A POSITIVE REVOLUTION IN ENHANCING THE COLLEGIATE MEN OF COLOR EXPERIENCE: AN IPA STUDY USING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FROM A SOCIAL IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE TO EXPLORE HOW COLLEGE MALES NAVIGATE THEIR SOCIAL IDENTITY GROUPS

A thesis presented
by
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To
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of
Higher Education Administration

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
June 2017
This work is dedicated to the memory of Juanita Olivia Gaskin.
I promised you I would get this done.
#doitforjuanita

“Life is a beautiful struggle,
People search through the rubble for a suitable hustle,
Some people using their noodle,
Some people using their muscle,
Some people put it all together,
Make it fit like a puzzle”
-Talib Kweli f. Mary J. Blige, *I Try*
ABSTRACT

Colleges and universities have used a multitude of strategies to ensure that historically marginalized men of color graduate from their institutions. However, these schools have utilized deficit-based approaches that assumed this population did not have the skills to be successful in college. There was little evidence that utilizing this population’s social identity could yield new and innovative ways to support them in while in college. This qualitative study with an interpretative phenomenological methodology combined social identity theory and appreciative inquiry to better understand the important factors that men of color found most valuable within their social identity groups. Eight self-identified historically marginalized men of color participated in semi-structured interviews that asked about their social identity groups and what their university could do to better support these group’s development. Data analysis showed that participants valued their personal identity of being a man of color, had leaders within their in-groups they admired, took on an increased level of leadership within their groups, had motivation from their group members to complete their degree, and campus involvement helped them find connections with their in-groups. Recommendations for educational administrators included continued offering of involvement fairs and interest meetings where students can form in-groups, working to ensure campus environments were welcoming for men of color, and create support programs where men of color across different racial and ethnic backgrounds can talk about shared experiences.

Key words: deficit based approach, in-group, historically marginalized men of color, Appreciative Inquiry, Social Identity Theory
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to send my heartfelt acknowledgements to the faculty, staff, and others at the Northeastern University College of Professional Studies. I went looking for a quality program that would expand my horizons and make me a better scholar-practitioner and I found it at NEU. I am also equally thankful for the 2013 Doctor of Education Cohort at the Seattle, WA campus, whose encouragement to keep challenging the status quo kept me moving. I am also thankful my colleagues introduced me to new ways of thinking and welcomed me into a vibrant and diverse community in the Puget Sound. I am also particularly thankful for the guidance from my chair, Dr. Margaret Gorman, my second reader, Dr. Harvey Shapiro, and my third reader Dr. Santiago Solis, as well as Sheldrake Consulting for their direction in shaping this research and document.

I am thankful for all the people who pushed me to finish this dissertation and guided me through this journey. I know I will miss some people, but my sincere thanks go to Dr. Kurt Earnest, Dr. Mimi Benjamin, Dr. Thomas Hill, Dr. Mary Jo Gonzales, Dr. Teri Hall, Dr. Debra Sanborn, Dr. Aurelia Kollasch, Dr. Jie Sun, Dr. Pete Englin, Dr. Richard Freeman, Dr. Leon Pickett, Dr. Chris Jensen, Dr. Ginny Arthur, Dr. Martino Harmon, Japannah Kellogg, Carmen Flagge, Robert Lipsey, B Nathan, Lisa Reagle, Katie Murray, Kenyatta Shamburger, Terrell Bratcher, Matt Lenno, Lynn Lundy Evans, Jayne Holzinger, Tami King-Kelly, Raft Woodus, Anee Korme, Mahnoor Ahmed, Joel Bolling, Mario Rodriguez, Chris McQueen, Carly Heasley, Christen Gray, Jason Romero, Amber Umble, Dirron Allen, Paulomi Dholakia, Maia Williams, all the members of “The Island” and countless others who believed in me.

I am also indebted to Jon Gilgoff and Dr. Tommy Woon, two individuals who shaped this research and showed me different ways to approach working with marginalized populations.
These two individuals opened my mind to positive methods in working with men of color and focusing on common strengths rather than deficiencies. I only hope this work opens more minds to this type of work and what these two men have to offer.

I am also thankful to all my family members across the country who have encouraged me to continue my education and pursue this degree. To my mother and father, thanks for telling me to stop feeling sorry for myself and keep going when I wanted to quit. You have encouraged me to stay positive and finish this degree. To my nephew Deacon, this means that I can go to more of your futsal and soccer games. To my brother Kyle, you are without a doubt the smartest and strongest man I’ve ever met. I hope this spurs you to advance your own education and show the world how intelligent you are.

Finally, I would be remiss in not acknowledging the most important person in my life, my dear wife Ana. We’ve been through some rough times, but she was the steady hand that guided me through this entire process from applying to grad school to defending this dissertation. My research ruined many weekend plans, so there’s no way I can make it up to you other than giving you all my love. *Te quiero mucho, mi esposa bonita.*
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For years, efforts have been made to increase the numbers of men of color who graduate high school and attend college. However, once men of color gain entry into colleges and universities, this population must still endure being in environments where they are overrepresented in revenue-generating sports, subject to low-expectations of faculty, and victims of stereotyping by their peers (S. Harper & Harris, 2012). While multiple studies and articles have been written on the low retention and graduation rates of this population, little has been shown on the best way to provide support this population while in college. It is not enough to merely send men of color to college; they must be supported academically and socially while they are enrolled and not perceived to be deficient students by peers and faculty (Gaskin, Wilson, Day, Real-Ibarra, & Thomas, 2014). Given that holding a college degree is a necessity to secure high-paying employment and that lack of academic and emotional support can lead to lower graduation rates (S. R. Harper, 2012), it is important that men of color feel supported and that they belong, which keeps them on the path towards graduation (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005).

Current literature regarding support programs for men of color on college campuses pointed out one distinctive factor: most utilized a deficit-based approach (Dyce, Albold, & Long, 2013; S. R. Harper, 2012; Matos, 2015) that assumed men of color did not have the necessary skills to succeed in a university setting. However, little has been done to research whether men of color could support themselves using organizational and cultural development models. Students of color have stated in multiple studies that while they felt they can achieve success during their time in college (S. R. Harper, 2012), there were several barriers in order to stay successful, including a lack of racial/ethnic representation of faculty and staff (Harris, Wood, & Xiong, 2005).
2014), ever present negative stereotypes about the motivations and academic capabilities of men of color (S. R. Harper, 2012), and limited institutional resources that directly assisted men of color in their academic and social pursuits (S. R. Harper, 2013). In addition, most research on issues facing men of color had been geared towards particular groups (e.g. Black men, Latinx men) and had not focused on the larger men of color community.

Chapter One will explain the problem of practice and highlight the guiding research question that guided this study. A detailed explanation of the academic issues facing men of color will be presented to add additional context to the research. This section also will discuss the combined theoretical framework used to focus the types of questions asked of participants.

**Problem Statement**

For the purpose of this study, the term “man of color” was defined as a person who self-identified with both the male gender identity and as a member of a racial/ethnic group in the United States that had historically been marginalized or discriminated against: African American, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American/Alaskan Native, Multiracial, or a combination of any of the identities. This section will discuss the issue being studied in three pieces. First, current practices geared towards men of color in college will be presented. Second, research focusing on this population and issues they face while in college will be offered. Finally, theories used to serve men of color will be discussed.

**Current Practices**

In order to increase the graduation rates for men of color, colleges and universities in the United States used a series of tactics with the goal to increase graduation numbers. Some of these strategies included creating student organizations specifically for men of color, specialized institutes and centers that provide culturally relevant services, and conferences that brought
together stakeholders to discuss issues relevant to men of color (S. Harper & Harris, 2012). This had been best seen at the national level by the White House initiative known as My Brother’s Keeper, which focused efforts on connecting young men of color to social services, strengthened encouragement to stay in school, and promoted gainful employment (House, 2016). At the K-12 level, offices such as the Oakland (California) Unified School District’s African American Male Achievement Office and non-profit programs like Brothers on the Rise (Gaskin & Gilgoff, 2013) worked with young men of color in urban areas on issues like restorative justice, developing a definition of healthy masculinity, conflict resolution, and academic success.

At the collegiate level, programs like Lambda Upsilon Lambda Latino at Cornell University (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011) and the Men of Color Collective at Iowa State University (Gaskin & Gilgoff, 2013) focused on male empowerment and developing a deeper sense of community. These groups provided a way to develop social networks that students can access when they need academic or social assistance, as students were more likely to get advice on issues from other students rather than from faculty (Baker, 2013). Programs that use mentoring, academic support, and peer guidance provided more valuable opportunities for students to feel like a member of the campus community, which can lead to students wanting to graduate from their university (Brooks, Jones, & Burt, 2013; Maton & Hrabowski, 2004).

While current practices focused on skill development and academic help, very little was known on how men of color received social support from their peers. Mentoring and developing relationships were important to students, so this study focused on understanding how men of color used those resources to help them succeed academically. The study wanted to get a better understanding on how men of color received the support from their peer networks, and in turn, provided those same resources to their peers. In addition, current practices to support men of
color were geared towards specific racial groups and did not encourage different racial and ethnic identities to come together and learn from each other. Since men of color lived and worked in diverse environments, it was important to understand what impacts the makeup of their friend groups had upon them. This study examined how the diverse networks that collegiate men of color formed aided in their development as successful students on campus.

**Relevant Research**

A major focus on research with regards to men of color was towards graduation and retention rates. There have been significant numbers of studies particularly on the academic performances of men of color which showed that men of color enrolled and graduated at rates significantly lower than their White male counterparts (S. Harper & Harris, 2012). Even statistics from urban high schools showed gaps that persisted through college. One study of New York City public high schools showed that 53.9% of Black males and 56.9% of Latinx males who entered high school in 2006 graduated (S. Harper, 2013). In that same study, 9.3% of Black males and 11.4% of Latinx males entering high school in 2006 were considered “college ready”, meaning they had taken the coursework necessary to be successful in college (S. Harper, 2013).

Additional research regarding men of color at community colleges showed persistent gaps as well. Up to 70% of Black and Latinx males in college started their academic journey at a community college or other two-year institution (Harris, Wood, & Newman, 2015). Even with a critical mass of men of color at these types of schools, retention and graduation rates were lackluster. The three-year graduation rates at community colleges for men attending full time were 20.3% for Latinx males, 26.1% for Black males, and 38.6% for White males (Harris et al., 2014). Data for students attending community college of a combination of full-time/part-time were 15% for Black men, 15.2% for Latino men, and 29.7% for White men (Harris et al., 2014).
And at four-year universities, studies regarding men of color and persistence focused on the growing impact of intercollegiate athletics and the overrepresentation on team sports. In 2009, Black men made up 4% of public university enrollment but comprised 55% of students on football and basketball rosters at public universities (S. Harper & Harris, 2012). A study by S.R. Harper et al. (2013) regarding African-American athletes showed that Black students involved in intercollegiate activities graduated at substantially lower numbers than their White counterparts. At some major Division I universities, the African-American male athlete graduation rate was 0% (S. R. Harper, Williams, & Blackman, 2013).

At a national level, there have been documented gaps in the number of Bachelor’s degrees earned by men of color and White men. In the 2012-2013 academic year, 553,599 degrees were granted to persons who identified as African American, Latinx, Native American/First Nations, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Multiracial. From that total, 39.7% of degrees conferred were for men of color. Similarly in the 2013-2014 year, 39.7% of degrees were conferred to men of color (Statistics, 2016). For comparison, White males earned 44.2% of degrees granted to White students in 2012-13 and 44% of degrees in 2013-14 (Statistics, 2016).

While there was much data on graduation rates for men of color, there was limited research on the lived experiences of men of color and the intergroup relationships they developed while on campus. Studies such as Saenz, Bukowski, Lu & Rodriguez (2013) and Harris, Wood & Newman (2015) have examined how men of color interacted with each other, however studies have focused on masculinity development and not relationship building. This research focused on the value and impact of intergroup relationships men of color had on campus. It was important to examine the lived experiences for this population and how their social networks helped them while in school. It was also important for participants to discuss the unique parts of
their social identity groups they found most valuable in helping them succeed academically and socially. Thus, this research used an organizational development model that was both appreciative of their experiences (Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Newman, 2001) and encouraged participants to openly discuss the value they placed on their friend groups.

**Current Theory**

Initiatives geared towards men of color were grounded in a deficit-based approach, which assumed that underrepresented students were unable to succeed in college compared to other populations (Green, 2006). Programs and services that used deficit-based thinking portray students as not having the ability to succeed in college and have been used to support continual oppression of minority groups in the United States (Matos, 2015). As Matos (2015) noted in their work on deficit-based thinking towards Latinx families and college persistence, “The cultural deficit model is a master narrative used to scaffold misunderstanding and ignorance regarding communities of color” (p. 448). These deficit-based programs also neglected students’ cultural capital, or the specific norms and values that have been passed on through generations (Dyce et al., 2013) and neglected student characteristics that may actually lead to academic success, such as family educational level and household income (Stewart, 2013).

Deficit-based strategies may have had the unintended consequence of trying to “fix” students, rather than providing a space for students to dialogue about their experiences (S. Harper & Harris, 2012). In addition, many of the support programs researched focused on mono-racial identities (Gaskin & Gonzalez, 2014; S. R. Harper, 2012) and did not focus on the collective challenges faced by men from this entire racial and ethnic spectrum (i.e. African American, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, Native American, Multiracial). Separate programs for different male communities of color had not focused on the collective identities this population can
resonate with (Gaskin & Gilgoff, 2013) and did not promote cross-dialogue that could have yielded in both healthy discussion and holistic community building (Gaskin et al., 2014). Learning across different communities and life experiences helped students understand multiple perspectives on issues and create a wider community of supportive peers (Hlyva & Schuh, 2004).

Several recommendations for non-deficit based programming have been presented, including mentoring programs and connecting students to faculty (A. Michael & Vasudevan, 2012), developing campus organizations that help students navigate campus culture (Palmer & Maramba, 2015), providing resources for cultural organizations and encouraging majority students on campus to attend cultural events (Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008) and holding intentional conversations that focus on current student issues (Gaskin & Gonzalez, 2014). This research addressed serving a wide community of men of color and not just singular racial groups (African American, Asian Pacific Islander, Latinx, Native American, Multiracial) that have been presented above. The current study also took the position that men of color have learned skills and strategies for success from their past environments (Urie Brofenbrenner, 1977; Gaskin & Gilgoff, 2013) that can be applied to a collegiate context and shared with their peers in order to create a supportive environment for everyone. Supportive environments are defined as ones that utilize peer interactions to foster academic, social, and cultural development and that assist men of color as they live and study in campus environments (Baker, 2013; Fleming, Howard, Perkins, & Pesta, 2005; Palmer & Maramba, 2015).

Administrators and faculty members on college campuses who want to increase the retention and graduation rates for men of color should investigate moving away from a deficit-based theoretical model for two reasons. First, creating inclusive environments for students where they feel a sense of belonging could have a positive impact upon student success (Museus
et al., 2008) and reduce additional stress that students of color face while being at predominately White institutions (Wei, Ku, & Liao, 2011). By examining the college environment and its many subcultures people live in (Urie Brofenbrenner, 1977; U. Brofenbrenner, 1979), administrators can look at the special relationships men of color make in order to feel comfortable and become academically successful. Encouraging the relationships men of color make with each other can show that their feelings and experiences are validated and are of significant importance to the institution. If institutions recognized the value of encouraging men of color to form groups where they can dialogue about their experiences on campus, these students could be more inclined to stay enrolled in college, participate in campus life, value their cultural backgrounds, and graduate with a degree (Gonzalez, 2001; S. Harper & Harris, 2012; S. R. Harper, 2012).

Second, using the students’ collective identity and strengths could yield valuable learning experiences for both students and college administrators to get a better sense of what can be done to support men of color. It has been noted that peer-to-peer interaction is a strong predictor of overall academic success and helps provide key instructional and cultural support for students of color (Dennis et al., 2005). While interacting with faculty helps college males perceive greater value in their degree (Palacios, 2014), merely having faculty and staff of color on campus does not immediately solve lingering issues of being uncomfortable and struggling academically on campus. Leveraging the men of color community’s collective strengths and wisdom could yield better understanding on how academic procedures and campus policies directly impact this community (Gaskin & Kollasch, 2014).

**Research Question**

The study was guided by this research question: *What are the important functions and experiences historically marginalized collegiate men of color find most valuable within their*
social identity groups? The focus of the study was to understand how collegiate men of color described the critical components of their social identity groups they found beneficial during their time on campus. The purpose of the study was to show that men of color used their social identity groups as a valuable resource while in college. In addition, the study aimed to show how colleges and universities could use the experiences of students’ social identity groups as a method to creating non-deficit based programming that would benefit future generations of students.

**Conceptual Framework**

The researcher used a combination of social identity theory and appreciative inquiry to guide the study. This section will highlight the basic tenets of each theory and will discuss how the two relate for the purpose of the proposed study. More detailed discussion about both theories is located in the literature review in Chapter Two.

**Social Identity Theory.** The study used social identity theory (SIT) as a lens to understand how men of color can used their identities to be successful while in college. Specifically, SIT allowed for the examination of how the norms and practices of a particular in-group (men of color) and its views of an out-group (dominant cultures on a college campus) could impact how it shaped an environment that worked best for them. Social identity theory was crafted by Henri Tajfel and colleagues who were interested in better understanding how people formed social groups (Willets & Clarke, 2014). Through research, SIT evolved into a theory that expanded the understanding of how people formed social groups and how those groups impacted both individual and collective behavior. Social identity theory offered a way for the researcher to better understand how men of color form identity groups and how participant’s identity groups impacted their desires to graduate from college. Since the study focused on understanding how
participants valued their social identity groups, it also meant understanding how they internalized their group identity and how interactions with non-men of color students affected their lives on campus.

Figure 1.1. Picture representation of Social Identity Theory

Figure 1.1 provides an illustration of SIT. The use of SIT was appropriate for the study, as men of color were a specific population with particular traits and characteristics. Multiple studies (Ghavami, Fingerhunt, Peplau, Grant, & Wittig, 2011; Jones & Volpe, 2011; Thomas, Hoxha, & Hacker, 2013; Tillapaugh, 2015) indicated that historically marginalized communities formed in-groups for better support and cultural relevancy. These groups helped members make sense of their particular situation and understanding differences and challenges across identities could help reduce inequalities between in-groups and out-groups (Goar, 2007). Rather than focusing on a particular group of men (e.g. Latino, Black, etc.), studying men of color from across the racial and ethnic spectrum not only allowed for understanding what it meant to be a man of color but to explore the personal navigation each participant did on a daily basis on a college campus.

Appreciative Inquiry. This study was guided appreciative inquiry (AI) as the method of constructing questions to elicit insightful answers from participants. Appreciative inquiry is widely known as a positive-focused organizational development model used more often with business and governmental organizations. Appreciative inquiry methods have been used in healthcare (Richer, Richie, & Marchionni, 2009), business (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005),
secondary education, (Martin & Calabrese, 2011; Smart & Mann, 2003), and in higher education (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012; Elleven, 2007; Giles & Kung, 2010; Priest, Kaufman, Brunton, & Seibel, 2013). Since studying men of color has occurred through a deficit-based approach as described above, the use of appreciative inquiry as the method for designing questions for the study fell in line with the idea of examining a particular in-group through non-deficit based means (S. R. Harper, 2012) and gave participants the opportunity to shape how non-deficit based programming would benefit their peers.

![Figure 1.2: The 4-D Process of Appreciative Inquiry](image)

As shown in Figure 1.2 above, appreciative inquiry utilizes a 4-step process to get participants thinking about what skills and strategies have worked in the past to create an organization or working environment that seeks to draw out the positive energy of people. In each phase, a facilitator asked questions to encourage each member to think about times when the work environment fostered creativity and imagine an environment where potential solutions to common problems can be discussed through the lens of past successes (Elleven, 2007; Lehner & Hight, 2006). Since the focus of this study was to examine how men of color describe the importance of their social identity groups, the use of appreciative inquiry encouraged participants
to speak about how these groups helped them towards their efforts to graduate. The use of reflective thinking and asking for positive examples is a hallmark of appreciative inquiry (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012), and it provided participants to talk about the beneficial aspects of their social identity groups and provide suggestions for how colleges and universities could aid students in finding similar networks they could benefit from.

**Combination of Social Identity Theory and Appreciative Inquiry.** The study used a combination of SIT and AI to better understand how men of color used their social identities on campus that best serve their academic pursuits. For the purpose of this study, the researcher considered the specific in-group of men of color to be a human organization that had potential for positive change. Decisions made to improve the status of the group not only benefitted their own status but challenged out-group assumptions about the in-group. Focusing on the in-groups strengths and working to improve their functions both satisfied a critical component of appreciative inquiry that states positive change was a natural function of organizations (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012) and of social identity theory where positive evaluations led to continued membership of individuals and an overall increased social status of the group (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). Figure 1.3 below provides an illustration on how the study used principles of both social identity theory and appreciative inquiry to answer the research question.
The research sought out to determine how men of color could use their social identity group to assist them in their efforts to graduate from college. The use of social identity theory helped the researcher understand the particular group norms and behaviors that existed which benefitted men of color in their academic pursuits. Using appreciative inquiry as the method of questioning helped understand what current skills and behaviors the in-group had to support one another in their academic pursuits. The researcher used key elements from each theory to inform his thinking and to frame the research question that guided this study.

**Research Overview**

In order to explore the particular functions that men of color found valuable within their social identity groups, a qualitative study with an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was utilized. Using a qualitative approach allowed participants to have their voices heard directly, and the IPA approach let the researcher capture how participants experienced
their unique reality (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Study participants were students at a public, metropolitan, liberal arts university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Eight individuals who self-identified as both being male and being a member of a historically underrepresented racial/ethnic group in the United States participated in the study. The study took part in three phases. In Phase 1, questions were piloted and recruitment of students took place. In Phase 2, participants were interviewed for approximately 45 minutes with semi-structured questions based upon the four phases of appreciative inquiry. IPA studies that utilized appreciative inquiry (Ewing, 2011; Okai, 2015) consisted of face-to-face interviews instead group sessions like other appreciative inquiry studies (Makino, 2013). Phase 3 involved initial coding of the data. Coding took place with computer aided software (MAXQDA 12), and a multiple step inductive process was utilized for data analysis as recommended for IPA studies (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In order to maintain trustworthiness, several steps including member checking, peer review of codes, using an interview matrix, field notes, and researcher journal were used to ensure codes reflected the participant’s experiences.

**Contribution**

As mentioned above, emphasis had been paid on the graduation rates for men of color, and current ways to support men of color through their academic journeys focused on deficit-model thinking (Gaskin & Gilgoff, 2013; S. R. Harper, 2012). Environmental factors, such as navigating campus cultures designed for majority populations (Wei et al., 2011) and limited institutional support for cultural organizations and support offices (Museus et al., 2008), have not helped colleges and universities achieve higher graduation rates for men of color. Findings from this study could be used to aid colleges and universities in crafting non-deficit based approaches to help men of color achieve their academic goals by understanding how they value the social
identity groups they identify with. This research worked to add to a growing list of literature that encouraged institutions to move away from deficit based modeling and focus more on strengths men of color have (S. R. Harper, 2012, 2013) and move towards students engaging one another (Baker, 2013; A. Michael & Vasudevan, 2012) to create the kinds of learning environments where men of color can thrive. This study also will add to the body of research on best ways to support men of color through the lens of SIT (Lezama, 2014) and the combination of AI principles with SIT (Williaume, 2009) in order to better understand the lived experiences of men of color.

**Study Limitations**

This study focused on how men of color described the most valuable aspects about their social identity groups while in college. Before beginning research, several limitations were considered. First, because of the use of an IPA approach and with appreciative inquiry methods, the number of participants were small. This led to a small variation of experiences and may not necessarily reflect the thoughts and opinions of men of color at the campus where research was conducted. In addition, since the sample size was small, experimental mortality had the potential to strongly influence the results as members who left took their thoughts and experiences with them (S. Michael, 2005). Finally, the scope of the study was limited to one research site and the total time with participants was no more than 70 minutes to be respectful of both student academic schedules and the personal time limitations of the researcher.

**Chapter 1 Summary**

While men of color are attending colleges and universities at greater levels than before, studies have shown that this population faced significant struggles in order to reach graduation. However, very little research has focused on how men of color could thrive in college and
graduate with their degrees. This research project explored how collegiate men of color described the importance of the social identity groups. The problem of practice, research question, and combined theoretical frameworks were discussed. Chapter Two will detail the two theories used in this research, social identity theory and appreciative inquiry, as well as discussing issues that men of color face while in college.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focused on how men of color described the most valuable components of their social identity groups and their value during their collegiate academic journeys. Since the study utilized a combination of social identity theory (SIT) and appreciative inquiry (AI) as it is applied to collegiate men of color, it was important to discuss seminal roots of each, present evidence on how both concepts have evolved over time, as well as highlight relevant critiques of SIT and AI. This chapter will highlight the peer-reviewed literature and studies that have shaped how social identity theory and appreciative inquiry are applied in the field, and will discuss current research regarding men of color on college campuses.

The literature review will contain three sections. The first section will discuss the history of social identity theory, including founding ideas and applications to leadership development and social action. The second section will provide a detailed look into appreciative inquiry, complete with applications to multiple areas within education. The third section will discuss current research and literature regarding men of color on college campuses. This chapter will conclude with a summary statement.

Social Identity Theory

The first part of this literature review will focus on social identity theory, as it is the main concept used to understand how men of color can create environments that work best for them. This section will highlight the seminal roots of SIT and the concept of self-categorization. The section will also discuss focuses on intergroup comparisons and evolution of SIT towards understanding leadership influences within social identity groups. A table of empirical studies related to social identity theory will be presented. Finally, some criticism about SIT and refuting
Evidence will be presented to enhance the decision to use this theory for the doctoral research project.

**History of Identity Theory**

This section will provide a brief historical review of identity theory. While social identity theory was not directly derived from identity theory, it is important to understand the different ways interpersonal interactions within society have been studied. Theorists like Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson looked at identity theory from the lens of knowledge acquisition in people. Identity theory under Piaget was focused on how young children obtain knowledge through interactions in society. He started studying how young children made mistakes and the processes they used to learn how to complete tasks (Blake & Pope, 2008). His studies began to include how children interacted with others in order to understand how their world worked. Piaget conceptualized that children began to develop value structures and competence in handling social situations through interactions with others (DeVries, 1997). As young children, they learned social cues and a sense of morality from adults. Children learned morality from adults who were in a position of power that dictated the knowledge that needed to be learned or encouraged them to be creative and think for themselves (DeVries, 1997). By the time children reached the age of 12 and moved through adulthood, they started to understand more about social identities and were able to use logical thinking to solve problems (Blake & Pope, 2008; DeVries, 1997).

Erik Erikson developed an identity theory that spanned a person’s entire life cycle (Bradley, 1997). Erikson was interested in understanding a person’s relationship with their social environment (Kroger & Marcia, 2011) and the multiple ways they developed their own identity. Erikson saw identity as a balance between two factors: identity synthesis and identity confusion (Schwartz, 2001). As Schwartz (2001) noted:
For Erikson, identity is best represented by a single bipolar dimension, ranging from the ego syntonic pole of identity synthesis to the ego dystonic pole of identity confusion. Identity synthesis represents a reworking of childhood and contemporaneous identifications into a larger, self-determined set of self-identified ideals, whereas identity confusion represents an inability to develop a workable set of ideals on which to base an adult identity. Ego identity, then, represents a coherent picture that represents a coherent picture that one shows both to oneself and to the outside world. (p. 9)

Under Erikson’s theory, a person went through a successive stages of development called “crises” (Bradley, 1997, p. 263) where the individual developed a deeper sense of self as they moved through the world. Stages began at birth and moved through adolescence and adulthood. As Bradley (1997) noted in their work:

Successful resolution results in the development of the particular ego strength most appropriate to the stage at hand, creating in the child the foundations for hope, will, purpose and competence; in the adolescent, fidelity, or a sense of unity and continuity; and in the adult, a capacity for love, care and wisdom. (p. 263)

Ultimately in each stage a person resolved the crisis as they began to balance their individual identities with the environments they lived in (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Erikson saw people move through their life cycle developing a personality that was shaped by these crises (Bradley, 1997). As adolescents moved into adulthood, people were able to create a personal identity that was made up of different and cultural factors, such as employment role or marital status. Adults also had enough knowledge about themselves to where they could make decisions how they wanted to shape their identity within the world (Schwartz, 2001).
George Mead crafted identity theory to understand how societal pressures shaped personal behavior in the world (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identity theory posited that individuals held multiple identities in society that changed depending on the type of interaction they had with others. As Stryker & Burke (2000) noted in their work:

To refer to each group-based self, the theorists chose the term identity, asserting that persons have as many identities as distinct networks of relationships in which they occupy positions and play roles. In identity theory usage, social roles are expectations attached to positions occupied in networks of relationships; identities are internalized role expectations. The theory asserts that role choices are a function of identities so conceptualized, and that identities within self are organized in a salience hierarchy reflecting the importance of hierarchy as an organizational principle in society. (p. 286)

Under identity theory, a person moved through society holding what was known as role identities. People held multiple roles that presented themselves at different times in the world. For example, a graduate student may also be a husband and a supervisor at work. One of those roles may present themselves more than the others depending on the situation (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Role identities were considered to hold a specific set of behaviors and norms that people should follow. If a person followed the expectations society has of a certain role identity, then that person’s self-esteem was positively impacted (Hogg et al., 1995). Some role identities held more importance than others due to the frequency of them being presented in societal interactions. As Hogg et al. (1995) noted in their work, the role identities most frequently used held greater salience with a person and increased a person’s self-esteem. This level of salience was predicated upon a person making a commitment to a particular role identity and was influenced by the frequency a particular role identity and the strengths of relationships connected...
to a particular identity (Stryker, 1980). As Hogg et al. (1995) commented, “The more strongly committed a person is to an identity-in terms of both interactional and affective commitment-the higher the level of identity salience will be” (p.258).

Both social identity theory and Mead’s identity theory discussed how people define themselves within society and the impacts interactions with others shape their behavior. In addition, both SIT and identity theory described the ways a person’s social identity becomes internalized through distinct processes (Stryker & Burke, 2000). However, Hogg et al. (1995) discussed several major differences between identity theory and SIT, including:

1. “…identity theory focuses on the process of labeling oneself as belonging to a particular social category, acknowledges the role that others may play in supporting this categorization, and relates self-conception to behavior via behavioral prescriptions embodied by roles. Yet it generally stops short of specifying in any detail the cognitive processes and structures (e.g. categorization, prototypes) that may underlie identity dynamics and may produce conformity to norms…Social identity theory, in contrast, has a somewhat more dynamic and highly elaborated perspective, which explains contextual salience in terms of social comparative factors, self-esteem motivation, uncertainty reduction, and social explanation”, (p. 263)

2. “Another important source of differences between the theories is that social identity theory is about intergroup relations and group behavior, while identity theory concerns role behavior. Identity theory thus is focused differently than social identity theory. It concentrates on role behavior and role identities, and does not consider in any direct sense the impact of other social attributes on self.” (p. 264)
These differences helped make the distinction between Mead’s identity theory and Social Identity Theory. Where identity theory was concerned with understanding how people’s identities are shaped by social interactions, SIT focused on group dynamics and how interactions with groups shape personal identity. The next section will discuss the formation of SIT and the multiple components that make up this theory.

**Seminal Beginnings of SIT**

Social identity theory (SIT) was created by Henri Tajfel and peers to better understand how people identify within social groups and how those groups interact with others (Devine, 2015; Trepte, 2006). Henri Tajfel began his research by studying effects of prejudice within groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which ultimately led him to partner with John Turner to further study intergroup relationships (Hogg et al., 1995). According to Tajfel (1982), social identity is the part of a person’s sense of self that gains knowledge and emotional stability by being a member of particular social group, known as an in-group. SIT explains how group processes work and how members feel about their membership (Goar, 2007; Hogg et al., 1995). Social identity theory is guided by three theoretical principles:

1. “Individuals strive to achieve or to maintain positive social identity” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16)

2. “Positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some out-groups: the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16)
3. “When social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct and/or make their existing group more positively distinct” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16)

According to this theory, the in-group provides both a sense of belonging and social norms that people must adhere to (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Grouping also helps members make sense of the world and navigate complex social situations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Groups are defined by three major factors:

- We can conceptualize a group, in this sense, as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it. (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 15)

The in-group serves the purpose of hosting a set of attributes that a person can clearly identify with (Hogg, Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012). Once a person becomes a member of an in-group, they derive positive social status and good standing within the group. The member begins to develop positive self-esteem through identifying with the in-group and holding negative views of out-group participants. Developing an in-group allows for members to create both a stronger personal and group identity where one had not existed before (Burford, 2012; Christian, Bagozzi, Abrams, & Rosenthal, 2012; Willets & Clarke, 2014).

The in-group also serves as a method to create a stronger sense of identity where there was not one before. Willetts and Clarke (2014) suggested in their article that SIT could be a powerful tool to create a sense of organizational and professional identity amongst nurses in Australia. The authors detailed how the profession of nursing had not been seen as vital to
medicine until the mid-1980’s when nursing schools were established at colleges and universities in the country. Creating a sense of identity amongst nurses was also hampered by negative views held by doctors and other medical professionals. The authors argued that by examining the day to day duties and the factors that impact their working situations, nurses could collectively share their experiences and begin to form groups to support their efforts. Creating this professional identity could also help shape how doctors and other professionals see nursing and help to create a more supportive environment for this type of work (Willets & Clarke, 2014). Such a similar tactic of using SIT as a method to understanding how men of color describe the importance of their personal networks could inform universities how these groups could be beneficial to improving the academic performance of this population.

**Understanding Intergroup Comparison**

Members of an in-group also begin to develop particular behaviors and attitudes that become prevalent and are specific to the group. The person’s behavior is dictated by the influence of others within the in-group and an indifference towards an out-group (Tajfel, 1982). Comparisons with an out-group occur and are influenced by three variables:

1. “First, individuals must have internalized their group membership as an aspect of their self-concept: they must be subjectively identified with the relevant in-group.” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16)

2. “Second, the social situation must be such as to allow for intergroup comparisons that enable the selection and evaluation of the relevant relational attributes.” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16)
3. “Third, in-groups do not compare themselves with every cognitively available out-group: the out-group must be perceived as a relevant comparison group.” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16)

Social identity theory also posits that groups engage in comparison with one another to maintain their social standing. Members of an in-group that view both their individual position and overall group status as strong will hold positive views of the group. Focused comparisons to an out-group will demand that the in-group works on strengthening their positionality to ward off any threats (Funiaole, 2015). Competition amongst groups is seen as a natural by-product of ensuring their ideal behavior is the norm that others may follow. This comparison also leads to very distinct differentiation between groups. As Tajfel and Turner (1979) noted in their work, “the aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group on some dimensions. Any such act, therefore, is essentially competitive. This competition requires a situation of mutual comparison and differentiation on a shared value dimension” (p. 41). Turner (1975) mentioned that any conflict between groups is mostly focused on comparison and rather than conflict. This comparison is done so that members continue to have a positive view of their own group, and that those views are based upon the unique cultural factors (Turner, 1975) that help differentiate their group from others.

**Group change.** There may be members who no longer view themselves as holding a positive standing within the group or will be looking to join another social group. People will naturally look for a group that has more favorable attributes compared to their last one (Turner, 1975). As Turner (1975) noted, “People will seek a more positive social identity where ‘positive’ itself denotes no more than certain shared beliefs as to what aspects of social identity are desirable and sought” (p. 9). Groups face dynamics of change because of three major factors:
1. Members sense another in-group best fits their personal needs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

2. People are trying to change their in-group by one of three means:
   a. Using a new metric to compare their in-group with an out-group. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)
   b. Modifying the group values so that negative views are now seen positively. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)
   c. Looking at another out-group to use for a comparison basis. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

3. Members of an in-group want to compete directly with an out-group. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

People within an in-group want their membership to have value and to have a sense of meaning. By providing this, the in-group will maintain a high status and be able to better compare themselves to other groups within their environment (Hogg et al., 1995). In addition, groups who are onboarding new members will need to provide support to ensure a smooth transition yet value their uniqueness that they bring to the group. If not, new members may be slow to adapt to a fresh set of group norms because they feel older identities are being pushed out to accommodate a new identity (Amiot, Terry, Wirawan, & Grice, 2010).

**Shift towards Self-Categorization**

While SIT focuses on the desire to become a member of a group, there was a shift in literature moving towards understand how group behavior becomes internalized. Self-categorization theory is considered an extension of SIT, where it attempted to explain the relationship between a person’s salient identity and the behaviors expected by group members (Hogg & Terry, 2000), as well as the impact of social influence on a person’s social identity
development (Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990). A seminal definition of self-categorization was provided by Hogg, Turner & Davidson (1990) who stated “Self-categorization theory holds that people conform to positions perceived as normative for (stereotypical of) their group precisely because, in reflecting the agreement of similar others, such positions provide subjectivity valid evidence about the external world” (p. 79).

Social identity provides the reference that norms group members must have, but self-categorization theory focused on the cognitive processes that lead people to internalize group behaviors (Hogg & Reid, 2006). SIT explains how groups engage in social comparison, but self-categorization looks at how group membership is internalized within each member. A major assumption of self-categorization is that people knowing group themselves with others that have the same characteristics and hold similar belief structures (Voci, 2006). People categorize themselves based upon accepting the norms of the in-group and the stereotypes from the out-group, as this stereotyping helps with group differentiation (Oldmeadow, Platow, Foddy, & Anderson, 2003). As group members begin to see a shared identity as more salient, they go through a process of depersonalization where they begin to see themselves as part of a category instead as individuals (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1992). Depersonalization is not seen in a negative light; rather, it is a process that explains how people start to identify with the group act according to group norms.

As people maneuver through the world, they may choose to categorize themselves differently depending on the situation. The two main factors that lead to categorization are fit and accessibility (Turner et al., 1992; Voci, 2006). Fit is broken down into two components: comparative (groups are formed when intragroup differences are smaller than other groups) and normative (differences and similarities between groups must be within societal beliefs on what
the groups believe in) (Turner et al., 1992). Accessibility refers to the ability to categorize between in-groups and out-groups, and has three major determining factors:

1. The importance of the in-group/out-group categorization to a person’s self-definition. (Voci, 2006)
2. The person’s past experiences using the categorization to their benefit. (Voci, 2006)
3. The person’s personal goals and desires for using the categorization. (Voci, 2006).

A final reason why categorization occurs was suggested by Hogg and Terry (2000), which was to eliminate uncertainty within society. SIT suggested that people join groups in order to find meaning within society and groups serve a purpose to provide members with a higher self-esteem. Self-categorization does this by providing group members with the prototypical behavior and norms that people adhere to in order to feel secure within society. If the prototypical behavior is positive and applied equally to everyone, members will have a stronger social identity and increase self-esteem. The importance of prototypical behavior will be discussed in the next section about group leadership and direction.

**Prototypical Leadership**

In order to best understand how groups can maintain their status, Hogg (2001) proposed that social groups are led not just by group norms but through individuals whose leadership would impact how the group operated. Under this line of thought, leaders naturally want their members to feel good about their role in the group. In turn, followers yield power and responsibility to leaders (Hogg, 2001). Since leaders and followers are involved in the same social group, leaders hold significant sway in what the norms are and the way the in-group compares itself to out-groups (Hogg et al., 2012). In addition, since group members identify with
group ideals and values, they will look for leadership that strongly showcases these attributes. Hogg, Knippenberg, & Rast (2012) defined this as the prototypical behavior.

Prototypical behavior is important for groups, as it is seen to be the desired performance group members want to meet (Hogg, 2001). Once members of the in-group continue to internalize the prototypical behavior, uncertainty about their place in society reduces and members begin to see themselves as group members rather than individuals. Prototypical behavior also works to maximize the differences between in-groups and out-groups (Hogg et al., 2012; Hogg & Terry, 2000). A member of the in-group who strongly exhibits the prototypical behavior becomes what is known as the prototypical leader (Hogg, 2001). They are often not charismatic or powerful, nor do they need to manipulate membership in order to achieve their personal goals. Rather, as Hogg (2001) mentioned, leadership is defined by the position they hold plus the fact that group members now see themselves as a collective and have internalized prototypical norms. Thus, leaders can direct the group and influence new members as they learn group standards.

The power of prototypical leadership can lead groups to feel greater self-esteem (Hogg et al., 2004). In addition, good prototypical leaders can distinguish between developing individual and group identities, depending on situational contexts. Hogg (2001) stated that having prototypical behavior is important for leadership development for four reasons:

1. Prototypicality helps members clearly see differences between their group and external ones. (Hogg, 2001)

2. Good prototypical leadership values the in-group members and works to better the entire collective. (Hogg, 2001)

3. Leaders are driven by their personality and not by the position. (Hogg, 2001)
4. Prototypical leaders must continue to show that they still showcase the strongest group characteristics. (Hogg, 2001)

Good prototypical leaders want the group to succeed and for members to feel valued (Hogg et al., 2004). However bad leaders can be removed from their position if group norms change or if the leadership no longer meets the needs of the group (Hogg, 2001). From this perspective, deviance in the group serves a positive function, as it is working to change the group from the inside rather than outside forces causing a shift in leadership (Hogg et al., 2004).

Understanding leadership influences on group members is important to social identity theory. Great leaders help ease the transition from individual to group identity. Leaders who exhibit transformative skills are more likely to attract members to the group and increase self-efficacy, or the ability for a person to believe they have control over how their life will occur (Knippenberg, Knippenberg, Kremer, & Hogg, 2004). These transformative leaders instill a belief that individuals who join a group will feel secure in their membership and are valued. It also helps when transformative leaders work to develop relationships with group members and use their shared identity to establish deeper levels of trust (Steffens, Haslam, & Reicher, 2014). It has also been suggested that leaders have a greater impact upon members who more strongly identify with the group than those who have a weaker affiliation (Steffens et al., 2014). However, leaders must model the preferred group behavior rather than use subversive tactics like surveillance and politics to transfer norms to new members (Subasic, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra, & Haslam, 2011). If those negative tactics are used, they risk losing their positive influence upon members.
Table 2.1

**Summary of SIT and Self-Categorization Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Insight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clopton &amp; Finch (2010)</td>
<td>The authors of this study combined SIT and a social health model to investigate how the strength of identity to sports teams influences the perceived level of social capital on campus.</td>
<td>Intercollegiate athletics can play a major role in overall community building on campus and how in-groups related to sports form in college.</td>
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<td>Friesen &amp; Besley (2013)</td>
<td>This pilot study combined self-categorization theory and Erickson’s identity development to understand how teacher identity was created for first-year teachers.</td>
<td>Self-categorization theory showed promise in understanding how first-year professionals internalized a teacher identity along with their own personal identities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funiaole (2015)</td>
<td>The article uses SIT as a way to understand how Japan positions itself both politically and militarily against potential threats from China and other nations.</td>
<td>A country can see itself as its own in-group and will move in a direction to protect itself from out-groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghavami et al. (2011)</td>
<td>SIT and Erickson’s identity formation models were used to examine how minority and LGBTQ+ students’ identity development impacted sense of belonging within the respective social groups.</td>
<td>Evidence was shown that developing a sense of identity within the particular population helped create stronger attachment to in-group.</td>
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<td>Hawley, Hosch, &amp; Bovaird (2014)</td>
<td>SIT was the framework to understand the “black sheep effect” and its impacts on college student athletes and their perceptions of athletes who get in legal trouble.</td>
<td>Some in-group norm deviation was allowable for student athletes, but deviation depended on situation and the impacts of overall perceptions of student athletes on campus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levin, Walker, Haberler, &amp; Jackson-Boothby (2013)</td>
<td>The authors combined SIT and critical race theory to examine the experiences of faculty of color at several California community colleges.</td>
<td>Faculty of color discussed how the social identities based upon race shaped how they interacted with their counterparts, both positively with other faculty of color and negatively with White faculty members</td>
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Mastro, Behm-Morawitz & Kopacz (2008)

The authors combined SIT and adverse racism theory to understand how White Americans perceived Latinx characters on television. Participants used media images of Latinx characters to reinforce in-group norms and out-group stereotypes.

Powell (2011)

The article discussed how American hip-hop culture could be better understood through the lens of SIT. The author derived a model based on SIT that looked at hip-hop as a method for social mobility and social change.

S.A. Reid (2012)

Three experiments were conducted to better understand the impacts on self-categorization and how people with strong political beliefs responded to perceived biased media reports. Perceptions of media bias were higher when political identities were salient or if the story was provided by an out-group media outlet.

Criticisms of SIT

While SIT has been used in a variety of situations and its application continues to grow, there have been criticisms about some of its principles. Two central critiques relate to how groups change their status within society compared to those more privileged and how political ideologies are reflected within the theory. These critiques are offered below along with refuting arguments.

As mentioned above, individuals within a particular group may challenge their membership through a number of means, but the criticism levied by Brown (2000) is focused on how entire groups move up in status. An in-group may use the same tactics as mentioned earlier, but the ways vary depending on the situation and cannot easily be predicted. However, one way underprivileged out-groups could increase their societal standing would be to emulate prototypical behaviors that successful members use and view stereotypes as motivators to move the in-group in a positive direction. An out-group can actively look for members who have gained educational or professional success and use them as prototypes for future movement
(Lezama, 2014). These leaders provide testimonials about how to become more successful and to have a better understanding of how particular stereotypes can be overcome through education. In addition, the out-group may see comparisons to an in-group as motivation to change their positionality (Lopez, 2014) and use social identifiers as a way to build community. In her study, Lopez (2014) examined how undocumented students used the label “illegal” throughout their educational careers to bond with others and develop strategies to help each other to change their social standing when compared to other social groups.

Another criticism levied towards SIT regards political and ideological identities. Politically-focused groups may be harder to identify and can be seen as ambiguous (Huddy, 2001). This criticism stems from the idea that most social identities are fixed and that political leanings are harder to identify. As Huddy (2001) noted:

Is someone who endorses legalized abortion and needle exchange programs but also proposes smaller government and free-market principles a liberal? What is the demarcation point between liberal and moderate? At what point does moderate shade into conservative? These questions are difficult to answer, and they muddy popular understanding of ideological labels (p. 141).

Some research has addressed how SIT can be applied to political and ideological identities. One such study used concepts of SIT towards understanding political activism and examined a concept of ideological social identity (ISI), or the psychological attachment to an ideological in-group (Devine, 2015). While a beginning, it is evidence that SIT can be applied to identities that can be harder to clearly identify.
SIT Conclusion

The work of Tajfel, Turner, and Hogg shaped how SIT can be used to understand intergroup relationships and internal group processes. The work of Tajfel (1982) expanded the focus on how group members can influence one another in increasing self-esteem and promoting positive change within society. The literature and studies mentioned above serve to provide guidance for understanding how men of color use their social identities to improve their living and learning environments. The literature review continues its focus on the unique method of questioning the proposed study will use to examine how men of color can create the ideal environment that is supportive of their needs.

Appreciative Inquiry

As mentioned in Chapter 1, appreciative inquiry (AI) is an organizational development model that focuses on individual’s current strengths and uses them to develop positive structures and systems. For the purpose of this study, AI was the model used to ask men of color about their social identity group and examine the importance of such groups in their quest to graduate from college. This section will include the seminal roots of appreciative inquiry and discussion of the 4-d process. Applications of AI to education will be provided, as well as a table of relevant literature. Critiques of appreciative inquiry and refuting evidence will be discussed. Finally, links between appreciative inquiry and social identity theory will be presented.

Beginnings of Appreciative Inquiry

The seminal roots of appreciative inquiry can be found with the work of Kurt Lewin and the concept of action research. As Lewin (1946) stated in his seminal work on this subject, “It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action “(p. 35). Lewin was initially interested in
examining how businesses could be more productive if workers made decisions through a democratic process rather than being told what to do (Adelman, 1993). Through experiments, Lewin began to craft a method that was participatory in nature and offered continual feedback for continued improvement. As Adelman (1993) stated in his review of Lewin’s work:

Action research for Lewin was exemplified by the discussion of problems followed by group decisions on how to proceed. Action research must include the active participation by those who have to carry out the work in the exploration of problems that they identify and anticipate. After investigation of these problems the group makes decisions, monitoring and keeping note of the consequences. Regular reviews of progress follow. The group would decide on when a particular plan or strategy had been exhausted and fulfilled, come to nothing, and would bring to these discussions newly perceived problems. (p. 9)

Lewin noted that the process of action research was a combination of understanding intergroup relationship dynamics and social factors that influenced group decisions (Lewin, 1946). In order to help solve such complex issues, Lewin proposed an iterative process sought to simultaneously understand a particular system and ultimately improve it (Fitzgerald et al., 2001). To Lewin, it was important to understand how an organization worked, discover new ways to improve the organization, and then analyze the results. As he stated in his work, “rational social management, therefore, proceeds in a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action” (Lewin, 1946, p. 38). David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivasta examined the work of both Lewin and Kenneth Gergen, who examined how organizations can use collective ideas to promote change through action research
(Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Makino, 2013). As Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987) noted in their seminal work,

> Thus, appreciative inquiry refers to both a search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and a will of a group, organization, or society as a whole. It is an inquiry process that affirms our symbolic capacities of imagination and mind as well as our social capacity for conscious choice and cultural evolution. (p. 161)

Appreciative inquiry was developed as a method that harnessed the collective wisdom of organization members to create lasting change within those organizations. In their article proposing the concept of AI, Cooperrider and Srivasta had three critiques regarding organizational change models. First, problem-solving approaches were not conducive for creating innovative solutions to organizational problems. Second, they claimed that organizations were socially created and could grow to the potential of the people who existed within it. Finally, they argued that the best way to create impactful change was to provide new ideas, which couldn’t be done with conventional change methods (Bushe, 2011). There was more interest in examining how individuals could work together to make change in an organization, as well as how current strengths could be used to impact innovation within a system (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

The desire by organizational leaders to use appreciative inquiry is to help facilitate organizational change through both theorizing about a better environment then creating action steps to make it a reality (Makino, 2013). In order to develop a better understanding on how organizations can change for the better, the line of questioning during the 4-D process (discover, dream, design, destiny) focuses on what current systems and structures work rather than ones
that do not (Priest et al., 2013). For systems and groups to grow and enact positive change, several assumptions must occur:

1. People create meaning of the world through interactions with others. (Fifolt & Lander, 2013)
2. The process of asking questions help foster change. (Fifolt & Lander, 2013)
3. Telling stories helps people focus on positive memories. (Fifolt & Lander, 2013)
4. People and groups naturally want to move forward in positive ways. (Fifolt & Lander, 2013)
5. More energy can be directed towards positive change rather than negativity. (Fifolt & Lander, 2013)
6. People share responsibility in the entire change process. (Fifolt & Lander, 2013)

These six assumptions are rooted in a concept known as the positive core. This concept is defined as the unique values, methods, assets, and skills that organizations have which they can use to grow in a positive manner (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). In developing the positive core for an organization, people begin to think about their group from an asset-based approach rather than deficit-based, and relies on collective wisdom and communication about successes to begin mapping how positive change can occur (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Appreciative inquiry is rooted in social constructivism, where the participant’s viewpoints shape how they see the world (Makino, 2013). Therefore, interactions with others help individuals construct a reality that operates at its best for everyone, not just a select few. People in a particular group (i.e. collegiate men of color) can integrate their lived experiences and use them to improve a situation in which they exist (Beckles, 2008; Martin & Calabrese, 2011). Groups and organizations are encouraged to always revisit their future goals through
constant use of the 4-D process (discover, dream, design, destiny). Organizations, similar to the population studied in this research, are seen as structures that desire change that will impact them positively in the future (Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011), and people are naturally driven to be a part of the change through storytelling (Aldred, 2009). This allows for appreciative inquiry to be applied in multiple contexts, as it involves people within organizations and is intended to bring out the best in their experiences.

**Contemporary Applications to Education**

School environments are often seen as complex organizations that often move slowly towards positive change. The scope and size of an educational institution varies, but appreciative inquiry has shown itself to be readily applicable to this field. Education institutions are driven to share knowledge and provide opportunities for future growth, so AI is an avenue for people to come together and build better environments (Makino, 2013).

**Higher education.** Colleges and universities are beginning to see appreciative inquiry as a valuable tool for creating positive change in an uncertain landscape. Since these institutions are designed for exploration and the transmission of information, AI is becoming an emerging way to leverage institutional cultures to create environments that better serve their purpose.

In order to completely implement AI at a college or university, Fifolt and Stowe (2011) provided five key indicators for its successful use. First, leaders must be open to trying a new method for organizational change. Second, people who are invited to take part in the AI process must have an understanding of how the method works. Third, transparency in the entire AI exercise meant that stakeholders knew how they could participate and had the chance to share their story. Fourth, the focus on staying positive must remain through the process, and should
also allow participants to vent any frustrations. Finally, any results created at end of the AI process must be carried out evenly amongst participants (Fifolt & Stowe, 2011).

Fifolt and Lander (2013) highlighted two prime examples of AI being applied in higher education environments. At both the University of Oregon and the University of Alabama-Birmingham, teams of people were brought together to envision a better future for their organizations. Leadership at both institutions were not focused on fixing deficiencies within their units; rather, they were desiring to know what areas of their organization were functioning well. Specifically at Oregon, leadership was desiring this information so they could shift their programming towards student learning and aligning their goals to the academic mission of the university (Fifolt & Lander, 2013). In both examples, participants shared what their ideal organization would look like, and were able to have a major say in how they should be implemented. At Alabama-Birmingham, staff input allowed leadership to craft a divisional mission statement based upon participants’ positive core comments. Communication was consistent throughout the statement creation, allowing staff to provide feedback during this process (Fifolt & Lander, 2013).

**Instructional support.** Another area where AI has been applied within higher education is with the development of academic curriculum and improve teaching methods. Appreciative inquiry has the ability to bring together faculty from different disciplines to discuss which teaching methods are working the best and how to create student teams where more faculty interaction can take place (Fergy, Marks-Marlan, Ooms, Shapcott, & Burke, 2011). Faculty may be reticent to engage in a form of organizational change, but the five steps pointed out by Fifolt and Stowe (2011) could be applied here. Academic departments who are looking to improve
their educational offerings can use an AI process to better understand their unique cultures and examine which of their courses provide students with a positive experience (Priest et al., 2013).

Faculty members who are interested in improving their teaching methods can turn to AI for a deeper examination. Harrison and Hasan (2013) noted in their work on the use of AI by faculty within the classroom that it does not follow the traditional 4-D model. Rather, similar concepts of positivity, potentiality, and communication are applied within the classroom to hold higher expectations for students. For example, classroom expectations were modified to the assumption that students had the potential to learn difficult concepts and provide students with successful tools they can use during group projects (Harrison & Hasan, 2013). Faculty members can also do a personal AI process regarding their instructional methods and student success goals. Through reflection and focusing on potentiality, faculty can design personal methods to ensure they continue to develop positive relationships with students and craft professional development plans that can be implemented in the classroom (Giles & Kung, 2010).

Table 2.2

*Summary of AI Articles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Insight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aldred (2009)</td>
<td>The article critiques both AI and World Café, two different organizational development models used in the United Kingdom.</td>
<td>While participatory change models may motivate people in to action, more research needs to be completed to fully understand the impact both AI and World Café have on organizations and on power dynamics that exist within groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alston-Mills (2011)</td>
<td>The author highlighted how AI concepts were adapted for a diversity education course for higher educational professionals.</td>
<td>Combining AI principles with a diversity program led a small number of participants to discuss how they could improve conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bright (2009)</strong></td>
<td>The article makes the case for AI being a part of organizational development models, including positive organizational scholarship (POS).</td>
<td>POS focuses on the characteristics that lead people to move towards positive change, and AI has natural links through its focus on positive inquiry to create structural change in groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calabrese (2015)</strong></td>
<td>School administrators went through an AI process to share best practices and experiences that improved student learning.</td>
<td>Sharing in group led to administrators taking material from peers and implementing them in their schools during the 11-week study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calabrese, Hester, Friesen, &amp; Burkhalter (2010)</strong></td>
<td>An AI process was conducted amongst rural school teachers and leaders to improve communication.</td>
<td>Participation in AI led to more appreciation of different viewpoints and desire to integrate these views into action items that strengthened relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gaskin &amp; Williams (2016)</strong></td>
<td>AI was used to design a training program for college orientation leaders.</td>
<td>Student leaders were able to design a program that included developing mentoring relationships and training topics that directly related to their jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neville (2007)</strong></td>
<td>An “inquiry project” (p. 109) directed business students to use an AI process to think about solving a global problem of interest using course lessons and personal experiences.</td>
<td>Students created action plans that took into consideration multiple perspectives and engages communities impacted by the issues at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peutz &amp; Kroth (2009)</strong></td>
<td>AI was discussed as a method to strengthen services offered by university Extension offices.</td>
<td>AI was envisioned as a concrete method that Extension officials could use to build upon staff and office strengths to improve services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>San Martin &amp; Calabrese (2011)</strong></td>
<td>AI was used with students at an alternative high school to speak about the positive aspects of their environment.</td>
<td>Students valued relationships with staff/faculty and learning that challenged their thinking and viewpoints.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criticisms of AI

Appreciative inquiry has well-documented uses in a variety of situations, however there have been critical commentary about the process and its outputs. One common critique that has been shared relates to the use of positive questioning (Bushe, 2011; Grant & Humphries, 2006). This criticism revolved around the amount of positivity that is used through the entire 4-D process and whether it neglects the negative experiences people may have within organizations. Bushe (2011) also noted that by focusing just on positive aspects, it leaves out the perspective of others who had non-positive experiences who could provide information on how the organization could change for the better. However, an argument against this claim points out that the appreciative inquiry method does not neglect those negative experiences. Rather, an AI facilitator will focus on getting participants to examine how to create a better experience from the beginning instead achieving a solution determined by the process leader. S. Michael (2005) noted in her work on crafting appreciative inquiry questions,

> In establishing a dynamic in which people can speak freely about their experiences rather than react out of a presumed need to defend or justify their bad experiences, however, AI advocates claim that an appreciative approach can often yield a more nuanced understanding of both the positive and negative in an experience than would a problem-solving approach starting at the negative. (p. 223)

Another criticism about AI revolved around the end results of the process. In a study of health facility employees who participated in continuing education programs that a concern participants had was that AI would not come up with a concrete solution to the organizations’ issues (Dematteo & Reeves, 2011). One misconception about the AI process is that it is not intended to create solutions to problems. Instead, the last step of the 4-D process (destiny) is
focused on how people can create the environment that will facilitate positive change. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005), the last phase of AI sees change as a transformative experience that will motivate people to create the organization that works best for them. In addition, the use of storytelling throughout the AI process lets participants not only discuss what their ideal environment is, but the steps that need to be taken to grow the group in a more positive direction (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012).

**Integration between Appreciative Inquiry and Social Identity Theory**

In the development of the literature review, there were noticeable links between both appreciative inquiry and social identity theory that warranted discussion. Through understanding social identity theory, in-group members were a collective of individuals who had similar social status, had some attachment to their social identity, and had a strong understanding on how they have become members of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Members of an in-group desired to have a positive status of the group (Tajfel, 1982) and to have a positive evaluation of self within the group (Turner, 1975). Aligning to the key principles of appreciative inquiry, in-groups were always looking to change their fortunes for the better and improve their standing (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Group behavior was set by a prototypical standard that set the in-group out from others and helped members maintain a high level of self-esteem when they compared themselves to out-group members (Hogg, 2001). People who are in these in-groups strongly identified with the organization and had a vested interest in ensuring the overall success of the group and of individual members (Watkins et al., 2011).

Group leaders often modeled this prototypical behavior and were assumed to have the best interest of the group in mind. However, attitudes and behaviors were modified by the in-group if members sensed that outside groups were trying to improve their social status or if in-
group members started to believe that their fortunes were better served by joining another social group (Hogg et al., 2004). But if the in-group wanted to continue to maintain their high status compared to out-groups, moving forward towards positive change involved gathering group members together and holding authentic conversations regarding where the group needed to improve to enhance their status (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). These moves were partly born out of improving the group’s status in society, and in part because positive energy tended to lead towards more creative solutions that everyone benefitted from (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

**AI Conclusion**

Throughout this section of the literature review, the seminal work of Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987) was a motivating factor in using AI in multiple cases. There were very few variations of the 4-D process, and it had seen wide success particularly within the field of education. For the proposed study, using a positive-focused line of questioning like AI will be beneficial in having men of color look at their social identities and examine the current strengths they have that can be applied to create stronger college environments that respects their experiences. It had also seen limited success within diversity education, so this study hopes to build upon the literature linking AI and working with underrepresented communities.

**Men of Color on College Campuses**

Since the study focuses on the male of color community, this part of the literature review will discuss the recent articles and research that show the current issues this population faces. This section will focus on two main issues related to men of color. The first item discussed will be on the types of campus climates men of color must navigate is provided. The second issue
will be focused on the development of masculine identities within particular racial and ethnic communities.

**Campus Climate**

One emphasis in literature regarding men of color focuses on the particular campus climates they must navigate. Campus climates were originally influenced by the interests and desires of White students, and current traditions and customs primarily serve White students (Wei et al., 2011). Men of color must exist in a campus climate where they are not expected to succeed academically and peers and faculty hold stereotypical assumptions about their acceptance to college. Students of color often report never having a class taught by a faculty member of the same race/ethnicity (S. Harper & Davis, 2012), feeling alone on campus and not having strong relationships with faculty members (Cooper & Hawkins, 2014), and having a strong sense of alienation from their White peers (Cerezo, Lyda, Enriquez, Beristianos, & Connor, 2015). In addition, efforts to improve campus climate are usually left to campus offices or specific personnel that did not have the resources or political buy-in to make effective change (S. Harper, 2014). Men of color face unique circumstances on college campuses that impact their academic success and leave them feeling left out of the campus community.

**Minimization of experiences.** Male students of color indicated that they do not feel a sense of community on their campuses and that the lack of understanding from their White counterparts was a contributing factor. Colleges and universities have introduced diversity education in an effort to create environments that are inclusive of different identities. However, these educational efforts are focus on limiting bias and not on challenging the root causes of bias, meaning that students can still hold the same negative feelings towards others (Nolan Leon Cabrera, 2014). Even with educational efforts, men of color still face consistent stereotyping by
their White peers, and in the case of Black men, are victims of racial slurs by fellow students (S. R. Harper, 2012).

It is best for educational professionals who want to see men of color succeed in college to understand why White students, particularly White men, hold stereotypical thoughts and minimalize the lived experiences of their minority peers. These stereotypes and other racist behavior can affect academic performance and ultimately student of color retention and graduation rates (Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2014). White men believed that racism was perpetrated by students of color (Nolan Leon Cabrera, 2014) through the presence of monoracial student groups and excluding White students in discussions. The White students were not victims of outward racial discrimination or violence, rather they felt uncomfortable in an multicultural environment (Nolan Leon Cabrera, 2014). In addition, White males claimed that they were victims of reverse racism due to institutional efforts to diversify the student body and did not have a working definition of “contemporary racism” (Nolan Leon Cabrera, 2014, p. 49). In their eyes, racism was perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan or by students of color in a reverse fashion. What they were not doing was examining what racism truly is and how their thoughts contributed to a non-inclusive learning environment. And, any negative feelings students of color had on campus about their experiences were their fault due to their perceived racist attitudes towards Whites. As Nolan Leon Cabrera (2014) noted in his study, “This meant these racially privileged people spend the majority of their time downplaying the importance of systemic racial oppression instead focusing on how minorities are ‘racist’ against Whites” (p. 49).

Another stereotype White students held towards their minority peers was the lack of work ethic and desire to assimilate into an American culture. White male students noted that a major reason for inequality between races and ethnicities was that certain groups, particularly Asian
Pacific Islanders (API) (Nolan L. Cabrera, 2014; Nolan Leon Cabrera, 2014), had stronger work ethics and desired to academically succeed. This thought pattern furthered the stereotype that Asian American/Pacific Islander students are the preferred minority group to work and live with (Nolan L. Cabrera, 2014; Shek, 2006). However, a juxtaposition with Asian Pacific Islander students was seen in research, where White students valued upward mobility of API students because of a perceived strong work ethic, but showed more hostile attitudes towards this population because the belief in this meritocracy challenged the White students’ concepts of privilege (Parks & Yoo, 2016). Other groups, like African American and Latinx students, did not value traditional American values and were not invested in succeeding in college and were content with self-segregating themselves (Nolan Leon Cabrera, 2014). These feelings placed upon communities of color, particularly towards male students, has a negative effect upon the students’ feelings on whether they belong at that university or not (Cerezo et al., 2015).

Feelings of stress. There is a growing body of research and literature on how campus environments effect the mental health of students of color. Most of the research focuses on both men and women, and there are slight variations in data based upon gender. However, the general theme from the literature is that constant feelings of being alone and persistent microaggressions by dominant cultures leads students of color to disengage from the campus community (Cerezo et al., 2015). Microaggressions are defined as slight or unconscious affronts made towards people of color by majority communities (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). The stress of being a minority on a college campus is different than general academic stress and is felt amongst racially marginalized communities (Wei et al., 2011). Even with the increased stress levels, men of color were less likely than their White male peers to have utilized mental health services due to a variety of factors, including having a culturally specific masculine identity that values self-

One area of research involving men of color and stress involves a phenomenon called imposter fraud. With this, minority students on campus live with the constant feeling that their successes are resultant from luck or circumstance rather than their efforts. Given the persistent negative stereotypes about students of color on campus, they must hold themselves to high standards in the hope they are not discovered to be a fraud (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013; McClain et al., 2016). Another area is called minority student stress (MSS), which is defined as the unique stress factors experienced by students of color that include racism, discrimination, and daily microaggressions (McClain et al., 2016). Combined, these stress factors impact students of color much differently than their White peers. These stressors have an impact upon a student’s commitment to stay at a school and graduate (Johnson et al., 2014).

Studies have shown that there are no significant differences in how men and women experience MSS and imposter fraud, with the exception of Latinx males who suffered lower rates of minority stress than their female counterparts (Arbona & Jimenez, 2013). African American students felt higher levels of MSS compared to their Asian American and Latinx counterparts (Cokley et al., 2013). Successful African American students may feel higher levels of stress due to the fact they have persisted in the college environment and may have higher levels of depression and anxiety due to survivors guilt (McClain et al., 2016). In addition, African American men who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) felt more personal and family-related stress compared to their peers at predominately White universities, who had to deal with stereotypes and microaggressions (Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, & Luque, 2015).
Asian American/Pacific Islander students had higher levels of imposter fraud than their minority counterparts, due to the persistent stereotype of being a “model minority” and having to live up to that arbitrary standard (Cokley et al., 2013). In addition, as Shek and McEwen (2012) noted in their study of API men and self-esteem, “However, the negative relationship with personal self-esteem in this study may be indicative of an increased awareness of the racial minority status of being Asian American and a heightened sensitivity to racism” (p. 713). Latinx students at both predominately White institutions and more diverse colleges reported elevated levels of stress due to just identifying as a person of color and having a strong sense of identity that made them aware of negative interactions due to their identity (Ar bona & Jimenez, 2013). In addition, more stress is faced by Latinx men regarding navigating college experiences and bureaucracies that are new concepts for these students, as well as coming from schools that did not adequately prepare them for college-level work (Vasquez, 2015)

Masculinity Development and Expression

Another growing body of literature involves how men of color in college environments develop a sense of masculinity. Literature has been geared towards particular minority communities, but there are commonalities amongst racial/ethnic groups that contribute to a better sense of what being a male at college truly means. These commonalities include:

1. Gaining respect from others. (Harris, 2010)
2. Having confidence in handling daily tasks. (Harris, 2010)
3. Taking responsibility for self and others. (Harris, 2010)
4. Showing dominance through physical action and sexual activity. (Harris, 2010)

However, men are socialized to see education as a feminine trait (Saenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015). In this respect, a man of color who gets an education does so counter to
cultural expectations. Men who did not associate education with being feminine focused more on their academic success (Wood, 2014). Specific differences between ethnic groups on how they navigate achieving an education while balancing gender roles will be discussed below.

Research on masculinity development and expression involves understanding how gender roles impact how men shape what being “masculine” means and how they interact with other males. When men don’t live up to societal standards of being a man, an internal conflict occurs where they don’t see themselves as masculine and engage in what is known as male gender role conflict (MGRC). During MGRC, men who try to assert their masculinity endure six unique behavioral patterns: restricting emotions, homophobic behavior, socialized power and competition, restricting sexual and affectional behaviors, desiring to achieve higher levels of success, and suffering health issues (Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011; Harris et al., 2015). Under the MGRC framework, studies regarding development within the African American and Latinx communities show how college men of color make meaning of being a man while on a college campus. Additional studies focused on using feminist methods to understand how men of color can become partners in eliminating patriarchal hegemony and develop healthier definitions of masculinity (McGuire, Berhanu, Davis, & Harper, 2014; Saenz & Bukoski, 2014). The unique experiences these male communities face as they explore masculinity while in college will be discussed below.

**African American men.** African American men face persistent stereotypes about their presence on campus and ability to achieve academic success (S. R. Harper, 2012). Being surrounded by negativity impacts how Black men interact with others and how they see themselves as men. Some Black men will show themselves as being different than the dominant culture by using slang language, wearing different styles of clothes, and express themselves more
assertively than their White peers. This expression of masculinity is seen as a way to cope while being in an oppressive environment (Harris et al., 2011). By doing this, Black men avoid the impression that they are feminine have relationships with gay Black men. This factor in masculinity development also ties into the desire to engage in sexual relationships with multiple females in order to showcase their manhood. By even associating with others who were not straight, some Black men could be assumed to be members of the LGBTQ+ community and seen as not being masculine enough for the community (Harris et al., 2011).

Other ways Black men showcase their masculinity are through spirituality and connections with other Black men. Within the Black community, spirituality was a factor in dealing with stress and building a sense of community with others (Mincey et al., 2015) and have been suggested as a way to help Black men survive in environments populated with a White majority. Spirituality was also a way Black men dealt with some of the expressions of masculinity, including sexual engagement with women and other behaviors they felt were against their faith structure (Harris et al., 2011). Building connections with other Black men was seen as another way to develop a better sense of what it means to be a Black male on a college campus. Developing connections through leadership opportunities, joining Black Greek-Lettered Organizations (BGLO), or through student groups helped Black men communicate about what it means to develop a healthier sense of masculinity and to discuss any issues they face while on campus (S. Harper, 2014; S. R. Harper, 2012; McGuire et al., 2014). This self-reliance on other Black men was seen as a way to cope with being in very unwelcoming environments (Cerezo et al., 2015). However, self-reliance was seen as a negative for Black men who were reluctant to get academic help in community college settings. This desire to solve one’s own problems,
combined with internal feelings of inferiority and negative attitudes from peers and faculty, led Black men to resist asking for academic help until it was absolutely needed (Wood, 2014).

**Latinx men.** While there are areas of similarity between Latinx and African American men, this particular community must navigate strong cultural norms regarding masculinity and family roles. Latinx students face stressors regarding being a visible minority in mostly White spaces and dealing with a lack of knowledge regarding the college experience (Arbona & Jimenez, 2013), but Latinx men face a unique mix of living up to gendered norms yet maintaining a sense of responsibility to community. Multiple studies (Saenz & Bukoski, 2014; Saenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013; Saenz et al., 2015; Vasquez, 2015) noted this competition between the ideals of *machismo* (aggression, homophobia, gender dominance) and *caballerismo* (family oriented, caring, nurturing). With these ideals, Latinx men must navigate the social and family norms of providing financial and emotional support yet do so through self-reliance and hard work. Often these ideals are reinforced though gender roles, where other Latinx men suggest their peers stop their education and get employment to support families (Saenz et al., 2013) and from Latinx women to suggest men maintain strong masculine traits like not showing emotion and working hard to obtain success (Vasquez, 2015).

Much research on Latinx men has been focused on community college students, as studies have shown that a majority of Latinx men begin their academic careers at 2-year institutions (Wood & Harris, 2015). Latinx men at community colleges note that the ideals of *machismo* served a dual role. First, there is a great desire to succeed academically and personally, as failure was a motivating factor in working hard. However, this desire to achieve success does not encourage Latinx men to ask for help and to engage in competition with more successful Latinx women (Saenz et al., 2013). One area where Latinx men found success counter
to the *machismo* expectation was providing support to one another through study groups and student organizations focused on Latinx issues. These communities form bonds where Latinx men can discuss issues about stress and navigating campus cultures, as well as provide academic help to their peers (Harris et al., 2015). This allowed Latinx men to maintain some aspects of *caballerismo* yet embrace student and socialized male gender norms (Saenz et al., 2015).

**Asian American/Pacific Islander men.** The Asian American/Pacific Islander (API) male community has been the subject of limited research regarding developing a sense of masculinity. As mentioned above, the API community in general is not considered a racial minority by majority communities on college campuses (Nolan L. Cabrera, 2014) and face the persistent stereotype that they are the ideal minority group due to their successes in academia and assimilation into American society (Nolan Leon Cabrera, 2014). Despite the fact that Whites may not see API persons as people of color, the community may still have difficulty adhering to societal norms due to the historical legacy of discrimination towards Asian American and Pacific Islander persons (Shek, 2006). The limited literature on API masculinity development discussed a juxtaposition on how API men are seen in society. In one respect, API men are dominating and subscribe to strong gender roles, and yet are also seen as being effeminate (Shek & McEwen, 2012). These racialized gender norms can lead to confusion within API men about which roles to take on and how they will manifest themselves while on campus. As Shek and McEwen (2012) stated in their study, “Societal expectations placed on Asian American men to fulfill gender roles lead to internal conflict when their own self-concepts do not match what is prescribed, particularly when examined through a racialized lens” (p. 713).
Literature Review Summary

This literature review examined social identity theory and appreciative inquiry. Tajfel (1982) identified the seminal roots of SIT and how social identities are used to build groups that increase self-esteem and lead to intergroup comparisons. These roots of SIT led to an extension towards self-categorization proposed by Turner, Hogg & Davidson (1990) that focuses on the internalization of norms that lead to increased identification with a specific categorization. The literature review for SIT concludes with speaking on prototypical behavior and how it impacts group membership and operations, as well as new applications of SIT to areas of social change and collective action to benefit out-groups.

The second part of the literature review considered the history and application of appreciative inquiry, starting with the work of Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987) that led to a seminal definition of the process. The literature review focused on how the assumptions of AI are centered on the concept of positive core which shapes the method of questioning. Organizations and groups are seen as having life and desire to change for the better. Through this, the work of Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) showed how the 4-D process works in a variety of organizational contexts. Finally, the applications of appreciative inquiry to educational contexts were investigated.

The final piece of the literature review focused on the myriad of issues men of color face on college campuses, both as a blended community and within individual identity groups. Impacts upon men of color from negative campus environments and stereotypes from their White peers were discussed, as well as the mental stress placed upon communities of color from these environments. Finally, the issues of masculinity development were discussed for each Black, Latinx, and API communities. While there were similarities in how the communities
define what it means to be masculine, unique differences and challenges were highlighted that impact how these communities navigate campus environments.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter will focus on the methodology, research methods, and data collection for this study. In addition, procedures to analyze data will be presented. Analysis of the participant interviews will be provided with connections on how it answers the overarching research question.

Paradigm

The researcher approached the study from a constructivist paradigm, where multiple realities are shared and valued throughout the research process (Ponterotto, 2005). This research study focused on speaking with men of color about their experiences and direct questions that elicit reflection about their time on campus. While members of a unique in-group on campus, each student came to the study with their own unique experiences that shaped their desire to identify as a man of color. That unique perspective inspired reflection and ultimately shaped roles within the in-group; the study strived to inspire the same level of reflection during data collection. In addition, the researcher had intense dialogue with participants to gather these multiple perspectives. The constructivist paradigm supported the interactions between researcher and participant, as the data was qualitative in nature and utilized the facilitator’s skill to ensure the subject’s experience is reflected in the study (Hawtin & Sullivan, 2011; Ponterotto, 2005).

From an ontological perspective, participants brought multiple realities to the study that need to be respected (Ponterotto, 2005). Participants in this study were members of different in-groups (i.e. Greek-lettered organizations, student employees, laboratory assistants) and brought those perspectives to the study. In addition, multiple realities were based upon past experiences in society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) that shaped viewpoints and attitudes. From the perspective of epistemology, interactions between researcher and subjects were critical to fostering
understanding of the situation (Ponterotto, 2005) and encouraged both parties to ensure the study’s findings were accurate (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Finally, from a methodological perspective, the constructivist paradigm focused on in-depth interviewing of subjects (Ponterotto, 2005) with the aim of building consensus between researcher and participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Research Design

The study involved interviewing eight self-identified men of color on a college campus. This sub-section will discuss participant recruitment and access and data collection. This section will also discuss the data analysis procedures, steps to maintain trustworthiness, and human subjects considerations.

Given the research question “What are the important functions and experiences historically marginalized collegiate men of color find valuable within their social identity groups?” the researcher decided that qualitative methods would be the best approach for this particular study. Qualitative research is focused towards understanding the lived experiences of subjects and discovering the meaning of a particular situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, qualitative research seeks to answer a defined research question and examining themes from participants in order to present the study’s findings in a concise and effective manner (Creswell, 2012). Most studies regarding the lived experiences of this population (S. Harper & Harris, 2012; S. R. Harper, 2012; Saenz et al., 2013) involved the use of qualitative data to understand how colleges and universities best ensured these students were successful in college. Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to ask questions about student experiences and provided the flexibility to follow up on critical pieces of information shared by participants that yielded deeper data that answered the research question. Within the qualitative research
framework, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as the research tradition for the study.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a research approach that is dedicated to understanding how people make sense of their environments (Smith, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). The two main aims of IPA research are to understand the participant’s world view and interpret those descriptions so it can be related to a larger audience (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, 2004). It allows researchers to engage with participants on a deep level regarding a certain research question, as participants are easily the experts on their own lives (K. Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis consists of three integral components. The first, phenomenology, is focused on having the researcher examine their own observation of a particular phenomenon. Influential theorists like Husserl and Heidegger saw phenomenology as narrowing down assumptions about a particular situation and interpreting how participants make sense of a unique experience, whereas theorist Sartre saw phenomenology as the understanding on how people’s experiences are influenced by the presence or lack of relationships (Smith et al., 2009). The second component, hermeneutics, focuses on interpretation by the researcher, which theorist Schleiermacher saw as an intense process meant to gain a great understanding of the subject’s experiences (Smith et al., 2009). The final component, idiography, is concerned with examining the lived experiences of participants through a lens of particularity. In other words, researchers must pay attention to detail provided through participant stories and strive to understand how people live a unique situation (Smith et al., 2009).
In order to engage with participants for this study, one-on-one interviews were conducted to gather data that reflected the subjects’ lived experiences (Rodriguez & Smith, 2014), and analysis was double hermeneutic where “the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them” (Smith, 2011, p. 10). Since the researcher is interested in understanding how men of color examined the strengths and benefits embedded within their social identities in order to graduate from college, the IPA approach allowed for the students to speak directly about their experiences and for the researcher to provide an analysis that reflected on how the respondents make meaning of their unique contexts.

This study followed the spirit of three other dissertations (Irby, 2015; Ovueraye-Adoghe, 2013; Pettigrew, 2016) that utilized an IPA approach to research the lived experiences of men of color. In each case, the researchers sought out IPA to ensure the participant’s voices were reflected in the study and learn more about how men of color experience getting an education in their respective environments. In addition, one case utilized an IPA approach to discover commonalities between the researcher and subjects since they shared similar racial and gender identities (Pettigrew, 2016). Since this particular study sought out to understand how men of color valued their social identity groups, it was important to discover the lived experiences of participants within their networks. An IPA approach directed the researcher to interpret what participants experienced within their social groups and to conduct self-reflection to reduce any researcher bias about the experiences subjects talked about. This approach also allowed the words of participants to be fully presented as evidence regarding the importance of their social identity groups.
Combination of IPA and Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) guided the researcher through developing questions for this study. This combination of IPA and AI has been seen in two previous studies. The first study by Ewing (2011) involved interviewing graduates of two distinct organizational development programs at Case Western Reserve University. The researcher was looking to understand how graduates of these programs used their education to create positive transformations within their personal and professional lives. The second study was conducted by Okai (2015) and investigated how parents of school-aged students dealt with the youth’s diagnosis of having a learning disability and the distinct processes on how they found out. Both studies used IPA as the method to understand how participants experienced the unique phenomenon and appreciative inquiry directed the types of questions being asked. For example, Okai (2015) implemented AI as the framework to create positive focused queries regarding how families interpreted their child’s learning disability to avoid lines of negative questioning. Ewing (2011) asked semi-structured questions based upon the 4-D process, with each step (discover, dream, design, destiny) having several prompts to gain information about the graduates’ positive transformations.

Participants

As mentioned above in Chapter One, the term “man of color” was defined as a person who identified with the male gender identity and whose family is a member of a historically marginalized community in the United States (African American, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Native American/Alaskan Native, Multiracial, or a combination of the mentioned categories). The numbers of men identified as Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Multiracial attending college have increased since 1976,
when only 826,600 students were enrolled compared to 3,209,400 students in 2012 (Statistics, 2013). Men of color made up 37.8% of enrollment in 2012, compared to 62.2% of White males (Statistics, 2013). The participants in this study were self-identifying college aged men of color who were enrolled at a university in the Mid-Atlantic of the United States. The male of color enrollment at the research site had grown from 2034 students in 2006 to 3345 students in 2015, compared to enrolling 4963 White students in 2006 and 5291 White males in 2015 (Maryland, 2015). The research site had the fourth-highest amount of enrolled men of color out of 11 universities within the state (Maryland, 2015). The research involved interviewing 8 students, as IPA studies used small sample sizes (Ewing, 2011; Okai, 2015; Rodriguez & Smith, 2014; Vangeli & West, 2012) in order to gain deeper insight into participant experiences. A purposive sampling strategy was utilized (Okai, 2015; Smith & Osborn, 2008) so the unique perspective of collegiate men of color was heard throughout the study. There was no exclusion with regards to socioeconomic status, family educational attainment, immigration status, or whether the student lived on-campus or commuted to school. The study only included students who had not earned a Bachelor’s degree at the time of the study. The study also recruited participants from various undergraduate class years (freshman/first-year, sophomore, junior, senior) to ensure their different perspectives and lived experiences were reflected.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year in School</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 is a quick overview of the participants and key demographic information.
Recruitment and Access

Accessing participants had to consider several procedural and ethical considerations. The researcher was a professional staff member at the university where the subjects were enrolled at. In order to alleviate any ethical concerns, it was stated on the informed consent form and in person that participation in the study would not reflect upon or be a factor in any decision on both their employment opportunities and enrollment status at the university.

Recruiting participants involved two strategies. First, the researcher reached out to campus offices and organizations that worked directly with students of color and asked them to recommend students for the research. Second, the researcher utilized social media posts on platforms students use on a regular basis (see Appendix C). In both cases, students were directed to e-mail the researcher at his Northeastern University e-mail to express their interest. Because the study was conducted at this particular university, institutional review board (IRB) approval was granted at both Northeastern University and the research site to ensure the research and recruitment of participants were within applicable rules and guidelines. The principal investigator took the required IRB training at the research site and completed National Institutes of Health Protecting Human Research Participants training prior to beginning research.

Data Collection

The study was broken down into three phases of recruitment, collection, and analysis. These detailed steps assisted the researcher in maintaining the integrity of the study and report accurate data. Each phase is discussed below.

Phase 1

In phase 1, the researcher began by conferring with the major professor, Dr. Margaret Gorman, to ensure the participant questions would answer the overall research question on how
men of color described the importance of their social identity networks. After conferral with the principal investigator and second reader for additional feedback, the Graduate Student applied for and received IRB approval from both Northeastern University and the research site. Once the IRB processes were completed and approval from both universities were received, the Graduate Student began the recruitment process via social media and connecting with campus offices to identify potential participants. Appendix C details the scripts used to inform individuals of the study through e-mail and social media. Interested participants were communicated to through the Graduate Student’s NEU e-mail and times were set up to discuss the study and obtain informed consent. The first meeting for each participant took no longer than 10 minutes.

At the first meeting for each participant, the researcher used the Interview Protocols in Appendix B to read a script detailing the purpose of the study and how consent to participate would be given, and each participant had the opportunity to ask questions. Each participant was given the Informed Consent Document in Appendix A and were encouraged to ask any questions about the study and the document before signing. Once the document was signed by the participant, the researcher signed the form as well. Before the meeting ended, the researcher asked several demographic questions listed in the Interview Protocols (Appendix B), including pseudonym, the race/ethnicity they identified with, their gender identity, year in school, academic major, and what activities they were involved with while in college. The researcher used a notebook to capture these responses. This notebook was also used to keep field notes and analytic memos for the study. The researcher and participant agreed on a time and location to conduct the study interview.
Phase 2

In this phase, participants were interviewed for up to 45 minutes with the questions listed in Table 3.2. The semi-structured interviews were based upon the appreciative inquiry 4-D process. Each part of the 4-D process (discovery, dream, design, destiny) had semi-structured questions that focused on understanding how participants navigated their social identity groups. By structuring the questions in this manner, the researcher hoped participants were freer to share their stories (S. Michael, 2005; Williaume, 2009) and can more directly speak to how they would craft an environment that meets their needs. The semi-structured questions were written in a manner where the participant was oriented to the topic at hand (S. Michael, 2005) and was clarified if the participant had trouble understanding the question.

Each participant was interviewed at a location of their choosing. The researcher used the Interview Protocols in Appendix B to remind participants of the purpose of the study and of their rights during the research. Each participant was also given a copy of the signed informed consent document for their records. The researcher used Rev, an iOS-enabled application to record each interview. During each interview, the researcher kept field notes in his notebook to keep track of any interesting points or comments each participant made. Once the interviews were finished, recordings taken with the Rev application were immediately sent off to be transcribed, and all audio files were immediately deleted once the graduate student got the submission confirmation email from Rev. Participants were given a debriefing document (located in Appendix D) reminding them of the purpose of the study and providing contact information for the researcher and the university counseling center, in case students felt distressed after their participation and needed to contact a health professional. After each interview, the researcher wrote his analytic
memo where he began noting his interpretations of how the participants valued their identity groups and any beginning thoughts on theme development.

Table 3.2

List of questions and associated theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ: What are the important functions and experiences that historically marginalized men of color find most valuable within their social identity groups?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The purpose of this study is to understand how collegiate Men-of-Color describe the value of their social identity groups and their importance towards their efforts to graduate from college?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please tell me about how you decided to come to this university? Overall, how has your experience been since you arrived?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m interested in learning how students experience campus life either through their social groups they created and/or were fostered by the various efforts of the university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overall, how would you describe the campus environment? • Overall, what is your impression of campus life? • What are the various support groups, services, or events offered by the university that you’ve found helpful for creating a social network? • How would your group of friends describe the environment? • How do you think other college students would describe the campus environment and campus life (aka those not self-described as CMOC)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AI-Discover (Warm-up)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AI-Discover SIT-In-group formation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Now I’d like to understand more about your social network and those individuals whom you spend most of your time with either socially and/or academically.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who are the group of friends you primarily spend time with? • How did you become friends with these people? (e.g. were they fostered through campus life activities or self-created) • What are the different groups of people you tend to associate with socially and/or academically? • Reflecting on those people you tend to spend most of your time with, did those friendships develop because of campus-organized events, through your own initiative, or a blend of the two? • How do you think other college students, specifically women or those who are not self-described Men-of-Color, might describe their group of friends? • How does identifying with your friends enhance how you identify as a man of color? • Can you describe how identifying as a man of color has changed since you have been on campus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AI-Discover SIT-Self-categorization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AI-Discover SIT-Prototypical behavior</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I’d like to understand more about your network of friends and how you support each other socially and/or academically.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who are the individuals you admire? Why do you admire them? • Can you share ways in which your friends respect and/or admire you? Why? • Who are the leaders within your social group? Why do you consider them to be leaders?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• How do you think other college students might describe those they admire, e.g. women and/or those who don’t describe themselves as Men-of-Color?
• What are the stereotypes that non-Men of Color have towards you and your friends? How did you and your friends learn about these stereotypes?
• What happens if you and/or your friends don’t act the way your non-Men of Color peers expect you to?
• Can you think about a time when needed help figuring out a social situation, who did you go to for support and how did the experience go? How about an academic assignment?
• Can you talk a little bit about how being with your friends strengthens your self-esteem and hopefulness for graduating?
• How do you think other students who are not in your social network would describe their sense of self-esteem and hopefulness for graduating?
• Do you think your friends share the same aspiration to graduate? Why? Why not?

Assume its five years from now and you’re an alumnus of this institution - you’ve been asked to share some advice to a group of incoming freshman about strategies for developing supportive social networks.
• Based on your experiences, what would your suggestions be?
• How might your advice change if you share with a group of Men-of-Color versus a general group of students?

Assume its ten years from now and you’re thriving in your career and the institution’s Top Leadership Team has invited you in to share your experiences and provide advice for launching innovative practices to advancing graduation rates and stressing the importance of social identity groups for Men of Color?
• Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you give to enhance the importance of social identity groups for Men-of-Color and in turn advance graduation rates?

| Phase 3 |

For the data analysis phase of the study, the researcher utilized a multistep analysis process set out by Smith et al. (2009), which was also employed in studies by Okai (2015) and Ewing (2011). The process was meant for the researcher to fully understand how the participant interpreted the phenomenon and provided agency for the researcher to reflect upon the participant data (Smith et al., 2009). Once each interview transcript was received from Rev, the researcher began to follow the multistep process for analyzing the data. The multiple steps are listed below as:
1. **Reading and re-reading the initial data.** The researcher began by reading the transcribed notes to ensure the focus was placed on the participant’s words (Smith et al., 2009). Repetition of examining the transcription helped the researcher begin to conceptualize where connecting or diverging points were located within the data.

2. **Preliminary noting.** The researcher then started to note comments of interest that highlighted the participant experiences. Smith et al. (2009), Ewing (2011), and Okai (2015) suggested preliminary noting take into account descriptive commentary (statements within the transcript about the content, key objects, life experiences), linguistic commentary (metaphors, repetition of statements, other interesting language use), and conceptual comments (moving away from explicit commentary to how the participant understands the situation that is being discussed). This step allowed the researcher to provide their own thoughts and ideas as to how the participant experienced the phenomenon being studied.

3. **Crafting emergent themes.** The researcher moved from examining the full transcription and starting looking at preliminary notes. These preliminary notes helped identify themes that reflected the participant experience and the researcher’s interpretation (Okai, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). The themes were identified as phrases or short statements that spoke to what the participant talked about and were significant enough to warrant further analysis. (Smith et al., 2009)

4. **Finding connections across the themes.** The researcher then mapped themes that had connections to one another. From this step, the researcher was able to group themes that directly spoke to the participant’s experience.
5. *Move towards the next case.* Once connections were found, the researcher moved onto the next transcript and began the process once again, allowing for new themes to emerge from the new participant’s statements. (Okai, 2015)

6. *Look for patterns across multiple cases.* The researcher than looked for similar themes from across all the interviews. Smith et al. (2009) suggested that this phase mandated the researcher to be creative in examining the patterns as it helped the analysis become more theoretical in nature. Patterns could be presented in table form that shows major themes with subordinate pieces supported with participant commentary. (Smith et al., 2009)

7. *Writing the final analysis.* This phase involved providing a full narrative that included emergent themes that arose from participant experiences as well as the researcher’s interpretation of those themes. (Okai, 2015; Smith et al., 2009)

After step 1 in this process, the researcher conducted member checking with each participant. Once each transcript was transcribed, participants were notified that they had the opportunity to view their transcript. This was done to ensure the researcher’s initial thoughts matched with what the participants were trying to convey through their statements. Each participant met for no more than 30 minutes at a location of their choosing to review the transcript. Participants reviewed their interview transcripts and only one participant made changes to their statements they either felt needed more clarification or needed modification after some reflection. Once member checking was completed, the researcher continued with the rest of the data analysis steps listed above. Table 3.3 details all three phases of the study.
Table 3.3

Description of the study phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE 1</th>
<th>PHASE 2</th>
<th>PHASE 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Obtained IRB approval from both Northeastern University and research site  
• Began recruitment process through social media and outreach to campus offices  
• Contacted potential students through NEU e-mail  
• Held first meeting (up to 10 minutes) to obtain informed consent, answer questions, and get demographic data  
• Scheduled second interview | • Held second interview (up to 45 minutes)  
• Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 8 participants  
• Students selected interview location, date, and time  
• Transcribed each interview through Rev.com | • Began initial coding of each case through multistep process (Smith et al., 2009)  
• Students given hard copies of transcripts for their review  
• Member checked with each student (up to 30 min)  
• One student modified their responses  
• Conducted peer review of codes  
• Clustered codes into categories  
• Used interview matrix to help cross-cut data for theme development |

To help narrow down the large amount of data collected across all eight cases, the researcher set up a detailed coding strategy to help identify themes. The coding strategy involved several steps that embedded the seven-step analysis process, which are listed below. A PDF version of each transcription was loaded into MAXQDA 12 so codes could be organized in an orderly fashion. Once all the individual cases were coded using the strategy below and themes identified, the researcher then began to look for themes across all the cases (Smith et al., 2009) by clustering codes that had commonalties. In order to ensure codes were reflective of the participant’s experience, the researcher utilized his field notes, which kept track of what the researcher is thinking during the study. In addition, the researcher kept an interview matrix which tracked the researcher’s thoughts, key quotes, and initial codes for each case. These quotes
and codes were linked to the specific questions listed in Table 3.2. These helped ensure the participants’ statements and researcher interpretations were accurately reflected in the final reporting of the study. Table 3.4 details the coding strategy:

Table 3.4

Coding strategy for the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Obtain the transcript of first case and print it off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Start writing biographical information for Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read the transcript the first time and make preliminary noting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Re-read transcript and confer with field notes (taken during interview) to ensure all notes are reflected. Conducted member-checking after each case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Look for connections across themes and note them within MAXQDA 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td>Enter quotes/themes into interview matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Obtain transcript of next case then repeat Steps 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>Once all cases have been coded, look for patterns across all the cases utilizing both MAXQDA 12 and interview matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 8</td>
<td>Cluster related codes into themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trustworthiness

As this is a qualitative study, there were concerns about maintaining the trustworthiness of the data and results. One consideration about maintaining trustworthiness and internal validity would be the present threats to the study. One threat considered was experimental mortality, or the potential of participants to drop out of the study, taking with them valuable data (R. S. Michael, 2015). Attrition would have had a significant impact upon the study, as one-on-one
interviews were the method used to obtain data. None of the participants left the study, so the concern of experimental mortality was eliminated. However, the researcher would have alleviated this threat by recruiting more students to take the place of those who left the study. Another threat that may occur during the study is researcher bias. Since the researcher had an extensive history working with this particular in-group and even personally identifies as a male of color, he could have easily interpreted the data through his own experiences rather than those of the participants. The IPA approach involved the researcher making sense of the participants’ experiences and providing their own reflection on the process, but the researcher must be focused on what the participants are saying throughout the study. The multistep process that IPA required to analyze data set the standard that themes that are representative of the participants, and not necessarily those of the researcher (Smith et al., 2009).

In order to maintain trustworthiness and validity of this study, member checking was utilized. By using member checking, the researcher was working in cooperation with participants to make sure data was being collected accurately and their voices was being captured (Cho & Trent, 2006). As this study focused on examining a particular case involving a specific in-group and utilized deep levels of conversation to better understand participants’ situation, consistent communication about that data and whether it is being collected accurately was critical for success. As Cho and Trent (2006) noted, member checks must happen consistently and the investigator must be looking to learn something new from the data being presented in order to keep a high level of internal validity. As mentioned in the informed consent form in Appendix A, participants had the ability to see transcripts and notes from their interviews and provide feedback to make sure the information reflects their experiences. In addition, once all the participants had viewed their transcripts and responding changes to codes, the researcher
approached another doctoral-level graduate student to conduct a peer review of the codes. The graduate student was given the table of codes (Appendix F) and a small portion of a transcript and asked to code some segments. The graduate student then sat down with the researcher and discussed why they assigned codes to certain statements. This added an additional level of trustworthiness to ensure that another researcher could reach similar conclusions and were interpreting the data in the same fashion.

**Data Storage**

Multiple steps were taken to maintain participant confidentiality. No original names were listed on any notes or transcriptions. At the initial meeting to obtain informed consent, participants chose a pseudonym that was used to identify them in the study. Audio recordings compiled by Rev were sent to its confidential transcription service, and the audio files were immediately deleted once they were sent to be transcribed. Transcriptions and the interview matrix were stored on both Dropbox, a cloud-based server that is encrypted through a double-verification process, and on a password-protected USB flash drive. Participants were given informed consent forms (see Appendix A) to sign. Those signed forms, as well as field notes and any hand-written notes taken during data analysis were kept in a locked safe at the researcher’s house and will be for three years.

**Researcher Positionality**

For this research, the researcher understood how their extensive work with programs for collegiate men of color could lead to bias and possible skewing of data (Machi & McEvoy, 2012). The researcher was a first-generation student of color who attended a predominately White university in the Midwest United States and started working with men of color while in a Master’s program, then moved to California where he worked for a non-profit organization that
provided after-school programming for K-12 students. He was posted at an elementary school in Oakland, CA where he collaborated with a non-governmental organization that focused their programming on young men’s masculinity development and community building. This organization utilized a combination of ecological systems theory (Urie Brofenbrenner, 1977) and masculinity development methods (Kivel, 1999) to aid boys from grades 2-4 to understand how their local environment impacted how they lived and learned, and how to work together to be more supportive of one another. After this posting, the researcher was recruited to work at Iowa State University and create a support network for men of color on campus. Using his past experiences, he worked with a group of 7-10 student leaders to create the Men of Color Collective, a student organization that focused on discussing ways for students to discuss their ideas of masculinity and how it impacts the way they work and live on campus (Gaskin, 2012; Gaskin et al., 2014).

**Human Subjects Considerations**

As mentioned above, the study involved collecting data from participants in a qualitative nature. Before the study began, the researcher received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from both Northeastern University and at the university site. Participants completed informed consent documentation that has been approved for both Northeastern and the university site (see Appendix A). Participants created pseudonyms at the very beginning of the interview, and were not referred to by their given names in any documentation or notes during the study. The study was not designed to harm the participants in any way nor to be deceptive in obtaining data from participants. However, at the conclusion of the study, each participant was given a debriefing document highlighting the limits to confidentiality allowed under law and resources for mental health clinicians if a participant requires it (see Appendix D).
Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter highlighted the methodology and research design for the proposed study, keeping in mind its uniqueness in combining the IPA approach with appreciative inquiry. The chapter also discussed the thorough methods for analyzing data collected through the IPA approach and the care taken to protect human subjects. This particular qualitative research design gathered data that spoke directly to the participant’s experiences.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand how collegiate men of color described the valuable aspects of their social identity groups and the importance of those groups to the participants’ persistence to graduation. Eight participants were interviewed about their experiences with social identity groups. The following chapter will highlight the participants and their particular social identity groups, analyze the themes that emerged from the data, and discuss important findings.

The Participants

The participants were self-identified men of color who were recruited by means of social media or recommended by key staff members on campus. Each participant was interviewed for up to 45 minutes, answering questions about their experiences being men of color on campus and about their social identity groups. The next section will provide a brief portrait about each student who interviewed for this research and the different in-groups they were members of.

Table 4.1

Demographic information of study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Declared Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Asian/Korean American</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Biracial/African American and White</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jett Jackson</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Biracial/Irish and Guinean</td>
<td>International Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Molecular Biology, Bioinformatics &amp; Biochemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzgerald</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Mass Communication &amp; Electronic Film and Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Pakistani/Punjabi</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latin American</td>
<td>Economics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jacob

Jacob was a sophomore student majoring in Chemistry. He self-identified as an Asian male and ethnically as Korean American. He chose this institution over a more prestigious public university despite his family’s hesitation, but did not regret his decision due to his positive experiences. He participated in a leadership development program and was employed as a chemistry and physics tutor, but was not incredibly involved in student organizations. Jacob was very focused on his academics but had a small friend group he developed throughout life. As he said in his interview: “Mostly the guys from back home, mainly from high school. There's a handful of them I came here with, so they're black males.”

Alex

Alex was a senior student majoring in English. He self-identified as a biracial male and ethnically as African American and White. Alex transferred to this university from one that was smaller and located in a rural setting where the communities of color were much smaller and struggled to connect with White students. He explained why he transferred to his current institution:

That led me to a decision where I had to make a change and decide where I was going to go back to school. Once I transferred, I wanted to come back in state to an area where I felt generally comfortable and an area that I still felt was generally diverse but still had a strong, active minority community. I saw that in [INSTITUTION] and that's what brought me to [INSTITUTION].

Alex was active on campus as a member of a wrestling club and a member of a National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) historically Black Greek-lettered organization. Alex was also a
frequent visitor to the Black Student Union, a physical space on campus where African American students and their allies congregated.

**Jett Jackson**

Jett was a senior student majoring in International Business. Jett self-identified as a biracial male and ethnically as Irish and Guinean. Jett had attended two other universities before enrolling at the research site and chose this institution because it had a more vibrant community for African Americans. He detailed the specific reason why he chose to attend this university by stating:

The reason that [INSTITUTION 1] really swayed me is I went to an event called Being Black in America, and I just saw the community at Towson. It was between [INSTITUTION 1] and [INSTITUTION 2], and I just liked that community better, because of the better on-campus presence I felt that [INSTITUTION 1] had, and then also the little bit of a smaller size school than necessarily a big state school.

Jett was very active on campus, serving as a member of the student government, working as a resident assistant on campus, and was a member of an NPHC organization. Jett had a wide group of friends which allowed him to gain multiple perspectives on campus life and on social issues.

**Bob**

Bob was a junior student studying information technology and self-identified as a Black male. Bob came to this institution directly from high school and chose this particular university because his older sister attended several years earlier. Bob made his initial friend group through living on campus his freshman year, during which this group of students went out together to campus events. Bob was active on campus, as a member of an NPHC organization, serving on
the board of the NPHC leadership council, and as a member of an organization for Black women. Bob was very active in his NPHC chapter. His line brothers, or members who joined the organization during the same initiation period, recommended him to participate in other student organizations and leadership development programs on campus. He talked about how his line brothers influenced him by stating:

It was just the brotherhood and the new social climate that you can reach by going through Greek life. It opens more doors and you get to see and have those connections as people have before you...It helped me move into other arenas like leadership and stuff like that. I wouldn’t have known about that if it wasn't for [ORGANIZATION 1] or [ORGANIZATION 2] my other organization. I wouldn't have known about that unless ...

It was my brother in my fraternity who came before me and said, "I think you'd be good in this," and stuff like that. It opened other doors for me.

**Cole**

Cole was a sophomore student majoring in a combined molecular biology, bioinformatics, and biochemistry program and self-identified as a Black male. Cole described why he came to this institution:

Well, the main reason I decided to come here was because it was financially within my range. So, a lot of other schools, I didn't have the money to get into them. But, what really brought me towards [INSTITUTION] is the [PROGRAM] that I'm affiliated with. That was a really big draw for me. I knew someone that had graduated, that were apart of [PROGRAM] and because of that, I decided to come to [INSTITUTION].

Cole became a mentor for that program, in addition to his on-campus jobs as a tutor and worked in a research lab. Cole was also involved in a student organization for those majoring in
molecular biology and biochemistry. Cole had a small yet close group of friends derived from his experiences in the mentoring program and from working in a research lab.

**Fitzgerald**

Fitzgerald was a junior student majoring in mass communication and electronic film and media. He self-identified as a Black male. Fitzgerald chose to attend this university over others due to their marketing efforts and recruitment videos. He made his friend group through attending campus organization meetings and being outspoken on issues facing the Black community on campus. When asked about how his friends described the campus environment, he stated:

> They would describe it as, on some days, lit, and on other days a struggle. I have very articulate friends…There are good days, there are bad days, but most of the time it's a middle ground. It's like, "We know what school we go to," their type of acceptance.

He also stated that most of his friends were Black women, as he felt a deeper connection with them due to the lack of Black men on campus. Fitzgerald was active on campus; he was a member of the Black student organization and a member of a council of multicultural student organizations. Fitzgerald also worked as a student employee in both the student diversity and campus leadership offices.

**Peter**

Peter was a senior student majoring in political science. He self-identified as a Pakistani male and ethnically as Punjabi. Peter chose this institution due to an interest in politics. He stated:

> The other thing was when I was coming out of high school I was involved in politics and stuff like that, and so I really wanted to stay in the area just to really kind of keep that
network. [INSTITUTION] provided me that avenue. Just to, you know, hopefully go onto like...campaigns and stuff like that, and help me stay close by and maintain that network.

Peter was very active on campus; he was a member of an Interfraternity Council (IFC) Greek-lettered organization and was a member of a campus dance club. Peter also worked on campus in the campus leadership office and with student activities. While he went to a very diverse high school and had friends from different backgrounds, his friend group in college was predominantly White men.

Charlie

Charlie was a sophomore student majoring in Economics and self-identified as a Hispanic/Latin American male. He chose to attend this institution because it offered the academic major of his choice. Charlie stated:

So I originally came into this University through the business program. I was a business administration, previous administration major. And [INSTITUTION] was one of the best schools for business at the lowest price possible. So that's the reason why I came to [INSTITUTION].

Charlie was involved in a number of campus activities, including a club for economics majors, table tennis club, and was inducted into a leadership honor society. He had a very close friend group that was established in the building he lived in his first year of college. He described his friend group to be diverse but he was one of only a few Hispanic/Latin American students in both his residence hall and his academic major.

Participant Overview

Each of the eight participants had unique experiences that reflected how they identified themselves and the different types of groups they were members of. All identified as men of
color and were confident in their answers when asked to identify their specific racial and ethnic backgrounds. All the participants chose the research site due to its reputation of being an inclusive community and rigorous academic programs. All the participants were connected to the university either through employment or leadership programs sponsored by the university. However, each participant had different groups they belonged in. Some participants joined race-based organizations, some joined historically Black Greek lettered organizations, and others made friend groups by participating thorough on-campus student group information fairs. From interviewing the participants, their experiences led to developing codes that reflected their lives on campus. The next section will highlight the codes and categories that were identified through analysis and member checking.

**Codes and Categories**

After the interviews were coded according to the strategy detailed in Chapter Three, the researcher clustered the codes based upon their commonalities. From the eight participants, there were 54 codes from 313 coded segments, listed in Appendix F. Those 54 codes were developed from reading the participant’s interview transcripts multiple times and conferring with field notes. Potential codes were noted in the margins of the interview transcripts and within MAXQDA 12. Codes were modified as the researcher reviewed field notes and analytic memos multiple times. In addition, during the member checking phase each participant was able to read their interview transcript with codes written in the margins and had the opportunity to share their thoughts on whether the researcher’s coding reflected what the meaning of their statements. Figure 4.2 below details how the seven step data analysis process outlined by Smith et al. (2009) matched to the coding strategy and theme development for this study.
Those 54 codes were clustered into five categories: Help From My Friends, Working with Everyone Else, What’s the Campus Environment Like, Represent Represent!, and Getting Involved on Campus. These five categories were developed by re-reading field notes and looking for statements from participants that connected with analytic memos taken after interviews. A discussion of each of the categories is provided below and include statements from participants which highlight the importance of each one.

**Help From My Friends**

Participants spoke about how being with other men of color helped them during their time in college. Participants spoke about different facets about being with other self-identified men of color, including getting support on personal issues, motivation to succeed academically, and having leaders who they could look up to.
For this study, the in-group was a group of people who shared a common identity and internalized it as a part of membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). All eight participants discussed how their in-group provided support while they were on campus. Support was academic or personal, and their in-group was valuable for them as they navigated their way through campus. Jacob talked about how his in-group helped him with difficult issues:

I would say whenever I meet up with a certain friend group, it eventually turns into something like that all the time. If we have any serious issues that were talking about, or not even serious, but just something that we have to get off our chests, we'll eventually tell each other.

Jett was a member of different in-groups. When asked about the groups of people who he spent the most time with, Jett spoke about his fraternity brothers and how their presence positively impacted him. He spoke at length about how his NPHC organization was a valuable resource for him:

My line brothers in my fraternity. It's four of them plus me, so there’s five of us total. We spend the most time together. Probably, every day, at least three to four hours with one to four of them. Even academically, we push each other. Every Sunday we have study halls where we invite the campus out to study with us, because we all happen to be men of color. My whole organization isn’t men of color, but we're predominantly men of color. We just try to be pillars on campus, and they really push me to not settle because of what society might tell us that we're supposed to meet.

Bob was in a different NPHC organization but held similar views to Jett. For him, his group provided an outlet for him to meet like-minded individuals who wanted him to succeed:
It was just the brotherhood and the new social climate that you can reach by going through Greek life. It opens more doors and you get to see and have those connections as people have before you.

While not a member of an NPHC, Peter’s mostly White Greek organization provided an avenue for him to meet like-minded peers and build deeper relationships with them. His fraternity had many members, so he had to find the few who would best understand his identity as a man of color. Peter talked about being with his fraternity and within a large organization, he was able to find those who shared his interests:

In terms of socially, like I said just people who are open minded and people who have kind of like varied interests, so like for example I don't really hang with the guys in my fraternity who only like to go out. You know, I like to kind of have different things to do and interesting conversations to have.

Having peers who held similar identities provided participants with the comfort that they could be successful on campus. They spoke about how their in-groups provided advice on personal issues and served as a community of like-minded peers they could relate to. The next set of codes focuses on how participants felt connections to the campus environment.

**Working With Everyone Else**

Study participants spoke in great depth about the number and quality of their interactions with non-men of color, defined here as out-group members. All eight participants talked about their interactions with non-men of color in academic spaces. These interactions helped shape how they viewed the out-group and informed how to act in academic settings. When asked about his experiences in academic areas, Alex said:
Academically, it's a whole separate culture. You can tell almost who's in the certain schools, like the science school, or the liberal arts college. I am a member of the college of liberal arts. I'm an English major. I do have classes with mostly white people. That's kind of just something I feel like isn't ... I think minorities are underrepresented in liberal arts colleges in my opinion. At least men of color. Certainly more women of color in the education majors and the communication majors and things like that but I feel like where more minority men tend to go to the areas revolving sports science or sports management, business, biology, and things like that. That's just something I've noticed. I don't know if there's any particular trend that goes along with that. That's just something I've noticed in my time in college. My classes are with mostly white females.

Jett Jackson spoke about being in his academic courses and his interactions with out-group members that focused on building his level of understanding across difference:

Academically, in my major, my major is probably 15%, 16% African American. My major is mostly white kids. I associate with them. I'm not closed off to that, because I understand everybody has a different perspective. I have some great friends from my major, too. I would definitely say yeah, it's literally where you're at depending on the kind of people you'll be around.

Some participants talked about having to work with out-group members for academics. Similarly to Alex and Jett, either there weren’t a critical mass of men of color in their disciplines. Charlie talked about the lack of Latinx men in his discipline and having to work with out-group members by stating “Yeah. And especially within my major too. There aren’t a lot of Hispanics who study economics at [INSTITUTION]”. Fitzgerald discussed who he asked for help with his academics:
People in my classrooms. I'm pretty personable. I get to know everybody. I just don’t spend a lot of time with them outside of the classroom. I'm a communication major so most people in my class are white women. I have no grudge against white women, so I'm pretty open.

Jacob mentioned working with out-group members with his academics: “When it comes to academics, it'd usually be just classmates and I guess people I would benefit working with.” Peter had similar sentiments when working with out-group members by stating “Academically, I don’t even know if I associate anyone, with anyone based simply off a academics. I mean, if it happens it happens.” None of the participants stated that they solely went to their in-group for academic help.

Some of the dealings participants had with out-group members involved stereotypes. All eight participants talked about the various stereotypes that out-group members held about their specific in-groups. Each participant learned about these stereotypes either from direct contact with out-group members on campus or brought this knowledge from high school. Alex detailed his experiences with this story:

I've seen people surprised when they found out ... we had this general body Greek meeting for the leaders of all the fraternities and sororities, and when they find out how much we fundraise and how much money we donate and things like they, they're like "whoa, really, how?" When they find out we just don't have parties, they’re like, "really?" I talk to people all the time and they're like, "what's your major?" And I'll tell them I'm an English major and they're like, "really? You like to read?" I don't even really like to read, but that transition of thought makes no sense to me, and that's the kind of stuff you kind of see and hear about.
Like Alex, Cole had faced his share of stereotypes being a man of color on campus:

Like I said, they think I like basketball. They think I’m good at basketball. A lot of people think that…you know that aren’t men of color…that I have really nappy hair or certain kinds of political affiliations, those kinds of stereotypes. Or that I’m from Baltimore, so I rob people. It’s that kind of thing.

Fitzgerald also spoke about the various stereotypes about being a man of color he faced at the university. He talked about an interaction he had with classmates after a faculty member accidentally used inappropriate language towards people of color in the class and how classmates assumed he would be angry about the situation. Fitzgerald spoke at length about the stereotype involving the perception of being angry from out-group members:

I just feel like that everybody in my classes thinks I'm angry or if somebody says anything I'm going to shut down their opinion, or if somebody says something racist I'm going to clock them. I mean, I am, but you don't have to fear it. It's not always going to be the worst experiences of your life. I'm one of the people that people approach sometimes when it comes to things like that, that were angry. They're just like, "I'm going to be angry." I'm like, "No." Then, you turn them off and then you prove them right and all this other stuff. I mostly just talk to people and I feel like I talk to people very well. I can break it down into ways that they understand it and accept it more.

Jacob talked about some of the stereotypes he faced as a self-identified Asian American male. Those stereotypes included his math proficiency, sexuality, and athletic ability. He did speak about how he dealt with those stereotypes held by out-group members. One comment about facing stereotypes and the interactions he faced was:
I think it just opens some of their eyes. The fact that some people actually believe the stereotypes, and when you act in a way that's against that, I think people are more open to say, "Wow, I was wrong. I don't know any of these people. That's not right for me to, uh, I guess assume stuff.”

Members of Greek organizations had to manage different kinds of stereotypes about their membership. Peter, who was involved in a mostly White fraternity, stated: “I mean, probably just like, I guess, frat boys would be the first thing to come into my mind, just because I happen to be in a fraternity and people have those stereotypes.” Bob also talked about different stereotypes about being in a historically Black fraternity:

Especially because being in a frat, a prominent Black frat on campus, girls especially and guys who aren't in the frat will at times, because you're on a social spotlight people will judge you or people will know your entire life and make judgment. Or they'll get mad at the way you carry yourself. It's almost like they don't understand, like it's a defense mechanism. Because if I know that you feel that way I have to carry myself in a certain manner in order to show you that it doesn't bother me.

Alex talked about similar stereotypes he faced as a NPHC member and how they were different than some of his male of color peers who were in predominantly White fraternities:

Being around people who aren't necessarily of color or ... I'm such a mixed up person based on all the activities that I do inside and outside the university. And being a person whose half-white, white people are comfortable around me, almost to the point where they'll forget that I'm black and they'll say something. I'll have other white friends who don't necessarily share those opinions or views but know that the people in their social circles ... I've had friends who are black but not members of black organizations, they're
members of white fraternities, and the stuff they told me they had to deal with directly, it's absurd. The jokes they have to deal with and the stupid stuff that people say thinking it's funny and it's not that serious when in fact you’re hurting peoples' feelings and you're being very disrespectful and ignorant. Stuff comes at you one way or another, whether it's directly or through other people, you hear about stuff that people think is ridiculous.

From the interviews, participants had varying interactions with out-group members. While these men of color had no problems working with out-groups on their academics, they faced many stereotypes about their racial/ethnic identity or student group membership. The next set of codes focused on how the in-group provided guidance and support while on campus.

**What’s The Campus Environment Like**

Participants talked about how the campus environment impacted how they saw themselves as men of color. Six of the participants described their interpretations of the overall campus environment. Peter offered his thoughts on the campus environment:

I would describe it as ... what's the word ... it is very present with opportunities. Like, really anything or any club that exists out there generally does, and I just think it's pretty easy to find like-minded people in some regards.

Similar to Peter, Cole found the campus environment rich with chances to meet new students and attend new events. He discussed how he felt the campus environment was for him:

The campus environment, like I said, is mostly positive. I feel safe walking around no matter what time of day or night it is. When I'm inside of my dorm, I feel at home…My professors, I feel like I can interact with them as I please because they're available for me to talk to. Also, the staff members here, they're really cool. And, like I said, it's an overall positive experience.
Alex discussed how the university, and its proximity to major metropolitan areas, influences the campus environment:

Oh, it's been very good…[INSTITUTION] is one of the schools where there is a lot of things that happen, and a lot of historical things take place at our school, whether it just be a lot of different talks ... Being so close to D.C. gives you a lot of interesting perspectives, and there's a lot of characters at our school. Other than that, my experience here has been pretty good.

Charlie had a diverse in-group and got along with lots of students on campus. He offered similar sentiments to Alex on how campus diversity influences students’ perceptions of the campus environment: “They do like the environment here. They always love meeting new people and interacting with people…Yeah, I really can’t think of anything else. And it’s really fun here.” However, five of the participants mentioned that the campus environment felt segregated between their in-group and others on campus. While the university provided ample opportunities to get involved and meet new people, these participants felt that the environment could be more inclusive. Bob spoke about the feeling of segregation from his perspective:

I would describe the campus environment as segregated but yet inclusive at the same time. It's not so segregated that I can't reach out to maybe the white community but at the same time within the black community, it does feel like at times I go to a HBCU.

Fitzgerald saw ample chances to meet new people, but he felt that students of color simply dealt with the environment as best as they could. In his opinion, White students and cisgender males were not willing to creating a campus environment that was welcoming to his in-group. Fitzgerald spoke about the feeling of segregation on campus in these terms:
I would say the campus environment here is segregated for the most part. People generally stick to people who share the same identity, groups of them. That's just human nature, in my opinion.

Alex gave insight on why he thought particular groups segregated themselves with others. He talked about how different Greek organizations did not work together to plan events or on philanthropic initiatives. When asked about how campus could have gotten to a level of segregation, Alex stated:

The public school system in high school kind of sets that up in these areas. So when you go from a high school of all people who look like you to a college which is way bigger of this kind of melting pot of cultures, you gravitate toward your own. Which is what happens in the black community and it happens in the white community. The white community just happens to be a bit larger.

For Alex, segregation was not only because of out-groups but there were internal issues within communities of color. Similar to out-groups, his in-group needed to find commonalities across difference in order to help campus feel more welcoming.

The participants noted that while the campus environment afforded them opportunities to learn and feel safe, there was an underlying feeling of segregation on campus. Students in this study took advantage of the multiple opportunities to engage with others and learn from their experiences. However, the feeling of separation between in-groups and out-groups on campus was noticeable by participants. The next set of codes discusses how participants came to identify as men of color on campus.
Represent Represent!

There was lots of discussion surrounding how men of color identified themselves while on campus. There was ample evidence that their the social identity groups they were involved with influenced how they saw themselves as men of color, their self-esteem, and desire to graduate from college. Six of the eight participants talked about how in-groups helped them develop self-esteem and an identity that fit who they wanted to become. When asked about advice he would give to incoming men of color about developing social identity networks, Jett Jackson offered this advice:

It's one thing to be on your computer investing by yourself, but when you’re with twenty of your friends and you're all doing it, it's fun. That'd be my biggest thing to tell freshman. Just don't be scared to tell people what you like to do, because it's college. It's not high school. Nobody is going to make fun of you if you do things that they don't like. Really get out there and know those people that do that, and then it'll branch into other groups from there.

One of the questions participants answered involved their experiences with stereotyping on campus by out-group members. While participants didn’t speak about how these experiences influenced their self-esteem, Bob spoke about how stereotyping influenced how he represented himself on campus. Rather than worrying about changing his behavior, he decided to be himself and not worry if he was acting stereotypically or not. He responded by stating:

We would be conforming to ... We act the way they expect us to by being ourselves and they view us in a negative light, that's on them. If we don't act that way, I thought you were like ... I don't know, I could have said something positive but I geared it towards negative, what people say negatively… It may be like us conforming when you think
about it at times because of the negative remarks that we often get if we were to change how we are just because of those negative remarks it's like conforming to what you...
You know?... Why won't you just be you and accept you for who you are. What people say, that's what they say but as long as you know the genuine you like you're not trying to be that way. You're not trying to be ignorant. You're not trying to seem self-centered but it is like if your personality gives off that to certain people why does it affect, why should it affect you if you know that you're not trying to be that.

Some of the participants spoke about how being successful at the university, whether it was academically or socially, was a form of representation. They were motivated to succeed and fight stereotypes that men of color could not be successful college students. By associating themselves with like-minded individuals, they would help dispel notions of failure held by out-groups. Alex provided his thoughts by stating:

I think as a man of color it's already ... it's our unfortunate predisposition that we won't even necessarily go to college or be in college. Going to college and finding these other strong minority men and women that all have the same goal as me which is to graduate and get our degree, that helps solidify my identity. It helps solidify the fact that I'm here, and I'm doing this, and I can do it, and I'm going to do it. The relationships that I've built and the organizations I've joined and the people that I surround myself, they feed into that. It's important to me that I surround myself with people who will feed into that because if you're around people who aren't feeding into your goals and your dreams, it's probably not going to work out for you.
Jett also spoke about associating with like-minded students to help him succeed while on campus. His motivation to represent himself in a positive manner resulted from understanding the struggles men of color faced while in college:

I think there's a sense of camaraderie, especially with men of color that I don't think in terms of calling people leaders, other groups might not have as much. With the women and women of color, the protective and groups where it's more a group of "We're all similar," whereas in our group it's more like "Making sure that everybody knows that they're great or can be great."…Whereas with us, it's like one in three of us is in jail, half of us are dead. People we grew up with aren't here. Every day is one step forward and you have more weight of your family, your community are at your back. Whereas they're just expected to come to school, expected to do good. Where it's like a lot of us are expected to come to school, but our teachers don't expect us to do well. Society doesn't expect us to make it. It's like that fight, again, that they don't have, which isn't there fault.

In the interview, Jett spoke about how his identity changed to be a positive representation of a man of color. He spoke about being a positive influence on campus and being motivated to succeed in his academics. Bob also spoke on how his identity as a man of color changed to be more representative of who he wanted to be. Bob talked about how interacting with his in-group affected how he saw his identity as a man of color:

My views as a man of color are different because of the fact ... My views have changed. I don't have to wear Jordan's and stuff like that to be cool or I don’t have to talk ignorantly, stuff like that. Kind of like a vision I had before I came to college. When I came I came to college ... Coming from [LOCATION] it was like, you sagged your pants, you acted
like you didn't care about your appearance but coming to college I met intelligent people of color as well.

Charlie was one of very few Latinx men within both his friend group and his academic major. However, he saw the lack of representation on campus as an opportunity to share his heritage with his friends and other peers:

I think for me it provides a different background to them because the majority of my specific friend group is Caucasian. So for them, it's mainly about understanding, “Well I come from a different background so here let me share what knowledge I’ve had and what experiences I have”...Yeah, yeah. Definitely. I love sharing with them my experiences and what I go through in my culture and heritage and stuff like that…I mean it did allow me to be more representative of my group, of my heritage and my culture.

Charlie said that his identity as a man of color wasn’t enhanced while he was on campus, but being with a diverse group of friends gave him a chance to be a positive representative of his culture and have the opportunity to learn about his friends’ cultures as well. He went on to say:

I think for me it provides like a different background to them because the majority of my specific friend group is Caucasian. So for them, it's mainly about understanding, "Well I come from a different background so here let me share what knowledge I've had and what experiences I have."… . I love sharing with them my experiences and what I go about through in my culture and heritage and stuff like that. And they always share what they do in their culture.

Participants saw themselves as positive representatives of the men of color community and took great pride in identifying as such. Students were motivated to be themselves and to
work hard in order to counter stereotypes out-group members held. The next group of codes discusses how the participants participated in student clubs and leadership opportunities.

**Getting Involved on Campus**

Study participants were asked about the ways the institution helped engage students to create in-groups. Participants talked at great length about how the university did its best to help men of color form groups. In addition, participants spoke about the staff and faculty on campus who were seen as a valuable resource for men of color and their social identity groups. Seven of the eight participants spoke about how the university helped students get involved and meet peers with similar identities. A common thread throughout the seven participants were social events and other campus activities and how critical they were in helping participants get involved in form in-groups. Alex talked about how a major campus organization fair was important for him to learn about the fraternity he eventually joined:

The involvement fair is something that they do a lot of. I know at the beginning of every school semester, they try to plan out maybe two or three different events that are all essentially the same kind of event to give people a platform to showcase their various organizations and clubs and allows other students to walk around and browse and see what's available out there. That's how I got involved in my fraternity essentially. I was just walking around and I found them and I talked to them and they were cool. That's how I got involved in the wrestling club because I was like, oh they have a club here, I'd like to get back into wrestling. I hadn't done it since high school. The involvement fairs and things like that I've noticed actually do a lot of work and they're not just for show.

Peter was also a visitor of campus organization fairs and Greek life open houses. These were chances for him to find ways for him to connect with like-minded peers. Because of these,
Peter was heavily involved on campus and spoke about how the university offered plenty of opportunities to get involved on campus:

That I found? Offered by the university I mean, Greek Life has been very, very big in my college experience, just being able to like develop myself as a leader and push myself out of my comfort zone I think that's been very helpful. I think, obviously, the resident assistant program, I mean all universities have that but that's been very crucial. Just, a lot of other clubs and all that, definitely very, very resourceful in kind of becoming a better person.

Like Peter, Fitzgerald was active on campus and spoke about the many ways he engaged with other students on campus. Fitzgerald offered his experiences on how campus events and efforts helped him get involved and develop peer networks:

As far as I see, between the certain departments that I'm in, they really try to engage students and really trying to foster [INSTITUTION] being a home for certain students…Definitely on campus jobs, I feel like, are the best. You just meet so many people. You get so many ins that you have a network. Student groups are up there but you've just got to take advantage of the student groups. Some people forget that student group leaders are also students and it's hard for them to program for you if you don't reach out to them and make that effort. Orientation, I feel like, is a big one. Sometimes the people that you meet that first couple days, you stick with, and sometimes you don't.

In addition to campus events that sought to bring people together, two of the participants spoke directly on how their living arrangements helped them develop social identity groups they found
beneficial during their time at the university. Bob spoke about how his group of friends bonded in their first-year residence hall:

The first day door were open. We all lived in the basement of…It was one, we didn’t have an RA so we were able to do a lot more under the radar stuff. We all just clicked. I met…that's the friend in particular I'm talking about. He lived right next door to me. We just clicked. We played Madden all the time, we had real deep conversations. It's kind of like my best friend.

Charlie’s in-group came from living in a residence hall. Due to the layout of the building, Charlie had high levels of contact with his group from the start and relationships began to strengthen as time progressed. He detailed how his friend group continued once they moved to another residence hall:

We all live together on the same floor and we also knew each other from the previous year and got to know each other for the first time and there last year…We were designated to [BUILDING] where we eventually started talking to each other and slowly knowing our names. And especially with Res, it forces you to talk with people ‘cause of the structure and how it’s set up.

The stories of these two participants demonstrate the impact that living on campus had in their ability to find in-group networks. Finding these in-groups quickly gave them the encouragement and confidence they needed to branch out to new endeavors with in-group members’ support. Student staff that worked within the residence halls served as a motivator for Bob and Charlie’s in-groups to try out different campus clubs and discover new leadership opportunities.
Study Themes

Once the categories were developed, five themes emerged from the data. The researcher conferred with field notes, analytic memos, and the interview matrix to find similarities across the participant interviews that would answer the original research question “What are the important functions and experiences that historically marginalized collegiate men of color find valuable within their social identity groups?” Development of these five themes involved entering statements from each participant into an interview matrix and using a cross-case analysis to find commonalities. In addition, the researcher reviewed the interview transcripts and field notes to ensure these themes reflected the participant’s stories and experiences. Significant time was spent reviewing all study documents to ensure the participant’s voices influenced the name of each theme and the important supporting statements. The five themes that emerged from the data were Know Who You Are, Building Camaraderie, Someone Has Your Back, We’re Going to Make It, and Help Our Groups Thrive. The next section will discuss each theme in detail.

Know Who You Are

As the study participants spoke about their experiences with social identity groups, a common thread was the impact being around their groups had on their own identity development. It was apparent from the data that participants noticed how their identities of being men of color became stronger as they interacted within their in-groups. From his interview, Peter used to view White people in terms of being an out-group. However, he joined an Interfraternity Council organization that shaped how he saw himself as man of color. He discussed how his identity had become more salient while being a member of a majority White fraternity:
I mean, it definitely has made me more prideful. I have really learned to appreciate my cultures eccentricities, especially as a, identifying as Muslim, yeah it's definitely just made me double down on my identity. It's encouraged me to learn more about it.

Like Peter, Alex joined a Greek organization to find a sense of community. While Alex joined an NPHC, his mixed-race identity shaped how he interacted with the Black community on campus. Alex talked about his mixed-race identity and how being in mostly Black spaces, like the meeting space for the Black student organization on campus, helped him deal with out-groups:

The first few times I went it was kind of weird. I walked in, said what's up to everybody, and just sat in there because I didn't know anybody. But the more you go, the more people will have conversations around you, and you take part in those conversations, and then it gets to the point where you know all these people. Now you see them every day. Now it's not even something that I have to think about when I see these people, remembering their names or telling one individual from the next, that you kind of have to build on when you first get here. It was very quick that I got used to that environment…I felt comfortable there, I could joke with them. And that's important to me because there’s not a lot of people of mixed race that are there. I definitely stand out and my skin tone is very light compared to a lot of people that are in there so I stand out. I know I stand out and I have to deal with conversations that revolve around, oh this, this and this about white people, and white people do this, because that's the environment that I'm in. I'm in the environment with all African-American people who deal with the issues that come along with being a minority.
Bob was engaged in several activities on campus and had a supportive network of peers whom he could rely on. As mentioned above, he felt there was a standard that men of color had to meet when he first arrived on campus. When asked about how his identity was shaped during his time at the university, he added this quote about the influence by his friend groups:

I believe your friends are a reflection of you so as a man of color you can't be one sided with your friends. Your friends can't represent only one thing. Your friends have to represent what you want to be especially as a man of color with success. I guess what you’re trying to give off as your persona as well. When you hang out with people that aren’t particularly doing nothing or aren't involved or aren't producing any success then subconsciously it kind of sucks you down too. I see my friends as a support system to push me up but at the same time of their representation of my values as well. So when other people see them they see what I represent at the same time.

Jett had a unique perspective on developing a stronger identity as a man of color. He arrived to campus from a different part of the country and purposely sought out a university where his marginalized identity would be welcomed. He was active in a lot of other campus activities that exposed him to a wide variety of identities and perspectives. Since he was involved in different groups on campus and was comfortable working with others different than him, he spoke about how that influenced how his identity changed since coming to campus:

Yeah. It's changed since I first got on campus. I still had that "Okay, I'm from the midwest." Not necessarily prejudice doesn't exist, but where I'm from it's not as blatant. Definitely how it's changed since I first got here, and then two and a half years later, it's really ... You become a pillar once you accept who you are on campus, because people know that they can come to you with their problems. They know they can trust you,
because you're confident in who you are. That's basically the thing I love most about Towson and my friend groups is we are all very comfortable learning more about ourselves then becoming stronger. Once you become stronger, people know that they can come to you and go through the same process, even if they don't know that they're doing it.

Fitzgerald spoke about how he saw a lack of leadership from Black men on campus and how that influenced him to associate with women of color. His identity of being a Black man was shaped by attending the university and seeing a lack of Black male leadership. He provided his thoughts by stating:

Being from [LOCATION], I always say this, I wasn't cognizant of being black. Everybody was black. I think coming here, experiencing culture shock, made me aware of my blackness. Then, being aware of your blackness, I feel like you go through this spectrum of emotions. At the end of the spectrum it's like either you're neutral, blasé, if you will, to being black. You're like, "It doesn't really matter." I don't know, I felt a calling, I would say. That's a strong word. A pride in being black. I feel like it changed. Being a man here, I felt like, came later. It was just like, "I'm black. We have this collective identity." Then, being a black man, it was like, "I don't see a lot of black men here. Time to step up and be that black man," that I felt like I should be in this community.

Participants talked about their identities and changes to them since they arrived on campus. For these students, identifying as a man of color was a source of pride and motivation to become a leader. The next study theme discussed how participants took on leadership roles within their in-groups.
Building Camaraderie

Social identity groups provided a chance for participants to develop leadership skills and apply them in different areas. In many cases, participants saw themselves as leaders within their own groups. This gave participants the chance to showcase their skills and be supportive to others within their in-groups. Fitzgerald was blunt in why his in-group considered him to be a leader by stating: “They admire my, ‘Shade.’ I get told that, ‘You're so shady. You're so honest.’ Then, again, I feel like I work hard and they like that. Personality, I would say. Seeing that there’s a shortage of, like I said, black men on campus, I feel like I'm really piped up because of that.” Peter viewed himself as a leader within his in-group evidenced by this comment:

The leaders in my social group, oh, that's a good question. Hmm. I would say definitely like I am definitely one of the leaders if not like, I guess, yeah I would definitely one of the leaders… I guess just the fact that I'm outspoken, and also just having initiative to kind of do new things or kind of propose new ideas.

Being involved in student government and working in the residence halls gave Jett additional opportunities to showcase his leadership potential. He talked about how his leadership skills were admired by all his friends and how it was influenced by being a member of a NPHC fraternity:

In my fraternity we have a term called Rocks of your group of line brothers, and I'm the one in mine. They just know that they can come to me with anything and I'm not gonna turn them away or anything like that. I guess you'd say I'm a fighter… I'm a leader. I would definitely say I'm one of the leaders in a lot of my social groups, because, again, I'm not scared of a workload and do SGA work. That's very important, the people who
want to get things done. My line brothers were all leaders, because we push each other to be leaders in other organizations on campus.

Like Jett, being in an NPHC gave Bob an avenue to explore new leadership opportunities. He spoke about finishing a leadership development program and joining other organizations that would help him develop this part of his identity. During the interview, Bob was asked about how his social identity group saw his leadership. Bob described how he was a leader not by just being involved in organizations but as a resource to his peers. He detailed his contributions to the group by stating:

They respect me by listening to me and they admire me because of my story, how much I’m willing to go out on a limb for them. It's kind of ... I think they respect what I represent and my level of seriousness and how I try to carry myself. I don't worry about a lot of things that they may worry about that may be immature or childish or something like that. They come to me when they need advice or something like that.

Similar to Bob, Alex spoke about his leadership qualities within his in-group by providing support and encouragement to others. Alex found a space to meet new people on campus within the Black student organization that ultimately helped him develop new relationships. In his experiences, it was important to be a person who could communicate and be himself. He stated:

I feel like my friends appreciate ... my close friends who know about they, they know about my ability to communicate with everybody. I think that's something everybody notices and points out about me. It's almost to the point where it's like, I get teased for it almost, but because it's cool. They poke fun at it but I know it's not a bad thing and I
know they don't view it as a bad thing. I think they appreciate the way that I am and the things that are important to me which are balance and it's something that’s come from me being biracial. I've never liked being stagnant, I've never liked being around one group of people, one type of people, I've never liked one type of thing, I've never liked considering myself one thing. For 23 years, that's been it. And I make it a point when I meet people and I tell them that that's what's important to me. I think they appreciate that.

Leadership was a common source of pride and reflection from all the participants. They stated they were leaders and identified how their leadership was respected by their peers. They were also able to articulate how their leadership affected in-group members. The next theme of this study focused on leadership they had from their in-groups and the specific people they considered role models.

**Someone Has Your Back**

While participants talked about how they saw themselves as leaders, they talked equally about the fellow students whom they also saw as leaders. They spoke about the individuals who had an impact during their time on campus and why they felt these people were so important. The in-groups participants identified with provided them with great leadership exemplars. Jacob spoke about the leader in his in-groups and why he considered them as the ones to take on leadership roles:

I guess the people I would see leaders are the ones that aren't afraid to call out the other guys in the friend groups…I have been thinking about who might be the leaders in our friend group for a while now, and it always come down to that. I like to say it's important to, I guess, check people just so they have some type of feedback on the way they're acting.
For Jacob, leaders in his group were the ones who make sure others were following the group norms and provided feedback. For Charlie, leaders in his in-group provided comfort and compassion when needed. Charlie added this story about a leader in his group and how they helped him during a personal issue:

I mainly did go through my group of friends but I think the friend that resonates with me the most would have to be [STUDENT]. I’m always really comfortable talking with her and at one point…and there’s this one point where I was in a relationship and that relationship had to end…And that’s where my friend [STUDENT] comes in. She’s always there to try to drill up my brain that “Hey, you know you had this but you need to forget about it because it’s going to hurt you more in the long run” kind of thing.

Alex spoke at length about how his membership in an NPHC organization and being in the Black student organization space gave him plenty of role models to emulate. He also spoke about the individuals whom he looked up to. When asked about others he admired, he talked about a female student involved in the campus Black student organization he respected:

This person is actually younger than me but she's done a significant amount since she's been at [INSTITUTION] and she's very involved in the minority community within and outside her own particular organization. She is actually the same major is another thing ... we've taken some of the same classes, she's taken classes I still need to take, so I'm able to ask for her advice on things and she sheds light on a lot of that kind of stuff. She's younger than me but I feel like she's done so much more than me in her time as a college student. She's great.
Bob talked about the students in his fraternity who he looked up to and provided motivation for him to develop his own leadership skills:

I would say [STUDENT 1]. I admire him because of his work ethic and his lack of excuses that he makes, multiple jobs, multiple organizations and still managing to do school, self-sufficient. He's a good role model for me. [STUDENT 2], one of my fraternity brothers that came before me…He was somebody to look up to as well, super involved but also held down the fort academically as well.

Two of the participants did not name specific people who they considered leaders. However, they admired specific qualities people had and valued their leadership skills. Cole talked about the qualities he admired of people on campus:

Most people...individuals that I admire are ones that have persevere through the heart to go to college. Like looking at them and exchanging stories like "Wow, you've been through a lot." But they're still here, they're still pushing forward, they're still doing what they have to do to succeed. Those are people that I admire.

Cole was asked to elaborate more on the people he considered leaders within his in-group. He once again answered in general terms about certain skills people had:

The leaders within my social group...the only reason I consider them to be leaders is because they put together events or they say "Hey, we should go out and do this." In other words, they take the initiative to hang out or to go do something or to go somewhere. Either that or they have been in the friend group the longest and I just happen to come along and join it.
Jett was asked to clarify about those he saw as leaders, and he pointed out why he felt women in student organizations were ones whose qualities he admired:

A lot of the women in the organizations I'm in are very strong. Our SGA president is a woman. She is very strong. To be able to be a woman of color and lead an organization, that's somebody that I look up to as well. Just being able to do that is pretty cool.

Alex was asked to elaborate on the men of color whose leadership he admired. Similar to Cole, he admired what other men of color had to endure while in college. He stated:

Oh yeah. Yeah, there's hundreds. Just the fact that they can come every day and do what they have to do to work through a system that's not necessarily setup for them, and then also, to be able to have other things ... I have a lot of friends who are musicians of different kinds. I have friends that are actors. I have friends that have their own businesses. I have friends that are campus leaders. I think that day-to-day dealing with what life can throw at you makes you a leader in general. If you're not willing to back down from life, you're already a leader.

Participants interpreted leadership in different ways. However, participants did not underestimate the impacts that leaders in their in-groups had on their academic and social lives on campus. It was this admiration of fellow peers that motivated them to work harder towards their personal goals.

**We’re Going to Make It**

A common thread across the interviews were the positive influences in-groups had towards the goal of graduating from college. The participants all shared how being with their in-groups provided support in their academic pursuits that did not involve help with coursework or
class scheduling. Rather, in-groups provided necessary advice and role modeling the participants used as motivation. The participants found this support from their in-groups to be invaluable. Since Jacob had a small circle of friends, it was interesting to get his thoughts on how his friend group helped him in his academic pursuits. Jacob mentioned how his in-group helped him:

Yeah. Maybe if I'm having a bad day, I'm doubting myself, they're pretty quick to encourage me in a way, saying, "Oh, y-you can do it," or, "You've done so much in the past, you can get through this." They're just a supporting group of people.

Cole had a small in-group that was predominately from his on-campus laboratory position. Like Jacob, Cole spoke about how his in-group provides additional motivation to work towards graduating from college:

Yeah, I feel like being with my friends, people that truly are my friends, they know me and they understand. So, when I feel like faltering in ways or I'm not quit like myself, they can pick up on that and they support me through my rough times.

Fitzgerald was adamant on getting towards graduation and not having family members pay more money for his education. He saw his peers take longer than four years to graduate and he resolved to finish his education as fast as possible. When it came to explaining how the in-group provides support for participants to reach graduation, Fitzgerald provided this example on how his in-group motivated him to push forward:

Hope for graduation? We all are here to graduate, ain't nobody trying to stay. I feel like that notion of student success, one, people try to shoot it down, but then also I feel like it’s worth having. We try to uplift that. Whenever somebody’s slacking, they could be like, "You're going to be here for a while." We just pressured this guy to get into a class because he was slacking. It's the one class he needs to graduate. I was just like, "What're
you doing? You're going to be here a whole other semester. You might walk but you're still going to be here." I feel like it's a kind pressure, or a side eye. It's a, "Get your shit together," kind of thing. No one's going to hold your hand but we're just going to side eye you until you get the point.

The push to graduate was articulated by other participants. Being around their in-groups was an additional motivator to finish their degree program. Jett spoke at length about how being around his in-groups helped motivate him to graduate from college:

Yeah. You know that somebody cares about what you're doing academically and what you're doing in life, because college is where you, not only but it's a big place where you meet people you'll be friends with for life. Just knowing that you're all working towards a goal, no matter what your color, creed, religion, anything is, you're all working towards that graduation goal. It's just good to know that you're not alone. I think that's a lot of the times why there's such a low graduation percentage of especially African American males is because they might feel isolated, especially at PWI's. Knowing that everybody you're around is trying to get the same thing you're trying to get definitely motivates you.

Similar to Jett, Bob spoke in detail about how his fraternity brothers provided him with motivation to eventually graduate from college. He detailed how seeing other fraternity brothers earn their degrees played a major factor in him staying in school and achieving the same goal:

Seeing them graduate around me. When I joined my fraternity, the reason why I talk about it so much, is when I joined them it gave me that sense of to see it through. Seeing the men that came before me graduate gave me hope. My mom didn't graduate, my dad didn't graduate and my four brothers and sisters before me didn't graduate so I was searching for something to give me motivation to push me through. Once I found ... Once
I got in my frat and I started seeing all my big brothers graduate, [STUDENT 1] graduated and [STUDENT 2] about to graduate this semester, it just seems more and more real that, "Wow, I'm about to graduate," and I just got to keep pushing.

Keeping in line with Bob and Jett, Alex also spoke with detail about his in-group and how members helped him focus on his studies. Being around a supportive community that shared part of his racial/ethnic identity provided him the knowledge that he was not alone in working towards graduation:

It’s always a constant feeling of us being together going through the same things because we feel that college may be different for us than it is for other groups. I don't always necessarily feel that, but I know the people who I'm around feel that, I'm going to feel that, because that's the kind of person that I am. My friend groups encourage me to do better especially when they see I don't do as well as I'd like to, and I'm not going to go talk to them directly about it, but they'll tell something is off and they ask about it. If I end up opening up about it, they're like, "here's how we'll take care of it, here's how we'll approach this, here's what you've got to do, I've been in a similar situation, all you gotta do is this." It's good to have that around. I'm definitely appreciative of it.

Participants found that their in-groups were valuable in motivating them to be successful in their academics. This motivation was shown through positive role modeling and encouraging group members to stay focused on their goals to graduate. The final theme of the study focused on how institutions could help support the creation and growth of social identity groups on campus.
Help Our Groups Thrive

Each participant was asked how their university could help students support current and create future social identity groups. Participants talked about their experiences with groups and offered solutions the institution could institute to better support in-groups. In addition, participants spoke about the advice they would give to incoming students to help them join or build social identity groups.

Jacob talked about how his small group of friends were a positive influence on his academic and social experience on campus. Despite the fact he was not overly involved on campus, his in-group provided him the opportunity to talk about his experiences. When asked about the advice he would give to incoming men of color, he offered:

Okay, I see. I think when telling a group of men of color, you could tell them to reach out to people of the same ethnicity. They could probably relate better than anyone else. I guess to me, as a man of color, I could look out for people that come from the same background as I do.

Jacob also stated that he would tell university administration to encourage future men of color to reach out and find others. Jacob was one of two participants who would not encourage students to join current student organizations. Charlie was the second person; his suggestion for men of color focused more on positive representation of their identity:

I would say be that representation of their social group. And don’t be backed down by generalities and assumptions and always…and what’s another word, another phrase for putting your hand up kind of thing? Like, “I want to do that” or be representative I guess. Be representative of your group and what your beliefs are and what you stand for.
Peter suggested that incoming students would need to branch out to different communities in order to find the in-group that worked for them. When asked about how his advice would change for men of color, he added: “I would stress to them especially yes, like don’t settle, but also just like really get involved. Develop yourself, and yeah just like, just try to be one percent better every day. Whether that be academically, socially, just do something to get better, just to give them that edge.” He was more direct in his suggestion to university administration on how they could help men of color create social identity groups:

Oh, that is close. Definitely try to hire more professors of color, and I guess not just of color but really just a diverse faculty in general, in all senses of the word. Also, with that like seek out professors who have kind of like a, what is the word I’m looking for here, like they provide interesting insights into a field. So like, just to give you an example for that, so for example like I know…might be hiring this new political science professor who specializes in kind of like Islamic history and, you know, Islamic political ideology. That would be fascinating, I would have loved to, just to take a course like that, but I’m about to graduate. But, definitely that…Hire professors who encourage students to be problem solvers…don’t simply study the world’s problems, solve them.

Peter’s advice to administration was different than the other participants, where it focused on bringing more faculty and staff of color to campus. He did not directly mention joining groups or even Greek life, but his advice to administrators had a close tie to his own academic experience. Other participants provided practical advice for incoming students to build social identity groups. Fitzgerald provided the advice he would give to incoming men of color:

You got to figure out where the nearest barber shop is, most definitely. I still struggle, to this day. I feel like you’ve got to build that network yourself, piece by piece, of where do
you get your hair cut, where do you go grocery shopping. I feel like programs, such as our mentoring programs on campus, help in a way. Also, they don't because I feel like the relationship in mentoring programs sometimes are artificial and you're not having your mentee's best interest in mind. I feel like you have to take it for yourself in making those strides. I feel like you've got to work a little harder than other people, to be honest, to make those relationships, that network.

Fitzgerald was asked how campus administration could help students build the relationships he referenced in his quote. He talked about a double standard that men of color had to meet, where they had to be leaders in lots of organizations but were not given lots of structure to be successful. For Fitzgerald, the institution had to find a balance between challenging and supporting men of color. From the interview:

Especially if there are men of color and they're leaders or they’re in black student organizations to hold them to a higher standard. Then, freshmen come in and they're looking at us like, "That's where I need to be." Also, those people tend to have the social network that most freshmen aspire to have. I feel like that is important. You don't want them to be not on the come up, and then people are looking to aspire to be them. The reason I feel like there is a coddling or over nurturing of Black men here is because we are in such few supply, especially Black men trying to be student leaders. So mediocrity is often accepted, complacency of your average Black male student is the norm.

For him, it was important for the university to find unique ways to encourage men of color to be successful and at the same time still hold high academic and social standards. Since he perceived there was a lack of men of color on campus, it was important, in his opinion, to ensure that this population was given ample opportunity to lead at a high level expected of others. For other
participants, involvement on campus wasn’t tied to expectations but to help build community. Cole had entered the university through a mentoring program that helped him form a social identity group. He talked about how this particular institutional initiative was important to him:

I know that with my experiences …having your group, people that you can personally relate to, it has really impacted my ability to perform because my level of comfort has increased. There's a man named [STAFF MEMBER] …has a really strong vision and that's why I support [PROGRAM] so much, because of what he believes will work and what I've seen has worked…The social identity groups, I feel like is really important because we as the people need to know who we are as well as there are other people out there that are like us and that support system is crucial and it's really important for progression. It's not even the progression of the individual didn't improve, but us a whole and those impacts will go down for generations. What you learn is passed on to what comes from you. So it all starts there.

Cole did not have many people to rely on while at campus, but initiatives that helped students create in-groups like his mentoring program had a positive impact. He eventually became a mentor for the program and wanted to continue to be a resource for other men of color. Campus programs and initiatives were important to both Alex and Bob, who found themselves involved in numerous activities. When asked about the advice he would give to incoming men of color regarding creating their social identity groups, Alex stated:

I think that would be … I would focus … if I was speaking to a group of men or color, the conversation is going to be more focused on just that. Meeting other people of color and congregating with other people of color who are going to understand the things you've dealt with. You understand the things they've dealt with. You'll go through new things
together. And those are going to be strong places for you to be. Those are going to be the people who motivate you, those are going to be the people who cheer you up when you get down, and when you don't understand why you just can't do well in school, those are going to be the people who are like, "I probably know why you're not doing well in school." Just based on that comradery between you two.

Alex also had very concrete suggestions on how the university could encourage men of color to create supportive social identity groups. Alex had participated in a Black student leadership conference sponsored by the university and found it incredibly helpful. He was able to network with other students in different organizations and start to plan events. When asked if a similar event would be beneficial for men of color, he replied:

I think that would be really good even if it was just ... it could be zoomed in as far as they would want it to, as far as just the black fraternities, or just the minority driven academic groups that are out there. There's just so many different organizations and I think there's definitely a difference in the conversation that needs to be had between the general body of African-Americans and African-American men. There's a different conversation that could be had when you exclude women. The same thing could be said for women. They could have their own thing where they discuss their own unique issues they have to deal with that we might not necessarily deal with or understand as black men. I think if they were able to do something like that, I think it could definitely have its benefits. It could definitely be successful.

Similar to Alex, Bob had been a participant in a leadership seminar where he was able to network with different students and was encouraged to join new organizations. His advice for incoming men of color was to join Greek life and take advantage of the leadership opportunities
those groups offered. When asked on how the university could support men of color in building social identity groups, he offered this suggestion:

I would put a requirement on the amount of organizations somebody has to be a part of. It would be more ... [INSTITUTION] now does a great job of providing multiple organizations that anybody can join. They do a great job of it but I would put as a graduation requirement you have to be a part of x amount of organizations throughout your [INSTITUTION] tenure. That way if they join those organizations and it’s like, they're doing things that people are doing like like-minded things. You'll see people ahead of you doing what you want to do and it'll give you the realization that you can keep going. I think I would put more stress on academic groups than anything, academic organizations…I would say one organization per semester. You don't have to stick with that organization throughout your entire time at [INSTITUTION] but if you gave yourself to one organization per semester or if it was a yearly thing if you're appointed a board position that might be different. Definitely if you're not on the board, if you're a gen member, join one organization a semester and branch out and continue to branch out. By the time you graduate, say, if you went four years that's eight organizations that you can put on a resume.

For the participants, it was important for future men of color to find an in-group that best fit their needs and for the institution to actively support it. Most of the participants were involved in campus organizations and their suggestion to find peers who shared their identity was clearly evident. And, having the university provide material and emotional support for men of color as they develop these social identity groups was important for the participants.
Answering the Research Question

A discussion must take place to show how the results answered the research question “What are the important functions and experiences historically marginalized collegiate men of color find valuable within their social identity groups?” From the study themes, men of color who were members of social identity groups knew there were members who would provide social and academic guidance when needed. While social identity group members did not provide help with homework on a regular basis, they did give participants motivation to continue with their studies and reach their goal of graduation. Leaders within these social identity groups role-modeled how to multitask priorities and perform academically. Participants found these groups valuable enough to suggest that university administrators put significant resources to encourage future men of color to either join or create these beneficial networks. Finally, being a member of these social identity made participants more secure in their identities of being men of color. Despite negative interactions with other students on campus, participants knew their social identity groups would support them and helped them understand what it meant to be a man of color on campus.

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter discussed the categories and themes that emerged from the data of the study, starting by highlighting the eight participants who shared their stories. Participant data was broken down into categories, which were eventually used to identify the five key themes of the research. These five themes, Someone Has Your Back, Building Camaraderie, Know Who You Are, We’re Going to Make It, and Help Our Groups Thrive, described the importance of their social identity groups. Chapter Five will discuss the implications of the study, applications to theory and practice, and future research options.
CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to answer the research question “What are the important functions and experiences historically marginalized collegiate men of color find valuable within their social identity groups?” The research involved interviewing eight self-identified men of color about their experiences at a university in the mid-Atlantic United States. The questions asked were derived from a conceptual framework that used social identity theory and appreciative inquiry. Five themes emerged from the data: Know Who You Are, Building Camaraderie, Someone Has Your Back, We’re Going to Make It, and Help Our Groups Thrive.

This closing chapter will contain four sections. The first part will discuss key findings from the study and their relation to relevant literature. The second section will detail implications of the study for education practitioners and administrators. The third section will highlight the researcher’s reflections and suggestions for future research. The chapter will close with a summary statement about the research project as a whole.

Key Findings from Analysis

Below are the key findings from analyzing the five themes. These themes showcased the many ways they found their social identity groups to aid them in their social and academic journeys at their university. This analysis connects the study themes to relevant literature on both social identity theory and appreciative inquiry.

Know Who You Are

Participants indicated that their social identity groups helped them develop a deeper appreciation for being a man of color on their campus. Participants spoke about being with groups that helped validate their identities. Whether their in-groups were all one ethnicity or a diverse mix of people, their groups had a positive impact on how they saw themselves as men of
color. This process was discussed by Hogg, Turner, and Davidson (1990) and Hogg and Reid (2006) on how in-group members begin to internalize their group membership through a process of depersonalization. Instead of eliminating their own personal identity, group members begin to see themselves as a part of a larger unit and are willing to adhere to the group’s standards. Participants talked at length about how being with their particular in-groups helped them gain a better sense of what it meant to be a man of color. Participants noted how their in-group helped mediate out-group expectations of being a man of color on campus like being unprepared academically or always showing anger. Participants also began a process of internalizing their membership. Comments like this one from Bob showed how their in-group membership helped them develop a deeper understanding on being a man of color at a university:

I believe your friends are a reflection of you so as a man of color you can't be one sided with your friends. Your friends can't represent only one thing. Your friends have to represent what you want to be especially as a man of color with success. I guess what you’re trying to give off as your persona as well. When you hang out with people that aren’t particularly doing nothing or aren't involved or aren't producing any success then subconsciously it kind of sucks you down too. I see my friends as a support system to push me up but at the same time of their representation of my values as well. So when other people see them they see what I represent at the same time.

Participants also spoke about finding people within their in-groups that shared common interests and beliefs they could more easily relate to. Being a part of an in-group helps mitigate the beliefs that out-groups have, since group members have developed a status within their in-group and have an attachment to group norms (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). One example of this was
discussed by Cole on how his identity within his in-group helped dispel stereotypes on being a Black man:

I know for myself in the past, I'm not the stereotype, so people often view me as less manly or in some ways weaker. But, what I've noticed recently is that those same people don't look at me as the stereotype. They say "He is different", but at the same time they respect. So, when I'm in my friend group or when I'm with the other mentors, people pay attention to what I have to say because I am smart, because I carry myself a certain way even though I don't fit their stereotype. It still works out.

The social identity groups helped members develop a stronger self-esteem and hold their identity with high regard. By doing so, participants were able to distinguish themselves from other students who did not share their group identity. This differentiation students held between groups was discussed by Turner et al. (1992) and Voci (2006) in their explanation regarding group fit. Participants in the study chose their in-groups through normative fit, where the decision to join the in-group was determined by looking at beliefs of social identity groups and choosing the one that fits their personal needs (Turner et al., 1992). Participants who joined organizations, such as Peter, Alex, Jett Jackson, and Bob, all made a conscious decision to join their particular in-groups because there was a strong differentiation between ones that connected to their particular interests and others that did not. Jett mentioned how a mentoring group he was in helped him choose organizations that fit his personal needs by stating:

I was lucky, when I first got here, to be involved with a group called [PROGRAM]. What it is is mentoring group for predominantly African American, but also first-generation college students. That group fostered a group that I was able to join. Off the bat, I had that group, and then from there, I could create other subgroups from that.
By identifying with these particular groups, students in turn felt more connected to their own identity, as referenced by Friesen and Beasley (2013) and Ghavami et al. (2011). Participants talked about the ways they were able to start the differentiation process by attending group interest meetings and joining mentoring programs. Institutional efforts helped participants find in-groups by offering multiple options and providing students the space and time to join the groups they desired.

**Building Camaraderie**

An important benefit of the social identity groups were the role models participants could use as examples. Participants talked about why they admired certain people within their in-groups. Reasons for respecting in-group leaders ranged from being sympathetic to taking on multiple leadership roles on campus. In-group leaders were seen as people who genuinely wanted members to succeed and encouraged others to get involved in other activities on campus. This modeling of effective behavior ultimately led some participants to become leaders within their own social identity groups. Students in this study saw themselves as leaders for the same reasons they admired others in their group; they listened to their friends and provided advice on social and societal issues. Participants were motivated to be a positive example within their groups and had plenty of examples to learn from.

The Building Camaraderie theme was consistent with prototypical behavior, referenced by Hogg (2001) and Hogg et al. (2004). Participants who identified group members as leaders admired them for modeling behaviors and actions considered to be positive. These leaders were also respected for providing advice when needed. As Hogg et al. (2004) discussed, prototypical leaders are admired for caring about in-group members. All the participants mentioned individuals or their entire group who were considered leaders and why they were admired. One
good example on prototypical leadership came from Fitzgerald, who spoke about why he respected leaders within his in-group:

The leaders of my social group? I feel like whoever holds a position on campus tends to be leaders in my social group, and on campus in general. Most of the times when things go down or something's happening, usually those people are called upon. Usually, everybody breaks them into a table. I know I put a lot of emphasis on hard work and being professional, all those good things. Also, the people that can change the vibe. If everybody's serious and solemn, people that can lighten people up. Also, just being upstanding in themselves. If they're just holding themselves to a higher standard or presenting themselves a certain way, I feel like it's better for the entire community. I remember when Trump one everybody was, of course, down, pissed, a mixture of emotions. I do remember some people walking out and looking unfazed, and also not letting it get to them. It was like, "I'm not going to let it get to me. I'm hurting but I'm not going to let it get to me." I feel like that made a difference. I was like, "That's the way to be."

Social identity groups also had the effect of creating new leaders. Leaders hold great influence over their followers (Hogg et al., 2012), as was noted by several of the participant’s stories about who they admired for their leadership acumen. Alex, Bob, Charlie, Fitzgerald, and Jett Jackson all mentioned leaders within their group who pushed them to take on additional leadership roles. Group leaders had the standing to encourage their members to become leaders themselves. Leaders worked to ensure that members’ needs were met and people felt secure within the group (Hogg et al., 2004).
Someone Has Your Back

This theme was also consistent with the social identity theory of prototypical behavior, referenced above in the Building Camaraderie theme. Prototypical leaders wanted group members to succeed (Hogg et al., 2004), so encouraging participants to focus on their studies and take part in additional leadership opportunities fit within this theme. The use of appreciative inquiry aided in the development of the Someone Has Your Back theme. Appreciative inquiry allowed the researcher to dig deeper into participants’ stories and helped to identify the leaders who had a positive influence during their time on campus. The 4-d process encouraged participants to discuss the specific reasons why leaders in their in-groups had a profound impact on both their identities and desires to graduate from college. In addition, groups that are looking to improve their standing within society seek innovative ways to ensure members feel supported and challenged to take on leadership roles (Watkins et al., 2011). Asking questions modeled after the appreciative inquiry 4-D process encouraged storytelling from study participants about the leaders in their groups and the types of impacts they had. For example, Bob did not hesitate to continue to name members who he looked up to and relied upon for help. He pointed out three fraternity brothers who he admired:

[STUDENT 1], [STUDENT 2] and I would say [STUDENT 3]. Those three individuals because, like I said, how they carry themselves. [STUDENT 1] individually, like I said, his lack of excuses but [STUDENT 3] lives a structured life and at times I come to him and ask him for advice. When I can go to somebody for advice it makes me think they're a leader. We can be mutual, we can be the same age or they can be younger than me but then on my side it's something I want to achieve. [STUDENT 2], I would call him a leader because people socially admire him so much and his level of happiness is
unmatched. People go to him and still may feel, the effect he has on people, I would call him a leader in any aspect.

The combination of social identity theory and appreciative inquiry was valuable in understanding the Someone Has Your Back theme. Social identity groups were extremely important for leadership development and successful role modeling. Using appreciative inquiry allowed participants to talk about the specific ways their social identity groups were important to them and identify specific examples on how leaders influenced their behavior. In addition, social identity groups facilitated members to become leaders within their groups, and asking questions based upon the appreciative inquiry 4-D process encouraged participants to discuss the specific reasons why they were considered leaders within their groups and the specific qualities they bring to their social identity groups (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Hogg et al., 2004).

We’re Going To Make It

Participants in this study did not talk about how they got academic help from their group members, but they did speak about the added initiative they got from seeing their group members do well academically. In-group leaders were academically focused and were seen as positive influences upon other group members. Being around other men of color who were also working to get their degrees was seen as large motivating factor for participants to focus on their studies. In addition, social identity group leaders modeled the successful behavior that members could emulate in order to be academically successful.

This theme was also based on the concept of prototypicality, mentioned by Hogg (2001) and Hogg and Terry (2000). As Hogg and Terry (2000) noted in their work, prototypical behavior provided the set of beliefs and attributes that group members adhered to. From the study results, leaders communicated group norms and standards through conversations and
providing advice. This sharing of knowledge was valued by study participants, as they admired these leaders for their knowledge and openness to discuss difficult topics. An example of this was seen from Alex, who talked about the valuable advice he received from older fraternity members:

> I have fraternity brothers that are my friends but the ones who are older than me and the ones who were members of the organization before I was, I look at them as older brothers. They did a lot of the things I'm doing before me, so whether they're my age, a year old, two years older, three years older, there's that mutual understanding that they've been through it already. And they're always able to shed advice or talk me out of making a stupid decision or giving their input whether I asked for it or not, that's just something I have to deal with at this point. That's something I really appreciate.

Specifically, this theme is consistent with the literature on how prototypical leadership helped in-groups focus on their academics and work harder than their out-group peers. Prototypical leaders did not provide academic assistance in specific courses, but they role modeled how to be a successful student and ensured other members felt comfortable taking on leadership roles. Leaders worked to ensure members stayed on top of their academics, as noted by Charlie’s comments about his peer group and how they all took ownership of holding each other accountable:

> It makes me want to be more on top of things. Especially, we all can see, my group of friends can all see, when one of us is lagging a little bit or not putting in as much effort anymore so all of us, we emphasize that you need to do your work kind of thing and that’s just how we get motivated at first.
Group differentiation was another motivating factor for students to be successful in their studies. As Tajfel and Turner (1979) discussed in their work, in-groups strive to differentiate themselves as a form of competition against out-groups. All the participants wanted to graduate and had to work with out-group members as a means for academic progression. However, participants were confident they would be successful and did not hold similar values to the out-group. They discussed how out-group members treated them, especially in the classroom as Jett Jackson noted in his interview:

There's a lot of jealousy there. A lot of like your shining and trying to be better than somebody, when a lot of Caucasian dudes don't really have to worry about being smarter than somebody else, but there's been times in class where I've offended people because I'm smarter them. Which isn't really fair, but at the same time it's like that fine line. You're never gonna ... It's very hard to go unnoticed, and you don't want to go unnoticed. Unless you're going unnoticed, they're gonna have something to say.

When asked about how these same out-group members feel about their hope to graduate, Jett questioned the effectiveness of their social networks and if they really had support:

It depends on the strength of their network, but if they don't have that good a network ... I feel like the hardest thing to do in college is do it by yourself...Because even if you miss a day of class, who are you gonna call? If you don't talk to the professor, who you gonna email? I feel like your confidence to graduate can be very low if you're just trying to get there by yourself. That's anything in life. You need a team to do anything great. You can do good things by yourself, but you have to have people around you to do great things.

Participants expressed sentiments similar to Jett. While they felt they were in a prime position to succeed, other students were not as fortunate. The participants did not openly deride
out-groups, but questioned whether they had the motivation to succeed as much as they could. Compared to other networks on campus, the participants’ social identity groups were superior. As suggested by the work of Funiaole (2015), this comparison of groups only worked to strengthen how they viewed their in-group and deepen their resolve to be successful. In addition, participants viewed their in-group’s success through its unique cultural norms (Turner, 1975). For example, Alex, Bob, and Jett all were in NPHC organizations that valued togetherness and discipline. For these three, having mandated study tables with other line brothers required a level of accountability that other out-groups might not have had. For Cole, Charlie, and Jacob, their in-groups were in rigorous academic disciplines that required working with out-groups solely out of necessity. For them, out-groups would not be as successful because there was no desire to collaborate. No matter the how participant’s social identity groups saw others, they all were led by individuals whose role modeling of academic success gave participants a level of self-efficacy (Knippenberg et al., 2004) regarding their hopes to graduate.

Help Our Groups Thrive

A final way participants talked about the value of their in-groups involved how they met their peers. Most of the participants mentioned that efforts of the institution helped them find in-groups to join. These efforts ranged from structured mentoring programs to organization fairs. Even in the instances where participants did not attend an organization fair to find their in-groups, they found their peers through on-campus living arrangements and were encouraged to explore other campus opportunities by other students or staff members. Participants found these efforts valuable to developing connections with students and would encourage incoming men of color to take advantage of these institutional efforts. Participants were also direct in providing suggestions on how the institution could better encourage men of color to join or create their own
social identity groups. For example, Jett Jackson spoke about direct ways the university could support men of color as they created in-groups. He spoke directly about financial support for student groups and visible representation of communities of color within university administration would be a positive start:

There's no reason that, and this is just from the university, the first thing the university can do is, money-wise, create change that way. There's no reason why groups of color should have less than the other groups, or else you're just perpetuating stereotypes that are naturally in society. That'd be one. Two would be have genuine leadership that looks like them that's not in positions where only people that look like them can get hired to…You can have a vice president of diversity and inclusion, but that person doesn't have to be African American. What about the Provost? Can the University make an African American the president? If you want to really have something they can aspire, something that they can look up to, you have to make that effort to do that. It'd be those two things, really. Put your money where your mouth is, and then also if you really want the students to succeed, understand that representation is probably the most important thing. Once you see somebody who did something, you know you can do it.

San Martin and Calabrese (2011) and Calabrese (2015) used appreciative inquiry to discuss relationship building and furthering best practices that enabled success within educational environments. In those examples, study participants talked about the value of the groups they were a part of and why they were seen as beneficial. For this study, participants talked about direct ways they would counsel both future men of color and the university on the importance of forming social identity groups. Alex told a story of a best practice the university sponsored to help social identity groups:
The main thing that comes to mind is something that is already actually that has happened once and hopefully [INSTITUTION] can keep it going. But that was ... what it was called when we did it ... was the Ugima conference. Basically what that was was a weekend retreat where the leaders of all the minority-driven campus organizations came together for a weekend specifically to discuss our community and how we are going to strengthen our community based on working together. Because the Black Student Union doesn't do anything with the African Diaspora Club, and they don't do anything with the hip hop dance team, and they don't do anything with the black fraternities and sororities. None of us are working together. And it's basically like we're doing every man for ourselves. Every organization for themselves. And that's not strengthening our community. The way our community is going to continue to grow and become stronger is if we're all working together and if the university is pressing us to work together. That weekend retreat was great for me. I got to meet a lot of people outside of my initial fraternity and Greek life circle, and I got to make connections in all the different minority groups that we have and I got to find out about a lot of the different minority groups I didn't even know existed. I would love if [INSTITUION] kept that going and did that every year. I think it's really important for the black culture of [INSTITUTION] to thrive and keep people from boxing themselves in socially.

As seen above in Alex’s story, study respondents gave examples on how the university could work to support social identity groups on campus. For Jett, Alex, and other participants the university had the resources and personnel to assist men of color find groups and for those groups to stay viable over time. If those resources were directed towards in-groups that men of color joined, then it made it easier for those groups to recruit and serve the next generation of
members. These examples were combined by storytelling of past examples when the institution supported efforts for social identity groups to meet and share resources (Calabrese, 2015).

**Implications for Theory**

Social identity theory provided the researcher with a deeper understanding on the unique ways men of color value their social networks while in college. It was evident from the findings that social identity groups served an important role in this population’s success and developed leadership skills to help lead in-groups into the future. While SIT and its extension into leadership development were instrumental to the success of this research, the researcher discovered two areas of the study where the theory could be expanded to better explain how historically marginalized communities utilize their social identity groups. Under the concept of prototypical leadership discussed by Hogg (2001) and Hogg et al. (2012), group members who were considered leaders within in-groups internalized their membership, transmitted group norms to new members, and worked to ensure group members were successful in their endeavors. This style of leadership was evident in the study, as every participant discussed participants whom they felt were worthy of the leadership role and how those leaders supported them throughout their collegiate journeys. Literature discussed how prototypes held influence over others and how they communicated group norms and standards to members. While there is a growing body of evidence examining how group members become leaders, the literature could be expanded to understand the unique group factors that motivate group members to become prototypical leaders. For example, being a members of a NPHC organization that holds specific group norms may impact how a group member becomes a prototypical leader than someone in a more academically focused in-group. In addition, literature on prototypical leadership could expand upon cultural factors on how prototypical leadership is developed across historically
marginalized communities and how these leaders are viewed within historically marginalized communities. It is hoped that this study would encourage researchers to revisit prototypicality and examine it on a deeper level with marginalized communities in the United States.

Social identity theory posited that in-groups and out-groups competed against one another for social status and resources. This competition gave group members agency to internalize their membership and reduced the likelihood they would switch groups they felt better met their needs. However, literature was lacking on the ways in-groups and out-groups had to work together to solve different problems. The need for in-group members to associate and get help from out-group members was evident in the study as several participants noted it was imperative for them to get academic assistance outside their identity groups. Given the lack of representation within their disciplines, these men of color had to study and complete projects with those they did not share identities with. While the desire to perform better than out-group members was evident by participants, they all mentioned that academic success could not have been possible without working with students whom they would not normally associate with. Members also discussed that they were not discouraged to work with out-group members on academic assignments; rather, study participants did not feel like they had to work within their in-groups to succeed academically and had to work with out-groups since many of their friends were not in the same academic disciplines they were. Given the nature of educational environments where interactions with diverse communities was expected, the use of social identity theory provided some context on how historically marginalized males used their social identity groups to be successful. Social identity theory could expand upon the in-group/out-group competition concept in order to be applied in different environments where working together in certain circumstances is necessary yet does not impact group change.
Implications for Practice

This study focused on how historically marginalized collegiate men of color described the importance of their social identity groups. Eight self-identified men of color were interviewed about their experiences on campus, how they joined their social identity groups, people in their in-groups they considered leaders, and how the institution could better support the creation and development of these networks. From the results listed above, implications for higher education practitioners will be presented.

Study participants were clear in stating the importance of being involved with campus leadership opportunities and membership within student organizations. Participants like Peter, Bob, Alex, and Jett were members of Greek-lettered organizations that offered fellowship and mentoring from older members. Cole, Fitzgerald, Charlie, and Jacob all had jobs on campus where they could develop their leadership skills and work with a diverse array of student leaders. Jett and Cole were members of a mentoring program for first-year students from historically marginalized backgrounds who became mentors for future participants. Study participants talked about how they were encouraged by their peers, campus staff, and resident assistants to attend student organization fairs, campus wide social events, and Greek-letter organization interest meetings. By getting involved with these opportunities offered by the university, participants were able to find in-groups that fit their needs. Once they joined their particular in-groups, leaders within the groups encouraged members to join additional student organizations and to attend different leadership development. Study participants found it important that the university offered multiple chances to discover the various groups on campus they could join. It was evident from the interviews that participants found great value in their connection to the university and the friendships that were made. Participants also felt that the institution did a great
job in encouraging all students to find clubs and organizations where friendships could be made and saw the additional institutional efforts to help groups network, alluded to by Alex’s statement on bringing different Black student organizations together for a retreat, as a further way of supporting student leadership efforts. In addition, participants noted the key professional staff and faculty members who were critical in providing support for programs or served as organization advisers that helped group members develop leadership skills.

These actions above were seen by the researcher as moving away from deficit-based programming and offering multiple avenues for men of color to get involved. These important programs and recruitment fairs showed the many ways men of color could find involvement and displayed a level of commitment by the institution to support the interests of this population and respected the past experiences students of color came with to campus. The researcher recommends that institutions take the participants’ experiences about the value of attending such meetings and continue to offer organization fairs where men of color can find the groups that fit their identities, as well as encourage faculty and staff to take on advising roles to provide additional support.

Students in this study spent significant time talking about their interactions with out-group members and how often they interacted with other men of color within their majors. While participants discussed having to work with out-group members on academic assignments, they noted the lack of other men of color within their academic disciplines. Alex, Charlie, and Jacob talked about being one of few men of color in their academic majors. Jett Jackson and Fitzgerald provided stories on negative interactions with their White peers while in the classroom. Even though the institution had a growing number of men of color enrolled in classes, that diversity was not reflected in both faculty representation and seeing students with similar identities in their
classes. As colleges and universities make pledges to increase diversity on campus, particular attention must be paid to recruiting men of color and ensuring there is a critical mass of this population on campus. Not only must men of color be recruited and enrolled, but they must be supported using the findings from this study to help with their retention. Institutions would additionally be well served to recruit and retain faculty and staff from historically marginalized populations that can serve as additional leadership figures for men of color.

Participants also talked about some of the stereotypes they had learned about men of color while in college. These stereotypes often portrayed men of color as being academically inferior compared to their White peers, being aggressive and loud in the classroom, and only being in college to attend parties. While the participants did not seem impacted by dealing with these stereotypes, they were aware that out-group members held these beliefs. An ever present challenge for institutions are to ensure their campuses are welcoming for men of color and provide opportunities to meet people from various backgrounds. These interactions would help non-men of color dispel stereotypes they hold towards the study population. The researcher suggests that institutions take the results of this study, as well as the work of both Museus et al. (2008) and Wei et al. (2011), and work to ensure that men of color feel welcomed on campus and not have to face the stereotypes discussed in this study.

Another implication for practice involves understanding the racial and ethnic makeup of the in-groups men of color join. Literature regarding men of color assumed that they would associate with members of the same racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, all of the participants in this study chose in-groups that varied in their racial diversity. Some participants, like Jacob, Bob and Fitzgerald, had social identity groups primarily made up of African American men. Other participants, like Charlie and Peter, had in-groups made up primarily of
White students. No matter the racial and ethnic makeup of their social identity group, the participants’ sense of identity being a man of color was impacted in a positive fashion. Participants were able to learn from their peers and develop a deeper appreciation for their marginalized identities. Participants were also able to dialogue about their identities within their groups and were treated with respect. In addition, participants were in a campus environment that encouraged students to join groups and work together on academic assignments. Men of color may not always join social identity groups that match their racial and ethnic identities, or join groups where members are from different marginalized groups (i.e. religious, ability, sexual orientation, gender non-conforming). As participants discussed in the final theme, they encouraged future men of color to join identity groups that challenged their world view and work with other men of color from different life experiences. Institutions do provide support for men of color through student organizations or mentoring programs, however they are targeted to specific racial and ethnic identities. This researcher recommends that support groups designed for men of color are welcoming to all marginalized racial and ethnic groups, where members can talk about their different identities and share personal stories that deepen learning about one another. In addition, these support groups should also discuss intersections between race/ethnicity and other marginalized identities that men of color bring with them to campus. Finally, the discovery that Peter and Charlie were members of mostly White in-groups was interesting to the researcher. There was not enough time to pursue research on the specific reasons why these two participants joined racially homogenous groups, but it served as reinforcement that some men of color are members of in-groups that may not reflect their ethnic or racial identities.
Future Research

While this study was one of few that used social identity theory and appreciative inquiry to understand how men of color valued their social identity groups, there are several areas where researchers and educational practitioners could expand on this work. First, continued research should focus on impacts of social identity groups and graduation rates for historically marginalized males. This study was designed to understand the impacts of in-groups had upon men of color who were in college, but future studies could expand upon these findings. Participants spoke about how group members played a major role in keeping them on track academically, however this study did not examine this factor on a deeper level that the research wanted to. A longitudinal study could be implemented to track the academic performance of men of color who join different social identity groups and those who do not. From this approach, it could be better understood how social identity groups influence the numbers of men of color who graduate with a college degree.

Regarding men of color and their social identity groups, this study focused on the valuable aspects men of color found with their group membership. This study focused on the groups created solely on both their gender and racial identities and did not examine intersections of sexuality, class, ability, and other marginalized identities. In addition, the participants in the study were not asked about specific details on their racial and ethnic identity development within their social identity groups. Future research could examine how men of color within their social identity groups came to terms with identifying as a man of color and how their other identities shape their interactions within their networks and impacts how they are influenced by prototypical leadership.
Another area of future research involves social identity groups and their roles in masculinity development. During the literature review, the researcher found plenty of studies on how particular communities (i.e. African American men, Latinx men) develop a sense of manhood during college. Much of the issues these populations faced involved negative aspects of being a man, including engaging in unhealthy sexual behaviors and restricting emotions. However, there was very little seen about the positive impacts social groups had on masculinity development and if their influence mitigated some of the unhealthy behaviors seen in in other studies. Research discussed how certain social groups, like religious groups and Greek-lettered organizations, aided in masculinity development. However, these particular groups were made up of singular racial and ethnic groups. As the researcher was analyzing the data, he began to think about ways to study how social identity groups could impact how participants saw themselves as men and how they came to identify as such. In addition, the researcher began to wonder if participants who were in social identity groups that were primarily academic in focus developed a sense of masculinity and if those groups had any positive impact. Future research could involve how men of color from different marginalized backgrounds could dialogue about what it means to identify as a man on a college campus. Studying the impacts on how academic organizations affect masculinity development amongst men of color could also benefit future studies. Finally, studying how Native American and Multiracial men develop a sense of masculinity on college campuses could yield additional understanding on these populations.

Another area of future research is connected to Charlie and Peter and the makeup of their in-groups. For both students, their in-groups were comprised mostly of White students, and both were the only men of color in their friend groups. While Charlie and Peter had individual reasons for being members of their networks, understanding the impact on being the sole or one of few
men of color within the group could yield interesting results on their identity development and on intergroup relationships. This future research could also better understand the intergroup dynamics of in-groups comprised of mostly White students and how they could support the racial and ethnic identity development for men of color who may be underrepresented within their groups. Since both Charlie and Peter felt supported within their social identity groups and were encouraged to share their stories of being a member of a marginalized community, mostly White in-groups could play a large role in guiding men of color through their journey to understand their identities and play a large leadership role within their networks.

An area of continued research involves using appreciative inquiry in higher education environments. There were dissertations involving appreciative inquiry within colleges and universities, and this research hoped to add to a growing body of literature. There were studies where appreciative inquiry was used with marginalized populations, so this research will add to this unique inquiry method. Participants in this study were able to discuss about the positive aspects about their social identity groups with ease and provide concrete recommendations on how their university could assist future students in joining in-groups, which was a direct result of the appreciative inquiry questioning process. Researchers and college administrators could use appreciative inquiry as a way to discover how their institutions serve their students and discover new ways to provide resources for them. In addition, during the data analysis phase the researcher began to think about how appreciative inquiry could be used to understand how other student groups (i.e. LGBTQ+, religious minorities, students with disabilities) experience campus and what suggestions they could offer that institutions could move forward with. The researcher strongly suggests that colleges and universities that are looking to better understand how students
view their campus environments use appreciative inquiry as a method of understanding and including student voices in decision making processes.

**Reflections as a Scholar Practitioner**

This study was motivated by the researcher’s personal experience of being a man of color who attended a predominately White institution for both his undergraduate and graduate careers. While in college, the researcher found a small yet highly supportive in-group that had students from different racial and ethnic communities. His professional work within K-12 and higher education sectors included the use of appreciative inquiry concepts with students to improve major programs. His experience with youth development and creating friend groups that stressed teamwork and understanding also influenced the desire to study how men of color value their social identity groups. In addition, seeing a lack of literature that focused on positive aspects of identifying as a man of color on college campuses spurred great interest. The researcher wanted this project to be a valuable resource for educational professionals and higher education institutions to use and guide them in understanding how men of color value the social groups they were members of, and how universities could learn from this population so that they could serve them better.

Combining social identity theory with appreciative inquiry proved to be an amazing way to answer the overall research question and to provide men of color in the study to talk about the positive ways their identity groups helped them during their academic journeys in college. In addition, using an interpretative phenomenological analysis allowed the researcher to better understand how men of color valued their identity groups through the double hermeneutic process. It was a powerful tool to interpret how participants experienced their social identity groups and for the researcher to connect with their stories.
The findings of this study will shape how the researcher views student groups on campus and how they valuable they are for men of color. Participants believed their social identity groups truly made their experiences on campus much better and exposed them to new leadership opportunities. This was one of very few studies that combined social identity theory with appreciative inquiry, so the researcher hopes that other higher education professionals use this research as motivation to use the combination of SIT and AI with different communities. In addition, this was one of a small number of studies where appreciative inquiry was used with historically marginalized communities. Results from this study have motivated the researcher to continue to examine social identity groups with other student groups on college campuses and to use appreciative inquiry as a method to discover the positive aspects students place on their friend networks.

**Chapter 5 Summary**

The goal of this study was to understand how historically marginalized men of color describe the important factors and experiences they valued from their social identity groups. Results of the study showed that participants valued the leadership skills they gained from being within their groups, gained a deeper appreciation for identifying as a man of color, they found group members whom they could emulate, and that being a member of these in-groups helped them find additional leadership opportunities on campus. This chapter discussed the themes of the study and connections to both social identity theory and appreciative inquiry. In addition, this chapter presented future directions for research and implications for education professionals and institutions.
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Appendix A: Northeastern University Informed Consent Document

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Doctor of Education Program
Investigator(s): Dr. Margaret Gorman, Principal Investigator, Mr. Matt Lenno, Co-Principal Investigator, Sylvester Gaskin, Student Researcher
Title of Project: A Positive Revolution in Enhancing the Collegiate Men of Color Experience: An IPA Study using Appreciative Inquiry from A Social Identity Perspective to Explore how College Males navigate their Social Identity Groups

Request for Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Purpose of the Study
This study is designed to understand how self-identified men of color navigate their peer groups while on a college campus. The goal of the study is to show that self-identified men of color create networks to support each other, and that universities can take those lessons learned to craft programs that are focused towards the academic and social health of self-identified men of color. You are being asked to participate as you have self-identified as a male member of a racially underrepresented group at this university.

Procedures
You will take part in three one-on-one interviews with Sylvester Gaskin and will be asked questions about your experiences as a man of color, how you came to identify as a man of color, and your experiences being a man of color at this university. Questions will only be asked by Sylvester Gaskin, who will be conducting the interview. Conversations will be recorded through an iPad application and sent to http://www.rev.com, a confidential service for transcription. You will have access to transcribed records of this session, as well as notes and codes made based upon the transcribed records.

In a few weeks, you will meet again with Sylvester Gaskin for 15-20 minutes so you can review the transcripts and notes to ensure your words and experiences have been accurately reflected.

Participation
Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and can leave the study at any time. Your participation or non-participation will have no effect on your academic or employment status at this university.

Risk/Discomfort
There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this study. If the conversation becomes distressing or uncomfortable to you, you may leave the conversation at any time.

Benefits
You may not reasonably expect any direct benefits from this study. However, the information learned from your participation may help universities create programs and services to better assist men of color during their times in college.
**Time Commitment**
The initial meeting to complete this form and ask some demographic information will take between 5-10 minutes. You will be interviewed once for between 30-45 minutes. Individual interviews will take place in the evening time between the hours of 6:00pm and 10:00pm. You will meet with Sylvester Gaskin a few weeks after the initial meeting to review notes for between 15-20 minutes. Your entire commitment for this study will be for three meetings that will take between 50-75 minutes total.

All interviews will take place at any location you choose. No interviews will take place at Sylvester Gaskin’s workspace.

**Confidentiality**
Since this study will involve one-on-one interviewing, your participation will be known to Sylvester Gaskin. In addition, there are limits to confidentiality of the information that may be shared (i.e. child abuse/neglect, threats to harm yourself or others, sexual relationships with faculty) where notification of authorities is required by law. The following steps will be conducted to maintain your confidentiality:

- Copies of this informed consent document will be given to you for your records. I will keep copies of the informed consent document in a locked access safe at the researcher’s house for three (3) years. After three (3) years, the informed consent forms will be destroyed.
- Given names of individuals will not be connected to any notes, recordings or transcriptions. Only the Investigator will know the true identities of participants.
- Participants will have opportunities to create pseudonyms to protect their identity.
- Pseudonyms will be used if participants need to be identified in the results of this study.
- Any notes that are taken during the interview will be kept in a notebook that will be locked at the student investigator’s home.
- During the interviews, recordings will be done through an iPad application.
- Recordings done through the iPad application will be sent to [http://www.rev.com](http://www.rev.com), a confidential transcription service, and the recordings will be immediately deleted after notes are transcribed. Once session notes are transcribed and coded, participants will be given the full transcription and Investigator’s codes to review for accuracy and to clarify any statements.
- Interview transcriptions and coding data will be kept on Dropbox, a cloud-based secure password-protected server with two-step verification that the Investigators only has access to, as well as on a password protected USB flash drive as a backup. Consent forms, notebook, and the USB flash drive will be kept in a separate locked access safe at the researcher’s home. Participants can access any of this information for up to three (3) years after the conclusion of this study. Once the study has been completed, the data on the Dropbox server will be deleted. After three (3) years, the notes, consent forms, and data on the flash drive will be destroyed.

**Compensation**
Participants will not be compensated for their role in this research. There are no anticipated costs to participate in this study.
If you have additional questions about participating in this research, you can contact me at gaskin.sy@husky.neu.edu or 651-338-9754. You can also contact Dr. Margaret Gorman, Principal Investigator, at m.kirchoff@northeastern.edu or Mr. Matt Lenno, Co-Principal Investigator at mlenno@towson.edu.

Participant Rights
If you have questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617-373-4588. E-mail: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Please indicate your consent by signing below:

__________________________
Signature of Person Agreeing to Take Part Date __________

__________________________
Printed name of person above

__________________________
Signature of person who explained the study obtained consent Date to the participant above and __________

__________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Section A - Introduction:

This study is investigating how self-identified men of color enrolled at a public, metropolitan, and Master’s degree granting university in the Mid-Atlantic can use their identity to support their peers while in college. The research looks to question between 8-12 students who identify as being members of historically marginalized ethnic and racial groups in the United States.

The purpose of this doctoral thesis is to explore how college males from historically marginalized backgrounds navigate their social identity groups in order to create supportive environments on campus. The study utilizes social identity theory, which posits that members of a specific in-group determine standard norms and behaviors that all members subscribe to. While attention has been paid to collegiate men of color and the multiple challenges they face while in college, this study focuses on how this population uses their identity as an in-group to which they can create supportive environments for each other.

From a broader sense, colleges and universities can use this research as a basis for crafting new programs or improving existing services targeted for men of color. The research does not take a deficit-based approach to understanding the experiences of this population, rather it aims to examine the positive aspects of being a man of color and how those strengths can be used to best understand how this population’s social identity groups help students succeed academically and socially.

The research question is as follows: How do historically marginalized collegiate men of color describe their social identity group as they strive to persist in their graduation efforts? The focus of the research is to understand the importance of social identity amongst men of color and the creation of settings that are conducive for men of color to thrive in both academically and socially.

Section B - Data Collection Procedures:

- Participants will be recruited through social media posts on Twitter and Facebook, as well as asking campus offices to re-post these messages through their social media feeds.
- The investigator will bring a laptop, iPhone and iPad, pens/pencils, tissues, and a notepad for additional notes.
- Interviews will take place in a classroom located on the campus. The interview room will be in a central location on campus that is near to several residence halls, adjacent to a parking structure and is located along several campus shuttle routes.
- Data from participant conversations will be recorded on the iPad through a service called Rev, which is an iOS-enabled application that records conversations and sends the recordings to be transcribed. Recordings will immediately be sent to Rev after each session to be transcribed. Transcriptions are returned to the investigator within 24-48 hours.
- Participants are entitled to having their identities protected. Confidentiality will be maintained through the following procedures:
- Copies of this informed consent document will be given to you for your records. I will keep copies of the informed consent document in a locked access safe at the researcher’s house for three (3) years. After three (3) years, the informed consent forms will be destroyed.
- Given names of individuals will not be connected to any notes, recordings or transcriptions. Only the Graduate Student Investigator will know the true identities of participants.
- Participants will have opportunities to create pseudonyms to protect their identity. Pseudonyms will be used if participants need to be identified in the results of this study.
- Any notes that are taken during the interview will be kept in notebook that will be locked in a safe.
- During the interview, recordings will be done through an iPad application. Recordings done through the iPad application will be sent to a confidential transcription service, and will be immediately deleted after notes are transcribed. Once session notes are transcribed and coded, you will be given the full transcription and Investigator’s codes to review for accuracy and to clarify any statements.
- Notes and transcriptions will be kept on Dropbox, a cloud-based secure password-protected server with two-step verification that the Investigators only has access to, as well as on a password protected USB flash drive as a backup. Consent forms, notebook, and the USB flash drive will be kept in a separate locked access safe at the researcher’s home. Participants can access any of this information for up to three (3) years after the conclusion of this study. Once the study has been completed, the data on the Dropbox server will be deleted. After three (3) years, the notes, consent forms, and transcriptions will be destroyed.

- Written script for informed consent meeting:
  - “Hello, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will investigate how men of color support one another during their time in college. Before we begin the project, I want to inform you of your rights in this research. I will be handing out the informed consent documents which lists the procedures of this study, any associated risks, benefits, time commitments, steps to maintain confidentiality, and contact information for the investigators. I want to remind you that participating in the study is completely voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable or are unwilling to continue your participation, you may end your involvement at any time. In addition, please be aware that your interview will be recorded through an application on this iPad. Transcriptions will be done through a confidential service and any audio will be deleted once notes have been transcribed. You will get a copy of the interview once it has been transcribed.”
  - I am providing you a copy of the informed consent forms. Please read them over then sign and date where indicated. I’d be happy to answer any questions you have about the form and the research in general. Once you sign the form, I will sign it as well, and will provide you copies of the completely signed forms at our scheduled interview.
One last task we need to complete: I would like to ask you a few quick questions that I will note in this notebook. Notes in this book will be kept confidential as well as any other documents. The quick questions I have for you are:

- What is the pseudonym you want to use in this study?
- How do you identify racially and/or ethnically?
- Which gender do you identify as?
- What is your year in college, your major, and your hometown?
- What kinds of other organizations or interest groups are you a part of on campus?
- Are you employed? Where do you work?

Written script for the individual interview:

- “This interview is scheduled to last between 30-45 minutes. I have a list of questions that I will be asking, and I may ask a follow up question either for clarification or for you to elaborate on a concept you are talking about. To reconfirm from our previous conversation and on the informed consent form, I will be recording this interview through this iPad. A copy of this interview transcript will be e-mailed to you once it is transcribed. Also, as a reminder, your chosen pseudonym may be used to identify you in the study. Only I as the student researcher will know your true identity.”

Section C - Data Collection Questions:

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<tr>
<th>RQ: How do historically marginalized men of color describe the importance of their social identity groups while in college?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of this study is to understand how collegiate Men-of-Color describe the value of their social identity groups and their importance towards their efforts to graduate from college?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please tell me about how you decided to come to this university?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall, how has your experience been since you arrived?</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m interested in learning how students experience campus life either through their social groups they created and/or were fostered by the various efforts of the university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overall, how would you describe the campus environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overall, what is your impression of campus life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What are the various support groups, services, or events offered by the university that you’ve found helpful for creating a social network?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How would your group of friends describe the environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do you think other college students would describe the campus environment and campus life (aka those not self-described as CMOC)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now I’d like to understand more about your social network and those individuals whom you spend most of your time with either socially and/or academically.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Who are the group of friends you primarily spend time with?
- How did you become friends with these people? (e.g. were they fostered through campus life activities or self-created)
- What are the different groups of people you tend to associate with socially and/or academically?
- Reflecting on those people you tend to spend most of your time with, did those friendships develop because of campus-organized events, through your own initiative, or a blend of the two?
- How do you think other college students, specifically women or those who are not self-described Men-of-Color, might describe their group of friends?
- How does identifying with your friends enhance how you identify as a man of color?
- Can you describe how identifying as a man of color has changed since you have been on campus?

I’d like to understand more about your network of friends and how you support each other socially and/or academically.

- Who are the individuals you admire? Why do you admire them?
- Can you share ways in which your friends respect and/or admire you? Why?
- Who are the leaders within your social group? Why do you consider them to be leaders?
- How do you think other college students might describe those they admire, e.g. women and/or those who don’t describe themselves as Men-of-Color?

- What are the stereotypes that non-Men of Color have towards you and your friends? How did you and your friends learn about these stereotypes?
- What happens if you and/or your friends don’t act the way your non-Men of Color peers expect you to?

- Can you think about a time when needed help figuring out a social situation, who did you go to for support and how did the experience go? How about an academic assignment?
- Can you talk a little bit about how being with your friends strengthens your self-esteem and hopefulness for graduating?
- How do you think other students who are not in your social network would describe their sense of self-esteem and hopefulness for graduating?
- Do you think your friends share the same aspiration to graduate? Why? Why not?

Assume its five years from now and you’re an alumnus of this institution - you’ve been asked to share some advice to a group of incoming freshman about strategies for developing supportive social networks.

- Based on your experiences, what would your suggestions be?
- How might your advice change if you share with a group of Men-of-Color versus a general group of students?
Assume it’s ten years from now and you’re thriving in your career and the institution’s Top Leadership Team has invited you in to share your experiences and provide advice for launching innovative practices to advancing graduation rates and stressing the importance of social identity groups for Men of Color?

- Based on your experiences, what recommendations would you give to enhance the importance of social identity groups for Men-of-Color and in turn advance graduation rates?

| AI-Design/Destiny | SIT- In group and collective action |

Closing remarks:
- “Thank you for participating in this study. I will contact you in a few weeks so that you can review notes and make any clarifying statements to ensure your words and experiences have been accurately captured.”

Section D- Report:

**Potential Audiences:** The study findings are targeted towards administrators, faculty, and other staff at universities and colleges that are looking to find innovative ways to ensure men of color feel supported at their campuses and can be both academically and emotionally supported.

**Report Details:** The final report will detail common themes that arose from the participants’ interviews. Selected quotes that highlight the rationale for creating a theme will be presented as well. The report will take the themes and ideas from the interviews and detail the specific steps the participants used to navigate their social identity groups.
Appendix C: Social Media Posts and Digital Communication for Recruitment

Facebook Post:

Take part in an innovative research project!

A study for Northeastern University in Boston is looking for Towson students who identify as a male of color to talk about their experiences on campus and how they look out for each other both academically and socially.

The study will involve an introductory meeting for 5-10 minutes and one-on-one interview for a 30-45 minutes. Once the research is complete, participants will meet for 15-20 minutes with the researcher individually to review the data results.

For more information, contact Sylvester Gaskin at gaskin.sy@husky.neu.edu

This has been approved by Northeastern University’s IRB #CP16-11-13.

Twitter Post:

Looking for self-IDing men of color to take part in interviews about positive experiences on campus. E-mail http://tng.im/3Kr for info.
E-Mail Communication to Referrers:

Hello (Name),

My name is Sylvester Gaskin, and I am currently working on a Doctoral research project at Northeastern University studying how male students of color on at this university establish friendships and networks with their peers to support one another during their academic careers. The purpose of the study is to see how this group of students works with one another to help with both academic and social issues they may face. The goal is to see if by working together, students with this identity can help one another graduate from the school.

I am asking for your help in recruiting students to participate in this study. I am looking to interview between 8-12 students for this study. Participants need to be both self-identifying as a member of a minority community within the United States (i.e. African American, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, or Multiracial) and as being male. I am looking for a diverse range of participants that include class year, campus involvement, and residential status. Participants will meet three times during the study: first for an introductory meeting with me to learn more about the study, complete informed consent forms and collect some demographic information for about 5-10 minutes, second for an individual interview with me for about 30-45 minutes, and a final time to review their transcript and notes for 15-20 minutes. The total time to participate in the study is 50-75 minutes. Students will create a pseudonym that will identify them in the study, and all documents will be kept secured in accordance with both Northeastern University and our institutional IRB policies. Participation is entirely voluntary.

If you know of a person who would be a great candidate for the study or have questions, feel free to contact me at gaskin.sy@husky.neu.edu. Thanks!
E-Mail Communication to Potential Participants:

Hello (Name),

My name is Sylvester Gaskin, and I am currently working on a Doctoral research project at Northeastern University studying how male students of color on at this university establish friendships and networks with their peers to support one another during their academic careers. The purpose of the study is to see how this group of students works with one another to help with both academic and social issues they may face. The goal is to see if by working together, students with this identity can help one another graduate from the school.

I am asking to see if you are interested in participating in this study. Participants need to be both self-identifying as a member of a minority community within the United States (i.e. African American, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, or Multiracial) and as being male. You will meet with me three times during the study: first for an introductory meeting with me to learn more about the study, complete informed consent forms and collect some demographic information for about 5-10 minutes, second for an individual interview with me for about 30-45 minutes, and a final time to review their transcript and notes for 15-20 minutes. The total time to participate in the study is 50-75 minutes. You will create a pseudonym that will be used to identify you in the study, and all documents will be kept secured in accordance with both Northeastern University and our institutional IRB policies. Participation is entirely voluntary.

If you are interested in participating in the study or have questions, feel free to contact me at gaskin.sy@husky.neu.edu.

Thanks!
Sylvester
Gaskin
Appendix D: Debriefing Document

Thank you for participating in this research study. The purpose of this study was to examine how college-aged self-identified men of color can support one another during their enrollment in college. This study utilized social identity theory (SIT) and appreciative inquiry (AI) to better understand the experiences of self-identified men of color and what aspects of that identity are beneficial for group members while in college. It is the hope of the study that colleges and universities could use both SIT and AI to better understand the needs and experiences of men of color on their campuses and direct appropriate resources to support this population during their collegiate journeys.

Confidentiality
Please keep in mind that any information that you have provided to the investigator will be kept confidential. However, there are limits to confidentiality of the information that may be shared (i.e. child abuse/neglect, threats to harm yourself or others, sexual relationships with faculty) where notification of authorities is required by law. Procedures the investigators will use to keep your information confidential are detailed on your Informed Consent documentation. Notes and transcribed conversations will not be shared with other people outside this study and will be secured for at least three (3) years and then destroyed. Informed Consent forms will be kept secured for at least three (3) years as well and then destroyed. Pseudonyms will be used in final reporting of results. Your identity will only be known to the researcher.

Distress
Some of the conversations in the study may have been sensitive, personal, or distressing to you. The study did not intend to cause undue stress, but if it has been felt, please notify the investigators so we can best assist you. Anything you shared will be kept confidential within legal guidelines. Mental health resources are available to all participants by contacting the Counseling Center at 410-704-2512 or by visiting the Counseling Center, located on the 2nd floor of the Health and Counseling Center facility (formerly called Ward & West). Services are confidential and many are of no cost.

Contact
For questions about the study, contact:
Sylvester Gaskin, M.Ed.
651-338-9754
Gaskin.sy@husky.neu.edu

Dr. Margaret Gorman
Northeastern University
m.kirchoff@northeastern.edu
Appendix E: Key Definitions

**4-D Process:** The cyclical process of questioning used in appreciative inquiry.

**Appreciative Inquiry:** Development model that uses positive questioning to discover best practices within their organization (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012).

**Deficit-Based Approach:** Educational perspective that assumes historically marginalized groups are unable to be successful within school settings (Green, 2006).

**Historically marginalized groups:** People who identify as either Black/African American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Latinx or Hispanic, Native American/First Nations, multiracial/multiethnic, a combination of those, or another racial group that is not White.

**In-Group:** A collective of people with a shared identity that is used to develop stronger self-esteem and to differentiate themselves from other groups in society (Tajfel, 1982). Also called a *social identity group*.

**Man of Color:** Person who identifies both with the male gender identity and as a member of a historically marginalized group.

**Out-Group:** Collective of people with identities different than in-groups; used for comparison and competition (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

**Prototype:** In-group members who strongly showcase group behaviors and take on leadership roles within the group (Hogg, 2011).

**Social Identity Theory:** Theory where people join together into groups for social understanding and to build self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

**Self-Categorization:** The process of in-group members of internalizing group norms and beginning to see themselves as group members rather than individuals (Hogg & Reid, 2006).
### Appendix F: Codes and Categories from the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Help From My Friends</th>
<th>Working with Everyone Else</th>
<th>What’s the Campus Environment Like</th>
<th>Represent Represent!</th>
<th>Getting Involved on Campus</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- In-group support</td>
<td>- Perceptions of the out-group</td>
<td>- Campus sense of community</td>
<td>- Self-esteem</td>
<td>- Campus Events and Involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Academic help</td>
<td>- Out-group interactions</td>
<td>- Segregated environments</td>
<td>- Balance</td>
<td>- Institutional support</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Describe the in-group</td>
<td>- Views of the out-group</td>
<td>- Making friends</td>
<td>- Changing identity</td>
<td>- Ready-made in-group</td>
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<td>- In-group relationships</td>
<td>- Out-group perceptions</td>
<td>- Different in-groups</td>
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<td>- Financial</td>
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<td>- In-group challenges</td>
<td>- Interactions with out-group</td>
<td>- How students perceive campus</td>
<td>- Represent</td>
<td>- Defined in-group</td>
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<td>- In-group differentiation</td>
<td>- Out-group leadership</td>
<td>- Environment</td>
<td>- Vulnerability</td>
<td>- Institutional support</td>
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<td>- Motivation</td>
<td>- Stereotypes</td>
<td>- Lack of community</td>
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<td>- Differentiation</td>
<td>- Curiosity</td>
<td>- Active</td>
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<td>- Academics</td>
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<td>- Lack of representation</td>
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<td>- Status within in-group</td>
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<td>- Advice</td>
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<td>- Prototypical behavior</td>
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<td>- In-group admiration</td>
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<td>- Membership expectation</td>
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<td>- Opportunity</td>
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<td>- Future in-group support</td>
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<td>- Collectivity</td>
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<td>- In-group leadership</td>
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<td>- Security</td>
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<td>- Self-Leadership</td>
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</table>