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For the Culture : Using Ethnographic Interviews to Describe the Attempts and Strategies Used by Black, First-Generation, Female, College Students to Combine Family, Community, and College Life

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For the Culture: Using Ethnographic Interviews to Describe the Attempts and Strategies Used by Black, First-Generation, Female, College Students to Combine Family, Community, and College Life

A DISSERTATION

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation

For the Culture: Using Ethnographic Interviews to Describe

the Attempts and Strategies Used by Black, First-Generation, Female,

College Students to Combine Family, Community, and College Life

of

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Abstract

Using qualitative methodology, 10 Black, first-generation female college students were studied at Predominately White Institution in Northern New Jersey. The study examined how Black, female, first-generation college students combined the diverging aspects of their home and school lives and the strategies they used to do so. The theoretical perspectives used in this study were Black Feminist and Life Course Theory. Combining these theoretical perspectives revealed how Black women used agency and linked lives to navigate college and renegotiate family and societal expectations. Analysis of 10 individual ethnographic interviews highlighted two major themes and several sub-themes. The major themes were: 1) reciprocity and 2) the art of navigation between home and school. This work has implications for future research on first-generation Black women and the use of reciprocity as a motivating factor for attending and completing college.

Keywords: Black females, first-generation college students, Black family relationship patterns

Acknowledgments

But by the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. -1

Corinthians 15:10

To begin, it was only by the grace of God that I was able to complete my

doctorate. So, to him, I give all the praise, honor, and glory. Because like the women in my

study, life for me has been no crystal stair… Thank you to my participants, you ladies are truly

extraordinary, and I enjoyed every minute of our time together. I vow to do the work and

make it better for girls like us… Keep shining and "doing it for the culture," and oh, the places

you will go...

To my committee members… Dr. Boyd, you knew me from the start of it all; thank

you for the long conversations and for being the example I needed to succeed. Dr. Lewis,

thank you for taking a chance on me and for all your words of encouragement. Dr. Herr, thank

you for challenging me and bringing out the researcher. Dr. Stewart, thank you for "other

mothering" me. I don't think my journey would have been the same if I had not been on your

team.

To my daughters…Najah…thank you for being an "othermother" to your siblings and

"taking one for the team." You were "your sisters' keeper" even when "you needed more."

You will forever be my sunshine. Egypt, though you were not born from my womb, you are in

every essence of my soul, my child. This journey has not been easy without you. Nia, my

angel, you have stood by my side throughout this doctoral journey. You applauded and

bragged about my success and encouraged me the whole way through. Thank you for your

understanding and support. I could not have done this without you. We did it, Dr. Daughter!

There is no title more important to me than the title of Mother. I may not have done it the best

way, but I pray that one day you all will see that I did it the only way I knew how... I only

wanted to make you all proud. Love Always, Mom

To my parents…Mom, thank you for giving me the gift of life, for that I can never repay you…Dad, my hero...I know my passion and drive make you both nervous and proud. I pray I continue to make you proud. Love Always, Tika

To Reggie…Thank you for being my rider...You are a positive motivating force within my life. Should you ever feel the need to wonder why, let me know... Love Always Fatimah

To my siblings… Dada and Ibn I am forever my brother's keeper. To my big sister Nee-Nee, If I knew I had to live life without you, I would have held you tighter. Love always, your baby sister. To my "sis stars".. Tonya, for always being the first one in and last one out.. Nisa my day one... Trop, My Puppy Brother, Ms. Shariff, my NCC Crew, The aunties, My Other mother's...and Other Brothers.. To my village..Thank you for being in my circle of service. Thank you for the calls, posts, dinners, and all else that was done to help me complete this process. My cohort and especially my first-gen kin for support. My campaign team and community for being in the trenches. My cousin, Dr. Foster, for leading the way. Beulah, Streams of Hope, and Pastor Dickson for anchoring me. My campaign team and community for being in the trenches. To my teachers who saw something in me and were the example, I needed to see. My othermothers, mothering me. To my angels I lost in my PhD journey, my nephew Sabor, auntie loves you and your life was not in vain; nana my twin, I love you and your memory lives on in me. Mrs. Frierson, I promise not to take any wooden nickels and always prove the doubters wrong. Momma Francis, not a day goes by that I don't long to hear your voice. I did not come from your womb, but you were a mom to me in every way. Thank you to my ancestors and future generations... I will continue to do it for the culture and make my ancestors proud.

Dedication

This paper is in loving memory of my Nana, Joan P. Turner. The strongest woman I know!!!

For it is she who gave me the courage to do it all. She placed HER crown upon MY head. She

told me to wear it with pride. She told me some days it might slip just to keep me humble.

But I'm never ever to let it fall. She gave me a kit. In the kit were strength, courage, and

wisdom. She taught me to put God first, to love and to surely be loved in return; she taught

me to dance like no one was watching and to sing like no one was listening; she taught me

that there was nothing that I couldn't do, and not to be afraid of a broken heart because in my

kit were tools for mending, she taught me to fight, but only for good, she said if I'm to give,

give from the heart, she told me damsels in distress were not of our DNA, and that we were

warriors, but still women. Lastly, she told me it was ok to be a Princess, soft and pretty, and

still play in the dirt and be strong and gritty... Nana, my heart longs for your gentle touch and

words of love, but I know you're here in my heart, guiding me still. You were my best friend.

I pray that you see your legacy in me and my children. My Shero, purple butterfly, eastern

star… I am she, and she is me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Context of the study

Research abounds on the best approach to providing racially sensitive support services for Black and Brown college students. Likewise, literature is abundant on gender acute services to women entering college campuses.   However, there is a dearth of research and literature on how to best approach the provision of services for first-generation students who have the intersecting identities of Blackness and womanhood (Williams et al., 2020). Information on this topic is vitally important as these students represent a growing majority of minority students on college campuses in America. Their presence has lasting economic, educational, and social consequences.   While there are many definitions for first-generation college students (FGCS) in this study, they will be defined as students who have at least one parent who has not obtained a minimum of a bachelor's degree. This definition was chosen because it most aptly describes families in the urban setting, which is the intended population of this study. This definition of FGCS is appreciably different from, and should not be confused with, that of the continuing generation students (CGS), who are students who have at least one parent who has graduated with a bachelor's degree (Garriott & Nisle, 2018).

Reflexive Stance

My intent for undertaking this study is to contribute to a body of scholarship on this topic through ethnographic interviews. My motivation is rooted in the resonating themes from a focus group of first-generation, Black female college students I interviewed as doctoral students. The transformational interactions were part of a research project that examined how first-generation college student status influenced family relationships. Throughout this process, I began to hear themes outside the present study's scope, but they resonated with me

nonetheless. Though I am a doctoral student in my forties, I still identify as a first-generation college student. After presenting my research at a national conference in Texas, I was welcomed by an unexpectedly overwhelming response from student attendees who felt that we had all walked in the same "heels, flats, sandals, and slippers." I was intrigued by seeing myself in my participants' experiences and bothered that these concerns had yet to be addressed. Given the enormity of our roles in the educational, economic, political, and social structure, I decided to expand the study to explore how common these themes were among first-generation college students that were black and female. Thus began my motivational journey and rationale/purpose for my dissertation research.

My own experiences as a first-generation black female college student make it apparent that the FGCS sector of the college population is exceptional because it carries with it the struggles, demands, and expectations of our communities. The motivating factors for attending college generally are family honor and future financial freedom (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014). Because of this, I believe that FGCS are inextricably tied to the hopes, dreams, and even the stability of our communities. Each thread of this Teflon-like tether often influences our entire collegiate experience and educational pursuit in our community. In addition, once we, as Black women from low-income communities, arrive on campus, we are suddenly cast into a confusing existence where it is not easy to find our place. And, when we return to our neighborhoods during breaks and after graduation, we may find ourselves in an awkward state. Our college experience and higher education attainment distance us from the trust and acceptance Black women enjoyed as adolescent neighborhood girls. We become benignly ostracized but desperately embraced as we are needed to keep the community sustained and thriving (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015).

Preliminary Literature Review on Black female students

Black women are often overlooked on issues of race and gender when it comes to an understanding of their experiences (Crenshaw, 1990). From the lens of intersectionality, race and gender cannot be viewed from a separate lens. Instead, they must be located along multiple axes such as race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, stage in the life cycle (Semu, 2020), and in this case, first-generation (first gen) status. Not very long ago, Black women were denied access to all but a few post-secondary educational venues. First Generation Black Women (FGBW) were forced to choose between a few Black women's colleges and co-educational Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Williams et al., 2020). These factors combined prevent us from knowing very little about how best to support populations with complex and intersecting identities.

Black women on college campuses often face incredibly high expectations about who they are and how they should represent themselves and are portrayed in literature as successful, strong, black women or overcomers (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). They are often considered the exception to the negative portrayals of black women shown in the media. These portrayals include having multiple children, being unmarried, over-sexualized, emotionally unstable, and uneducated compared to the positive images of White girls and women seen in magazines, movies, and television shows (Jacobs, 2016). "Black women typically experience ongoing processing filtered through the world around them, complete with the biases, misogynoir, and otherwise negative attitudes that cause them to second-guess themselves" (Williams et al., 2020). Black women on predominantly white campuses may experience hypervisibility and hyper invisibility. Hypervisibility stereotypes ways in which black women are viewed as being

unintelligent, angry, loud, aggressive, and offensive. Invisibility is the fundamental aspect of being black in a white-dominated society, and the absence of research on black women.

Furthermore, invisibility is the failure to consider black women's unique characteristics and experiences, not having a voice, and they must bend and blend to white norms of beauty standards (Mowatt et al. 2013). This may cause them to conform to the means of race and gender while silencing their voices (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). In addition to unwelcoming college culture, FGBW also faces domestic issues, such as unrealistic family expectations, family obligations, and lack of economic and educational resources (McCoy, 2014).

Problem Statement and Research Question

In addition to everyday college stressors, first-gen college students often enter college with additional disadvantages. They are more likely to come from low-income homes, have less-educated parents, have lower educational expectations, lower social positions, and have more neighborhood violence. With good intentions, the choice to attend college for some Black, first-generation students may be based on the need to support traditional family scripts concerning resource sharing and interdependence (Boyd-Franklin, 2013) or provide financial assistance to both immediate extended family members (Bui, 2002). FGCS are more likely to succeed; they need instrumental family and institutional support (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014).

Research has stressed the importance of family support for first-generation college students (Guiffrida, 2005; Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Although most FGS families are not able to provide instrumental support needed to navigate college campuses, they often provide support in other ways, such as family capital, or nonmaterial resources such as their habits, priorities, belief systems, and values, to stimulate college aspirations (Portnoi & Kwong,

2019). Though standard support systems and cultural programs are necessary, they may not be enough to increase feelings of satisfaction and inclusiveness, nor do they increase graduation rates for FGBW (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). Moreover, their first-gen status may elicit minimal social, instrumental, and financial support from family (Irlbeck et al., 2014). It could leave students vulnerable to stress, depression, and inadequacy (Aruguete & Katrevich, 2017). "Stress reactions may occur when students must navigate between a home culture into which they have been enculturated and a very different academic culture they are trying to acculturate" (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 131). These stressors have been implicated in low graduation rates among first-generation college students and could erode academic confidence and performance even after college (Jenkins et al., 2013,). Consequently, research indicates that FGCS completes 4-year college degrees approximately 50% less than CGS and significantly slower rates (Garriott & Nisle, 2018).

Though Black women have broken racial and gender barriers by doubling college attendance between 1971 and 2005, low graduation rates for FGBW are still causing concern (Winkle-Wagner, 2015). Four years after enrollment, approximately 57% of Black women drop out of college. Although graduation rates for all first-generation college students may be an issue, with almost 57% of Black women dropping out of college within four years of enrollment, and report doing significantly worse psychologically, than first-generation males and non-first-generation students (Jenkins et al., 2013), there may be some barriers worth highlighting.

These numbers are startling when you consider the history of discrimination on FGBW's path to college. The numbers also suggest that significant obstacles persist. These statistics highlight opportunities to address barriers unique to this population. They present a

chance to examine the costs for Black women as they navigate through uncharted environments such as college campuses. Studying FGBW's experience in this area could have broader societal benefits such as our approach to social services, increased college completion, and creating a space for FGBW to be seen, heard, and understood on college campuses. These issues lead to the following research questions:

1-How do FGBW describe their attempts at combining home, community, and college life?

2- What strategies do FGBW use to cope with combining the complexities of their lives?

Purpose of the Study

This study examines how Black females who are first-generation college students at a predominantly white institution (PDW) merge their lives as college students with the expectations of the families and communities that produced them. Through qualitative research methods, I will attempt to understand what it was like for FGBW as they navigated through college, home, and community. FGBW attempts at combining home, community, and college life may take a lot out of black women, creating additional stress and making them less likely to attend or complete college. This study will help identify their experiences and concerns that can lead to decisions about appropriate services needed to make it easier for them to navigate college.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore what it is like for students as they attempt to combine the diverging aspects of school and home. First-generation students may experience stress reactions as they negotiate a home culture where they have already been enculturated and a highly

different academic culture; they have minimal experience (Jenkins et al., 2013). First-gen college students who are black often have a model of self that is interdependent with family networks, contrary to that of White and continuing generation students and the universities model (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Although literature often discusses that the decision to attend college is met with conflict (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015), we must also explore whether it is necessarily such conflict that always exists for FGBW. If so, we must begin to seek out motivational factors that push them through. Examining aspects of agency, self-determination, culture, and resilience can start the process of understanding strategies used by FGBW to navigate through their first two to three years in college.

Black females are often under-researched in education (Stephens, 2020). Existing literature does not consider the uniqueness of black females. Instead, their experiences are subsumed under two broad categories of being young middle-class black girls or white (Jacobs, 2016). White and young middle-class Black girls are less likely to share the same socioeconomic and first-gen status as other black female college students. Other factors to consider are Black female students juggling college and parenthood, family responsibilities, and employment. The goal should be to refrain from studying FGBW from a cross-racial perspective and, in comparison, to the experiences of White students. This study is designed to assist researchers, policymakers, institutions, and practitioners avoid normalizing assumptions around meritocracy myths and historical contexts associated with college attainment and attendance for FGBW (Williams et al., 2020). Through this study, I aim to make a valuable contribution to existing literature that has often, with or without intent, excluded black women and their unique experiences. With research centered on Black women, we can better understand identity development by pinpointing crucial factors that provide insight into black women's

developmental and societal issues (Williams et al., 2020). Therefore, this study will be an interpretation of participants' experiences in hopes of understanding how their everyday experiences and differences across multiple groups foster new experiences of self (Collins, 2019).

The final goal of the study is to examine the relationship between Black females who are first-generation college students and the communities that produced them through the eyes of the participants. The study will explore social influences and interactions with family networks throughout their college experience. Issues related to kinship in contemporary Black families will also be examined.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Overview of First-generation College Students

Transitioning to college can be difficult regardless of socio-economic status, age, or ethnicity.   Many universities push to recruit more students of color in the interest of diversity. However, when programs do not account for student differences, they can create conflict, competition, and separation between majority/minority groups (Quaye et al., 2019). This can be even more daunting for first-generation college students of color as they try to navigate uncharted territory where they may discover that opportunities are not always equally distributed. This inequity is surprising given that colleges, seen as Democratic institutions, once offered such a promise to realize ideals of freedom, social justice, equality, and human rights (Collins, 2019).

Many of these newly and aggressively recruited students are the first in their families to attend college. Nearly 50% of all college students are first-generation, and approximately 34% participate in 4-year institutions (Hébert, 2018). However, only 11% of first-generation college students earn a bachelor's degree after six years of higher education, compared to 55% of continuing-generation students (Aruguete & Katrevich, 2017). These students may face challenges that distinguish them from their continuing generation peers. Sociodemographic factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and first-generation student status correlate highly with college performance and persistence (Keels, 2013). First-gen students make up approximately 1/3 of college students in the United States (Martinez et al., 2009). These students tend to be from lower-income households and are more likely to represent an ethnic minority than their continuing-generation peers (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014). Among

these low-income and first-gen college students, more than a third are parents, and students of color are especially likely to be balancing parenting and college (Nelson et al., 2013).

FGCS are more likely to have marginalized identities that intersect by race, gender, and socioeconomic status and, further, may be the first in their wider community to attend college (Hand 2008; Ritchey, 2016). FGCS often do not identify with the dominant culture. To meet the expectation of the college environment, those first-generation college students who do not identify as members of the dominant group may be required to abandon or limit family or cultural traditions in favor of those more consistent with the dominant culture. As it relates to first-generation college students, these intersections can create a sense of accomplishment while creating an ambiguous sense of loss (Olive, 2010). These losses may include the loss of a familiar past and intergenerational continuity. FGCS report being torn between the culture of family and the university culture (Aruguete & Katrevich, 2017) and are less likely to have instrumental experience and support for college completion than non-FGCS (Ellis et al., 2019). When faced with obstacles, first-generation students may have few outlets for social support and report being more depressed, stressed, and upset than other students (Aruguete & Katrevich, 2017).

When a student's cultural focus is based on a collectivist worldview that emphasizes family and attending to others, going to college to pursue one's path may be fraught with more conflict for first-generation and ethnic minority students than for continuing-generation and White students because of clashing cultural norms and values (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Cultural norms and values of educational institutions often represent self-enhancement values that primarily focus on independence (Aelenei et al., 2020). First-generation college students may be unfamiliar with the dominant culture of higher education and lack support

from family members. They may feel alienated by the impersonal, bureaucratic nature of the college campus (Stuber, 2011). Similarly, many first-generation students experience a diminished sense of belonging and access to social capital on college campuses which may impact their access to coping resources as they navigate the challenges of being the first in their family to obtain a bachelor's degree (Garriott & Nisle, 2018). Coping resources, as defined by Garriott & Nisle (2018), refer to both "personal psychological (e.g., problem-solving orientation) and social resources (e.g., social networks and mentors) that are available to aid in one's management of stressful life events" (p. 438). Finally, some argue that the problems of first-generation students reflect the social and psychological challenges these students face when trying to adapt to the socio-cultural world of the college or university (Garriott & Nisle, 2018).

College Culture

Every College or University has a set of unspoken rules that all students are expected to adhere to. Failure to do so can bring about unexpected challenges as students attempt to navigate unfamiliar territory. College culture may differ from campus to campus depending on demographics and geographical locations. However, there are many similarities. Institutions of higher learning are built upon specific shared values, norms, and behavioral expectations that define a common academic culture and differentiate them from other kinds of institutions, regardless of ethnic majority (Jenkins et al., 2013). First-generation college students are often expected to assimilate to this culture with little to no preparation. While the parents of continuing generation students' have already prepared them for academic culture, eliminating the need for acceleration and thus eliminating this component of stress (Jenkins et al., 2013).

Faculty, administrators, counselors, and peers affect college culture (Cayirdag, 2016). When colleges have established diverse and supportive college culture, it implies a favorable climate (Cayirdag, 2016). Failure to address diversity and equity issues can lead to a racial environment on college campuses that is not conducive to successful outcomes for students of color (McClain & Perry, 2017). Moreover, colleges typically reflect a middle-class American value system based on independent values, which may be fraught with conflict for students from working- or lower-class homes which tend to be of a more interdependent background (Stephens et al., 2012).

Students with an independent model of self (e.g., continuing-generation, White students) are advantaged when their model of self matches the universities norm of independence, and students are disadvantaged when their model is self as interdependent (e.g., first-generation Latino students) does not match (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). A college student's implicit understanding of who they are, or model of self is fundamental as they enter college (Stephens et al., 2012). In independent cultural contexts, a "good adult" means separating oneself from others by going away to college, moving out, getting a job, or being responsible solely for oneself (Stephens et al., 2012). Going away to college for some FGCS may conflict with their model of self since these students may come from backgrounds where the expectation is to remain connected to and responsible for family members (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). While interdependent cultural contexts also expect individuals to engage in some independent acts, there is an underlying expectation that the individual will remain connected and will continue to contribute to the family. College may create uncertainty and conflict for first-generation college students because it highlights economic and cultural

discrepancies between the working-class home environment and the middle-class university environment (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015).

Campus Racial Climate. The campus racial climate is described as the current beliefs, judgments, and outlooks about race, ethnicity, and diversity within an academic society. It influences outcomes for the student body. School campuses' racial climate can impact students of color's graduation and retention rates and overall college satisfaction (McClain & Perry, 2017). To create a diverse campus and employ a recruitment model that promises an inclusive campus experience, universities often advertise multiculturalism, pluralism, equity, inclusiveness, and social justice. However, when these expectations are not met and universities fail to address structural challenges, racial conflict and separation will still exist (Quaye et al., 2015).

When colleges fail to acknowledge the individual student, this encourages feelings of mistrust and voluntary separation amongst racial groups. For example, students report a lack of diversity in sports, campus concerts, books, and faculty (Harper & Patton, 2007). When choosing faculty for university, it is essential to consider their expertise and race (Breihan, 2007). Sprinkling people of color for the sake of appearance will not suffice. Minority students benefit when having mentors and leaders that can relate to their experiences. Students will also help when minority staff feels empowered to address students' individual needs without fear of losing their jobs (Harper & Patton, 2007). Minority students on college campuses still experience racial tension enacted through microaggressions, lack of diversity in faculty, and programs that are inclusive of students and their intersecting identities. As students of color are experiencing interactive cultural strain, they are simultaneously coping with integrating acculturation, identity development, and socialization (Jenkins et al., 2013).

With incidences of overt racism and discrimination remaining prevalent at colleges and universities, we must understand how students experience microaggressions (Ellis et al., 2018). Microaggressions often appear in written or verbal racial jokes and racial slurs, excessive surveillance based on racial stereotypes, minimization of ethnic identity and experiences being questioned while in a position of authority, and pathologizing interethnic cultural differences and communication styles. These overt forms of racism subtlety demean and invalidate a person's identity, experiences, and historical background and are conveyed in derogatory verbal, behavioral, and environmental undertones (Ellis et al., 2018) during what may be the most critical period of ethnic and gender role identity development (Jenkins et al., 2013). These issues may be problematic for all Black women; they are especially detrimental to first-generation Black women.

Black Females and Higher Education

Black women continue to be under-researched in studies about higher education, despite their overwhelming presence on college campuses (Quaye et al., 2019). Since 1972, Black women's participation in higher education has nearly doubled to the point where they dominate almost every statistical measurement of Black performance in post-secondary education (Slater, 1994). Black women account for 16% of the total U.S. postsecondary college enrollment, and in 2013–2014 Black women held 12% of all bachelor's degrees conferred (Slater, 1994). While these numbers are impressive, they have the potential to frame Black women as highly successful and robust, leading some to believe that they may face challenges but require less support (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019) because they are socialized to be strong, Black women. The "Strong Black Woman " portrayal often ignores Black women's sacrifices to maintain these expectations.

Additionally, these expectations pointedly account for their Blackness but fail to consider their womanhood (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). On the contrary, terms such as "Black Girl Magic " coined by Cashawn Thompson, highlight the struggle and resilience of Black women (Williams et al., 2020). Ultimately, if systems were in place to support the needs of Black women, they would not have to exert the extra energy to be more vital or magical.

While acknowledging the more than astonishing accomplishments for Black women in higher education, concern still exists with the 6-year graduation rate at 4-year universities, which has been at a consistent 43% for over a decade (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). Researchers must now consider why the college graduation rate of Black women is not equal to their enrollment rate. Some of these reasons may be based on stressors common to all college students, and some may be based on those stressors unique to Black students attending a PWI. However, black women tend to have additional burdens such as family responsibilities, single parenthood, higher expectations, hypervisibility, and underrepresentation (Jenkins et al., 2013). 37% of Black college students juggle college and parenting and are low-income (Nelson et al., 2013). Although women report receiving more social support than their male counterparts, they also report more stress and depressive symptoms (Tran et al., 2018). On college campuses, Black women experience higher expectations about who they are and whom they are expected to be by peers, faculty, and media (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). Black women face skin complexion and hair texture issues compared to white beauty standards (Williams et al., 2020). They must manage to

navigate between multiple worlds or alter the image they present to Black men, White peers, teachers, and families (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019). When aspects of identity are imposed on Black women, some may feel pressure to change or abandon their identity to fit in (Williams et al., 2020). These issues are especially problematic for first-generation black women (Williams et al., 2020). Despite the rising number of first-generation black women on college campuses and holding the most degrees in the Black community they still must endure instances of sexual harassment, misogynistic oppression, stereotypical ideals, and microaggressions (Williams et al., 2020). Even after graduation and extensive earnings, their middle-class privilege is challenged by the disadvantage of being both black and woman (Butler-Sweet, 2017). Given the intersecting oppressions and first-generation status for Black women on campus, there should be consideration of the cost for this population and how these issues might be addressed. Research shows that an increase in social support could decrease negative experiences for FGCS (Gist-Mackey et al., 2018). MacGeorge et al. (2011) describes social support as "supportive communication: verbal (and nonverbal) behaviors intended to provide or seek help." Higher levels of social support amongst peers and family promote higher college satisfaction and overall social, academic adjustment, integration, and self-efficacy (Jenkins et al., 2013). Additionally, support and encouragement from family networks promote self-efficacy, which influences self-motivation (Kim, 2014), which could affect retention and graduation. Research on Black families has documented the connection

between family composition, family involvement, and educational outcomes (Browne &

Battle, 2018).

Black Families

  To understand the significance of family networks on Black, female, first-generation

college students, one must first understand the significance of Black family relationships in

the students' lives. First-generation college students may derive from families and

communities with little college experience and understanding of what to expect on college

campuses. As a result, families may have little to no knowledge of providing support for the

student (Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). In addition, FGCSs who come from low-income contexts

may require the use of the students' resources (Smith, 2008). Some authors (Terrell, 2017;

Winkle-Wagner et al.) described the practice of sharing monetary resources originally

destined for college expenses with family members in need.   Though this is a manifestation

of family interdependence, current literature speaks to how the need to attend to family

obligations and household responsibilities influences academic success and retention in

African American first-generation college students (Guiffrida, 2005; Herndon & Hirt, 2004).

  The concept of family has been viewed as the foundation of African American culture.

It plays a vital role in developing African Americans and building African American

communities (Staples, 1987). Members were "held together by common values including

interdependence, mutual aid, resilience, communalism, and collective responsibilities"

(Stephens, 2005). Membership in a family holds meaning and comes with defined

expectations (Stewart, 2015).   In addition, membership is determined not just by blood

relations for Black families. Boundaries for who can enter this family unit are flexible and

permeable (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). This includes fictive kin- persons not related by blood,

marriage, or adoption but who hold the rights and obligations of any family member (Stewart, 2003; (Sudarkasa, 2007).   Often circumstances and living conditions determine acceptance and invitation into families (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). Traditionally research on Black families has focused on the pathological and not the strengths through the lens of the traditional nuclear family, which contrasts that of Black families (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). In some instances, for FGCS, college entrance may be seen as a family goal and a chance to uplift the race (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). Lacking wealth and social and financial capital, Black families often pool resources and make sacrifices to support children (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). Consequently, students often feel a sense of obligation (and added stress?) to family members since family members aided them in their college pursuits (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). This may result in resources intended for educational purposes being diverted to meet basic family needs (Stewart, 2003).

Family Structure & Definition

Traditionally, research on Black families used a nuclear family lens, which is neither traditional nor culturally appropriate for Black families (Holmes, 1995; Sudarkasa, 1997). Thus, the differences between Black families and the nuclear family have been viewed as pathological and in need of change rather than as strengths that have aided in the survival of Blacks in America (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). The concept of family has been viewed as the foundation of Black culture and plays a vital role in how Black development and Black communities were built (McAdoo, 2007; Staples, 1987). Membership in a family holds meaning and comes with defined expectations (Stewart, 2015). Members were "held together by common values including interdependence, mutual aid, resilience, communalism, and collective responsibilities" (Stephens, 2005). Black families have often thrived on

flexible family roles in that it is not uncommon for individual family members to have dual roles (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2005). It is important to note that the families from which FGBW comes are likely to be extended. Even single mother-headed or two-parent families are likely embedded in an interdependent extended family. This interdependence may include "daily interaction with, and responsibilities for, other family members such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins" (Holmes, 1995, p. 1658). Notably, Black family, membership is defined not just by blood or marital relationships. Still, it may include *fictive kin*- persons not related by blood, marriage, or adoption but who hold the rights and obligations of any other family member (Stewart, 2003; Sudarkasa, 2007).   Boundaries for who can enter this family unit are flexible and permeable (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). Often circumstances and living conditions determine acceptance and invitation into families (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). The definition of family may vary from culture to culture, and families' composition may vary within cultural groups. For this research, a family will be defined as a collective unit of support systems that consists of immediate family, extended family, non-blood kin, and religious and community resources (Browne & Battle, 2018).

Kinship Networks

The idea of kinship is not a new concept for Black families. Extended kin networks within traditional African communities, pre, and post-slavery, suggest that the nuclear family structure has never been the norm for Black families (Messing, 2006). Black families have traditionally utilized extended family and friend networks as resources, when necessary, minus any stigma attached (Stack & Burton, 1993). Research has implicated that these family practices could play a vital role in the emotional and cognitive development of Black children (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). Kinship characteristics like informal adoptions (took in) and

fictive- kin used during slavery is still used in contemporary black families (Holmes, 1995; (Boyd-Franklin, 2013). Names such as Auntie or uncle are used to acknowledge extended family members who hold value with the family. For Black families, these relationships have value and may be challenging to explain to people outside of their culture (Stack & Burton, 1993; McAdoo, 2007). Informal adoptions occur when family members or extended family members take in children while parents are working, incarcerated, or deceased (Boyd-Franklin, 2013). Even when no bloodlines or legal adoption are attached, these children become family members and absorb the same benefits and responsibilities as biological members (Boyd-Franklin, 2013). This was also done during slavery when children were separated from their parents and taken in by other family members.

Black Church as Family

The "Black Church" has been described as an extension of the Black family network (Williams et al., 2008). It is the oldest institution in the Black community as it dates to the era of slavery. It has provided spiritual, instrumental, and social support (Williams et al., 2008). Christian members of a church with predominantly Black congregants and denominations (governing bodies) are considered part of the larger institution known as the Black Church (Stephens, 2020). This membership reinforces family values and imparts religious capital to Black families (Stephens, 2020) by providing a sense of power, a greater sense of self, and survival (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). The influence of the Black church has been studied in providing resources for elders and opportunities for leadership development and to provide. It has also been found to support both informal (Stephens, 2020) and formal education (Walker & Dixon, 2002) for individuals at all stages of development and support education. The black church has also been instrumental in pursuing social justice and equality

for the Black community. The Black church has been found to provide access to mentors outside those the larger society defines as a family who has the experience of attending college. Therefore, these mentors might support FGBW in their journey to and through college.

Family Strengths

Once viewed as disorganized, dysfunctional, and disadvantaged in literature, researchers have recently identified the resilience and strengths enacted by African American families (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2005). Family strengths amongst black families are conceptualized as "relationship patterns, interpersonal competencies, and social characteristics that create a positive sense of family identity" (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2005, p.461). These interactions among family members are satisfying and fulfilling (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). What constitutes value in white American culture may not be the same for Black families. When we assume the idea that there is a distinct homogeneous American culture, we think that all families should have a similar conceptual character (Nobles, 1978).

For Black families' positive interpersonal relationships create a sense of positive family identity, satisfaction, and fulfillment (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993) and can be considered family strengths. Such family strengths are vital in assisting families and family members in dealing effectively with stress and crisis (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). For Black families and students, membership within the family holds a particular value and sense of pride. One FGBW reported that "not forgetting where she came from" despite her success was an accomplishment (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992).

Mutual Aid/Interdependence Mutual Aid/Interdependence. The notion "Am I my brother's keeper" is a cultural concept that refers to the mutual aid system in extended black

families (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). For Black families, kin networks are often in place to support those in need. This represents a traditional Black family value that includes a mutual aid system (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). Contrary to the individualism shown in White families, Black families uphold interdependency or communal cooperation out of necessity (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). This concept emerged from the idea of survival in a hostile and oppressive society where blacks viewed themselves as "making it" only through the concerted efforts of groups of people (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). Historically this can be best observed in the shared planning and execution of escapes from slavery within the underground slave community. Continuing African traditions, taken from African villages, across the shores of slavery, and through plantations and right into contemporary America, Black families have maintained that all members are a part of the community and are responsible for each other (Fairley, 2003). Amid social and economic turmoil, Blacks pooled resources together to provide for each other… and ensure the family's survival. In some instances, for FGCS, college entrance may be seen as a family goal and a chance to uplift the race (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992). Black families often pool resources to make sacrifices to support children (Higginbotham & Weber, 1992).

Theoretical Frameworks

Theories help understand the mechanisms of behavioral change (Davis et al., 2015). Life Course Theory and Black Feminist Thought seem appropriate frameworks to examine how FGBW describe their attempts at combining home, community, and college life and what strategies they use to do so. These lenses will allow examination of implications for women's agency and how institutions can support women from oppressed cultures through educational and social support. Life-course speaks to the importance of the individual's interaction with

their family and individual development under varying social, cultural, and historical contexts. Using the principles of Life Course theory/Kinscripts, the present study represents an understanding of the role of timing, historical context, linked lives, and human agency in choosing to attend college. "Black Feminist Thought gives voice to the American black woman whose experience and reality remain outside knowledge for most" (Hein, 2017, p. 1). It emphasizes the power and agency of Black women, in particular, to theorize from their cultures and lived experiences to produce contextually relevant knowledge, and heal the self, the community, and the larger socio-cultural context (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010).

Kinscripts

A Kinscripts framework is a specific formulation of the life course perspective that examines how families negotiate the life course as multigenerational collectives and individuals (Stack & Burton, 1993) regarding the roles/scripts assigned to which one is expected to adhere. Kinscripts speaks to the issue of an individual's behavior and development and the role that individual family traditions and expectations play in an individual's life choices, life changes, and trajectories (Stewart, 2015). For this study, Kinscripts was appropriate because the women in this study are operating under scripts assigned in their families' contexts. This assignment of hands was suggested in the previous research that prompted the development of this study. In some cases, their college attendance may violate a family or community script that required them to complete (or not complete) high school and enter income-generating employment to contribute to the tradition of mutual aid. In other cases, the script may require that students attend college and be successful in a career that would support the family at large, even if that career does not match the interests and aspirations of the student. Additionally, this kinwork perspective acknowledges family

members' ongoing actions to "regenerate families, maintain lifetime continuities, sustain intergenerational responsibilities, and reinforce shared values" (Roy & Burton, 2007).

Life Course Theory

In the study of child development launched in the 1920s, longitudinal studies determined that current theories did not consider changes to human development influenced by life's ever-changing events (Elder, 1998). Relational developmental systems broadly posit that development is impacted through bidirectional relationships between the individual and their context. Human development in life-course theory represents a process of organism-environment transactions over time in which the organism plays an active role in shaping its development (Elder & Shanahan, 2007). Science has shown us that the basic process of development involves mutually influential (i.e., bidirectional) relations between levels of organization ranging from biology through individual and social functioning to societal, cultural, physical, ecological, and, ultimately, historic levels of organization (Elder & Shanahan, 2007). This perspective views the social context as a "scene or setting" through which the person—loaded with their "natural predispositions"—must pass (Elder & Shanahan, 2007). The life course premise posits that changing lives can alter developmental trajectories (Elder, 1998). Thus, the study of human development should apply to processes across the life span (Elder, 1998). Originally conceived of and applied to the impact of the Great Depression, the life course perspective posits that "historical forces shape the social trajectories of family, education, and work, and they in turn influence behavior and particular lines of development" (Elder, 1998).

Life-course theory points us to a world where we consider the time and space in which lives are lived and where people work out development paths as best they can (Elder &

Shanahan, 2007). It tells us how lives are socially organized in biological and historical times and how the resulting social pattern affects how we think, feel, and act (Elder, 1998). Researchers have drawn on qualitative and quantitative studies adopting life course perspectives in shaping educational pathways for disadvantaged students in higher education (Brady & Gilligan, 2020). Drawing from Elder's original study on children in the great depression and how historical forces shape the social trajectories of family, education, and work, we can consider how the public health and economic crisis of COVID-19 influenced the behavior, decisions, and development of college students (Benner & Mistry, 2020). The life course perspective provides a comprehensive framework for conceptualizing development across multiple domains over time through its core principles (e.g., human agency, linked lives, historical times and place, and timing). The life course perspective provides a comprehensive framework for conceptualizing development across multiple domains over time (Brady & Gilligan, 2020).

  Historical Time & Place. Historical time & place suggests that the life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their lifetime (Elder, 1998). Historical changes can alter the social trajectories of family, education, and work, which ultimately influences behavior and development (Elder, 1998). Contributions to this perspective come from mechanisms that link historical change to transitions and life patterns (Elder, 1998), such as Elder's study of children's development during the Great Depression and World War II. In this study, historical time is pertinent in that the current period may be a time where there is a greater willingness to acknowledge the experiences of marginalized groups and to move forward in a spirit of equity

Timing. The life course perspective also amplifies attention to the developmental timing of sociohistorical events (Benner & Mistry, 2020). The principle of timing states that the developmental impact of a succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in a person's life. This perspective challenges us to consider all life stages through the generations, from infancy to death (Elder & Shanahan, 2007). As first-generation college students enter a new developmental stage with dynamic and complex changes in living situations, relationships, and roles, family and institutional support decrease as the agency increases (Wood et al., 2017). This emphasis on the part of age and the passage of time in expressions of the agency is critical as with time and maturity, our capacities and resources may change, our social networks may grow or decrease, and our goals may change in light of various significant life events such as leaving home and entering college (Brady & Gilligan, 2020).

Human Agency. Research documents the role of human agency in studying marginalized populations in higher education (Brady & Gilligan, 2020). The principle of human agency states that individuals construct their life course through choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances (Elder, 1998). Although individuals can select the paths they follow, choices are contingent upon opportunities and limitations of social structure, culture, and family interactions (Elder, 1998). Research further discusses the importance of examining the dynamics of the conscious choice of social mobility in the option to attend college (Olive, 2008). Paulsen (2005) suggested that first-generation students make choices based on a different perspective than continuing-generation students; these views may be unique to their groups and thus frame what students perceive and value about college. For these students, the desire to better oneself may manifest

in an altruistic framework; the motivation may include rescuing oneself from a challenging and limited future and giving something back to family and community (Terenzini et al., 1994).

Linked Lives. Despite the abundance of research focused on first-generation students, there appears to be little literature exploring the environment in which agency is enacted (Brady & Gilligan, 2020). For this study, we will also consider the role that environment and structure on and off campus have on students' agency. Looking at the impact of the interaction between individual agency and contextual factors for Black women on college campuses can point to deciding to exercise their choice to attend college, navigate their journey, and develop their coping styles (Brady & Gilligan, 2020).

Linked lives suggest that lives are lived interdependently, and social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships. Life-course perspective speaks to the importance of the student's interaction with their family and the communities from which they come (Stewart, 2003). As an individual develops, the interactions within their environment become more complex. The concept of linked lives is particularly relevant for this study on first-generation college students. It addresses the issue of interdependence and how role change in one generation has consequences across the generations, ascending and descending (Elder, Shanahan, & Jennings, 2015)**.** Stack and Burton (1993), Kinscripts further explain this concept from the perspective of black family traditions, resource sharing, and, more importantly, how an individual's life course is connected to another and how that life course, in the context of kin, is negotiated and constructed. Traditionally, concepts from life courses' principle of linked lives have been derived from white, middle-class families.

However, this study will further explore these concepts from the lens of Kinscripts, which includes race and culture (Stack & Burton, 1993).

Black Feminist Thought

Given the historical legacy of racism in the United States and within U.S. higher education, we situate this study in scholarship that positions Black women and their experiences at the center of the research. Considering the inescapable social and structural barriers for first-generation black women, it's increasingly important to examine first-generation students through a cultural and ethnic lens (Olive, 2010). This study is framed by Collins's (1990) work on Black feminist thought, which offers a framework for understanding the experiences of Black women. "Black feminist theory is the study and articulation of the experiences of black women who are simultaneously situated politically and historically in society at positions based upon their race (black), their gender (female), and their class (disadvantaged)" (Siple et al., 2018, p. 132). Collins (1989) asserts that Black women are "neither passive victims nor willing accomplices" to their social power (p.747). Black feminist thought gives voice to the American black woman, whose experience and reality remain outside knowledge for most (Hein, 2017, p. 1). It emphasizes the power and agency of Black women to theorize from their cultures and lived experiences to produce contextually relevant knowledge, heal the self, the community, and the larger socio-cultural context (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). Black feminist thought frames this study as there is still a gap in the literature on how Black female college students navigate stereotypes and define their identities (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019).

The black feminist theory offers a perspective different from larger society by using themes relating to Black women's culture and traditions. However, if you are flourishing

according to the larger culture, you are the exception to the rule. For successful Black women, this can cause separation from family and community at times to the detriment of the family unit, leaving them having to negotiate issues that arise when both middle- and lower-class members exist within the same extended family structure. We can use intersectionality to think about how the Black women discussed how they dealt with overlaps in their identities and how they crafted an authentic sense of self. A compelling body of research suggests Black women are subjected to inordinately high expectations compared with other groups. They are influenced by identity politics, stereotypes, and the superwoman ideal.

Conclusion

Viewing these experiences through the lens of Black, feminist thought as described by Patricia Hill Collins, I aim to illuminate the unique and multiple oppressions which contribute to their experiences and the experiences of other women of color who are the first in their families to complete college and achieve upward mobility (Collins, 2009). Additionally, a feminist perspective promotes creativity, risk taking and sharing personal views, thereby infusing much-needed reflexivity within the research (Holmes, 2020). Critical feminist and pedagogical theories create a conceptual and methodological framework; that privileges the experiential knowledge of Black girls/women within particular socio-political and historical contexts, dismantling the traditional knowledge hierarchy and holding Black girls up as experts of their lived experiences. Failure to acknowledge and address Black women's intersecting identities reinforces the marginalization of their race and gender (Collins, 2009). A gap remains in the literature relative to how Black women college students navigate stereotypes and how they define their identities in their ways.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Qualitative Methodology

This chapter will begin with a review of the research approach chosen for the study. The chapter will then go on to explain the positionality of the researcher. Next, the participants' section will explain the research site, eligibility requirements, and recruitment procedures. Finally, this chapter will end with data collection and analysis information. This will include reflexivity, member checking, backyard study, and limitations. This chapter will support the research design to answer the following research questions:

1. How do FGBW describe their attempts at combining home, community, and college life?

2. What strategies do FGBW use to navigate combining the complexities of their lives?

This work will add to the existing study, which examines the influence of first-generation college student status on family relationships. Since it has not explicitly been discussed previously, this study will expand the dataset, focusing on the strategies used to navigate the constant transition between participants' home identity and their school identity when they desire to maintain a role in both. Home identity concerns the roles and scripts ascribed to the student by the family, community, and cultural contexts to which the participant belongs. School identity refers to the campus environment and the expectations (academic, social, and societal) to which the student must conform to be deemed successful.

The primary goal of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experience of Black,

female, first-generation college students and their attempts at combining home, community,

and college life and the strategies they use to do so.   To examine this topic, a qualitative

research approach was used to gather in-depth data about the participants' experiences

navigating their college experiences. Typically, research on first-generation college students

looks at outcomes such as retention of graduation rates (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014).

Qualitative methods allow for a more direct understanding of experiences or phenomena from

the people's point of view (Corbin & Strauss, 2020). Accordingly, the qualitative

methodology seems appropriate for both the study population (FGBW), who have been

ignored or silenced in the research, and the chosen theoretical perspectives, Kinscripts and

Black feminist thought, which guided the study.

Using Life Course's Kinscripts as a theoretical framework, I explored how first-

generation Black female college students navigated family, community, and university

cultures and how it influenced individuals and their development under varying social,

cultural, and historical contexts (Stewart, 2003). A qualitative study facilitated this

exploration by allowing the participants to tell their stories from their perspectives. The

participants had the opportunity to speak of the family and community roles/scripts they have

assumed or been assigned, the degree to which their college aspirations fulfilled or interfered

with those roles, and how they navigated the space between college, family, and community

expectations if such navigation was necessary. Furthermore, qualitative methodology offered

a culturally sensitive approach by giving Black, female, first-generation college students a space to tell their own stories about their unique experiences (Tillman, 2002).

Black feminist thought also resonated with qualitative methodology as it allowed the participants' voices to be heard. Research shows that first-generation college students have unique challenges, mainly when they derive from a minority ethnic background (Jenkins et al., 2013). However, education research has not always included the unique experiences of Black women, nor has it illustrated their voices in the literature (Jacobs, 2016). Thus, a qualitative method is necessary to explore the individual nuances of their lived experiences (Jacobs, 2016).   A qualitative research study allowed the participants to describe how they interpreted what they experienced and its effects on them, ultimately providing a more robust understanding of how they make sense of their world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). An understanding of lived meaning, the experience of the individual, is necessary to anticipate and meet the needs of first-generation students in the academic environment (Olive, 2010)

Ethnographic Interview Research Design

An ethnographic interview is a qualitative research design that aims to describe a culture or group through narrative data collection (Spradley, 2016). In addition, an ethnographic interview seeks to discover and record an individual's experiences and how those experiences are interpreted by that individual (Bauman & Adair, 1992).   When used as a methodology in education or social sciences, it provides a more reflective, critical, and context-informed perspective on literature and practice (Nadan, 2019). In an ethnographic interview, the researcher must take the position of the learner and, to the extent possible, put aside existing knowledge and assumptions, thus allowing the participant/informer to be the teacher of their own experiences (Nadan, 2019). Ethnographic interviewing employs a method

of narrative yet structured discovery. This method includes in-depth interviews and observations focused on specific topics but allows flexibility to capture unexpected findings and relationships among subjects. This method also allows the researcher to ask questions that elicit a personal description of the participants' daily activities, routines, and interpersonal relationships (Bauman & Adair, 1992) while inspiring them to talk about specific aspects of their culture. Researchers attest that narratives are the best way to discover a person's lived experience and ways of asking a person to "relive" moments of their past, thus providing thick descriptions of their experiences (Lawlor et al., 2000).

Black women are often under-researched in issues of education (Quaye et al., 2019) and overlooked on matters of race and gender when it comes to an understanding their experiences (Crenshaw, 1990)—leaving little on how to best approach the provision of services for first-generation students who have the intersecting identities of Blackness and womanhood. When colleges fail to account for student differences, they can create conflict, competition, and separation between majority/minority groups (Quaye et al., 2019). For this reason, an ethnographic interview approach was conducted to understand the social situations in which FGBW exist and how they perceive and understand those situations (Westby et al., 2003). Black women are consistently shaped by and shaping a world filled with boundaries and oppression. With race and gender at the forefront, ethnographic interviewing will remind the reader to abandon his cultural background for this study and imagine themselves in the position of Black women who live by different meaning systems (Spradley, 2016). Though the participants' stories were based on their individual experiences, this methodology allowed me to locate themes or core issues that all black women can acknowledge and integrate into their self-identity. Lastly, ethnographic interviews allow personal and cultural meanings and

experiences to be organized in story form (Lawlor et al., 2000). This is especially effective for Black people, who are storytellers by nature (McAdoo, 1991).

Researcher Positionality

Positionality describes an individual's worldview, personal values, and position about a research task and its social and political context (Holmes, 2020). suggests that we interrogate how our positionality could impact the research and understanding. A researcher's positionality can influence all aspects of the research process, including the choice of methodology, development of research questions, and the interpretation of results. Acknowledgment of one's positionality requires self-reflection and a degree of self-awareness. This is sometimes called reflexivity, which is the researcher's effort at recognizing and disclosing their preconceptions and biases about who and what is being investigated (Holmes, 2020).

Backyard Study. Reflecting on my identity and social location concerning my participants, I identify this as a "backyard" study. A Backyard study occurs when the primary researcher experiences the same phenomena identified in the research (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014). Like my participants, I am a Black, first-generation, low-income college student who attended a predominantly white public university in New Jersey for my undergraduate and graduate studies. As a Black, first-gen female, I had the insider advantage of relating to my participants from the intersection of race, gender, class, and first-gen status.

Although being an insider brings subjectivity concerns to backyard studies (Zulfikar, 2014). Aldrige (2003) suggests that insider views can empower communities if the researcher is aware of where they are situated in the research. Finally, Aldrige (2003) addresses the

dilemma Black researchers often face when allowing their voices to be heard and

simultaneously giving voice and agency to the Black community they are researching (p.29).

He further states that "by articulating these definitions of voice and agency and giving

credence to the researcher's voice and the voice of his or her people, African- American

educational historians address what Scheurich and Young (1997) have called "epistemological

racism"—a tenet of Western positivistic research that marginalizes the worldviews of

minorities and people of color" (Alridge, 2003). Although the insider knowledge that I, the

primary researcher, brought to the table allowed me to better understand the plight and

experiences of my participants (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014) for an ethnographic interview and

to remain unbiased in my analysis, I had to assume the position of learner. As the learner, I

was careful not to inject my own experiences while understanding the privilege my

positionality presented.

However, I identify as and with FGBW; I must also acknowledge my experiences, the

privileges that come with those experiences, and the influence these factors might have on the

research. I am a single mom of two college-aged children and one who attends middle school

and is eagerly awaiting her college experience. Additionally, I think it is also important to

disclose that one of my children I inherited through kinship at birth. Kinship inheritance

occurs when you informally adopt or "take in" a child of a relative (Stack & Burton, 1993).

This is not uncommon in Black families when one parent or both parents cannot care for the

child (Boyd-Franklin, 2013). Another essential part of my positionality is that I have a niece

whom I have played an integral role in raising, who entered college as I began my data collection. Though she was not part of my study, while I was collecting and analyzing my participants' experiences, I was able to help my niece, who became a first-generation, Black female college student at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), navigate her experience.

I currently hold a Master's in Social Work and Educational Leadership and work as a private practice therapist. As a therapist, I have had access to black families and black family issues, which sometimes include managing transitions and conflict. In the community where I live, I am an elected member of the Board of Education and the Chair of the Scholarship Committee for the Orange Housing Development Corporation, which provides college funding for low-income students living in public housing. I am also an adjunct professor at a community college, where I teach Psychology to primarily low-income and first-generation students. Furthermore, in my research assistant position, I have had the privilege of working on research projects that exclusively focused on first-generation college students. All these experiences are likely to have influenced my desire to complete the study and develop, collect, and analyze the data during this study.

Participants

Eligibility Criteria. To be eligible to participate in this study, students had to identify as First-Generation College Students between 18-24. For this study, first-generation students are those with neither parent having a 4-year degree (Tibbetts et al., 2018). Participants must identify as female and Black/African American and attend predominantly white institutions in Northern New Jersey. Since the study's goal was to understand student experiences, the final requirement was that students be at least second-year full-time students. In choosing to interview students that have completed at least one year of college or have graduated within

the year, I ensured that students had ample time and experience to provide a detailed description of their experience.

Recruitment Procedures. As a graduate assistant, who worked on projects with first-generation college students, I had access to students who fit the criteria for my study. I will communicate with colleagues who can further assist in the recruitment process. These colleagues will also act as gatekeepers. A gatekeeper in a qualitative study is someone who facilitates the researcher's entry into a group, family, or organization (Reeves et al., 2013).

Using a gatekeeper and my status as a first-generation, Black graduate student, I aim to build a rapport with my participants by establishing mutual trust, understanding, and communication between myself and the participants (Zulfikar, 2014). Students were recruited for the study via email advertisements sent to college students, placing flyers in places where students are known to gather, and attending gatherings intended for the targeted population. Purposeful sampling via snowballing techniques and an email invitation was funneled through student organizations by the gatekeeper. Purposeful sampling was adequate for reliable, rich, thick data with limited resources (Patton, 2002).   Snowballing allowed me to select students who met the criteria for the study and received referrals from them for other potential students (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The goal for this study was to interview a minimum of 12 participants and not to exceed 15, mainly because sample sizes in qualitative research tend to be small and purposive to support an in-depth analysis and provide richly-textured information (Vasileiou et al., 2018). However, I was sure to simultaneously engage in data analysis and collection to recognize saturation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Data Collection

Individual Interviews. For this study, I conducted two 60–90-minute in-depth, semi-structured, ethnographic interviews with a minimum of 15 Black, female, first-generation college students from Montclair State University. They are in at least their third year of college. Considering Covid 19, the plan was to conduct all interviews via Zoom. However, Covid restrictions were relaxed, and some participants were willing, so I conducted some in-person interviews. Interviews were recorded via audio and visual with the participants' permission via Zoom, a video and audio platform, and transcribed through Otter, an audio transcription platform. A follow-up interview was conducted to clarify any missed information, offer member checking, and ensure richer data (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

To adhere to the characteristics of an ethnographic interview, I listened for cues and used neutral probes to guide the conversation toward the topic (Bauman & Adair, 1992). This allowed me to engage the interviewee in conversation to elicit their understanding and interpretations of the topic (Reeves et al., 2013). In addition, I kept notes during the interview to keep accurate accounts of the participants' own words, and they were used for follow-up questions. (Bauman & Adair, 1992). The goal of ethnographic interviews is to collect descriptive data and avoid questions that cause the need for interpretations (Bauman & Adair, 1992).

Interview Guide. The initial interview guide was part of an existing study on first-generation college students and their family relationships. That protocol was expanded to gather information specific to this research study. The additional question was based, in part, on preliminary data collected during focus groups in the original study. The interview guide was reflective of literature that examined themes to include: 1) students' influence in deciding to attend college. 2) family and community roles or scripts before and during college 3)

family/ community interaction before and after entering college 4) experiences involving resource sharing (APPENDIX A)

Reflexive Journaling. I also kept a research journal as part of my data collection. I documented my thoughts and reflections from the start of the study until the analysis of the study. I used both written entries kept on my computer and audio entries using a transcribed voice recording app. Research journaling also offered ethical and methodological rigor to qualitative research. When used as an interactive tool of communication between researchers and participants and as a form of providing feedback to us, it can aid in improving the reliability of the study (Janesick, 1999).

Data Analysis

A constant comparative analysis approach was used to analyze and compare data derived from these ethnographic interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This comparative method of data analysis consists of data collected from interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data was transferred verbatim and reviewed for accuracy (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) using Otter, a recording and transcribing app. Open coding techniques were used by analyzing, comparing, and cross-referencing data line by line to identify and name all dimensions found within the data (Christmann, 2014). Open coding allowed me to derive data into categories that may have recurring patterns located across the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Next, I used axial coding to center connections and potential themes found from open coding surrounding my research question and purpose statement. Lastly, selective coding allowed me to identify core themes to finalize the analysis systematically. It was imperative to consider my own biases and positionality throughout this process. To ensure trustworthiness, final findings were validated by respondents in the second interview via member checking.

Trustworthiness. Establishing trustworthiness is a must in any study. The researcher should provide an analysis that contributes rich, believable, and trustworthy findings. I incorporated member checking, reflexive journaling, critical friends, and prolonged engagement to ensure credibility in this study. Membercheking ensures that the researcher gives an accurate account of the participants' experience and not some version of their interpretation of what was said(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Memberchecking can be accomplished with preliminary questions, follow-up interviews, and feedback for respondent validation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Additionally, follow-up interviews will also add prolonged engagement and assist in avoiding assumptions, further adding to the validity of the study. To consider factors that influence reflexivity, it was necessary to consider my background as a first-generation college student and be aware of the influences I brought to the research (Patton, 2002). Considering my own researcher's position, critical self-reflection of my thoughts, feelings, and reactions was recorded via a research journal to decrease the chances of interjecting my existing knowledge and prejudgments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Weekly meetings with critical friends to discuss the process, emerging findings, and tentative interpretations allowed me to promote validity and reliability within my study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Lastly, I provided access to the dissertation findings to ensure the participant could see themselves within the data as necessary for member checking and respondent validation.

Limitations of the Study

No study is without limitations that may influence data outcomes. Identifying a study's limitations provides transparency, transferability, and reproducibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).   Limitations may occur when a researcher makes a conscious choice to narrow the participant pool (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). This study was purposely designed for a particular demographic, which may make my study less generalizable. While the study is not generalizable to a larger population of women, the thick description in the findings provided possible transferability.

Chapter Four: Findings

This study explored the lived experiences of Black, female, first-generation college students regarding their path to college and their journey to graduation. The two themes that emerged from the analysis of these data were the concept of "reciprocity" and the art of "finesse." Reciprocity was characterized by the participants' comments that they felt an overwhelming need to give back to their families, community, and race in exchange for their opportunity to attend college. Under these circumstances, the concept of reciprocity is described not by the quid pro quo but by the interdependent nature of Black families. Finally, this chapter will explain how FGBW described their attempts at combining home, community, and college life and the strategies they used to do so. The art of finesse theme is portrayed by how the participants negotiated and navigated their journey through college using cultural tools that may appear elusive and deemed to be without value to the larger society. Finally, this chapter will describe how FGBW described their attempts at combining home, community, and college life and the strategies they used to do so.

Theme 1: Reciprocity

Reciprocity is significant for studies on Black female college students as Black families often operate from an interdependent family model that has been essential for survival and success. The participants in this study have exhibited the same elements of reciprocity to navigate through their college journey. In this study, the idea of reciprocity can be illustrated by the following analogy: imagine a pot, and everyone in the family network adds to the pot at different times. The family network is like a village. The villages in this study consisted of family, extended family, community members, ancestors, and communities

within communities, like Black women. Whoever is a part of the village has the right to take from the pot when needed. If members add to the pot, the pot stays full, and the village can survive. Tensions arise when members take more than they need or fail to add to the pot. The women in this study recognized when members were taking more than they gave or when they were not giving at all; however, acknowledging the value in this mutual aid transaction, they decided that it was their responsibility to add to the pot regardless. This was beneficial to the women in this study because they did not have to always rely on the contribution of their immediate family members but were able to pull from other members within their village if need be. The themes in this study highlight how these women made their contributions and the strategies they used to do so. The significant features of reciprocity in this study were: 1) the transactions of mutual aid could be either direct or indirect, 2) they can occur over time (expected return may not be immediate or directed at the giver), 3) repayment may not be in kind or tangible. As a form of reciprocity, the term *pay it forward* will be mentioned as an indirect form of reciprocity where participants themselves were the beneficiary of someone else's services toward them and felt warranted to do the same. The whole concept can be summed up in the old adage, "one hand washes the other, and both hands wash the face."

Whether stated or unstated, this cultural norm of interdependence was built into the lives of these participants and has had a tremendous positive impact on their thoughts and behaviors. However, though this need for mutual aid has historically been ideal for interdependent communities like my participants, it does have its complications. For example, when the exchange of service was not even, or students did not see the immediate benefit, the cost of reciprocity seemingly outweighed the advantage. Still, the students persisted in their part of the transaction. More importantly, for the Black, female, first-

generation college students in this study, the concept of reciprocity was valuable but heavy, a strategy for success in college, and a hindrance to that success, but never optional. Though many of them negotiated how they engaged the concept, they knew intrinsically that they had to do it because the cost of not paying it forward may have been a more significant burden for them.

There was no uniform response regarding the burdens of reciprocity. Still, several participants in this study spoke about the sacrifices they made on behalf of their families in their journey to and through college. Each of them felt somewhat beholden to someone for their progress in one way or another. Their feelings can be captured in the following three subthemes: "taking one for the team," "one-sided," and "am I my brother's keeper."

Taking one for the team

While reciprocity is a recognized and valued strategy in Black communities, it can also be complex and dependent on specific fulfilled roles. Many of the students in the study mentioned giving back or some other form of reciprocity as their main reason for attending and motivation for completing college. Each participant spoke about the sacrifices their parents and another family/community members made for them to attend college and how they felt compelled to pay it forward or, in some cases, *take one for the team*. For this study taking one for the team will be defined as willingly making a sacrifice or adding to the pot for the benefit of the family or community, even when there is no direct return. This manifested in different ways for different students.

In some cases, participants were willing to put their dreams and aspirations on hold because they felt they owed their families or community something in exchange for their college degrees. For some participants, their immediate family or kinship network provided

resources to get to and through college. The participants all recognized that they had been afforded opportunities that others in their families and communities had not. There was a unanimous agreement amongst the women that their collegiate opportunity had the potential to help them elevate themselves and their families socially, economically, and even spiritually. This form of reciprocity was overwhelmingly present throughout the study and revealed both families and communities as actors in the transaction.

One of the sacrifices the women in the study made was choices about college which may include which college, commuter status, or major they chose. Most participants in the study talked about their intention to attend college in-state or off-campus to save their parent's money and help with family responsibilities. This sacrifice was problematic for some students who could not pursue their majors of choice or get the dorming experience they considered part of the college experience. For example, Amina wanted to attend Fashion Institute in NYC. Instead, she ended up at her current institution and, as she puts it, "taking classes that's gonna be useless to my career."

While these women's choices may seem like smart choices considering the participants' socio-economic status, the women in this study still felt as though they were 'losing out on something for the sake of their families. This was especially true for participants like Autumn, who gave up on some of their college aspirations for their families. Autumn, like many others, knew she had no choice but to go to college. She said, "if I was to say I didn't want to go…they were still going to make me go". Since attending college was a dream for Autumn, attending was not a burden. However, Autumn lamented about having to sacrifice her dream of dorming and having the full college experience to stay at home and help her mom:

I always wanted to go to college. I wanted the full college experience. I kind of was

like, when I apply to college, I'm going to be adamant about living on campus. One

day, I'm going to come up with a whole debate with my mom, so she could let me stay

on campus so I could get the full experience. I want the full experience.

Autumn, a Haitian American, said that when she tried to convince her mom to see things her

way, her mom noticed that as "back talk" and "being Americanized ". Opposite of Autumn's

dream of staying on campus, Autumn explained that her mom's expectation was for her to

remain home to help her with household responsibilities. The mother could ensure that

Autumn's behavior was in keeping with her specific ethnocultural context. The family

expectation for Autumn was to break tradition by attending college and maintain the gendered

expectations of household duties. Inconsistent with her own goals, Autumn knew that her

mother's expectations for her college journey overrode her dreams and aspirations. This

sentiment was consistent throughout the study.

While again recognizing the honor in the reciprocal trade-off between the participants

and their families, the give and take still got somewhat complex for the women in the study.

The sacrifices their families made weighed a little heavier on the hearts of some participants

than others. For participants who struggled to find a balance between the give and take,

reciprocity seemed to cause burdens and guilt that stifled each participant's fulfillment of

personal dreams.

Participants who chose to attend college solely to meet parents' expectations who had

sacrificed for them all felt a lack of satisfaction and self-enjoyment throughout their journey.

For two, reciprocity became more of a limitation than a gift. The pressure Amber's mom

placed on her gave Amber little room for self-satisfaction. She struggled to find a balance

between what and who she wanted to be and her mom's idea of what her college education should be. Amber expressed, "I just want to be able to follow my passion without having what my mom wants, like instant success." This example of skewed reciprocity, where the family got what they wanted, but the students' desires were abandoned, was shared amongst the participants. Throughout the study, students rationalized their sacrifice with a tradeoff. However, the consensus was that students were taking one for the team in a sense. This suggests that notions of reciprocity can go awry - that in coming through for the community, the student's needs got crowded out, at least temporarily.

Another way reciprocity can go awry is when limited members in the reciprocal relationship. Typically, the more members participate in a mutual aid transaction, the less the burden on the members. This was not the case for Amber. Unlike most students in the study, Amber did not have an immediate village of support surrounding her. Amber was an only child raised by a single mother, and without a relationship with her extended family Amber and her mom relied heavily on each other. Their networks within the community were also minimal. She explains:

> I have no relationship with my family. It's just my mom and me. I have a family; you know I have a full family. My family is very dysfunctional though, so when you start speaking on that support system, my mom is my rock. My mom literally held me up financially. I was always able to count on my mom. I didn't have that support from, you know, any other family member.

Because of the toxicity within her family, Amber and her mother could not rely on them for support, and Amber did not articulate reasons for the lack of community connection. Since Amber was without siblings or other relations, she was the only outlet for her mother's dream

of seeing her lost college aspirations fulfilled. Amber's attendance at college was an example of her taking one for the team.

Michelle, Arraya, and Amber all spoke about how their moms all forwent college to provide them with opportunities that they never had. Arraya laments, "my mom she went to community college; she was pregnant with me, so she didn't get a chance to finish, so she just went straight to work." For these students, knowing that their moms sacrificed their dreams for their daughters, the students are now offering their dreams to pay them back. While the participants had no issue with giving to those who had given so much to them, it still felt burdensome. Amber's sentiment throughout the interview is reflected in this example below:

> I wanted to quit daily, especially for my freshman and sophomore years. I didn't know why I was here. I felt like I was just doing this because my mom really wanted it. My mom would say things like, if you don't go to college, you won't be living in my house. So then it's something, obviously, I'm just here because I won't have a home.

In this case, the expectation of reciprocity was explicitly stated. Amber knew that her mom would not throw her out of the house. However, she also knew that those words indicated her mother's need to see her forfeited dream fulfilled through her daughter. Amber intimates her high regard and appreciation for her mom. Being an only child, she knew that it was her responsibility to give her mom the sense of pride in having a daughter who graduated from college.

Some of the other participants spoke highly of their families and were extremely grateful for all they had done to raise them. Many felt it was their obligation to finish college as a part of a reciprocal transaction. They used the family resources and care, and in return, they would obtain a degree about which the family could be proud. Subsequently, for

participants Amber and Amina, the degree was more minor about them and more for their parents. Amina's parents were immigrants and had worked extremely hard to send their children to college. Amina expressed her feelings about college by adding, "I'm like, why am I here? I don't even know why I'm here myself." She talks about the lack of motivation she had after her decision and how challenging it was for her to navigate an environment, she wasn't so sure she wanted to be in. She said:

> So it was kind of challenging for me… I truly wanted to quit…And the only reason why I didn't was that I was saying, I'm literally almost there. Let me just get the degree and call it a day, but I feel like [if] I could have started over. I would have taken some time before deciding to go to college.

She says, "it felt like pressure because it's just like if I do decide to drop out and of a sudden what am I going to say to my mom, my family." It was evident that these participants recognized how much their college degrees meant to their families and community. However, they recognized the struggle in making it their own. Although participants spoke about attending college as a form of reciprocity with their families, it looked different for participants depending on their family circumstances and backgrounds. Though some participants were able to find some sense of satisfaction in their service and sacrifice, this was not the case for others, particularly for Amber. Her success was intricately tied to her mother's hopes and dreams. This resulted in participants struggling to balance what they, the student, wanted and satisfy the script that their parents had expected of them. Amber stated:

> I'm supposed to feel like, wow, I'm a first-gen graduate, and I did it, but instead, I don't have those feelings because I feel like it was never a goal for me; my mom kind of made that my reality but truthfully, I just feel like I got a piece of paper. However,

because I never wanted to go to college because that was never in my blueprint, I don't
have that same sense of pride in my accomplishments. Now I'm in a situation where
I'm looking at that bigger job to please mom. I'm also going to try to balance my
passion which is being a broadcast journalist.

Amber further explained how her initial lack of motivation and effort affected her grades and
choice of major. Her low-grade point average excluded her from the program that she
eventually became passionate about, broadcast journalism. While Arraya said, "I had bigger
goals. I had something in me that I needed to accomplish because I know no one in my family
can say they have a doctorate. And that the only option to get out of that rut is to go to
college".

 In these cases, their college journey went deeper than money and status. Participants
in this section believed that their college degrees would somehow change their families' lives.
Just the very idea promoted an intense hunger and will to succeed. Imani, who grew up in a
very urban area with little support from her parents, was raised by her grandparents and aunt.
She talks about her grandmother, who had only a 6th-grade education.:

I feel like my college degree will break generational curses...my family came from the
rural south, my grandma grew up picking cotton with my great-grandma and my great-
great grandma; she was picking cotton as well, trying to work her way up to New
Jersey. Nobody in my family has ever had money.

They all had a purpose and for most paying it forward was enough motivation for them to
push forward. Amina explained:

…honestly like, whenever I reached the level of success I want to reach, like that's not even a question is going back to my family, like the people that invested so much in me, like, not just like my nuclear and extended family but also my community, like I feel like that's the reason I'm doing what I'm doing. When asked about her decision to attend college. She stated:

> I felt like it was something I had to do because me and my sisters were kind of like the first to do it. So because of that, it was embedded in our heads like through high school and middle school that if you don't go to college, you're basically a failure, like you'll be struggling.

> Though these participants could have ultimately refused to attend college, the weight

of refusing to adhere to their family expectations might have been a heavier burden. For these students who watched their families sacrifice their dreams, this educational journey was perhaps more of a badge of honor for the parents than the students themselves.

Ancestor work

The participants in this study pointedly alluded to the importance of intergenerational reciprocity between grandparents and younger family members. Participants in this section also spoke about the importance of changing the trajectory of their family's history. Since these women were the first in their families to attend college, it was vital for them to change the family norm of being uneducated, teenage parents, and underemployed. Many participants spoke about needing to take care of their families or end generational curses.   When reciprocity was presented in connection with breaking generational curses, most participants were willing to participate even when the payback did not directly or immediately affect them. For others, bringing value to their families and community worked as a motivator during their collegiate struggles.

The participants all came from low-income homes and neighborhoods where they watched community members, as Arraya stated, "work meaningless jobs" and struggle financially, leading to other poverty-related circumstances. For participants like Araya, college was the way to change the trajectory for herself and the family members that would come after her. Arraya's major is anthropology, but she plans on going to medical school to be a medical examiner. She also talks about the impact that her educational choices will have on the Black community:

> "My program and field are predominantly white…but having a Black woman in that space speaks volumes…coming from East Orange, where I'm from, many people cannot say that. My journey to going to medical school, a lot of people can't say hey, I'm a doctor, especially like, especially from where I'm from... And I kind of admire that, that I'm able to make that stride and be that voice for a lot of people, cuz I don't know a lot of people that come from my background, that's a medical examiner. And there's only one person I met, and she didn't come from East Orange or New Jersey in general. So, it's very different to hear somebody that comes from where you come from and be able to so much.

Arraya recognizes the strides she is making by entering a white male-dominated field. She takes pride in that she is paving the way for other Black girls. By doing her best to uplift the community and being a voice for her people, Arraya is doing *ancestor work*.

Imani spoke about her family and said that although she knows that her family does not understand the significance of her decision to attend college, they still played a massive part in why she is pursuing a degree. Imani, like other participants, recounted the lack of

understanding and support about her college experience. She explained that her family did not care if she went to college or if she was available to help them when they needed it. Although Imani's family offered little to support her, she recalls the love and support she got from her grandmother regardless of what she had to offer. Imani spoke emotionally about the overwhelming feeling of love and support she received from her grandparents. The love she got from her grandparents was more than enough for her to want to give something back to them in the form of making them proud:

> Their love was just so unconditional and so great, like, I've not felt the abundance of love from them…My grandpa passed away like on his deathbed; he was saying like, I'm so proud of my granddaughter. So like I know, if nobody [else]was, you know, rooting for me, it's always my grandparents.

Arraya continues the Ancestor work with her siblings

> Like, I guess, family is important to me so I would just always make sure they're good, especially my younger siblings, all my siblings. I make sure that they don't want or need for anything if I have to figure out how to do it, I'm going to figure it out.

Arraya recognized these patterns of support and nurturing from her grandparents and did her best to reciprocate by caring for and nurturing other family members. In doing so, she not only paid her grandparents back for what she received from them, but she also lightened the load for her grandmother by picking up the slack.

Although the road was tough for most participants, quitting was never an option because they felt obligated to make their contribution to their families and communities. Nicole expresses this by saying:

Even if you feel like you want to give up, you have to do it [keep going] because if you don't do it, who's gonna do it. Who's gonna set an example for the younger women in our family. Just always having that sound in my head that says breaking those generational curses and setting those examples for those little cousins, nieces, and nephews, you know, having those conversations with your little siblings or cousins and stuff like that.

Nicole was also raised by her grandmother. Like Imani, Nicole had absorbed some nurturing levels and received unconditional love and support from her grandmother. In addition to recognizing that the women in her family were not setting a good example for the younger generation, Nicole said that it was now her responsibility to take on the responsibility and continue the work of her ancestors.

In addition to the participants feeling like they needed to make their families proud and be role models to their younger family members and communities, most felt like their duty was to uplift the race as Black women. This has come to be known as doing it for the culture, and these participants provided various examples of this behavior. Knowing that they came from families and communities where graduating college was rare, these participants took on the responsibility of becoming that "hero" or the "example" for family and community.

Students who entered college to appease their parents could find solace in their decisions. Amber explained that she initially did not want to attend college and spoke about when things changed for her. Amber explained that it made her feel better after she figured out a "why,"

Her reason was "to just prove to yourself that you're capable." Being a Black girl from the hood, she felt the need to show other poor black girls "that we can do it." She says:

> Well, I feel proud of the fact that I've graduated college because I know that at one point, my ancestors couldn't say the same thing. And so I'm more proud of that than I am of actually saying I graduated for myself. I'm happy for myself, You know, because again, this wasn't something that I really wanted; it was something that my mom wanted, so while she's happy with the paper and all over Facebook, you know, bragging. I don't have the same satisfaction.

Amber explained that her grades improved after figuring out her "why," Her college journey became tolerable. Her why was to show other Black girls from her community that they could do it…. Though Amber was still repaying a debt, this form of reciprocity included both negotiation and a strategy. As mentioned above, Amber still lacked a sense of pride in obtaining a degree. Still, for both Amber and Amina, their tradeoff was not adhering to the scripts their parents laid out for them but their contribution to other Black girls who may not have otherwise believed that college opportunities were for them.

Though each participant in the study expressed that they were attending college to give back or take care of their families, Michelle shared a different sentiment. Michelle was the only participant that conceded that she was attending college for herself:

> This is going to sound really selfish, very selfish…but like I said, like I'm doing this for me, I feel like if I was doing this, or I was going to college for anybody else, I would hold resentment towards anybody basically. So I'm doing this for me to make myself proud.

Though Michelle admittedly said she was attending college for herself, this statement suggests that she did not feel it was her right. Saying that it may sound selfish indicates that she believes she should be doing it for her family but chooses not to. Though Michelle acknowledged the concept and value of reciprocal interactions within her family, her comment of "it may sound selfish" suggested that by making her college journey only about herself, she goes beyond the cultural script of interdependence and resource sharing where family pride is considered a resource. Michelle's attitude might not be selfish in a cultural context where individualism is prized. Nonetheless, she is confident enough in her family's ability to hold their own that she is willing to make the sacrifice. She says, "it's kind of like we all have a part to play in his family because, as I said, we're all we had." When Michelle was asked if she felt obligated to give back, her response was:

> You know I always find my purpose is to help other people and give back. Like I said like, I even was like thinking about like social work...like I have certain family members where it's like you know, that's not where you're going to get a lot of money at like, you should go for like the top, not be like a psychologist and stuff. Still, I'm just like, you know, like I said before, like, I feel like representation matters, and I want to be that person that I needed when I was younger, that makes sense.

While Michelle was unwilling to contribute her degree for future benefits to her family… She did plan to contribute to a circle of service. She saw her choice to pursue a graduate degree in Social Work to contribute to the broader community.

The participants recognized the lack of resources in their homes and communities; they realized that they had opportunities not afforded to others and felt the need to give back. For example, when Amber said, "I want to watch the way I word things, but I feel privileged

enough to know that I have an education, knowing that some of my ancestors didn't have that same opportunity."

Though the details of the phenomena were presented in various ways and to different degrees, many of these participants saw themselves as active members of a family/community legacy. This legacy stretched from long-deceased ancestors through themselves and into the future of yet unborn children. As part of this legacy, their role was to carry on work started by their ancestors. Some spoke of their education as repayment for the sacrifices of their ancestors or a tribute to them.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

Am I my brother's keeper? As used in the Black community, this term typically means taking the role of protector of your brother. For Black people in general, the term "brother" could mean mother, father, sister, or brother and goes beyond blood, and extends to extended family networks, the community, and the Black race. The term "am I my brother keeper" resonates in this study as these women felt as though they were the keepers of their families, communities, race, and gender. Each participant in the study named either social, financial, or upward mobility for their families as their main reasons for attending college. Subsequently, they also felt obligated to "lookout" for their siblings or younger community members physically, financially, emotionally, and other instrumental ways. One part of being "my brother's keeper" was attributed to the interdependent nature of Black families. Taking care of your younger siblings is required to support parents who are working, ill, or otherwise unavailable. The second part of being "my brother's keeper" stems from providing instrumental and beneficial information to assist in their becoming successful adults.

Many of the participants in the study spoke about providing care for their siblings as part of their contribution to the family. Assuming the role of caregivers to their siblings was a way of doing their part and ensuring that they were in the circle of service. In some cases, participants were *filling in* for absent parents and believed it was their duty to ensure the wellbeing of their siblings; below are a few examples.

Tracy opted to forgo living on campus so that she could stay at home and help her mother with family responsibilities. She recognized that she had many family obligations and knew that it was for the betterment of her family. It was a role that she was given to her early on in life and was now like second nature:

> Well, I never really had much of a childhood; I always had to take care of my brother, like the role of being a parent was given to me, at a very young age, I was cooking and cleaning at like the age of 10…things that ten year old's normally do but it's just what I was doing.

Tracy explained that she recognized that she had to give back to her family and understood her mom's expectations of her. She reflected on the things she did to ensure that her mother and brother were taken care of, as well as how she managed to do that and attend to her responsibilities as a student:

> Lots of schoolwork, and when you're working your nine to five, it was hard sometimes, because I would have worked right after class or I would have class right after I got off work, but I was able to balance it out, but then I would have to come back home. Do chores, housework, and do the laundry. I wash the dishes, I do my and my brother's laundry.. I've got to worry about getting my homework done, getting in

bed by 11:59, and stuff like that, and then I still have to make sure I'm doing what I'm

supposed to do at work because I'm a supervisor…

Imani also spoke about her need to take care of her family. Though many participants could

not articulate why they took on these family responsibilities, it was still the overall sentiment

in the study. Imani, whom her grandmother and aunt raised, said:

I have to get an education to take care of my family. I also had eight siblings as well.

I'm the oldest, so it's more like second nature to try to take care of my siblings.

Because nobody else is going to do it... My mom, doesn't really know how to be a

mother. So like I step in where I need to because something just simply doesn't click

with her, and I wouldn't want to see my siblings suffer based on her poor decisions….

Other participants described their varied contributions as their *brother's keeper*.

Arraya said, "Yes, so my mom has seven children besides me. And I feel like once I get a

refund check, I have to give her at least half". Her financial contribution comes from funds

intended for her educational endeavors. Other participants like Autumn explain that they need

to be "like the interpreter, the person who makes sure that it's like there's order in the house

and makes sure my brother is okay and he's fed." Autumn also said, "So I can one day teach

my brother who's going to go to college, how to get through like financial aid or how to go to

like, what college is really for him." In addition to needing to maintain their families

financially, emotionally, and physically, participants in the study also overwhelmingly felt as

though it was their responsibility as first-generation college students to share the knowledge

that they have obtained so that they could also be successful in college:

The expectation is to graduate to keep going and don't stop. And that's just kind of

how it's been, um, because I'm the oldest…I have to set an example for my siblings, so

even when I graduated from college and came home, my siblings were like, I know I'm

proud of you. Congratulations and things of that nature. And my parents are now like,

see Arraya graduated from college.

Imani also spoke about how it was essential to invest in her siblings' lives because someone is

invested in her.

I wouldn't want to see my siblings suffer based on her [mother's] poor decisions. So

it's like I'm going to pick up the slack, no matter what, because if my aunt didn't raise

me, I wouldn't be where I am today. Or if I didn't have the specific programs that I was

in, I wouldn't be here today, so I want to make sure my siblings get at least some type

of that opportunity.

Amina also spoke about what it was like being first-generation and feeling like she had to set

an example for their younger siblings and family members.

Okay, so I have two older sisters that I live with, and one younger sister she's about

like nine years younger than me, and I live with my mom; and it's funny because we

kind of sort of live with our cousins too because like it's an apartment building and

they're right under us. So there you have, my aunt, and her three daughters. So yeah,

um, that's kind of our family dynamic, as the nuclear part, the rest there's some in New

York, and the majority of my family is back home in Africa. So, my two older sisters,

we all consider ourselves first-gen because we're the first to do it in our family; a little

tough because there's always many expectations not just from the family here but also

from the family that's back home.

Though participants like Amina acknowledged the burden of being responsible for the family,

they also recognized the benefits. Some participants expressed the importance of relying on

their siblings and other family members as emotional support and motivation to succeed.

Nicole explains the kinship between her two cousins who grew up in the same house. One was

a college graduate, and one was a college senior. She explained that although they are her

cousins by blood, they have more of a "brotherly relationship." When discussing family

support, Nicole stated that her cousin was "down her back every 5 seconds" and recalls words

of encouragement he had provided. In these examples, a mutual benefit relieved the

participants throughout their college experience. Though some participants felt they were

giving more than receiving, others felt the term "am I my brother's keeper" was reciprocal.

Michelle expresses this by saying, "We all depend on each other for almost everything.

There's no one sole person that we lean on like we're all each other's help." Similarly, Amina

says:

> I feel like it's okay to kind of get that from my siblings as we talk pretty much every
>
> day. So like, we will talk about a question that is bothering us, so I feel like I kind of
>
> received that from them, just having them around. I feel like I'm fulfilled if that makes
>
> sense.

Participants detailed various experiences involving moments where they felt their siblings or

other family members were their keepers, making them feel supported. Justine explained:

> Talking to my siblings every day like they're such a big help. We're all super close, so
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> they're always so supportive. Anything I had a question about, I talked to them, and
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> then I talked to my dad; even though he couldn't relate to college life, he would just try
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> his best to give me the best advice.

In addition to emotional support from siblings, participants also discussed how their older

siblings and family members who had some college experience were able to share some of

their experiences and education with them to make their college experience easier: Many of the participants talked about not having anyone that could relate or understand their college experience. Although their parents could not connect to their college experiences, participants in this section had extended family and community members with a college experience that could provide support.

> My older brother was the first person in our family to go to college. Well, yeah, my extended family too. So like he was kind of a tester, I would say he had to figure everything out because nobody knew how to, like, nobody went to college before. But he helped, and I talked to him, and he explained to us what to do, like, how to get loans and what to look for in college and financial aid. What's the best deal, like all that stuff. So he definitely helped me.

 In addition to blood-related relatives that helped, some participants spoke of non-blood kin who assisted them along their journey. Being my brother's keeper in Black communities extends beyond blood, and for these participants, extended family members and communities did their part in giving back to the participants. These included: close family friends, teachers, counselors, church members, etc. For example, Autumn talks about how her church family was there when she was not always able to speak to her mom.

> And they're pretty close. I say it's a close-knit type of thing. But we're not all families. We're like family friends within the church. They're pretty close; they'll visit you if they want to have Bible study or something. And I will I like my church only because like, you can talk about things that you wouldn't usually talk about

Autumn also said that her family did not have a car, and when she had late-night activities, her

dance group from school would bring her home and pick her up so that she did not miss out

on studying by taking the bus. In addition, to her church family, Autumn had formed a

sisterhood with the women in her dance group where they all took care of each other and

were, in essence, *each other's keepers.*

Imani also talked about her church mentors, who were like family to her. These

mentors were instrumental in her attendance as well as her success. She says, "Okay, so I have

many mentors that went to college. And that's what kind of kept me on a perfect path... when I

was going through stuff, they kept me in check or helped me through certain things"… For

example:

> If on the move out day, my family doesn't own a car or anything, they will come to
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> pick me up and take me back and forth to and from school every year, as they would
>
> just go in and check on me or like, one of our mentors helped me get my driver's
>
> license. Just like throughout, like even going to college, they threw me a trunk party, a
>
> graduation party they're very much like family, stuff that my family wouldn't do.

 Imani had an entire community of people who rallied behind her. Who were, in fact,

in their way of *paying it forward.* This was common amongst many of the participants.   Imani

said, "I knew I wanted to go to college since I was in middle school… I had a Black principal;

I had many black teachers in my corner". Imani talks about her mom's friends to whom she

was close. She explained that since he had graduated from college, he was someone that

could relate to her experience. She recalls him explaining to her mom why it was necessary to

celebrate her high school graduation and college entrance.

The notion of being *their brother's keepers or* responsible for their families varied for each participant, but the overall concept was the same. Throughout the study, giving back to their families and communities was dominant. Some participants took a hands-on approach where they were physically responsible for the day-to-day care of their siblings. Other participants were building a legacy to benefit their families and communities in the near and far future.

Thanks, but I Need More

These participants were invested in the tradition of mutual aid, a part of reciprocal relationships. Still, they were aware that their efforts to provide support and resources may not always be returned. The concept of reciprocity had an immediate benefit for some; in other cases, it did not. For various reasons, one being they just did not have the experience.

Some participants felt the need to give back to their families and communities even when they did not feel their families or communities had given to them to complicate the process further. Although the participants participated in reciprocal family transactions, whether the exchange was direct or indirect, the concept still works better when the benefits are mutual and immediate. When there is a continuous and quick service exchange, the transaction should feel less like a burden. However, this exchange can feel one-sided and burdensome when one hand fails to wash the other or the village does not show up.

This was the case for many participants in the study. While they recognized and were grateful for the things that their families offered, they still felt a void in what they needed. For instance, Justine acknowledges that her dad had very little understanding of her college experience but says, "he could not relate, but he would just try his best to give me the best advice." Overall, participants were attending college to make a better life for their families.

They adhered to the expectations and scripts ascribed to them by their families, and some were juggling school and home responsibilities in the name of reciprocity. However, many participants still felt they were not getting what they needed from their families. In some instances, participants even felt their families were not entitled to their benefits.

While some participants vehemently talked about financial struggles and not getting financial support from their families, the need for emotional support and a basic understanding of what they were experiencing mattered most to the participants. They discussed the importance of having someone who knew and understood what they were going through. Most understood that their families would provide that support if they could but realized that many had little to no college experience, leaving them with no frame of reference.

While the participants acknowledged and appreciated the love and support they received from their families, they still spoke about needing more. When Michelle was asked about what she felt like she needed from her family, she wasn't getting it…. Her response was:

> Um, I would definitely say emotional support. Okay, because nobody has experienced college. Living on campus and being away, they think it's a good thing to be on your own... And nobody can really sympathize… my family, they've always been the type to like, always have clothes on my back, I've always had food in my mouth so like that was good and like everything was great, but there's always more to it.

Many of the participants spoke about how stressful college was for them and repeatedly recalled times when they wanted to quit. The overall sentiment for many of the

participants was that their families just did not have the words or a level of college relatability to make them feel better. Some participants spoke about needing emotional support, while others could not articulate or identify what they needed, only that they needed more. Araya stated, "my support system at home was a little shaky only because they didn't know how to help me because they had never been in that type of space." This was the case for many participants in the study. While they recognized and were grateful for the things that their families offered, they still felt a void in what they needed:

> Going home, it was really hard to talk to someone, so most of the time in my college years, I just stayed at school because it's like no point in going home because no one would understand how I felt. And even when I come home sometimes for Thanksgiving or something and I'll be crying because I'm just so overwhelmed and so stressed, it will just be the simple consoling me and saying, okay, it's going to be okay, you get through it.

Arraya expressed that even when overwhelmed and stressed, making sure her family was okay was a priority. She continues by explaining that while she makes their needs a priority, she does not get the same in return:

> I have to make sure they have this or that one or whatever the case may be, and it's just a constant, go go go go go and then never okay. All right, like, what about you, how do you feel, what's going on.

Though Arrays said, "I had to read between the lines and figure out if they did support me and if they were proud of me." She still felt she needed to give her refund check to her mom and help her aunt with things like gas when she needed it. She says, "I feel like that's not what they asked of me. But I feel like that's just the least I can do".

Most of the participants were left with ambiguous feelings about how their families felt. They knew their families loved them, but their actions at times showed otherwise. While this overall sentiment was present in most students, it looked slightly different for Imani and Nicole. Both participants were raised by their grandparents because their parents had abused drugs. For these participants, college was a survival pathway. So, the pressure for them to succeed was heavy. Both participants felt the need to provide for their siblings and help their parents even though they had done very little to raise them and could offer little to no help. Imani explained why she felt the need to adhere to this script and assist her mother even though her mother provided very little to her, "My relationship with my mom isn't that strong because she never really raised me, but she's like trying to raise my siblings, but she's still having a tough time, so I help her."

Imani incorporated her sense of agency by saying, "yeah, I will do it because someone did it for me and because these are my siblings, and it is the right thing to do., But not because I owe my mother anything."

These participants acknowledged the pressure and stress they felt in their current situation. Like many others, the return of service was not equal, nor was it immediate. However, the participants knew that the long-term benefit of seeing their families taken care of would eventually be worthwhile.   Most of the participants recognized that though they may not have gotten what they needed from their immediate families, their village showed up in most cases. They understood that their assignment was to pass it along for their families and communities to grow. Though some students expected support from their families, others did not. Imani said:

my family, they don't care what I do, but even if I decided not to go to college, it wouldn't have really made a big difference". She goes on to say, "they don't really understand the significance...they don't get it, and that's okay because I don't expect them to get it, most of them didn't graduate from high school.

Nicole talks about how it seemed as though her family was working against her. By speaking negatively and attempting to deprive her of support and other family resources. However, she was desperately trying to work to improve the quality of her family.

So, even having these, you know, villains in my background, you know, it does help me try to break those generational curses and just always having that sound like break those generational curses like and set those examples for those that little cousins and nieces, and nephews, you know, having those conversations with, you know, your little siblings or, you know, cousins and stuff like that.

By "villains," Nicole refers to her aunt, who had an instrumental role in her upbringing and was also instrumental in bringing her down. Nicole's aunt attended college but was forced to drop out after getting pregnant and had not yet completed her degree. Working through a learning disability, Nicole lacked emotional and financial support but was still adamant about providing for her family.

While reciprocity and upward mobility were the women's goals in this study, the burden at times still got heavy. These women were leaping and navigating through the territory they were not prepared for. Still, they pushed forward. While the women could find support within their village, there was still longing for understanding and support from the people closest to them.

Theme 2: Navigation between School & Home

The Art of Finesse

When participants were told that the study's goal was to understand how they navigated the spaces between home and school, some students described this phenomenon as *finessing*. These participants learned to successfully maneuver through unfamiliar spaces and circumstances in campus's academic or social areas. It could also involve a degree of manipulation or reshaping the behavior of others to meet short- or long-term goals in either educational or home spaces. Being able to finesse requires that one be aware of their skills and be willing and able to shape those skills to the environment in which they find themselves. For example, Araya says, "I think when I got a clear understanding of who I am and my likes and dislikes, etc., I think I'm able to finesse a lot differently than I would before."

Though participants in this study may not have had the tools described as valuable to the larger society, they did have a unique set of skills acquired from their struggles and experiences that they could use to help them navigate college. For example, Araya talks about being one of the few Black women in her program. She explained how she came into college undecided but knew she wanted to "stick out in a good way," so she chose a major where Black women would be a valuable commodity. Being both Black and female put her at both an advantage and a disadvantage. As a Black female, she could obtain opportunities that would not otherwise have been available. For example, when opportunities that specifically targeted marginalized people became available, Arraya was always called upon to be the face of the department. However, to finesse her way through the program as a Black woman, she says she, like many other participants, talked about always having to observe the room. "So

seeing who talks like me a little bit... okay, she does. So let me talk to her because she would understand, ``she says. Like Araya, many participants explained how they had to find a way to navigate or find a space to fit in crowds and conversational topics they were unfamiliar with.

Imani realized that she was not equipped with all the tools she needed to be successful and that she would have to make it work one way or another. She talked about entering college and realizing that "we did not learn the same things as my white counterparts". She recalled feeling behind in most of her classes and said, "they were saying all these big words that I knew nothing of, and they seemed like they were doing well in class." She recalled hearing students discussing high school debate teams, civic classes, and other programs that may have prepared them for college but that she was never privy to. As a pre-law student says, ``I have to work ten times harder...because this is stuff they already learned". She talks about how she navigated that situation. She explains that although she won't be the best student, she would be "the student that puts in the most effort." She said:

> I sit in front of the class; I ask questions based on the text, so it's an educated question. So it's not like I'm just here unprepared if there's extra work that I could do. I always make sure I get it done. I stand outside 10 minutes earlier because I've also learned it's also about making connections with peers and professors".

Imani's way of finessing is to present herself as a hard worker and someone eager to learn. Imani's goal is to convince her professors of what she lacks in content knowledge; she attempts to make up for it in the effort.

Many participants talked about when they had to figure out how to advocate for themselves because they did not feel their programs were. Participants spoke about times

when their advisors were not supportive. Arraya explained when she searched for internships and advice about career choices after college. She says, " I wasn't getting the answers I wanted, so I had to do my own research" and "be aggressive." She wondered, "Wow, do other people have to go through this, or is it just me"? She says, "seeing that type of support within my classmates that I was lacking at some point; I just felt secluded in a way," making it not easy for her to succeed. However, after her many attempts at navigating through these spaces after learning the ropes, she explained, "it was easier to navigate because now I know, okay, I can't go to this advisor, I have to go to this advisor... Or "I have to sit in front of this class" or ``I need to sit in the back of this class" and "I don't have to be the center of attention all the time. These students had to make themselves visible where they were not. Some way in which this was done was by reading the room to see who would be of service to her and who would not. Like Arraya, most students had to determine which behaviors would serve them best in different situations.

Justine also recognized that she came to college unequipped to compete with her white counterparts. Justine recalled feeling like she constantly had to prove herself:

I was afraid to speak up; in my science classes, there weren't many people that looked like me, especially girls; there's a couple of men—a couple of black men but black females. There weren't a lot, especially in those like bio classes. So like, if I had a question, I'll be a little bit afraid to raise my hand…Because like everybody else was getting the material, I'd be a little lost.

Justine explains how she navigated awkward spaces by building her confidence and having the courage to make herself be seen. She says, " I'm here to make it known that I'm here, I'm

studying. Like, I mean, I know there are black people here, but like, obviously the bigger majority are white people, it means constantly having to prove myself and like not wanting to slip up". Justine talks about just having the courage to "just like make yourself stand out and make people take you seriously."

While these women were learning to navigate in white spaces, they were also trying not to perpetuate negative stereotypes of Black women, contributing to the culture. Justine talked about having restraint so people would not think she was uncivilized. She recalled, "So like if I wanted to be in an argument, not to take it all the way there because people would see me as, Oh, she's so angry." Many of the students on campus had these same moments where they had to navigate these spaces. Amina talked about how she navigated in uncomfortable situations:

> Some stereotypes come with being a black woman, so for example, if I were working with somebody that was disrespectful, in a sense, it would require me to have a lot of emotional intelligence because if I respond a certain way, it would be, Oh, this black woman spoke to me in this way.

Most of the participants spoke about microaggression in which they were forced to navigate which tone to use or the body language that would not make them appear too aggressive. Michelle explained her journey of navigating white spaces coming from a predominantly white high school to a predominantly white college. She explained how she often just went with the flow not to stand out or look like the stereotypical Black woman. Michelle explained how she apologized a lot, even when she did not feel like she did anything wrong. Michelle admits that as early as middle school, she abandoned her identity as a Black girl to alleviate the pressure of being a Black girl in a predominately white school. With a bit of shame, she

says, "I don't know if I should say this because it's going to sound offensive, but like in my middle school we kind of acted white to fit in, if that makes sense...because like we were surrounded by so many white people". She describes her high school as a glass of milk with a few chocolate sprinkles inside. Michelle realized that as a woman of color, she did not have the privilege of being herself or expressing how she felt in fear of being ostracized. She says, "it's like you got to like tiptoeing around people sometimes... you can't be yourself". For Michelle, this continued throughout college.

Michelle passionately tells a story of how she and her Hispanic roommate were close over the summer in EOF until school started and other Hispanics came along. She recalls countless times when she would feel disrespected or wronged by the group but chose to remain quiet so that she would not appear like an angry black woman. She says they would often start to speak Spanish so that she could not understand what they were saying. It got to the point where she had to change rooms. Michelle recalls an emotional moment on her birthday when she and her roommate were going to meet other friends at a restaurant to celebrate:

> so my roommate invited her other Hispanic friend, who took over two hours to get ready for the reservation. So while everybody's there, basically like they're waiting for me. Whose birthday it is like whose dinner it was for. So I stayed quiet, and I remember walking to the car..she was just like, are you okay, and I just said, you know, like, please don't ask me that right now. When we got there, she was kind of standoffish with her friend... everybody was upset that I came late, and like they knew why I arrived late, but because I said that [please don't ask me that right now]... It kind of went downhill from there. Because after that night, she was just like, you know,

why would you say that it made her feel some type of way? And it was kind of just like all right, I guess I can't say anything anymore, because like, you're just going to play the victim.

In addition, Michelle also mentioned that her roommate shared her side of the story with their advisor, who was also Hispanic.   Michelle says, "she told her story which I didn't offer mine… because I am not confrontational…. my advisor started to kind of look at me differently and I'd be side-eyed, and I'm like yeah this is, it was uncomfortable". Michelle explains that instances like this made her feel like an outcast. She later changed dorm rooms and advisors. She said, "it just emphasizes even more like we're both minorities, but we come from different portals." She felt like, "So when you're mad, you get to do this, but when I'm mad, I can't say anything; it's like I'm like the angry black woman."

The college journey for these students was tumultuous at times, yet they were steadfast in their efforts and did whatever it took to quiet the noise and complete the trip. While some may see these women as conceding, they chose their battles and kept their eyes on the bigger picture.

The Art of Finesse was also relevant for these students in their families and community contexts and their blending of the two. Imani talked about her family not having the financial resources she needed to purchase things for school. However, she always seemed to make a way somehow. She explained that although her mother may not have money to send her, "she tries to support me in the best way that she can." She provided this example of how she and her family finessed food insecurity issues. "My mom gets food stamps. She'll send me some food stamps and buy me stuff and support in the best way that she can like if she gets, like extra money". Like these students were primarily from low-income families, and

food is expensive on campus, food insecurity and hunger can be issues that influence academic success.

Tracy talks about navigating between home, school, and work responsibilities. She says especially during Covid. She says:

> I would have work right after class, or I would have class right after I got off work, but I could balance it out, and then I would have to come back home. Do chores, and housework. I've got to worry about getting my homework done, getting in bed by 11:59, and stuff like that, and then I still have to make sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to do at work because I'm a supervisor.

She also talked about her responsibilities to her younger brother and talks about how she taught her brother how to take care of himself and help with chores which allows her to have more time to herself. She utilized an agency to reshape her brother's behavior to meet her needs. In this way, she fulfilled family responsibilities, met her needs, and provided her brother with a skill that would be valuable in the long term.

Navigating between home and school required students to be self-aware and come to terms with who they were and whom they were becoming. Amina explains her journey through college as a Black woman born in Africa.   She talked about feeling conflicted between her African culture and her Black American Culture. She says, "growing up was a bit of a conflict because it's like, there's something that is expected from me from this culture, again, there's another thing that is expected from me in the black community as well." She says that despite her mom's efforts to prevent her from becoming Americanized, Amina explained to her mom that she was both. She says, "I also grew up here, so I'm going through the same struggle as an African American." She comes to terms with the fact that, "whether

she likes it or not. I was born here, but I'm also from there. So, in a sense, I'm both African and American, so I just learned how to be okay with being Americanized, so like now when she says that, I'm like yeah, I'm American". She recognizes that although she does hold dear her knowledge of Senegalese African culture, she says "it was a challenge growing up, but now I've learned how to embrace it."

When these women were navigating and finessing their way through campus life, they were also using these same skills to finesse at home.

Autumn, for example, lamented about "staying on campus" and "getting the full college experience." She explained that she only saw commuting as a Haitian female in her future. She adds, "being that I am the first female to go to college, and it's not that they don't trust me, it's that they don't trust the world around me, so they rather I commute. They rather I stay home". In Autumn's attempt at adhering to the script her family had set out for her while still incorporating her own needs, she began to seek ways to stay on campus to get more of the college experience that she had always wanted. She talks about how her experience as a peer leader gave her a sense of college fulfillment:

> I'm on campus, not living. But as a peer leader, I get to experience campus life. So like, just like the scholars that are coming in now. I'm learning just like them, like campus life… when I go back to my position as a peer leader, and I'm living on campus, and I'm away from my mom. I feel as though I'm a new person. Because I don't wear anklets at home, I'll wear an anklet on campus.

The participants in this study commandeer a host of necessary tools to get to and through their journey. Although these tools may or may not be deemed essential to the larger society, they were instrumental for this study's first-generation college students.

Making Connections"

Making meaningful connections or joining groups was another way participants navigated their college journey. Many participants talked about the lack of support and representation on campus. Many of them began to forge connections with people who shared the same cultural links to cope with this situation. These students used their agency to create a space for themselves to make both home and school life easier to navigate.

Autumn joined groups such as the Haitian Student Association, where she was able to speak to other Haitian women who shared similar experiences as she did. She says, "She says, "it is harder to get in, like, become friends with white people. It's not because, like, a race or anything; it's just that I never really was interested in really talking to them. The connections that Autumn made on campus allowed her more autonomy:

> I'm a lot quieter at home, but I do have conversations on campus, such as what mental
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> health is like at home? Or like, what do I have to do at home? Do I wear the same
>
> clothes? I don't wear it? I would say, ``I'm a more free person on campus".

Because of her involvement in these activities, Autumn's mother, who was previously very controlling and allowed her limited freedom became more lenient in allowing her extra space. Autumn explained how she was able to create an extended family network which made her navigation between school and home journey easier to navigate:

Especially right now, as a peer leader, like my coworkers, they're very supportive. They're the ones that helped me navigate the school, my first week of training, they'll walk around with me, point out where everything was, they tell me about their experiences. They told me about the club that I was in. I'm now an executive assistant because they gave me the history of that club. They gave me things like, what they do, what I can do, um, positions I can go for. They tell me about myself. So, I know what to improve and what not to improve like; they give me my glows, and my grows. So, they're really supportive.

For these participants who entered college with limited resources, building different networks was essential in their ability to succeed in college on an academic level and add value to their college experience. Many participants in the study spoke about their experience on campus and the lack of inclusion and representation for Blacks. Amber compared her experience to students she knew who attended Historically Black Universities (HBCU), noting the lack of representation for Blacks on campus:

 I noticed that the community here was small. I wanted to be more a part of the community, especially getting to know more of my peers, so I went to the Black Student Union meeting sophomore year, just before getting involved on campus and pulled one of the girls to the side and kind of picked her brain and asked her, What are some of the reasons you join BSU you know what did BSU do for you."

Even in spaces where the participants did not fit, they were devoted to making a space for themselves. Amber says that despite the "lack of [Black] culture" on campus, she did her best to create spaces for herself and other women of color:

...I had to get my sense of culture and community here at Montclair State, which is

why I joined the Black Student Union and I was the vice president of the Black

Student Union, so I felt like I tried to create those events that I felt like they get at

HBCU's here. And, you know, you can only go so far, but I made my own

experiences.

Not only were these students forging connections to make college life easier for them. They

were also creating spaces for other Black women to have a space.

Amina also spoke about being on a campus where only a few Black people noticed

"the whole stereotype thing." She says, "I wasn't used to the environment that's number one

because it's like you're used to being surrounded by so many black people and now, like, you

don't see as much anymore. So, it was getting used to". She says the organizations that she

joined but then like "the Black Student Union, the native African organization, all of those

organs, I tried to join it, even the ones I didn't like to, when I knew like people were there I

was there to just so that I can stay connected with the culture…."

While some students could make meaningful connections, this was not the case for

Michelle. She distinguishes herself from other Blacks in the diaspora. Michelle points out

that although these Black women share the same skin tone and some experiences, they come

from different ethnic groups. She says:

You kind of like just get a sense of like being alone, like I said like because you're

part of like a minority group, but then like, even within that minority group there's still

not as many black students or black women, as there is like Hispanic or like,

international students like you don't fit in the same like you're still going to be looked

at as an outcast.

Michelle appreciated women of color but had also experienced microaggressions by women

of color. She did not feel like there was a space specifically for women that shared her cultural

experiences. Other minorities had specific spaces to fit in, such as the Haitian Student Union.

The Black Student Union was open to all students who identified as Black. Therefore, there

was no specific space for Black students who identified as African Americans minus any

other cultural identifiers like Michelle.

In their efforts to extend their networks for smoother campus life, some of the

connections made their home lives smoother. In instances where students were not getting the

instrumental support they needed at home, they could find the help they needed within

extended networks. Araya, who had recently graduated and was applying for a master's

program, talked about being at home. Again, she says that although there are no conflicts with

her family, she still could not have meaningful conversations about the application process.

She explains what it was like for her:

Right now, I'm going through my master's program, and I'm going through the process

of being accepted, so it's like when I talk to family that's kind of the only thing that's

kind of on my mind, so that's all I can talk about, and I was talking to my aunt about it,

and she was like, okay, like, that's, that's good, that's good. What you have to do, and

it's like, I want more.

Araya defines more as sharing her experiences with "like-minded individuals" or "someone

that kind of like, understands the process and understands how far and how long and stressful

and complicated, it takes to get there." She said:

"I only find that with my friends that went to school with me that graduated, or who's looking into going into masters. When I'm home, I feel like I'm at a dead end. So I have to be out; we have to be doing something".

Araya navigates this feeling by maintaining connections with her college friends. She says, ". She also talks about her college roommate whom she had maintained and formed an extended family network with. She says, "we're really close. And now every summer I spend time with her family and go on vacation with them. So yeah, definitely I gained a family going to college".

The connections would be temporary for some students, but they would be lifelong for some. By extending their family network, they also expand their village, thereby creating more chances of success.

Many of the women in the study also shared the sentiment that they were the minorities on campus by attending a PWI. Some of the women in this study forged connections with other women of color to create a comfortable space for themselves.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This qualitative study used ethnographic interviewing to explore the experiences of Black female first-generation college students at a predominantly white institution in New Jersey. Participants were asked to reflect on what it was like for them as they merged their lives as college students with the expectations of the families and communities that produced them.   The research question that guided the study was "How do FGBW describe their attempts at combining home, community, and college life, and what strategies do they use to do so?

Analysis of the data collected yielded two primary themes. The primary themes were reciprocity and navigation between school and home**.** These themes articulate the lived experiences of participants' involvement on predominantly white campuses. These themes also identified the nuances of the lived experiences of these Black women and how they navigated spaces within interdependent families and communities. These themes were a subset of themes related to how Black female, first-generation college students negotiated and navigated their way through. This chapter begins with an overview of the study's Theoretical Perspective and an explanation of its connection to the study. Next will be a discussion of significant findings related to the literature on first-generation college students, families, and the community. Also included in this chapter are implications that may be valuable for universities, policymakers, and practitioners. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a brief conclusion.

Theoretical Connections

Life Course theory and Black Feminism were the theoretical paradigms that guided this study. Kinscripts, a derivative of life course perspective, as appropriate for this study as they gave a perspective on how participants could negotiate their life course and either accept or reject the family or societal roles assigned to them. Particularly relevant from each paradigm were the concepts of agency and linked lives. Both lenses allowed examining how these participants enacted agency through their journey of oppressive institutions and lack of instrumental college support.

Life Course Theory

Life Course theory can be used to examine how changing lives can alter developmental trajectories (Elder, 1998). This study's societally accepted trajectory of young, black, low-income women included teenage pregnancy, dropping out of high school, substance abuse, and continued poverty, which one participant called "generational curses." These first-generation college students stated that their main reasons for attending college were to change their families' trajectory and increase social and financial mobility for future generations. Several aspects of Life Course were salient in this study. They were human agency and linked lives. And since the family was a feature of the study, the addition of Kinscripts to this analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of the issues related to family/kinship in the Black community.

Life Course theory also illuminated the workings of human agency amongst marginalized populations like the women in this study. Human agency is how individuals establish their life trajectories by the personal choices and actions within the opportunities and constraints of historical and social circumstances (Elder, 1998). The women in this study

constructed their life course via their choice to attend college and engage in opportunities that may not align with their expected trajectories or social circumstances (Elder, 1998). Though the women in this study adhered to some family expectations regarding going to college, significant choices, and campus life, the decisions were ultimately theirs. These women could negotiate or *finesse* tradeoffs that were acceptable to themselves and others to have some control over their lives. As Black females, the exploration of human agency was prevalent throughout the study as students acted as their own agents in pursuing their degrees and in their attempts to either adhere to or not adhere to family and societal expectations.

Life Course's emphasis on linked lives presented itself as the participants discussed how they lived and thrived interdependently with their families and communities. Participants in this study spoke of how every choice they made directly or indirectly affected their families and communities. Elements of Life Course's linked lives illuminated how social and historical influences were expressed through this network of shared relationships wherein participants felt responsible for their lineage and community success. This included ancestors whom they had never met and children that were not born yet. Participants elaborated on this as they spoke about attending college because their ancestors were denied the opportunity to set an example for younger community members. Similar to studies on Native American students, the notion of reciprocity or giving back to the community is a motivating factor for the students in this study to complete college despite the challenges so that they may better serve their community (Salis Reyes, 2019). Thus, attending college for these first-generation college students was a "major disjunction in the life course" because they are breaking tradition by attending college rather than continuing the tradition of not attending college (Terenzini et al., 1994).

Kinscripts

Kinscripts, a derivative of Life Course theory, was an appropriate framework to explore how first-generation Black college students combine the diverging aspects of home and school. Kinscripts thoroughly explores how families negotiate the life course as individuals and as members of an intergenerational collective (Stack & Burton, 1993). These students often spoke of the tensions and interplay between the roles/scripts assigned to them in family expectations and the desire to guide their own lives, particularly regarding decisions about their college careers. Reciprocity and negotiation were the overall themes in this study which encompassed Kincripts in that the interdependent lives of both families and communities are "illustrated in patterns of intergenerational role responsibilities" (Stack & Burton, 1993, p. 159). Stack &Burton (1993) quoted a 19-year-old Black mother who said the following:

> My grandmother raised me. Now it's time for me to give something back. It's O.K. If my mother raises my child for now. If she didn't, I wouldn't be able to take care of my grandmother. (p.160)

This form of reciprocal family interaction was shared amongst the students in this study who were raised in interdependent family contexts (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). Adhering to family roles that give back to the family somehow was a treasured and honorable trait within the families of these participants (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). On the contrary, this notion of reciprocal family interaction is not common amongst students who do not come from interdependent backgrounds (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Students from non-interdependent or dominant cultures in the United States often promote a more independent

social interaction, whereas being a "good" adult means establishing oneself as autonomous and separate from others, including one's parents (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015).

Furthermore, a Kinscripts perspective acknowledges the enactment of human agency, demonstrated in the participants' choices to "regenerate families, maintain lifetime continuities, sustain intergenerational responsibilities, and reinforce shared values" (Roy & Burton, 2007). For example, Imani spoke about her grandmother and great-grandmother picking cotton in the South. While Imani's goal as a first-generation college student was to change the pattern of poverty within her family, she also chose to maintain the legacy of hard work and determination that she recognized as a family strength. This is consistent with cultural beliefs that honor the forefathers' work (Fairley, 2003). Kinscripts spoke to the issue of an individual's behavior and development and the role that individual family traditions and expectations play in an individual's life choices, life changes, and trajectories (Stewart, 2015). The first-generation women in this study broke long-standing family and community traditions by attending college. Whether adhering to current family wishes or setting new traditions, these women were still doing their part to improve their family's long-term and short-term trajectories (Reyes, 2019). As the participants in the study discussed the multigenerational relationships within their family networks, they spoke about the importance of adding value and contributing to their families and community (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). Consistent with the literature on Black, first-generation college students, the women in this study also felt charged with the responsibility of attending to the needs and expectations of the family while simultaneously trying to pursue their paths (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Stack and Burton (1993) refer to this as kinwork, in that these women are doing the work that is necessary for the family to survive from generation to generation.

These women elaborated on the roles and scripts that family, community, and society assigned them and provided detailed and passionate accounts about whether they adhered to them and the strategies they used to do so.

Black Feminism

Black feminism is pivotal in studies on Black women in that it creates a level of knowledge about their oppression, and it allows them to define their realities (Collins, 1990). Examining the lives of these participants through a Black feminist perspective illuminated a direct view of the experiences of Black women and gave voice to their unique and individual stories. The use of ethnographic interviews provided a perspective to Black feminist thought. It strives to envelop the expression of Black women's standpoints, thereby providing a stage to project their voice (Collins, 1990; Collins, 2002). Black feminism highlights women's perspectives within oppressive systems giving prominence to gender and race (Collins, 1990; Collins & Bilge 2020). Research shows that the unique experiences of Black women in Higher Education have been under-researched (Winkle-Wagner, 2015).   Black women have continuously advocated for colleges and universities to add representation in administration, organizations, and curricula and create an overall college culture that addresses their needs and concerns (Kendi, 2012).

Furthermore, Black women must navigate between "socially accepted norms of being both black and women, which means they encounter both gender bias and racism in classroom settings, residential environments, and interactions with their White peers" (Jaggers, 2020, p. 289). Often "undergoing tremendous mental gymnastics to negotiate when, how, and how often their authentic identities show up." While these strength-based and powerful navigation techniques have been essential in navigating these negative experiences, it is also seen as a

liability rather than a strength on predominantly white campuses (Williams et al., 2020). In addition to systemic oppression, black women may also face pressure within their families and communities. Black women are more likely to have family responsibilities and family members who do not value their educational pursuits (Kim et al., 2021).

Additionally, when parents continue to communicate gendered different expectations and responsibilities, it further adds to the oppression of Black women (ECCLES & J, 1983). Pressure for Black women continues after they graduate in that they still experience misogyny and unequal pay in the workplace. Suitable partners are limited to women who wish to marry within their racial/ethnic group. College-educated men are less likely to marry Black women with higher educational attainment and earning potential (Butler-Sweet, 2017).
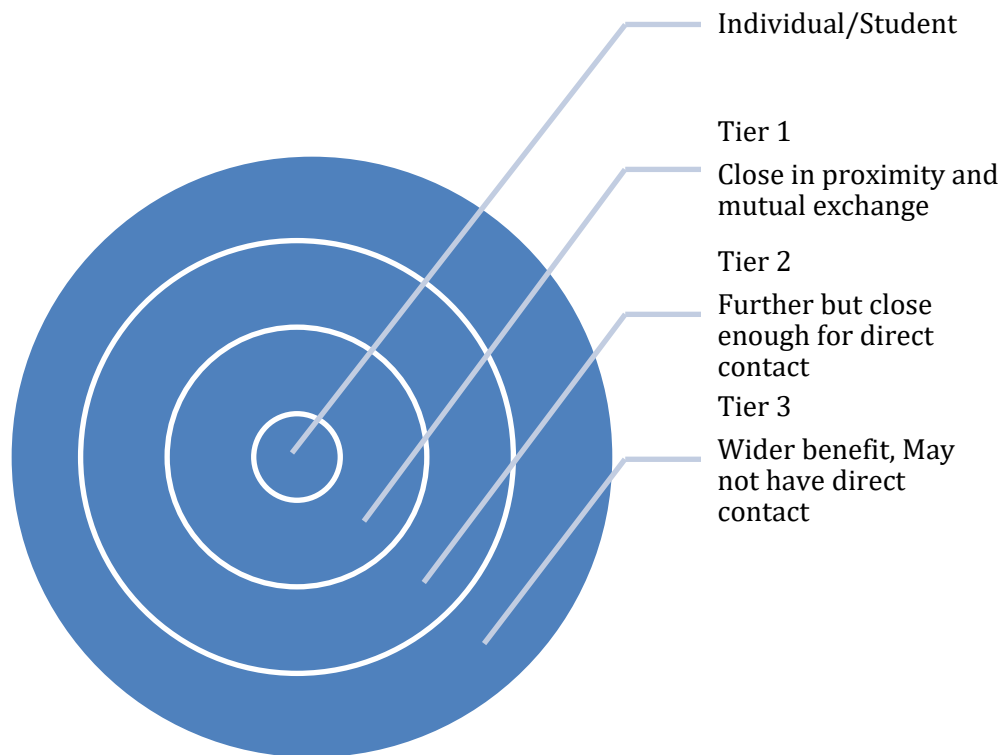
Specific findings in this study highlighted the oppression and lack of opportunities within the lives of these participants, which in turn motivated them to succeed. Collins (2000) suggested that oppressive systems such as predominantly white institutions often use key terms such as diversity to lure students in, only to fail to add the necessary resources and support for them to succeed. The fact that Black women in this study allude to how they often felt unheard and unsupported on campus and saw it as a form of oppression. Black Feminism speaks of how Black women are usually placed in situations where they must speak in tones and frame ideas in ways familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group (Collins, 2009). Women in this study expressed how they refrained from speaking with strength and passion. This was so that they did not portray the stereotype of the "angry black woman," which is often assumed by their white counterparts, thereby causing them to feel intimidated and upset (Collins, 1990). Black women are often expected to bend to the norms of race and gender in ways that sometimes encourage them to deny their voices, exhibit passiveness, or choose

between their race and gender (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019, p.410). Black feminism asserts that while these Black women face these challenges on campus, any efforts to rearticulate their experiences must also be made in a way that is non-threatening to their white counterparts to avoid exclusion or other consequences. One participant hesitantly admits times when she would "act white" and wear her hair crimped like white girls so she would not stand out. Black Other participants spoke about being "hand-picked" by the university to showcase their attempts at diversity (Collins, 2000). That student then revealed how she exercised personal agency in turning those efforts to her advantage. This was an indication that she was not a passive recipient but active on her behalf. She sought out a major that needed her and would provide benefits to her in addition to the education she would receive. Black feminist thought posits that, while these women did not create and were thus not accomplices in these problems, they found themselves situated in, they also did not see themselves as helpless, passive victims (Collins, 1989). Recognizing the limitation that came with their intersections of being both Black and women, these women were able to use their oppression to their advantage.

The links between Kinscripts and Black feminism were made evident in this study. They both produced culturally relevant knowledge that clarified the need for the participants to heal themselves, their communities, and the larger socio-cultural context (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). Overarching findings in this study supported Black feminism. The participants consistently exhibited the power and agency of Black women lending the opportunity to theorize from their culture and lived experiences (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). Agency is reflected in a multiplicity of actions undertaken by Black women to defy systems of oppression and domination (del Guadalupe Davidson, 2017). They defied societal

expectations in their choice to both attend and be successful in a space that often felt less welcoming.

The process by which participants were able and found it necessary to be responsible for the well-being of their families, be an example for their communities and change societal perspectives of Black women exhibits elements of both Kinscripts and Black Feminism (Stack & Burton 1993; Collins, 1990). This resonates because the participants in this study understood that their loads were heavy and that their family scripts differed from those of continuing education students. However, the choices they made to adhere or not adhere to family scripts, although it was sometimes a burden, were still ultimately their choices to make. These students began to enact agency in their attempts to carve a space for themselves while simultaneously remaining loyal to family scripts. Each of these women negotiated these family interactions by "taking one for the team" for the common good and the sake of their families and communities (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). Each participant felt like getting a college degree was more significant and had a greater purpose. These women all felt a need to prove to themselves, their families, and society that they could do it. In the interest of empowerment, each participant spoke about setting an example for younger family members and Black women who never believed in or had the opportunity to attend college. The overarching goal for each woman was to empower themselves, their families, and the Black (female) population but also to do their part to dispel common stereotypes about Black women (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019).

Individual/Student

Tier 1
Close in proximity and mutual exchange

Tier 2
Further but close enough for direct contact

Tier 3
Wider benefit, May not have direct contact

Model 1: Circle of Service Framework

Interpretation of Findings

Circles of Service

Interdependent communities like those in my study have been essential in creating

opportunities for success because there is always someone willing to either pay forward or

pay back the blessings they received. In most cases, some door of opportunity was opened for

these participants, and they walked through it without even being able to identify their

benefactor. They may not have been the targeted individual, intended beneficiaries of the

excellent work of some person. More likely, the target was anyone who may have traveled the

path the benefactor had paved for them. African American traditions hold that not one of us is

self-made; on the contrary, we have all benefited from those who have paved the way before

us (Fairley, 2003). These same behaviors have been instrumental in the participants' success

in this study. Black families have historically relied on mutual aid transactions (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993).

Furthermore, due to low socio-economic conditions out of necessity, Black families have created alternative forms of survival by maintaining the act of reciprocal transactions. (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). The findings in this study indicate the same record of transactions. One of the most critical aspects of this study is the participants' desire to give back to their families and ancestors for all that they had done for them. The payback form of reciprocity is direct in which a person provides a service to another who returns the favor to the same benefactor.

The women in this study recognized that being the first to attend college meant something big for their families. They also realized that it was not going to be easy since they knew very little about the world in which they were embarking and that they were not equipped with all the tools that would make it easy for them to succeed. Studies on Black female college students do not attend to their cultural differences. Thus, it was necessary to view how these women navigated the spaces between home and school from a more traditional perspective. The mutual aid system that these women relied on can be described as "circles of service." These circles may widen or contract as needed to meet the needs of the individual. This circle of service framework was developed to examine the experiences of the Black women in this study as they navigated through college and simultaneously adhered to and renegotiated family and societal scripts (Stack & Burton, 1993). This framework aimed to distinguish Black women in scholarship that often does not account for their individual, family, and cultural differences (Collins, 1990).

The circle of service is a network of interdependent members of families and communities that support each other in multifaceted and often unidentified and underappreciated ways. Viewing Black families from an ecosystem approach helps the idea that families function in "interrelated roles" that can change over time while the family is attempting to "maximize the quality of life" (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). Boundaries for who can enter this circle and at what levels are flexible and permeable (Dilworth-Anderson 2019). Often circumstances and living conditions determine acceptance and invitation into families (Dilworth-Anderson, 2019). This circle of service could be equated to the concept of "the village." The village, or, in this case, circle, is essential in understanding the resilience of African American families living in a society where they are devalued (McAdoo, 2002). Historically, the village has been invaluable as it birthed children, nurtured their spiritual and social development, sent them to college, and launched their careers. Black families have long relied on reciprocal family interactions. The women in this study recognize the value of these interactions and do the work they need to contribute. This is called this kinwork, in which members do the work required to regenerate families and maintain and reinforce shared values and intergenerational responsibilities (Stack & Burton, 1993). While typical definitions of reciprocity suggest its success is based on mutual and immediate benefit, as long as the patterns of reciprocity continue to be serviced and provide some form of gratifications to the benefactors, the process would not be disrupted (Gouldner, 1960). Continuity of the circle is based on a combination of circle members (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The circle's goal is to provide mutual support to each other to keep the circle functioning. Indeed, for these FGBCS, the motion of the process can generate both solace and support and angst and stress.

The guidelines for admittance into the circle are flexible and vary with family structure, cultural context, and proximity. Taylor et al. study on reciprocal Black family networks investigated mutual support based on the frequency of interaction, degree of closeness, and demographic variables (Taylor et al., 2016). The members in this circle can include immediate and extended family members, community members, and even communities within communities, like Black women. Research on family support often focuses on family and extended family members with little focus on the role of friends, community members, and church members within the circle (Taylor et al., 2016). However, in this study, participants accessed support from friends, church members, and various community members. Extended members with no blood ties, referred to as "fictive kin," have links to West African family patterns (Stewart, 2007). The circle members could also change based on social, family, and historical times (Stack & Burton, 1993). The process consists of 4 interdependent components referred to as tiers. These tiers in no way hold any level of the order of importance. In the center of the circle would be the individual. The individual is important because membership in the circle depends on cultural characteristics, relationship patterns, and proximity to the individual. The next tier (tier 1) would consist of people with whom the participants had direct contact. Those in this circle exchanged services and resources within a short time and spatial distance. This is important because the participants had direct access to these supports and could get faster support. First-tier members need not be immediate family members as it is not measured by blood relation but by the spatial proximity and interactive distance. Tier 2 comprises members further out of the diameter but close enough to make direct contact.

For example, Amber's tier two would be her mom, while Autumn's tier 2 would be her mom, brother, and church family. Since Amber is an only child and does not communicate with her family members, her immediate circle is small. Upon entering college, Amber met students with whom she bonded and now considered her family. Those members have moved from tier 2 into tier 1, and Amber's immediate circle has expanded. The third tier is cultural, in which membership includes members who share similar intersections as the individual. This includes ancestors who are no longer with us but are still a part of the circle and unborn children who will be a part of the circle. Tier 3 members may have a more indirect benefit or may benefit the entire race.

For example, by Imani completing her college degree, she is paying it forward to her grandmother (ancestors). Imani's grandmother picked cotton with her mother and grandmother in order and was able to move their family from the rural south. Imani received support from tier 3 and is now giving back to her ancestors in tier 3. She is also changing the trajectory for the unborn children in her family by breaking the cycle of being first-gen. Tier 3 can also include members the individual will never meet but has added to the circle that may impact the individual. For example, Michelle Obama would be tier 3. Her contribution to the circle provided positive representation for Black women, which may have opened doors for others.   Services provided to the circle are similar to those in social support exchange can be "restricted/equal exchange of the same resource (e.g., the provision and receipt of emotional support) or generalized/mixed exchanges (e.g., the provision of instrumental support and the receipt of emotional support) (Taylor et al., 2016).

Reciprocity

The first theme, *reciprocity*, illustrated the interdependent relationship between Black, first-generation college students and the families and communities that produced them. Research reveals, for example, that students who are both first-generation and ethnic minorities (e.g., Latinos, Native Americans) tend to prioritize interdependence between themselves and their families and communities and tend to put the needs of others before focusing more on their own needs (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). The study represents the same elements of direct and indirect forms of reciprocity as mentioned in aspects of kin work and interdependence and which are natural elements of Kinscripts (Stack & Burton, 1993). Direct reciprocity is when one person does for another and receives a service in return from the same person and involves a reciprocal exchange between two parties (Chiang & Takahashi 2011). On the contrary, indirect reciprocity involves more than two parties, such as a group or network, in which the return service can be directed toward anyone in the network (Chiang & Takahashi 2011). In studies on reciprocal relationships, reciprocity has been distinguished as (a) reciprocity as a transactional pattern of interdependent exchanges, (b) reciprocity as a folk belief, and (c) reciprocity as a moral norm. (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In the current study, participants shared stories of tiers of interdependence occurring through intergenerational relationships guided by the concept of reciprocity. For the participants in this study, reciprocity was either direct or indirect in that they were either paying something forward or paying something back. However, the goal was to preserve somehow their family or culture, either direct or indirect.
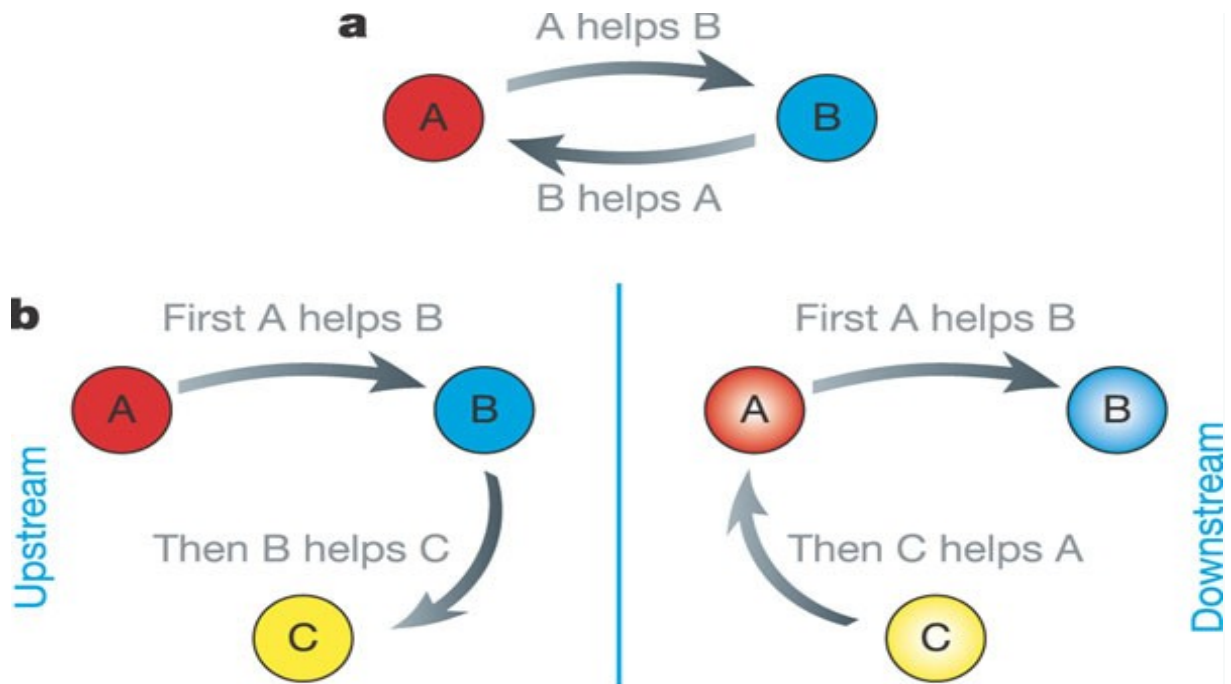
Model 2: Direct and Indirect Reciprocity

One of the critical components of reciprocity for this study was interdependence. All participants described some level of family interdependence; and the need to attend to family obligations and household responsibilities, which influenced to some extent, their level of academic success (Guiffrida, 2005; Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Participants in this study discussed providing economic and social mobility to their families and communities as the main reason they attended college and the motivating factors. Additionally, although most participants reported that they intended to provide financial assistance to family members after college, all did not believe that it was their responsibility to take care of their families, nor did they think their families expected them to. Instead, a few participants reported they would do it because they wanted to and not because they had to. Whether or not students believed that it was their responsibility, all students ultimately adhered to the traditional mutual aid system in some fashion (Stack & Burton 1993). They were choosing to provide aid

to family members aligned with students' model of self while choosing to pursue individual pursuits in conflict with their model of self (Stephens et al., 2012). On the contrary, the failure to maintain healthy attachment and communication with the family presents challenges to the family belief system or script, leading to perceived feelings of betrayal, and being "cut off" from family members (Agllias, 2011).

In removing themselves from the circle of service, Black students risk eliminating their support system and an essential part of their culture (Stewart, 2015).   The concept of reciprocity can be understood through the hardship adaptations the women in this study made for the people in their lives whom they felt indebted through the idea of agency and linked lives (Elder, 1998). Though participants' decisions were accompanied by ambivalence, all ultimately agreed that it was their choice to adhere to their families' expectations about attending college. Students still long for a sense of belonging within the intergenerational family but still seek to differentiate or individuate in interests, pursuits, and relationships to have a strong sense of self (Agilias, 2011).

The study participants strongly expressed appreciation for the hard work and sacrifices that their families, communities, and ancestors made for them to have the opportunities to attend college. As the first in their families and sometimes communities to attend college, they acknowledged that they were afforded opportunities that others were not. With implications of achievement guilt, these women felt like "survivors" because they "escaped" adversity in the home environment and found it culturally and morally necessary to pay it forward (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015). Some participants put back what they felt they took from the circle and only took out what they thought was necessary.

Taking one for the Team

A critical part of reciprocity was this study's interpretation of *taking one for the team.* For this study, this phenomenon refers to willingly undertaking an unpleasant task or making a personal sacrifice for the collective benefit of others. In this study, the participants described sacrifices they made for their families. Research shows that a more educated family will have a more positive impact on the community and society. Some alluded to their reluctance to attend college but describe choosing to participate in helping their family and community. Other women discussed taking on majors that ultimately brought them very little satisfaction. However, they did so to appease their families and produce the income to provide for them (Reyes 2019) adequately. In choosing majors that they were not ultimately interested in, they expressed a lack of motivation throughout their journey and a constant desire to quit. While it was eventually the participants' own decision to attend or not attend, their choices were contingent upon the opportunities they were afforded and constraints of social structure, culture, and family interactions (Elder, 1998). Although attending college was not parallel with the hopes and dreams attached to a few participants, they were willing to make the sacrifice and continue the circle of service to bring value to their families and community. Showing aspects of human agency in their decision to attend college, these women were able to renegotiate their family and societal scripts and ultimately change their life trajectories (Elder, 1998). Others report that having attended college was to make their families proud and because not adhering to their family's expectations would come at a cost they were not willing to bear. For these women to ensure that they did their part to continue the circle of service, participants were willing to sacrifice their dreams and aspirations. This served as both a motivation and a burden for the women in this study. Though the load was

heavy, these sacrifices also tie into the student's contribution to their family's legacy and can

lead to generational healing (Salis Reyes 2019). Participants who grew up in a "traditional

Black community" have been equipped with a system of core beliefs which is the foundation

of their inner strength (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). These beliefs may include but are not limited to

sacrificing hard work and determination.

The women in this study also felt it was their responsibility to make sacrifices for their

race. In response to years of abuse, neglect, and oppression, these women felt they owed it to

the Black community to pay it forward. Furthermore, despite the extraordinary sacrifices

made by Black women in this country, they are still mistreated, underrepresented, degraded,

and stereotyped (Collins, 1990). For this reason, the women in this study spoke about the

importance, the desire, and the responsibility to be a "credit to their race." They all felt the

need to conduct themselves to improve how Black people and Black women were seen and

judged by others (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019).

The women in this study spoke about how they chose to bring value to the culture. For

some women, this meant speaking up for themselves; for others, it meant choosing not to

speak. Some spoke about instances where they felt disrespected and devalued by their white

counterparts and had to carefully consider the best way to respond to avoid adding to negative

stereotypes about Black women. One student explained how she had to use "emotional

intelligence" to react in ways that were non-threatening to her white counterparts (Winkle-

Wagner et al., 2019). To further their oppression, these women lamented what it was like not

having the privilege to speak about their negative experiences. Many of the women in this

study felt like they had to set an example for Blacks. Feminism speaks of how Black women

are often placed in situations where they must speak in tones and frame ideas in ways familiar

to and comfortable for a dominant group (Collins, 1990). They believed that somehow their

actions would either change the negative perception of Blacks or add to the negative

perception of Black women (Collins, 1990).

In addition to dispelling the "angry Black woman" myth, these women wanted to do

their part to add to the legacy that their ancestors had created. This legacy reaches back to

deceased ancestors and future children (Fairley, 2003). While the respect for ancestors did not

extend to the level of ancestor worship as practiced on the continent of Africa, there was a

sense among these participants that they were part of a legacy that included the ancestors and

that there was a need to make those ancestors proud and to learn from the experiences and

struggles of those ancestors. This resonates with the work of Fairley 2003 who said, "no one

is self-made in the African American community; all have benefited from the efforts of the

previous generation (p.557). This is an essential truth that must be acknowledged". Similar

ideas were proposed by Nobles (1978) in his theoretical work one Black family definition,

where he extended this legacy to its African Roots by saying, "the individual owed his very

existence to all members (living dead and yet to be born) of the family, tribe, or clan (p.684)."

Am I my Brother's Keeper?

Another critical aspect of reciprocity was the adage *Am I my Brother's Keeper.* In Black families, this typically means to act as a protector of your brother. When used in this capacity, the term brother holds a deeper meaning. It does not only include family but could include anyone that identifies as Black regardless of gender. The phrase "am I my brother's keeper" resonates in this study as these women were the keepers of their families, communities, race, and gender…Black families have acted on the premise of a value system that includes interdependence, mutual aid, resilience, communalism, and collective responsibilities (Stephens, 2005). It is typical in Black families to rely on relatives to assist in times of peril and maintain reciprocity (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). The women in this study discussed their experiences being cared for by members of their families like grandparents and aunts in the absence of their mothers and fathers. They are now called on to provide their younger siblings and relatives with the same service. Most women felt an unstated responsibility to be protectors, caregivers, and providers for their families. This concept is referred to as other mothering, "women who assist blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities" (Collins, 2000, p. 178). The idea of other mothering has been passed down from generation to generation. This multigenerational form of reciprocity maintains family traditions and scripts needed for survival over the life course (Stack & Burton, 1993). The women in this study illustrated the nature of Black women's culturally expected responsibility to be protectors, caregivers, and providers for their families. Black families often have a matriarchal system, with the grandmother at the head, fulfilling their role or script as primary caregiver (Stephens, 2020). Anchored to stabilize family relationships, Black families maintained this mutual aid system (Cash, 1995). With Black women at the

forefront, these kinship networks have existed across generations and social classes, thus

empowering Black women with self-reliance, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Cash, 1995).

Thanks, but I Need More

This sub-theme emerged as a significant aspect of the participants' navigation through

college. This concept addressed how participants felt they were giving more than they were

getting from their families. While studies on mutual support within Black families are

primarily equitable, in relationships where the reciprocity is one-sided, people often report

they give more than they receive (Taylor, 2016). Participants in this study stated that while

they recognized the contributions from their families throughout the years, the stress and

burden associated with completing their college degrees were still heavy. In some instances,

participants felt as though their families did not make any contributions and should not feel

entitled to the benefits of their successful academic achievements. According to Gouldner

(1960), participants should not assume that their families would be grateful and that they will

always reciprocate. Due to the ambiguous nature of indirect reciprocity, family members may

not have recognized how the participants' college degrees would benefit them.   In this case,

reciprocal relationships cannot always be quantified in that the return service is not always

direct (Gouldner, 1960).

On the contrary, the participants lamented the lack of understanding and emotional

support from their families. This study ultimately attended college as a form of payback to

their families. Still, their families could not provide a basic level of understanding or empathy

for their experiences. Not because they did not want to but because they had little to no

knowledge about college experiences. In terms of reciprocity, social exchange theory

suggests that individuals are happiest in social relationships characterized by equal giving and

receiving support (Taylor et al., 2016). For these participants who felt like they were not receiving the necessary levels of support, the stress became overwhelming and resulted in them feeling unmotivated and defeated. This was especially true for participants like Nicole, who felt like she was attending college to save her family and break generational curses. The same people she was fighting for were doing their best to hinder her progress and bring her down.

Theme 2: Navigation between School & Home

One constant among the participants' lived experiences was the sense that they had to work at navigating the space between their home and college lives. For these Black women, successfully combining home and school was a necessity. Most of the women in this study came from low-income homes where limited resources. The transition to college for these women was not easy. Upon entering college, participants spoke about their experiences and how different their college campuses were from the communities they came from. These women spoke in detail of the realization that despite all the hard work they had done to get into college, they still were not prepared upon arrival. They realized that their schools, families, and communities had not adequately provided them with the needed tools to succeed (Gibbons & Woodside 2014). Although these women struggle, they are less likely to report that they need help (Gibbons & Woodside 2014). Participants spoke about what it was like trying to negotiate their way through college classes that they were not academically prepared for or exposed to. They also talked about not having the social and linguistic capacity to keep up with conversations amongst their non-black, continuing education counterparts. Mostly, the students talked about not having a support network that they could relate to and help them navigate through these uncharted college experiences. It is evident that they were less

academically, socially, and financially prepared than other students (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

While research shows that most students in this study spoke about having to be conscious of how the (world) around them viewed them, to navigate this system effectively, these participants needed to acquire a new skill set, including advanced study skills, socialization skills, research skills, and the ability to exploit networking contacts (Sinanan, 2016). Most of which were foreign to many, particularly to first-generation minority students. However, relying on aspects of agency, these women in this study were able to change their life circumstances by being proactive, self-organizing, and self-reflecting (Bandura, 2006).

The Art of Finesse

One of the ways that students navigated within and between school and home was referred to as the art of finesse. This study referred to *finessing* as a way to maneuver through situations skillfully and with ease…or to cleverly and slyly get oneself out of a problem or successfully or successfully "**B.S**" an assignment or situation (Urban Dictionary). Women in this study immediately recognized that, like black women from lower socioeconomic contexts, they would have to work extra hard to be successful on predominantly white campuses. Considering their inadequate education, lack of instrumental support, and social skills incompatible with the environment, these participants knew they would be at a disadvantage (Yosso, 2005). Many directly spoke about not being adequately prepared for college, yet these women were able to find ways to navigate using a set of tools that may not be named or valued. Yosso (2005) suggested that such devices can be attributed to community cultural wealth, which he describes as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms

of oppression" (p. 77). White middle-class views of cultural wealth tends to devalue the cultural capital of marginalized populations and their ability to navigate through dominant and non-dominant cultural contexts (Browne & Battle, 2018).

These participants embodied the adage "fake it until you make it." Some women talk about taking skills acquired from their old neighborhoods and using them to get them through situations at college. Some participants speak about observing the room, seeking out people who talk like them and mimicking their style. Lastly, women in this study talk about code-switching. This Linguistic capital: the cognitive and social competencies needed to communicate in more than one language or style allowed them to fit in or appear more knowledgeable (Yosso, 2005). Some participants acknowledged that they were nowhere near as familiar as their white counterparts and knew that the only way to pass the class was to "play up to" the professor. By playing up to the professor, they showed up for class early or asked lots of questions so that the professor would remember them as students who worked hard and put in the effort. Other participants talked about having family responsibilities that might conflict with their educational attainment.

Making and Maintaining Connections

Another way these women were able to navigate through their college journey was by *making connections*. Black feminist pedagogical theory encourages group interaction, community building, respect, and self-reflection and emphasizes Black women's ways of knowing, teaching, and learning (Collins, 2000). The women in the study talked about what it was like being a Black woman on a predominantly white campus. They expressed how having a space for themselves would have made campus life easier to navigate. There was an overarching notion of feeling alone and unsupported. Research shows that Black students

often report racial isolation; however, joining groups of other Black students could foster a more successful experience and completion. The women talked about feeling like they did not belong and did not have faculty or staff members they could go to for help. Most of the women in this study began to connect and build their relationships.

Black feminism pedagogy supports the notion that when Black women engage in making connections behaviors such as group interactions and community building, it increases cultural knowledge and women's ways of knowing, teaching, and learning (Collins, 2000). Some participants discussed joining the Black Student Union or the Haitian Student Union. Others spoke of building dance teams, social groups, and study groups with people who shared similar experiences.   The Haitian Americans on campus all joined the Haitian Student Union in which not only were they able to connect with Black Americans but Blacks specific to their own culture. However, Black American students spoke about not having a particular place for them. It is important to note that often Black student's Common support systems are necessary (e.g., Black cultural centers) but may not be sufficient to increase Black women's feelings of satisfaction with their college journeys at PWIs, nor may they be significant enough to increase graduation rates Exploring within-group differences of Black students. Black women, in particular, have a clear understanding of what support structures they may need as they negotiate the intersection of two marginalized identities, race, and gender.

The participants also spoke about how they made it a point to maintain connections they knew would be critical for their success and survival. When students grow up in families and communities with little or no resources, it is common for the district to rally around them

and offer their help and support, especially when community members see potential in their members. Amongst the extended family networks in this study were school leaders, church members, extended family, and others. Many of the vast networks in this study were willing to give back because they benefited from some sort of support and mutual aid.

Limitations

The sample size for this study was particularly small, albeit appropriate, and suggested for auto-ethnographic interviews. A more comprehensive range of participants could have provided more cultural context regarding the experiences of Black women. In addition, since Black women's experiences are similar but still uniquely different, a more extensive study may have provided stories from a more comprehensive range of Black women of different ages and diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition, it is essential to point out that all the participants were from one particular University and that they all shared very similar social and economic backgrounds.

Though this study was a part of a more extensive study on FGCS, the interviews for this study took place during a global pandemic which may have affected the interviewing process. Because of the pandemic, interviews were done during zoom, and students often had to fight for privacy. Although the participants were repeatedly ensured that the discussions could occur when they felt most comfortable, the lack of face-to-face may have contributed to some level of disclosure. Lastly, because of the global pandemic and classes being held on zoom, some students could not fully articulate what it was like on campus. However, the study's limitations did not interfere with the interview and data collection process.

Implications

This study has implications for those in Higher Education who are charged with or interested in meeting the academic and socioemotional needs of first-generation Black female college students. The results illuminate issues that add stress to the college experience of Black females (FGCS) and might influence the development of programming to meet the needs of that population. Lastly, this paper highlights the inherently feminist contribution of ethnographic methodology. It offers a culturally sensitive approach by giving Black females (FGCS) a space to tell their own stories about their own unique experiences (Tillman, 2002). Additional research on the topic could adequately and appropriately inform practices, programming, mentoring, and hiring of experienced faculty and staff. The results of studies in this area may assist colleges and universities in understanding the experiences of first-generation college students at PWIs and form programs to promote academic success and reduce stress and anxiety through social and emotional support programs and mentoring.

This study can be expounded in various ways. Limited studies on Black, first-generation college students consider the different cultural backgrounds of Black women. The study highlighted differences in cultural norms and family expectations. It also illuminated that while overall, the needs of the women were similar, there were indeed some distinct differences in how they navigated these spaces. These findings would assist practitioners and administrators in practices and supports that would be instrumental in their ability to cope and improve self-efficacy.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how Black females who are first-generation college students at a predominantly white institution (PDW) merge their lives as college students

while adhering to the expectations of their families and communities. The themes that emerged were reciprocity and navigation between home and school. The study uncovered new contributions to the literature, including Black female college students' ability to navigate through unfamiliar spaces using agency and finesse, the need to consider the differences between Black women in the diaspora, and the need to refrain from interpreting them.

Historically Black families have relied on mutual aid and reciprocal transactions to survive pre-slavery. They kept these transactions going by constantly replenishing the circle or putting in what they took out. The women in this study, without any formal training, ultimately relied on the same survival techniques as their ancestors. While the concept of reciprocity has the distinct markings of serving as a solution for making interdependency a benefit to these women, it also was burdensome. It may have stifled the fulfillment of dreams that were personal to each participant. The students in this study acknowledged the need to use their education to uplift the community and their race. For some, the freedom to act in accordance with their dreams and talents was crowded out by what they believe they owe to the community. The budding businesswoman may feel that they must become a social worker because their community needs it. The engineering major may choose to be a teacher because the school system demands it; the philosopher may have to cage his thoughts to serve as a civil servant to respond to community needs.

Moreover, this study highlights the importance of acknowledging the plight of Black females. Mainly first, Black female college students who are charged with making valuable contributions to the struggle of Black women and the legacy of their ancestors. The first-generation women in this study broke family and community traditions by attending college. Whether adhering to current family wishes or setting new traditions, these women were still

doing their part to improve their families' long-term and short-term trajectories. Ultimately, while continuing education, students are in college to secure a future for themselves; the women in this study were in it for survival, not just for themselves but their families, communities, and race.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Where did you grow up? What was it like? (Tell me about your childhood, what was it like for you?

    a. Who lived/lives in your house?

    b. Who was in your family?

    c. What were their roles?

2. What is your role in your family?

    a. Has this role changed any upon entering college?

3. Tell me about your decision to attend college.

    a. Who was included in that decision?

    b. Whom do you know that has attended college?

    c. Was your decision supported by family and friend groups?

    d. Were there any particular challenges? Tell me about them.

    e. Have you received help or support from family/friends/community?

        i. give me some examples of that support

4. What did you expect to gain upon entering college?

    a. Has college met your expectations?

5. What did (do) you expect to gain? Lose? Give back? To or from whom?

6. Tell me about ways, if any, that college has changed you.

7. Would you change anything about your decision to attend college?

8. Talk about relationships with family and friends from home since you started college.

9. Tell me about your support systems.

    a. Family? Friends?

    b. On-Campus. Back home

    c. What is provided?

10. Do you have regrets about your decision to attend college?

11. How does your family react to/feel about/say about your college experience?

12. What is/was the hardest thing about being first-generation?

13. What does your Family/Community/Support Group know/not know about the college experience?

14. What do they have to offer toward the experience?

15. Advice to others?

16. What is expected after college?

17. Obligations after college?

Appendix B

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Education
and Human Services

Department of Family
and Child Studies

<u>Consent Form for Adults– Individual Interview</u>

Please read below with care. You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to other people before you fill in this form.

Study's Title: Influence of Family & Social Contexts on the Experiences of First Generation College Students

Why is this study being done? The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences and needs students who are the first in their families to attend college. In particular, we will explore the following questions

1. How do family obligations and expectations influence (support or hinder) college experiences and success?
2. What are the benefits and costs (economic, social, and family) of college completion?
3. What are the unique needs of students who are the first in their family to attend college?

What will happen while you are in the study?

1. You will complete a brief survey.
2. You will participate in an audiotaped one on one interview that will include general background information about yourself and your family, information about barriers and supports to your education, and your thoughts about the costs and benefits of a college education .
3. In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, interviews for this study will be conducted remotely.
    a. In most cases the platform used will be ZOOM. During ZOOM interviews, participants have the option to disable their video feed and to change their screen name to increase the level of confidentiality.
    b. Telephone interviews are also a possibility

After your interview, the audiotapes will be transcribed and I will look for similarities and differences among you and the other participants in the study

Time: The individual interview will last 45-60 minutes.

Risks: There is no more than minimal risk involved while participating in this study. You may experience some inconvenience due to the time commitments and scheduling issues. In addition, there may be some discomfort because of discussion details of your thoughts and feelings regarding family and educational issues.

Benefits: It is believed that your participation in this study will help me and others to understand the needs and issues of first generation college students more fully. This understanding will allow for a greater number of appropriate supports to be provided by the colleges attended by those students. You will receive a cash payment of $5 for your participation in the study.

Who will know that you are in this study? Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym for the purpose of any presentation of this material. Your identity will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Do you have to be in the study? Your participation in the study is voluntary. You can refuse to answer any question or stop participating at any time. Your refusal to participate or discontinuation will not result in any negative consequences for you. If you cease to participate, you will still get the things you were promise and your payment will not be affected.

Do you have any questions about this study? If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact:

Dr. Pearl Stewart at 973-655-6840 or stewartp@mail.montclair.edu

Do you have any questions about your rights as a research particpant? Phone or email the IRB Chair, Dr. Dana Levitt at 973-655-2097 or (reviewboard@mail.montclair.edu

It is okay to use my data in other studies:
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

It is okay to audiotape me while I am in this study:
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

It is okay to use my audiotaped data in the research.
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

It is okay to video-record me while I am in this study.
Please initial: _____ Yes _____ No

The copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

If you choose to be in this study, please fill in your lines below.

_____   _____   _____
Print your name here   Sign your name here   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of Principal Investigator   Signature   Date