PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE READINESS FOR HIGH ACHIEVING BLACK STUDENTS

by

Erin L. Harden

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Curriculum and Instruction

Charlotte

2022

Approved by:

_____
Dr. Greg Wiggan

_____
Dr. Gloria Campbell-Whatley

_____
Dr. Marcia J. Watson-Vandiver

_____
Dr. Christopher O'Brien

ABSTRACT

ERIN HARDEN. Perceptions of College Readiness for High Achieving Black Student.

(Under the direction of Dr. Greg Wiggan)

This dissertation explored Black/African American students' perceptions of college readiness through student demographic questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus group data. One objective of this study was to explore how advanced coursework contributed to the college readiness of Black students. Another objective of this study was to examine academic writing readiness for Black students, an under-researched aspect of college readiness. This study contributed to current research on college readiness for Black students, postsecondary outcomes for Black students as well as overall life outcomes for these students by employing an Afrocentric Social Capital Theory that addresses the connections between postsecondary degree attainment, social capital, and social mobility for Black/African Americans. The findings indicated that having a fostered college mindset, collegiate academic exposure, and being provided foundational skills and knowledge were aspects of advanced course participation that contributed to postsecondary success for the participants. In terms of writing readiness, writing opportunities and writing skill enhancement contributed to the participants' college writing readiness and success. However, misalignment between high school and college expectations, misalignment of collegiate level writing expectations, and lack of citation knowledge were other areas related to college readiness that also emerged from the data. Policy implications as well as implications for teachers, school personnel, and teacher educators were also explored.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first acknowledge my spouse and life partner for all your support during this journey. Colin, the meals you cooked, the home you provided, and your strong belief that I could finish this, especially at this time truly helped me get to the finish line. To the best parents anyone could ask for, Irving and Regina, I could not have made it this far without you two. Dad, you checked in with me and always asked how it was going. You truly affirmed that I was reaching the finish line when you started telling your friends that I would have my doctorate in less than six months during the Summer of 2022. Mom, I am what I am because of you. Your genius inspired me to find my own genius. To have a mother who graduated college at the age of 15 and had a law degree in her early twenties really motivated me to reach for the stars. To my sister Morgan, thank you for telling me to "get it done" and believing in me.

To my Heiresses, my beloved line sisters, thank you all for supporting me. Specifically, thank you DeMonica for believing in me even when I became weary in the process. Quita, Jordan, Chelsea, Adriana, and Deja thank you all for your support and encouragement during the journey. Chelsea, you reminded me that my journey is my own and to follow it as such. To Sharmaine, when the going got rough in the beginning, you helped me continue to see the positive and believe in myself despite crazy circumstances. To Joshlyn, thank you for being my accountability partner and sister. I could not have made it to the finish line without you. I am so proud of you Dr.Thomas and so proud of us. We did it!

To the Black women educators that changed my life and taught me to reach for the stars, I am forever grateful to you all. Ms.Carter, one my first Black teachers and the best, thank you for supporting me since the sixth grade. The talk you had with me as a ten-year-old to help motivate me to do my best, shaped the rest of my educational career. To Ms. Moreland, my first

Assistant Principal that I worked with as a Middle School Teacher, I thank you for seeing something in me from my interview to be a long-term sub at WMS to your belief in me as the 7th Grade Level Chair. You began calling me "Dr. Lewis" before I ever received acceptance into a doctoral program and you truly affirmed my journey. To Ms.Watson, you also saw something in me and gave me the opportunity to develop as a leader and help develop and run the 9th grade program at Y.O.U. That experience allowed me to grow in so many ways and really helped me believe in myself as an aspiring leader in Black education.

To my girls Taylor, Olivia, Courtney, and Neicey, thank you all for always supporting me and being here for me. Taylor, you have been with me and supported me every step of the way. Neicey and Courtney you two believed in me, even when I was anxious about next steps. Olivia, you checked in with me throughout the journey and always listened to understand where I was at in the journey and how I was doing. To my PhD sister Dr. Teasdell, so many times throughout the journey you checked in with me to make sure I crossed over and completed the journey and made sure that I built my CV along the way. Our late night calls during the pandemic are especially some of my best memories of this journey and I am so grateful to have had you as a sister during this experience and beyond. To Dr.Williams III, I appreciate you seeing my potential as a first year doctoral student and providing me with opportunities that enhanced my experience.

To the family members that inspired me to the PhD: Goddaddy, Aunt Jackie, Grandma Mamie, Uncle Neal and Aunt Martina, I would not be here if it were not for any of you. Goddaddy, you inspired me as a PhD and college president to go the distance with my passion for education. Aunt Jackie, all of my educational experiences have been shaped by you, from on the fly grammar lessons, to the college tours you coordinated and took me on, to your guidance

for what to study for my Master's degree. I would not be here if it were not for you two. To my Grandma Mamie in heaven, your passion for education inspired my passion for education. To my Uncle Neal and Aunt Martina in heaven, you two created a legacy to ensure your descendants were supported as they pursued their education. Our family scholarship made this journey a reality.

To my professors in the Urban Education strand of the Curriculum and Instruction program, Dr. Lewis and Dr. Butler, thank you for giving me the foundation and knowledge needed to push my scholarship in the field. To my dissertation committee: Dr. Campbell-Whatley, Dr. Watson-Vandiver, and Dr. O'Brien, thank you for your feedback and support during this journey. To my chair, Dr.Wiggan, you truly changed the way I saw my purpose in education. From your coursework, I was provided the opportunity to "think" more than I had in my entire educational journey. Through your mentorship, I started to see myself go further than I could imagine. Thank you for your guidance and belief in me all the way to the finish line.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my legacies. To my first legacy that never made it here with me, thank you for motivating me to push ahead and see it through. To my legacy on the way, my son, thank you for being the light that guided me to the finish line. I did not know at the beginning of my journey, but this is for you. I cannot wait to meet you in the Spring of 2023. To my husband, this is for you and for us. To my parents, I also dedicate this work for it belongs to all of us.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACT: American College Testing

AP: Advanced Placement

CCR: College and Career Readiness

IB: International Baccalaureate

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress

SAT: Scholastic Aptitude Test

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

College and career readiness (CCR) is a focal point of the educational system in the U.S. Yet, based on economic changes in the U.S., the attainment of a college degree has not equated to higher rates of employment for degree holders due to financial barriers (Anyon, 2014; Royce, 2019). Thus, the benefits of postsecondary education rest in question for some (Bollig, 2015). However, other researchers have contended the need for postsecondary degree attainment for better chances for employment, higher earnings, and upward social mobility (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013; Rosenbaum, Ahearn, Rosenbaum, & Becker, 2016). However, college and career readiness indicate postsecondary achievement and life outcomes. The National Forum on Education Statistics (2015) reported that 65% of jobs require some form of postsecondary education by 2020. Overall, increased college and career readiness have been widely accepted as one of the desired outcomes forK-12 schools throughout the U.S.

College and career readiness is a U.S. educational objective that became popularized following the establishment of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI), n.d.). The Common Core State Standards are national educational standards developed to align educational goals across the United States. State education departments widely adopted the standards after passing President Obama's Race to the Top legislation, which offered additional funding to states that implemented the initiative (Mcguinn, 2015). Common Core State Standards were first developed as college and career readiness standards intended to "address what students are expected to know and understand by the time they graduate from high school" (CCSSI, n.d.). Current Common Core State Standards consisted of K-12 standards combined with the earlier college and career readiness standards and were enforced by 41 states in the U.S. (CCSSI, n.d.). However, the initiative lasted less than a decade,

with many states reversing the use of Common Core to create district standards and standardized assessments (Goldstein, 2019; Rycik, 2014).

Nonetheless, the objective of college and career readiness remained essential. It was included in the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) under the Obama administration. However, it began to decline after revisions were made to the policy under the Trump administration (Hackmann et al., 2019). In a qualitative research study on the mention of CCR in the state educational plans for all fifty American states, Hackmann et al. (2019) found that "Twelve state plans include a high CCR emphasis, 24 plans provide a medium emphasis, and 16 plans place a low emphasis" (p.10). The researchers concluded that CCR is adequately implemented and defined in state educational systems are not equitable to all students (Hackmann et al., 2019).

Despite the shift from Common Core, the U.S. Department of Education still outlines College and Career Ready Standards (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The College and Career Ready standards are described as "the goals for what students should learn" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., para. 2). The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) also reports that most states have adopted college and career ready standards of some sorts.
However, despite the focus on CCR, efforts toward completing postsecondary education for U.S. students are imperative. The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) further asserts that "Today, about one-third of American students require remedial education when they enter college, and current college attainment rates are not keeping pace with our country's projected workforce needs" (para.3).

While there are no formal qualifiers for college readiness in the U.S., there are data to support that nationally students are inadequately prepared for higher education. The National

Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) 2019 reported student performance levels in reading and math that are intended to assess how well students understand the specified subject areas for the appropriate grade levels (NAEP, 2019c). The performance levels are split into Basic, Proficient, and Advanced, with proficiency and above indicating reasonable competency in the rigorous subject areas (NAEP, 2019a). The NAEP (2019c, 2019d) results revealed that 24% of twelfth-grade test participants scored proficient or above on mathematics, and 37% scored proficient or above on the reading test.

Although NAEP data do not necessarily assess college readiness, the performance levels of twelfth-grade students in mathematics and reading, under 50%, indicate the need to improve academic outcomes for all U.S. students. The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) estimated that about 37% of twelfth-grade students were academically prepared for college in mathematics and reading based on student outcomes on the NAEP assessments (NAEP, 2019a, 2019b).

Further, 61% of NAEP participants reported applying or receiving an acceptance to a four-year college through a survey questionnaire given as part of the mathematics and readings assessments to determine the postsecondary plans of those students (NAEP, 2019a, 2019b). Of the 61% of students that applied or were accepted to four-year colleges, 37% of those students had scored proficient or above on the NAEP mathematics exam, and 50% had scored proficient or above on the reading exam (NAEP, 2019a, 2019b). These data demonstrate that higher performance on these assessments affects application submissions and admission to four-year colleges. In terms of college entrance exam outcomes, the College Board (2019) reported that only 45% of students met or exceeded reading, writing, and math as evidence of college readiness on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

Act Inc. (2019) reported that only 37% of students met three or more out of 4 of the American College Testing (ACT) college readiness standards benchmark. The combined data reveal that college readiness continues to be an issue in the U.S. educational system. The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) has also reported that college degree completion rates are without workforce needs of the workforce.

Table 1

College Readiness Indicators Total Student Averages

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and American College Testing (ACT) College Readiness Indicators Total Student Averages		
NAEP College Ready	SAT College Ready	ACT College Ready
37%	45%	37%

Note. The table above combines combined subjects' college readiness averages for all students reported by the National Center for Education Statistics, College Board, and ACT Inc.

Statement of the Problem

While students nationally are underprepared for postsecondary education, Black/African American students are particularly interested in this project. As previously mentioned, 24%of 12th-graduate students were proficient or above in mathematics and 37% proficient or above in reading on the NAEP exam (NAEP, 2019c, 2019d). However, where the data was disaggregated based on racial identity, only 8% of Black students met proficiency or above in mathematics, and 17% met proficiency or above in reading (NAEP, 2019c, 2019d). Aside from the NAEP assessment data, college entrance exam data revealed lower academic outcomes for Black/African American students. In 2019, 782,820 students took the ACT (ACT inc., 2019).

Out of those students, 220,627 were Black students (approximately 12% of test takers), making them the third largest racial group that took the ACT aside from Hispanic/Latinx students (293,100) and White students (918,937) (ACT inc., 2019). Despite being the third large /ethnic group of test takers, 11% of Black/African American test takers met three or more of the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks (ACT inc., 2019).

When disaggregated based on the subject area and race/ethnicity, 32% of Black/African American students met the English ACT College Readiness benchmarks, 12% of students met the benchmarks in mathematics, 20% of the students met the benchmarks for reading, and 11% met the benchmarks for science (ACT inc., 2019). However, the averages of all students that met benchmarks per subject were deficient, with 59% meeting the benchmarks for the subject of English, 39% for the subject of mathematics, 45% on the reading portion of the test, and 36% on the science portion of the test (ACT inc., 2019). Although a lower percentage of students overall are meeting the ACT College Readiness benchmarks, Black students have the lowest percentage of benchmarks met per subject out of all the racial groups, which include African American, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and White students (ACT inc., 2019).

In 2020, 12% of students who took the SAT were Black/African American (College Board, 2020). The SAT assesses students' college and career readiness through the SAT Math and SAT Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EWR) benchmarks (College Board, 2020). The total mean combined math and evidence-based reading and writing score for all test-takers nationwide was 1051 out of 1600, with an average SAT math score of 523 and an average EWR score of 528 (College Board, 2020). Based on the College Board's criterion for college readiness

in those subject areas, 48% met the college readiness benchmarks for math, and 66% met the benchmarks for EWR (College Board, 2020).

For Black/African American students, the average combined score for math and EWR on the SAT was 927, with an average math score of 454 and the average EWR score of 473 (College Board, 2020). Overall, 21% of Black/African American students met the college readiness benchmarks for the SAT Math, 44% met the EWR benchmarks, and 20% met the College Board college readiness benchmarks for both math and EWR (College Board, 2020). The average SAT math and EWR scores for Black/African American students were the second lowest average scores out of all racial/ethnic groups behind American Indian/Alaska Natives (College Board, 2020).

The ACT and SAT data for Black/African American students, compared to the average scores for all test-takers, is evidence that there is a need to focus more intentionally on college readiness for students in the U.S. Black community. Compared to the NAEP scores for Black students, the ACT and SAT data further reveals the exigency to address this issue. Further, postsecondary graduation rates from a National Center for Education Statistics (2018) longitudinal study revealed that 21% of Black students that enrolled in college in 2010 graduated in four years, with an overall 40% graduating between 4-6 years, the lowest graduation rates of the racial and ethnic groups represented in the sample. The recent development of an Advanced Placement African American studies course further shows that education for Black/African American students needs to be enhanced, including the need for education increases the history and contributions of African Americans in the U.S. (Feldman, 2022). Ultimately, Black/African Americans are a priority group of students due to lower academic and life outcomes from their peers in other racial groups.

The data reveal the need to increase college readiness for all students, especially Black/African American students. Improved college readiness for Black/African American students should, in turn, increase postsecondary success for these students. However, it is to be noted that the data presented is not intended to prove an academic deficiency for Black/African American students. Instead, the data presents a failure on behalf of school systems and personnel for not providing adequate resources and training to support successful postsecondary outcomes for Black/African American students. Increased postsecondary success for Black/African American students positively impacts social mobility, thus improving life outcomes for Black/African Americans.

Table 2

NAEP, SAT, and ACT Subject Data by Race/Ethnicity

NAEP, SAT, and ACT Data by Race/Ethnicity

Race	NAEP Math Proficient or above	NAEP Reading Proficient or above	ACT Math College Ready	ACT English College Ready	ACT Reading College Ready	ACT Science College Ready	SAT Math College Ready	SAT EWR College Ready
American Indian/ Alaska Native	9%	23%	14%	29%	21%	13%	20%	38%
Asian	52%	50%	68%	77%	62%	60%	80%	83%
Black/ African American	8%	17%	12%	32%	20%	11%	21%	44%
Hispanic/ Latino	11%	25%	25%	44%	32%	22%	30%	53%
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific	16%	27%	23%	38%	26%	19%	27%	47%

Islander								
White	32%	47%	48%	70%	54%	45%	59%	79%
All	24%	37%	39%	59%	45%	36%	48%	66%

Note. The table above displays college readiness averages for students by race/ethnicity and subject as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics, College Board, and ACT Inc.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore high-achieving Black students' perceived readiness for entering college as well as perceived readiness for collegiate-level academic writing. This study focused primarily on students' perceived readiness instead of examining overall college readiness determined by grades, test scores to provide insight into the impact of insufficient college preparedness for Black/African American students. One objective of this study was to explore how advanced coursework contributed to the college readiness of Black students. Another objective of this study was to examine academic writing readiness for Black students, an under-researched aspect of college readiness.

Finally, this study aimed to contribute to current research on college readiness for Black students, postsecondary outcomes for Black students as well as overall life outcomes for these students by employing an Afrocentric Social Capital Theory that addresses the connections between postsecondary degree attainment, social capital, and social mobility for Black/African Americans. The desired participants for this study were second-year Black/African American students who completed advanced coursework during high school. Qualitative data was collected from a minimum of four participants through semi-structured interviews. The outcomes of this study were vast knowledge of Black/African American students' long-term educational

outcomes and the contribution of a new conceptual framework that can address persisting deficit beliefs in Black/African American students' academic achievement.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two theoretical frameworks that make up the proposed conceptual framework to help address academic inequities for Black/African American students. The first theoretical framework that guides this study was Social Capital Theory. The Social Capital Theory maintains that social connections can be fostered and used to access networks and resources needed to achieve desired outcomes (Bourdieu,1986; Coleman, 1988). Social Capital Theory has been used in educational research to explain educational outcomes for varying populations (Dika & Singh, 2002; Rogošić & Baranovic, 2016).

The second theoretical framework guiding this study was Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity positions Africa as the center of humanity and promotes human agency (Asante, 2011). In education, Afrocentricity is used as a tool to dismantle oppressive systems. These two theories combined makeup what I established as Afrocentric Social Capital Theory, which is further explained in chapter 3. Afrocentric Social Capital Theory was used to reexamine access and participation in advanced coursework and the implications for college readiness and college writing readiness for Black/African American students.

This study seeks to determine the following:

RQ^{1}- What aspects of advanced coursework from high school contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education?

RQ^{2}- And what writing activities prepared these students for academic writing in higher education?

It was hypothesized that students' perceptions of college and writing readiness directly connect to their experiences in advanced courses in high school. This study also hypothesized that participation in advanced coursework and exposure to direct writing instruction have positively contributed to students' postsecondary success. This research intended to provide a deeper understanding of college readiness for Black/African American students and to promote further action toward increased outcomes for these students.

Significance of the Study

Black students deserve a quality education that nurtures success in higher education and beyond. One historically successful approach to increasing college readiness has been participation in advanced placement courses (Kettler & Hurst, 2017; Warne, 2017). However, the College Board (2014) reported that out of 3,153,014 students who took AP Exams nationwide, only 9.2% of test takers were African American. Furthermore, of those 9.2% Black test takers, 4.6% scored a 3 or higher (the lowest passing score) on AP Exams (College Board, 2014).

Black students' participation in advanced courses could provide the necessary support for postsecondary educational attainment. Though research has addressed the racial disparities in advanced coursework enrollment, few studies have connected those disparities to higher education outcomes. Additionally, more research on students' perspectives on advanced coursework participation about their academic achievement in college or university settings is needed.

The Potential Role of Writing

Inadequate preparation for collegiate academic writing can be attributed to the lack of writing instruction in secondary schooling and misalignment to the writing expectations at the postsecondary level (Rives & Olsen, 2015; Sundeen, 2015). Reading and writing are embedded

in college curricula through various departments. In addition, many students enter college classrooms with ineffective writing skills, which decreases outcomes for success in their post-secondary coursework (Reid & Moore, 2008; Roderick et al., 2009). Researchers have contended that students who have not mastered analytical writing struggle more with postsecondary coursework (Matsumura et al., 2016).

The inclusion of writing criteria within Common Core, the national education standards in the U.S., makes evident the importance of writing skills for college and career readiness (Rives & Olsen, 2015). The Common Core Standards included extensive criteria on the type of writing assignments students should master at each grade level. Yet, state and national surveys revealed that writing was still not a key component of English curricula (Sundeen, 2015). The lack of writing in K-12 can be attributed to several shifts in the U.S. educational system, where standardized testing and accountability have taken precedence over quality instruction (Scott & Holme, 2016; Wahleithner, 2018). Students that do receive some writing instructions are still not prepared to meet the length requirements for college essays, lack grammatical competence, and are becoming less confident in their writing abilities (Goldstein, 2017). Writing anxiety is another challenge that contributes to lower performance on writing assignments and assessments in higher education (Holland, 2013; Mcleod, 1987).

Additionally, there is limited research on collegiate academic writing for Black/African American students. Therefore, more research is needed to improve writing instruction, especially for Black/African American students, as writing is pertinent for college success and career success. Strong writing skills are often used to qualify employees as more valuable team members and can also increase productivity and business operations (Solomon, 2018). Strong writing competence is also beneficial for reading enhancement, success on college assignments,

and a necessary skill in the workforce. As a result, this study also explored perceptions of academic writing readiness for Black/African American students.

This body of research recognized college readiness initiatives and writing instruction as forms of social capital that support matriculation through higher education. One aim of this research was to examine key factors that need to be attributed to college readiness for Black/African American students and identify key factors that contribute to college writing readiness for these students. This research provided a snapshot into the inequities faced by Black students attempting to succeed in higher education by establishing specific focus areas needed to improve postsecondary outcomes.

Definition of Terms

Academic Writing: The term academic writing refers to writing for school or academics.

Advanced Courses: Advanced courses refer to courses above grade level in K-12 education that may or may not include specified advanced courses such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses.

Attainment Gaps: This study addressed an issue that can be relative to the term *attainment gap*. This term refers to "the rates at which different ethnicities earn college degrees" (Colvard et al., 2018, p.262). While this attainment gap, likened to the so-called achievement gap, attempts to compare Black and Latinx students' college attainment rates to the rates of White students, this term was applied to the subject matter in this study to acknowledge the existence of such rate between the identified racial/ethnic groups, not to compare different groups to one another.

Black/African American: Black/African American is a phrase that was used throughout this study to emphasize that the population focuses on students who are racially Black and of African descent. A slash mark divides Black from African American to indicate that the population of

focus are Black American descendants of enslaved Africans. This means that the population studied were born in the United States and whose ancestors were taken from Africa and enslaved in the United States.

College and Career Readiness: College and career readiness is a phrase that represents the U.S. educational system's goal to ensure that students are ready for collegiate-level work and ready to enter the workforce.

College Preparation: College preparation refers to the planning, practices, and actions necessary for enrolling in postsecondary education. College preparatory practices include college application completion, college entrance essay writing, college entrance examinations, and any steps related to finalizing college enrollment.

College Readiness: For this study, college readiness is defined as "as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college program" (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013, p. 118).

College Writing Readiness: College writing readiness refers to student readiness for academic writing at the collegiate level.

Direct Instruction: Direct instruction refers to specific skill-based instruction from teachers that aligns with the planned curriculum and long-term educational outcomes.

Ethnicity: The term ethnicity refers to a person's ethnic background based on the cultural attributes of their country of origin.

First-Year Writing: First Year Writing refers to writing programs/courses for first-year students.

Postsecondary Institutions: Postsecondary institutions offer coursework and programming that leads to the awarding of certifications, degrees, and licenses after completing secondary-level schooling.

Postsecondary Outcomes: The phrase postsecondary outcomes refer to any outcomes related to participation in postsecondary education that include but are not limited to grade point average (GPA), two or four-year degree attainment, graduation, and certification.

Race: Race is determined by physical traits and can be defined as the color of one's skin (Newman, 2016). The race is not necessarily related to the country of origin.

Social Capital: Social capital is established through "relationships held and groups to which one belongs" (Bourdieu, 1984, as cited in Sommerfield & Bowen, 2013, p. 47).

Supplementary Instruction: The term supplementary instruction refers to instruction outside of a planned curriculum in K-12 education that often supplements topics covered, introduces additional perspectives on the topics covered, or addresses skills outside of those evoked by the scheduled curriculum.

Urban Schools: The terms urban education and urban schools are used in this article to refer to the educational environments of schools considered Urban Intensive, Urban Emergent, and Urban Characteristic (Milner, 2012).

Urban Students: The term urban students refer to student populations in schools categorized as Urban Intensive, Urban Emergent, and Urban Characteristic (Milner, 2012) that typically serve students of color and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Anyon, 2014) predominantly.

Delimitations

This study addressed Black/African American students' perceptions of college readiness and college writing readiness and the influences of their participation in advanced coursework. Although there are specific advanced coursework programs such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses, this research design allows participants to qualify if the course

title/content was intended for students performing above grade level. As a result, the quality of non-IB and non-AP advanced coursework cannot be accounted for or assessed in this study. Another delimitation of the study is that the participants all identified as Black/African American. This delimitation is important as there are Black people from many different ethnic backgrounds whose educational experiences may differ from Black/African American students' experiences due to historical strife related to the enslavement of Africans in the United States. This study also restricted the sample to second-year students. The study limited participation to these specified classifications to elicit a larger group of willing participants and to choose students that were not too far removed from high school to reflect on their experiences. Lastly, this study heavily relied on students' memory and subjective interpretations of their high school academic experience, of which the accuracy of those reflections cannot be measured.

Summary

This introductory chapter examined issues with college readiness for students in the U.S. The issue of Black/African American students' college readiness that is addressed in this study was described and supported with recent data. The research purpose, questions, and significance of the study were also provided. Due to the prioritization of college readiness for U.S. students and the implications the lacking area has on postsecondary completion and the workforce, there was a need to explore college readiness for all students further. This is a dire need for Black/African American students, whose educational experiences are systemically hindered and thus has resulted in decreased postsecondary success for these students. Increased college preparedness contributes to high social mobility and overall improved life outcomes. As such, this qualitative study investigated high-achieving Black/African American students' perceptions of college readiness and writing readiness.

Organization of Chapter

This dissertation adopts the format of the traditional dissertation that includes five chapters. The current chapter, Chapter one, serves as the introductory chapter aimed at establishing the problem and purpose and setting up the overall aims of the study. Chapter two includes a synthesis of the literature that addresses the historical implications of this study, other relevant studies related to this current research, and explanations of the theoretical frameworks by which this study was guided. Chapter 3 covers the methodology applied to address the specified research questions.

The rationale for designing this research as a qualitative phenomenological study is explained, as well as the data collection and analysis methods. Validity was also established in chapter three. Chapter four provides a comprehensive review of the findings. The dissertation concludes with chapter five, which includes a discussion and analysis of the findings as well as implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The decreased postsecondary outcomes of Black/African American students is a systemic issue that has deep historical roots in educational attainment for Black/African American people. Simply looking at the data and determining an entire racial group's underachievement as a personal fault would be a dire mistake. The historical nature of the supposed underachievement or lowered outcomes educationally is most pertinent in considering how to resolve the consequences of years and years of malpractice of education as a tool to oppress Black/African American people further rather than to support the advancement of this group of people. The following literature review serves to address the historical and systemic aspects of educational attainment for Black/African Americans and to connect these occurrences to present-day practices and data implications related to the research focus for this study.

The literature review begins with a brief history of schooling in the United States and educational attainment for Black/African Americans. The impact of opportunity gap discourse on Black students' academic outcomes is elaborated on, and then the literature review shifts to a focus on postsecondary education. Sections of the literature review on postsecondary education include explorations of Black/African American students' college preparedness influences, advanced secondary coursework participation, academic writing readiness, and perceptions of college readiness, followed by a chapter summary.

History of Schooling in the U.S. and Black Education

To adequately situate the current study on college readiness for Black/African American students in the U.S., historical context on the educational attainment and experiences of this demographic is essential. As the United States was expanding to become the developed country

that it is today, citizens who were settled in this country began gaining more knowledge and thus started to consider educational attainment became increasingly important specifically, as education became of interest in the U.S., schooling also increasingly became of interest and value (Rury, 2013). It is important to note that education is not schooling, and schooling is not education. Education is the lifelong learning process that occurs. In contrast, schoolings lifetime, whereas schooling is the formal institutional learning that is used to socialize different groups in society (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995). While participation in schooling initially was less common for the general public, the social value of schooling increased in the 19th century, leading to the development of a formal U.S. educational system (Rury, 2013).

As schooling gained social significance, questions about who deserved schooling became significant education. Educational attainment for women, African Americans, and Native Americans during the 19th century began to take place, but for varying reasons. Thus, it became apparent that schooling was for "specific purposes" that differed depending on the demographic (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Rury, 2013). As such, initially, only women were allowed to attend school if their schooling did not threaten men (Rury, 2013). For African Americans, education emphasized "good behavior and training manual labor" (Rury, 201,3, p. 113), and for Native Americans, schooling was used to force assimilation (Rury, 2013; Wilder, 2014). From a sociological standpoint, social transmission has been a primary purpose of education, but social transformation through schools is possible when individuals are empowered to become agents of social change (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Rury, 2013). The current study aims to explore the meanings of the social transmission processes in schooling related to college readiness and college writing readiness for Black/African American students.

Black/African American Education in the U.S.

Access to education for Black/African Americans has been impacted by different factors that provide historical context for the systemic inequalities that persist within the U.S. education system. During the exceptionally long period of the enslavement of Black/African Americans in the U.S., educational skills such as reading were prohibited (Wiggan, 2011). In the seminal work *The Education of Blacks in the South*, Anderson (1988) thoroughly explained how and why schooling for Black children became part of the *White Agenda* during the post-slavery reconstruction era in the U.S.

Both White northerners and southerners used schooling as a tool to *train* African Americans to be what they wanted them to be, which was manual laborers to support the era of industrialization in the U.S. (Anderson, 1988). The use of schooling to advance industrialization efforts in the U.S. occurred primarily through higher educational attainment, an area of schooling that had become of social interest to Americans in general (Anderson, 1988; Rury, 2013; Wilder, 2013). However, before higher education was used to stratify Black/African Americans into the lower waged labor force, enslaved Black/African Americans in the U.S. had been used to build and support the operations of many of the first universities in the United States, including the highly regarded Ivy League universities (Wilder, 2013). Thus, the historical relationship between Black/African Americans and postsecondary educational attainment is complex and cannot be addressed without historical context.

Other critical contextual considerations needed to understand postsecondary educational attainment for Black/African Americans include the different schools of thought regarding the types of education that should be pursued, key figures that offered access to postsecondary for

Black/African Americans, and the backlash from these postsecondary pursuits. During the Reconstruction era in the U.S., the congressionally established Freedmen's Bureau was tasked to support Black Americans' transition into society post-slavery, which included efforts for educational attainment (Wiggan, 2011).

Additionally, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and White evangelicals, through the American Missionary Association (AMA), established many Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs) that prominent White philanthropists provided funding to with conditions (Anderson, 1988; Watkins, 2001; Wiggan, 2011). The attainment of Black higher education was believed to guide the destiny of black people in America (Wiggan, 2011). This strong belief was the foundation of one particular university, which successfully graduated many well-known African Americans who became principals, professors, lawyers, and doctors (Wiggan, 2011). Atlanta University changed the perception of Black higher education and led to the establishment of many other institutions of higher education for African Americans (Wiggan, 2011). Although a positive shift for African Americans, critics of the university's course of study believed it was used to socialize African Americans to Eurocentric ideals (Wiggan, 2011).

Overall, the debates over courses of study in higher educational institutions for Black/African Americans often revolve around two philosophies from two renowned Black/African American leaders: W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington (Anderson, 1988; Wiggan, 2011). Booker T. Washington believed that studies on agriculture and domestic labor would prepare African Americans for the necessary work needed to earn their place in society (Washington, 1901). Dubois believed that an exceptional group of men, known as the *talented tenth,* would use their education to advance the African American race and pushed for the pursuit of liberal arts education (Dubois, 1903; Wiggan, 2011). Through the work of Booker T.

Washington in collusion with General Samuel Armstrong, White philanthropists like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie invested in HBCUs with the condition that vocational education be prioritized (Anderson, 1988). As such, Black/African Americans were tracked into specific types of careers, ultimately placing them into specific socioeconomic statuses.

However, scholars such as W.E.B. Dubois saw the value in well-rounded courses of study that allowed Black/African Americans to enter higher-paying professional careers and, in turn, increase Black social mobility (Jewel, 2007; Wiggan, 2011). Postsecondary education is still considered a path toward increased social mobility for Black/African Americans, although the credentials alone are no longer enough for this type of life improvement (Royce, 2019).

Black Academic Achievement and Opportunity Gap Discourse

Current issues that impact postsecondary attainment and completion for Black/African Americans are connected to historically ingrained issues in Black Education. Based on the motives and actions taken by powerful forces that impact the types of education accessible to Black/African Americans, it is evident that education threatened the social order that the dominant group aimed to establish. Nonetheless, Black/African American people sought education by any means, establishing their own schools, institutions, and communities (Anderson, 1988; Jewel, 2007). Black people also began to pursue higher forms of education past college degrees, and a Black middle class emerged (Collins, 1983; Jewel, 2007; Wiggan, 2011).

Therefore, limits to educational attainment to were not enough to prevent climbs up the social strata that the dominant group aimed to preserve. As such, new tactics had to be used to marginalize and dehumanize Black/African Americans. One such tactic was the formulation of deficit narratives about Black/African Americans' intellectual abilities, which is more commonly

referred to as the achievement gap but most appropriately denoted as an opportunity gap. The discourse surrounding this gap is detrimental to overall beliefs about and the treatment of Black/African Americans.

Achievement gap discourse is deeply rooted in historical notions about racial inferiority stemming from U.S. slavery, which manifested in the form of pseudoscientific reports supporting notions of racial inferiority and unequal and inequitable schools for Black/African American students and other students of color (Anderson, 1988; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Wiggan, 2011). The phrase *achievement gap* refers to notions regarding the test performance gap between students of color and White students but often focuses on the performance gap between Black and White students (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lewis, Chambers, & Butler, 2012; Milner, 2012). The notion of the Black-White achievement gap can be attributed to the 1966 Equality of Educational Opportunity Survey, also known as The Coleman Report, in which James Coleman claimed to have findings supporting the notion that students of color perform better when attending schools with European-American students than when attending schools that are predominantly populated with students of color (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995).

Later in a study titled The Bell Curve, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) alleged that sub-group members (low-socioeconomic status backgrounds, racially/ethnic diverse groups) are predisposed to adverse life outcomes and low academic achievement in school, with an emphasis on Black/African Americans underperforming their White counterparts. Ultimately, the notion of the achievement gap places a stigma on Black/Americans and their academic capabilities that permeates through P-12 systems, as well as systems of higher education. Thus, in the purview of present issues of college readiness and college writing readiness for Black/African American students, it is important to highlight the systemic nature of these issues to shed light on the

exclusionary efforts that have historically and systemically been against these educational pursuits.

While the current study focuses primarily on the educational experiences and outcomes for Black/African American students, it is important to acknowledge other demographics facing some of the same issues as the racial/ethnic group of focus. As described in the introductory chapter for this study, Black/African American students' performance on college entrance exams has been lower than the national averages for both assessments, as well as lower than the performances of their Asian American and White peers from other racial/ethnic groups (ACT Inc., 2019; College Board, 2021). Historically, concerns about opportunity gaps have focused not only on Black/African American students' academic performances but Latinx students' educational outcomes (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Thus, literature on educational issues, such as the need for improved college readiness for racially diverse students, has heavily centered on Black and Latinx students (Knight-Manuel et al., 2016; Martinez et al., 2019).

Black/African American and Latinx students are often grouped when addressing opportunity gaps and other academic concerns for various reasons. One main reason is the due to high concentrations of Black and Latinx students in characteristically urban schools (Milner, 2012; Tatum & Muhammed, 2012). College entrance exam data reveal that Latinx, Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Native American students have similar outcomes as Black/African American students (ACT, 2019; College Board, 2021). However, there are specific factors that differentiate Black students' academic experiences from their Latinx counterparts as well as other non-white peers. One significant factor is the influence of anti-Black racism that pervades various aspects of schooling and educational systems (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021).

Anti-Black racism is a specific type of racism in which the phenotypical attribute of Blackness leads to discriminatory treatment on macro and micro levels (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). As such, while Latinx students are a focal group due to perceived academic underachievement in comparison to White counterparts, which is also highlighted through opportunity gap discourse, policies and practices geared toward improving these outcomes have been privileged and accepted more than those suggested to enhance Black student outcomes (Smith, 2021). Examples of these policies and practices include the increased focus on English as Second Language, prioritizes Spanish-speaking populations, national immigration movements that center Latinx communities more than other immigrant groups, as well as increased social empathy toward Latinx and other non-Black people of color (Bryan et al., 2022; Smith, 2021).

College Readiness for Black/African American Students

In the U.S., college readiness, often denoted by the phrase *college and career readiness*, is an educational priority for federal, state, and local educational systems intended to support the successful matriculation of students to and through college. However, inconsistent definitions and measures of college readiness exist nationally, further complicating efforts to address this concern (Mishkind, 2014). The federal government has also provided funding and implemented policies to support this endeavor, yet less than 50% of U.S. students are considered college ready in mathematics and reading (NAEP, 2019c, 2019d; Mishkind, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Various factors contribute to college readiness for students and are specific to the demographics of the students (Dumais & Ward, 2009). In addition, pursuing a college degree is often considered a trajectory for students. It is marked by the completion of specific steps that include developing college aspirations, becoming academically prepared and qualified for

college entrance, and application processes (Horn, 1997). College readiness is the successful completion of credit-bearing college courses that lead to obtaining a degree, certificate, or access to career training programs without remedial or developmental interventions (Conley, 2012). However, these qualifiers neglect external and individual factors that can contribute to students' overall postsecondary success.

Black/African Americans College Preparedness Factors

Three main factors contributing to Black/African American students' college preparedness are individual student characteristics, personal background, and institution. Unique factors contributing to Black students' college readiness for Black students include cognitive and non-cognitive factors. Cognitive factors that contribute to and often qualify Black/African American students' college readiness include academic and college entrance exam performance (Maru intended to represent students' readiness can negatively impact present students' readiness can have negative impacts on Black students' college admissions, depending on score requirements, thus impacting postsecondary outcomes (Black et al., 2016). Barnes and Slate (2011) examined college readiness for Black, Latinx, and White students using three years' worth of archival data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Academic Excellence Indicator System.

During the three-year timeframe, the researchers examined the math and reading college readiness rates for each racial/ethnic group and found that Black students outperformed their peers in both the math and reading sections of the assessment. This study is consistent with similar studies focusing on test scores as determinants of college readiness, and the outcomes are similar to the trends on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2019c, 2019d). The researchers asserted the need for more research on other factors that could contribute to the

disparities in college readiness between the different racial and ethnic groups.

Non-cognitive factors, also known as non-academic factors, influence Black/African American students' college preparedness (Sommerfield, 2011; Washington & Schwartz, 1998). Non-cognitive factors include personal background, social status, extracurricular activities, and special talents in the arts, sports, or other skills-based activities (Farb & Matjasko, 2012). Black students' background has an impact on their college readiness and success. Individual background factors include socioeconomic status, home life, parental/guardian educational band, and the quality of schools attended (Reddick et al., 2011; Redford & Hoyer, 2017). College knowledge is also an aspect of personal background that is not typically formally evaluated prior to enrollment in higher education but can become a disadvantage for students with less knowledge about college (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Roderick et al., 2009).

Institutional factors that impact Black/African American students' college preparedness include college-going school culture, rigorous courses, high-quality teachers, and resources that support postsecondary success (Enberg & Wolniak, 2010; Hooker & Brand, 2010; Martinez et al., 2019). For schools that serve a majority of students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, building a college-going school culture fosters college aspirations and knowledge about what it means to matriculate at an institution of higher learning (Hooker & Brand, 2010; Martinez et al., 2019). In a study that explored differentiating factors for diverse students' college and career readiness, Kramer et al. (2020) found that positive youth development practices advanced *odds-beating* schools' success to enhance college preparedness. While this study took a deficit position on diverse student outcomes by classifying schools with higher sub-group graduation rates as odds-beating schools, the study reveals how non-academic institutional support also influences college readiness for Black/African American youth. Culturally relevant

professional development for school personnel, the need to re-frame accountability, and an improvement of culturally relevant educational modeling and practice for school staff are institutional factors that influence Black/African American students' postsecondary success (Knight-Manuel et al., 2019).

Ensuring Black/African American Students' College Readiness

While diverse factors contribute to college readiness for Black/African American students, other different people play a substantial role in the college preparation process. Students play a significant role in their preparation for college based on the individual student characteristics and personal factors mentioned in the previous section. However, students preparing for college will only know what has been presented to them about college from various sources and experiences. Subsequently, underachievement in higher education has been determined to be based on individual student factors (Bensimon, 2007; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015). Similarly, and consequently, Black/African American students' challenges with success in higher education have been attributed to parents or guardians and their economic and educational backgrounds (Coleman, 1988; Nichols & Islas, 2015; Solorzano, 1992).

Although students and their parents have important roles toward the student's college readiness and success, institutions are mandated through federal, state, and local laws to provide quality teaching and instruction to prepare students for college (Mishkind, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). As such, school personnel play an important role in ensuring that Black/African American students are college ready. More specifically, teachers and high school counselors have a unique responsibility to prepare students for postsecondary education. Teachers are charged with ensuring college preparedness for students, especially for non-White students.

Teachers have the important responsibility of instructing students and developing curricular activities that contribute to students' college readiness, however, race can inform a teacher's college expectations for students that can further influence their implementation of college support (Liou & Rojas, 2020). Subsequently, teacher expectations can be a predictor of students' college completion (Boser et al., 2014). High school counselors also play an important role in ensuring college readiness for students, as they offer support for navigating admissions and funding processes needed for postsecondary enrollment (McDonough, 2005). However, high school counselors sometimes function as gatekeepers to college knowledge and can be swayed by biases to withhold some aspects of that knowledge from certain demographics (Vela-Gude et al., 2009).

Aside from teachers and school counselors, the quality of the teachers, school structure, social contexts, and the caliber of instruction impact college readiness for Black/African American students (Dougherty et al, 2006; Martinez & McGrath, 2015; Reddick et al., 2011; Southworth & Mickelson, 2007). Policy recommendations for restructuring high schools to enhance success for students of color include changes to organization and governance in which new and smaller high schools are created to offer more personalized learning and support, curriculum and assessment policy reform, investments in teachers and school personnel, funding changes, and clear indicators for college readiness (Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008; Roderick et al., 2009). Local, state, and federal programs are additional efforts geared towards increasing college access and readiness for low-income youth, which are Black and Brown youth of color (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). Some of the programs historically known to support college readiness for Black/African American students and other students of color include Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Upward Bound (Knight-Manuel et al.,

2019). While several stakeholders offer interventions that support Black/African American students' college preparedness, school-based measures are of concern for this study. Exposure to college-level coursework in high school has been consistently recommended as a solution for increasing academic success for students after their transition to college (Morgan et al., 2018). The following sections address advanced coursework and gifted programming, academic writing, and postsecondary success for Black students.

Advanced Coursework and Postsecondary Outcomes

Roderick et al. (2009) asserted the need to address the social capital gap through policies that offer resources to build up school capacity to increase college readiness for low-income and minoritized urban students. Advanced courses are school-based resources that support college preparedness efforts (Morgan et al., 2018; James et al., 2017). Advanced high school courses are above-grade level classes in K-12 education that include Honors, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

While honors-level and other similar higher-level courses indicate increased rigor, dual credit, AP, and IB courses provide students with the opportunity to receive college credit based on passing assessment scores (Morgan et al., 2018). Enrollment and success in higher-level classes have benefitted students as a way of getting ahead at the postsecondary level (Evans, 2018; Morgan et al., 2018; Roderick et al., 2009). However, historically, there has been a low representation of students of color enrolled in gifted programs (Ford, 1998). Thus, racial and ethnic disproportionalities in advanced course enrollment and completion represent an opportunity gap that persists for Black/African American students and other students of color (James et al., 2017; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008).

Implications of Racial/Ethnic Gaps in Secondary Advanced Courses

The underrepresentation of Black students enrolled in advanced courses has implications for the lower postsecondary graduation rates for Black students. Yet, few studies have examined the relationship between secondary advanced coursework, college readiness, and postsecondary success for Black/African American students. Welton and Martinez (2014) presented findings from two larger studies in Texas that focused on Latinx students' college choice and opportunity networks of students of color to investigate structural systems that impact students of color's college readiness and found that inequities in Advanced Placement and advanced coursework was a structural challenge toward college readiness for students of color. In a study on participation and completion rates of dual enrollment programs in Kentucky public high schools from 2009-2013, Lochmiller et al. (2016) found that completion rates for dual enrollment programs were the lowest for Black students and American Indian Students (Lochmiller et al., 2016). The researchers recommended that future studies explore the factors that contributed to the lower completion rates for Black and Native American students (Lochmiller et al., 2016).

Further, Iatarola (2016) reviewed advanced course offerings and their effects and found that the participation gaps in advanced math coursework for Black students were a contributing factor to college math readiness for Black students. Lochmiller et al.'s (2016) analysis show dual enrollment program completion gaps for Black and Native students, which in turn suggests that these groups are entering college without college credit at a higher rate than their peers. Iatarola's (2016) findings allude to direct connections between advanced coursework and collegiate-level course preparedness. Both studies present findings that indicate a connection between advanced coursework participation and higher educational outcomes. However, a gap in the research is the lack of knowledge regarding the ways in which advanced courses propel

college success.

Colgren and Sappington (2015) analyzed secondary data from the Illinois State Board of Education to determine differences in ACT scores between AP (completed at least one AP course) and non-AP students across a variety of demographics. The researchers found that Black students that completed AP English courses had significantly higher ACT scores than Black students in less advanced English courses (Colgren & Sappington, 2015). While the article focused heavily on the need to transform the so-called achievement gap, the analysis of the secondary data offered clear insights into connections between AP course participation and college entrance exam success needed for postsecondary enrollment. It is evident through the literature that participation in higher-level courses in high school has implications for college readiness for Black students.

However, the research addressing these connections is limited. Moreover, more research on the impact of Black/African American students' advanced course completion toward postsecondary readiness and success is needed. This research aimed to extend knowledge on the relationship between secondary advanced coursework participation as well as academic writing experiences toward academic inequities in higher education faced by Black/African American students. The following section addresses Black students' academic writing, postsecondary success, and perceptions of college readiness.

Collegiate Academic Writing for Black/African American Students

Culturally and linguistically diverse students often enter college underprepared for collegiate academic writing due to writing fluency and lack of writing instructional support more than their counterparts from the dominant group (Torres & Black, 2018). The lack of writing instruction for Black/African American students and students from low-income backgrounds can

negatively impact their collegiate academic writing capabilities, which can inhibit student success in postsecondary education (Syrquin, 2006). Therefore, more research is needed to improve writing instruction for Black/African American students.

Postsecondary Success for Black/African American Students

While various factors contribute to college readiness, there are also important factors that contribute to postsecondary educational success and completion for Black/African American students. Strong academic self-efficacy, sense of belonging, support, imposter syndrome and stereotype threat can influence postsecondary success for Black/African American students (Brooks, 2015; Massey & Owens, 2013; Palmer & Young, 2009; Peteet et al., 2015; Strayhorn et al., 2015). Racism and microaggressions experienced by Black/African American students are challenges that pose subsequent challenges for postsecondary persistence and completion (Solorzano et al., 2000). Academic and social adjustment at institutions of higher education are additional factors that contribute to Black/African American women's retention and persistence (Schwartz & Washington, 1999).

Literature on postsecondary success for Black/African American students has revealed different elements that impact outcomes for these students. However, much of the literature focuses on non-cognitive factors that influence Black students' success (Massey & Owens, 2013; Palmer & Young, 2009; Peteet et al., 2015; Schwartz & Washington, 1999). Further, many studies on Black students' postsecondary outcomes have focused on gendered groups, mostly Black/African American males (Palmer & Young, 2009; Strayhorn et al., 2015). The current study explored college readiness for all Black/African American students (descendants of enslaved Africans in the U.S.) regardless of gender. Additionally, the current study examined institutional factors as opposed to individual cognitive and non-cognitive factors that contribute

to success in higher education. Another unique feature of this study is the investigation of college readiness from the students' perspectives.

Black/African American Students' Perceptions of College Readiness

Few studies have examined Black/African American students' perceptions of college preparedness or college writing readiness (Freeman, 1997; Knight-Diop, 2010; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Reid & Moore, 2008). Further, research that has focused on student perceptions of higher educational attainment has often focused on college readiness supports that influenced enrollment (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Knight-Diop, 2010). Freeman (1997) explored high-school-aged African American students' perceptions of barriers toward African Americans' postsecondary attainment and solutions to address these hindrances using structured group interviews. Data were collected from 70 African American students in grades 10th, 11th, and 12th from five U.S. cities that had larger African American populations.

The themes that emerged from data on perceived barriers were economic/financial and psychological/social barriers toward African Americans' participation in higher education (Freeman, 1997). Among some of the psychological/social barriers shared by the participants, the college not being presented as an option and feelings of intimidation toward higher education were perceived obstacles to postsecondary attainment (Freeman, 1997). Further, many of the students reported that college was not being emphasized enough from their experiences (Freeman, 1997).

The perceived solutions were thematically categorized as physical and financial capital, information channels, aspiration cultivation, and curricula, indicating that these areas should be focal points for addressing the issue (Freeman, 1997). Freeman (1997) maintained that the failure of programs geared toward increasing African American participation could be due to the lack of

students' voices to help shape those initiatives. Ultimately, this study offered insight into the perceived barriers toward postsecondary educational attainment to highlight the need for educational policy reform (Freeman, 1997).

In a collaborative study from ACT Inc. and the Council of the Great City Schools, 293 high school seniors from five of the largest US urban school districts participated in a survey and focus group session on college planning (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). Most participants, all of whom were either African American or Latinx, reported that friends and peers, teachers and counselors, and high school courses were very or somewhat helpful toward their college planning (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002). The report also laid out specific recommendations for schools on how to support postsecondary educational planning that included parent programs and resources on college planning, cultural, language, and socioeconomic status considerations, as well as college planning integration into extracurricular activities (Noeth & Wimberly, 2002).

Knight-Diop (2010) examined the impact of interpersonal and institutional school-based attitudes toward Black students' educational outcomes using data collected from 15 Black/African American students during a four-year ethnographic study on the influences toward the understanding of college access and college attendance processes. Knight-Diop (2010) used interview, focus group, and observation data to highlight how inequities within various institutional structures intended to foster a college-going high school culture can both positively and negatively impact Black students' postsecondary access and aspirations when care is inadequately enacted in these spaces. While the perspectives presented in this study were enlightening for educational personnel in consideration of the impact of college-readiness educational reform efforts, more research on the role of school-based caring toward students' postsecondary success is needed (Knight-Diop, 2010).

Reid and Moore (2008) found that college preparation and lacking college success skills were two overarching themes of first-generation urban college students' perceptions of college readiness. The researchers collected data from 13 Black students, both African American and immigrant that were the first generation and had attended the same urban high school using biographical questionnaires and semi-structured individual interviews (Reid & Moore, 2008). In terms of college preparation, all participants mentioned classes and teachers as supports for their college preparedness (Reid & Moore, 2008). Yet, the majority of the participants (7) felt their college preparedness was lacking, and three students who reported feeling better prepared than other urban peers, still felt less prepared than their other college peers (Reid & Moore, 2008). Further, English courses and AP course participation enhanced their postsecondary success, with AP English reported as positively contributing to college writing readiness (Reid & Moore, 2008).

Participation in college-preparatory programs and extra-curricular activities was also reported as positive contributing factor to college readiness (Reid & Moore, 2008). Academic skills, study skills, and time management skills were among the reported lacking skills needed for college success (Reid & Moore, 2008). Reid and Moore (2008) contended that collaborative family and school support, high expectations, and early college planning are necessary measures needed to support first-generation urban students' collegiate success. The Social Capital Theory was used to frame the discussion of the findings from the study and the researchers acknowledged that while the students had some social capital in some areas needed for postsecondary success, they lacked that capital in the other areas (Reid & Moore, 2008). Each of the studies that utilized student perspectives on college readiness offered insight toward the phenomena and addressed institutional supports that contributed to college readiness.

However, much of the literature focused on support that led to college enrollment, leaving a gap in the research regarding student outcomes during college. Additionally, more curricular-based research on college readiness is needed to determine the impact secondary school curricula have toward student success in higher education. The current study explored institutional supports needed for Black/African American students' college readiness using an Afrocentric Social Capital conceptual lens.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the review of literature is to situate the current study with other relevant research. However, the current research focus for this study is part of a larger domain of research on Black education. As such, the literature review included historical context on Black/African Americans' educational experiences. Additionally, the literature review addressed opportunity gaps in Black education to offer further context on current issues related to this research area. Literature on college readiness for Black students highlighted the role of institutional support in fostering postsecondary success for this demographic.

The literature also confirmed a connection between advanced coursework participation and student success in higher education, as well as students' perceptions of unpreparedness. While existing research adequately highlights college readiness concerns for Black students and influences on college enrollment, more research on student success in postsecondary institutions is needed. Further, research on Black students' college writing readiness is scarce with writing concerns appearing in study findings, but not a primary area of inquiry. Thus, the current study expanded knowledge on secondary educational experiences that influence postsecondary outcomes for Black/African American students. The theories and the research method used for the study are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of college readiness and college writing readiness for Black/African American students who completed advanced coursework in high school. This study was significant due to the need to increase postsecondary outcomes for Black/African American students that systemic hindrances have continuously impacted. The topic addressed in this study was part of an overarching and historically ingrained issue regarding unequal and inequitable education for Black/African Americans. In the field of education and topics on Black education, deficit narratives are often contrived from quantitative data that promotes notions of underachievement for Black/African American students (Milner, 2007; Toldson, 2018).

Research studies investigating college readiness and postsecondary attainment for underrepresented groups, such as Black/African Americans and other students of color, often apply quantitative approaches to analyze individual student characteristics, such as grades and test scores, in relation to college readiness that fails to adequately address the complex nature of the phenomenon (Barnes & Slate, 2011; Maruyama, 2012; Welton & Martinez, 2014). As such, this study employed a qualitative approach that offers deeper insight into the educational phenomenon of Black/African American students' college readiness (Bloch, 2004; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Mertens, 2019; Toldson, 2018). The following research questions guided this study:

> *RQ*^{1}-What aspects of advanced coursework from high school contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education?
>
> *RQ*^{2}- And what writing activities prepared these students for academic writing in higher education?

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the theoretical frameworks that inform the research study. Next, the research design, which includes participant selection and sampling procedure, and data collection methods, are described. Data analysis strategy and validity follow. The chapter concludes with a summary of the covered methods and methodology.

Conceptual Framework

Social Capital Theory

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) posited that three main types of capital exist in society: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital depending on the area of interest. Bourdieu's explanation of the social capital theory in relation to cultural and economic capital stemmed from his other theories on social reproduction and cultural reproduction theories, which were used to address social and economic inequalities reproduced in schools (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Social capital is a combination of attained and potentially attainable resources accrued through social networks or connections that can translate into economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital is then accrued based on the individual's initiative to foster and develop these social connections to others who already have established capital that the individual seeks to inherit through their connection (Bourdieu, 1986). American sociologist James Coleman (1988) defined social capital as a function of various entities related to social structures that influence the actions of the actors (those taking the actions) within those social realms. Like the conceptualization of social capital from Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) described social capital as relationship-based, as it manifests through changes in the relations between people.

These relationships then enable the person who takes action to promote these relationships to use their connections as a resource to gain access to areas of personal and professional interest (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). Coleman (1988) articulated that social

capital is mainly obtained through obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures that rely on reciprocated actions, information channels accessed through social relations, and norms and effective sanctions within collective networks (Coleman, 1988). While Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) have different notions of social capital, both perspectives have been applied to educational research (Dika & Singh, 2002).

Social Capital Theory and Educational Phenomena

The conceptualizations of social capital theory from both Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) have been applied to the field of education to explain educational phenomena, such as inequitable educational practices, gaps in educational attainment for different demographics, and rationales for academic outcomes disparities between groups (Dika & Singh, 2002; Plagans, 2011). Coleman's (1988) explanation of social capital theory was used to develop his conceptualization of human capital, specifically high school graduation, which relies on social capital from familial and non-familial relationships. Social capital theory, as conceptualized by Bourdieu, can be used to explain differences in educational outcomes between groups when the emphasis focuses less on economic and cultural capital implications, such as background and experiences related to socioeconomic status, as Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital is often used when focusing on access to institutional resources (Dika & Singh, 2002; Rogošić & Baranović, 2016).

Further, the social capital theory has implications for social mobility, which refers to the shift higher or below the social class in which a person was brought up (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Lin, 1990; Plagans, 2011). Social capital as an instrumental resource for gaining human and cultural capital has been expounded upon to emphasize how these social connections are just as important as an individual's knowledge (Lin, 2002). However, social capital as a tool for

advancement can also negatively affect societies, as it contributes to social, cultural, and economic inequalities for non-dominant group members (Bourdieu, 1977; Portes, 1998; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Collective social capital acquired through communities has also been deemed to have spurious conclusions due to other contributing factors that could lead to achieving certain outcomes related to social connections (Portes, 2000). For the purpose of this study, the impact of resource-based social capital on achieving human capital by way of a four-year college degree was explored. Social capital is conceptualized as being acquired through coursework that can allow students access to the academic rigor and skill needed at the collegiate level.

Social Capital Theory and Educational Outcomes for Black Students

Schools are spaces in which social capital can be obtained primarily through the relationships fostered between like-minded individuals in these settings and the resources within the school (Plagans, 2011; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Wimberly, 2013). However, social capital provided through schools can be detrimental to populations with less access to other forms of capital and receive differential treatment and care resulting from being non-dominant group members (Linn, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Wimberly, 2013). Social capital acquired through schools also comes in the form of access to quality teachers, school counselors, learning communities, mentoring, and special programs that offer students access to college knowledge needed to complete higher education (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McAllister, 2011; Smith, 2007; Welton & Martinez, 2013).

For Black/African Americans, these social-structural barriers lessen the impact of social capital as a tool for successful transitions to postsecondary education from high school (Wimberly, 2013). Although negative impacts of social capital exist, researchers have still used social capital theory to explore various aspects of college attainment relative to educational

aspirations, access, preparedness, and completion (Brown & Davis, 2001; Freeman, 1997; Palmer & Gasman, 2008; Reddick et al., 2011; Taggart, 2017). While researchers have examined school social capital toward postsecondary education for Black/African American students of color, many studies have focused primarily on Latinx students, specifically Black/African American men, and on social capital through social relations through institutional agents or family backgrounds. Additionally, few studies have singularly researched advanced college preparatory coursework in high schools as institutional support that provides students with school-based social capital.

In his conceptual article addressing the socialization of racially diverse youths, Stanton-Salazar (1997) defines institutional support as:

> Key resources and forms of social support that function to ensure children and adolescents become effective participants within institutional spheres that control resources and network pathways associated with different forms of empowerment, during adolescence and early adulthood, including school achievement, class mobility, and self-determination (p. 1078-1079).

This study applies Stanton-Salazar's (2011) conceptualization of institutional support. It posits that school-based social capital can also be acquired through different types of courses and coursework necessary for social capital retrieval needed to gain human capital by way of a college degree. As such, advanced courses in high school are viewed as institutional supports that function as social capital necessary for academic success at the collegiate level. However, acknowledging the exclusive nature of social capital seeks to evaluate how inclusive this form of social capital is for diverse groups through an Afrocentric lens.

Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity is a theoretical framework that centers people and history from an African perspective, grounded in the notion that all humans originated from Africa (Asante, 1991; King et al., 2014; Traore, 2007). Afrocentric theory "guides us toward a new approach to producing knowledge about any culture and group, as well as toward a solution to the problem of European/White cultural supremacy" (King et al., 2014, p.37). When applied to education, an Afrocentric approach centers world studies, people, and history from an African vantage point based on the belief that humanity originated in Africa. Afrocentricity challenges universal white supremacy, addresses racist theories, and is a human-centered, anti-hegemonic perspective (Asante, 1991). The tenets of Afrocentricity include distinctions between individuals toward the community, respect for elders over notions of equality, human interconnectedness, and humanist spirituality (Traore, 2007).

Afrocentric Social Capital Theory

This research study is guided by the theoretical frameworks of social capital theory and Afrocentricity, as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1986), Stanton-Salazar (2011), and Asante (1991). Combining the theoretical frameworks of Afrocentricity and social capital theory, this conceptual framework was used to analyze the impact of advanced coursework in high school toward college readiness as institutional support that results in school-based social capital. Writing activities in high school were also conceptualized as school-based social capital acquired through participation in advanced courses aligned to college-level rigor.

The conceptual framework was pertinent for the data analysis and discussion of findings. There were three guiding principles of the Afrocentric Social Capital conceptual framework. The first guiding principle of this framework was the commitment to critical examinations of exclusive practices for members of humanity. From this perspective, any social, political,

economic, or cultural exclusions from activity or practice should be analyzed and addressed. A guiding question for this principle was: *Do this practice and policy consider exclusive practices for any member of humanity?* The second guiding principle for the Afrocentric Social Capital Theory was the acknowledgment and disclosure of prevalent dynamics of power and privilege that manifest from the practice or policy. While efforts to identify and recognize the dynamics and their effects were needed to adequately apply this guiding principle, this aspect of Afrocentric social capital theory emphasized the need to recognize these influences and their impact on the achievement of social capital. The second guiding principle was analyzed by questioning: *How is power and privilege manifested through the adoption of this practice/policy?*

The final guiding principle focused on necessary resources for preventing the exclusion and inequities of humans. The purpose of this guiding principle was to promote movement from simply identifying systems of exclusion and inequity toward concrete action steps that proactively address these issues. The third principle of this framework considered the following question: *What resources are necessary for the prevention of exclusion and inequality for any member of humanity?* Altogether, the inspection of exclusive forces, power and privilege dynamics, and needed resources make up the Afrocentric Social Capital framework.

When applying this conceptual lens to educational research pursuits, it was important to note that Social Capital theories foster inequity and inequality by nature of the concept (Bourdieu, 1977; Portes, 1998; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). As such, it is important to emphasize that the Afrocentric social capital theory conceptualized in this study was not used to prevent or remove the use of social networks as a means toward social mobility or the retrieval of other life-enhancing aspirational endeavors. Rather, an Afrocentric social capital theory views social

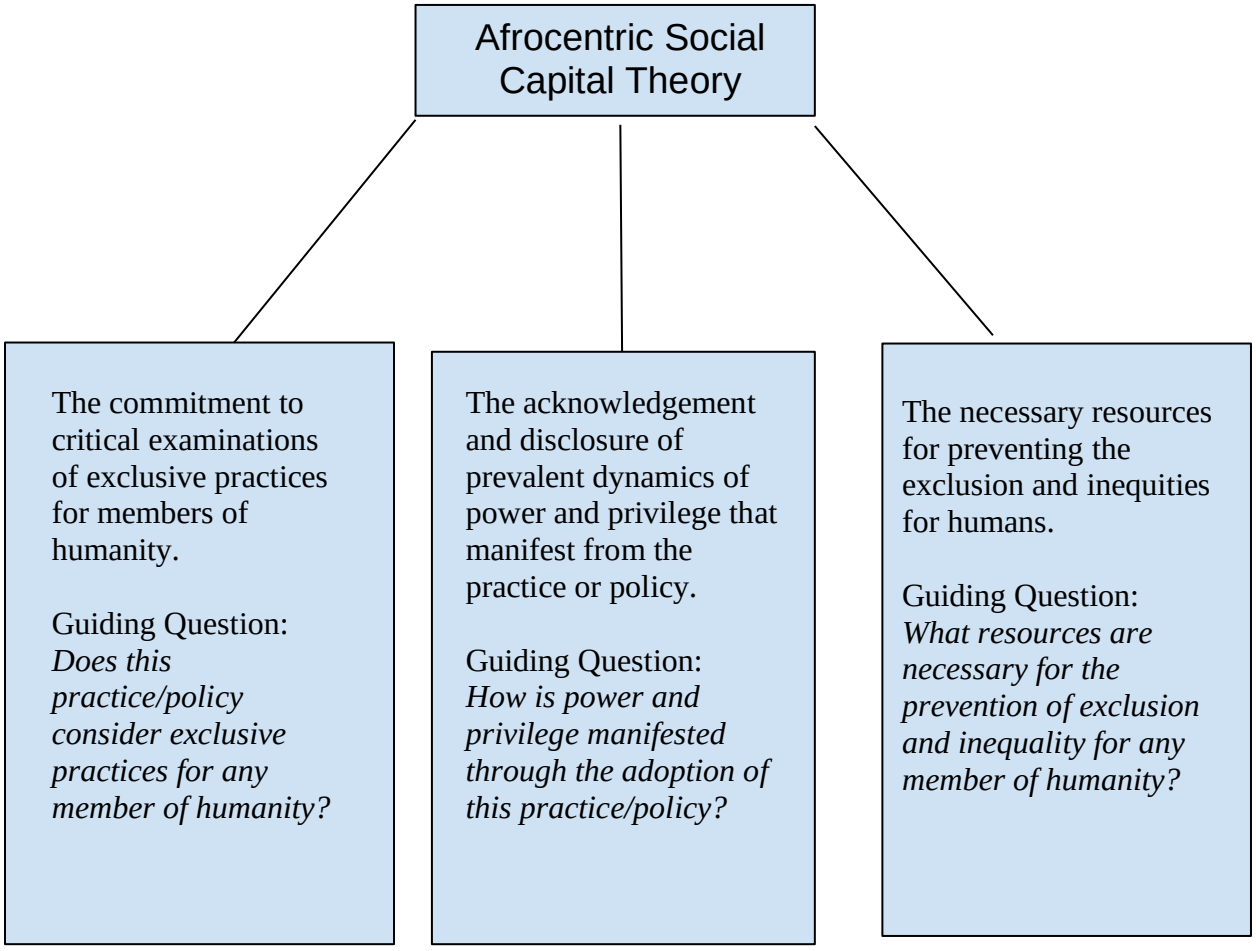
capital as a significant contributing factor toward educational and economic life outcomes that should be more accessible to all humans. This vantage point of social capital may seem contradictory to the principles of Afrocentricity as a facet of social life that perpetuates social inequality and inequity. A contradiction exists if social capital is viewed as a system/entity enabling inequality.

However, through the lens of Afrocentric social capital theory, social capital is perceived as a resource that is primarily used as an advantage for individuals or groups rather than intended to disadvantage those excluded from the resource. In this way, while social capital leads to social inequalities, it is not intended to create those inequalities. An Afrocentric Social Capitalist believes that social capital is deeply ingrained in global societal structures and, when provided through institutions, should be accessible to all humans. Afrocentric Social Capital should not be assumed or synonymously used with the term Black Social Capital as theorized by Orr (1999).

While Afrocentric Social Capital Theory focuses on using social capital as a resource toward social change, similar to the Black Social Capitalist's objectives, this framework is concerned with increasing access to social capital resources for improved life outcomes. In sum, Afrocentric Social Capital Theory was used in this study to examine Black/African American students' perceived advanced coursework and academic writing activities as resources that enhance college readiness and college writing readiness.

Figure 1

Afrocentric Social Capital Theory Conceptual Framework



Research Design

Qualitative research inquiry is imperative in the field of urban education. Key phenomena in urban education have been established through research and have highlighted systemic inequalities for urban students. Phenomena in urban education, such as the school-to-prison pipeline, school pushout, and opportunity gap, have been shown repeatedly through research (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2012; Pane & Rocco, 2014). Other outcomes of educational research in urban educational settings have been the establishment of theories, schools of thought, and pedagogical frameworks aimed at serving marginalized students. Educational

research in urban educational settings is necessary to improve outcomes for urban students. However, certain areas of educational research have caused harm to marginalized groups, especially members of the Black community, through incorrect uses of quantitative data, such as intelligence tests or performance data, to make determinations about this demographic (Toldson, 2018).

A substantial amount of information related to educational phenomena can be discovered through qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research. For K-12 students, this means greater insight into the challenges faced by students or in schools and the reasons for those occurrences. For marginalized students experiencing school in urban educational settings, qualitative research is particularly important for negating deficit narratives often contrived from quantitative data. In an article objecting to deficit notions about the supposed *achievement gap*, Toldson (2018) argued that "good" data is needed to truly assess student achievement, not "bad statistics" (p.193). *Good* data would provide a full understanding of the issue being analyzed because the data would include multiple factors that contribute to unfavorable outcomes (Toldson, 2018).

Qualitative research inquiry can provide the good data Toldson (2018) described. Qualitative research provides a more holistic view of the educational phenomenon being studied (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). This holistic view was necessary to negate false narratives about marginalized groups often used to disenfranchise, as well as to expose other factors contributing to unfavorable circumstances related to systemic issues rather than blaming individuals. This research heavily focused on the achievement of Black Americans, with an emphasis on college and career readiness. Qualitative research inquiry allows the exploration and identification of the complexities in this area.

There are various research designs that can be utilized in qualitative research studies, including ethnographic research, case studies, phenomenological research, grounded theory, participatory action research, and historical and narrative research (Adams, Fujii, & Mackey, 2005; Kuper, Reeves, & Levinson, 2008; Mertens, 2019). Ethnographic research places the researcher as an insider so they can understand the culture and lived experiences being studied (Alam, 2015; Buscatto, 2018; Mertens, 2019). Grounded theory qualitative research aims to develop a theory based on themes established through the collected data (Charmaz, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Mertens, 2019).

Whereas participatory action research is a collaborative study in which participants serve as co-researchers often used to promote self-determination or explore conflicts relative to power dynamics (Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009; McIntyre, 2000; Mertens, 2019). Historical and narrative research is situated in the context of the history of the research subject that is narrative-based (Mertens, 2019; Miller, 2015; Yow, 2015). Based on the areas of inquiry, this study was designed as a phenomenological case study. Phenomenological research focuses on individuals' subjective views on a particular phenomenon and is concerned with determining social meaning (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Ehrich, 2003; Mertens, 2019). Case studies focus on one specific case or instance of a phenomenon through thorough investigations of the historical background, physical settings, and many other contexts of the case (Maoz, 2002; Mertens, 2019; Stake, 2005).

A case study is a "...specific, unique bounded system" (Stake, 2000, p.463). A bounded system is a structure that is limited or bound to certain stipulations (Mertens, 2019). In this study, Black/African American students who took advanced courses in high school and were enrolled as honors college students at a mid-sized public research university in the southeast, served as the case in which the phenomenon was studied through. There are different types of case studies

that can be used based on the desired outcomes of the research. The three main types of case studies are intrinsic case studies, instrumental case studies, and collective case studies (Crowe et al., 2011; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Stakes, 2000).

Additionally, case studies can be designed as single or multiple case studies, depending on how many cases are analyzed within the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). This study was a single instrumental case study, as the findings were generalized to offer more context on the phenomenon (Crowe et al., 2011; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Stakes, 2000). In the current study, college readiness for Black/African American advanced coursework participants offered insight into the impact of that preparation on their college readiness and their college writing readiness, with the potential to further reveal the impact on Black students' success in honors college programs. Case studies can also be conducted as a specific study, such as a phenomenological case study, in which the participants' lived experiences relevant to the phenomenon make up the case that is explored (Mertens, 2019; Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenological research "...involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p.13). Phenomenology is considered both a philosophy and a methodology that are connected (Ravitch & Carl, 2020; Qutoshi, 2018). As a methodology, phenomenology is either descriptivist or interpretivist, where interpretive phenomenology uses interpretation as a means of understanding (Heidegger, 1927/2011; Rapport & Wainwright, 2006). Ultimately, phenomenological research centers on subjective experiences to uncover what and how a lived experience is perceived (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995; Ravitch & Carl, 2020; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Interpretive phenomenology aims to uncover how different individuals understand similar experiences or life events (Mertens, 2019; Rudestam &

Newton, 2015). The current study investigated the shared experience of advanced coursework participation in high school for Black/African American students currently pursuing postsecondary education, thus in alignment with interpretive phenomenology.

Reflexivity Statement

My educational background and beliefs on equitable educational experiences for Black/African American students prompted me to further explore college readiness for this demographic. Further, my experience as a writing tutor and writing instructor at the secondary and postsecondary levels influenced my decision to also investigate college writing readiness. While research on opportunity gaps, such as college readiness and college writing readiness for Black students remains prevalent, much of the research comes from a deficit perspective. As such, I decided to explore the experiences of high achieving Black/African American students and their perceptions of college readiness and college writing readiness.

As the researcher for this study, I acknowledge that my experiences as a high achieving Black student that participated in advanced courses contributed to the study focus and design. I participated in honors and AP courses, similarly to the students that I had the privilege of interviewing for this study. Further, I could relate much of what was shared during this study. Nonetheless, I maintained an objective stance and sought to ground my interpretation and analysis in the data and relevant literature. Yet, it is important before further describing the participants and study design that I also express that my passion for this subject comes from witnessing the lack of support and resources needed to foster readiness and resilience at the postsecondary level for Black/African American students.

Participants

Selection Criteria

Data for this study were collected from four to six Black/African American students who participated in advanced coursework in high school. In alignment with the research objectives, purposive sampling was used for the intentional selection of participants to ensure that the research questions were adequately addressed (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Purposive sampling is often used by qualitative researchers and allows the researcher to find *information-rich cases* that can provide deeper insight into the phenomenon being explored (Patton, 1990; Ravitch & Carl, 2020; Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

The type of purposive sampling employed for this study was Criterion Sampling. Criterion sampling allows the researcher to select participants based on an established criterion needed to accomplish the goals of the study (Patton, 1990; Mertens, 2019; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). As such, a selection criterion was developed to outline the desired participants for this study in alignment with the goals of the research questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The criterion for participation in this study is the following:

1) Participants must be currently enrolled in a four-year college or university and be classified as second-year students.
2) Participants must self-identify as Black/African American; a combined racial/ethnic identity used to indicate that the person is U.S. born, has Black skin, and is, therefore a descendent of enslaved Africans in the U.S.
3) Participants must have completed at least one advanced course in a U.S. high school. Advanced courses include Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, and/or “Honors” courses.

The established criterion supported the research questions by specifying identity markers and experiences needed for participants to adequately represent the desired population of focus in this study.

The identity marker of *African American students* was included in the first research question, which is why it was also part of the selection criterion. Due to the broad use of the identity classifications of *Black* and *African American*, an explicit description of a combined identity marker is included in the selection criterion to emphasize the exact demographic needed for this study. The first research question also included *advanced coursework from high school* to indicate that the researcher was interested in the impact of these courses on the overall topic of inquiry, which was college readiness.

As such, the selection criterion included the completion of at least one advanced course as a qualifier that must be met to participate in the study. The selection criterion also specified what courses counted as advanced courses to prevent confusion around eligibility, which could result from the ambiguity of the phrase *advanced courses*. While different high schools have different titles for advanced courses across the country, *AP*, *IB*, and *Honors* are nationally recognized course distinctions for above-grade-level educational programs. Therefore, these distinctions were also included in the selection criterion.

Additionally, both research questions indicated that students pursuing *postsecondary education* or *higher education* are of interest; therefore, enrollment in a four-year college or university was part of the selection criterion. Designated years of study were included with the college enrollment criterion to enable the researcher to collect meaningful data from the participants. Thus, the researcher was interested in collecting data from second-year college students who were not too far removed from high school to reflect upon their experiences while

also having at least one year's worth of exposure to collegiate academics. To efficiently locate participants that meet the selection criterion, the researcher recruited students from the honors college within a medium-sized public research university in the southeast. The researcher has co-taught in the honors college and taught an honors course at the time of the study. Participant recruitment from the honors college enabled the researcher to access Black/African American students who have completed advanced coursework, as advanced course completion is often an eligibility factor for honors colleges. Participants were recruited through class announcements and emails to students that met the criteria and an announcement requesting participants during an honors college-specific organizational whole group meeting. The researcher also used the honors college website to identify potential participants listed on the site based on their scholarship group.

Data Collection

A signifier of a strong qualitative research study is the use of appropriate methods to accomplish the overall research goals. Methods are the tools used to collect that data, which help the researcher better understand the problem being addressed (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). While there are many methods that can be used in qualitative research, three methods were used in this study.

Educational History and Experiences Questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect demographic and educational history information from each participant. Open-ended questionnaires, like surveys, allow researchers to collect important data quickly and efficiently. Other pros to using open-ended questionnaires include simplified response compilation and analysis, as well as the feasibility of collecting more

data that may be relevant to the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The open-ended questionnaire used in this study prompted students to report information such as:

1) Demographic information: such as age, racial/ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and any other information the student decides, is important for the researcher to know about who they are.
2) High school academic history: including graduation year, final high school GPA, descriptions of academic experience, including the number and types of advanced courses taken in high school, and recollection of writing activities in high school.
3) College entrance experience: including the number of colleges applied, acceptances received, and entrance exam scores.
4) Current experience in higher education, including the year of study, major, GPA, honors/recognitions, evaluation of experience thus far, including positive events and challenges faced.

Data collected from the open-ended questionnaires allowed the researcher to develop participant case summaries. This data was also used to help the researcher identify areas to probe during the second phase of data collection. Responses pertaining to high school academic history and current experiences in higher education were used for data triangulation.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were also used as a data collection method in this study. Research interviews are used to delve deeper into the lived experiences of the study participants and their construction of reality in relation to the topics explored (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Interviews can either be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, which informs the interview protocols (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The

purpose of a semi-structured interview is to obtain "...descriptions of the life world view of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.6).

Interview protocols were established prior to conducting the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Since the interview was semi-structured, the protocols were used as a general guide for the interview but were not restricted to a specific order or wording and allowed opportunities for follow-up and probing questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Interviews took place virtually using video conferencing technologies.

The use of these technologies allowed the researcher to record and caption the interviews to assist with transcription accuracy. Some pros of using interviewing as a research method include a deeper examination of language and concepts related to the topic explored, as well as more insight toward the matter studied that leads to the production of knowledge (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Harvard University, n.d.). The cons of interviewing include ethical issues such as misinterpretation by the researchers or leading the interviewees through probes, as well as issues with dynamics between the researcher and the interviewee (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Harvard University, n.d.). Relational, context and contextual, non-evaluative, person-centered, temporal, partial, subjective, and non-neutral interviewing values and characteristics were considered when developing the interview guide and conducting the interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

Focus Group Session

The third data collection method was a focus group session. Focus groups are group interviews that use conversation and interaction between a group to pull out more data from participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Patton, 1990; Mertens, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The use of a focus group as a data collection method is beneficial for researchers investigating

perspectives of a problem, as well as studies used to explore group-specific experiences (Mertens, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Focus groups are structured as group interviews facilitated by the researcher using about five to seven open-ended questions that emphasize more of the *what* than the *why* (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Mertens, 2019). The use of a focus group in the current study allowed the researcher to collect important and relevant data needed to make this study a single instrumental case study.

As an instrumental case study, one of the goals of this research was to offer more insight into the issues of college readiness and college writing readiness for Black/African American students (Stakes, 2000; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). By bringing the participants together in a group setting, the researcher was able to use the data to generalize the issue across the racial/ethnic group, despite the issue being studied through one specific and unique case. Focus groups also present opportunities for participants to relate to and comment on each other's responses, allows open expression and validation of perceptions and experiences, whatever piece of data they intend, and can advance social research agendas for marginalized communities (Mertens, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2011). However, confidentiality can be an obstacle when conducting focus groups (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

The focus groups were conducted virtually via video conferencing, which allowed the researcher to take steps to protect participants' identities by enforcing webcam and name visibility restrictions. The focus group session occurred during the last phase of the study for data collection. An interview guide with five to seven questions was used during the focus group in a semi-structured format, like the individual interviews. Participants signed a consent form for both the individual interview and the focus group session, in which the focus group session consent emphasized confidentiality. A confidentiality statement was also read to participants

during the opening of the session. The session was recorded and captioned over a two-hour period. Using the captions as a tool, the researcher verified the electronically transcribed responses for the focus group session in preparation for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data from this study were analyzed on an interpretive level using a constant comparative analysis to develop themes. Coding is an integral part of this type of data analysis procedure (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The coding process includes precoding or initial coding, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). At each stage of coding, the data is reduced to conduct a thorough and more reasonable analysis. Thus, through the phases of coding, a constant comparative analysis is applied. Constant comparative analysis is a process of "...continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process, continuously feeding back into the process of category coding" (Dye, 2000, p. 4).

This process is referred to as constant comparative analysis because researchers are constantly comparing the codes that were identified to whatever piece of data they intend to relate to. The use of constant comparison analysis can change the pattern of the original coding scheme and eventually leads to well-defined categories of the data (Dye, 2000). Refined codes are needed to establish the themes that emerge from the data. The themes are then used to explain the overall meaning and outcomes of the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). One pro of this process is the reduction of data which makes the analysis process more manageable, and the con of this process is the subjectivity used when determining the meaning (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

Validity

Validity in qualitative research is important for establishing the quality and rigor of a study. Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, quality measures such as trustworthiness and/or validity were conceptualized to address concerns with the truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality, which are necessary aspects to consider when evaluating a study (Guba, 1981). Thus, a criterion was developed for qualitative researchers to use to address quality through four measures: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Credibility refers to the reality and/or truths in the findings (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Credibility can be established through prolonged and persistent engagement, peer debriefing, member checks, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, and triangulation (Mertens, 2019). In this study, credibility was established through triangulation. Triangulation is the examination of multiple data sources to determine the consistency of themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Mertens, 2019).

Theoretical triangulation of the data collected from open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group interview was confirmed among the data sources, considering the theoretical underpinnings that frame the study to demonstrate truth in the outcomes (Denzin, 1970; Shenton, 2004). Transferability refers to the evaluation of the researcher's contextualization of the study, which should allow for an easy transfer to other related studies (Firestone, 1993; Shenton, 2004; Mertens, 2019). Thick description that included context from the student demographic questionnaire was used to substantiate the transferability of this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Lastly, confirmability was established through a reflexivity statement in which the researcher reflected on and explored biases that could have impacted the interpretation of the data.

Summary

This project was a phenomenological case study that centers on the subjective experiences of Black/African American students who took advanced courses in high school. This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1-What aspects of advanced coursework from high school contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education?

RQ2- And what writing activities prepared these students for academic writing in higher education?

It was hypothesized that participation in advanced coursework, as well as exposure to direct writing instruction, positively contributes to students' postsecondary success. Black/African American honors college students at a mid-sized public research university in the southeast served as the specific case from which the phenomenon was studied. Data for this study were collected from four Black/African American students who participated in advanced coursework in high school through 10–20-minute open-ended questionnaires, 90-minute semi-structured interviews conducted virtually, and a two-hour online focus group session.

Questionnaire data were analyzed and used to create a case summary of participants. Interview and focus group data were transcribed and coded for themes. Questionnaire responses were also used to triangulate the data between interview and focus group transcripts (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). The findings were analyzed and discussed using the researcher-developed Afrocentric Social Capital conceptual lens, which is a human-centered evaluative framework of exclusionary and inequitable policies and practices.

This research aimed to extend knowledge of the relationship between secondary advanced coursework participation and academic writing experiences toward academic

inequities in higher education faced by Black/African American students. The significance of the study outcomes were implications for future research and reform initiatives in the field of urban education toward increased college readiness and college writing readiness for Black/African American students through participation in advanced high school courses.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This dissertation study aimed to explore the perceptions of college readiness and academic writing readiness from Black/African American students that completed advanced coursework in high school. Data for this study was collected through Student Demographic Questionnaires, Individual Interviews, and a Focus Group Session and was analyzed to determine themes. The current chapter presents the major findings of this study by providing a summary of participant demographic profiles, reporting and describing the themes that emerged from the study, and explaining how the themes were established. The themes that emerged from the data were generated after a constant comparative analysis of the coded data occurred. The constant comparative analytical procedure helped to better align the coding schemes to the raw data through the cyclical analysis of coded data. This chapter also includes excerpts from the interview and focus group session. The research questions guiding this study were the following:

RQ^{1}: What aspects of advanced coursework from high school contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education?

RQ^{2}: What writing activities prepared these students for academic writing in higher education?

Individual interviews and focus group sessions provided a forum for students to reflect and share their experiences regarding college readiness and college writing readiness in relation to their prior participation in high school-level advanced coursework. Five themes emerged from the data, along with three sub-themes. The themes that emerged for both research questions and from each source of data were 1) fostered college mindset, 2) collegiate academic exposure, 3) foundational knowledge, and 4) skill development, writing opportunities, and writing skill enhancement. The three sub-themes that emerged from the data were 1) misalignment between

college and high school academic expectations, 2) misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations, and 3) lack of citation knowledge.

Participant Summaries
Table 3

Participant Academic Information

Pseudonym	High School GPA	Number of Advanced Courses in which Participated	Number of Advanced Courses Completed	SAT Scores	ACT Scores	Number of College Acceptances	College GPA
Neal	3.5-4.0	22	22	1300-1499	27-33	1	3.5-4.0
Martina	3.5-4.0	5	5	1200-1299	22-26	7	3.5-4.0
Rosa	3.5-4.0	21	17	1100-1199	22-26	11	3.5-4.0
Lee	3.5-4.0	22	22	1100-1199	22-26.	5	3.4-2.5

The participant summaries derived from background information reported in the Student Demographic Questionnaires. The participant summaries provided a snapshot of the specific demographics represented in the study, as well as important context related to the participants' educational histories. In order to be eligible to move forward in the study, participants had to meet the following criteria: currently enrolled in a four-year college or university and classified as a second-year student, self-identify as Black/African American, and have completed at least one advanced course in a U.S. high school. There were a total of four participants in the study. Each participant has received a pseudonym.

The first participant, Neal, was a student from a medium-sized city in a Southeastern state. He self-identified as an 18-20-year-old male and as Black/African American and Native American. Neal stated that at least one guardian had obtained a four-year college degree. In terms of his high school academic history, Neal reported attending both public and private schools, making straight A's throughout their secondary academic career, and having a grade point average (GPA) that fell within the 3.5-4.0 range. The private high school that Neal attended was ranked as an *A* school and labeled as *#2 in the best Christian high schools in Fayetteville, NC Area* (Niche.com Inc., n.d.).

While the Title One status and percentage of students with reduced or free lunch was unable to be located for this school, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Private School Universe Survey (2020-2021) revealed that 12.6% of the private high school's student population was Black/African American. The second high school that Neal attended was not a Title One high school and had about 47% of students directly certified or eligible for free or reduced lunch. This high school was also a public high school with the latest school grade of a "B" for the 2019 academic term, had the distinction of the Purple Star Award for being military friendly, with about 31% Black/African American student population (North Carolina School Report Cards (NC Report Card), n.d.).

Additionally, Neal shared that he participated in and completed 22 advanced placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or Honors level courses in the subjects of Science, History, Math, Network Security, and English during high school experience. In terms of writing activities, Neal described the number of papers written during high school as *definitely a lot,* with a maximum length of three pages that were of *easy to medium intensity*. Neal applied to only one college and received admission to that one college but was offered scholarships to two

to three schools in other states. His SAT score fell in the range of 1300-1499, and his ACT score fell in the 27-33 score range. Neal did not receive any non-admission letters to college and was not waitlisted for any colleges or universities. At the time of the study, he was a second-year college student majoring in Computer Science and had been awarded the chancellor's and dean's list, a scholarship through the University's Honors College, an emerging leaders alumnus, and an IC CAE Scholar. Neal's collegiate GPA fell between the range of 3.5-4.0.

The second participant in the study was Martina, another student from a medium-sized city in a Southeastern state. She self-identified as a Black/African American female between the ages of 18-20. She also shared that at least one guardian had graduated from a four-year college or university. Martina attended a Title One public high school that was last rated as a "B" school through the North Carolina School Report Cards (NC Report Card, n.d.), with a 42.5% Black/African American student population, and has about 67% students that either is directly certified or eligible for free and reduced lunch (NCES CCD, 2020-2021). At her high school, Martina reported making All A's and a few B's and having a GPA that fell within the 3.5-4.0 range.

Additionally, Martina participated in and completed five advanced courses that were either labeled *honors* or "*AP*" in the subjects of Environmental Science, Biology, Statistics, Microeconomics, and Macroeconomics. In terms of writing activities from high school, Martina reported having to write at least one essay per year during high school that was around one to three pages long and described the essays as *easy*. In terms of her college entrance experience, Martina stated that she applied to eight colleges and received admission to seven. She was denied admission from zero schools but waitlisted for one. Martina scored between 1200-1299 on the SAT, scored between 22-26 on the ACT, and was offered scholarships from seven colleges. She

was a second-year student at the time of the interview, majoring in Health Systems Management and minoring in Biology. She had a GPA in the 3.5-4.0 range and had received accolades in speech tournaments at the time of the study.

The third study participant, Rosa, was a student from a suburb of a medium-sized city in a Southeastern state. She self-identified as an 18-20-year-old Black/African American heterosexual woman that used the pronouns (she/her). Rosa shared that at least one guardian had received a postgraduate degree. Additionally, Rosa attended a public high school that was last rated a *B* school through the NC Report Card (n.d.), in which Black students made up about 15% of the total student population (NCES CCD, 2020-2021). Rosa's high school was not a Title One high school, but 52% of students were either directly certified or eligible for free and reduced lunch (NCES CCD, 2020-2021). During high school, Rosa participated in 21 advanced courses and completed a total of 17 advanced courses. The advanced courses that Rosa took were categorized as either Honors or AP courses and for the subjects of English, History, Math, Science, Spanish, and Business. She made mostly A's and B's in high school with a 3.5-4.0 GPA.

Regarding writing experiences in high school, Rosa stated that she wrote less in high school than in college, writing about three or four essays a month that was one to four pages in length. She also noted that the essays for her AP classes were more difficult than the ones written for the honors level classes and that the longest essay length was between four and six pages. On standardized college entrance exams, Rosa scored between 1100-1199 on the SAT and 22-26 on the ACT. She applied to 13 colleges for admission, received 11 acceptance letters and one non-admission letter, and was waitlisted for one college or university. Rosa also received scholarship

offers from eight schools. At the time of the study, Rosa was a second-year Pre-Business Administration major with a collegiate GPA that fell within the range of 3.5-4.0.

The final participant of the study was a student from a small suburban community near two medium-sized cities in the Southeastern region of the United States named Lee. She self-identified as a Black/African American female between the ages of 18-20 and reported that she had at least one guardian graduate from a four-year college or university. Lee attended a Title One high school that had approximately 72% of students directly certified or eligible for free and reduced lunch (NCES CCD, 2020-2021). Lee's high school's last school rating was a *B* with a 36% Black/African American student population. During high school, Lee participated in and completed 22 honors courses and three advanced placement courses. These advanced courses were in the subjects of Music (Vocal Performance), Spanish, health science, math, history, English, biology, chemistry, environmental science, anatomy and physiology, nursing fundamentals, Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, world history, American history, pre-calculus, English literature and composition, and English language and composition. Lee made all A's in high school and had a GPA between the range of 3.5-4.0.

Regarding essay writing experience in high school, Lee reported having written at least 100 essay papers that were moderate to hard in terms of rigor. The longest essay she wrote in high school was 10 pages. Lee completed two standardized college entrance exams, with SAT scores ranging between 1100-1199 and ACT scores that ranged between 22-26. She applied to six universities for admission and received five acceptances for admission, one non-acceptance, and was waitlisted for one university. Lee was offered a scholarship by four colleges. Lee was a second-year political science major with a collegiate GPA within the range of 3.4-2.5 at the time of the study.

As part of the research methods, an electronic questionnaire was used to collect the demographic information of all participants in the study. The demographic questionnaire prompted students to report demographic information: such as age, racial and ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and any other information the student decides is important for the researcher to know about who they are. The questionnaire also allowed students to reflect and share their high school academic history, which included their graduation year, final high school GPA, descriptions of academic experience including the number and types of advanced courses taken in high school, and recollection of writing activities in high school. Additionally, the demographic questionnaire asked students to share their college entrance experience, including the number of colleges applied to, acceptances received, and entrance exam scores. Finally, current experiences in higher education, including participants' years of study, major, GPA, honors/recognitions, and evaluation of experience thus far, including positive events and challenges faced, were requested in the questionnaire.

Data collected from the open-ended questionnaires allowed the researcher to develop the participant case summaries presented in this section that provides further context to the academic backgrounds and experiences of the participants. All four participants were recruited through an honors college at a Southeastern university. Between the four participants, a total of 66 advanced courses. All participants had collegiate GPAs that fell between the ranges of 2.5-4.0 at the time of the study. Further, each participant had at least one guardian that graduated from a four-year university, and altogether the four participants were granted admission to a total of 24 colleges and universities, as well as offered scholarships from 22 schools.

This context is important because it offers important insight into the backgrounds of the participants that the researcher considered in relation to their perceptions of college readiness

and college writing readiness. Overall, the demographic information from the participants revealed that the study participants were a group of high-achieving Black/African American students with vast experiences in advanced courses, thus deeming them credible sources to speak to the potential impact of high school advanced course participation on academic and writing readiness at the collegiate level. The following sections of the chapter explains the themes that emerged from the study, as well as describe how those themes derived from the data. The chapter then concludes with a summary of the key findings.

Introduction to Study Themes

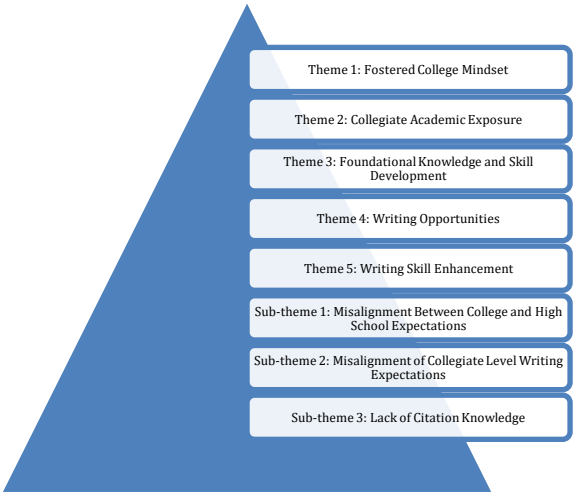
The generated themes for this study were derived from data collected through three data collection methods including a student demographic questionnaire, individual interviews, and one focus group session. While the questionnaire data were analyzed and used to create a case summary of participants, the interview and focus group data were coded for themes using the transcripts of each interview. The transcripts for the individual interviews and the focus group interview were generated from the electronic platform Zoom. Prior to the coding process, transcripts were verified for accuracy through a re-listening of each recorded interview and a correction process of the electronic transcripts. For each interview, the coding process included precoding or initial coding through the pulling of raw words from the transcript, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2020).

The five themes and three sub-themes that emerged is discussed in the following sections. These themes were: fostered college mindset, collegiate academic exposure, foundational knowledge and skill development, writing opportunities, and writing skill enhancement. The sub-themes were misalignment between college and high school expectations, lack of citation knowledge, and misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations.

These themes and sub-themes is discussed based on the research question they are aligned to. Three of the themes emerged in relation to research question one regarding the aspects of advanced coursework from high school that contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education. The other two themes were established to reflect the perceptions of writing activities that prepared these students for academic writing in higher education, which was explored through the second research question. Each theme is described and includes an explanation of the pattern that led to the development of the theme. Evidence of the themes were also included in the interview transcripts.

Figure 2

Study Themes



Theme 1: Fostered College Mindset

An important aspect of advanced coursework from high school that contributed to the participants' academic success in postsecondary education was a fostered college mindset. For these students, a fostered college mindset was a mindset or perspective about college and the college experience fostered through their secondary educational experiences. Each participant described moments when their high school experiences helped them foster a college mindset.

Participant Reflections

In terms of fostered college mindsets, Neal recounted how work ethic was instilled in students that participated in advanced courses:

> But as far as like how high school courses prepare me for college, I say probably that work ethic, instilling a work ethic in me like that I think that's probably the most important thing from taking ap courses is having the work ethic, and not getting lazy or like feel like oh, this is more than I could take. Well, no, you have taken like hard courses before so it's like. You know this course is literally just like hey you do your work, you study for your test, and you make a good grade that's kind of the same high school.

Neal recognized that taking advanced courses such as AP courses showed him how to build a strong work ethic and maintain it. He related his experience with "hard courses" in high school to that of taking *hard courses* in college.

Neal acknowledged that the former experience helped motivate him to continue to push forward in challenging courses later on during his collegiate experience, indicating that the instilling of the work ethic during his high school years positively impacted the way that he persevered in college. Also, for Neal, college expectations setting in his high school advanced courses also contributed to a fostered college mindset. Neal reflected on some of the ways in which his advanced courses during the latter half of high school impacted some of his expectations about college:

> Yeah so definitely like junior senior year and those ap courses were like telling you like, you know how much of a work ethic, you need to have and how you're gonna be like writing papers and mostly get used to doing this because you're going to do it in college so it's like you know the work that you're doing now is college level like work or it's like that's why it's like transferable to colleges

> because it's like college level work so there's like that idea that what you're doing is like what you would be doing in college, which is more or less true.

Similarly, Martina shared in her individual interview how her experiences in advanced courses enhanced her perceptions of the purpose and benefit of school:

> I mean I used to view school as just just, I just have to do it, but if I actually try to understand it and can actually be interesting and be applied to real life. I mean school doesn't always have to be just stuff that you memorized. There's real life applications. and it can be used, maybe even in the workforce. I think that's pretty much it.

Martina connected her experience in labs and learning how to access resources in her AP Biology class to a shift in mindset about her schooling experience, that in turn shifted her perspective of how to view college.

While Neal and Martina both reflected on how their mindsets about college were fostered more directly, Rosa's fostered college mindset came from her exposure to the college classroom experience as a high school student in advanced courses. Rosa stated that:

> I think, well, whenever it came to like the debate side of like that's kind of more of how the College classroom is set up. Well, for the most part it's more of an open discussion, I would say, and some you know, like some professors are like they just want to facilitate the conversation and that's kind of what was happening whenever we did like the debate portion.

Classroom debates showed Rosa what it was like to be in a classroom that centered around facilitated discussion that helped Rosa understand what to expect in a college classroom setting and the types of learning activities that she would be engaging in at that level. However, Rosa

also stated:

> Honestly, some of the information I feel like did help me prepare for college, but it was mainly also like outside of school activities that I would do like I participated in.

Through Rosa's interview, she also believed that her experiences in advanced courses helped prepare her for college and have a mindset for college, but she acknowledged participating in extracurricular activities that had influenced more of her mindset around college and the college experience.

Lee spoke more explicitly about the ways in which advanced courses helped her foster a college mindset. She described how advanced courses in high school allowed her to be with like-minded people and thus helped them to collectively develop a college mindset:

> I was in classes, where people were like- minded, they wanted to like do really prominent things in the world, they wanted to go to said universities. We know the UNC systems are really good, so I think I kind of still keep up with some of those people and they're, most of them are in UNC system schools umm but, we just we just wanted to be successful and kind of like if we if we had to stretch ourselves kind of stretch yourself the most that we could.

Lee described how her experiences in advanced courses and the instructors were intentional with the development of the students' college mindsets and college knowledge:

> It was effective in the way that it framed my mindset for like you, you will probably have to you might have to read 30 pages, a week of something or you know you might have to go through this whole packet of material and create a you know major project for a midterm or final but in ways it was like teaching us stuff that I've learned here I'm at this

> collegiate institution on the world and the big things are happening in the world in the way people that maybe you don't look like me, maybe they'll have such a similar experience of living their life just wasn't as emphasize um.

Overall, all four participants expressed how their participation in advanced coursework helped shift their perspective on college and led to the development of a college mindset.

Theme 2: Collegiate Academic Exposure

The second prevalent theme that emerged from the data regarding the aspects of advanced coursework from high school that contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education was Collegiate Academic Exposure. For the participants in the study, collegiate academic exposure referred to their exposure to the expectations, college knowledge, and skills needed to be successful academically at the collegiate level.

Participant Reflections

For Neal, the collegiate academic exposure that occurred through his experiences in advanced courses also happened through the college expectations setting that took place in those courses. Neal described having a large workload in his advanced courses that were similar to the workload expectations in college:

> Taking those ap courses and having like a large workload for those ap courses because they've tried to like prepare you, for I guess college rigor on instilled like more positive work ethic because, like one class when ap class that I would say probably had the most work out, like all ap courses like to just probably APUSH (Advanced Placement U.S. History) which I took, like my sophomore year. And oh my gosh that was that was a lot of work, I I honestly like haven't done that, like honestly kind of compare like I remember in high school I kind of compared

> like a lot of stuff to that is like you know okay I've done more work than like what I'm doing now so it's like, if I can, if I can do what I did before than I could definitely like do this now, so I kind of look at, so I definitely think that's had a positive effect as well because it's like oh I've done like I'm not from unfamiliar to having to do a lot of work like I definitely can do it.

Throughout the interview, Neal continued to stress the value of having a strong work ethic that was reinforced in the advanced courses he participated in and an important trait to have to be successful at the collegiate level. As such, in terms of collegiate academic exposure, Neal emphasized not only his work ethic, but how his experience of having a larger workload in advanced courses helped prepare him for the academic workload expectations at the collegiate level.

For Martina, collegiate academic exposure happened during her educational experience in advanced courses through her exposure to college coursework and access to resources, as well as collaborative learning experiences that she was able to participate in. Regarding her exposure to college coursework and access to resources, Martina stated:

> Definitely uhh. The courses that I took from junior and senior year helped tremendously. There's a lot of concepts. I thought that could be totally different, very, extremely difficult, but really it all kinds of, kind of builds off of each other. Everything we've talked about in AP Biology, we're, we're kind of reviewing right now and then building off of that and take those classes.

Martina recognized from her exposure to specific disciplinary concepts in an advanced course that there were direct connections to the academic expectations that she would have in her major at the collegiate level. In terms of collaborative learning experiences as collegiate academic

exposure, Martina reflected on how those experiences prepared her for the group work expectations that are common at the collegiate level:

> I think for AP Biology, the the labs helped me realize that I am going to have to do group work a lot more than I might want to and learn how to use the equipment that I may not be familiar with and working with others. And even if I'm the only Black person in the group you know and maybe not the first person someone would look to for help. I'm still going to have to work with those people.

In this reflection, Martina also acknowledged how she learned to not only anticipate collaborative learning experiences at the collegiate level but also that these experiences may also require her to work with other students from different backgrounds. During the focus group session, Martina spoke further about how her participation in advanced courses provided her benefits through receiving college credit. She stated:

> I feel like for me, I would have definitely had to cram a lot more classes into my schedule, because sometimes some semesters. I may want to take just 12 credit hours really just focus on those classes, that if I didn't take certain APs in high school, then I would have had to take those general education requirements in addition to the major and the PA school stuff, so I also feel like not only with just time, like the amount of credit hours per semester, but actual knowledge that I gained in those AP classes, I can honestly say really did help me. So, it kind of prepared me for group work that I have now.

Rosa recalled how she had the opportunity to have college classroom experience in her advanced courses:

> Of the AP US history activity like we were pretty much, classmates were going back and forth about like why you know they were arguing their point for their side, and then the instructor would come in and then you know talk more, facilitate the conversation, and then you know go back to you know classmate saying something. So I feel like that activity kind of mirrored how the College experience is like in the classroom.

For Rosa, participating in constructive debates in her advanced courses have her exposure to the collegiate academic experience through a similar class structure centered around discussion and the development of strong arguments.

Lee referenced how exposure to a collegiate-level assignment structure provided her exposure to collegiate academic expectations. She stated that:

> Those classes did help me somewhat to understand kind of the mindset of how college works like lots of readings, but another thing I I only took AP classes and honors classes, I didn't take I didn't do dual enrollment or take classes at a college or university before I got to college.

Though Lee calls references an understanding of a "mindset" about how college works, she specifically describes an assignment structure at the collegiate level that she was able to experience in her advanced courses. Lee also shared how her instructor's transparency about the college experience helped provide her collegiate knowledge exposure as well:

> But she she talked to us about college and she talked to us about how she even she even talked to us about like big university versus small university and her experience. At a small university she kind of share with us some like adult things and even in our readings like adult concepts that even concepts of like

> adolescence kind of like transitioning into the adult world were discussed and I would say in that class.

In the focus group session, Lee also reflected on the benefit of participating in advanced classes in high school and collegiate academic exposure. She shared:

> And if I hadn't taken advantage of the ap courses, I took and I just what I wouldn't have known like the amount of things you might have to read in a week's time or a month's time to study on like chapters and just the format of using the book, as well as lectures to understand content. Because before my advanced courses, there was a book, but the book, once you got what you got from the book, like, for example, a math class once you understand the formula you didn't need the book anymore, really.

Across the individual interviews and focus group sessions, collegiate academic exposure was an aspect of advanced coursework and participation in those classes that contributed to their academic success.

Theme 3: Foundational Knowledge and Skill Development

Foundational knowledge and skill development was a theme that represented the final aspect of advanced coursework that contributed to postsecondary success for the participants in the study. Overall foundational knowledge and skill development denoted the development of collegiate foundational knowledge and skills necessary for academic success.

Participant Reflections

In his individual interview, Neal described how his critical thinking skills were enhanced through his participation in advanced coursework:

> Um so yeah let's say like I guess that's probably one of the big differences between advanced courses and like more basic courses, is that they focus more on the critical thinking abstract kind of concept like what do you know about this topic versus oh, who did this, or who did that or you know what have were like like multiple choice like facts facts questions you know just kind of memorizing this is more like getting you to think. They prepare me for college, because they stimulated my brain, like making me think more about concepts because that's one thing about college that I'm learning is that is very varied in terms of like the classes, that you take, and the things you learn. But it just allows you to really interpret different things and interpret prompts and scenarios and multiple fashions because you have been you're used to like critically thinking about a certain topic or subject really expanding like your vocabulary and yeah just really being able to think just improving your thinking skills with critical thinking skills.

For Neal, critical thinking and the development of conceptual knowledge were foundational knowledge and skills that were beneficial for his college preparation and success.

In her individual interview, Martina spoke more specifically about the foundational knowledge and skill development from advanced coursework that contributed to her postsecondary success. Martina discussed the foundational knowledge needed for her field of study at the collegiate level:

> There is one, definitely AP Biology. That has helped me a lot. And I'm minoring in Biology, and taking a biology lab right now. And so that just the background information helps a lot. Like with the formulas and I kind of not memorize, but I, I understand things a lot more. It's when you do get to those college level classes

> they're not, the professor is not as likely to go back and review. Okay, let's review what this is, you're kind of just expected to know what it is ahead of time and then just build off of that knowledge. So I'm really, really glad that I took AP, biology in high school and statistics helped us help as well, like using a graphing calculator.

For Martina, her advanced coursework in AP Biology was necessary for her success in her college minor and the lab course she was taking at the time of the study. She also specifically acknowledged how college professors do not review much of that foundational disciplinary knowledge, rather they expect students to come to their classes having that background information already.

In the focus group session, Martina offered two additional reflections that showed how foundational knowledge was beneficial for her during her college coursework. She shared:

> Because, like, for example, this ap environmental science class I took helps me a lot with the general biology that I'm in right now.

She also elaborated more by also sharing :

> I know what it means, because I took this AP class, so I mean and that's something that really helped me just with taking less credit hours per Semester and actually having some background knowledge ahead of time going into that class.

Martina gave firsthand accounts of how the foundational knowledge and skill development benefited her during her college academic experience for the group to reflect on as well.

Rosa reflected on moments during her collegiate experience when she realized that someone would reference some of the foundational knowledge they learned in high school during that college-level class. She recounted:

> Because in some courses like like, for example, like a history course like the AP US History course, then I go into college and I hear all these like. Someone would reference something and I'm like oh, I remember learning that like back then in AP US History or umm you know just really to help me remember things, and then to you know, become more knowledgeable. So if they do mention that, like in a college class, I remember firsthand learning that and then being able to I guess share in the discussion.

Rosa also shared her thoughts on the benefit and impact of advanced course participation in relation to college preparation:

> I think I might have touched on earlier, but I feel like the AP level classes were the ones that were closely related to what we do in college now. Ummm just based off of like the curriculum and the content, because like I only did take AP statistics for a few weeks, because then Covid happened and we've never really got back to taking those classes, but from what the few weeks I was in there umm the material that we learned was basically identical to the intro like statistics course that I took.

She acknowledged specifically that advanced courses like AP courses were closely related to college courses because of the curriculum and content. Rosa was able to provide a clear example of when she recognized how the foundational knowledge learned in high school was relevant to her college-level coursework.

While Lee did not speak specifically about the ways in which content knowledge learned in high school was beneficial to her success in college, she did describe specific foundational skills that were of benefit. Lee shared:

> I took I took AP Literature and that class was more centered on analyzing some plays, which I'm doing right now for a course and I don't think I've done that, in another course before. But that kind of, that analyzing a play and like writing papers that kind of like draw analysis on plays are kind of helping me now, and I think back to like what I had to do, then, and like reading a play, kind of understanding characters and stuff. I would say that most students kind of get that experience, even if you're not in an AP or honors class but again, we were assigned readings and you had to cover course material so I'd say that would also be beneficial.

Similarly, to what her peers reflected on in their interviews, Lee connected a foundational skill learned during her advanced coursework in high school to her coursework in higher education. While Martina gave specific examples of the benefits of the foundational knowledge she received through her advanced coursework participation during the focus group session, Lee reflected on a negative experience she may have had if she had not participated in high school advanced coursework. She stated:

> If I hadn't taken advanced courses in high school, I think it definitely would have been a culture shock to learn the amount of content, you have to read.

Lee recognized that the foundational knowledge and skill development she was provided in high school advanced courses was necessary. Ultimately, advanced coursework during high school provided them with the foundational knowledge and skill development needed to be successful at

the collegiate level.

Sub-theme 1: Misalignment Between High School and College Expectations

The three themes that emerged from the data all highlighted specific components of advanced courses that the participants perceived as beneficial to their postsecondary success. However, while the interviews provided significant insight regarding the aspects of advanced coursework that contributed to students' postsecondary success, the data also highlighted some other important aspects of those experiences. One such aspect was a misalignment between high school and college expectations. While not all of the participants shared insight to this perceived misalignment, the majority of the participants did.

As such, misalignment between high school and college expectations was a sub-theme that emerged from the data. For the participants, whose responses touched on this sub-theme, misalignment between high school and college expectations meant that there were high school expectations that differed from expectations the participants had at the collegiate level. Some of the misalignment also occurred as a lack or need that the participants felt would have been beneficial for academic success at the collegiate level.

Participant Reflections

Martina reflected on the structure of the high school classroom and how there were clear distinctions between what high school instructors expected of students versus what college professors expect from students. She stated that:

> I mean in high school, we're always told to not talk, but in college it's like the professors are trying to get us to talk and raise our hands and participate.

Martina acknowledged how the expectations in college were almost opposite of what her high school teachers expected in the classroom. Similarly, Rosa described some of the misaligned

expectations between high school and college. For Rosa, the rigor and some of the non-academic skills needed for college were not fostered during her high school experience:

> In high school, but that probably was because the classes, the material wasn't as hard, I want to say. like I feel like in college, it is a bit more, and you are doing more things, then in high school and like now I have to become better at managing my time because in high school like I you know I had like a strict schedule and now it's like me trying to work and make a strict schedule, so that I can save time for like you know improving in my studies.

Rosa recognized that things like scheduling and time management were independent responsibilities in the collegiate setting, whereas in high school, these things were handled for her. Similarly, Lee highlighted how independent prioritization and action were needed at the collegiate level more so than at the high school level:

> And then college was a different system, but even though high school umm kind of had the intention or sometimes has an intention more now focused towards colleges, it's not developed or like shifted enough gears towards college readiness, so, as I explained earlier, it just feels like a different system like if you if your goal is to get really good grades in high school, you can do that. If you do what's expected of you, but in college, if you want that, if you want success is, you have to prioritize what you want to do prioritize kind of this mental strategy of how can I be really strategic and doing some certain assignments, maybe more certain assignment maybe less to get a desired outcome, or to even be confident and like learn what you know that you should be learning. It's different and more creative strategies.

Lee differentiates the two schooling systems where in high school, there are more supports set up for your success, but in college, strategic thinking and planning are needed to be successful. For these participants, the high school expectations that they were held to differed from the expectations placed on them as college students.

Theme 4: Writing Opportunities

In terms of the second research question which aimed to explore the writing activities that prepared the advanced course participants for academic writing in higher education, two themes and two sub-themes emerged from the data. The first theme that emerged was Writing Opportunities. Each participant described different writing opportunities that they were able to experience through the advanced course participation in high school. Writing opportunities for these students meant exposure and opportunities to explore different types of writing activities at the postsecondary level. Thus, due to their advanced coursework participation, these students had opportunities to engage in writing activities that were similar to the writing experiences they would have at the collegiate level.

Participant Reflections

Neal reflected on how the writing opportunities prevented him from coming to college without having proper writing experiences. He stated that:

> Um, I think they prepare me pretty well. Um I think they prepared me pretty well and just by getting used to I’m writing papers like not having not like coming to college and then like oh, the first time I’ve ever written a paper is like oh I’ve never like like I like I say like they prepared me in the sense that, when I came to college, the first time that, like the first time, having to write a paper it hasn't been in college, but like in high school like I’ve done it before.

For Neal, the familiarity with writing papers in high school was a benefit of his participation in advanced coursework. However, this was not the case for all participants. Martina briefly shared the writing opportunities she had by stating:

> I remember one really, really major project. We had our sophomore, all sophomores had to write. I don't remember how many pages, but I don't think it was over 3. This paper about any topic of their choice, so I chose the topic of African traditional dances and perform like African dance in front of the class. And most of it was mostly just for show and not really for like you know enhancing our writing skills.

Although Martina was able to describe a writing opportunity that she recalled from high school, she still questioned the intent behind the assignment.

Rosa shared a number of instances where writing opportunities were present in her high school advanced courses. Rosa described short answer essay writing:

> Well, I remember mainly, I guess like for AP US history, we would have to take tests, which require us to write essays. Because basically the whole structure of like the class was to prepare for the ap exam that would happen in the spring, of every year. So we would try and like write this long answer question. Practice how to answer The short answer question. Ummm write essays that required us to pull in information from different documents.

She also recalled how a style of writing that she had the opportunity to practice was beneficial later on in one of her college courses. She stated:

> So the assignments, like, for my business communication course later on semester we're going to have to do a persuasive memo and presentation so learning how to

> write persuasively back in AP Language I can pull that information from there and then apply it to this new.

Rosa also reflected on the benefits of the writing opportunities that she had in high school and the impact on her success at the postsecondary level. Rosa shared:

> And I feel like That kind of structure helped me whenever it came to like writing college essays or because, like even in the class. We had an assignment, where we wrote our college essay or like one of the common application essay prompts. So I feel like that was very realistic very, I can't think of the word, but like very helpful. As far as like whenever it came to applying for college and then actually in college.

During the focus group session, Rosa elaborated on her writing opportunities in high school with the group by stating:

> I feel like I guess high school writing kind of set you up in a way for college writing because it can be like in college good writing so can be different across disciplines, so I feel like from high school it kind of taught you how to write I guess pretty much basically for anything but, as you advance into like your major you take on a particular style of writing so for like within like if you're at like in science, or more writing I guess like lab reports and all that type of thing but what's in business it's more of you know, like business report analytic reports and just going more specific into your discipline, so I feel like high school gave you like a basic foundation of you know, sentence structure and you know like grammar and things but college allows you to expand upon that and write more towards your you know future writing.

Rosa was able to further make the connection between high school and college writing activities that she had also described during her individual interview.

Lee also recounted a couple of significant writing opportunities during her individual interview. She discussed the opportunity to practice in-class essays during high school:

> You know, if you take it home and you're allowed to like do it home, you only have limited time to do it, so when it comes to finals sometimes in proving your competency you only have so much time, and that class, allow me to kind of understand um that that's a possibility and that it's probably something that might happen in college and then it's it's beneficial I think in person essays have their benefits.

Lee was able to make a connection between the in-class essay writing opportunity in high school and the implications of that opportunity for college writing. Similarly, Lee also stated:

> But the conc--, the concepts, I learned about like how to write for college, we went over, we kind of did in class like maybe how you write a like an in-class paper that might may serve as like a final or midterm which is which are definitely things I've definitely had to do now as a second year.

Aside from the implications of collegiate-level writing, these opportunities for in-class essays also opened Lee's eyes to other college structures, such as assessments at the collegiate level. While each participant had varying degrees of writing opportunities in high school, the opportunities themselves were mostly deemed valuable across the board and offered them exposure to what was to come.

Theme 5: Writing Skill Enhancement

The final theme that emerged in regard to the second research that explored the writing activities that prepared the students for academic writing in higher education was Writing Skill Enhancement. Throughout the individual interviews and the focus group session, participants described writing skill development and ways in which their writing became better based on some of their writing experiences in high school. Thus, writing skill enhancement for these students was the writing skill developed through instruction and course activities.

Participant Reflections

For Neal, the emphasis on writing in his advanced courses provided him the opportunity to improve upon supporting claims with evidence and how to apply different perspectives in his writing. He shared:

> English Four. I know we had, we were like as far as writing experience for those, like our tests in our quizzes would be like free response, a lot of like free response questions like we would have like. You would have to give like there would be like a like a topic or concept and you would have to give your position, and then you would have to back it out with like evidence, you know, so you have to give like your topic you're like like your your introduction or like hypothesis and then you would have to back it up with evidence and it wasn't necessarily a right or wrong answer, but your answer would be right if you knew how to back up and provide evidence, for your answer, as compared to their just me right or wrong answer. um they helped me prepare for college writing because in college they allow you to kind of look at multiple stances of the topic, rather than just seeing a

> topic from just one side you can kind of like look at all different kinds of perspectives of a topic, rather than just like looking at it from one perspective.

Neal connected specific writing activities in high school to the writing expectations in college. Further, Neal described specifically a writing skill that was fostered during his high school advanced course participation.

Martina's writing experiences differed greatly from the other participants, as her she felt that the most beneficial preparation she received for academic writing at the collegiate level occurred through her participation in a pre-college summer program at her university. Nonetheless, Martina reflected on some of the writing skill enhancement that occurred during her high school advanced courses. She stated:

> Freshman year of high school. We mostly focused on grammar, which I still kept some of that stuff you should just know to put a period at the end of the sentence and what to capitalize.

Although her reflection was brief, Martina was able to still share how the grammar focus enhanced her writing skills, as the tools learned were things she still used in her writing at the time of the interview.

Rosa on the other hand had vast writing experiences in her high school advanced courses that she was able to share during the individual interview and focus group session. During the interview, Rosa stated:

> Ummm, well for one I guess, high school did help me with college writing by thinking more about the overall message about what you're trying to say and like how to convey it because I remember like whenever I was like way back in umm like elementary and middle school, I was taught like for writing, we were more

> structured like grammar, and so we really like really we're trying to get the grammar base of writing but not really the whole message about like really how to construct that in a meaningful way so that you can make an impact on on the reader, so I feel like that formed from high school where I would learn how to really trying to make an impact on the reader is kind of what college writing is all about.

Rosa found that her writing skills were enhanced by being taught how to construct overall messages in high school. She also shared during the interview that she was taught how to integrate quotes into her essays and how to further engage readers with an essay. Rosa also reflected on how the writing skill enhancement that happened in high school went hand in hand with her refining her writing process for college. She stated:

> The AP Lang class and we wrote an essay all about that, like analyzing it, and so I feel like that whole process transfers to college because constantly like we write papers on like a certain article or maybe even a book and then gather our own thoughts about that and then put that into a paper in a professional way as well, I feel like they kind of work hand in hand both processes from high school to college.

The writing skill enhancement that Rosa experienced in high school was important to the enhancement of her overall writing process that she has had in college.

Lee was also able to recall specific examples of writing skill enhancement from her collegiate experience. She shared that:

> Doing some in class exams, writing some short essays, but kind of like developing speed and learning how to get your thoughts on paper in a quick way

> that um that hadn't really been emphasized before because before it was all about MLA format, maybe APA if your teacher really wanted to do that.

Lee's reflection on writing skill enhancement was brief, similar to Martina's as she felt there were also a lot of misalignments between high school and college writing experiences. However, Lee was able to identify a shift in how her writing skills were developed during her participation in her AP Language course during her junior year of high school and how that benefited her. Altogether, there were writing activities that the students were able to participate in during their high school careers that were of benefit to them later on when they became academic writers at the collegiate level. How their writing skills were enhanced by certain writing activities in high school was also evident through the individual interviews and the focus group session.

Sub-theme 2: Misalignment of Collegiate Level Writing Expectations

Similarly to the case for the first research question that addressed the aspects of high school advanced coursework that contributed to the participants' collegiate academic success, sub-themes emerged about the second research question that explored the writing activities that influenced these students' academic writing successes in college. The first sub-theme that emerged with regard to this question was a misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations. During the individual interviews and the focus group session, most participants alluded to this misalignment. In their experiences, the misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations was writing expectations held in high school that did not match with the academic writing expectations they have been held to at the collegiate level.

Participant Reflections

Neal described the difference in the significance of plagiarism in high school and college during his interview. He recounted:

> I definitely think I feel like there there's like more on the line with like college papers and essays because plagiarism it's like such a like like it was like such a big deal about plagiarism and college. So I was like like as far as like high school, I don't really remember my high school like being a huge deal about plagiarism because at least some colleges do.

Since plagiarism in his experience has been so much more emphasized and seems to hold more significance in college, Neal surmised that there was more to lose when making a writing mistake such as plagiarism. While Neal's main account of the misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations focused on the writing mistake of plagiarism, Martina shared multiple examples of misaligned expectations that she was held to at the high school level that was different from the expectations in college for writing. Martina described the difference in writing feedback from high school to college:

> I don't feel like in high school we received very much feedback with my writing. I feel like I was just told I was good at it because I can write a lot and make the argument. So I don't really feel like that helped prepare me for college.

Martina not only felt that there was a lack of feedback during her high school experience but also that the expectations for writing skills were also lower. In turn, she felt that those lower expectations for writing did not benefit her in college. She expounded on this further by also stating that:

> Because I mean in high school, teachers would say, oh, you know, you write a lot, so you're doing good. It's not about the quality of work, it's just how much you

> can write. And then once you get to college they're like oh, this needs to be correct.

Martina recognized that the difference in expectations in high school was to her detriment in college, as she was later told she needed improvement in her writing. Lastly, Martina specified a difference in page number requirements for essays at the high school and collegiate levels. She stated:

> I feel like in high school we wrote maybe three-page paper, maximum I mean. I took an honors course, an Honors 3700 course where we wrote a 10 page paper which I had never done before.

Martina acknowledged that the misalignment between page number requirements for high school and college led to inexperience regarding the more extended writing assignment at the collegiate level. She also elaborated more on some of the misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations during the focus group session by sharing the following:

> Knowing how to paraphrase that's something that college takes really seriously that high school for me at least didn't take that seriously. There are actual consequences for plagiarizing other people's work here in college so that's why I feel like it's pretty important to know how to word certain thing.

Her sentiments about plagiarism followed Neal's regarding this misalignment as well.

Rosa's experience with misaligned collegiate-level writing expectations had to do with the evaluation of the writing assignment differences. Rosa shared:

> Umm yea also like for collegiate writing it's not as they're not really as pressed about if you miss a comma somewhere. Mainly did you get the point across? Does this affect the reader somehow and is it like meaningful in some way? I'm saying

> more of like in college it's mainly focusing on the overall message and, like the yes, you may have some citation errors or you may have some punctuation errors and mistakes, but like that is not counted as much against you, as if you just like miss the whole point of like your I guess if you miss the whole piece, like, for your audience.

Rosa perceived that the evaluation of writing in college had more to do with the overall message the writer conveyed, as opposed to grammatical components in the writing. Lee, on the other hand, outright described the misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations as a lack of college preparation. She stated:

> And so I felt like there was a significant lack of preparation, especially in like writing papers and formatting like switching to different writing styles. If we're, if we're getting prepared for college, I think that writing, the writing styles emphasized would definitely be more prioritized and in high school to me it felt like a system of its own sort.

For Lee, different elements of writing needed to be prioritized more at the high school level to better prepare students for college-level writing. She presented similar sentiments with the group during the focus group session. She stated:

> The way that a lot of students um are like geared towards writing in high school or education you received before college isn't always the way that you write in college, so I ideally if they're ideally if there was more focused on like writing in a collegiate way for like how universities really take writing and then I think that, I think I think in that term, I think, in that case, it is important and building those skills early.

Many of the participants ultimately felt like writing activities and experiences were misaligned between high school and college.

Sub-theme 3: Lack of Writing Formats and Citation Knowledge

The final sub-theme that emerged from the data was *the Lack of Writing Formats and Citation Knowledge*. While a lack of writing formats and citation knowledge can be considered an example of a misalignment of collegiate-level writing expectations, most participants made specific comments about this issue. As such, a lack of writing formats and citation knowledge became a standalone sub-theme from the interviews and the focus group session. For the participants, lack of writing formats and citation knowledge was missing knowledge about writing formats and citation styles citations at the collegiate level that differed from the writing formats and citation styles of focus at the high school level.

Participant Reflections

Martina vocalized her frustrations about the difference between the writing and citation formatting used in high school and college. She stated:

> And then the citations, I only heard of MLA when I was in high school. I never knew there was any such thing as APA, Chicago, everything else, let alone different versions of it. Like APA 7, 8. and so that was definitely an adjustment.

Martina found that she had to adjust to this lack of knowledge once she was in college. She described further this lack of knowledge during the focus group by stating:

> I didn't even know about different citations like I thought MLA was the only thing that existed in high school that's all that we learned in the summer exposed to.

While this knowledge was not provided for her during her high school experience, her participation in a summer pre-college program helped fill in the gaps for her.

Similarly, Rosa also reflected on how one writing format was used predominantly in high school that was not predominantly used in her specific discipline in college. She shared that:

> So, first, I guess I'll start like at the very beginning um during that summer with UTOP. I took the U-WRT class, which was like the university writing beginner class to everybody is pretty much everyone's required to take, and that kind of set the tone for college writing I would say because I would have to how to learn how to use citations. Because in high school I used like a bunch of MLA if I did write papers, but in college, especially for business, you have to use APA umm seven so it's just learning about that and yeah just mainly learning more about citations.

Rosa did not specify whether or not she had heard of APA formatting before college but did note that it was a format she had to learn. Lee also shared how one writing format and citation style was focused on more in high school than in college. She stated:

> …before it was all about MLA format, maybe APA if your teacher really wanted to do that, I would say, At my school there was nothing about APA.

Lee expanded upon this lack of knowledge during the focus group as well. She shared:

> Ummhumm in high school, I wrote mostly in MLA too, and I think that a few projects we like we were encouraged to use APA, or like required to use APA, but it wasn't it wasn't a lot, so what happened when I got to college was that they, sometimes I would have options to use MLA or APA and I'd be conflicted on which one to use, because on the one hand, I know I have this. I know I know how to use this format of writing and citing things, but on the other hand, I feel like even in high school I definitely knew later on I have to use APA um but it

> just wasn't enforced in my curriculum so it's hard to like practice that, in practical terms.

Lee explicitly expressed that APA formatting was also not addressed in her high school. Although she had an awareness of the writing format in high school, she acknowledges that there were limited opportunities to practice with that format. Altogether, a majority of participants expressed that there was a lack of writing formats and citation knowledge during the high school experience.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings from the current research study. Data for this study were collected from four Black/African American students that participated in advanced coursework in high school through 10-20 minute open-ended questionnaires, 90-minute semi-structured interviews, and a two-hour focus session that were all conducted virtually. The questionnaire data were analyzed and used to create a case summary of participants that is presented earlier in the chapter. The themes that emerged from the interview and focus group data were also described and defined.

Further, this chapter included a plethora of participant reflections that have helped provide insight into the aspects of high school advanced coursework participation and writing activities that contributed to postsecondary success for the participants. The next and final chapter includes a discussion of the findings presented here in chapter four, a discussion of the themes of current literature and the theoretical framework that guided this study, as well as the implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

In this final chapter of the dissertation study, findings from the study are discussed in relation to current literature on college readiness and advanced coursework and the theoretical framework that guided this study. Data for this study were collected from four Black/African American students that participated in advanced coursework in high school, through 10–20-minute open-ended questionnaires and 90-minute semi-structured interviews conducted virtually. A two-hour focus group session was also used for data collection. Questionnaire data was then analyzed and used to create a case summary of participants and themes were developed from the interview and focus group session data.

The themes that emerged from the study were fostered college mindset, collegiate academic exposure, foundational knowledge and skill development, writing opportunities, and writing skill enhancement. The sub-themes that emerged were misalignment between college and high school expectations, lack of citation knowledge, and misalignment of collegiate level writing expectations. This chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical framework for this study. Using the theoretical framework, the themes are then be discussed and situated within the relevant literature. This is followed by policy implications of the study at the local, state, and national level, implications for teachers, implications for school personnel, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and lastly the conclusion.

Afrocentric Social Capital Theory

This study was guided by the Afrocentric Social Capital Theory, a human-centered evaluative framework of exclusionary and inequitable policies and practices. The framework combines the two social theories of Afrocentricity and Social Capital Theory. Social capital theory derived primarily from the works of two theorists, Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988),

but has since been expanded by other scholars. Bordieu's (1986) conceptualization of Social Capital Theory is associated with the concept of social networks, as the theory contends that social capital is accumulated through resources provided from social networks or connections that lead to obtaining economic and cultural capital. Simply put, capital which shows up in the form of access, resources, knowledge can be obtained socially through certain social connections (Bordieu, 1986). Similarly, Coleman (1988) viewed social capital as a result of relationships that allows individuals access to personal and professional enhancements. Relationships and networks can also include non-human associations, such as institutions.

When considering institutions, a *network*, the resources and support from said institutions functions then as a form of social capital. Stanton-Salazar (1997) conceptualized institutional support in the context of K-12 education, as a way for one to acquire school-based social capital. Per Stanton-Salazar's (1997) definition of institutional support, one such form of school-based social capital are courses, more specifically the types of courses that schools are able to offer. In this study, Black students' perceptions of the impact of advanced courses in high school was explored. Thus, advanced courses in high school were considered as institutional supports that led to acquiring social capital in higher education, which could in turn lead to increased postsecondary outcomes. Additionally, for this study Social Capital Theory was combined with the theory of Afrocentricity to create Afrocentric Social Capital Theory. Afrocentricity positions Africa as the origin of humanity and promotes human agency through this lens (Asante, 2011). In the field of education, Afrocentricity can be used as a tool to dismantle oppressive systems (Asante, 1991; 2011). An Afrocentric Social Capital Theory combines these two theories by functioning as a theoretical lens that evaluates exclusionary and inequitable policies and practices. The three guiding questions of this theoretical framework are:

1. Does this practice/policy consider exclusive practices for any member of humanity?
2. How is power and privilege manifested through the adoption of this practice/policy?
3. What resources are necessary for the prevention of exclusion and inequality for any member of humanity?

The perceived impact of high school advanced coursework toward perceptions of college readiness reveals an opportunity gap in college readiness for Black students. The following sections of the chapter highlights the themes based on the two research questions of focus in relation to other relevant literature and the Afrocentric Social Capital Theory that guided the study.

RQ1-What aspects of advanced coursework from high school contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education?

In terms of the aspects of advanced coursework from high school that contributed to African American students' postsecondary academic success, three overarching themes emerged from the data. Additionally, two sub-themes were present in the data about this research question. The sections below describe the themes in connection to current literature on college readiness, as well as the theoretical implications of the findings.

Theme 1: Fostered College Mindset

The first theme that emerged was *Fostered College Mindset*. Through the participants' statements, a fostered college mindset encompassed the different ways in which the students' thought processes and mindsets about college had been impacted by their participation in advanced coursework. For the participants, the instillation of work ethic, the relation of school to real world applications, mindsets around college classroom structures and college level skills, as

well as attitudes around collegiate course loads and academic personas were the aspects of fostered college mindsets that the participants experienced through their advanced high school courses. This theme aligned with other relevant literature that addressed the significance of a fostered college mindset, as the literature contended that the promotion of a college going to school culture and development of college knowledge were beneficial to college success (Hooker & Brand, 2010; Martinez et al., 2019).

While this aspect of advanced coursework is important to college success, especially Black students' college success, theoretical implications are telling. When considering the Afrocentric Social Capital theoretical framework, the data offer insight into how schools foster a college mindset. It was evident through the participants' responses that the level to which a college mindset was fostered in their high school experiences varied. This was clear through the differences in the participants' statements related to this theme. While all the participants alluded to a fostered college mindset in their interviews and through the focus group session, some of the participants had more to say related to this theme than others. Specifically, a majority of the participants made a couple or more statements that indicated their perception of the benefit of a fostered college mindset. However, one participant had limited words about how their college mindset was fostered through their experiences in advanced coursework. This variation in the level to which a college mindset was fostered for each participant provides implications about equity and access in advanced courses.

Thus, when considering the first guiding question aligned to the theoretical framework, the practice of advanced courses being a space for fostered college mindset is exclusive to students whose school's advanced educational programs include this specific aspect of college preparation for students. In terms of the second guiding question of the theoretical framework

that addresses power and privilege gained through this practice, the data revealed that students were privileged with college knowledge due to this fostered college mindset they were provided through their advanced coursework in high school. This in turn, offered advantages for these students such as: having a stronger work ethic, as Neal described in his interview, the realization that schooling can be impactful for the workforce that Martina made, the understanding of college classroom structures and functions Rosa received, and the cognizance of college expectations had by Lee.

The data show that these students were privileged by the fostered college mindset in their advanced courses. However, it also reveals that this privilege may only be limited to certain students whose schools include this practice as part of their advanced course programs, further showing how this is an exclusive practice that comes with advanced course participation. Therefore, when it comes to the third guiding question from the theoretical framework that addresses the resources needed to prevent exclusive practices and inequality, the data further highlight the need for consistent quality and school practices in advanced course programming that impacts college readiness for students.

Theme 2: Collegiate Academic Exposure

The second theme that emerged from the data as an aspect of advanced coursework that contributed to the participants' postsecondary success was *Collegiate Academic Exposure.* Each participant provided insight into an aspect of collegiate academic exposure they experienced while participating in high school advanced courses. This exposure occurred as increased course load, opportunities for collaborative learning experiences, course discussion, and debate, as well as larger reading loads and extended college knowledge. Collegiate academic exposure as an aspect of advanced coursework participation that contributed to the students' postsecondary

success aligned with relevant literature on college readiness. Reid and Moore (2008) had similar findings, as they contended that advanced course participation enhanced their postsecondary success. Noeth and Wimberly (2002) also had comparable findings in their report, where students reported high school courses as a factor that was helpful to their college planning. Collegiate academic exposure through college-level coursework has also been a recommended practice to support increased academic achievement for students transitioning from high school to college (Morgan et al., 2018).

The data revealed that types of collegiate academic exposure was perceived as a contributing factor for postsecondary success for the participants. Further, each of the participants made a direct connection between their high school advanced course experiences and their collegiate experience thus far. Neal shared his feelings about his capability for the rigor of collegiate-level academics that came from the academic rigor he was exposed to in his advanced courses. Martina described how the course content and collaborative lab experiences prepared her discipline-specific specific courses she was enrolled in at the time of the study. Rosa mentioned that the class debates in her AP U.S. history course *mirrored* the classroom discussions and debates she experienced in her college classes. Lastly, Lee spoke about the number of readings for the advanced courses that helped her prepare collegiate-level reading assistants and discussed how her teacher provided important advice about the college transition process. Ultimately, all of the participants had some exposure to collegiate academics that they identified as a contributing factor to the postsecondary success they had achieved at the time of the study. However, this data also shows that while this exposure is important and beneficial, the types of exposure were different for each participant. This indicates that collegiate academic

exposure happens in numerous ways therefore providing students with various opportunities to encounter collegiate level academics.

As collegiate-level, this aspect of advanced coursework from an Afrocentric Social Capital lens, there are significant implications about the exclusivity and inequality that this exposure regarding college preparedness for all students. Since there is a potential that students do not receive the same collegiate academic exposure, as was the case for the participants in this study, it is evident then that collegiate academic exposure can be exclusive for certain students and can exclusively be presented to students. Further, college academic exposure does privilege students. This study showed that students who participated in advanced courses have the privilege of gaining collegiate academic exposure that places them at an advantage over other students. Therefore, the resources needed to prevent exclusion and inequality would be for this same exposure for all students at all levels. Additionally, a uniform way of providing collegiate academic exposure would also need to occur for this practice to benefit all students.

Theme 3: Foundational Knowledge and Skill Development

Foundational Knowledge and Skill Development was the third theme that emerged from the data. During the interviews and the focus group session, the participants reflected on their experiences gaining foundational knowledge and skills needed to be successful academically as college students. Neal mentioned how his critical thinking skills were enhanced in his advanced courses; while Lee discussed the opportunity, she was provided to strengthen her analytical skills in her AP Language course. Martina reflected on how the content she learned in her AP Biology class provided her with the foundational knowledge she needed as a biology major at the time of study and Rosa shared how information she learned in her AP U.S. History and AP Statistics courses were referenced later in the collegiate level courses for those disciplines. Ultimately, the

participants found direct connections between the skills and knowledge they learned in their high school advanced classes. This finding was consistent with findings from other related studies that acknowledged that participation in high school advanced courses contributed to disciplinary college readiness for Black students (Iatarola, 2016; Reid & Moore, 2008).

The emergence of Foundational Knowledge and Skill Development as a theme reveals the significance of having these components in the high school experience for students. Each of the participants alluded to a connection between what they had learned in their advanced high school courses and how it showed up in their college classes. Most of the participants were able to identify the specific course and discipline and make those connections to the college version of those courses. This data provides positive implications regarding the impact of high school advanced courses toward student's perceptions of college readiness. It implies that advanced high school courses are playing an important role in preparing students for college, one that includes providing students with the foundational knowledge and skills they need to be successful. While this is a positive found in advanced coursework participation for high school students, when considering inclusion and equality, there can be downfalls to this practice.

Therefore, in terms of the Afrocentric Social Capital theoretical framework, this practice is exclusive for only certain students. The findings from this study along with current literature both contend the significance of advanced courses for college readiness. The foundational knowledge and skill development described by each participant in this study further highlights the importance of participation in those classes as well. However, it begs the question as to what foundational knowledge and skills non-advanced course participants are provided in the course levels, they are enrolled in. Thus, in terms of the exclusivity, this educational practice thrives as an exclusive practice because the classes themselves are exclusive.

The literature also contends that participation in higher level classes such as advanced courses boost students at the collegiate level (Evans, 2018; Morgan et al., 2018; Roderick et al., 2009). However, not all students are offered this privilege, especially not Black/African American students who have historically been underrepresented in these courses and have disproportionately represented in the enrollment data (Ford, 1998; James et al., 2017; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). As such, students who do participate in advanced high school courses have the privilege of receiving exclusive foundational knowledge and skills that support their college preparation that they would not have otherwise. Lee directly expressed this sentiment during the focus group session, as she mentioned how it would have been a "culture shock" adapting to the amount of content and readings that are expected at the collegiate level. Thus, in terms of resources necessary for the prevention of this exclusive practices, opportunities for students to develop foundational knowledge and skills for the collegiate level is needed in all courses at the high school level, not just at the advanced level.

Sub-theme 1: Misalignment Between College and High School Expectations

The sub-theme that emerged in relation to the first research question offers important insight about the state of college readiness as it stands for students currently. Misalignment between college and high school expectations was heavily addressed in the individual interviews and the focus group session. Participants shared about different instances of misalignment between these different levels of schooling, from classroom structures and expectations where discussion is limited in high school but for many college classrooms a main classroom format, to lessons related to non-academic aspects of college that students would have benefitted from exposure to, to overall systemic differences, structures, and goals between each level of schooling. This insight reveals that advanced coursework participation is not the overarching

solution needed to address the college readiness issue. Rather, it is a supporting factor that can help lessen the issue, but not fix the issue.

From an Afrocentric Social Capital lens, the misalignment between the expectations needed at these two schooling levels is actually an issue that is relevant to all students. As such, while advanced coursework participation may allow for some privilege to occur for students that enroll in these classes, that privilege/advantage those students may receive is limited as misalignment between the high school and college classes exists in those spaces. A resource then needed to improve the inequality for students is cross-curricular exposure at all levels of education for students, where high school and university faculty work together to provide students with all of the necessary foundations needed to be successful at the postsecondary level.

Summary

Overall, the themes that emerged from the data are consistent with the literature addressing college and career readiness, advanced course participation, and college readiness, and literature on postsecondary success. The data reveal that Black/African American students that participated in advanced courses in high school perceived that the benefits of these courses on their postsecondary success were that their mindsets about college were fostered through their advanced courses, they received collegiate academic exposure in these co. They were provided foundational knowledge and skills. Yet, while the participants acknowledged these benefits, the data also revealed that despite their participation in advanced courses, there was still misalignment between high school and college expectations. Theoretically, advanced course participation and its benefits are exclusive and unequal for students. The following section focuses on the writing activities that were perceived as helpful for academic writing in higher education.

RQ2- And what writing activities prepared these students for academic writing in higher education?

The second research question focused on the writing activities that prepared Black/African American high-achieving students for academic writing in higher education. Two themes emerged about this research question. Additionally, two sub-themes were also present in the data. The following section addresses the two major themes related to this area of exploration and the theoretical implications. Similarly, the two sub-themes discuss jointly regarding the guiding theoretical framework.

Theme 4: Writing Opportunities

In terms of the perceived writing activities that prepared the participants for academic writing in higher education, Writing Opportunities were a recurring theme throughout the individual interviews and the focus group session. The participants mentioned a variety of writing opportunities that allowed them to gain experience that was relevant for their collegiate-level academic writing. Neal explicitly described his belief that the writing opportunities he was provided in high school helped him prepare for academic writing at the collegiate level. More specifically, he acknowledged that those writing opportunities in high school prevented him from coming into college with a lack of writing experience, similarly alluding to a "culture shock" Lee mentioned related to foundational knowledge and skill development needed for success at the postsecondary level. While overall there was limited research on Black/African American students' academic writing in higher education, Neal's acknowledgement was consistent with the related literature about this subject that also contended that a lack of writing instruction could negatively impact academic writing and academic success at the collegiate level for Black/African American students (Syrquin, 2006). Though that particular study focused on

writing instruction, the sentiment is the same when it comes to writing opportunities overall for this demographic.

The other participants, Martina, Rosa, and Lee explicitly described some of the writing opportunities they were provided in high school such as: short essays, open-ended responses for assessments, persuasive writing, college entrance essay writing, take-home exam essays, and in-class essays. Similar to Neal, Rosa also made connections between the writing opportunities she had in high school and the writing expectations she was having in her college courses at the time of the study. Lee made these connections as well, emphasizing how these opportunities emulated writing activities expected to be assigned at the collegiate level. From the data, it is evident that these students were provided with beneficial writing opportunities that they perceived as beneficial to their academic writing experiences at the postsecondary level. Yet, while each of the participants shared different writing experiences, the varying levels of writing opportunities for each participant highlights issues with exclusivity and inequality with this practice.

When analyzing this practice through an Afrocentric Social Capitalist lens, there are implications of exclusion, power and privilege, and the need for more resources. Although each of the participants referenced writing opportunities and the connections to their collegiate level academic writing, these experiences varied greatly. Rosa and Lee were able to recount many different writing opportunities they experienced, while Martina had less than a few opportunities that they mentioned. In Neal's interview, the emphasis on writing in his advanced courses was apparent, but he did not explicitly mention as many writing opportunities as Rosa and Lee. Martina in particular described how she and the other second year high school students had one "major" essay they were assigned, but that it was short in length and the grading did not focus as

much on quality but was more so “for show” in that students were to also include presentations with their projects.

As such, the data reveal that although writing opportunities was an aspect of academic writing readiness that contributed to the participants’ academic success, it was unequal and inequitable for all the students. Therefore, this practice does lead to exclusion for many students. It leads to exclusion for some advanced coursework participants depending on their school and program as to how many writing opportunities they are provided. There is also the implication that if there are limited writing opportunities at the advanced course level, then these opportunities may be even more limited for students not participating in these courses. In terms of privilege, advanced students are more privileged with having more writing opportunities in their advanced coursework that can benefit them. But within the group of advanced students, some are more privileged than others depending on how much more writing opportunities they were offered. Therefore, when considering the resources necessary for the prevention of this exclusive practice of offering writing opportunities, more direct writing instruction and writing assignments are needed at the high school level in all course levels.

Theme 5: Writing Skill Enhancement

Writing Skill Enhancement was the final theme that emerged from the data in relation to the exploration of the writing activities that contributed to successful academic writing in higher education. During the interviews and focus group session, participants described different ways in which they felt that their writing skills had been enhanced through their participation in advanced courses. Neal explained how the free responses for the quizzes in his advanced English course needed sufficient evidence to support the claims they would make in those responses. He also explicitly stated that this practice helped him with his college writing, because it not only

allowed him to practice supporting his arguments with evidence but helped him also understand the importance of exploring multiple stances on a topic. Similarly, Rosa shared that her writing skills were enhanced through the practice of communicating the overall message/argument in a meaningful way in her AP Language course. She did also describe other enhancements to her writing such as grammar improvements, integrating quotes from other sources into writing, and ways to better engage readers. Like Neal, Rosa also explicitly made connections between the writing skill enhancement that occurred in her high school classes to the academic writing needs of college through learning how to convey messages better and making the overall connection between the high school and college writing process. Martina and Lee briefly discussed different writing ,skills that were enhanced such as improving grammar and speed in writing.

The enhancement of writing skills in advanced courses can be seen as an exclusive practice through the Afrocentric Social Capital lens. Many of the participants specifically linked the writing skill enhancement they received to specific advanced courses, one in particular being the AP Language Course. The implication here is that this specific course structure may have been designed to enhance certain writing skills in a way that other courses may not be designed, further showing how exclusive this practice is. In that same regard, these students are privileged with specific enhanced writing skills that place them at an advantage academically when it comes to academic writing because of their participation in advanced courses such as the AP Language course. Once again, leaving this implication that students who do not participate in these courses are, therefore, at a disadvantage when it comes to academic writing at the collegiate level. The needed resources then are direct instruction and uniform writing skills enhancement for all students, no matter the course level.

Sub-themes 2 and 3: Lack of Citation Knowledge and Misalignment of Collegiate Level Writing Expectations

The two sub-themes that emerged about the research question exploring the writing activities that supported academic writing success at the collegiate level also provided significant insight into growth areas for increasing college readiness for students. The two sub-themes were Lack of Citation Knowledge and Misalignment of Collegiate Level Writing Regarding the lack of citation knowledge, most participants specifically referenced an issue with their citation knowledge. During the individual interviews and the focus group session, Martina, Rosa, and Lee shared that they primarily used the writing format Modern Language Association (MLA) in high school but were primarily using the American Psychological Association (APA) writing conventions in college. This mismatch between the required format used for high school writing and college writing reveals an apparent misalignment for academic writing for these students.

The other sub-theme was the overall Misalignment of Collegiate Level Writing Expectations. Although a lack of citation knowledge falls under that category, it was developed as a stand-alone theme because of the amount of explicit references to that particular issue. In terms of the other misaligned writing expectations, the participants described the stronger emphasis on plagiarism at the collegiate level, differences in how much feedback and the types of feedback received, differing page length requirements, misaligned measures of quality, and a lack of emphasis on writing styles. The sub-themes align to relevant literature that espoused that students with cultural and linguistic differences were more underprepared for collegiate academic writing than their dominant counterparts due to a lack of writing and fluency instruction. Although the participants in this study did receive direct writing instruction and were provided with writing opportunities, the sub-themes revealed critical aspects that were evidently needed based on the students' experiences.

In the cases of these missing practices for this particular group of advanced Black/African American students, the lack of specific citation knowledge and exposure to other collegiate-level writing expectations left these students excluded from pertinent writing knowledge they needed to be successful, collegiate-level academic writers. In this case, then, these students were not privileged because they were missing these aspects of writing knowledge which implies that students who do come to college with this knowledge are more privileged in terms of their academic writing preparation even than students who may have also participated in advanced courses that provided writing instruction and activities. Thus, an issue of quality for different types of advanced courses comes into play, revealing the needed resource of a uniform set of writing expectations to be covered for all high school students regardless of the course level.

Summary

The themes and sub-themes related to exploring writing activities that contribute to academic writing success at the collegiate level offered important insight regarding this issue. The data revealed that there were specific writing activities that can positively contribute to academic writing success at the collegiate level. The data also revealed that there were missing writing activities and knowledge as well. Although there was limited research on collegiate academic writing for Black/African American students, the participants' responses aligned to studies acknowledging the issue of collegiate-level academic writing for diverse students. Regarding the Afrocentric Social Capital theoretical framework, writing activities in advanced courses are exclusive to certain groups of students and can lead to inequality in the collegiate academic writing preparedness process. Further, writing activities can also be inequitable even when included in advanced courses, as some advanced courses offer more aligned and quality

writing activities while some advanced courses lack that. The remaining sections address the implications of the study, recommendations for future research, the study limitations, and then lastly the conclusion.

Implications of the Study

Policy Implications

As previously explained in the first chapter, there are many varying issues with the concept of college readiness as it exists in U.S. society. One such issue is that there are no consistent definitions and measures of college readiness across the nation (Hackmann et al., 2019; Mishkind, 2014). Although the Common Core Standards were developed to address this issue, the impact was short lived and differing expectations in relation to college readiness persist (CCSSI, n.d.; Goldstein, 2019; Hackmann et al., 2019; Rycik, 2014). Through the data, it is evident that the lack of consistency of measure and definition of college readiness remains an issue. Thus, there are important policy implications that can be made based on the findings of this study. At the National level, college readiness should be defined, and a national measure of college readiness should be established. College entrance exams could be part of that measure, but other measures need to be developed to track students' college readiness throughout their secondary experience, as opposed to being measured in order to gain college admissions.

At the State level then, college readiness policies should be aligned to the national policy including the use of the same definition and measures. State departments of education in particular should be responsible for ensuring that these definitions and measures are abided by, and state educational standards should reflect these same standards as well. At the local level then, school districts and personnel should be responsible for maintaining these standards and measures. Accountability would also be most pertinent at the local level and local district and state educational personnel should work together to maintain alignment. Overall, alignment and

coherent policies at the national, state, and local levels could significantly rectify the issues revealed in this study.

Implications for Teachers

Teachers and other school personnel have a significant role in ensuring college readiness for students, especially Black/African American students (Liou & Rojas, 2020). As such, the findings from this study offer important implications for these stakeholders. Some of the participants in the study mentioned that their teachers provided specific opportunities in the classroom that helped them prepare for college. As such, one implication is that teachers should incorporate college readiness in their classrooms in a multitude of ways. Not only should the curriculum be high quality and content on grade level, but other activities and social interactions can also be used as opportunities to foster college readiness. Lee shared in her interview how her teacher offered advice about college that not only focused on the academic aspects but other important knowledge that was helpful to know regarding the transition to college as well. This is a practice that could be utilized by all teachers regardless of the course level that they teach. Teachers should integrate opportunities to provide students with important college knowledge as part of their college readiness. Further, teachers could collaborate with other advanced course instructors at other schools to compare and learn from each other to improve the quality of their courses.

Implications for School Personnel

Other school personnel such as counselors and administrators also play an important role in supporting students' college preparedness (McDonough, 2005). Literature on advanced coursework and its impact on college readiness has acknowledged how the quality of courses and even the gatekeeping practices for advanced course enrollment can influence college readiness

for students (Boser et al., 2014; Martinez & McGrath, 2015; McDonough, 2005; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). The data from this study confirmed that these aspects do influence both college readiness and postsecondary academic success for Black/African American students. As such, one implication for school personnel is to ensure that all students are served by quality teachers that provide high-quality instruction.

Another implication of this study is that there is a need for school personnel from multiple schools within the same state and region to collaborate and evaluate their course offerings, course quality, and instruction in relation to one another. All participants in this study were from the same state, yet they each had different experiences in their advanced courses that impacted their college readiness. School personnel should be working together to ensure that at the very least students in the same state and even region should be learning the same quality information. Lastly, school personnel should be working to refine recruitment and retention practices to support Black/African American high-achieving students' completion of advanced courses.

Implications for Teacher Educators

A proactive approach to improving college readiness for students would be to properly train teachers to prepare their students for postsecondary education adequately. Data from this study revealed that there was misalignment between high school and college expectations academically. While it cannot be determined why this misalignment occurred, an assumption could be made that teachers may not be fully equipped to foster college readiness in their classrooms. Therefore, teacher educators play an essential role in ensuring that teacher candidates enter classrooms with tools to support high academic achievement for all students and to help prepare students for postsecondary education regardless of their educational trajectory.

Teacher preparation classes should adopt the definitions and measures of college readiness in their region and educate teacher can integrating integrate effective practices to enhance college readiness for all students.

Limitations of the Study

Important limitations exist for this study. One limitation was the sample size. There were a total of four participants whose insights were included in this study. A larger sample size would help to generalize the findings better. Another limitation of the study was that it had a particular inclusion criterion that was abided by. As such, those excluded from participating in the study were first year, third year, fourth year and above college students, un-enrolled college students, college students that did not complete advanced coursework in high school, non-Black/non-African American students, Black-Immigrant/Immigrant-origin students (Study focuses on Black American (US origin) students). These additional perspectives could have offered further insight into the explored phenomenon. Additionally, this study was designed as a single instrumental case study, where the specific case included interdisciplinary students that were all part of an honors college at a southeastern university. Lastly, this study did not provide member checking which would have enhanced the study's validity.

Recommendations for Future Research

This provided important insight into the aspects of high school advanced coursework and writing activities that contributed to postsecondary success for the students of focus. While this insight is both significant and useful, future research should further explore the design and quality of advanced courses that were created to help foster college readiness. Additionally, this study revealed that despite advanced coursework participation, misalignment between high

school and college expectations still existed. Future studies should investigate this misalignment to help better address the overall issue of college readiness.

Other recommendations for future research would be to include more perspectives related to the issue and to expand the input to be from students nationally, as opposed to the specific case this study was limited. Perspectives from university faculty teaching introductory level courses could further provide insight into the aspects of college readiness for all students that need to be addressed and Black/African American students Including high school educators' perspectives would allow researchers to understand further why a misalignment between these two educational levels occurs. Additionally, an analysis of student writing samples at the collegiate level would is a recommendation for future research, to help determine how students need to be better supported as academic writers in higher education. Lastly, with the inclusion of the newly developed AP African American Studies course, future research should also consider the impact of this advanced course offering on Black/African American students' academic outcomes.

Conclusion

This phenomenological case study centered on the subjective experiences of Black/African American students who took advanced courses in high school to explore the aspects of that coursework participation that contributed to postsecondary success. The study further investigated the writing activities that also contributed to the success at academic writing at the collegiate level as well. Data collected through student demographic questionnaires, individual interviews, and a focus group session provided important insight regarding advanced course participation and college readiness for Black/African American students. As such, this study contributes to the existing literature by offering further insight into some of the specific

aspects of advanced coursework participation that Black/African American students perceived as beneficial to their academic success. The study also highlighted areas of misalignment that need to be further explored and addressed. Additionally, this study contributes to the literature by offering insight into under-researched area of college readiness, which is college writing readiness. Ultimately, the issues of college readiness and college writing readiness were able to be further explored from the students' perspectives to help provide a further understanding of the complex nature of the issue in order to lead to practical solutions.

REFERENCES

ACT, Inc. (2019). *The condition of college and career readiness 2019. The condition of college and career readiness 2019* (pp. 1–20). Retrieved from https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/secured/documents/cccr-2019/National-CCCR-2019.pdf.

Anderson, J. (1988). *The education of blacks in the south, 1860-1935.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. https://doi.org/10.32316/hse/rhe.v1i2.1238

Anyon, J. (2014). *Radical possibilities: Public policy, urban education, and a new social movement.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203479704

Asante, M. (2011). *Afrocentric idea revised*. Temple University Press. DOI: 10.7202/1041928ar

Asante, M. K. (1991). The Afrocentric idea in education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *60*(2), 170-180. https://doi.org/10.2307%2F2295608

Ashtiani, M., & Feliciano, C. (2018). Access and mobilization: How social capital relates to low-income youth's postsecondary educational (PSE) attainment. *Youth & Society*, *50*(4), 439-461. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0044118x15607163

Barnes, W., & Slate, J. R. (2011). Ethnic differences in college-readiness rates: A multi-year, statewide study. *Education and Urban Society*, *20*(10), 1-29.

Barnes, W., & Slate, J. R. (2014). College-readiness rates in Texas: A statewide, multiyear study of ethnic differences. *Education and Urban Society*, *46*(1), 59-87. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0013124511423775

Baum, S., Ma, J., & Payea, K. (2013). Education pays 2013. *The College Board*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572537

Bell, D. A. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory. *U. Ill. L. Rev.*, 893. https://www.fordham.edu/download/downloads/id/15445/whos_afraid_of_critical_race_theory_cle_materials.pdf

Black, S. E., Cortes, K. E., & Lincove, J. A. (2016). Efficacy versus equity: What happens when states tinker with college admissions in a race-blind era? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *38*(2), 336-363. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373716629006

Bollig, C. (2015). "Is college worth it?" arguing for composition's value with the citizen-worker. *College Composition and Communication*, *67*(2), 150-172. https://www.proquest.com/docview/1749628138

Boser, U., Wilhelm, M., & Hanna, R. (2014). The power of the Pygmalion effect: Teachers' expectations strongly predict college completion. *Center for American Progress*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED564606

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). Greenwood Press. https://doi.org/10.2307%2F2069964

Bourdieu, P, & Passeron, J. (1977). Reproduction in education, society, and culture. Sage. https://doi.org/10.1080%2F0305006780140109

Brooks, J. E. (2015). The impact of family structure, relationships, and support on African American students' collegiate experiences. *Journal of Black Studies*, *46*(8), 817-836. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0021934715609914

Brown, M. C., & Davis, J. E. (2001). The historically Black college has a social contract, social capital, and social equalizer. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *76*(1), 31-49. https://doi.org/10.1207%2Fs15327930pje7601_03

Bryan, K., Romney-Schaab, M., & Cooper, A. (2022). The Illusion of Inclusion: Blackness in ELT. *CATESOL Journal*, *33*, 1.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, *94*, S95-S120. https://doi.org/10.1086%2F228943

Collins, S. M. (1983). The making of the black middle class. *Social Problems*, *30*(4), 369-382. https://doi.org/10.1525%2Fsp.1983.30.4.03a00010

Colvard, N. B., Watson, C. E., & Park, H. (2018). The impact of open educational resources on various student success metrics. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *30*(2), 262-276. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1184998

Conley, D. T. (2012). A complete definition of college and career readiness. *Educational Policy Improvement Center (NJ1)*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED537876

Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *11*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.1186%2F1471-2288-11-100

Council of Writing Program Administrators. (2014, July 17). Council of writing program administrators. Retrieved from http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html

Darling-Hammond, L., & Friedlaender, D. (2008). Creating excellent and equitable schools. *Educational Leadership*, *65*(8), 14. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ796360

Denzin, N. (1970). Strategies of multiple triangulations. *The research act in sociology: A theoretical introduction to sociological method*, *297*(1970), 313. https://doi.org/10.4324%2F9781315134543-12

Dika, S. L., & Singh, K. (2002). Applications of social capital in educational literature: A critical synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, *72*(1), 31-60. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00346543072001031

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (Vol. 20). NYU Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctt1ggjjn3.12

deMarrais, K. & LeCompte, M. (1995). *The way schools work: A sociological analysis of education*. Longman Publishing Group.

Destin, M., & Kosko, M. (2016). Motivating disadvantaged students toward the possibility of college. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *97*(5), 8-12. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/24579771

Dougherty, C., Mellor, L., & Jian, S. (2006). Orange juice or orange drink? Ensuring that "advanced courses" live up to their labels. *NCEA Policy Brief No. 1*. ERIC Clearinghouse. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED519415

Dowd, A. C., & Bensimon, E. M. (2015). *Engaging the "race question": Accountability and equity in US higher education*. Teachers College Press. https://doi.org/10.1080%2F00221546.2016.11777397

Dubois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of black folk*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1163/26659077-01602006

Dumais, S. A., & Ward, A. (2010). Cultural capital and first-generation college success. *Poetics*, *38*(3), 245-265. https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.poetic.2009.11.011

Dye, J. F., Schatz, I. M., Rosenberg, B. A., & Coleman, S. T. (2000). Constant comparison method: A kaleidoscope of data. *The Qualitative Report*, *4*(1/2), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2000.2090

Ehrich, L. C. (2003). The quest for meaning. *Qualitative Educational Research in Action*, 42.

Engberg, M. E., & Wolniak, G. C. (2010). Examining the effects of high school contexts on postsecondary enrollment. *Research in Higher Education*, *51*(2), 132-153. https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs11162-009-9150-y

Esponisa, L. L., Kelchen, R., & Taylor, M. (2018). Minority serving institutions as engines of upward mobility. American Council on Education. *Center for Policy Research and Strategy, Washington*. https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/MSIs-as-Engines-of-Upward-Mobility.pdf

Evans, B. J. (2018). How college students use advanced placement credit. *American Educational Research Journal*, *56*(3), 925-954. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0002831218807428

Explore Village Christian Academy. (n.d.). Niche. https://www.niche.com/k12/village-christian-academy-fayetteville-nc/

Farb, A. F., & Matjasko, J. L. (2012). Recent advances in research on school-based extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Developmental Review*, *32*(1), 1-48. https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.dr.2011.10.001

Farmer-Hinton, R. L., & Adams, T. L. (2006). Social capital and college preparation: Exploring the role of counselors in a college prep school for Black students. *The Negro Educational Review*, *57*(1/2), 101–116, 140. https://www.proquest.com/docview/219034109

Feldman, E. (2022, September 2). A.P. African American Studies Is Coming to U.S. High Schools. *Smithsonian Magazine*. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/ap-african-american-studies-coming-to-us-high-schools-180980689/.

Fish, M. C., Gefen, D. R., Kaczetow, W., Winograd, G., & Futtersak-Goldberg, R. (2016). Development and validation of the college campus environment scale (CCES): Promoting positive college experiences. *Innovative Higher Education*, *41*(2), 153-165. https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10755-015-9337-4

Ford, D. Y. (1998). The underrepresentation of minority students in gifted education: Problems and promises in recruitment and retention. *The Journal of Special Education*, *32*(1), 4-14. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F002246699803200102

Freeman, K. (1997). Increasing African Americans' participation in higher education: African American high-school students' perspectives. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *68*(5), 523-550.

Glodowski, K. R., Thompson, R. H., & Asuncion, E. A. (2019). Evidence-based recommendations for programming quizzes to improve college student behavior in residential courses. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, *29*(3), 543-570. https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10864-019-09330-z

Goldstein, D. (2019, December 06). After 10 years of hopes and setbacks, what happened to the common core? Retrieved July 14, 2020, from https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/06/us/common-core.html

Harper, S. R., & Newman, C. B. (2016). Surprise, sensemaking, and success in the first college year: Black undergraduate men's academic adjustment experiences. *Teachers College Record*, *118*(6), 1-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811611800609

Heidegger, M. (1927/2011). *Being and time (Macquarrie, J., Robinson, E., Trans.)*. Harper & Row.

Holland, N. E., & Farmer-Hinton, R. L. (2009). Leave no schools behind: The importance of a college culture in urban public high schools. *The High School Journal*, *92*(3), 24-43. https://doi.org/10.1353%2Fhsj.0.0019

Hooker, S., & Brand, B. (2010). College knowledge: A critical component of college readiness. *New Directions for Youth Development, 2010*(127), 75–85. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.364

Horn, L. (1997) *Confronting the odds: Students at risk and the pipeline to higher education*. National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Government Printing Office (NCES 98094)

Jack Britt High School. (n.d.). North Carolina School Report Cards. https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=260318&year=2021&lng=en

James, M. C., Butterfield, V., Jones, K. L., & Mokuria, V. G. (2017). Opportunity for all: An analysis of equality and equity in advanced placement programming in a US high school. *International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Sciences*, *4*(1), 15-21. https://www.ijires.org/administrator/components/com_jresearch/files/publications/IJIRES_748_FINAL.pdf

Jewell, J. O. (2007). *Race, social reform, and the making of a middle class: The American Missionary Association and black Atlanta, 1870-1900*. Rowman & Littlefield. https://doi.org/10.1163/187489411X581102

Knight-Diop, M. G. (2010). Closing the gap: Enacting care and facilitating black students' educational access in the creation of a high school college-going culture. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 15*(1-2), 158-172. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824661003635192

Knight-Manuel, M. G., Marciano, J. E., Wilson, M., Jackson, I., Vernikoff, L., Zuckerman, K. G., & Watson, V. W. (2019). "It's all possible": Urban educators' perspectives on creating a culturally relevant, schoolwide, college-going culture for Black and Latino male students. *Urban Education*, *54*(1), 35-64. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042085916651320

Kramer, C. S., Wilcox, K. C., & Lawson, H. A. (2019). Positive youth development as an improvement resource in odds-beating secondary schools. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F1438240

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2002). Designing and conducting focus group interviews. https://www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf

Iatarola, P. (2016). Implications for scaling up advanced course offerings and takings: Evidence from Florida. *Teachers College Record*, *118*(13), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F016146811611801304

Ladson-Billings, G. (2013). Lack of achievement or loss of opportunity. *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance*, *11*, 11-22.

Liou, D. D., & Rojas, L. (2020). The significance of the racial contract in teachers' college expectancies for students of color. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 23*(5), 712-731. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2018.1511529

Lin, N. (2003). *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815447

Lopez, A. E., & Jean-Marie, G. (2021). Challenging anti-Black racism in everyday teaching, learning, and leading: From theory to practice. *Journal of School Leadership, 31*(1-2), 50-65.

Martinez, M., & McGrath, D. (2015). Leaping the college-ready gap: What can be learned from schools that focus on deeper learning. *State Education Standard, 15*(2), 15-20. https://nasbe.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/2015/05/Martinez.pdf

Martinez, M. A., Torres, I., & Lewis, K. (2019). Beyond posters and pennants: College-going messaging at three racially and economically diverse public schools. *Teachers College Record, 121*(11). 1-42. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F016146811912101103

Maruyama, G. (2012). Assessing college readiness: Should we be satisfied with ACT or other threshold scores? *Educational Researcher, 41*(7), 252-261. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189x12455095

Massey, D. S., & Owens, J. (2013). Mediators of stereotype threat among black college students. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 37*(3), 557-575. https://doi.org/10.1080%2F01419870.2013.786110

McDonough, P. M. (2005). Counseling and college counseling in America's high schools. *State of College Admission*, 107-121.

Mertens, D. (2019). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (5th ed.). Sage publications.

Milner IV, H. R. (2012). But what is urban education? *Urban education, 47*(3). 556-561. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042085912447516

Mishkind, A. (2014). Overview: State definitions of college and career readiness. *Career and College Readiness Counseling in P–12 Schools*, 1-26. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED555670

Morgan, T., Zakhem, D., & Cooper, W. (2018). From high school access to postsecondary success: An exploratory study of the impact of high-rigor coursework. *Education Sciences, 8*(4), 191. https://doi.org/10.3390%2Feducsci8040191

Mount Tabor High. (n.d.). North Carolina School Report Cards. https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=340454&year=2020&lng=en

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage publications.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2015). *2015 mathematics and reading at grade 12*. National Center of Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_g12_2015/#reading/preparedness.

National Forum on Education Statistics. (2015). Forum guide to college and career ready data. (NFES 2015-157). U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015157.pdf

Newman, D. M. (2016). *Identities and inequalities: Exploring the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality*. McGraw-Hill.

Nichols, L., & Islas, A. (2016). Pushing and pulling emerging adults through college: College generational status and the influence of parents and others in the first year. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *31*(1), 59-95. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0743558415586255

Noeth, R. J., & Wimberly, G. L. (2002). Creating seamless educational transitions for urban African American and Hispanic students. *PsycEXTRA Dataset*. https://doi.org/10.1037/e725892011-001

Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Thomson, D. L. (2010). Gifted programming for poor or minority urban students: Issues and lessons learned. *Gifted Child Today*, *33*(4), 58-64. doi:10.1177/107621751003300413

Oppenheimer, D., Zaromb, F., Pomerantz, J. R., Williams, J. C., & Park, Y. S. (2017). Improvement of writing skills during college: A multi-year cross-sectional and longitudinal study of undergraduate writing performance. *Assessing Writing*, *32*, 12-27. doi:10.1016/j.asw.2016.11.001

Palmer, R., & Gasman, M. (2008). "It takes a village to raise a child": The role of social capital in promoting academic success for African American men at a Black college. *Journal of College Student Development*, *49*(1), 52-70. https://doi.org/10.1353%2Fcsd.2008.0002

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Sage.

Perna, L. W. (Ed.). (2013). *Preparing today's students for tomorrow's jobs in metropolitan America*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Peteet, B. J., Montgomery, L., & Weekes, J. C. (2015). Predictors of imposter phenomenon among talented ethnic minority undergraduate students. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *84*(2), 175-186. https://doi.org/10.7709%2Fjnegroeducation.84.2.0175

Plagens, G. K. (2011). Social capital and education: Implications for student and school performance. *Education and Culture, 27*(1), 40-64. https://doi.org/10.1353%2Feac.2011.0007

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24*(1), 1-24. https://doi.org/10.1146%2Fannurev.soc.24.1.1

Portes, A. (2000). The two meanings of social capital. *Sociological Forum, 15*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007537902813

Qutoshi, S. B. (2018). Phenomenology: A philosophy and method of inquiry. *Journal of Education and Educational Development, 5*(1), 215-222. https://doi.org/10.22555%2Fjoeed.v5i1.2154

Rapport, F., & Wainwright, P. (2006). Phenomenology as a paradigm of movement. *Nursing Inquiry, 13*(3), 228-236. https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fj.1440-1800.2006.00325.x

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2020). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage Publications, Incorporated.

Reddick, R. J., Welton, A. D., Alsandor, D. J., Denyszyn, J. L., & Platt, C. S. (2011). Stories of success: High minority, high poverty public school graduate narratives on accessing higher education. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *22*(4), 594-618. https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202x11414133

Redford, J., and Hoyer, K.M. (2017). First generation and continuing-generation college students: A comparison of high school and postsecondary experiences (NCES 2018-009). U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved October 9, 2017, from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/ pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018009.

Reid, M. J., & Moore III, J. L. (2008). College readiness and academic preparation for postsecondary education: Oral histories of first-generation urban college students. *Urban Education, 43*(2), 240-261. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907312346

Rives, A., & Olsen, A. (2015). Where's the rhetoric? exposing the (mis)alignment in the common core state writing standards. J*ournal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *59*(2), 161-170. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/44011237.

Roderick, M., Nagaoka, J., & Coca, V. (2009). College readiness for all: The challenge for urban high schools. *The Future of Children*, *19*(1), 185-210. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.443

Rodriguez, K. L., Schwartz, J. L., Lahman, M. K., & Geist, M. R. (2011). Culturally responsive focus groups: Reframing the research experience to focus on participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 10*(4), 400-417. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F160940691101000407

Rogošić, S., & Baranović, B. (2016). Social capital and educational achievements: Coleman vs. Bourdieu. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, *6*(2), 81-100. https://doi.org/10.26529%2Fcepsj.89

Royce, E. (2019). *Poverty & power: The problem of structural inequality*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Rudestam, K., & Newton, R. (2015). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process*. Sage.

Rury, J. L. (2013). *Education and social change: Contours in the history of American schooling*. Routledge.

Rycik, J. A. (2014). Support continues to erode for common core standards and assessments. *American Secondary Education*, *42*(3), 52.

School detail for Jack Britt High. (n.d.). National Center for Educational Statistics; National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&InstName=Jack+Britt+High+School&SchoolType=1&SchoolType=2&SchoolType=3&SchoolType=4&SpecificSchlTypes=all&IncGrade=-1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=370001102512

School detail for Lucy Ragsdale High. (n.d.). National Center for Educational Statistics; National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&InstName=Ragsdale+High+School&SchoolType=1&SchoolType=2&SchoolType=3&SchoolType=4&SpecificSchlTypes=all&IncGrade=-1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=370192000830

School detail for Mount Tabor High School. (n.d.). National Center for Educational Statistics; National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&InstName=Mount+Tabor+High+School&SchoolType=1&SchoolType=2&SchoolType=3&SchoolType=4&SpecificSchlTypes=all&IncGrade=-1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=370150000623

School detail for Stuart W Cramer High. (n.d.). National Center for Educational Statistics; National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&Miles=10&Zip=28032&ID=370162003246

School detail for Village Christian Academy. (n.d.). National Center for Educational Statistics; National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?ID=A0108581

Scott, J., & Holme, J. J. (2016). The political economy of market-based educational policies. *Review of Research in Education, 40*(1), 250-297. doi: 10.3102/0091732X16681001

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*(2), 63-75. https://doi.org/10.3233/efi-2004-22201

Smith, B. (2007). Accessing social capital through the academic mentoring process. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 40*(1), 36-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680601088465

Smith, P. (2021, March). Beyond anti-Blackness in bilingual education: Looking through the lens of the Black immigrant subject. *American Educational Research Association Bilingual Education Research Special Interest Group Newsletter*, 4-6.

Solorzano, D. G. (1992). An exploratory analysis of the effects of race, class, and gender on student and parent mobility aspirations. *The Journal of Negro Education, 61*(1), 30-44. https://doi.org/10.2307/2295627

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education, 69*(1/2), 60-73. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696265

Sommerfeld, A. (2011). Recasting non-cognitive factors in college readiness as what they truly are: Non-academic factors. *Journal of College Admission, 213*, 18-22. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ962511

Sommerfeld, A. K., & Bowen, P. (2013). Fostering social and cultural capital in urban youth: A programmatic approach to promoting college success. *Journal of Education, 193*(1), 47-55. https://doi.org/10.1177/002205741319300106

Southworth, S., & Mickelson, R. A. (2007). The interactive effects of race, gender and school composition on college track placement. *Social Forces, 86*(2), 497–523. DOI:10.1353/sof.2008.0009

Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin, & Lincoln, YS (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.

Stanton-Salazar, R. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review, 67*(1), 1-41. DOI:10.17763/haer.67.1.140676g74018u73k

Strayhorn, T. L. (2015). Reframing academic advising for student success: From advisor to cultural navigator. *The Journal of the National Academic Advising Association*, *35*(1), 56-63. https://doi.org/10.12930/NACADA-14-199

Strayhorn, T. L., Lo, M. T., Travers, C. S., & Tillman-Kelly, D. L. (2015). Assessing the relationship between well-being, sense of belonging, and confidence in the transition to college for Black male collegians. *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men*, *4*(1), 127-138. DOI:10.2979/spectrum.4.1.07

Stuart W Cramer High School. (n.d.). North Carolina School Report Cards. https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=360378&year=2020&lng=en

Sundeen, T. H. (2015). Writing instruction for adolescents in the shadow of the common core state standards. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *59*(2), 197-206. DOI:10.1002/jaal.444

Syrquin, A. F. (2006). Registers in the academic writing of African American college students. *Written Communication*, *23*(1), 63-90. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088305283935

Taggart, G. (2017). The effect of online college attendance on job obtainment through social connections. *The American Journal of Distance Education*, *31*(1), 43–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/08923647.2017.1258660

Taliaferro, J. D., & DeCuir-Gunby, J. T. (2008). African American educators' perspectives on the advanced placement opportunity gap. *The Urban Review*, *40*(2), 164-185. DOI:10.1007/s11256-007-0066-6

Tatum, A. W., & Muhammad, G. E. (2012). African American males and literacy development in contexts that are characteristically urban. *Urban Education*, *47*(2), 434–463. https://doi.org/10.1177/004208591142947

The College Board. (2020). *SAT suite of assessments annual report total group* (pp. 1-16, Rep.). New York, NY: The College Board.

Toldson, I. A. (2018). No BS (Bad Stats): Deconstructing the Black-White Achievement Gap using a DuBoisian Framework (Editor's Commentary). *The Journal of Negro Education*, *87*(3), 191-199.

Torres, C., & Black, R. S. (2018). Culturally responsive self-regulated strategy development in writing for college students with disabilities. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, *18*(1), 42-59. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1212448

Tierney, W. G., & Hagedorn, L. S. (Eds.). (2002). *Increasing access to college: Extending possibilities for all students*. SUNY Press.

Traoré, R. (2007). Implementing Afrocentricity: Connecting students of African descent to their cultural heritage. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *1*(10), 62-78. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A192352780/LitRC?u=anon~e848d79e&sid=googleScholar&xid=5c7f55db

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). College- and career-ready standards. Retrieved from https://www.ed.gov/k-12reforms/standards

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019a). The nation's report card mathematics, NAEP report card: 2019 NAEP mathematics assessment

highlighted results at grade 12 for the nation. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/mathematics/2019/g12/

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019b). The nation's report card mathematics, NAEP report card: 2019 NAEP reading assessment highlighted results at grade 12 for the nation. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2019/g12/

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019c). The nation's report card mathematics, national achievement-level results. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/mathematics/nation/groups/?grade=12

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2019d). The nation's report card reading, national achievement-level results. Retrieved from https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/mathematics/nation/groups/?grade=12

Venezia, A., & Jaeger, L. (2013). Transitions from high school to college. *The Future of Children, 23*(1), 117-136. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1015237

Wahleithner, J. M. (2018). Five portraits of teachers' experiences teaching writing: Negotiating knowledge, student need, and policy. *Teachers College Record, 120*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811812000103

Wallace, D. (2017). Reading 'race' in Bourdieu? examining black cultural capital among black Caribbean youth in south London. *Sociology, 51*(5), 907-923. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038516643478

Washington, B. T. (1901). *Up from slavery: An autobiography*. Doubleday.

Washington, C., & Schwartz, R. (1998). African-American freshmen in an historically black college. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 11*(1), 39-61. https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/fyesit/fyesit/1998/00000011/00000001/art00003

Watkins, W. H. (2001). *The White architects of Black education: Ideology and power in America, 1865-1954*. Teachers College Press.

Welton, A. D., & Martinez, M. A. (2014). Coloring the college pathway: A more culturally responsive approach to college readiness and access for students of color in secondary schools. *The Urban Review, 46*(2), 197-223. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1039674

Wiggan, G. A. (Ed.). (2011). *Education for the new frontier: Race, education and triumph in Jim Crow America (1867-1945)*. Nova Science Publishers, Incorporated.

Wilder, C. S. (2014). *Ebony and ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Wimberly, G. L. (2013). Chapter three: Understanding social capital and the African American school experience. *Counterpoints, 383*, 37-52. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981247

Young, V. A., Barrett, R., Young-Rivera, Y. S., & Lovejoy, K. B. (2014). Other people's English: Code-meshing, code-switching, and African American literacy. *Teachers College Press.*

APPENDIX 1: REFLECTIVITY STATEMENT

My educational background and beliefs on equitable educational experiences for Black/African American students prompted me to further explore college readiness for this demographic. Further, my experience as a writing tutor and writing instructor at the secondary and postsecondary levels influenced my decision to also investigate college writing readiness. While research on opportunity gaps, such as college readiness and college writing readiness for Black students remains prevalent, much of the research comes from a deficit perspective. As such, I decided to explore the experiences of high achieving Black/African American students and their perceptions of college readiness and college writing readiness.

As the researcher for this study, I acknowledge that my experiences as a high achieving Black student that participated in advanced courses contributed to the study focus and design. I participated in honors and AP courses, similarly to the students that I had the privilege of interviewing for this study. Further, I could relate much of what was shared during this study. Nonetheless, I maintained an objective stance and sought to ground my interpretation and analysis in the data and relevant literature. Yet, it is important before further describing the participants and study design that I also express that my passion for this subject comes from witnessing the lack of support and resources needed to foster readiness and resilience at the postsecondary level for Black/African American students.

APPENDIX 2: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Demographic Questionnaire Consent

UNC CHARLOTTE
Department of Educational Leadership
9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of the Project: Perceptions Of College Readiness For High Achieving Black Students
Principal Investigator: Erin Lewis MA, University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Greg Wiggan
Study Sponsor: N/A

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. The information provided is to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please email me at elewis31@uncc.edu.

Important Information You Need to Know

- This is a three part study. By completing the Student Demographic Questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in all portions of the study if deemed eligible.

- All aspects of the study will take place online. The Student Demographics Questionnaire should take about 10-20 minutes to complete independently. The 90 minute Individual Interview will take place via Zoom, as well as the two-hour Focus Group session. I will provide you with the necessary links to click on to access the interviews online.

- Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether to participate in this research study.

Why are we doing this study?
The purpose of this study is to explore high achieving Black students' perceived readiness for entering college as well as perceived readiness for collegiate level academic writing.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?
You are being asked to be in this study because you are a second year college student in the US who completed at least one advanced course in high school, self-identify as Black/African American, and are age 18 and older.

What will happen if I take part in this study?
If you choose to participate you will first complete this 10-20 minute questionnaire one time. The questionnaire will ask questions about your background (age group, year of study etc.), your high school academic history, your college entrance experience, and your current experience in higher

education. Once deemed eligible, you will receive a second consent form to participate in the 90 minute individual interview and 2 hour focus group interview. If you choose to participate in the following two parts of the study, you will participate in the individual interview and a focus group interview one time each. Both interviews will ask questions about your current collegiate academic experience, your experiences from your high school advanced courses, and your academic writing experiences. The focus group interview will include other participants, some whom you may know. A focus group confidentiality statement will be signed prior to the session. Individual Interviews and the Focus Group Session will occur via Zoom and will be recorded for Transcription purposes. The recordings will be stored in a dual-password protected cloud platform and deleted following the verification of transcriptions. All three parts of the study are expected to take approximately three months, but each interview will only occur once.

If you are choosing not to participate in this study, then you should not complete the questionnaire.

What benefits might I experience?

You will not benefit directly from being in this study. Others might benefit because it is important to understand the perceptions of college readiness and college writing readiness for Black/African American students with others as a result and develop more effective college preparatory practices for students.

What risks might I experience?

The questions we'll ask you are personal and sensitive. For example, I will ask you about the types of grades you achieved in high school and your current academic performance in college. You might experience some mild emotional discomfort when answering these questions. We do not expect this risk to be common and you may choose to skip questions you do not want to answer.

How will my information be protected?

Your privacy will be protected and confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. To protect your privacy (identity), we'll assign a study ID code to your questionnaires responses and remove other linking data to a separate dual password protected system until the study is completed. While the study is active, only the Principal Investigator will have routine access to the study data. Other people with approval from the Investigator, may need to see the information we collect about you. Including people who work for UNC Charlotte and other agencies as required by law or allowed by federal regulations. Data with any linking information will be deleted from the cloud servers at the conclusion of the study. Audio and video recordings from the individual interview and focus group session will be deleted once transcriptions are verified by the Principal Investigator.

How will my information be used after the study is over?

After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies without asking for your consent again or as may be needed as part of publishing our results. The data we share will NOT include information that could identify you.

Will I receive an incentive for taking part in this study?

An incentive is not able to be offered at this time.

What other choices do I have if I don't take part in this study?
If you choose to not participate, you should not complete the Student Demographic Questionnaire. If you are deemed ineligible to participate in this study, we will remove your questionnaire responses from the data.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
It is up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Who can answer my questions about this study and my rights as a participant?
For questions about this research, you may contact Erin Lewis, elewis31@uncc.edu or Dr. Greg Wiggan, the faculty advisor at gwiggan@uncc.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Office of Research Protections and Integrity at 704-687-1871 or uncc-irb@uncc.edu.

Consent to Participate
By signing the consent portion of the survet, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will receive a copy of the signed consent form portion of the survey for your records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this consent form, you can contact the Principal Investigator using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I acknowledge that by completing the questionnaire, I am agreeing to take part in this study.

Name (PRINT)

_____

Signature Date

_____

Name & Signature of person obtaining consent Date

Part 1: Demographic Information

1. What age group are you part of? (Group 1: 18 and Under, Group 2: 19 to 20; Group 3: 21 and above).
2. Gender: Please describe how you identify? [We ask for gender identity in order to adequately report the gender identities of participants in our study. However, this study does not aim to focus on one particular gender.]
3. What is your place of origin?
4. What racial group do you identify with? [Race here refers to the observable color of one's skin based on societal perceptions of skin color and racial identity i.e. Black, Brown, White, etc.]
5. How would you describe your ethnicity? [Ethnicity here refers to a person's ethnic background based on cultural attributes of their country of origin i.e. African American, Irish American, South African, etc.]
6. What is the highest degree or level of school that your guardian(s) completed? [Please report based on the guardians you had during high school years]
7. Is there any other important information you would like to report about your personal background?

Part 2: High School Academic History

8. Where did you attend high school?
9. What was the location of the high school you attended (city, state)?
10. What type of high school did you attend (e.g. public, private, magnet, etc.)?
11. What year did you graduate from high school?
12. How would you describe the letter grades you received during high school?
13. Which range best represents your final high school grade point average? [3.5-4.0, 3.4-2.5, 2.4-2.0, 1.9-1.0]
14. How many advanced courses did you **participate in** while in high school? [Advanced courses refers to courses above grade level in K-12 education that may or may not include specified advanced courses such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses]
15. How many advanced courses did you **complete** while in high school? [Advanced courses refers to courses above grade level in K-12 education that may or may not include specified

advanced courses such as International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement courses]

16. What types of advanced courses did you participate in while in high school? [Types of advanced courses refers to courses with distinctions such as Honors, AP, IB, etc.]
17. What subject areas did you complete advanced coursework for while in high school?
18. What amount of essays/ papers would you say you wrote during high school?
19. How would you describe the amount of essays you had to complete during high school?
20. What was the highest number of pages you were assigned to write for essays/papers you completed during high school?

Part 3: College Entrance Experience

21. What is the number of colleges or universities you applied to for admission?
22. How many colleges or university acceptances did you receive?
23. How many colleges or universities **did not** offer you admissions?
24. How many colleges or universities placed you on a waitlist?
25. How many colleges or universities offered you a scholarship?
26. Which range represents your overall score on the Standardized Aptitude Test (SAT)? [1600-1500, 1499-1300,1299-1200, 1199-1100, 1099-960, 959-830, 829-730, 729-620, 619-400; Please select N/A if you did not take the SAT]
27. Which range represents your overall score on the American College Test (ACT)?[36-34, 33-27, 26-22, 21-18, 17-14, 13-below, Please select N/A if you did not take the ACT]

Part 4: Current Experience in Higher Education

28. What is your current year of study at your college/university?
29. What is your current major at your college/university?
30. Which range best represents your current collegiate grade point average? [3.5-4.0, 3.4-2.5, 2.4-2.0, 1.9-1.0]
31. What honors/recognitions have you received during your college experience thus far? [Please write N/A if this does not apply]

32. How would you describe your overall college experience thus far?

APPENDIX 3: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

RQ1-What aspects of advanced coursework from high school contributed to African American students' academic success in postsecondary education?
RQ2- And what writing activities prepared these students for academic writing in higher education?

Interview Briefing:

- Defines the situation for the subject: This is the individual interview portion of the study which is part 2 of the 3 part study. This segment will last approximately 90 minutes. Before we begin, I want to ask again: do I have your permission to record this interview.
- Purpose of the interview:
    - ***The purpose of this study is to explore high achieving Black students' perceived readiness for entering college as well as perceived readiness for collegiate level academic writing.***
- Use of recording
- Asks if there are any questions
- Debriefing:
    - Ask participants, is there anymore to add?
    - Ask about the experience with the interview
    - Ask is there anything else you want to share or add before we conclude?

    a)How do Black females define college readiness?(b)What does it mean to be "college ready" to Black females? (c)What role do parents, peers, educators, and community stakeholders play in Black female's readiness for college?(d)What are some challenges/solutions experienced by Black females when preparing for college?(e)How do Black females describe the process got them to their current point (what did the process look like/ how did it evolve)?

Next Steps:

- Following this interview, around the end of February you will receive an invitation to schedule the focus group session. Once the focus group session date has been decided. I will send a calendar invite with the date and Zoom information as well as the focus group session protocols for you to review. The consent form signed today covered your consent for both the individual interview and focus group session.
    - Ask to spread the word

Part 1: Current Collegiate Experience

1. Tell me about some of the positive experiences that have occurred during your time in college thus far?
    a. What do you think helped make these experiences positive for you?
2. Tell me about some of the challenges you faced during your college experience thus far?
    a. How have these challenges shifted your view on your overall college experience?

    b. Do you think anything could have happened to prevent some of the challenges you've faced? Why or why not?
3. Can you describe in as much detail as possible your college experience academically?
4. Tell me, what do you think has impacted your collegiate academic experience?

Part 2: Advanced Coursework History/Experiences

1. On the demographic questionnaire, you shared how many advanced courses you participated in. Can you describe in as much detail as possible what it was like for you as a Black student in advanced courses?
2. What led you to participate in advanced courses during high school?
3. Do you feel that your participation in advanced courses provided you more information about college and how to prepare? Why or why not?
4. Can you tell me about a specific advanced course that has contributed positively to your academic success?
    a. What about this course made an impact on you as a student?
5. How would you describe the quality of your advanced courses? Why?
6. Tell me about some of the course activities you had in your advanced classes?
    a. How did those course activities help you prepare for college?
7. What value/benefits did these courses provide you?

Part 3: Advanced coursework, college success impact

1. Tell me about your transition to college academically.
    a. What was your academic performance like during your first semester of college?
    b. What factors/experiences contributed to your academic outcomes during your first semester?
    c. What factors/experiences contributed to your academic outcomes in your first year of college altogether?
    d. Have you performed better in college academically than in high school? Why or why not?
2. Can you describe in as much detail as possible your feelings about your college preparation?
    a. How well do you think your high school courses prepared you for college level academics? Why?
    b. Before enrolling into college, what did you expect your coursework to look like at the collegiate level?
    c. Where do you think these perceptions of college academics came from?

Part 4: Current Experiences with Collegiate writing

1. Tell me about your academic writing experiences and some of the writing expectations you've had in college thus far?
2. Can you describe in as much detail as possible your feelings about college papers/essays?
    a. How well do you think your high school courses prepared you for college level writing? Why?
3. Have you sought out or received any support for academic writing? Why or why not?

Part 5: High School Writing experiences, college success impact

1. Tell me about some of the writing activities you had during high school?

    a. How did those writing activities help you prepare for college writing?
2. Can you tell me about a specific writing assignment that contributed positively to your success with academic writing in college?
3. Reflecting back on your high school writing experiences, what value/benefits did these experiences provide you?

APPENDIX 4: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

5-7 Questions

1. How would you define academic success in college? Why?
2. What kind of preparation or skills do you think is needed to be successful academically in college?
3. How important is academic writing in college and why ?
4. Could you describe in as much detail as possible any experiences that you wish you had in high school that you believe could have helped you better prepare for college?
5. All of you are participating in this study because you participated in advanced courses in high school. What do you think your academic experience in college would be like if you did not take advanced courses?
6. As you reflect upon your experience as a college student, what do you feel other Black/African American students need in order to successfully complete college?
7. Can you share with me any other thoughts you have related to college preparation during or after high school that I didn't ask you about. I appreciate you all sharing so much about your experiences.

APPENDIX 5: IRB APPROVAL

To: Erin Lewis

Teaching & Learning Connect - Admin

From: IRB

Approval Date: 10-Oct-2021

Expiration Date of Approval: No Date of Expiration - No End Date **RE:** Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)

Submission Type: Initial Application

Expedited Category: 6~7

Study #: IRB-22-0120

Study Title: PERCEPTIONS OF COLLEGE READINESS FOR HIGH ACHIEVING BLACK STUDENTS

This submission has been approved by the IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal. Carefully review the Investigator Responsibilities listed below.

Important Information:

1. The University requires face coverings (masks) in all indoor spaces on campus, regardless of vaccination status.
2. The updates to safety mandates apply to North Carolina only. Researchers conducting HSR activities in locations outside of North Carolina must continue to adhere to local and state requirements where the research is being conducted.
3. Face coverings (masks) are still required in healthcare settings, public transportation, and daycares as well as many North Carolina schools. Researchers conducting HSR activities in these settings must continue to adhere to face coving requirements.
4. In addition, some North Carolina counties have additional requirements that researchers must follow.
5. Organizations, institutions, agencies, businesses, etc. may have further site-specific requirements such as continuing to have a mask requirement, or limiting access, and/or physical distancing. Researchers must adhere to all requirements mandated by the study site.

Your approved consent forms and other documents are available online at

Submission Page. **Investigator's Responsibilities:**

1. Amendments **must** be submitted for review and approval before implementing the amendment. This includes changes to study procedures, study materials, personnel, etc. Note: Modifications may require review by the Full IRB. Be aware of the IRB Committee meeting submission deadlines. 2.
   Data security procedures must follow procedures as approved in the protocol and in accordance with OneIT Guidelines for Data Handling.
3. Promptly notify the IRB (uncc-irb@uncc.edu) of any adverse events or unanticipated risks to participants or others.
4. Three years (3) following this approval/determination, you must complete the Admin-Check In form via Niner Research to provide a study status update.
5. Be aware that this study is included in the Office of Research Protections and Integrity (ORPI) Post-Approval Monitoring program and may be selected for post-review monitoring at some point in the future.
6. Reply to the ORPI post-review monitoring and administrative check-ins that will be conducted periodically to update ORPI as to the status of the study.
7. Complete the Closure eform via Niner Research once the study is complete.

Please be aware that approval may still be required from other relevant authorities or "gatekeepers" (e.g., school principals, facility directors, custodians of records).

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule) and 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), where applicable.