled, “It allowed me to get into grad school at the University of Baltimore for what I want to do in life.” Within the next two years, he intends on graduating and beginning a career in health administration. Over the next ten years, he has ambitions of becoming the CEO of a hospital and as a family man owning his first home.

Lance desires to reach his full potential and become a community leader impacting social change. He discussed running for office in the United States Senate and creating policies nationwide to assist young Black men and, more important, the Black community as a whole. He has also decided, "I'm going to have more control and power over what happens. I want to donate a lot of money to our educational system and impoverished communities. I want to be a better man."

Quinton

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Quinton is a sophomore Service and Supply Chain Management major who identifies as Black/African American. He is originally from Charles County, Maryland. He recalled that his interest in leadership began when he played football at a young age. When he first started playing football, he was quite laid back. But, as he became more comfortable with the sport and leading the offense and defense positions, he transferred those leadership qualities from the field to the classroom. Quinton commented, "Just like I am working in a group, I wouldn't normally talk. But, as I got older, I would be more talkative within those projects and began to play a big role in the activity, just like I do in football."

He noted that his mother influenced him at a young age to become a leader. He recalled his mother teaching him, "what things to do, how to carry yourself, how to speak to people professionally, networking and projecting your voice." Quinton identified that in middle school he did not listen to those things. But, as he transitioned to high school, he began to listen and understood that those things would help him be successful and hopefully attend college.

Collegiate Experiences. Quinton shared that he joined the MILE in his freshman year after learning about the program from his friend, Andrew. He is convinced that joining the MILE made him more comfortable at Denton University. He claimed he was able to meet more people and learn about activities and events on campus:

> I feel like it's helped shape me so far in college. I feel like without joining [the MILE] I would have just probably been going through the motions, staying in my room or going to the gym by myself. I probably wouldn't have met half the people I know now.

Quinton believed his involvement in the MILE encouraged him to apply to more organizations on campus. Currently, he holds leadership roles as a MILE mentor and the Treasurer for the sophomore class of the Student Government Association. Additionally, he serves as vice president for the Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP) and is a resident assistant for a male residence hall on the Denton University campus.

Quinton described his experience being a student leader at an HBCU sharing, "You gotta, know how to put yourself out there . . . . especially being at an HBCU . . . everyone's trying to compete. Even though we're all working towards the same goal, it's always a competition."

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. At first, Quinton believed a leader was a person who was "not afraid to be upfront with somebody and let them know the truth." He revealed, "As a leader in any environment you have to communicate truthfully, and sometimes it may make a relationship between you and another person distant." He discussed his understanding of leadership changing as he is transitioning from a young

man to adulthood. He believed that his maturity changed his behavior and how he viewed things in life. Quinton recalled:

> Some of the stuff I'm doing now, I wouldn't have taken seriously, like trying to apply for scholarships, lower my bill for parents because they're paying out of pocket. You have to understand someone is doing something for you. So it helped me mature as I'm trying to better myself and my future.

Quinton discussed the importance of having integrity and an upstanding character. He related how important integrity is to his leadership stating, "you have to know how to stay true to yourself and your peers and demonstrate integrity at all times." His advice to other leaders is "not to be afraid to speak up. You can't be afraid to project your ideas and your experiences, to help better yourself for the future. You must be able to say what's on your mind at that point." He commented further, "you have to learn how to speak up. You have to learn how to put your name out there, put your face out there, meet more people."

Future Forecasting. In two years, Quinton will be a senior at Denton University. He plans to stay on track with his course catalog, so he can have a minimum academic load his senior year. He hopes to stay connected to those around him and network with more people throughout his matriculation at the university.

When I asked him where he saw himself within the next ten years, he described educational and personal growth goals. He envisioned himself having his own place and car with a steady job in his career field. He admitted to having a calm demeanor but does not allow others to get over on him. Quinton also concluded, "I don't want to be

complacent with things or people around me. [But] I feel like sometimes I can let things slide when people do stuff I know isn't right or things you're not supposed to do."

Chris

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Chris is a junior, Elementary Education major, who identifies as Black/African American. He is originally from Montgomery County, Maryland, and recalled how he admired his older god-brother who set an example for him at a young age. He reported that seeing his god-brother do good things motivated him to want to be a better leader.

While in high school Chris was captain of his varsity basketball team. This opportunity exposed him to leading his peers and learning responsibility and teamwork. Also, during his senior year, he became a class representative for his grade level. He expressed how his counselors in his Tablet Achievement Program (TAP) throughout high school influenced him to become a leader. Chris observed, "I used to see them [the TAP counselors] and see how they were as people. And that is something I aspire to . . . it was just the way they were as people. It made me want to be like that one day." He believed it was the counselor's character that inspired him to want to become a leader.

Collegiate Experiences. Chris shared that during his freshman year, he was not involved in anything until his interaction with his resident director. Chris explained, "He was telling me about the meeting. I did not have anything else to do that day. So, I went to the meeting, and ever since then, I have loved being in the MILE." Chris asserted that the MILE springboarded him into being an involved student at Denton University.

He remarked that his participation in the MILE community service events has an influence on his identity as a leader. Chris expressed, "Making sandwiches for the

homeless . . .” and observed that “people don’t want to take the time out of their day to like put together a bunch of sandwiches . . . it’s tedious work, but it makes you realize how blessed you are with what you have.”

Chris served as a former Mister Denton University MILE, a member of the Society of Future Educators, and a member of Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society, Inc. He discussed his experience serving as Mister Denton University MILE sharing his appreciation for “being Mister Denton University MILE and having students come up to me, admire MILE men, and what the MILE does in the community. That’s been one of my biggest things. A lot of people are coming to respect the MILE.” Chris further explained how the MILE Affirmation is a roadmap for him as a leader, “The MILE Affirmation teaches you how to walk, talk, and breathe as a leader. The MILE has a standard for the people they are teaching to lead, and the affirmation spells it out.”

He currently holds the leadership roles of being a MILE mentor, president of the Men’s Lacrosse Club, and a resident assistant for a male residence hall on the Denton University campus. Chris perceived that being an RA was a rewarding experience: “I felt I could talk and help so many people within the community. And to see them grow and develop as people and be more successful. That was cool.”

Chris shared that being a student leader at an HBCU has a significant impact not only for the individual but also for the African American community. Chris added, “You have a platform to influence your peers toward success. By being a good leader, you can affect future generations of people in more ways than you think.”

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Chris’ first understanding of leadership was that of being a person who does what is right with others following their

actions. He recalled, “I felt like, . . . before I joined the MILE . . . I led passively; I did what I knew was right and believed that since I did that, that made me be someone everyone should follow.” Chris claimed he was not a very vocal person, so his peers did not always listen to him. Now after joining the MILE, he describes his understanding of leadership as accountability:

> [What] becoming a leader has meant to me, over the past couple years, is that you are an example to those around you. But it starts with yourself and holding yourself to a standard and being accountable for yourself, because you can’t lead others if you are not where you need to be. And so, for me, being a leader is about having [personal] accountability, and then it’s also, you know, trying to facilitate the best out of other people.

Now as a counselor for the TAP program, Chris demonstrated his reaction to leading. He admitted that “seeing kids at my camp come up to me and say they want to do my job when they get older . . . has been rewarding.” His advice to others in leadership is to commit yourself to the role. He disclosed, “I would tell them to embrace it and get as much from it as possible. And use this leadership opportunity as a means to grow themselves and grow somebody around them.”

Future Forecasting. Within the next two years, Chris will be graduating from Denton University and beginning a career as an Elementary school teacher, preferably in an urban community. Also, he has a desire to have his own charter school. He said, “In 10 years, I see myself having founded a school or helped, you know, start creating a school for African-American boys. Or just, just boys in general. Um, or possibly being like a superintendent.”

Furthermore, Chris predicted his financial goals stating, “I’m trying to save to buy a house, ’cause I want to own a rental property before I’m, like, 25.” He mentioned getting married and having children. He also noted that he would like to become a person who is even more committed to leadership and actualize his potential in that realm. Most important, he desires to remain humble throughout his success in life and continue to develop his character as a leader.

Everett

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Everett is a junior, political science major, who identifies as Black / Bi- or Multiracial. Everett is a native of Prince George’s County, Maryland and is a first-generation college student. He believed leadership was imposed upon him at a young age on the school playground. Everett said, “Growing up we would always play president of the United States on the playground. I would always be designated to play the president.” Everett also described another instance:

> I was on the safety patrol in elementary school. In the safety patrol, we had the safety patrol badges, but we also, led the recycling initiative, brought to us by our principal, to walk around during our lunchtime and miss some class time and take all the recycling out of the classrooms and then put it in the bins.

Within the home, Everett believes his mother instilled an attitude of service in him and his siblings. He recalled, “We served on the usher board at church. We are picking up the fans, taking people to their seats.” He observed his older brother become student body president of his elementary school, and that inspired him to join the student government in his high school years. Further, he admitted to watching his mother serve

in leadership positions at her job in the federal government, and that also intrigued him to want to be someone others looked up to as well.

Collegiate Experiences. During his participation in the MILE, Everett shared an invaluable experience of being a member of the MILE:

> Participating in the Maggiano's Fine Dining experience with the MILE and the ladies of EVOLVE. I had missed the etiquette class, but I was still able to attend the event because I had served as a MILE mentor throughout the year. I wasn't going to go to the dinner because I was fearful that everyone else knew what to do and I didn't. But I pushed myself to go. It was very impactful, and we were all learning how to use the knife and fork the correct way. It wasn't just me. So, I was glad I pushed myself to go because I would have missed that experience and never learned how to use proper etiquette when dining.

He has held past leadership positions, including junior class president, and sophomore class vice-president. Thanks to his role in many positions on the campus, Everett shared his experience learning his role in leadership when interacting with friends and peers. Everett recalled:

> It takes a toll on your friendship, [and] also your leadership. This past year as a junior class president, . . . one of my closest friends since freshman year is my vice president, and even though she's a great worker, we're the same person. We both want our way and think we're right, and so it started kinda rocky. But once we understood each other and our working style, I kinda deferred to her more on those key decisions because I knew I trusted her and her judgment.

Everett discussed his pivotal moment in becoming a leader in the MILE, that is, becoming a MILE mentor. Everett told a story about his pinning ceremony, "Getting pinned was very significant because the younger guys saw us get pinned, and that's something they aspire to . . . I am excited to see one of my residents, who is now one of my co-workers, get pinned next year."

Currently, he holds leadership roles as the Student Government Association president, a member of the Collegiate 100, and as a desk attendant in a male residence hall on the campus. Everett described his experience as being a leader at an HBCU as fun and exciting. He reported, "At an HBCU, it's always a lot of things going on, so you have to manage your time." Everett recalled:

> It was just homecoming, and it is always a great time for students at an HBCU. But sometimes you're conflicted with "I have this to do, or I have that to do." This past Homecoming, I wanted to go to the comedy show on Wednesday night, and I didn't have a class until 7:00 p.m. that evening. The comedy show started at 7:00 p.m., so I was conflicted on if I was going to skip class and go to the comedy show or go to class and get to the comedy show late. Luckily, the professor canceled class that day without us even talking to him about the comedy show. So, that was fortunate. A lot of times, even during my freshman year, I was going to the pep rally on Friday, but I didn't start a paper that was due that night. So, I had to miss out on the pep rally my freshman year to do that paper that was due at 11:59 p.m. that night.

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Everett first believed that leadership was defined by speaking at places publicly. He asserted, "When I joined the

MILE, I saw behind the scenes what goes into leadership. There are very different aspects to it, the public side, private side, the good, the bad, and the ugly." As time progressed, he learned that your leadership is dependent on your character. He knows that integrity is crucial to your leadership development. Everett communicated, "Your brand is everything to you, your family, and your future family. So, one mistake could cost you your life. Whether that's getting locked up or losing your reputation." Everett voiced his advice for others in leadership by saying, "Just go for it. There will be a lot of great opportunities, and you can rise straight to the top. A lot of people that join the MILE become RAs and even tutors."

Future Forecasting. In the next two years, Everett will graduate from Denton University and has a plan to pursue a master's degree in higher education administration. Continuing his educational goals, Everett has a desire to pursue a doctorate and work in the educational system. Everett stated:

> Working in the educational field at the high school level, as a principal, or working at the county level, as a superintendent, or working at a university, . . . I want to work in education. I was always attracted to education growing up . . . because I felt like education provides people with an opportunity. I want to work with high school and college students as they leave out and go into the real world. I think college is that last opportunity before they hit the real world. A lot of people change their lives in college.

Everett presented the notion that he wanted to grow in his responsibilities, mature and develop his leadership skills continuously. He expressed:

> In 10 years, I hope to be a father so that'll be more responsible, you know, making sure your kid's okay and making sure they have everything. Also being a father, you're at the head of your household. So, making sure your wife is covered with protection spiritually and physically, and as a father, you have to do the same.

Clarvonte

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Clarvonte is a junior, civil engineering major, who identifies as Black / African American. Clarvonte is a native of Prince George's County, Maryland, and is a first-generation college student. He believed that his parents were his primary influence for becoming a leader. He admitted, "they always encouraged him to sign up and apply for different things. They said, 'you may not like everything, but it's always good to find out what is good for you'."

During high school, Clarvonte was involved in the Student Government Association, Recycling Club, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. He believed his involvement in those actives exposed him to different principles of leadership. Clarvonte held the view that becoming a leader in his community during high school was due to people's considering him a positive example for other children in the neighborhood. Clarvonte stated:

> A lot of people in my church back home said that it's good to see a young Black man involved in something positive. So, it's meant, doing something positive for me, but also, setting a positive example for people after me, like the younger kids in the neighborhood and the church and everything like that.

Collegiate Experiences. When Clarvonte arrived at the campus of Denton University, he wanted to remain a positive example for others. So, he wanted to get involved in an organization. Clarvonte explained that he first heard about the MILE from his resident assistants. He stated, "They gave me the information; it was on a pamphlet, but they also talked to me about it. I also saw them wearing the organization's T-shirts and talking about the different trips that they took while being in the MILE."

Clarvonte shared how he learned teamwork at the MILE white water rafting event. Clarvonte stated, "It taught teamwork and collaboration, especially given that you're put in a boat with people that you don't know." Further, Clarvonte claimed, "I like to roll with the punches, to continue to press on, . . . have a positive outlook, . . . to know that there's light at the end of the tunnel, and I'll get through whatever's in front of me."

His previous leadership positions include resident assistant for a male residence hall, president and vice president for his fraternity, Alpha Nu Omega, Inc., and serving as a former Mister Denton University MILE. Clarvonte expressed his feeling of accomplishment for "stepping up to the plate" and being recognized as the Denton University MILE Man of the Year. He noted, "it showed that I had stepped up to be a leader after the MILE leaders that encouraged me to join the MILE had left [graduated] to continue to meet the standard of the MILE. That meant a lot."

Additionally, he held roles as the junior class senator, speaker of the house, and legislative secretary for the Student Government Association. He also served as a president and mister for the Council of Independent Organizations. He currently holds

the leadership position of Mister Denton University and is serving as a MILE mentor. He reflected on his experience being a student leader at an HBCU:

> Here at an HBCU, most of us were big fish in small ponds at our high schools. So, coming here, it's competitive. We all had the same credentials and some similar backgrounds, but it's just important that we all understand that we're here to push each other to continue to be better. I like the scripture that mentions iron sharpening iron. So, it's essential for us to remember that we're all in this together. It's competitive, but we all should be competing not necessarily with each other, but with our old selves to be better than we were the day before, and to realize that, as a Black community, how far we've come, the different struggles that we went through. We have progressed, and we're continuing to progress as we learn and . . . matriculate here at [Denton University]. . . . that we keep in mind that there's still a long way for us to go, but we are a part of that change that is coming. We need to continue to be ready and push each other to be ready because we need each other to succeed.

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Clarvonte first assumed that leadership was the task of someone who was in charge of others and being able to get others to get things done. He shared, "I remember in high school, there was this one leader of the group community project that was able to divide up the entire task, and everyone listened to them to accomplish the goal." During college, he learned that leadership is a continual learning process because many styles and approaches can work for different people. He justified his claim by stating, "When you're in college, there are so many people with different backgrounds, abilities, and knowledge. There's always

information and resources that you don't have but are available to you. But, you have to be willing to receive it."

Clarvonte's advice to others in leadership is to know when to show up and establish your role as a leader within a group. He clearly articulated:

> You have to know when to lead and when to let others lead. There were times when I would be the leader. But then, there were times when I needed help, and instead of leading my group down the wrong path, I was able to say, "I'm the leader, but it's you [who] can always wanna learn and grow. So, give others the opportunity to voice their opinions because they may have a more effective solution, which could benefit the whole group.

Future Forecasting. Clarvonte talked about graduating from Denton University within the next two years and choosing to attend graduate school. He said, "I'm trying to figure out what direction I would like to go in, whether it be pursuing a master's degree in civil engineering or a master's degree in higher education." He has ambitions to work at a college or university in student engagement while pursuing his graduate degree.

When asked where he envisions himself in ten years, Clarvonte expressed an avid desire to gain knowledge and wisdom and to work on such skills as time management. He would like to remain a leader and gain leadership roles in his career field while influencing others positively. Moreover, he expressed intentions of becoming a family man and remaining active in his community. Clarvonte concedes to the importance of, "being active in my community. That is something that has been instilled in me . . . It's not enough to worry about myself, but ensuring that others around me are benefiting from my work."

Domanick

Early Pre-Collegiate Experiences. Domanick is a recent alumnus of Denton University and identifies as Black / Bi- or Multiracial. He is also a first-generation college student. Domanick is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was very active in basketball during high school. He was also captain of the basketball team and an honor roll student there. He shared that his family always stated he charted his own path and never really followed people. In keeping with this observation made by his family, he admitted, "I never tried to be like, the class clown or fit in. I try always to be myself and try to grow and learn from other people, but never take the bad advice." Domanick believed his friends and peers were significant influences on his becoming a leader. He explained, "I looked [to] my friends for advice, and sometimes they looked to me . . . I think that is what makes good leadership because everybody has different outcomes on life."

Collegiate Experiences. During his undergraduate years, he majored in accounting. He remarked, "I wasn't one to take the initiative . . . but the [Denton University] MILE teaches you to volunteer . . . signing up for events, going here and there for X amount of time and doing this and that. So, that initiative . . . pushes you even when you don't want to." While pursuing his undergraduate studies, Domanick served in several leadership capacities, including being a MILE mentor and a resident assistant in a male residence hall. He explained that his pivotal moment in becoming a leader in the MILE was when he became a "pinned" MILE mentor. He shared, "Getting pinned was the icing on the cake – to be graduating a semester late – because if I graduated on time, I would never have been pinned." Domanick further commented:

> To be pinned at that time and have certain people there, felt good. I mean people looked up to me as, you know, a good influence to look up to, um, to have like my mentee there, was special this year, especially since, like, some of my main friends from the college already graduated.

Besides, during his undergraduate years, Domanick held the roles of treasurer, vice-president, and public relations manager for his fraternity Alpha Nu Omega, Inc. and even served as treasurer for the Council of Independent Organizations. He voiced his experience with competition as a student leader at HBCU, stating, "It takes a lot of character to be a student leader at an HBCU." He went on to say, "Everyone has these amazing goals they want to accomplish in life so there may be ten other people who want to do the same thing as you . . . all that competition builds character."

Changing Notions of Leadership and Roles. Domanick initially believed a leader was someone others looked up to and who made the right decisions based on ethics. During his collegiate years, he learned more about leadership from observing the older students who were MILE mentors in the organization. He affirmed the importance and positive impression of "learning and watching them [engage] leadership qualities, such as volunteering, speaking at certain events, dressing up in ties, and carrying themselves professionally." He believed observing them helped shape the man he desired to be in college. He emphasized, "As a sophomore, I knew I'd soon be the one dressed up in the MILE blazer. I'd be the one talking, introducing people to other members and being a leader within the MILE." Domanick conveyed his advice to others in leadership as regards committing and embracing the MILE. He remarked:

> If they are serious about taking up this leadership role and understanding that this leadership role is going to come with a lot of headaches, but, you know, [there are also] good moments, a lot of learning moments, a lot of moment that's gonna make you better as a person. But when you put on that MILE jacket, and you put on that MILE pin, understand that you represent more than just yourself, more than just your family. You are representing this whole organization, this university and everything that we stand behind and all the words that we say [are] our affirmation.

Future Forecasting. Domanick has returned to his hometown to pursue a career in the accounting field. He excitedly proclaimed his vision to become and entrepreneur and set up his personal clothing line. He mentioned that he would like to open his own CPA firm eventually and work only part-time for someone else, so he can become his own boss. He shared, "I want to make a difference for my family, hopefully buying both of my grandparents a kidney." He concluded:

> In 10 years, I should be married, supposed to have at least two kids. I don't care where I'm living. But hopefully, I'm living successful and not looking for my next dollar, but looking for, you know, my family's next 100 years of living, and prolonging my family's longevity.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 presented the participants' demographics and narratives. These stories are but snapshots that provide an understanding of the participants' backgrounds. Hence narratives speak of the experiences of Black male students participating in a campus-based initiative and the contribution of the latter to college student achievement in

relation to leadership identity development. The following chapter presents the key findings of this study and the data analysis used to highlight the way in which Black male students who participate in campus-based initiatives develop their leadership identity at Denton University—a public Mid-Atlantic doctoral research HBCU.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to understand the leadership experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. Further, the study attempts to examine, in detail, the social and academic support that students receive and the contribution thereof to college student achievement in relation to leadership identity development. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based leadership initiatives at an HBCU?
2. How do participants in campus-based leadership initiatives perceive themselves as leaders?
3. In what ways have their leadership experiences influenced their identity development?

In this chapter, I first present the step-by-step data analysis technique designed by Moustakas (1994) and that I used in this study. Line by line coding of each transcript produced 464 potential node codes that I compiled into eight node-coding reports. Five themes emerged that highlight the way in which students who participate in campus-based initiatives develop their leadership identity at Denton University–a public Mid-Atlantic doctoral research HBCU.

Subsequently, guided by the research questions, I discuss the findings of the study. Significant findings that emerged from the participants' experiences include **(a) interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development, (b) value in experiencing leadership challenges, (c) leadership involvement creates**

personal and professional growth, (d) understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism, and (e) student leadership at HBCUs creates resiliency. In Chapter 6, I will discuss the findings in relation to the analytical and theoretical framework of Komives' (2006) LID model.

Organization and Data Analysis

Using a step-by-step analysis technique designed by Moustakas (1994), I transcribed the interviews. I then began analyzing them by using NVivo 12 qualitative software. The participants in this study provide rich details relating to the purpose of this study and its guiding research questions. I read and coded each line of the transcripts manually with contextual content to the nodes shown in Table 2. I also revised node titles as coding progressed through each step according to Moustakas' (1994) data analysis technique.

Table 2. Organization of NVivo Reports

1. Demographics
2. S1 – Awareness before Joining the MILE
   - Q02. First interested in becoming a leader
   - Q03. Who influenced to become a leader
   - Q04. Understanding leadership before MILE
   - Q20. Becoming leader meant to you and others
3. S2 – Exploration –Engagement
   - Q01. Why joined MILE
   - Q05. MILE influence understanding leadership
   - Q18. Strengths discovered developed in MILE
   - Q23. Social support from MILE
   - Q24. Academic support from MILE
   - Q25. MILE impact on your college experience
4. S3 – Leader Identified

Q07. Prior leadership experiences and organizations

Q08. Leadership roles since joining MILE

Q09. How you learned to be a leader

Q12. Key pivotal points of becoming a leader

5. S4 – Leadership Differentiated

   Q10. Positive changes since MILE

   Q11. Negative changes since MILE

   Q16. Challenges

   Q19. You/others most value about yourself

   Q21. Your leadership different same as others

6. S5 – Generativity

   Q06. As a mentor, understanding of leadership

   Q13. Your influence on others – how learned

   Q14. MILE events your identity as a leader

   Q17. Who most helpful MILE – how

   Q27. Your responsibility to MILE and university

7. S6 – Integration–Systems

   Q15. Future

   Q22. Advice to others in leadership

   Q28. Lessons takeaways from MILE

   Q29. Biggest leadership successes

   Q30. Biggest leadership failures

   Q31. Anything else leader at HBCU

8. Wrap-up

   Q32. What would you ask

Data Coding

In qualitative research, context is essential when providing meaning or qualitative analysis. The coding process for qualitative research is logical and intuitive as the researcher utilizes inductive and deductive reasoning within three cyclical phases of

coding (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, in this study, from NVivo 12 qualitative software, I exported multiple node coding reports and organized them into concise reports in Microsoft Word. Subsequently, I compiled 464 potential node coding reports into eight node coding reports with 458 subcategory sections. During the coding process, I coded line by line to capture all the content so as to provide the context of the statement.

Listing and Preliminary Grouping

Following the initial data coding of the transcripts, I began horizontalization, which is the first step in the phenomenological data analysis technique outlined by Moustakas (1994). Horizontalization is the process by which the researcher remains open to every statement and assigns equal value to each statement of the participants (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). As I reviewed and examined each statement in the preliminary categories and coding reports, I kept an open mind throughout. I then lifted out of the transcript all statements that represented the phenomenon of leadership and placed them in a separate document for each participant. Moustakas (1994) refers to these statements as horizons.

During my review of the transcriptions, I was able to listen along to hear participants' voices and take notes of points of interest where their voices got louder and when they took moments to pause and think about the question that I asked them. For example, Craig became very excited when he discussed his memories of the MILE spring break trip. Additionally, while reading each participant's transcript, I was able to make margin notes and compare them to the notes in my research journal I kept throughout the data collection process. Using both the margin notes and my research journal, I was able to draw a horizontal line to indicate when a participant's meaning changed in his

descriptions of leadership experience in a campus-based initiative at an HBCU. This action is defined as epoche in phenomenological research (Creswell, 1998). Using Table 3, I provide an example of this process in detail by providing a small sample of the horizons collected for one of the participants, Craig.

Table 3. Sample List of Horizontalization Statements

"The MILE allowed me to grow, it allowed me to have leadership opportunities, hold positions, boards, and step out of my character in a positive way to become a positive light on campus."
"Everything doesn't have to get a reward, or accolades, or to say, 'Hey! You see me do that?' You know, it's more so like integrity, what you do when no one is watching. So that's what [being a] leader or leadership means to me, and that's what I got from joining the MILE and being a member for four years."
"I would say it [leadership] changed for the better of course, but being a leader after joining the MILE I realized it's not just those people that had those cool things that I always wanted, but it's those who make a change. It's not about themselves; its about giving back."
"It was kinda tough to be a leader of a floor knowing that you had people on the floor that's older than you, but the MILE showed me how to do that, how to navigate through those difficult situations to become a leader today."
"Before joining the MILE, I didn't have a great definition or example of what leadership was. I thought that it was just a position of authority. I did not understand what it meant to be a leader or how even to lead. Going to the different events and being under the coordinators who are mentors and true leaders, I got to really understand what leadership was.
"Something I learned at that the meetings was it was already a brotherhood before I got there, it was a brotherhood when I was there, and I'm pretty sure it's a brotherhood now."

"It allows me to grow into the man I am today; I think that was the turnover for me; that's when I started seeing some differences in myself from before college and after college."

Reduction and Elimination

After the process of horizontalization, I began the reduction and elimination of statements through invariant horizons or constituents. Moustakas (1994) defined invariant horizons as statements that stand out or point to the unique qualities of an experience. Using the following questions outlined by Moustakas (1994), I was able to ensure that there were no overlapping or repetitive statements by any of the participants: (1) "Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?", and (2) "Is it possible to abstract and label it?" (p. 121). To show the steps of phenomenological reduction, Table 4 presents the core themes/structure of the horizons that met the requirements of the data analysis process. By still using my research journal for detailing my perceptions of the phenomenon, I was able to keep them separate and ensure that only the participants' descriptions were used in the data analysis.

Table 4. Core Themes/Structures of the Experience

- Self-Motivation
- Elem-HS experiences
- Influential Relationships / Meaningful Connections with University Staff (Resident Directors / Resident Assistants / Directors)
- Family members (Influential)
- Empowerment/Confidence
- Insight
- Increased Purpose-Responsibility (Resource-Role Model / Mentor)
- Character-Personality
- Public speaking / Communication skills
- Life Skills
- Personal and Professional Growth
- Challenges: Visibility – Leadership persona
- Challenges: Making mistakes-failing/self-criticism
- Challenges: Disagreements / disappointing people
- Impactful MILE events
- Feelings of Altruism/Selflessness
- Giving Back – Continuous Commitment
- New Leadership Roles / Successes (Student Organizations, Fraternity, Mister, SGA, RAs/Das

Clustering the Invariant Horizons

Using the three phases of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I was able to review the invariant horizons and group them to form core themes for each of the participants. The three phases of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach include (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding (p. 224). The first or initial phase is defined as "open coding" or "first pass" line-by-line coding of the data to develop descriptive themes and assign category titles (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This phase included "in vivo" coding or selection of specific words and phrases from the content for titling purposes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 224). The second phase is defined as "axial coding" for the exploration of patterns and emerging themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 224). In this phase, I began merging, clustering, retitling, and eliminating categories. The third phase is defined as "selective (or substantive) coding," which is the deepest level of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 224). During this phase, I was able to interpret and synthesize meaning leading to new themes created by additional merging, clustering, and the elimination of categories. The three phases are cyclical and repetitive through data analysis until redundancy occurs. Table 5 outlines the gathering and organization of all the invariant horizons developed for each of the 12 participants of the study.

Table 5. Invariant Constituents (Themes and Evidence)

THEMES	SAMPLE EVIDENCE (INVARIANT CONSTITUENTS)
Interpersonal Relationships and Networks are Key	"Being in the MILE, it seemed like the doors were opening. The MILE allowed me to meet certain people, go to different venues, go to different conferences . . . it provided so many opportunities

for Leadership Development	that I'm still benefiting from today. I'm now 22 years old and a graduate student. I believe those same instances that happened to a 17-year-old boy are still happening to me, a 22-year-old man. So the MILE allowed me to gain so many opportunities, and keep flourishing into the man that I'm becoming today." "It's [the MILE] really helped my leadership because being a part of the MILE has placed me in the room with a lot of people on campus that I usually wouldn't encounter. For example, a general body [meeting] means they usually bring someone from campus. We had the Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Banks, and Dr. Edwin Johnson . . . just a bunch of different figures on campus, whether they be administration or people from student organizations to come and speak to us and network. So, it's allowed me to be in the room and see how other leaders think and better myself." "When I first joined the MILE, I wouldn't know anyone, but my roommate and they [MILE coordinators] would force us to go speak to people we didn't know. And by doing that, now at my next meeting, I know my roommate and that one person I talked to last time. Then the very next meeting I had to talk to someone else, so now by the time of the fourth meeting I know my roommate and those two previous people that I spoke with. So before you know it, it's like oh wow, I know the entire MILE. So

	that was something that the MILE certainly brought out of me, networking.You never know what people have or where people could help you at; you never know how you could help people."
Leadership Involvement Creates Personal and Professional Growth	"So before being in the MILE, I thought that I had to do everything [and] if I didn't do it, it was done incorrectly. But after being a leader in the MILE and after my first year I realized that I had people to rely on, that I did not always have to carry the weight or carry the load. So now it's kinda like I got my brothers here from the MILE program that's gonna help me get through this obstacle." "I had done public speaking before the MILE, but I really saw myself become a better public speaker, because of my roles in the MILE, being Mr. [Denton University] MILE, put me in a role where I had to be more vocal." "Going on trips . . . getting different life experiences so I could understand where my peers came from . . . I'm from Chicago, most people are from Maryland . . . but to get that experience, so I can get an understanding of the environment that I was in."
Meaningful Value in Experiencing Leadership Challenges	"In certain situations, you want to say things that you're really not supposed to be saying as a leader. You wanna do certain things you're not supposed to be doing it, and the challenge is that sometimes you do make mistakes. Everybody's not . . . nobody's perfect. So you do make mistakes, and the challenge is

	that when you do make that mistake, you have everybody looking at you because they think because you are a leader that you can't make mistakes." "It was a hard road, me getting on the straight and narrow because it's like I still had things that I felt like I should do or I didn't know if it was too wrong, or, you know, just like messing up, honestly, just being a regular college student. When I messed up, they held me accountable, and they addressed the situation as soon as it happened, so I understood, I know I can't do that no more. But once they addressed it with me and the other guys saw that I fixed the situation, they followed suit." "People not always seeing eye to eye with you. Sometimes, you may have an idea or a thought, and they don't think the same way that you think. So now you've got people kinda combating what you believe or what you think would be best for the group, and it's sometimes difficult when you're a leader, and people are not following."
Understanding Leadership through Collective Responsibility and Altruism	"It [understanding of leadership] changed for the better of course but being a leader after joining the MILE I realized it's not just those people that had those cool things that I always wanted, but it's those who make a change and you, it's not about themselves." "I would say it [responsibility] seemed like it's more a burden. A heavier burden on the other side. Trying to engage with the

	younger students or the new MILE members, trying to keep them engaged and trying to ensure that there is always something to do or there is always something interesting to keep them engaged. Before I would just show up to [MILE] events, now I'm a part of the planning of the [MILE] events, as well as getting people to come to the events or the programs, the promotion and everything like that. So instead of just showing up, now I have a role and ensuring that we have things to show up to." "It is not about me necessarily. It is about what I can do for the next group. Not all the things that I wanted to do or wanted to see might happen during my tenure, or during my matriculation, but I can start the groundwork. What I do now can set it up for the next group to come afterward, and they can benefit from it, but I benefit from putting in that labor and knowing that one day it will come to fruition."

Emerging Themes

Following Moustakas' (1994) recommended steps in data analysis, I formed the individual textural and structural descriptions for each participant. The textural descriptions present each of the participant's lived experience of the phenomenon of leadership. The structural descriptions were formed from the context and situations that have influenced the participants lived experiences (Creswell, 2009).

After presenting the individual textural and structural descriptions for each participant, I was able to see common themes emerge from the data. The themes

revealed how participants experience and understand their leadership identity development through participation in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. The development of five core themes described the phenomenon of interest: **(a) interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development, (b) value in experiencing leadership challenges, (c) personal transformation through leadership involvement, (d) understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism, and (e) student leadership at HBCUs creates resiliency.**

The first theme**, interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development,** demonstrates the significance of the relationships participants form as members of the MILE. The essence of this theme relates to how participants experience their leadership development. The importance of this theme is placed on the relationships participants developed with University staff [resident assistant (RA) / resident director (RD) / advisors], and peers or friends. Although participants' responses were varied, their experiences with significant individuals influenced the participants' decision to pursue leadership, get involved on campus, and develop networks for leadership development. Participants expressed appreciation for the connections made with other leaders, new and future leadership opportunities, and expansion of their professional networks. Participants suggested that the interpersonal relationships impacted the social support they received, their persistence to graduation, and preparation for life after college.

The second theme, **value in experiencing leadership challenges,** encompasses what participants believe to be the challenges they faced in becoming a leader. The essence of this theme describes the value they placed on the experience of overcoming

their leadership challenges. Participants offered challenges, including visibility – leadership persona, making mistakes – failing, disagreements, disappointing people, and self-criticism. Participants placed value on overcoming their challenges by using skills such as being your best self, communication skills, effective planning – presentation, eliciting feedback – criticism, and self-filtering. Participants suggested that experiencing these leadership challenges made them into a better leader with a broader skill set. Furthermore, it highlights how a participant's leadership identity development is impacted by the challenges they face and how they learn to overcome or address them.

The third theme, **leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth,** demonstrates what students believe to be the changes they experience while being a student leader. The essence of this theme describes the experiences of participants and the growth they encountered from their leadership involvement. Participants comprehend their personal growth in relation to becoming a more vocal leader and the confidence developed through their leadership involvement. Participants expressed their professional growth through leadership involvement by learning how to conduct themselves in business and social settings, developing integrity, and the importance of the academic support they received as a leader. Participants suggested that the personal and professional growth they experienced through their leadership involvement in the MILE led them to be successful in leadership opportunities in other organizations, various campus activities, and graduate school.

The fourth theme, **understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism,** describes how students come to understand and exhibit leadership. Participants value understanding leadership as a responsibility to others and as an action

that is selfless. The essence of this theme is developed through the influence participants experience from the phenomenon of leadership identity development. Participants expressed the importance of collective responsibility and selflessness in their pre-collegiate experiences, role as Denton University MILE mentors, Denton University alumni, and envisioning themselves in the future. Participants were inspired to remain responsible for their leadership after becoming an alumnus of the MILE and Denton University. Additionally, participants discussed their responsibility in terms of giving back to other students, the MILE program, and the University community.

The fifth theme, **student leadership at an HBCU creates resiliency,** describes how students experience leadership within the context of an HBCU. Participants value the significance of becoming a student leader at an HBCU. The essence of this theme highlights how the environment of an HBCU creates particular student experiences related to leadership, which has a direct impact on their identity as a Black male in college. Students are inspired to strive for the highest academically and socially among others who look like them and push through and persevere throughout their collegiate journey. Participants discussed their social life and what it means to maintain balance as a leader with responsibilities academically and socially.

The following discussion supports the themes presented and provides clarity to the findings of this study. Direct responses from participants' interview transcriptions are presented to provide insight into the lived experience of participants who experience and understand their leadership identity development through participation in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs.

Theme One: Interpersonal Relationships and Networks are Key for Leadership Development

All participants described how the interpersonal relationships and networks they formed throughout their collegiate experience were essential to their development as leaders. The participants discussed experiences regarding the interpersonal relationships they developed, which was the crux of this theme. Participants discussed their interpersonal relationships as being connected to others, new leadership experiences, and post-collegiate life.

Many participants reported that the interpersonal relationships they developed with the MILE staff had a significant impact on their matriculation at Denton University. Participants discussed how their interpersonal relationships impacted their experiences of financial struggle, persistence to graduation, and preparation for life after college. Devin stated, "If I hadn't known Mr. Bordley [resident director] or Mr. Molock [resident director], my schedule would have got dropped. I didn't have the money to remain in school. I wouldn't be at [Denton University], but me being in the MILE, I went to them . . . They made a couple of calls, and it got handled."

David shared how his relationships with the MILE staff and members encouraged him to stay enrolled in school:

> I really hated school. I was thinking about dropping out. It wasn't until I joined the MILE and got to interact with the different members in the MILE and build relationships with the MILE coordinators who really pushed me to become better. That's when I decided to stay, participate in the MILE, and finish out my tenure here at [Denton University].

Craig also expressed how his relationship with the Assistant Director, Dr. Lee, assisted him in applying to graduate school:

> She played a part in the . . . pivotal time in my life. During my freshmen and sophomore year, I did not really see the use of going to Dr. Lee. A lot of people was saying she has a lot of access; she knows a lot of people, but I did not see a fit, or I did not see a need to go talk to her. When I started going to my junior and senior year, I realized Dr. Lee has a Ph.D. She has something I am searching for. So, let me go talk to her. We had [a] meeting for hours, and she would give me all the advice I need on how to pick a college. She helped me find a perfect graduate school for me. So, I could never thank her enough for that.

Lance discussed the one-on-one relationship he had with the Director of the program "Dr. Gwynn sits down and has real conversations with me . . . if I'm messing up or need help, I know I can come to him . . . we have an everyday conversation, and we gained trust with each other." Lance continued to share that his relationships with the coordinators allow him to be held accountable when his actions were not in line with those of a leader:

> It was a hard road for me getting on the straight and narrow because I still had things that I felt like I should do or I did not know if it was too wrong to do. So when I messed up, they held me accountable, and they addressed the situation as soon as it happened. So, I understood. I know I cannot do that no more. But once they addressed it with me and the other guys saw that I fixed the situation, they followed suit.

Domanick shared an experience of how his relationship with Dr. Gwynn, director of Office of Residence Life & Housing, led him to win the prestigious President's Second MILE Award. He noted:

> If I wouldn't have built that relationship, he [Dr. Gwynn] wouldn't have been able to give me a recommendation. I won the President's Second Mile Award, and I never knew that building that relationship would help build a position for me in the future. I am grateful for going through the program.

Several participants articulated that their interpersonal relationships led to them expanding their network. David, expressed, "The connections and bond that I got to create with the MILE members whom I consider my brothers helped and pushed me to become a better person while finishing my time at [Denton University]." Walter discussed a similar experience with relationships developed in the MILE and how they expanded his network. Walter shared, "Getting to see all my old friends that graduated that was in the MILE, seeing what they were doing with their life now. They inspired me to say when I graduate, that's gonna be me . . . it begins to connect you with people for post-college life."

Craig recalled how his relationships expanded his opportunities and continued to impact his life post-graduation:

> The MILE allowed me to meet certain people, go to different venues, conferences, and it provided many opportunities that I am still today benefiting from. I am now 22 years old and a graduate student. I believe those same instances that happened to a 17-year-old boy are now still happening to a 22-year-old man and keep flourishing me into the man that I am becoming today.

Similarity, Clarvonte explained how he was able to build relationships with key figures on campus:

> Being a part of the MILE has placed me in the room with a lot of people on campus. Figures that I usually would not encounter. For example, a general body [meeting] means they [MILE coordinators] usually bring someone from campus. We had the Vice President of Student Affairs, Dr. Banks, and [University Archivist], Dr. Edwin Johnson . . . just a bunch of different figures on campus, whether they be administration or people from student organizations to come and speak to us and network. It has allowed me to be in the room, get to know these speakers and see how other leaders think and better myself. It has helped me because, in high school, you are a big fish in a little pond, but when you come to college, there are so many different people that have the same background as you or different background; but you are all in this one room, and you all come to the table with different abilities and knowledge. But it has helped me learn that your cup is never too full. There is always information and resources that you do not have that is available to you, but you have to be willing to receive it.

Many participants shared that when they first joined the MILE, they did not know many people on campus, but after they formed relationships, their network continued to expand. Craig explained:

> I did not know anyone, but my roommate and they [MILE coordinators] would force us to go speak to people we did not know. And by doing that, now at my next meeting, I know my roommate and that one person I talked to last time, then the very next meeting I had to talk to someone else. So, now by the time of the

> fourth meeting, I know my roommate and those two previous people that I spoke with. So, before you know it, it's like, 'Oh wow!' I know the entire MILE. You never know what people got, you never know where people could help you . . . you never know how you could help people.

Similarly, Domanick explained how the MILE network extended beyond college students to the alumni of the organization:

> It's crazy how the MILE can bring so many different students together, and even though sometimes we might not be at the same meeting every time, they [MILE members] still reach out and even after graduating, they still come back to certain events. This is a huge network that follows the [Denton University] MILE."

The majority of participants offered some commentary on how the relationships and bonds created in the MILE provided them with social support throughout their matriculation. A number of these examples involved participants developing personal friendships and coupled with the presence of a form of brotherhood within the MILE program. Domanick recalled, "The MILE brought [the] majority of my close friends." Participants discussed the importance of being able to talk to a peer that they can relate to daily. Reggie divulged, "The current MILE members, Kenold and Tyrell, helped me with choosing the type of friends I should hang around, and they told me that you should never have only one type of friends." Another participant Quinton expressed:

> Kenold has been most helpful . . . I feel like I can relate to him on a student level because he is actually in college, but he is about two years older than I am. So, he has actually experienced the things that I am doing right now. I feel he's just

> helped me with how to go about doing your homework during Homecoming or preparing for midterms. So, I feel like it was easier for me to relate back to him.

Walter emotionally conveyed a significant moment where he realized the depth of the relationship he had with other MILE members:

> When I was a freshman, I made dumb mistakes. I got into a fight, and I had to go to the hospital. And Domanick [MILE member] called me a cab that day, 'cause I didn't have the money or a ride back to campus from the hospital, I was gonna have to walk, but he put the money for the cab downstairs with the night attendant for me, and I got a ride back home. Now that I think about it, that was really a blessing. Domanick never asked me for the money back, [he] just made sure I was fine . . . told me to let him know when I got back to the dorms, and everything was good.

Lance believes that his relationships allowed him to trust and become a better leader:

> I gained some really good lifetime friends because I had to trust them in a certain situation. But once we gained trust from doing one of those activities, they started trusting me with different things, such as personal secrets, or information that they needed help with, or if they could not talk to one of the MILE coordinators, they knew they could come and talk to me, and I would keep their secret safe.

Other participants discussed how the interpersonal relationship developed led them to future leadership opportunities. Reggie discussed how his relationship with a MILE coordinator led him to run for a position in the Student Government Association. Reggie revealed, "Granted; I didn't win. I would have never run for that position if I was

not in the [Denton University] MILE because I would not have known Mr. Bordley [resident director] on the level that I did and he would have never pushed me. David shared how his close relationship to his resident director led him to become a resident assistant:

> I had in my mind I should apply to be an RA because the deadline to apply was that next week. But it was not until one of the MILE coordinators, Resident Director Mr. Molock, gave me a recommendation card to be an RA. I was like, "If he is giving . . . that card to me, and he is the RD, then maybe I should try to become an RA." I did apply, and I got the position as an RA. I would say that was all because of me joining the MILE.

The first theme, **interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development,** describes the significance of the relationships participants form as members of the MILE. Within this theme, it is clear that interpersonal relationships influence both how participants experience leadership and as well as how they development as a leader. Students described feeling a sense of being more connected to other leaders, new and future leadership opportunities and an expansion of their personal and professional networks. The second theme, **value in experiencing leadership challenges,** encompasses what participants believe to be the challenges they faced in becoming a leader. This theme captures the value they placed on the experience of overcoming their leadership challenges.

Theme Two: Value in Experiencing Leadership Challenges

All twelve participants described a variety of challenges they faced while becoming a leader. Common responses included maintaining a leadership persona,

making mistakes/failing, managing disagreements, disappointing people, and self-criticism. Participants described the most common response of challenges to becoming a leader as visibility – leadership persona. Participants shared the feeling that once you are identified as a leader, you are always seen as a leader no matter what the situation may be. Clarvonte expressed, "You're always on stage, whether you're on campus, whether you go home, whether you're speaking in front of people or you're speaking to people in private; you're always on stage. You're always representing something that's bigger than yourself." Another participant Devin explained:

> It is not a bad feeling, but it is as if you know, your name, who you are, what position you hold, what you do on campus. So, you cannot act out. You cannot do certain things . . . you have to hold yourself to a higher standard than another student would hold themselves to because you are somebody; you hold a leadership position on campus. You have people looking up to you, staff monitoring you. So, you have to make sure you are on your Ps and Qs all the time.

Relating specifically to the challenge of maintaining his leadership persona, Lance reported:

> It is like everyday things, just not relapsing or slipping up and always put my best foot forward if I am in a tough situation. I always got to do the best thing, even if I do not want to. Let's say if a guy walks up to me and does something to me, and I want to wild out, I know by me being a leader, and especially on [the Denton University] campus, I can't act off instinct or impulse because somebody's always

> watching. If I mess up, they just going to think that they can do it . . . or it devalues my word and credibility if I do something out of pocket.

Participants found value in experiencing the challenge of visibility – leadership persona – because it allowed them to become their best self. Four participants described becoming their best self as their skill in managing their challenge as a leader. Clarvonte noted:

> You are always representing something that is bigger than yourself. So, to uphold the standard of being a MILE man, I just had to remember always to put my best self forward for people to see because people will gravitate towards that. Nobody wants to join or be a part of something that runs halfway, or . . . is not running to the best of its capability. So, if I'm only putting out half of myself, or portraying half my potential, then people won't see all the good things that are in store.

Other participants describe making mistakes as a challenge to becoming a leader. Walter shared, "sometimes I'm doing stuff that a leader doesn't do. Making non-leader mistakes." Similarly, David happily expressed:

> Not being a leader (laughs), I see that because there are certain things where in certain situations, you want to say things that you are not supposed to be saying as a leader. You wanna do certain things you're really not supposed to be doing . . . , and the challenge is that sometimes you do make mistakes. Everybody's not . . . nobody's perfect. So, you do make mistakes, and the challenge is that when you do make those mistakes, you have everybody looking at you because they think because you are a leader that you cannot make mistakes; that is one of the biggest challenges I faced as being a leader.

Participants found value in their leadership challenge of making mistakes by learning how to plan and present effectively to others and eliciting feedback from those who are following them. Participants described specific tools and strategies that helped them plan and present effectively. Clarvonte remarked, "By me planning earlier I was more comfortable presenting myself as a leader in front of different administrators and students on campus." Everett expressed:

> I have a whiteboard in my office where I write everything that I need to do, whether it is school or something personal. I write, you know, and I check it off. It is fulfilling to me when I get to check the goal off. My mom just ordered me a calendar and planner to write down all my meetings and everything I have to do with school. I also learn from others, seeing what worked for them, and kinda applying it to my life. By learning also everything that someone else does, you do not just want to apply it to you. You have to see what works best for you.

Other participants described eliciting feedback–criticism as a skill to manage their challenges in becoming a leader. Participants spoke in detail about their peers helping them understand the struggles and mistakes they make when leading. Craig explained, "So, we [MILE members] would literally teach you how to be a leader, and you gotta actually go out and act on it; there were opportunities . . . to say, I'm a leader. I struggle in these areas; what I can do better? David claimed, "Knowing nobody's perfect . . . . we're going to make mistakes, we're human . . . surrounding myself with like-minded people. When I do mess up, they can, tell me about myself but also, uh, give me some pointers on how not to do this again."

Some participants described their challenges to becoming a leader as disappointments, disagreements, and self-criticism. Participants discussed disappointing people as a challenge to becoming a leader. Chris affirmed, "As a leader, you're expected to, you know, do a lot. You're expected to maintain, not only maintain, but help others achieve and get them where they need to be, but also maintain where you're at." Reggie shared, "You gotta make sure that everyone's opinion is heard and when you make a decision for a group, you gotta make sure it's in the best interest for everyone. You have to understand that sometimes everyone's needs are not going to be met." Craig described his challenge of becoming a leader related to managing disagreements with others:

> I would say people not always seeing eye to eye with you. Sometimes, you may have an idea or a thought, and they do not think the same way that you think. So now you've got people kinda combating what you believe or what you think would be best for the group, and it's sometimes difficult when you're a leader, and people are not following.

Quinton described questioning or criticizing himself in leadership roles as a challenge to becoming a leader:

> There's always gonna be people judging you or someone who thinks differently of how you are taking on a point or how you are trying to go about something. So, that's always gonna be a determining factor when you question yourself, like, 'Oh, should I say this? Should I say that? What if they think that is stupid? What if they think that does not make any sense?'

Another participant, Domanick who identifies as Black / Bi- or Multiracial expressed his challenge of self-criticism as it relates to being a Black leader:

> As a black leader, there's a difference because at first here [at Denton University], trying just to be a leader, you just getting to people, being relatable, knowing how to show that leadership quality, knowing when people need you to step up or when people don't need you to step up. But when it comes to being a leader outside of [Denton University], when it comes to this world, to be a leader and be black, it's kinda hard because the way that we [Black people] react, it's kinda different compared to someone else from a different background. We show more passion and more emotion when someone calls us out on something. We take pride in ourselves. I think that is the one thing about a Black person is they so pride[ful] . . . .it is self-pride. As a [Black] leader, it's hard to show leadership qualities at the right time. And it's all practice; it knows the people that you try to show these qualities to because they are the people that are going to react to whatever you're giving off. So, the way that I deliver my passion is probably the main thing [challenge].

Participants found value in their leadership challenges of managing disagreements, disappointments, and self-criticism by using the skill of communication to manage. Participants described communication as their central focus of managing disagreements by asking questions and sharing with one another to learn from their challenges. In this regard, Craig said,

> One of the things that I learned is that communication is key. Being intentional with your communication of how you say things, not what you say; it is how you

> say it. Perception is a reality, and all those little key phrases can take you a long way, that's how you can combat those same challenges, if you communicate, if you ask questions; no question is a dumb question. Ask all the pivotal and hard questions . . . It [Communication] would be seamless, and there will not be any problems or hiccups, no lapse or gaps to nothing. As long as you communicate effectively, you will be good.

In addition to communication, other participants described using self-filtering to manage their challenges becoming a leader. Devin shared,

> I have a filter. I have learned how to filter myself or to do certain things around certain people. When I'm with my peers, I have a certain way [I act] versus when I'm around staff members or my faculty advisors for my organizations. I act a certain way, not saying that I'm switching, but I filter – it's like a parent[al] control filter on the TV. You do not want your kids watching certain stuff when you are away versus when you are with them. So, I feel like I have learned how to master a filter in knowing what to say and when to say it versus when I was younger; I had no filter. I did not care what I did around people.

Participants discussed overcoming challenges and pushing themselves to try something they had never done. Craig explained:

> I never wanted to get on a boat, and I told myself I would never get on any boat. The reason why I say that is my fear of drowning, or possibly not making it back to land. But, my entire time in the MILE, we did a fishing trip, and I would never go because we were fishing in the middle of the ocean. During my senior year in the MILE, everyone was like this is the last chance you might as well go, and they

> all encouraged me, and everything was fine. I would say having my brothers on the boat with me throughout the entire experience made things a lot smoother and seamless for me. I was not thinking about being in the middle of the ocean. But they also did try to play a little prank on me, like we were gonna drown. So, it was fun to see that they'd walk me through it, once they felt I was comfortable with being in the middle of the ocean. So, challenge yourself and break outside your comfort zone.

Similarly, Everett shared his experience participating in the Maggiano's Fine Dining excursion with the MILE and pushing himself to overcome a challenge:

> I had missed the etiquette class, but I was still able to attend the event because I had served as a MILE mentor throughout the year. I was not going to go to the dinner because I was fearful that everyone else knew what to do and I did not, but I pushed myself to go. It was very impactful, and we were all learning how to use the knife and fork the correct way. It was not just me. So, I was glad I pushed myself to go because I would have missed that experience and never learned how to use proper etiquette when dining.

The second theme, **value in experience leadership challenges,** described what participants believed to be the challenges they faced in becoming a leader**.** Participants valued overcoming their leadership challenges of visibility – leadership persona, making mistakes – failing, disagreements, disappointing people, and self-criticism. Participants asserted that experiencing these leadership challenges made them into a better leader with a broader skill set. The third theme, **leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth,** demonstrates what students believe to be the changes they

experience while being a student leader. This theme captures the experiences of participants and the growth they encountered from their leadership involvement.

Theme Three: Leadership Involvement Creates Personal and Professional Growth

All participants described experiencing personal and professional growth through their leadership involvement. Participants shared experiences and responses regarding a transformation in their identity as a leader. Quinton noted, "I feel like the growth of my personality has expanded. So, I feel like after entering it [the MILE], I did become more talkative, I wasn't just confined to myself." Chris recalled becoming more social and interactive with his peers:

> I became a lot more charismatic, social, and talked more to people and really getting to know people. I found myself really interacting with any and everybody. I felt like that is something I did not really have as much before I came to the MILE. I was not always open to talking to every single person, but now I can have conversations with people, like, pretty easily.

Craig shared similar commentary reflecting on how his leadership involvement allowed him to grow as a man and gain leadership positions on campus:

> It allowed me to grow into the man I am today, joining the MILE when I started seeing some differences in myself from before college and after college. The MILE allowed me to grow; it allowed me to have leadership opportunities, it allowed me to hold positions on boards and step out of my character in a positive way to become a positive light on campus [Denton University]. I became a resident assistant (RA) through the MILE; that was one of the first things that drove me into being a leader . . . becoming an RA, well, first becoming a desk

> attendant (DA), but, more specifically being an RA and running a whole floor was something that I never thought I could do. I thought it was too much, like, how can you tell someone what to do, and you [are] only 18, and they [residents] are only one year younger than you are, and some of them may be non-traditional students so they may be older than you [are]? It was kinda tough, you know, to be a leader of a floor knowing that you had people that are older than you are. But the MILE showed me how to do that, how to navigate through those difficult situations to become the leader I am today.

Participants discussed how their leadership involvement helped them become more vocal and not to be afraid to ask for help. Devin declared, "Being in the [Denton University] MILE showed me it is okay to ask for help. If you are short a thousand dollars, go to financial aid and ask them for help. The worst thing they can say is no. It helped me communicate more." Chris shared commentary on how his leadership involvement caused him to grow into a better public speaker. He said, "I had done public speaking before the MILE, but I really saw myself become a better public speaker because of my roles in the MILE. Being Mr. [Denton University] MILE, put me in a role where I had to be more vocal." Similarly, David expressed that he still struggles with public speaking today, but his leadership involvement pushed him to continue to grow and speak publicly:

> I still struggle with it today, but knowing the coordinators, they pushed me always to be either talking in front of the group or presenting or introducing a guest speaker when we had at an event; or going to another event speaking, they really push[ed] me to get better at public speaking.

Many participants acknowledged that their confidence changed since their leadership involvement in the MILE. Participants expressed feeling more self-empowered and their self-perspective changing in a positive manner. Quinton remarked, "I feel like joining this organization [the MILE] helped me speak up more . . . if we're in a group, I don't sit back and listen to everyone now. I'll state my point, especially if it turns into a debate." Craig offered a response relating to his confidence as a leader suggesting:

> Most importantly, having confidence, the MILE changed me. Sometimes I was a little shy, or I wouldn't say exactly what I thought. But it allowed me to be not just outspoken but more so opinionated because that principle we always talked about at the MILE meetings that you normally attack the idea rather than a person. That has made me who I am today. So, now even in my professional or graduate position, sometimes when things don't go as planned, I think back to the MILE and how I could say something better to someone so that it doesn't seem like I'm attacking them. But, rather their opinion or their idea so that we can come to a better understanding.

Some participants described experiencing professional growth through their leadership involvement. Participants discussed professional growth as becoming more business focused and learning how to conduct yourself in a business setting. Lance shared, "It's like a lot of different professional things I learned in the MILE. Before I got to the MILE, I used to tie my tie the wrong way. So they [MILE Coordinators and MILE members] did tie exercises where you learn how to tie different knots, or you teach other

people how to tie different knots." David captured this theme by sharing the positive change he experienced in relation to his professional integrity as a leader:

> Learning how to conduct yourself at a meeting [or] how to conduct yourself anywhere you go, not just at a meeting . . . One of the things we learned in the MILE from our coordinators was integrity. So, knowing you should always be doing the right thing, even when nobody is watching was a positive change for me.

Participants' responses echoed their professional growth in relation to their opportunities for other leadership positions on campus. Eight participants described their leadership roles since joining the MILE as their involvement in student organizations. The student organizations mentioned explicitly by participants include the African Student Organization, Campus Activities Board, Association of Information Professionals Collegiate 100, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. These organizations allowed participants to lead in roles of executive board positions including presidents, vice presidents, secretary, and treasurer.

Four of the participants described their membership in their fraternity as leadership roles since joining the MILE. All four participants were a part of Alpha Nu Omega Fraternity, Inc. Participant Clarvonte shared, "The MILE piqued my interest in Greek life. Another participant Craig recalled joining his fraternity and serving on the executive board:

> I served as the secretary on the fraternity's executive board. That was something that I never thought I would be able to do. Like come out to the campus with a probate or to go through a whole process of becoming in a brotherhood. It was

> something I never thought I would be able to do and be able to complete . . . Then to be on the other side of the fence, I look back all the time and just think, I do not even know how I was doing that. I do not even know where the motivation is coming from. I do not even know how I was getting the strength, nor how I was getting the faith to do it but it seemed like it was destined to happen. So, it happened . . . That was something that I definitely can say that changed my experience while I was at [Denton University] after joining the MILE.

Other participants discussed their professional growth in relation to their experiences being a resident assistant and desk attendant after joining the MILE. Eleven participants served as resident assistants or desk attendants throughout their matriculation. Clarvonte shared becoming more prepared to engage and mentor his residents particularly other Black males. He noted:

> After [I] joined The MILE, I became a resident assistant (RA) on campus [Denton University] at O'Connell Hall "Where Excellence Begins." It prepared me to engage more, and that was a useful tool when I became an RA because I had a hall full of residents, primarily freshmen males. It just really taught me how to mentor, how to engage, how to ask the right questions, how to respond to different issues that we might have as males because it trained me to engage with males, particularly African American males. Where often, we do not always have the mentors or the resources that we need. It [MILE] was able to turn me into a resource, a mentor for others.

David recalled the professional growth he experienced as an RA that led him to his employment post-graduation:

> Because of the MILE, I became an RA, it grew me to become a better leader professionally, and because of me being an RA, I became a resident director at Rowan University where I lead a co-ed residence hall, which holds about 375 students. This year was my first year being a resident director, and it was successful. I had a staff of 12, a lot of resident assistants and one assistant resident director and yes, we had hardships. Yes, we had problems, but we got through it together, and I with the help of others had the best staff on campus, which was recognized by our department. And because of the staff, we were able to cultivate a wonderful community here at Rowan University

Other participants discussed how their leadership involvement caused them to experience professional growth in relation to the academic support they received at Denton University. Lance recalled his transition to Denton University and the support he received academically as a new leader within the MILE. Lance noted:

> I lived at OC [residence hall] my first year, and my transition was rocky. My GPA was low. So, one of my MILE coordinators, pulled me to the side . . . then he just basically showed me what my GPA was and . . . helped me understand how they count up the GPA and what I can go through to get my GPA higher. He actually sat down with me and was like, "Look, you need to do this, this, and this" and then, after that, I talked to some of the older guys that were in the MILE, and they helped me get tutoring so that I brought my grades up. After that, I was able to take on other leadership positions and help other people.

Likewise, participant Craig shared his experience receiving academic support for an English composition class that led to his professional growth in graduate school:

> My freshman year I was in an English composition class, and I had a paper due. I was a straight-A student before coming to [Denton University], and I was, getting pretty good grades my first semester there. I never used to get my paper checked. I would just submit it knowing I know how to write, but one day I took my paper to him [the MILE coordinator] because I did not wanna get a bad grade. I think I had received a "B" on my last paper, so I definitely want to get an "A" this time around. But I ask[ed] him to edit my paper, he told me to print it out and slide it underneath his door, and I did . . . It took him like an hour to grade it, and the paper came back with all these red marks. I was like, 'Oh no, he does not know what he is doing because I typically know how to write.' But sure enough, those same edits that he made then are the same edits that I am making today. That is really why I believe I got as far as I am today as a graduate student now. Those same edits that he made, I think about when I'm writing papers today. So, not only did I get the academic support I need[ed], or the academic critique right then [that] helped me in college but it's helping me now today in graduate school.

The third theme, **leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth,** demonstrated what students believe to be the changes they experience while being a student leader. Participants shared the importance of becoming a more vocal leader and the confidence they developed through their leadership involvement. Participants also highlighted the success in leadership opportunities they gained in other organizations, various campus activities, and graduate school. The fourth theme, **understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism,** described how students come to understand and exhibit the phenomenon of leadership. This theme

captured the value participants placed on understanding leadership as a responsibility to others and as an action that is selfless.

Theme Four: Understanding Leadership through Collective Responsibility and Altruism

All participants described some level of their understanding of leadership through collective responsibility and altruism. Examples illustrating an understanding of leadership through collective responsibility and altruism were shown throughout the process of the participants' becoming leaders through their lived experience. Participants talked about the importance of collective responsibility and selflessness in their pre-collegiate experiences, role as Denton University MILE mentors, Denton University alumni, and envisioning themselves in the future.

For several participants, becoming a leader led them to altruism. Lance highlighted that during his collegiate experience he learned that, "Becoming a leader is making sure everybody is okay and always doing the best thing for the best people, making sure I always worked towards the greater good for everybody." Further, he revealed that during his pre-collegiate experience he viewed leadership as self-centered. Lance stated, "At one point, I was all about myself, and it was just the family and me, nobody else, but I had to understand that for me to succeed in a society . . . I need to help bring up the next generation, which is not just my family, but also my peers."

Everett communicated similar reasoning of his understanding of becoming a leader remarking, "Becoming a leader means being selfless . . . it's not about you, it's about everyone else and serving everyone else. Coming to college, [Denton University] I

have picked up an aspect of service, and that is what leadership means to me. It's serving others."

Other participants described their altruism as the characteristic they valued most about themselves as leaders. Chris shared, "I'm really focused on serving people . . . no matter [what] . . . all I want to do with my life is just make sure that other people are happy, and do what I can to help them, you know, be happy or successful." Walter commented that he genuinely cares about others and their wellbeing. He noted, "I'm selfless and others value that in me as well because I genuinely care for others, and make sure other people are good." This thought led participants to describe the feelings of their responsibility in leadership as they participated in the Denton University MILE.

Seven participants described how they felt their responsibility as a leader increased after joining the MILE. Participants described having a duty of responsibility as a member of the MILE for themselves and others. Chris stated, "I have more responsibility because I have a leadership role in the MILE, people look up to me. Whether I recognize it or not, there's a certain level of expectation that comes with, like, being a leader." In contrast, Clarvonte explained in detail that his responsibility as a leader can be a burden as well as a duty:

> Yes, I would say it's [i.e. responsibility] more of a burden. It is a heavier burden now on the other side [being a MILE mentor] trying to engage with the younger students or the new MILE members, keeping them engaged. Trying to ensure that there is always something to do, or there is always something interesting to keep them engaged. Before I would show up to [MILE] events. Now, I am a part of the planning of the [MILE] events, as well as getting people to come to the events

> or the programs, the promotion and everything like that. So, instead of just showing up, now I have a role and ensuring that we have things to show up to.

All participants described their understanding of leadership as a MILE mentor by their responsibility to be continuously committed to their role as a leader in their every action. Quinton commented, "Leadership is a responsibility that you have to be able to do day in and day out." Chris also provided a reflection that highlighted his responsibility as a leader is continuous. He expressed:

> I think leadership is continuous now. That is something I learned being a MILE mentor. I do not think that [it is only] at times. It is not something I have always understood, but in retrospect, after this year as a mentor, it is continuous work. You have to embrace it, you know, being a leader and being a mentor [are] something that you do not necessarily stop [being]. But you must find peace in it and be calm because somebody is looking up to you. You are a mentor for a reason. So, somebody is going to be looking to you for advice and stuff; it is just continuous.

Some participants described their understanding of leadership as a MILE mentor relating to the responsibility of giving back intentionally. Adrian explained, "It is important to give back and support your own 'cause many times people do not support their own. Especially once they feel like they have accomplished something; they look forward to the future and aren't trying to look back." Similarly, Clarvonte explained his understanding of the importance of giving back to others while in leadership:

> It's [leadership] not about me necessarily. It [leadership] is about what I can do for the next group. Not all the things that I wanted to do, or wanted to see might

> happen during my tenure, or during my matriculation, but I can start the groundwork. What I do now can set it up for the next group to come afterward, and they can benefit from it. But I benefit from putting in that labor and knowing that one day, it will come to fruition.

Craig shared his understanding of leadership change because "Being a leader after joining the MILE, I realized it's [leadership] not those people that had those cool things that I always wanted, but it's those who make a change . . . it's not about themselves it's about being able to give back." Adrian pointed out that his responsibility, as a leader, was to guide the younger men who looked up to him. Further, he wanted to be able to give back to his community. He explained:

> I feel like it is my job to guide the younger guys . . . they all have my numbers; we have an open line of communication. Being in the MILE, I want to start my own organization in the Baltimore community, called "For No Impact." That is gonna be tours around local schools and stuff. But pretty much, we go [and] talk to the students about the importance of college, but also talk about the importance of life skills. When I do that, I wanna take, like, a different route. I feel like a lot of times, people do not realize it; they wanna go to these inner-city schools in these urban neighborhoods, and they go in the wrong way. Like they go as a preppy person. They do not wanna see your damn suit, and they don't see anybody in no suit on a regular basis. So, how they gonna be open to you. I feel like, me, I'm blessed because I can do both. I can put it together, build together, and help shape their experience.

Other participants described their understanding of leadership as a MILE mentor as the responsibility to hold themselves and other leaders accountable. Clarvonte recalled a moment in his leadership experience in the MILE. He shared, "The [Denton University] MILE made me more comfortable holding other people accountable and being willing to be held accountable for my actions or different deadlines." Everett discussed self-accountability as his responsibility as a leader. He stated, "They [MILE members] use a term, 'when you're off, you're on.' Someone is always watching you. So, you always have to hold yourself to a high standard." Similarly, Craig noted:

> Knowing that, I do not gotta always take on these [leadership] roles, but I have other people to support me that [are] gonna be willing to step up and fill this void. Before being in the MILE, I thought that I had to do everything. If I did not do it, it was done incorrectly. But after being a leader in the MILE and after my first year, I realized that I had people to rely on, that I didn't always have to carry the weight or carry the load. So, now it's kinda like I got my brother's here from the MILE program that's gonna help get through this.

The majority of participants also discussed their responsibility as leaders in terms of being an alumnus of the MILE and giving back to students in the program and Denton University. Two particular responsibilities emerged as participants discussed their future role as alumni of the program and of Denton University: serving as a financial resource and a role model/mentor. Clarvonte shared he wanted to be a resource to the MILE by "Giving my testimony of how the MILE's prepared me, and I'm here because I learned these skills, because I paid attention to these different things that were being said to me . . . to continue to pass on that information." Devin expressed:

> Just coming back and speaking when I have time. Letting them know the journey I took from transferring schools but letting them know that I was once in [their] shoes, and if I could do it, I know you can do it. Just being that figure like oh, he did it and being a living testimony. That is important because most young adults do not have that person that is pushing them. They might have somebody in their corners like their mother or their father, but they don't have that somebody that's in their age bracket that went through three or four years of college or what they are about to go through, telling them whom to connect with, what to do. Telling them to make sure you do this, make sure you do that. They have already been in those shoes. So, it is just like passing the shoe down.

Quinton realized his leadership responsibility as an alumnus to the university community as "dealing with those that are younger than me, it's just to help to steer them in the right direction, with not, not doing your schoolwork or going out and doing this all the time." Participant Lance shared,

> To the university community, I owe everything. I want to start giving money back but also volunteer my time, letting people know to come to [Denton University] and just because it is an HBCU, you can be the best that you can be. Getting kids from our community to come to HBCUs and specifically to [Denton University], just understand that if you come here that you could join the MILE, and exercise your full potential.

Lance continued sharing his reflection on his understanding of his responsibility as an alumnus member of Denton University:

> As an [alumnus] member, my responsibility is to come back and talk to leaders and talk to the regular population at Denton University to let them know that no matter what you are going through, I've been through some of the same situations, and I can help you as well as any man that wears a MILE shirt. We are one family no matter what years we were in the MILE.

Other participants described their responsibility in serving as a financial resource to the MILE. For Chris, it meant, "to give back and, you know, to help out in any way you can, whether that's monetary or with your time or with opportunity, to give back. And, you know, try and provide more than what was provided for you while you were in the MILE." Adrian expressed his desire to donate monetarily to the MILE and remarked, "I know my responsibility is to donate money, but also just come back, visit and share my story 'cause, to be honest, I hate Black people who go to school, get great jobs, and they turn their back on their communities and not help others."

Several participants specifically described their responsibility as a leader to give back to the African American community. Reggie noted:

> I want to be a leader. I want to be a person who is able to give back to the African-American community. But, what I do not want to be is that person who does it for the fame or to get praise from other people. I do not do anything now for praise, but I feel like now I do not do as much community service as I could. In 10 years, I want to be able to have that as a norm.

Similarly, Devin shared his desire to give a scholarship to a student that had taken a similar path to his:

> I want to start a foundation for a kid, like a little scholarship every year to donate to the school for a couple of kids that went through what I went through, that had their schedule dropped and needed a little extra funding, a thousand dollars, two thousand dollars, I just want to donate it to them, to be honest."

Participants discussed their future in terms of becoming family men, married with children and able to provide for family members, such as their parents and grandparents.

Other participants describe their responsibility as alumni to the MILE and the University community in terms of being a role model and mentor. Adrian stated, "To not disappear and showing them that I didn't think I was gonna do anything that I did in college, but I did . . . You really can do anything in this world, but it takes you to believe in yourself before you can get anyone else to believe in you." Clearly, for Adrian, it is important that he continue to be a visible role model, even as an alumnus. Our participant, Craig, expressed his leadership responsibility as a role model:

> Being a role model is something that you cannot teach. It comes over time, and it is kinda instilled in you. You could be a role model to someone that is even older than you are. Do not think that age plays a factor in it; it does not. There have been many times that I have done things, not looking for recognition, but people gravitate to it. They realize that when you work hard, for example, if you were in a group, and you are doing a class assignment and you are being the one who is stepping up, making sure the group project is done completely. Those same individuals are gonna wanna work in the same group as [yours] next time, and that's all because of what you did that initial time. So, just being able to say I'm going to step up, it may be more work; it may take more time, but that's my duty

> to the MILE. So, whatever I can do as a graduate student away from [Denton University] to help the MILE, I'm all for it.

Other participants described their responsibility as a role model to the MILE and university community as always representing the MILE Man. Chris stated, "I feel like my biggest responsibility to the [Denton University] community is to be a good representation of what the MILE stands for. And just continuing to set that [as] the precedent of what a [Denton University] MILE Man looks like, and this is how he carries himself." Another participant Devin commented:

> There is a time and a place for everything. Being on a University campus, wearing that blue and orange [Denton University] MILE tie, you are just held to a higher dignity, just like the queens, the Mister, and Miss of student organizations, when they have on their sashes. It is like they are being held to a higher responsibility. Eyes are on them like, 'Oh, I know, he is in the [Denton University] MILE, I can tell by his outfit. He has on his blazer, and he has on his tie. I like that guy,' something like that. I feel good just like it is a superhero type of thing. People can come up to me, ask me about the MILE or ask me for help. I feel dressing up makes me professional, when you have on a suit, tie, and a blazer, you feel the utmost professionalism and it just feels good. Before the MILE, I did not dress up. I was used to just being a college athlete, it is not a strict dress code, but you throw on shorts, t-shirt, hoodies or sweats. So, joining the MILE broke me out of my comfort zone, and I was able to dress up and get compliments. People would say, 'Oh, you look very decent. You look handsome. You smell good. You put on some cologne?"

Additionally, the majority of participants discussed their understanding of leadership in relation to responsibility and selflessness as they envisioned themselves in the future. When discussing his future, Dominick shared his sense of responsibility pertaining to becoming the head of his household:

> I want to make a difference for my family, hopefully buying both of my grandparents a kidney. My success is not even for me; it's for them. Hopefully, I'm successful and not looking for my next dollar, but looking for, you know, my family's next 100 years of living, and prolonging my family's longevity.

Similarly, Everett expressed his sense of responsibility for becoming a father in the future:

> In 10 years, I hope to be a father so that will be more responsibility, you know, making sure your kid's okay and making sure they have everything. Also being a father, you are the head of your household. So, [you're] making sure your wife is covered with protection spiritually and physically, and as a father, you have to do the same.

The fourth theme, **understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism,** highlights how students come to understand and exhibit leadership. Participants explained the importance of collective responsibility and selflessness in their pre-collegiate experiences, role as Denton University MILE mentors, Denton University alumni, and envisioning themselves in the future. Participants also highlighted their responsibility in terms of giving back to other students, the MILE program, and the university community. The fifth theme, **student leadership at an HBCU creates resiliency,** describes how students experience leadership within the context of an HBCU.

This theme captures the context of the environment an HBCU creates for the student to experience the phenomenon of leadership and the impact it has on their identity as a Black male in college.

Theme Five: Student Leadership at an HBCU Creates Resiliency

The fifth theme, **student leadership at an HBCU creates resiliency**, illustrates participants sharing their experiences regarding the importance of being a student leader and attending an HBCU. Reggie shared, "If I would've attended a PWI, I wouldn't be in the position I am [in] today. I would just be going to campus for the degree. I feel like coming to [Denton University], I'm learning life lessons as a leader." Chris commented on the impact student leadership at an HBCU has on one's resiliency. He furthered this idea with his assertion:

> I do not think all students know how big of an impact it is to be a student leader at an HBCU. It is the best thing ever because you have a platform to influence your peers toward success. In doing that, you are affecting future generations of African American students. I feel that sometimes that is not always looked at or by other student leaders. There is so much impact student leaders at HBCUs have on not just their peers but [on] the communities around them. By being, a good leader and engaging with communities, [you] can really affect a whole generation of kids and African-American people. That is a big deal.

Several participants described their experience being a leader at an HBCU as serving in an environment of competition. Participants believed competing with and among others builds character and persistence throughout one's matriculation. Quinton noted, "You gotta, know how to put yourself out there . . . . especially being at an HBCU

. . . everyone's trying to compete. Even though we're all working towards the same goal, it's always a competition." Clarvonte echoed this idea:

> Here at an HBCU, most of us were big fish in small ponds at our high schools. So coming here, it is competitive. We all had the same credentials and some similar backgrounds, but it is just important that we all understand that we are here to push each other to continue to be better. I like the scripture that mentions iron sharpening iron. So, it is important for us to remember that we are all in this together. It is competitive, but we all should be competing not necessarily with each other, but with our old selves to be better than we were the day before, to realize that as a Black community, how far we have come, the different struggles that we went through. We have progressed, and we are continuing to progress as we learn and as we matriculate here at [Denton University] that we keep in mind that there is still a long way for us to go, but we are a part of that change that is coming. We need to continue to be ready and push each other to be ready because we need each other to succeed.

Domanick revealed more about the competition that comes with being a student leader at an HBCU:

> It takes a lot of character to be a student leader at an HBCU. Everyone has these amazing goals they want to accomplish in life so there may be 10 or 15 other people who want to do the same thing as you . . . all that competition does build character. You win some, you lose some, but you earn.

Other participants described the importance of having a social life and maintaining balance while being in leadership at an HBCU. Participants profoundly

described personal experiences where they had to balance their leadership responsibilities with their academics and social activities. Lance shared, "You need a social life just as much as you need, academics, because, honestly, your social life is what keeps you sane 'cause if you just keep pushing in class, you don't get the full experience of college." Everett, explained his experience as being a leader at an HBCU and trying to maintain balance:

> Being a student leader at an HBCU is fun and exciting. At an HBCU, it is always a lot of things going on. So, you have to manage your time. It was just homecoming, and it is always a great time for students at HBCU. But sometimes you're conflicted with 'I have this to do, or I have that to do.' This past homecoming, I wanted to go to the comedy show on Wednesday night, and I did not have a class until 7:00 pm that evening. The Comedy show started at 7:00 pm, so I was conflicted on if I was going to skip class and go to the comedy show or go to class and get to the comedy show late. Luckily, the professor canceled class that day without us even talking to him about the comedy show. So, that was fortunate. A lot of times, even during my freshman year, I was going to the pep rally on Friday, but I didn't start a paper that was due that night. So, I had to miss out on the pep rally my freshman year to do that paper that was due at 11:59 p.m. that night.

Numerous participants described pushing through and persevering as it related to being a leader at an HBCU. The participants interviewed discussed a number of different leadership experiences that allowed them to build character and resiliency. David asserted:

> Being a student leader is truly hard. There is a lot about service and serving the campus when sometimes you do not even want to. Sometimes you wanna go to class or go to sleep, but you gotta go to this meeting or go to this event. I salute everybody who is a student leader today; or whoever was a student leader because I know that it was truly hard for me, and it is nothing that I regret doing. It's something that has truly pushed me to the man I'm becoming, and it's something that I would, when I have kids, push them to be . . . student leaders at [Denton University].

Craig offered his experience with being a Black male student leader at an HBCU by suggesting:

> Being a student leader on the HBCU campus, especially being a Black male, a lot of people underestimate you and may not see it [leadership] in you. You have to be your motivation. You may have those one or two people or even a handful of people that see it [leadership] in you. Then, you have a whole bunch of people that do not see it [leadership] in you. That number outweighs the number of people who do see it in you. But as tough and hard as it gets, you gotta push through. It's always gonna be a better day, and one thing I always pride myself on is no matter how bad of a day I'm having, someone is always having a worse day than you. So, to know that someone else had a worse day than you, whether it was financially, academically, socially, psychologically, whatever it can be, keep pushing, keep pushing through to become that leader. Find what you do best; find your niche; find your role and master it. Once you master that, then you

move onto the next. If you focus on one thing at a time . . . you shall see it through.

The fifth theme, **student leadership at an HBCU creates resiliency,** described how students experience leadership within the context of an HBCU. Participants highlighted the significance of becoming a student leader at an HBCU. They also shared stories of their becoming resilient through their leadership experiences. Students were inspired to have a social life and balance their academics with their social responsibilities as well as preserve their dignity throughout their collegiate journey.

Summary

This chapter presented the key findings of the study. Throughout the narratives of my participants, five key themes emerged related to their leadership experiences and identity: (a) interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development, (b) value in experiencing leadership challenges, (c) leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth, (d) understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism, and (e) student leadership at HBCUs creates resiliency.

Particular attention is focused on the significance of the relationships that participants form as members in the MILE. There is an examination of what participants believed to be the challenges and changes they faced while becoming a leader. Further, there is an understanding of how students exhibit leadership and the importance of being a student leader and attending an HBCU. Those themes highlighted the experiences of 12 MILE mentors as Black males who participated in a campus-based initiative at an HBCU. This study allowed me to understand the experiences and to examine, in detail, Black male participation in a campus-based initiative on the social and academic support

and its contribution to college student achievement in relation to leadership identity development.

The following chapter will present a detailed discussion of significant findings in relation to current literature on leadership development, identity development, Komives' (2005) LID Model, and what implications may be valuable for use by administrators in higher education, advocacy groups, and Black men who chose to enroll at an HBCU. Additionally, the discussion will also explore the results of the data analysis in the context of the proposed conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2, with the objective of evaluating the fit of the model to leadership development and identity development. The chapter closes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and some recommendations for future research.

Chapter 6: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand better the leadership experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. African American students who engage in formal and informal educational activities enhance their educational outcomes, academic achievement, college satisfaction, and increase their chances of healthy identity development (Astin, 1985; Hu & Kuh, 2002; Rocconi, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008). Black men reported that opportunities for and participation in leadership activities were essential to their campus experience (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Sankofa, Hurley, Allen, & Boykins, 2005).

This chapter presents a discussion of significant findings as related to the literature on African American males in Higher Education and at HBCUs, student involvement, out-of-the-classroom engagement and identity development, campus-based initiatives, and leadership development. Also, included in this chapter is a discussion on the connections of this study to Komives's (2005) LID Model and the implications for use by administrators in higher education, advocacy groups, and Black men who opt to enroll at an HBCU. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

The research questions that guided this study and sparked discussion, implications for practice and future research possibilities are the following:

1. What are the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based initiatives at an HBCU?
2. How do participants in campus-based initiatives perceive themselves as leaders?

3. In what ways have their leadership experiences influenced their identity development?

The study examined the social and academic support and its contribution to college student achievement in relation to leadership identity development of Black males participating in a campus-based initiative at an HBCU. I reported and employed information attained from face-to-face, semi-structured interviews conducted with twelve Black males at Denton University. All twelve participants identified as MILE mentors and meet the following criteria: (1) had a minimum grade point average of 2.8; (2) were upperclassmen (sophomore, junior, senior) or previously graduated within one year of their interview date; and (3) were in good disciplinary standing with the university. I subsequently conducted the interviews with the participants on the Denton University campus.

Discussion of Research Questions

Question 1: What are the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based initiatives at an HBCU?

Significant research has been completed on the experiences of Black males in higher education (Brooks et al., 2013; Cuyjet, 1997; Harper & Davis, 2012; Hill & Boes, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2011; Toldson & Lewis, 2012; Zell, 2011). Some of those studies include discussion on leadership experiences (Arminio et al., 2000; Flowers, 2004; Harper, 2005; Harper, 2006; Sutton & Terrell, 1997) and involvement in student organizations and identity development (Bohr et al., 1995; Fries-Britt, 2000; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Harper and Quaye, 2007), student graduation and retention outcomes (Ancar, 2008; Brooks et al., 2013; Cuyjet, 2006; Flowers, 2004; Sedlacek, 1999, 2004), and

enrollment and institutional engagement (Barker & Avery, 1997; Chickering et al. 2006; Harper et al., 2005; Hawkins & Larabee, 2009). However, those research studies mostly focused on high-achieving African American male students and the experiences of Black male students at PWIs. The examination of these topics was often supported by statistics and approached from a deficit perspective. Additionally, there is "a relatively small body of literature on the importance of student involvement experiences for Black male students" (Moschella, 2013, p. 3). The findings in the literature cited above led to the formation of this study's first research question: "What are the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based initiatives at an HBCU?"

Many participants reported that they were leaders before joining the MILE or enrolling at Denton University. However, the participants associated their participation in the MILE at Denton University as having a significant influence on their leadership identity development. The first theme, **interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development**, demonstrated the significance of the relationships participants formed as members of the MILE.

Participants described MILE staff as individuals who influenced them to become leaders. Furthermore, they indicated that having the MILE staff and peers as constant support, both academically and socially, helped them develop personally Black men. The MILE's ability to have staff members who could relate to the experiences of the students allowed participants to establish a deepening relationship and be vulnerable with one another and which allowed room for meaningful dialogue that could impact a person's growth. Participants described discussing future plans, facing their fears and sharing painful lived experiences.

The second theme, **value in experience leadership challenges**, encompassed what participants believed to be the challenges they faced in becoming leaders. Many student participants associated their challenges to becoming a leader as having a significant impact on their leadership identity development. Participants discussed challenges they faced, such as visibility, making mistakes, disagreements, self-criticism, and disappointing people. The participants believed that the MILE instilled in them the necessary tools and skills needed to face those challenges and become better leaders. As MILE participants, serving as a mentor, they were guided to lead discussions and mentor younger MILE men while developing themselves as leaders. The MILE staff's practice of encouraging the participants to take on leadership roles and to lead the group helped many participants attain future goals and overcome their challenges.

Campus-based initiatives, such as those at the Denton University MILE, were designed in response to the disengagement trends of Black males in higher education at PWIs and HBCUs alike. I hold to the claims that the leadership experiences of Black males participating in campus-based initiatives, such as the MILE at an HBCU, have many positive effects on their matriculation. Some of those positive effects include social and academic success throughout their matriculation. As a result of Black males' (in this study) participation in a campus-based initiative, there was an increase in their personal growth and their engagement with the university. This is evidenced by the participants' involvement with administrators, faculty, and staff as well as the resources offered at the university. Participants of the study also self-reported the strengths and skills learned to overcome challenges throughout their participation in the campus-based initiative.

Since HBCUs "have existed for more than 100 years without becoming serious subjects for academic research or inquiry" (Brown & Freeman, 2002 p. 238), it is not at all surprising that I, the researcher who is a student affairs professional at an HBCU, would want to examine the leadership experiences of Black male students who are matriculating at those institutions. It has been well documented that being involved on campus can help students develop a deeper sense of personal identity, connection to the campus community, and build leadership skills that prepare them for life after college (Astin, 1984; Harper, 2009). All twelve participants in the study shared information about being a leader at an HBCU. Three of the participants described their leadership experiences at HBCUs in relation to competition among other student leaders. These experiences combined with the reality of HBCUs providing a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes student success (Davis, 2006; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Palmer & Gasman, 2008), but at the same time the environment can create a culture of friendly competition that enables students to empower one another to be the best they can be. This environment provides individuals with the space to learn, grow, and be empowered by seeing those who look like them succeed, which helps them realize that they can accomplish and achieve at the same or higher level.

The fifth theme, **student leadership at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) creates resiliency**, described how students experience leadership within the context of an HBCU. The importance of pushing through and persevering while being a leader at an HBCU is vital to the experience of Black males. Much of the literature discusses the experiences of Black males as underrepresented in higher education (Horn & Berger, 2004; Porter, 2006; Strayhorn, 2008; U.S. Department of

Education, 2006) and lagging behind their counterparts in terms of their achievement and matriculation (Hill & Boes, 2013, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, my study shows the perseverance of these individuals who participated in campus-based initiatives and their achievement of goals through their leadership experiences.

Additionally, these participants acknowledged the importance of balancing and having a social life within their involvement in a campus-based initiative and their leadership experiences. They described the social and academic benefits of being a leader who participated in a campus-based initiative at an HBCU. The participants made a conscious effort to ensure that their academic achievement was in line with their social experiences, and they understood that they had to have both social and academic success to be a leader at an HBCU. Hence, the participants shared that they had many decisions to contemplate when navigating their leadership experiences at an HBCU.

Question 2: How do participants in campus-based initiatives perceive themselves as leaders?

There is a growing body of literature centered around college students' leadership development (London, 2009; Odom et al., 2012; Oldham, 2008). Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) define leadership "as a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish change" (p. 33). Furthermore, the authors describe two types of leaders: (1) a positional leader, and (2) a participant, collaborator, or group member. I believed that participants perceived themselves as individual leaders, but I wanted to explore how and why the participants perceived that they were leaders. Hence, these beliefs of leadership led to the formation of the second research questions, "how do participants in campus-based initiatives perceive themselves as leaders?"

Komives et al. (2013) defined positional leaders as those individuals who are in a leadership position. This position could have been selected, appointed, elected or hired to assume responsibility for a group working towards change (Komives et al., 2013). Thus, the fourth theme, **understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism**, is relevant in this regard. It described how students come to understand and exhibit leadership. The participants value understanding leadership as a responsibility to others and as an action that is selfless.

In my study, participants provided information on how they perceived themselves as leaders and their view of leadership both before and after their participation in the MILE. Eight participants described their understanding of leadership as a position of authority before their involvement in the MILE. Aligned with current research findings in the literature surrounding leadership identity development, participants believed a role defined leadership or assumed responsibility for a group.

The participants discussed perceiving leaders and leadership as positional during their elementary and high school experiences before their engagement in the MILE program. Participants described their roles as leaders through their involvement in school and community activities as well as familial responsibilities. Participants recognized that during that time, their perception of leadership was based on a role or responsibility assigned to a person. Such role could be that of a parent to a child or a coach to a youth sports team.

As a result of the participants' involvement in a campus-based initiative, such as the MILE, I believe that participants' understanding of leadership shifted to perceiving a leader as a participant, collaborator, or group member. Komives et al. (2013) described

the participant, collaborator, or group member leader as “one who actively engages with others to accomplish change.” Eleven participants described a change in their understanding of leadership and how they perceived themselves as leaders since their involvement in the MILE. Participants credited their leadership experiences in the MILE for changing their understanding of leadership to a focus on collective responsibility and altruism. Participants discussed their responsibility of leadership in terms of continuous commitment, giving back, being intentional, and establishing trust. The study shows that this action moved participants’ perception of leadership from a position of authority that was elected, appointed, or hired, to leaders being an active participant and collaborator in establishing change. The findings of this study echo those by Komives et al. (2013), who suggest that regardless of the leadership role a person assumes, “A person is defined as a leader by taking the initiative and making a difference in moving the group forward toward positive change” (p.22).

Additionally, as a result of their involvement in the MILE, all twelve participants viewed their leadership as different from other student leaders who were involved in various student organizations. Participants described their view of leadership in the MILE as an understanding of their purpose and the tailoring of the MILE for their success as students. Day (2001) states that leadership is constructed through social interactions within social environments. Therefore, “consideration of the organizational context is important and can provide insights into the various influences that developing leaders encounter in a particular setting” (Muir, 2014, p. 358). The MILE’s ability to create an atmosphere where students can actualize the purpose of the organization and feel that the environment is specifically tailored to their development as students is

essential to the progress of Black males in higher education. This study affirms the findings of several studies (Barker & Avery, 2012; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Palmer et al., 2013; Zell, 2011) that claim that male initiative programs provide a space for the development and growth of Black, and coupled with the supportive environment HBCUs (Allen et al., 2007; Palmer et al., 2011) provide for significant impacts on students' academic and social success.

Question 3: In what ways have their leadership experiences influenced their identity development?

A number of authors have explored the positive effects of the engagement in student organizations and out-of-classroom activities on identity development, retention, and other outcomes produced in college for students of color (Cokley, 2001; Evans et al., 1998; Flowers, 2004; Fries-Britt, 2000; Harper, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2007, Howard-Hamilton, 1997). Specifically, out-of-the-classroom engagement (Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995) is equally crucial to the development of leadership skills in all students (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000). Leadership research (Owen, 2012; Sanford & Adelson, 1962) shows that focusing on the personal and the individual aspects of development, as well as designing purposeful environments that provide the optimal level of support and challenge to spur development. These research findings led me to the third question guiding the study: "In what ways have their leadership experience influenced their identity development?"

The third theme of **leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth** demonstrated what students believed to be the changes they experience while being a student leader. Moreover, participants of the study associated their leadership

successes in relation to their strengths discovered and developed while in the MILE. Harper and Quaye (2007), citing the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, noted that participation in student organizations, residence hall groups, and other campus activities enable students to "learn through action, contemplation, reflection, and emotional engagement" (p. 11).

All twelve participants in my study shared that their participation in MILE increased their strengths, which included public speaking, communication skills, people skills, networking, accountability, and collaboration. The practices of the MILE offer and encourage students to take the opportunity to lead within the organization; furthermore, the MILE provided individuals with the instruction and support needed to shape and form their identity as a leader. Komives et al. (2005) stated that applying new skills, such as public speaking, delegating, motivating, team building, and facilitating is learned from being involved in different experiences and acquired through multiple engagement experiences. Further, these experiences are vital to student development as "every student club or organization provides learning opportunities for its participants to develop and practice these leadership skills, time management, collaboration, and goal setting" (The American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2011, p. 11).

Furthermore, many participants associated significant MILE events that influenced their identity as a leader. Participants shared information about events, such as the MILE retreat, excursions, and community service opportunities. The MILE's ability to provide participants with venues and activities for their leadership development is essential to the identity development of Black males. It is important to note that the

MILE's retreat created an atmosphere for teamwork, and the development of personal leadership skills had a positive impact on the way's participants viewed themselves. Participants described positive changes in their self-efficacy asserting confidence and the ability to recognize themselves as leaders to their family and their friends.

The participants of the study all associate their involvement in the MILE as a form of motivation to attain dominant leadership positions on campus and leadership roles beyond Denton University. These findings contradict the results of Kimbrough and Harper's (2006) study that collected data from various student leaders at HBCUs including student government association presidents, fraternity chapter leaders, and resident assistants (RAs) at nine different HBCUs. The overall results of their study revealed that the Black men were highly unengaged with the campus community (Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). Of the 49 student leaders interviewed at the various HBCUs, only seven of them were men, and these men were located at two different institutions. The findings from Kimbrough and Harper's (2006) study showed a disparity that made it necessary to look at gender differences in the engagement of Black collegians. The study showed that the leadership experiences of men who participated in the MILE at Denton University were the opposite. These students were leaders in multiple student organizations, holding roles as resident assistants in several residence halls, and were active members of fraternities and the Student Government Association.

The experience of the participants in the present study is incongruent with other research studies, such as that of Roach (2001), which asserted Black males are increasingly withdrawing from leadership positions and also that Black men spend the majority of their time investing minimal efforts in out-of-class time to their academic

endeavors (Harper, 2006; Harper & Quaye, 2009). However, as presented in this study, the participants were increasingly more involved on campus in various leadership roles, specifically some of the top leadership roles for students, such as those of the Student Government Association, and serving as "Mister" of the University; it is notable that several participants were both "Misters" and presidents for various student organizations. It is worthwhile to note that participants in this study spent a significant amount of time using university resources and engaging with the administration and staff for academic support out of the classroom.

It is clear that participation in the campus-based MILE initiative intentionally increased participants' social support, life skills, attainment of leadership roles, completion of the undergraduate degree, relationships with faculty and staff, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Overall, the success of the participants in campus-based initiatives, and their leadership experiences, are linked to their participation in the MILE.

Interpretation of Findings Situated in Theory and Relevant Leadership

Chapter 5 presented several findings that are connected to the theoretical framework of Komives' (2005) Leadership Identity Development (LID) model and, moreover, the importance of leadership as an identity for Black males at HBCUs who participate in campus-based initiatives. Those significant findings that emerged from the experiences of participants include (**a) interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development, (b) value in experiencing leadership challenges, (c) leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth, (d) understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism, and (e) student leadership**

at HBCUs creates resiliency. The following sections discuss the connection between the essential findings and the review of relevant literature.

Komives' Model of Leadership Identity Development

The theoretical framework guiding the study was Komives' LID model. As detailed in earlier chapters, the LID model is a comprehensive framework designed to inform leadership development programs that meet the various needs of college students at each stage of their leadership identity development. As highlighted in Chapter 2, the LID model was developed by a group of diverse college students. However, it is essential to discuss the ways in which "leadership identity intersects with other dimensions of identity, such as race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and social class" (Owen, 2012, p. 29). Komives et al. (2005) stated that students of color experience the stages of the model differently from their White peers. Furthermore, challenging gender stereotypes may lead to students seeking leadership roles and experiences (Komives et al., 2005). Komives et al. (2009) further stated that in developing the LID grounded theory model, many of the "participants of color described their experience of stage three (leader identified) in a more collectivist approach than other study participants" (p. 21).

The results of the present study aligned with the six stages and five organizational categories for the process of developing a leadership identity according to the LID model. However, the study provided much-needed implications when researching the experiences of students of color and their leadership identity development focused on the intersection of race and gender identities. The six stages of the LID model include (1) awareness, (2) exploration and engagement, (3) leader identified, (4) leadership

differentiated, (5) generativity, and (6) integration and synthesis. The five organizational categories for the process of developing identity include (1) developmental influences, (2) developing self, (3) group influences, (4) changing the view of self with others, and (5) broadening the view of leadership. The findings of this study are discussed in relationship to the LID model in the following section.

Stage 1: Awareness. Komives et al. (2006) defined the first stage as "becoming aware that there are leaders "out there" who are external to oneself, such as the president of the United States, a sports coach, one's mother, or a teacher" (p. 14). The emphasis on recognizing leaders who are external to one's self, in theory, is consistent with this study. As discussed earlier, the first theme of the study, **interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development**, relates to how participants experience their leadership development. Participants in the study described their understanding of leadership and how they perceived a leader as a position of authority. This understanding is congruent with the current stage in the model during the process of developing a leadership identity. The study's conclusion emphasizes that influences' such as individuals including family members, elementary through high school staff, university staff, peers and friends were important to spur the formation of one's identity to be a leader and helped them recognize the ability to take on those roles. According to Bennis (2009), confirming the understanding of one's self comes after reflection on his or her experiences. Having the appropriate amount of exposure to involvement in the school environment and activities can lead to a view of leadership externally and internally. Moorosi (2014) states that "at the personal identity level, a novice leader seeks to

improve their knowledge, and the focus is much on the individual and their leadership self-awareness" (p. 802).

Stage 2: Exploration and Engagement. This study revealed that exploration and engagement in the MILE were beneficial to the leadership identity development of the participants. The third theme, **leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth**, described the experiences of participants and the growth they encountered from their leadership involvement. Komives et al. (2006) defined stage two of the LID model as "a period of immersion in group experiences, usually to make friends; a time of learning to engage with others (e.g., swim team, boy scouts, church choir)" (p. 14). While participants discussed their motivation for joining the MILE as attendance at MILE events and motivation from people, including resident directors, resident assistants, and MILE members, all participants described personal changes resulting in their understanding of leadership owing to participation in their MILE. Those changes included insight, purpose (responsibility), and character (personality). During this stage, a person recognizes his or her leadership potential and their motivation to change some things. The study is consistent with literature suggesting that involvement and engagement in out-of-the-class activities have positive effects on the identity development of African American male college students (Cockley 2001; Harper, Carini, Bridges, Hayek, 2004; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008).

Additionally, during this stage, participants identify personal strengths and weakness. Previous literature (Frazier, 2009; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Sutton and Terrell, 1997) often focused on the African American male's barriers to involvement or experience after holding a leadership position; not focusing on the strengths that are

discovered or developed throughout their involvement in programs before assuming leadership roles of how they framed their concepts of leadership. In the present study, participants described strengths as public speaking, people skills, networking, initiative, accountability of self and others, and collaboration. This is consistent with Moorosi's (2014) study that reported strengths, including time management, improved self-confidence, enhanced self-control, and better relationships with peers, staff, and community.

Stage Three: Leader Identified. The present study provides implications for stage three of the LID model. The second theme, **value in experience leadership challenges**, described the value participants placed on the experience of overcoming their leadership challenges. Komives et al. (2006) described stage three, Leader Identified, as "viewing leadership as the actions of a group's positional leader; an awareness of the hierarchical nature of relationships in groups" (p.14). Wielkiewicz (2000) refers to stage three as moving into systems views and non-hierarchical perspectives deepening and broadening a person's leadership identity development. Findings from the present study reveal the challenges faced by participants, including visibility, making mistakes, failing, disagreements, disappointing people, and self-criticism. These findings are in line with current literature (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Kegan, 1994; Komives et al. 2009) that emphasizes a challenge for students developing leadership identity in this stage is demonstrating a collaborative model of leadership.

While assessing the challenges expressed by participants of the current study, there is a significant consideration of their understanding of leadership shifting their focus from self to the betterment of the entire group they are leading. The fourth theme,

understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism, describes how students come to understand and exhibit leadership. Participants valued understanding leadership as a responsibility to others and as an action that is selfless. In the original LID model study (Komives et al. 2005), the participants of color described stage three (Leader Identified) in a more collectivist way than other student participants. Further, the Komives et al. (2005) study revealed that there was a little independent experience of hierarchical leadership. The findings of the present study show that participants were concerned with facing their challenges to make them a better leader in relation to working with others and being a known leader on the campus of Denton University. Leadership development is mostly comprised of personal growth "becoming more aware of one's self is a necessary component of personal development" (Day, Zaccaro, & Haplin, 2004, p. 50).

This finding is in line with the original LID findings and the Helms and Cook (1999) study that exposed that students from collectivist cultures, such as African Americans, experience self-depends on group relationships and obligations. Previous research (Baxter Magolda 2001; Kegan, 1994; Komives et al. 2009) found that support from mentors is necessary for participants to demonstrate leadership as a process and reaching a collaborative leadership style. It is important to note that the majority of participants cited MILE staff and peer members as those from whom they learned skills to manage their challenges.

Stage Four: Leadership Differentiated. Komives et al. (2006) state during stage four, the "view of leadership is non-positional and is a shared group process (p. 14)". Further, Kegan (1994) suggested that at this stage, students shift their identity to that of a

leader. The participants in the present study identified themselves as MILE mentors but also shared pivotal moments in becoming a leader. Participants described their understanding of leadership subsequent to becoming a MILE mentor as a continuous-commitment, giving back intentionally, and establishing trust. Laub (2003) reported that African American males' definition of leadership aligned with many of the tenets of servant leadership. Previous research (Preston-Cunningham, 2016; Riverstone, 2004) asserts using servant leadership with Black males allows self-awareness and support by followers who are growing not only as members of the organization but also as bona fide people.

The results of the study corroborate prior literature on the changing view of leadership in stage four by participants. Komives et al. (2009) state that participants are embracing a new belief that leadership can come from anywhere in the group and not just a position. The participants of the study discuss their roles of mentoring other MILE members and the mentorship they received from the MILE coordinators and university staff.

Further, participants discussed their comfort with leading as an active member of the MILE. Rhoton (2003) showed that mentor-protégé relationships added learning as a benefit of mentoring and leadership development. Through this exchange between mentor/role models and the mentees, they were developing their leader identity as their mentors guided them through critical moments.

Stages Five and Six: Generativity, and Integration and Synthesis. The final theme, **student leadership at a HBCU creates resiliency**, provided more insight into stages five and six of the LID model. Komives et al. (2006) described generativity (stage

five) as "a commitment to developing leadership in others and having a passion for issues or group objectives that one wants to influence; and integration/synthesis (stage six) as acknowledging the personal capacity for leadership in diverse contexts and claiming the identity of a leader without having to hold a positional role" (p. 14). The participants in the study discussed their future providing descriptions of where they envisioned themselves in the next two to ten years. All participants described their success regarding professional, educational, family, financial and community ambitions. It is important to note that throughout the responses, all participants referenced their success in a collectivist approach and stated how they wanted to provide for the greater community. Specifically, participants referenced the Black community.

Hall (2004) asserts that "identity" is probably the most important aspect of leadership development (p. 154). Social identities, such as race and gender, reflect one's membership in groups of commonality (Hogg, 2001). Helms (1990) defined racial identity as "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3). While the results of this study confirm that participants are accepting responsibility for the development of others and have a continued self-development as lifelong learning, it is important to note that uplifting the Black community in terms of giving back to the MILE, and Denton University, and being a resource for other Black male leaders was consistent among all participants.

The original LID model study (Komives et al., 2005) was unable to describe any specific impact that race and ethnicity may have on the development of leadership identity. Conversely, the present study was able to show a direct connection of how race

impacts leadership identity development. The findings of the study affirm previous studies, such as Kimbrough and Harper (2006) and Strayhorn (2008), that African American undergraduate males often assumed responsibility to portray the entire race in interactions with other races. Participants in the present study discussed the difference between being a leader on an HBCU campus and in the greater community/world. Participants described how they had to monitor the way in which they are perceived as leaders and ensure that those outside of their race understands their passion and actions.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Over the last twenty years, there has been a surge in research examining the experiences of Black males in higher education. According to several researchers (Cuyjet, 2006; Davis, 1994; Palmer et al., 2014), Black students, particularly Black males, had better social, academic, and personal experiences at HBCUs. In the present study, the LID model was used to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of Black males in a campus-based initiative program. The exploration and engagement described by MILE participants provided many implications for how student affairs professionals and campus-based initiatives should be designed for the intentional development of the leadership identity of Black males at HBCUs.

Student affairs professionals should be very attentive to the experiences of Black males at HBCUs and how they develop their leadership identity. If faculty, staff, and administrators can understand the leadership experiences of this population of students, they can use the positive effects of their students' experiences to enhance programming and retention at their respective universities. This is even more important for universities that have campus-based initiatives because the latter can serve as a blueprint for program

and pipeline design. Many participants discussed the opportunities they were afforded to be able to connect to upper-level administration and with university resources, such as the Office of Residence Life & Housing, Office of the President, Office of the Bursar, and the Office of Financial Aid. Participants expressed that they were able to build personal relationships with faculty and staff who helped them not only to navigate the university but throughout personal life experiences that arose during their matriculation and post-graduation.

Specific to Denton University, leadership experiences through the MILE program provided the institution with student leaders who assisted various university departments that serve the students. The study revealed that many MILE mentors were offered the opportunity to become resident assistants who served as positive role models for the students in the residence halls and encouraged participation in the MILE program. The direct connection of the MILE program to the residential departments is extremely intentional and can serve as an outline to other universities that are looking to design campus-based initiatives.

In addition to serving as residence hall staff, many MILE mentors held roles as tour guides and executive officers in the Student Government Association. This type of involvement for Black males is significant for universities when retention and graduation rates for Black males are significantly lower than those of their counterparts (Hill & Boes, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Since students are currently in an unofficial pipeline to serving in those leadership capacities, administrators can use those students' experiences and stories both to recruit future students and target young Black males who are applying to their university. Students involved in these leadership positions could

serve as spokespersons for admissions and recruitment initiatives to increase the exposure of Black males in higher education.

The results of this study suggest numerous recommendations for program staff for campus-based initiatives, such as the MILE. Students shared the significance of their interactions and relationships with the MILE staff who were also resident directors and resident assistants. I recommend that this structure of having the MILE coordinators serve as resident directors should become a standard for increased intentional engagement of students within the residence halls. Throughout the study, participants described daily interactions with those members around the clock during non-traditional business hours. This was beneficial to participants as they always had someone they could talk to when facing challenges or when in need of advice. The participants expressed that they were being groomed as leaders by the leaders themselves.

Another benefit of having the residential staff serve as MILE coordinators was the academic support participants received from their involvement in the MILE program. The ideal campus-based initiative should provide students with ongoing academic support such as advising sessions and resources for academic development. Participants described staying on track with their academics as a result of the MILE coordinators' checking in on them randomly or during midterms and finals. If initiatives can be formalized, there would be a structure in place for all students to receive the same level of academic support needed to succeed during their matriculation.

Some participants were aware of academic resources, such as the Academic Enrichment program or study hall but confessed to not utilizing them consistently. Strategically planning and investing in data tracking efforts for the MILE can develop

ways to reward academic success so that students can take advantage of the academic programming activities offered. Creating this will provide positive reinforcement for students participating in academic programs, and it will demonstrate that the MILE program as an organization values and rewards high academic performance of its members. Further, the program will have the potential to achieve several benchmarks regarding academic performance as well as student engagement and leadership, and establish itself not only as a campus-based leadership initiative but as a premier academic program on campus.

While participants discussed the relationships and mentorship they had with MILE staff, the peer relationships that exist among MILE members was essential to the growth of the participants' leadership identity. Through networking and building connections, MILE members were afforded the opportunity to meet and interact with their peers who were different from them. These interactions offered MILE men exposure to peers with varied backgrounds. This allowed them to develop empahy skills, whereby thay could put themselves in someone else's shoes and have a better understanding of the world.

Student affairs professionals should further encourage students to see themselves as crucial members of the organization and the Denton University community so that the students truly understand their purpose and impact within the program. Many participants described learning their purpose in life while participating in the different experiences provided by the MILE program. The information analyzed gives us reason to believe that joining this organization can foster a lifestyle that influences their decision-making ability and goal-setting skills. Further, the men of the MILE will be

able to improve, learn, and refine decision-making and problem-solving skills when they find themselves in new situations while maneuvering through unfamiliar territory. This experience will influence their confidence, and these skills are transferable to other aspects of life, both personal and professional.

Another implication is that student affairs professionals should be intentional in their programming with members of campus-based initiatives to connect what they are doing in their organization to what they would be doing for their career and in life generally. Participants expressed that their level of social responsibility was based on what the organization stood for, familial backgrounds, and an intrinsic desire to do for others. It was also expressed by ensuring the uplifting of others rather than the pulling down of others for self-gain or self-interest. The participants expressed their desire to have a more social responsibility to their community.

These students seemed to have become more aware of their social role, sense of self, and the influence they could have on the Denton University community. Student affairs professionals should continue to emphasize the students' social responsibility and social role in society. Participants of the MILE that were interviewed expressed a greater need to connect professional goals through career workshops, resume building, and tips for continued success after graduation. If administrators can intentionally engage students to help identify their purpose, their role in society, develop cultural understanding, and connect these values to uplifting others, the impact will be more significant.

Furthermore, other recommendations for specific leadership programming for MILE members surrounding their leadership identity development and usage of the LID

model are essential to Black males. Staff for campus-based programs should consider using the LID model to create and design programs for each classification (freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) of members within the MILE. According to Komives et al. (2006), the LID model consists of stages that are both linear and cyclical, which allows for students to progress through them one at a time and to experience them repeatedly. Furthermore, each time the model is repeated, individuals experience it with a deeper understanding and formation of the stage (Komives et al. 2006).

A purposeful plan to integrate this model into programming can help students navigate and overcome their challenges in leadership. This can provide opportunities for students to identify their strengths and learn how to enhance their skills and development and communicate with one another. Through fostering an atmosphere that values healthy communication, students can be taught how to communicate effectively with others so as to reduce potential conflicts and value their individual and collective contribution to the group. Furthermore, students can develop their talents and ideas to explore who they believe they currently are and who they want to become.

Participants described the retreat and the opportunity it allowed for them to face their fears and develop internally as Black men and leaders. The very nature of such retreats provides a vast opportunity for participants to reflect and uncover their inner self and voice. These experiences often allowed participants to clear their minds, focus and develop objectives and goals for their future. Participants believed workshops connected with students' needs and desires and provided them with helpful information they could apply to their college experience. It also allowed students an opportunity to engage with

other students, faculty, and staff. This opportunity for engagement is critical to student development, especially for first-year students.

Specifically, having upperclassmen students become pinned members of the MILE in front of the first year participants and serving in formal leadership roles, such as MILE mentors, provided participants with hands-on experience and goal setting for the first year participants. Participants described the impact of seeing their peers become pinned members and how it encouraged them to remain committed and to strive to become a pinned member the following year. The formalized leadership role of MILE mentors is a significant distinction that gives the student members the opportunity to display inspiration, increased knowledge, and transformation for all members of the community to experience.

Additionally, leadership roles, such as the student-led committees are great incubators for the development of the participants' leadership identity. Participants discussed the impact and responsibility that were associated with being on the planning team for the MILE. The student-led committees and program chair roles provided members of the MILE with more leadership opportunities. This allowed students to demonstrate initiative and ownership over the program providing them with opportunities to shape the program activities. Such opportunties help university administrators to increase the visibility of their program on campus and allow the students to develop the MILE beyond what they can do from an administrative perspective. The student committees help to foster a cycle of fresh ideas and creativity that will ultimately enhance the program.

Another recommendation for campus-based initiatives is the inclusion of programming and mentorship for students with alumni and former members of the program. Participants who identified as alumni discussed their desire (1) to give back to the current MILE members and (2) as they grow successful in their career, to provide opportunities for the students who come after them. Considering the results of the study, I recommend instituting a MILE Alumni Network (M.A.N.). This program could serve several purposes: (a) promote continuous engagement of former members; (b) provide an additional level of mentorship for members as a positive example of Black male success, and (c) create additional opportunities for funding and resources for both the program and the university. This concept of alumni involvement is extremely critical as it helps to keep the organization connected with past members and helps to grow a network that could provide access to myriad resources (i.e., fundraising, recommendations, internships, jobs, speakers, etc.).

Overall, the impact of the MILE on the students both personally and socially can have a long-lasting effect on the students' lives but most important, their identity as leaders. From the interview responses, the MILE has made an impact on students' leadership throughout campus, confidence building, and overall growth of members. Further, I can infer that the MILE helps students understand their purpose in becoming a student leader and developing into the epitome of the Denton University MILE Man. It is from the emergent themes including (a) interpersonal relationships and networks are key for leadership development, (b) value in experiencing leadership challenges, (c) leadership involvement creates personal and professional growth, (d) understanding leadership through collective responsibility and altruism, and (e) student leadership at

HBCUs creates resiliency that recommendations and implications were made for student affairs professionals and program staff for the MILE.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As stated, there are two main limitations to the study. First, the study sample only includes upperclassmen males (beyond the first year) involved in a campus-based leadership program (the Denton University MILE) at a single institution. This selection excludes MILE participants that are in their freshman year of matriculation at the university or upperclassmen in their first year participating in the program because they have not been immersed in the program for at least one year. Owing to the purposive sampling technique, the exploration of the experiences of first-year students who participate in campus-based initiatives is not included.

Second, this study is unlike previous studies that are overarching and encompasses multiple ethnic/racial backgrounds about leadership identity development. This study is specific, focusing on Black undergraduate males who participate in campus-based leadership initiatives at HBCUs. However, the site selection in this study was confined to a single institution, Denton University, which is a public, Mid-Atlantic HBCU. As a result of the site selection, an analysis of institutional differences is not possible. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be transferable to other public Mid-Atlantic colleges and universities or HBCUs alike. It is important to note that this also means that different experiences and themes may emerge from a study of Black males who attend other public institutions, HBCUs, or any institution other than Denton University. Also, this study did not explore the experiences of other men of color who attend Denton University and participate in the MILE. Thus, there is a possibility that

individuals who do not identify as Black could experience similarities or differences in their leadership identity development throughout their matriculation at Denton University and their involvement in the MILE program.

As the aim of this research study was to capture the lived experience of Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives at an HBCU, qualitative research tools, such as one-on-one interviews and reflective journaling, are not designed to capture hard facts. Recognizing this approach, additionally, credibility could be given to the study if it were coupled with statistical data and analysis that would strengthen and support the findings that emerged from using qualitative research tools.

I believe that there are several areas for future research on targeted demographics that could add to the findings of this study. A quantitative study that would add breadth to this study's findings would involve a larger and more diverse population of MILE participants. The current study focused on individuals who were participants in a campus-based initiative that were classified as MILE mentors. A more extensive study with a broader sample could potentially explore the overall experiences of those with the MILE program. This study could provide similarities or differences on the impact of the MILE program on their leadership identity development. Further, the MILE program exists at other HBCUs and PWIs throughout institutions on the U.S. East Coast. A study that explores the combined experiences of students at various institutions could provide valuable insight into the general experience of its participants and the impact that the program is having on its students in comparison with other institutions.

Another qualitative study that could provide great insight into the influence of a participants' involvement in a campus-based initiative on their leadership identity

develop would focus on the postgraduate experiences. The current study revealed that the alumni participants credited the MILE program for their current leadership positions within their jobs and their access and opportunity to attend graduate school and professional jobs within their career. A qualitative study that explored participants' career and graduate school journeys would help determine the impact of the program beyond the students' matriculation at their university. It is possible that more themes and significant findings could emerge from the data collected and would offer more insight into the best practices and strategies for campus-based initiatives for Black males.

Finally, a further qualitative inquiry into the experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs could include a longitudinal study. The proposed longitudinal study would be able to follow Black male students from their initial joining of the campus-based initiative over four years or their completed matriculation at the university. This study would allow for the research to capture the experience at each stage of their university classification. Additionally, this study could look at the participants' academic achievement and their leadership involvement each year and provide a broader picture identifying significant experiences and interactions throughout their matriculation. The current study only accesses the participants at their current classification. It may be beneficial to look at the participants' holistic journey throughout the university and how that impacts their leadership identity development from freshman year to graduation.

Each recommendation for future research is suggested with the intent of improving current practices for the engagement of Black males in higher education. Each of these proposed research studies provide more insight into the lived experiences of

Black males and allow administration, faculty, staff, and policymakers to determine and design more resources that could ultimately affect students' personal growth and their matriculation at an institution of higher learning. I strongly believe that this study only scratches the surface of exploring the lived experiences of Black males and how their involvement in campus-based initiatives influence their leadership identity development as collegiate students.

Conclusion

After years of working with Black males at an HBCU and observing their experiences as student leaders, I wanted to explore their experience in detail. Finally, I have had the opportunity to do so through one-on-one interviews and in such a way that has been eye-opening to the impact the MILE has had on their identity as leaders. The findings, implications, and recommendations in this study have been discussed and presented in this final chapter in an attempt to inform and educate student affairs professionals, and those in the academy in general, on the leadership experiences of Black males in campus-based initiatives at HBCUs. In the words of the MILE affirmation:

I am the Denton University M.I.L.E. Man.

I commit myself to excellence

I am self-determined.

I know that when I am successful, my family, my community and my world are successful.

I welcome new experience and diversity.

I aspire to greatness –for there are no limits to what I can become.

I am the Denton University M.I.L.E. Man.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Email/Flyer

Dear M.I.L.E. member,

My name is Danny T. Molock Jr., and I am a Ph.D. Candidate at Morgan State University in the Higher Education Administration program in the School of Education and Urban Studies. I am concluding research for my dissertation titled, "The Journey in a M.I.L.E.: An Exploration of Leadership Identity Development in Black Males who participate in Campus-Based Initiatives at a Mid-Atlantic Historically Black College and University" and I would like to invite you to take part in this qualitative study. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Black males who participate in campus-based leadership initiatives at HBCUs. Understanding your perspectives and experiences as it relates to leadership identity development can help not only further scholarship on this topic but also enhance the effectiveness of such campus-based leadership programs.

Additionally, I am the former Program Coordinator for the M.I.L.E. program of Morgan State University. As a Black male, former Coordinator of a campus-based leadership program and researcher; I am very much interested in hearing your perspective and learning from your experience. Moreover, completing this interview is voluntary, and your responses will be confidential. The information given will be used to inform higher education administrators on the best practices for engaging students in a campus-based leadership program at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

If you are interested, please let me know your availability. The interview will only last approximately 60 minutes. I have also attached an abstract and the consent form.

In Unity and Service,

Danny T. Molock Jr., M.S.W.
Assistant Coordinator, Student Activities
Office of Student Activities
University Student Center
Morgan State University
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Office: (443)-885-3530
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morganmile
You are invited to participate in a study of Leadership Identity Development at HBCUs.
We hope to gain insight into the untold experiences of Black males who are developing as student leaders on HBCU campuses while participating in campus based leadership initiatives.
To participate in the study contact Primary Investigator, Mr. Danny T. Molock Jr. at danny.molock@morgan.edu & 443-885-3530
We Want To Hear From You!
MILE MENTORS
SHARE YOUR LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES!
REQUIREMENTS
* 2.8 Cumulative GPA
* Must Be Sophomore, Junior, or Senior (or graduated within one year).
*Have SUCESSFULLY Participated in the MILE for at least One (1) Year
*Have served or currently serving as a M.I.L.E. Mentor.
"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."
PosterMyWall.com

Appendix B: Sample Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of Leadership Identity Development at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). We hope to gain insight into the untold experiences of Black males who are developing as student leaders on HBCU campuses while participating in campus-based initiatives. The study is being conducted by Mr. Danny T. Molock Jr. of Morgan State University. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a member of the campus-based leadership initiative program called the M.I.L.E. and expressed an interest in participation.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a short demographic survey and an interview. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Your participation in this study will serve to inform higher education administrators on the best practices for engaging students in a campus-based leadership program at an HBCU.

Although risks are minimal, the researchers understand that reliving some experiences could bring forward unresolved issues. You are permitted to avoid answering any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You also have the right to revoke consent and stop the interview at any point in the process. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationship with the M.I.L.E. program or Morgan State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. If you have any additional questions later about the study, please contact the Primary Investigator, Mr. Danny T. Molock Jr. at danny.molock@morgan.edu or Faculty Sponsor Dr. C. Sean Robinson at sean.robinson@morgan.edu who will be happy to answer them. If you have further administrative questions, you may contact the MSU IRB Administrator, Dr. Edet Isuk, at 443-885-3447. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Demographic Survey

The Journey in a MILE: An exploration of leadership identity development in Black males at a Historically Black College and University.

Please complete the following:

1. What is your classification?
    a. Sophomore
    b. Junior
    c. Senior
    d. Alumni (graduated within one year of interview date)
2. What is your major?
3. How would you describe yourself?
    a. Black/African American
    b. Black/Caribbean
    c. Black/African
    d. Black/Bi-Multiracial

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Time of interview:

Date of interview:

Location:

Interviewee Code:

Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to join the MILE?
2. How did you first get interested in “being a leader”?
3. Who, if anyone, influenced you to become a leader? Tell me about how they influenced you.
4. Before joining the MILE what was your understanding of leadership?
5. How has your membership in the MILE influenced your understanding of leadership? How, if at all, has your understanding changed?
6. After becoming a MILE mentor, what was your understanding of leadership lessons?
7. If this was not your first leadership position, tell me more about your prior leadership experiences and organizations.
8. What leadership roles have you considered since becoming a member of the MILE?
9. Tell me about how you learned to be a leader. How did you learn this?
10. What positive changes have impacted your life since becoming a leader in the MILE?
11. What negative changes, if any have impacted your life since becoming a leader?

12. Tell me about some key/pivotal moments in your experience becoming a leader.
13. Tell me about how you go about influencing other. What do you do? How did you learn this?
14. As you look back on becoming a leader in the MILE, are there any MILE events that helped develop your identity as a leader? Could you describe each one?
15. Where do you see yourself in two years? Ten years? Describe the person you hope to be then. How would you compare the person you hope to be and the person you see yourself as now?
16. What helps you manage the challenges you face as a leader? What challenges do/have you encountered? Tell me about the sources of these problems.
17. Who has been the most helpful to you during your participation in the MILE? How have they been helpful?
18. Tell me about the strengths that you discovered or developed while being in the MILE?
19. What do you most value about yourself now? What do others most value in you?
20. What has becoming a leader meant to you? Others in your life?
21. How do you perceive your leadership as being different/same as others?
22. After having this experience as a leader, what advice would you give to someone who has just become interested in a position of leadership?
23. Tell me about a time where you felt you received social support from the MILE. How was it helpful, if at all?
24. Tell me about a time where you felt you received academic support from the MILE. How was it helpful, if at all?

25. How has being a part of the MILE impacted your collegiate experience, if at all?
26. Tell me what you find valuable of the MILE.
27. As a member of the MILE, what do you see as your responsibility to the MILE community? To the University community?
28. What are your biggest leadership lessons from the MILE?
29. Tell me about some of your biggest leadership successes.
30. Tell me about some of your biggest leadership failures.
31. Is there anything else you think I should know to understand what it is like to be a student leader at an HBCU?
32. What question(s) would you ask if you were doing the interview?

    Is there anything you would like to ask me?