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This instrumental case study examined the perceptions of African-American current and former secondary teacher education majors about the impact of sociocultural capital on their matriculation through the secondary teacher education program at an historically Black University (HBCU). There were two cohorts of participants: (a) four current majors in various content area secondary teacher education programs and (b) three former majors. Pierre Bourdieu's (1974) and Edmund Gordon's (1999) theories of social/cultural reproduction and human resource capital guided the theoretical framework of the study. Data were collected via reflective essays, individual semi-structured interviews, and cohort focused group interviews. Four themes related to human resource capital emerged from the data: (a) social/cultural capital, (b) institutional capital, (c) polity capital, and (d) personal capital. Findings showed similarities and differences among the two cohorts regarding how the participants acquired and utilized the social/cultural capital they brought with them to the university and how they were able to acquire and use institutional capital, polity capital, and personal capital once they arrived at the university. The study furthermore revealed how these various forms of human resource capital affected participants' perceptions of why they were or were not successful in matriculating through the secondary teacher education program at this particular HBCU.

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF  
SOCIOCULTURAL CAPITAL IN MATRICULATING THROUGH  
TEACHER EDUCATION AT A HISTORICALLY  
BLACK UNIVERSITY

by

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Approved by

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Committee Chair

To the casual observer, a doctoral dissertation may appear to be solitary work. However, to complete a project of this magnitude requires a network of support, and I am indebted to many people. I am especially grateful to my mother, Cynthia and my sister, Merissa for their love, support, and encouragement

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

African Americans historically have seen teaching positions as powerful and representing authority and respect. Such images are significant for African American students, and communities, as well as society in general. As far back as the post-antebellum era in American history, African Americans have used the field of education as one of the first and continuing professional fields as a model of African American professionalism for younger generations of African Americans.

Education has been a foundation for the building of African American communities. It created a professional class of people when other career options were limited or unavailable. It allowed the younger generations to see people like them in positions of authority and promoters of learning, which was a direct contrast to the larger hegemonic society's images about the traditional role of African Americans.

Fairclough (2007) explains that the primary purpose of the first HBCUs was to train and educate future teachers for Black students. The opportunity for control of the education of African American students being in the hands of other African Americans provided institutions that uplifted them and allowed them the opportunity to believe in themselves and see themselves as well their culture, as the norm rather than abnormal.

Although this process of educating African Americans by African Americans began several centuries ago, much of its fundamental ideals are still relevant today. Due to the historical significance of African Americans taking the responsibility of educating their own for almost two centuries begs the question of what happened to the fervor, the desire, the commitment of the African American community to continue to take ownership of educating their own in the twenty-first century? It is understandable that new opportunities have opened up for racial/ethnic minorities in the last few decades that allow African Americans to pursue other career options. Yet it is still clear that African Americans recognize that education is a key component to uplifting their communities and helping them to progress into a more productive future (Hine, Hine, & Harold, 2006). In 1865 Hezekiah Hunter, an African American teacher from Brooklyn, New York, commented on the need for African American teachers: “I believe we best can instruct our own people, knowing our own peculiarities, needs, necessities. Further, I believe we that are competent blacks owe it to our people to teach them our specialty” (Hine, Hine, & Harold, 2006, p.306).

Over 125 years later, there is still widespread acceptance that African American teachers may be particularly qualified to meet the educational needs of a growing and changing school-aged population (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002). Researchers have put forth poignant discussions which suggest that African American teachers may bring sensitivity and interest to the problems of African American students that other teachers may not (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002).



Howard (2001) concurs that African American teachers specifically are more adept at understanding equity issues, at employing culturally relevant pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of individual learners, and at developing the moral character of all students. Similarly, Marvin (2006) suggests that African American teachers possess a unique ability to use power and caring in their classrooms, creating structured, disciplined learning environments where students respect and learn from each other. Horvat and Lewis (2003) posit when instructors and students share common cultural characteristics, there is a cultural understanding consisting of common knowledge, communication, values, traditions, attitudes, and norms that can promote learning. King (1993) indicates that African American teachers often bring to the classroom experiences, expectations, and teaching practices found to enhance the African American student's achievement, and also, the fact that these teachers can act as cultural brokers for the students as well.

Teachers of color bring many benefits to the classroom that go beyond their racial or ethnic identification (Irizarry, 2007). Sonia Nieto (1999) and Horvat and Lewis (2003) makes the claim that teachers of color have often experienced marginalization and alienation in their own academic experiences, therefore they are likely to be able to relate to students of color in many ways that many white teachers cannot.

Data on the current state of teacher education in the United States reveal a decreasing number of teachers of color while the number of students of color is rapidly increasing (Gordon, 1994; Bennett, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006; Irizarry, 2007). During the 2002-2003 academic year, teachers of color represented approximately 13%

of the total teacher population (Bennet, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006). Currently, research has revealed that 90% of U.S. teachers are White European American while 42% of U.S. students are students of color (Parker, 2009). African Americans teachers make up less than 5% of the total public school teaching population (Ladson-Billings, 2009). These data suggest that racial/ethnic minority teachers have become an “endangered species” (Floyd, Graham, McCary-Henderson, Ricks, & Williams, 2005; Smith, Mack, & Akyea, 2004).

Despite these important and significant reasons that indicate the need for African American teachers, the absence of this demographic group is apparent in the voluminous research regarding retention of African American pre-service teachers and, ultimately, African American teachers for contemporary classrooms. Teacher educators are becoming more concerned with retention of students of color in these programs, especially with more racial/ethnic minority students attending college (Chenoweth, 1999; Sheets, 2000; Irizarry, 2007).

The literature states that there are several reasons that relate to this absence, but the main cause for the limited number of African American teachers is the increasingly low academic performance of teacher education majors in college, which often results in their inability to matriculate through teacher education programs (Hulsebosch & Koerner, 1994; Bennett, McWhorter & Kuykendall, 2006). In their research study on the teacher education experiences African American teachers, Hulsebosch & Koerner (1994) and Strayhorn & Terrell (2007) found that racial/ethnic minority teachers reported that they felt disconnected to their college in general and/or their educational programs while

simultaneously struggling to maintain their racial identities. Such findings provide some insight into why the shortage of African American teachers continues to increase in the United States.

McCray (2002) states that a paucity of research exists on African American teacher candidates' backgrounds and characteristics, experiences, and motives for teaching, in spite of widespread acceptance that African American teachers may be particularly qualified to meet the educational needs of a growing and changing school-aged population. Despite the need for proportionate representation of African American teachers, few studies have focused on prospective African American teachers (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002; Bennett, McWhorter, Kuykendall, 2006; Irizarry, 2007).

Previous studies regarding factors that impact retention of racial/ethnic minority prospective teachers have primarily obtained perspectives of in-service teachers of color and ignored the voices of those currently enrolled in teacher education programs (Floyd, Graham, McCary-Henderson, Ricks, & Williams, 2005). The few studies that do explore the perception of teacher education candidates omit the experiences of those students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), which are the largest producers of African American teachers (Tinto, 1993, Futrell, 1999, Irizarry, 2007).

Research is necessary to understand what African American teacher education candidates might perceive as factors affecting their journey through teacher education at HBCUs. This can be extremely useful for reforming and revitalizing teacher education programs at HBCUs, as well as teacher education programs across the board. The proposed study will examine the perceptions of African American secondary teacher

education majors enrolled at an HBCU, regarding their perceptions of how their sociocultural capital has affected their retention in the teacher education program.

### Theoretical Orientation

The proposed study is designed to understand sociocultural capital African American students bring into and also develop within a secondary teacher education program in terms of how this capital impacts their retention in the program. The theoretical framework for this study is based on Gordon's (1999) adaptation of Bourdieu's (1973) theory of social reproduction and cultural capital.

Bourdieu's theory (1973) of social reproduction maintains that the existing class structure and social inequalities of individuals in a capitalist society are reproduced by that society. Bourdieu (1973) believes that cultural capital and habitus are the keys to social reproduction. Bourdieu (1973) further theorized that differences in social background correspond to (a) differences in possession of cultural resources referred to as cultural capital and (b) the orientation to those resources referred to as habitus.

Cultural capital is the background, knowledge, dispositions, and skills that are passed from parent to child. According to Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction and cultural capital (1973) the culture of the dominant class is transmitted and rewarded by the traditional and mainstream educational system. Cultural capital is comprised of linguistic and cultural competence as well as a broad knowledge of culture that belongs to members of the upper classes and is found much less frequently among the lower classes. Social reproduction theory is based on an intergenerational transmission of cultural capital. In order to acquire cultural capital an individual should be able to receive and

internalize it. Schools, including higher education institutions, require students to have this ability, but usually, within dominant-ruled institutions, it is not provided for lower class groups. As previously implied, individuals often have to receive whatever cultural capital they get from their families; as such, the cultural capital received by individuals is often dependent on social class. The differences are reinforced by an educational system that prefer dominant cultural styles, which leaves most members of the lower classes and racial/ethnic minority groups with little hope of achieving social mobility within the various social institutions, such as colleges (Dumais, 2002).

The other important component of Bourdieu's work on cultural capital is the concept of habitus, which includes the beliefs, attitudes, experiences, values and aspirations of individuals (Bourdieu, 1973). This element of Bourdieu's work claims that it is one's disposition that influences the actions that one takes, such actions can be manifested in one's physical demeanor (Dumais, 2002). Bourdieu (1973) believed that the sum of these attributes shapes an individual's perception of self. Thus, a person from a lower social economic background would expect to do less well in school than their counterpart from a wealthy family. By having lived through frustrations, disappointment and other hardships, they are likely to not expect as much out of life. They will tend toward immediate gratification and be less inclined to believe in *far-off* rewards, such as better paying occupations, or being a respectable leader or role model in their community. Since many racial/ethnic minorities are often marginalized in the larger hegemonic structure, African American students may find it difficult to create

dispositions that allow them to see themselves being accepted in college and being successful in college.

Gordon (1999) extends Bourdieu's theory in developing a model of human resource capital. The eight human resource capital components include: (a) health capital comprised of the physical developmental integrity, health, and nutritional condition; (b) financial capital is the income and wealth, family, community and societal economic resources available for education; (c) human capital is the social competence, tacit knowledge and other education –derived abilities as personal or family assets; (d) social capital in which the emphasis is on social–network relationships, social norms, cultural styles and values; (e) polity capital is the value on societal membership, social concern, public commitment, political economy; (f) personal capital emphasizes dispositions, attitudes, aspirations, efficacy, and sense of power; (g) institutional capital refers to one's access to educating and socializing institutions; and lastly, (h) pedagogical capital is defined as supports for appropriate educational treatment in family, school, and community.

It is within the relationship between social institutions, such as universities and the learner that a high degree of dissonance can occur and result in a distortion of the learning process (Gordon, 1999). Oftentimes, it is the inability of schools to bridge between conflictive cultural capital resources that renders schooling as an “at risk-inducing phenomenon” for many racial/ethnic minority students (Gordon, 1999). Students are complex and bring much with them to the college campus and classroom, it is this complex sense of self that must, in turn, be met and integrated into the dynamic

culture of the learning environment in order for optimal development to occur (Gordon, 1999).

It should be understood, however, that the relationship between culture and social institutions is a reciprocal one. It is within teacher interactions that learners develop a system of structures and conventions of their sociocultural group (Gordon, 1999). Educators, specifically those at HBCUs, are considered to be more sensitive to the diversity of ethnic minority students and can, at the very least, be respectful of their indigenous orientations and values. Although such values may be at odds with the goals of the overall educational program, they can serve as social cultural purveyors in assisting students of color in acquiring, assimilating, and accommodating dominant human resource capital (Gordon, 1999).

Both Bourdieu and Gordon theorize that capital is a crucial component in student educational achievement. Bourdieu's theory looks at how institutions may come to value and illustrate how much they value the cultural capital of certain groups. As such, students may develop certain notions and perceptions about themselves and how they can fit into institutions of higher education. This proposed study wants to look at whether the same expectations and cultural value system are present for racial/ethnic minority students at HBCUs or do they experience a different and more empowering culture valuing system than what Bourdieu addresses in his theory of cultural capital. In addition, the study also looks to pair cultural capital with relevant aspects of Gordon's theory of social capital, where social processes undergrid the eight categories of human resource capital. While Bourdieu's theory focuses on the individual in development of

capital, Gordon's theory focuses on the social group. My study merges Bourdieu's (1973) theory of cultural capital with Gordon's (1999) theory of social capital, resulting in the concept of sociocultural capital.

The connection between the theories of Bourdieu and Gordon is that they may provide for a combination of elements that will allow racial/ethnic minorities and/or poverty disadvantaged students' opportunities to overcome assumed deficiencies in various societal arenas, particularly education. Both Bourdieu and Gordon explain the complexity of how various forms of capital can impact an individual's ability to move beyond and transform out of the realm of social reproduction. Racial/ethnic minority students tend to find the college environment at PWIs very different from their home environment and may lack the cultural capital and habitus to fit into those institutions academically and socially (Gordon, 1999; Dumais, 2002). My study explores how students' perspectives on how their sociocultural capital affects their retention in a secondary teacher education program at an HBCU.

Retention in teacher education programs is influenced by an institution's ability to value the multiple identities of their ethnic minority students as well as appreciate and actively acknowledge the human resource capital that they bring with them to the university. Additionally, a HBCUs' ability to be a broker for social cultural capital might be seen as a valuable asset to ethnic minority students' academic success in post-secondary education, particularly in teacher education programs because the representation of ethnic minorities in the field are so miniscule.



From a sociocultural perspective, building and developing social network relationships and having their social norms and cultural styles and values accepted are significant for African American college students (Gordon, 1999). Students at HBCUs are assumed to share a sense of power and self-efficacy that allows them to pursue their educational goals as an insider that fully participates in the institution, rather than an outsider that is consistently under scrutiny as research indicates is often the case for ethnic minorities at PWIs (Chenoweth, 1999; Rosales & Person, 2003).

Additionally, HBCUs are believed to be better suited to provide the necessary support for African Americans in terms of appropriate educational treatment, which again, eliminates the barrier of discriminatory treatment among the educational administrators and faculty and students (Brown & Davis, 2001). HBCUs occupy a unique place as a source of capital for African Americans. Brown and Davis (2001) discuss the primary role of the HBCU, which is to serve as the social capital purveyor. The relations and networks that HBCU construct into tangible and meaningful resources are known as social capital. Recent studies offer new evidence of the unique ability of HBCU to distribute social capital and effectively structure environments that lead to greater achievement outcomes for their students (Rovai, Gallien, & Stiff-Williams, 2007; Jones, 2001; Gallien & Peterson, 2005).

At HBCUs African American students have the opportunity to fully participate in the institution and develop network connections of academic elites that they may not have the opportunity to connect with at PWIs. As such, African American students may be able to transpose or transition their individual habitus that may have posited they do

not belong in academics to a disposition of not only do they belong; but they are a necessary presence in academics. It is believed that HBCUs may ameliorate the development of African American students' dispositions through the environmental support and leadership at the institution. As such, students can see themselves as being academically successful, which could be defined by their retention in college and, specifically, in their teacher education programs.

### Purpose of the Study

Using an instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995), the purpose of this case study was to understand African American secondary education students' perceptions of the impact of sociocultural capital on their matriculation through the teacher education program at an HBCU.

### Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. How do African American secondary teacher education majors describe their sociocultural capital?
2. How do African American secondary teacher education majors describe the utilization of their sociocultural capital in matriculating through the teacher education program?
  - a. How do they as individuals utilize their sociocultural capital?
  - b. How does the institution utilize their sociocultural capital?

- c. What is the impact of this utilization on their success in the teacher education program?
3. Does gender and/or socioeconomic status affect their decisions and descriptions regarding their teacher education experiences?

### Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used in this study:

Habitus – One’s view of the world and one’s place in it. It is an important consideration in trying to understand how students navigate their way through the educational system. It is the orientation one has toward using their capital resources (Dumais, 2002).

High Culture – High levels of normatively valued capital in U.S. postsecondary education. Usually transmitted to individuals that are associated with higher socioeconomic status. Factors that can contribute to an individual’s acquisition of more normative value culture includes high levels of parental education, societal privileges, access to academic resources, and prestigious social group networks (Wells, 2008).

Institutional Capital – Quality of and access to educating and socializing institutions. (Gordon, 1999). This can include the capability to develop meaningful cooperative relationships and socially or academic supportive networks.

Low Culture – Relatively low levels of normatively valued capital in U.S. postsecondary. Usually results from individuals having low family income or wealth, low parental education, or attendance at ill-resourced schools, which often brings about less access to financial, social, cultural, and academic resources (Wells, 2008). Obtained and acquired

by individuals that are considered to be in a lower socioeconomic status group (Dumais, 2002).

Personal Capital – Disposition, attitudes, aspirations, efficacy, sense of power. The ability of individuals to believe in them that one can make a difference in any undertaking they pursue. One's recognition of their personal assets, capabilities and skills that one may believe to be essential to their success and to one's achievement of professional and social goals in society (Gordon, 1999).

Polity Capital – An important component of the nature of capital that include important elements such as societal membership, social, public commitment, political economy. A human resource capital form that can result and encourage the idea of one becoming a transformational individual in their societies or encourage individuals be socially responsible in their communities (Gordon, 1999).

Secondary Education Programs – Programs designed to prepare education students to teach in a particular discipline for middle and/or high school students.

Sociocultural Capital – Based on the merger of Gordon's (1999) social capital theory and Bourdieu's (1973) cultural capital theory. Cultural capital includes culture-based factors and indicators of symbolic wealth and is often inherited from one's family (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital includes social and personal connections or networks that people capitalize on for personal which are often developed in schools in addition to home Gordon (1999).

Sociocultural capital is defined for this study as a merged concept to determine how both social and cultural capital are instrumental in assisting students in persisting through college and acquiring other forms of capital. Socioeconomic Status (SES) - An economic and

sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. Socioeconomic status is typically broken into three categories, high SES, middle SES, and low SES to describe the three areas a family or an individual may fall into. When placing a family or individual into one of these categories any or all of the three variables (income, education, and occupation) can be assessed. For the purpose of this study participants' were allowed to self-define themselves on the socioeconomic scale (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008).

Teacher Education Candidates – Students who have been formally admitted to a teacher education licensure program.

Teacher Education Majors – Students who were admitted to the university as teacher education majors but were not formally admitted to a teacher education licensure.

### Significance of the Study

This study will enhance the body of knowledge in an area of education where there is an obvious paucity of literature. There have been few (virtually none) studies that have looked at the impact of how HBCUs are equipped to retain African American teacher education students through the use and acknowledgement of the unique sociocultural capital that they bring with them to the campuses.

African American teacher education students will benefit from this research because the study will assist them in understanding what they bring into the program and how they can better utilize what they bring. HBCUs and PWIs will benefit from this study because they will gain a better sense of how to affirm the social and cultural capital

of racial/ethnic minorities and use this capital to increase the retention of these students in their teacher education programs.

Once teacher candidates and teacher education programs better understand and utilize the sociocultural capital racial/ethnic minorities bring with them to institutions of higher education, more racial/ethnic minority students can successfully matriculate through teacher education programs. Consequently, K-12 schools will benefit from an increased pool of racial/ethnic minority teachers.

#### Delimitations and Limitations

This study only focused on secondary education majors at one southeastern HBCU. Although this study included current and former secondary majors in a variety of disciplines it did not include participants from every secondary education program. As a result of the aforementioned delimitations, one limitation includes the lack of generalizability of the findings for other HBCUs or for secondary teacher education students overall. Another issue regarding the limitation of the study is that I actually work as the coordinator for one of the secondary teacher education programs. To avoid reactivity, students in this particular secondary program were interviewed by a trained research assistant. This helped to lessen the validity threat with these particular study participants (Maxwell, 2005). Lastly, the study is limited in having only male participants in the former secondary education majors. This is a limitation because this group does not provide the representation of the gender variable that the study intended to explore in both the current and former teacher education majors. As such the lack of females represented in the former majors' group did not allow me to fully explore the

impact of gender on students' perspectives of their experiences in the teacher education program.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this study I was interested in investigating the impact of sociocultural capital on retention of pre-service teachers in secondary teacher education programs at a Historically Black University. It is evident that there is a paucity of literature regarding this topic of study. Based on an examination of several bodies of literature I identified three strands that are relevant to my study: (a) the impact of sociocultural capital on African American students in higher education, (b) retention of African American students in teacher education programs, and (c) the role of HBCUs in educating African Americans. It is important to understand what is necessary for teacher educators and HBCUs to consider and know in order to ameliorate retention rates for this demographic population. The following review of the literature presents insights regarding the aforementioned strands that guided this research study.

#### Impact of Sociocultural Capital on African American in Higher Education

The constructs of social and cultural capital are distinct, social capital includes the social and personal connections or networks that people capitalize on for interpersonal assistance and personal gain, which for many students are often developed in schools in addition to home (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital includes culture-based factors and indicators of symbolic wealth that help define a person's class. Cultural capital is often inherited from one's family and



therefore may sustain SES stratification based on families passing the torch of societal privilege and advantage (Bourdieu, 1986). One of the major insights on student inequalities is that students with more mainstream valuable sociocultural capital fare better in school than do their otherwise comparable peers with less sociocultural capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Research has discovered that examining factors associated with family and home can make an important contribution to the achievement of equality in educational outcomes. Gordon (1999) suggests that it is the family's use of resources and the way the family functions in support of academic development are critical factors; therefore, it is more than the economic and educational status of the family.

Perna's (2000) study examined the relationship between college enrollment and several social and cultural capital variables. These variables included parental education, parental educational expectations of their children, student educational expectations, the importance of college attendance to the people around the student during pre-college schooling, quality of the high school the participants attended, and the participants' determination of their parents' involvement in their educational life. This study revealed that the amount of accumulated sociocultural capital will likely have affect college student decision making and the effects are likely to be strong, especially during their first years of postsecondary education.

Students with higher levels of cultural capital are more likely to persist at higher learning institutions than those students that have less social and cultural capital (Berger, 2000). According to Wells (2008), the acquisition of certain forms of social and cultural capital can have a positive effect on student persistence in postsecondary education. This

is a premise that is supported by the majority of past research concerning social class and persistence (Well, 2008). Black colleges provide a setting in which African American students may see the sociocultural capital they bring to this setting as beneficial to them obtaining their goals. As a result many African American students' sociocultural capital is beneficial to their retention at HBCU campuses because they are not forced to cope with the unfamiliar and potentially stressful situations of being a racial/ethnic minority on the college campus (Davis, in ed. Allen, Epps, Haniff, 1991).

Research has suggested that all types of colleges must begin to recognize the significance of sociocultural capital in relation to retention of college students, specifically those students that are not part of the mainstream sociocultural class (Wells, 2008). HBCUs are often able to help their students develop and maintain positive self-esteem, avoid feelings of isolation academically and socially at their institutions, and feel a strong connection to the university, faculty, and peers (Gallien, 2007). Students develop and/or sustain a sense of power and self-efficacy that allows them to pursue their educational goals as an insider that can fully participate within the institution and not feel marginalized or displaced (Rosales & Person, 2003; Rovai, Gallien & Stiff-Williams, 2007).

#### Retention of African American Students in Teacher Education Programs

Approximately 30% of all teachers of color in the field have been teaching for more than 20 years; therefore, the current population of teachers of color will be significantly diminished by retirements in the near future (Irizarry, 2007). The data suggest that retention efforts must address the support students of color need to

successfully complete their undergraduate degrees and teacher licensure programs (Irizarry, 2007). As such, colleges and schools of education need to develop new approaches aimed at improving the recruitment, retention, and preparation of teachers of color.

Berry (2005) posits “as pre-service teachers, teacher `education candidates are expected to acquire the knowledge and skills that may be contrary to those beliefs or what they are accustomed to base on their social and cultural foundation” (p. 4). As a result, African American pre- service teachers often question the validity of the formal curriculum presented in college as it conflicts, in many cases, with their perceptions of school based on their experiences. However, the degree to which African American students observe patterns of responsive teaching and caring in their teacher preparation may be critical to their choosing teaching as a career (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2003).

A first step to improving African American teacher retention is increasing our understanding of their experiences and purposes for wanting to teach (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002). Recent studies have found that there are indicators that African American pre-service teachers’ sociocultural background and early schooling experiences have influenced their perceptions of teaching as an extension of culturally responsive “mothering” that occurs within and outside of the classroom (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2002). According to Berry (2005) and Ladson-Billings (2009) prospective teachers do not easily relinquish beliefs, developed as a result of their own cultural and educational experiences about themselves or others.

Also, potential African American pre-service teachers are greatly influenced to pursue teaching as a career by family and home community (McCray, Sindelar, Kilgore, & Neal, 2003). An interesting dynamic to this position is that African American college students who decide to teach feel a certain responsibility to their community to serve as role models and resolve the major issues facing young black pupils today (Soloman, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Many teachers of color serve as cultural translators and cultural brokers for culturally diverse students (Irizarry, 2007). Pre-service students of color tend to bring greater commitment to multicultural teaching, social justice, and providing children of color with an academically challenging curriculum (Sleeter, Torres, Laughlin, 2004).

The literature reveals that African American students' life experiences should serve as an anchor in order for these students to be able to persist in their teacher education programs (Berry, 2005). When this occurs students are much more likely to be retained, when this does not happen students are less likely to be retained. Today's reality is that fewer African American students are pursuing college degrees in the field of teaching for various reasons. Those that do enter into teacher education programs are not likely to complete them and enter into the classrooms if the programs do not meet their needs (Berry, 2005). These needs include the opportunities to build socio-professional relationships. Most African American students value collaboration and connectedness in their educational setting. Instead of placing the individual student and his or her self-actualization at the core, teacher education programs need to promote positive interdependence through broader and deeper relationships. Such enhanced relationships

would include those among students, with the faculty and staff, with university support services, and with members of diverse communities (Campbell, 2005).

Teacher education programs must establish better opportunities for African Americans to collaborate with those people in their college environment. Lucas and Robinson (2003) determined through their research that the relationship between faculty and students tend to be stronger when students are given the opportunity to participate in a cohort. As such cohort groups seem to be a promising means for bringing students into teacher education and providing support to keep them in teacher education through graduation. Such groups make students feel valued and important, which is a dynamic component of retention (Lucas & Robinson, 2003; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007). When students enter a college or university and become part of a group, they have a built-in support system that can make a big difference in their transition to and success in the institution (Lucas & Robinson, 2003; Robert & Gasman, 2008). Although a lot of the current literature (Tinto, 1987; Jones, 2001; Gallien& Petersoson, 2005 ) refers to providing such cohorts to racial/ethnic minorities when they enter predominately white institutions (PWIs) it is likely to be equally as important to have such groups for secondary education students at HBCUs.

Other research illustrates how establishing a mentoring relationship with a faculty member is positively related to African American students' satisfaction and comfort with college (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Therefore, it can be assumed such mentorship would serve a similar purpose for those students that are teacher education majors. African American college students who were engaged in working with faculty mentors were also

more satisfied and comfortable with college (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Such connections and communications can build student's self-efficacy and commitment to the profession of teaching. Satisfaction and comfort is highly correlated with student retention (Bean, 2005; Tinto, 2003). Furthermore, Strayhorn and Terrell 's (2007) findings suggest that professional working relationships between faculty and African American students can powerfully activate sociocultural capital and use it to assist students in preparing for a career in teaching; familiarizing students to a profession through interaction with someone in the field is a factor which impacts students' success and retention.

The aforementioned issues must be addressed by teacher education programs that seek to improve retention of African American students. As the introduction of this section illustrates there is a major need and a critical role for teachers of color in the field of education (Soloman, 1997; Sleeter, 2006). There is a clear limiting and declining presence of racial/ethnic minority students in all institutions of higher learning, including HBCUs. This presents a serious problem for the majority of racial/ethnic minority students in public education. Sleeter (2006) states that teachers' race does matter, irrespective of training, in their pedagogical response to "difference." She concludes that it appears that some dominant –group teachers may not be ideologically ready and pedagogically equipped to assume the varied roles that teachers of racial/ethnic minority students must play to improve schooling for all. These claims further promote the importance of addressing the need for teacher education programs in HBCUs and other

institutions of higher education to put forth strong efforts to retain African American pre-service teachers.

### Role of the HBCUs in Educating African Americans

The knowledge of the impact of sociocultural capital on students' persistence in college is likely to have a similar effect on students' persistence in a specific major, such as teacher education majors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Established in the 1800's, HBCUs have continued to be the primary vehicle for educating and training African American and other racial/ethnic minority students. For example, studies have shown that African Americans who attend HBCUs complete their undergraduate degrees with greater frequency than those at predominantly white institutions. They also demonstrate greater satisfaction with their college experiences and have higher self-esteem, increased academic self-efficacy, and stronger achievement orientation (Alabanza-Akers, 2007). One of the gravest challenges facing HBCUs today is that of preserving their long tradition of educating teachers. The effective education of well-trained teachers and educational leaders has become one of the cherished traditions and an important part of the mission of most HBCUs (Williams, 1997; Baskerville, Berger & Smith, 2007).

During the antebellum era a few schools were established to educate African American pupils. In those schools uneducated, untrained African American preachers would often also serve as teachers. In 1865 the Freedman's Bureau was created and with the establishment of elementary and normal schools came the need for African American teachers (Fairclough, 2005). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans had few

professional career options to choose from; for the most part there were only two, preparing to become a minister or preparing to become a teacher (Fairclough, 2005). As such HBCUs (normal schools) took great pride in preparing students to go back to their communities and take on the responsibility of educating the next generation of African American youth (Fairclough, 2005).

From this time period to the present African American people have shown a persistent commitment to schooling, as demonstrated by their struggle and sacrifice. African American communities have energetically organized their social resources and political will to improve the education of their children. Committed student-teacher relationships and the dedication of African American educators who strove against the odds created an infrastructure for African American intellectual advancement (Williams, 1997; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007). Another lesson is that the concept of education the Black community has implicitly adopted education for liberation, for citizenship, for personal and collective power and advancement has deep roots (William, 1997; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007).

HBCUs have a whole tradition and culture of dealing with students who have a poor secondary education (Chenoweth, 1999; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007). Moreover, HBCUs oftentimes have more first generation college students than other institutions of higher education, but these are not new problems for HBCUs, they have grappled with such issues since their inception (Chenoweth, 1999; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007). HBCUs have had great success in educating students of color, shoring up the diversity pipeline from secondary school through the professoriate. Because they



enroll significant numbers of low-income and racial/ethnic minority students compared with their traditionally white counterparts, and because of their comparative success rates at graduating African-American and other traditionally underserved students, HBCUs contribute disproportionately to our nation's student and faculty diversity and therefore should be used as models for preparing diverse teachers and faculty (Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007).

There is a strong familiarity with the background of the traditional or typical student that enrolls in HBCUs. As such they have the experience to work more successfully with these students than some of their counterpart institutions. There are a lot of shared commonalities that can be seen within the HBCU that many of the students are used to from their own pre-college backgrounds. Although one might assume that there is little to no major discrepancies regarding the sociocultural capital of HBCUs and the African American student population they serve, specifically in teacher education programs, there is a need to explore beyond the surface of such a common assumption.

Research (Delpit 1995; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007) highlights the fact that teacher education programs and the environments that do not value sociocultural capital of African American students on mainstream college campuses may be a significant reason for African Americans and other racial/ethnic minority students desiring to depart from these programs. HBCUs enjoy a unique social contract in the national history. There is a social contract they broker between the nation and African Americans through sociocultural capital or the distribution and reproduction of social networks and resources that HBCUs provide for their students and graduates (Brown &

Davis, 2001; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007). Baskerville, Berger, and Smith, (2007) discuss the salience of how HBCUs occupy a unique place as a source of social and cultural capital for African Americans, in essence the primary role of HBCUs is that of sociocultural capital purveyor.

Furthermore, the decoding and transmission of social capital is seen generally as the providence of families and their networks (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Traditionally, this reality established the role of HBCUs as primary sources of social capital and as vehicles for the provision of techniques useful for receiving and decoding African American social and cultural knowledge (Brown & Davis, 2001; Carter, 2005). HBCUs continue to provide the experience for African American students to become beneficiaries of their unique sociocultural capital (Brown & Davis, 2001; Carter, 2005). As such Black colleges are important buffers and mediators in African American students' pursuit of both equality of opportunities and equity in outcomes.

At HBCUs students have the opportunity to work more with faculty and administrators that are ethnically and racially similar to them than they would at other institutions. A finding in the literature suggests that African American faculty are more in a position to integrate the realities of the African American students' backgrounds and cultures, while at the same time acknowledging, validating, and affirming their identities (Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002; Baskerville, Berger and Smith, 2007). Such faculty serves as pseudo families for ethnic minorities attending HBCUs and the students often confirm the belief that they also determine this to be an important function or role that they see their faculty serving for them. Yet, HBCUs still share in the plethora

of issues that impact the retention of African American students as other higher education institutions.

One consistent theory is that although HBCUs have a legacy of being capable of meeting the academic and personal needs of African American students, today these institutions are state supported and their overarching policies and procedures are not controlled solely by their HBCU administration. Most HBCUs are now guided by the same policies of other institutions of higher education, as such they are less autonomous than they once were and, as a result, less able to be able to incorporate major policies that would directly impact the unique needs of the major population of students they serve (Willie, Garibaldi., &Reed, 1991; Minor, 2008).

Other perennial issues include that in large measure these students continue to be first generation college students and often have a strong and immediate need for academic advising and mentoring, those factors required for college success (Smith, 2008). Furthermore, the fact that a large number of students come to these institution with developmental education needs means that these institutions often have to go an extra mile to help students find financial resources they need to stay in college once they are admitted. As such this is the reason that HBCUs are facing similar issues as other higher institutions of learning.

### Summary

Scholars argue that HBCUs are necessary because of their ability to educate many African American students who otherwise would not be able to study at the college level (Robert & Gasman, 2008). The preceding literature review corroborates the fact that

sociocultural capital has a direct impact on African American students' experienced in higher education. It also reveals that based on earlier research African Americans have unique reasons in deciding to enroll in a teacher education program and there are significant factors that relate to their sociocultural capital that can determine if they will be retained in the programs. Lastly, there is a historically significant role that HBCUs play in educating the African American community and providing service to the community in general. Historically the HBCU provides an environment for African American students in which they are likely to be able to expend their capital and employ habitus in a way that is beneficial to them in reaching their educational goals. Moreover, it is plausible to infer that other forms of capital, for example institutional, polity, and personal capital, interacts and collaborates with the social/cultural capital of African American pre-service teachers in assisting them in their decisions academic decisions.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The methodological paradigm that I selected for this study is qualitative. Qualitative research offers the advantage of focusing on specific experiences and perceptions of individuals engaged in the topic of interest. The qualitative approach was the best paradigm for my research study because I wanted to explore perceptions and give voice to secondary teacher education candidates.

Qualitative research is grounded in social constructivism, which involves several epistemological assumptions (Creswell, 2003). One assumption is that humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspective. Qualitative researchers seek to understand the context and gathering information personally. Researchers make interpretations shaped by their own experiences and background (Creswell, 2003).

Another assumption of qualitative research is that the basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. The process of qualitative research is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating meaning from the data collected in the field (Creswell, 2003). Lastly, qualitative researchers assume that all research is value-laden and biased; therefore, researchers must make their values and biases transparent from the beginning (Guba & Lincoln, 1988).

## Case Study Design

The specific qualitative methodology that I used is Robert Stake's (1995) instrumental case study design. According to Stake (1995), there are several components to an instrumental case study design: (a) the nature of the case, (b) the continuous emergence of issues, (c) triangulation, and (d) the role(s) of the researcher.

Stake (1995) maintains the nature of the case study is to understand a phenomenon. An instrumental case study is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular individual or particular program; it provides insight when there is a need for a general understanding of some "complex functioning thing" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). In my study the overarching purpose was to gain insight into African American pre-service teachers' perspectives on how sociocultural capital affects their retention in a teacher education program at an HBCU. In this study several different participants or "actors" were used to gain understanding about the unique case of teacher education programs at HBCUs from the perspective of African-American pre-service teachers.

Another important component of Stake's (1995) instrumental case study design is the continuous emergence of issues. Prospective questions posed should be derived from early contacts with the case, as well as from relevant literature indicating what other cases have determined to be problematic; these are known as etic issues. I developed my research questions based on a review of the literature regarding (a) factors affecting retention of African American students in teacher education, (b) the impact of capital on African American students in higher education, and (c) the role of HBCUs in preparing

African American teachers. In an instrumental case study it should be expected that “emic” issues will emerge during data collection and analysis (Stake, 1995). In my study the participants presented issues that were important and significant for them. This was evident by how the individual and focus group interview protocols evolved from analysis of the reflective narratives.

During the process of case study work the researcher is concerned with not only generating a comprehensive and accurate depiction of the case, but also developing the proper interpretations through triangulation of the data (Stake, 1995). The triangulation procedures in my study included multiple sources of data and member checking. Data sources included reflective narrative essays, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group interviews. During the member-checking process the participants examined their responses and the researcher’s interpretations of the data after each data collection stage and then a formal review of their words at the end of the entire data collection process. The participants were asked to review data for accuracy; they were encouraged to make changes that would better portray the meanings they wanted to present.

In this study I had several roles as researcher: teacher, interpreter, and advocate (Stake, 1995). I want to educate my audience on the participants’ perspective; therefore, I will employ characteristics of a teacher (Stake, 1995). Like a teacher, I will have learned something about what my readers (audience) need to know. The role of interpreter and gatherer of interpretations are central to the case study research (Stake, 1995). It is my belief that knowledge is built rather than discovered. This perspective guided me in constructing and justifying my narrative description of the results of the

study (Stake, 1995). I employed a constructivist view to provide readers with “good” raw material to assist them in building their knowledge and formulating their own generalizations regarding utilization of sociocultural capital in a secondary teacher education program. Lastly, as an advocate my goal is to convince my readers to accept the voices of the secondary teacher education students involved in this study.

Due to all of my previous experiences in attending and working in an HBCU, I bring some biases to the research. I was continuously aware of these biases and employed various measures to maintain objectivity during the data collection and analysis process. Some of these measures included using other interviewers to conduct interviews with participants that I had professional working relationships with on campus. I utilized in-depth probing for all individual and focus group interview questions to ensure that participants had opportunities to clarify and specify their responses so that their perspective would be accurately represented in the analysis. I conducted member checking sessions with my participants in each of my data collection phases, and I also triangulated my data at the during the data collection process. These biases could influence how I interpret the data I collect and the understanding that I may make regarding the information that I receive during the interviews.

### Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Legacy University, a public HBCU located in a major city in the southeastern region of the U.S. It is a four year university that has deep roots in the African American community and the state and has provided opportunities for traditionally underserved students seeking higher education, particularly African-



American students. At the time of this study Legacy University had an undergraduate enrollment of 8,253 students; 91.2% African American, 4.4% White, .4% Indian, .9% Asian, 1.1% Hispanic, and 2% Other. The university's mission is to provide an intellectual setting where students in higher education may find a sense of identification, belonging, responsibility, and achievement that will prepare them for roles in leadership and service for their communities.

Legacy University is a doctoral/research intensive university and a land grant institution that offers degrees at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels. Undergraduate degree programs total 117. The university is organized into eight academic units: College of Arts & Sciences, College of Engineering, School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, School of Business and Economics, School of Education, School of Nursing, School of Technology, and School of Graduate Studies.

Legacy University has 27 professional education programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Teacher education majors are housed in the College of Arts and Sciences, School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, School of Business and Economics, School of Education, and School of Technology. Undergraduate students may declare an education major at their admission to the university. However, all majors are admitted to teacher licensure programs through the School of Education. Secondary education majors include mathematics education, science education (biology, chemistry, or physics), history/social studies education, and English education.

Prior to formal admission to the teacher education (licensure) program students are allowed to take education courses at the 100, 200, and 300 levels. Students are

expected to be formally accepted into teacher education by the end of their sophomore year. The criteria for admission include having a cumulative G.P.A of 2.8, completing 48 semester hours, and passing Praxis I. After meeting these requirements students must submit an application and have a one-on-one interview with at least two members of the teacher education faculty. Once students are formally admitted they are considered teacher education candidates and can take 400 level and above courses.

Legacy University has several pre-professional organizations that provide a variety of opportunities to pre-service teachers. These organizations include the Teaching Fellows Program, Student North Carolina Association of Educators, Kappa Delta Pi, and Student Council on Exceptional Children.

Like other teacher education programs, Legacy University is experiencing retention issues. In 2007-08 the headcount of undergraduate education majors was 171 while the number of candidates recommended for licensure was 49 (IHE Bachelor Performance Report 2007-08). There have been some intervention methods developed to assist in curtailing attrition levels in teacher education, but retention still remains a significant issue that needs addressing. My study can enhance these efforts by providing insights on how the teacher education program at Legacy University can use and sustain the sociocultural capital students bring with them to the university.

### Participants

The participants in this study were traditional college students. They were African American secondary teacher education majors and secondary teacher education

candidates from different disciplines. I selected four former secondary education majors and four current secondary education candidates for participation in the study. These participants had declared their major as education upon entering the institution as a traditional freshman. The study used the cohort of juniors that entered the university during the 2006 fall semester. These students were identified by my gatekeepers, the assistant dean for secondary education in the School of Education and the assistant registrar. I chose to use a current major's cohort and a former majors cohort to explore what differences might be relevant among both groups in what sociocultural capital they bring to college, how they use that capital differently or similarly, and how it impacts their progress in teacher education programs and the college environment. As Stake (1999) asserts the qualitative researcher should try to preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening with regard to a case. A good case study should include the narratives of individuals that present the different array of experiences and perceptions as it relates to the case. This study's use of a cohort of former and current majors strengthened this methodology. The use of the two cohorts represents the unique experiences of different types of individuals that are and were engaged in teacher education programs at HBCUs could present their narratives and thereby provide a deeper understanding and insight into the real experience of different African American teacher education candidates. This provided for the collection of unique data found in the participants' narratives which was critical to having a rich analysis of the case regarding the retention of African Americans in teacher education programs at HBCUs (Stake, 1999). According to Creswell (2003) the selection of

participants in qualitative research must be purposefully selected so as to ensure that the researcher obtains a good understanding of the problem. This further substantiates the necessity of using the two cohort design in this case so as to meet the aforementioned presented by Creswell (2005).

This study used purposeful sampling where participants are eligible for selection these students to participate if they meet the criteria of the study (Creswell, 2003). The criteria for this study were that the students must be African American and be full-time students at the institution. For students that were former majors they must have been an education major for at least a full year. Current teacher education candidates were actively engaged in their program of study; this means that they were currently enrolled in a full-time course load. An effort was made to ensure gender balance among the participants with two females and two males in each cohort. While I was able to maintain gender balance in the current majors' cohort there was a lot of attrition in the former majors cohort, with participants dismissing themselves from participating in the study. The group started out gender balanced, but one female initially dismissed herself before signing the consent form and she was replaced with a male participant. Another, female former major participant decided to withdraw from the study before her first interview, and she was not replaced by anyone. As such, the former major cohort resulted in having three male participants.

Participants that were history secondary education majors were interviewed by a trained research assistant in order to alleviate bias because of the advisor/student

relationship that I have with these students. Participants self-identified their socioeconomic class for the research study.

### Data Collection

Prior to beginning data collection I had to gain permission to conduct the research study on the university's campus. I submitted the required documentation to the Institutional Review Board at Legacy University and then to the UNC Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which required that I had gained permission prior to submitting IRB documentation to them. After all documentation was reviewed and I received permission to conduct the study I began to identify participants in May 2008. I worked with my gatekeepers to acquire lists of students that seem to meet the research criteria for participation in the study. Once contact information was provided I called contact to potential participants and conducted a preliminary questionnaire to determine if they met the participant criteria and if so, if they were willing to participate. Once the participants were selected in mid-October and agreed to participate, I arranged a one on one meeting to establish consent and ensure confidentiality (see Appendix A for a copy of the Consent Form). Participants were informed of the scope and sequence of the research study by reading along with me while I read it aloud to them. I ensured the participants' anonymity, and consent forms were signed by participants. They were provided a copy of the form they signed. Data was collected from mid-October through the end of the fall 2008 semester. Data sources included narrative reflective essays, individual interviews, and focus group interviews.

Maxwell (2005) advocates reciprocity for those involved in the study. He maintains that it is crucial to offer some form of acknowledgement. As such, each participant received a gift certificate for lunch. I also provided lunch for the participants during the focus group meetings. Each cohort also had the opportunity to win two different prizes at the completion of the data collection. The first prize was a \$50 dollar American Express gift card. Second prize was a \$25 dollar gift card from Wal-Mart.

### *Reflective Essays*

The reflective essays were administered first to all the participants. This allowed me to gain background knowledge regarding how they came to be in education and to get initial perspectives about their experience in the teacher education program and what social and cultural capital they seemed to have prior to coming to Legacy University. By students having the opportunity to write they can tell their stories in their own words and provide a truer insight into what their experience is or has been (Casey, 1993). (See Appendix X for a copy of the Reflective Narrative Essay Guidelines.)

### *Individual Interviews*

I conducted one 1.5 hour individual interview with each participant. The semi-structured interview protocol was based on the responses that participants provided in the reflective narrative (see Appendices D and E for a copy of the Individual Interview Protocols). The protocol was developed to ensure that the interviews remained focused, yet the protocol was not so structured as to prevent individuals from being able to express their perceptions in the most truthful and honest manner possible. Interviews took place

at various locations on the university campus. After completing transcription of the data I set up meetings for participants to engage in member checking and validate their responses to the interview questions. This was done to limit any bias and ensure better validity of the data.

### *Focus Group Interviews*

I conducted two focus groups, one with former teacher education majors and one with current teacher education majors. The focus group utilized an approved protocol based on the data collected in the individual interviews (see Appendices F and G for a copy of the Focus Group Protocols). The focus group expanded and clarified on what the participants discussed regarding their experiences and perceptions in their one on one interviews.

Table 1 depicts the timeline of data collection and Table 2 aligns the research questions with data sources.

Table 1. Data Collection Timeline

DATE	ACTIVITY
August – September 2008	Identification of participant pool Selection of participants
October 2008	Completion of assent forms Reflective Narrative Essays
November 2008	Individual Interviews
December 2008	Focus Group Interviews

Table 2. Crosswalk Aligning Research Questions with Data Sources

Research Questions	Data Sources		
	Reflective Narrative essays of participants	Individual group interviews of participants	Focus group interviews of participants
How do African American secondary education majors describe their social/cultural capital (current or former majors)?	X	X	X
How do African American secondary education majors describe their utilization of their social/cultural capital in matriculating through the teacher education program? a) How do they, as individuals, use their social/cultural capital? b) How does the institution use social/cultural capital? c) What is the impact of this utilization on their success in the teacher education program?		X	X
Does gender or socio-economic status affect their decisions or descriptions of their experience in the teacher education program?	X	X	X

### Data Analysis

Qualitative case study research often yields a plethora of data; as such researcher has to make it a priority to manage and organize the information in a systemic manner in order to ensure proper processing during the data analysis phase of research (Miles &



Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, Miles and Huberman (1994) state that sequential analysis is one of the methods best suited for early analytic work and often can be used as data collection continues. This leads to deeper descriptive analysis of cases that involves systemic display of data for drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Stake (2003) emphasizes that data is continuously interpreted since qualitative research is inherently reflective: “in being ever reflective, the researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and records....data is sometimes precoded but continuously interpreted, on first sighting and again and again” (p. 242).

Miles & Huberman’s (1994) sequential analysis consist of a seven step process, which I employed as my primary level of data analysis. The seven steps are (a) underline key terms in the text, (b) restate key phrases, (c) reduce the phrases and create clusters, (d) reduce clusters and attach labels or pattern coding, (e) develop generalizations about the phrases in each cluster, (f) memo writing that poses explanations or mini theories, and (g) integrate theories in an explanatory framework. In this study, data was analyzed based on the aforementioned process.

After going through the essays or transcripts and underlining key terms I would put all the data in a table, I went through the data and highlighted with different colors any and all common statements. From my initial analyses 105 common statements were observed within the data. As I collapsed the data further, I was able to condense the 105 key terms or phrases into 33 major data points. I then went though the major data points and highlighted and color-coded common statements. These data points were then collapsed into 11 indicators: (a) home/family; (b) community; (c) extracurricular; (d)

comfort (succor); (e) legacy; (f) relationships (g) resources (h) revolutionary (i) role-modeling (j) interaction (k) committed (l) capable. I then compiled a list of the eleven indicators and clustered them into more specific categories. The home/family, community, extracurricular indicators were grouped to form the category labeled as social cultural foundations. The comfort and legacy indicators were grouped and labeled as natural assimilation environment. The relationships and resources indicator formed the professional/social networks category. The revolutionary and role-modeling indicator formed the category transformational attributes. The indicators interaction, commitment, and capability formed the category self-efficacy. Then, I looked at the categories to see any further patterns. I developed four overarching themes: social/cultural capital, institutional capital, polity capital, and personal capital. Table 3 shows the relationship between the indicators, categories, and themes that emerged from my data analysis. See Appendix H for a detailed example of data analysis related to the emergence of one of the themes.

TABLE 3. EMERGENT THEMES, CATEGORIES, AND INDICATORS

THEME	CATEGORY	INDICATOR
Social/Cultural Capital	Social/Cultural Foundation	Home/Family
		Community
		Extracurricular Activities
	Natural Assimilation Environment	Reassurance
		Legacy
Institutional Capital	Professional/Social Networks	Relationships
		Resources
Polity Capital	Transformational Attributes	Revolutionary
		Role Model
Personal Capital	Self-Efficacy	Interaction
		Commitment
		Capability

### Trustworthiness and Validity

Trustworthiness of qualitative research is established through triangulation of multiple data sources and member checking (Cresswell, 2003). “Triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation...triangulation serves also to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” (Stake, 2003, p. 241). Member checking is also an important part of triangulating observations and interpretations. Participants in my study were given opportunities to review their reflective narrative essays and interview transcripts.

My study can be viewed as good (i.e. valid) research because it addresses an issue where there are gaps in the literature and because I followed rigorous methodological

procedures. I developed my research questions from a review of relevant literature. I used multiple data sources to ensure triangulation. I have presented the results of my study using thick description that includes quotes from all of the data sources (reflective narrative essay, individual interviews, and focus group interviews) in order to accurately reflect the voices of the participants. I offer interpretations that make comparisons to the relevant literature (Creswell, 2005).

As a result of these validity checks and the systematic manner in which I conducted the study readers can feel confident that the study is “good research”—trustworthy and valid.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to examine African American secondary education students' perceptions of the impact of sociocultural capital on their retention in a teacher education program at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). This is particularly important since HBCUs are often believed to be designed to better assist racial/ethnic minority students, particularly African Americans to succeed due to a shared heritage and culture.

Participants included current and former secondary education majors in different content areas. The current majors' cohort included two males and two females. The former majors' cohort was comprised of three males who had been secondary education majors at the time they entered the university as traditional freshmen. Both groups consisted of university classified juniors. The participants were prompted to write a narrative reflective essay in which broad-based questions guided their reflections. They were then individually interviewed and later participated in a focus group interview with their cohort. Four themes related to human resource capital emerged from analysis of the data: sociocultural capital, institutional capital, polity capital, and personal capital.

This chapter presents the results of my data analysis, beginning with profiles of the participants, followed by a discussion of the four themes and their related categories and indicators.

Profiles of the Participants  
*Current Majors*

*Erica*

Erica is an English secondary education major. She is very talkative and is seemingly self-assured. She has a self-described neo-soul style about her. She comes from a single parent home. She lives with her mother and grandmother. Her mother has been recently laid off of her job so economically Erica describes herself as lower-class. Her hometown is Brooklyn, New York. She is very determined to have a successful college experience and teaching career. She says she has always had a lot of support from her family regarding her education. She has close relationship with both her mother and grandmother. She is determined to complete her education and work with students to encourage those that come from backgrounds similar to her own.

*David*

David is a mathematics secondary education major. He describes himself and his upbringing as middle-class or upper-middle class because both of his parents are college-educated and have good jobs. He takes great pride in the fact that his parents are still together. He is very self-assured and academically gifted. He was very easy to interview because he was eager to share his experience as a student in teacher education at Legacy University. David is a member of a lot of the very prominent organizations on campus. He is a Teaching Fellow, president of one of the student organizations in the Department of Mathematics, and a mentor and tutor for many students on campus. David also is very socially active on campus; he takes a lot of pride in his poetry writing and spoken word

performances. He has already published a book of poetry and is currently working on a second book. He is a very serious student that is dedicated to doing his best as a college student and in his career as an educator.

*Patrice*

Patrice is a biology secondary education program. Patrice was raised in a big city of Detroit. She describes her families' socio-economic status as middle class. Her parents are both college graduates and completed graduate school. Her mother is an educator and she also has other family members and close family friends that have made a career in education. She is very talkative and was really interested in expressing her views about her experience at Legacy University and within her specific teacher education program. She loves to brag that she has great parents because they have always been supportive of her and her siblings and motivated them to engage in different experiences (i.e.: traveling, extracurricular activities, and connecting with professionals in their community). She is very proud that her parents are still together. She has been playing the piano since she was about 11 years old. Patrice is very cheerful and loves to laugh. She also loves to travel, something she got accustomed to while growing up. She loves biology and loves to teach.

*Scott*

Scott is a foreign language education major. He was raised by his grandmother in a small town until he was 10 years old. He then moved to live with his father and stepmother in Cary, N.C. His mother was very young when he was born and he was raised with her being more like a sister. He describes his socio-economic status as

middle-class. Scott is articulate and intelligent, but quite soft spoken. He has a strong desire to teach as a result of some bad experiences that he had as a student throughout his public school years. He revealed a lot of stories regarding direct racism and discrimination inflicted by school officials on him and others like him at his schools. Scott enjoys painting afro centric artwork and hometown scenes in his spare time. He is strong academically and is a member of the foreign language honor society. He has received some scholarships for his academic talents. Scott did admit to having time management issue.

#### *Former Majors*

##### *Tommy*

Tommy is a former history secondary education major. His current major is history professional. He is from a small rural community that was somewhat diverse, although at his high school he never had a African American teacher. He describes his upbringing as working class. He has a close knit family that he talks about as being instrumental in his moral and ethical development. He is very friendly, but loses focus sometimes. He describes himself as having an open mind and easy to get along with. He has developed strong relationships with faculty in his major department. He has very little social outlets, particularly on campus. He openly and readily discussed the obstructions he felt were in place in the teacher education program that turned him away. Although he did not enjoy his experience in the professional studies component of his former major, he still has a strong desire to teach and thinks he will be an excellent teacher because he can connect with students.



*Alex*

Alex was an agricultural education major who changed his major to history professional. He comes from a small town which he described as a “redneck town”. Throughout his high school experience he only had one African American male teacher. This had a major influence on his decision to choose history as his major. He describes his background as middle class. His parents are still together but he does not really talk in detail about them. Alex has a very serious persona. He handles himself in a very mature manner. He is respectable and seemingly cautious. It took him a while to get comfortable answering questions. He feels that he still wants to teach and that he has the important characteristics that he needs to be successful. He does not see a lot of value in having to deal with the professional studies component of teacher education.

*Carl*

Carl is a former agricultural education major. He changed his major to agricultural professional. He comes from a small, rural area where there is not a lot to do. His socio-economic status is described by him to be middle class. He proudly talks about his father’s career in agriculture and the fact that his sister is in law school. Carl has a laid back persona, but he is serious about being successful. He equates success with financial gain. He is proud to attend Legacy University because he feels he is carrying on a family tradition. His father went to the institution and majored in agriculture as well. Carl enjoys the social aspect of the campus life; he is very involved in many extracurricular activities including a Greek letter organization.

The next section presents the themes that emerged from analysis of the participants' reflective essays, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. The four themes were (a) sociocultural, (b) institutional capital (c) personal capital and (d) polity capital.

### Sociocultural Capital

In this study, sociocultural capital is defined as the impact of family and community on the development of cultural styles, cultural values, and relationship building skills as a result of shared social norms. As I read and analyzed the narratives that the participants submitted, all of them had strong opinions about the role of family and parents in developing their positive notions about education. This was further substantiated in the participants' one-on-one interviews in which they reiterated the role of their background in assisting them in obtaining capital they could spend towards their future success. The theme of sociocultural capital has two categories: social and cultural foundations and natural assimilation environment.

#### *Social/Cultural Foundation*

Indicators of the sociocultural foundation category reflect how the participants' home/family, community, and extracurricular activities influenced and impacted how they developed as students interested in attending an HBCU and becoming a secondary education major. Both groups of participants referred to having memories implanted by their families, and in most case specifically their parents, about the importance of them getting a good education. Specifically, participants in both groups mentioned that

“education was stressed by their families (parents)” from their early childhood. Education was presented as the key component in being able to ameliorate some of the negative barriers they had encountered in their home-communities or to improve their social condition as an individual or for their family.

This category further examines how these participants’ relationships with their community helped shaped their educational dispositions. Relationship building with prominent community people and former teachers was an example of the impact that their participation with community members had a major impact on their decisions to go to college and become an education major. Their extracurricular opportunities further nurtured the development of their dispositions, attitudes, and perceptions about higher education, the HBCU experience, and the teaching profession. These extracurricular activities, regardless of whether they were academically based or culturally based were determined by participants to provide a positive influence on them as they grew up.

### *Home/Family*

Both groups revealed that they were able to attribute what they determine as their success thus far to family support, family emphasis on importance of education, and family structure. The supportive family component was evident in the current major group’s reflective essays and interviews. For example, Patrice talked about “how good my parents are because they always encouraged me and were involved in my school. My parents always knew all of my teacher, all the way up until I came here” (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 11, 2008). David said my parents were “supportive of

my education, they were very big on education and making me independent” (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008).

All of the current majors (Patrice, Scott, David, and Erica) saw themselves as having all that they needed to be successful in their secondary education program. Their confidence developed, according to their discussion, because their families really stressed education and were very involved in their schools by doing things like attending PTA meetings regularly and always making efforts to “get to know their teachers” (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 11, 2008).

Most of the participants explained that missed educational opportunities by other family members were the reason for their families’ passion for stressing the importance of education. As a result many of the participants were encouraged by their families or parents to do well to make up for family members who had not been successful at achieving higher education. Scott, for instance, revealed that:

my grandmother, she really stressed education because she had a scholarship to go to Buie State and she wanted to be a teacher, but I guess once she had her first baby, which was my mom and getting married she just stopped and did the housewife thing and then working, she gave up her dreams. She always told me, “you go all the way with it, she was like go to college once you get there go all the way don’t stop at Bachelors, Masters, go straight for your Ph.D.

My uncle also, he was in college, but he had to leave college for something really unnecessary. I guess he was not thinking like he should’ve. So he wasted his opportunity and I guess my grandmother just made a decision and gave her opportunity up also. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

As a result, Scott was really determined to succeed; not only because of the support he received from his family, but also due to his awareness of how missed opportunities affected his close knit family. Erica had a similar relationship with her family and she also felt it necessary to succeed in academics as much for herself as well as family members who had lost or never had the opportunity:

My mother never graduated, well she graduated high school, but she graduated a year late, she got left back. My grandmother she graduated high school, but she didn't... well, I wouldn't say she got a good education. She is from S.C. So back in those days education was different. (Erica, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008).

The former majors, Tommy, Alex, and Carl made strong claims that they too had families who were supportive and had also highly stressed education as the key to having a successful life. Tommy described the way in which his family influenced him:

I think that my family really has shaped and molded me into the person I am today...I think basically my family helped me become a better person by stressing the education part. They always stressed education. (Tommy, Reflective Essay, November 6, 2008)

The participants talked about their family structure, which seemed to be relevant to their sociocultural capital that they had been able to bring with them to college. They made a significant point to discuss the fact that whether they came from a two parent household or single parent home, their parents were still supportive of them and stressed education

as important for success. For instance David said, “I’m one of the few kids that I know whose parents are still together and feel very fortunate about that because I don’t have to go through what I have seen some of my friends go through when their parents get divorced” (David Individual Interview, November 2008). Alex (former major) stated, “my family is just basic middle class, my dad works on cars he likes that. Both of my parents went to community college, but yeah we are just middle class, we do alright you know and they always told us that education was important if you want to have opportunities in life” (Alex, Individual Interview, December 8, 2008). Carl, a former teacher education major, said: “my parents are still together and it’s just me and my sister. Both of my parents are college graduates and my mother was an educator”(Carl, Individual Interview, December 4, 2008)

Erica described herself as an at risk student because she came from a single parent home with a mother that was unemployed and who lived with her grandmother along with her, but she felt that her family had provided her with so much support and opportunities that she would be successful as a student and later as a teacher. Tommy discussed the fact that, “my parents are no longer together and neither of them went to college but my brother went here (to Legacy University), but did not finish. My parents are no longer together, but both of them really encouraged me to get a good education and my grandmother too. (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 6, 2008)

## *Community*

The community indicator is defined according to participants' perceptions of their socioeconomic status, community demographics (rural versus urban), and race relations.

The current majors primarily came from middle/upper middle class backgrounds while former majors came from middle and working class backgrounds. Patrice said that "my family is upper middle class because my parents are both college educated and had professional jobs, but me I don't have anything yet, I'm just trying to get there" (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 2008). David considered his family to be "upper middle class because my parents are both college educated professionals and we have everything we need and some of what we want" (David, Individual Interview, November 2008). Scott said that he was "just middle class, I usually have enough of what I need and sometimes there is some money left over for extras, so, middle class" (Scott, Individual Interview, November, 2008). Erica felt that her family was "lower middle class because she comes from a single-parent home and there is only one income and her mother just lost her job, so they are living with her grandmother" (Erica, Individual Interview, November 2008).

Carl and Alex both described their families as "middle class" (Carl and Alex, Individual Interviews, December 2008). Tommy, on the other hand, thought of his family as working class:

my grandmother did not go to college... and so she still works so I know we are working class, but I thought coming to college would give me a leg up on living like I want to live, but my family basically just told me to do your work, if you need help ask questions, you know that will pretty much

get you through, so that's what I did" (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 12, 2008).

The second indicator that participants included in discussions of their communities was the demographics, described as rural settings versus urban settings. Most of the current majors grew up in an urban setting while all of the former majors came from rural backgrounds.

Patrice emphasized:

I grew up in a big city... my parents had me in a lot of activities and stuff. So growing up I didn't see as much crime and violence as much because we were always in church or some extracurricular activities at school. In elementary school, I went to private school, so I didn't go to school with the neighborhood kids until I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. I have a real close family and we traveled a lot growing up. (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 11, 2008).

David also felt that his background and family tied him to a legacy of success and that he had been exposed to a cultural and social environmental that would lead him to be self-motivated and determined to do well:

I grew up in a major city in Raleigh. I went to public schools and I experienced everything as far as majority black and majority white (schools). I've had a lot of diversity as far as high school. I've had some interesting teachers, some good, and some bad. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)



Erica proudly talked about her urban background:

Well, of course growing up in New York, I loved it, it was always something to see. But I have gotten the opportunity to associate with more different people since I've been here at college than I did when I was at home. But I like all the different things you can see in New York and its just faster up there, like here things are really slower, so that is the difference that I see. (Erica, Individual Interview, November, 2008)

Scott spent his first ten years growing up in a rural setting, then moved to an urban setting:

I was born and raised for 10 years in a small town, until he moved to a bigger city to live with his father and stepmother. In my hometown we are really still separated by race still. It's still the black side of town and the white side and everything in between on this side so moving to a new city... my high school was majority white. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

All of the former majors came from rural backgrounds:

Really my town is no place to raise a family. I grew up, not in a predominately white area, but my school was majority white school, so the area that I lived in there was a lot of Caucasian people so the only thing to do after school was play baseball. So, we would play baseball everyday after school, but when I moved into a predominately Black neighborhood, it was basketball. Baseball was out, basketball was in. So we use to play basketball a whole lot more. And then football, that as always like part of my life, played football in high school. But there is absolutely nothing there.  
(Tommy, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

I also grew up in a very small town, so to piggyback off what Tommy said growing up in a small town there is not much to do. All we do, you know, is play sports. Just really not a lot to do. That's how you spend your time. (Carl, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

“a small red-neck town” everybody pretty much knew who everybody was, like Tommy said, not much to do. Couldn't wait to get out of there, but it was a good place, I guess it had its good parts. (Alex, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008).

The concept of race relations was another significant talking point addressed by some of the participants with regard to discussing their communities. According to Scott's perspective he had to endure significant racial discrimination in both his hometown and later the larger urban city that he moved to when he was about 10 years old. He revealed that:

In my hometown there were teachers who were like “oh my little black students” it always them getting into trouble. Like it could be in reality just one black student but the whole group like all of us would get in trouble for it. Like ya'll always acting bad, ya'll always bad and it would be just one person and we'd all be like what we do? I guess it just made me want to be different from them. I never had a black teacher, actually there was one, I don't know where she came from, but she would say the same thing as them. (Scott, Individual Interview, November, 2008)

In addition to that once he moved to a larger city he still contended that race was a major factor, specifically in his school experiences:

I remember when I started my new school there they made me go into a special class because my white teachers were saying they couldn't understand me when I talked, I guess because I talked different from the other students because of where I was from, I don't know. But my teacher kept saying she couldn't understand me so I was put in a special class, but I think my teacher just didn't want to deal with, you know a black male, so I had to go to the special class. (Scott, Individual Interview, November, 2008)

In 1<sup>st</sup> grade I remember my teacher calling all her black students her little monkeys. I didn't further understand why she referred only to her black students as monkeys so I asked her. Her response opened my eyes to racism in the school system. She told me that black people were originally monkeys and all her little black kids (students) looked just like little monkeys. (Scott, Reflective Essay, September 20, 2008)

Tommy who grew up in a predominately white area at one point in his life talked about how he never had an African American teacher throughout his pre-college academic experience but he said:

I never felt like I experienced any prejudice or race tensions among his teachers or any significant race problems within my community in general. It was a small town and everybody knew everybody and it just did seemed like, well I didn't notice, if it was going on, so basically everybody pretty much got along, especially in my high school. (Tommy, Focus Group, December 11, 2008)

### *Extracurricular Activities*

The indicator extracurricular activity is defined by the participants' educator related experiences as well as their participation in culture activities and/or sports. The participants also talked extensively about the impact of the extracurricular activities and how their backgrounds laid a foundation that provided them the motivation and confidence that they could and wanted to be involved and helped them understand the importance of being involved. These activities not only influenced their desire to go to college and succeed but also to teach. Patrice described how enthusiasm for teaching came from her early experiences:

Growing up I also did a lot of tutoring and I really enjoyed helping the students. I did a lot of volunteer work... tutoring and I really enjoyed it. I like science and I really enjoy teaching. (Patrice, Reflective Essay, September 22, 2008)

My mom was an educator and my aunt is too, now she is a principal so they always talked to me about education and, you know I was able to get some insight into what education was all about early. Also, you know I think it was important, because my family was always around professional people and had me around them as well and I think that made a difference. I had a lot of exposure to different people and things and it made me want to be successful too. (Patrice, Individual Interviews, November 2008)

David also realized his potential passion for teaching as a result of opportunities to engage in educator related experiences during high school and as a student in college. He said that:

In high school one of his favorite teachers decided to do a tutoring program and sometimes I helped her out. I helped her out my senior year to get community service house. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

I still tutor now at Legacy University and I am glad to help people and to get them to understand one of my favorite subjects... my main motivation form my major being mathematics secondary education lies within the interest of my peers and the students behind me. (David, Reflective Essays, September 22, 2008)

Erica also felt extracurricular activities gave her the opportunity to work with young people to develop their talents and academic abilities excited her to the point that being a teacher was extremely important to her:

My junior year (in high school) I began to work with middle school at their after school program as a cheerleading instructor. I fell in love with teaching that summer when I became a counselor for the 6 year olds. For the next three years I loved everyday of my job. I taught, advised, and supervised age 6-15. (Erica, Reflective Essays, September 23, 2008)

Carl was the only former who talked about having any of these educator related extracurricular activities: “I was a mentor for a little while when I was in high school for elementary and middle school kids” (Carl, Individual Interview, December 2008).

The current majors also participated actively in personal growth or high culture activities, such activities as described by the literature are those activities that serve as a power resource or a way for groups to gain status (Dumais, 2002) , whereas the former majors were very limited in their forms of extracurricular personal development activities. One of the current majors, Patrice said:

My mom put made me take piano lessons when I was about 11 or 12 years old, she told to try it for a year and if I didn't like it I could quit. So, I took the lessons and I loved it. I played the piano from about the time I was 11 years old until I came here to college years. (Patrice, Focus Group, December 6, 2008)

Donald explained:

I write poetry and started when I was in high school. I have published a poetry book and I am currently working on another. I love to read classical works. I also, go to a lot of open mics and do Spoken Word poetry. (Donald, Focus Group, December 6, 2008)

Scott said, “I enjoy painting. I usually paint afro-centric scenes or hometown scenes, something he has been doing since I was 10 years old” (Scott, Focus Group Interview, December 6, 2008).

The former majors mostly talked about their opportunities to play sports:

Like they said, I was the only boy, so my dad didn't want me sitting in the house with my little sister, so I had to go outside and play basketball after school. Also, sports keep you out of trouble. Especially in high school, its kind of a perk in high school. You know, cause they look out for the jocks in high school. (Alex, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Like I said, coming from a small town there is not a lot to do. So, after school, what do you do get together with everybody and play baseball. When I got to high school my family moved and where we moved everybody played basketball. So then baseball was out and basketball was in. and football has always been a part of my life and sports will keep you out of trouble. (Tommy, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Carl concurred with his cohort and said “yeah, I played sports too, basketball, football that’s about it” (Carl, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008).

### *Natural Culture Assimilation Environment*

Indicators of the natural culture assimilation environment category include reassurance (succor) and legacy. Reassurance (succor) as the participants describe it includes how well they fit in and how much their college environment provides a sense of family relations. Legacy was determined by the participants as the importance or value of the tradition of the HBCU experience.

*Reassurance (Succor)*

Participants in the current majors' cohort found that they were able to easily transition into the Legacy University culture. David felt strongly about his connections with Legacy University:

I fit in well its just, I'm all over the place. I'm just interactive with faculty, with students; they'll come to me for help. I can come to people for help. Campus events, I'm there, I'm at off campus events. There is always something to do. Whether it's having fun or just getting work done and 9 times out of 10 that's where I'm going to be (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Overall, it's a good connection. I notice that students are, feel more welcomed to come see them during office hours or just walking through the hallways. Like Dr. S., sometime might get your name wrong, but he remembers you or certain things about you, asks how your day is going. Dr. Graham, like I told you, he's my mentor always has a smile on his face. Loves to ask about you. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Scott was also passionate about the overall good fit that he felt existed between him and the university. Due to some of his negative previous academic experiences, Legacy University was a welcomed change for him. He felt this was finally an opportunity to experience the academic spotlight here, whereas his earlier schooling experience had left him marginalized in the shadows. He excitedly discussed how he thinks his professors feel about him:

The Spanish department, I'm just like the golden child almost, as soon as I got here I tested out of so many levels.



They were like oh my God! I was just like the new Miguel, like my mentor was a big deal, he was in magazines and things cause he did so good in Spanish Department. I did the same. (Scott, Individual Interviews, November 20, 2008)

Erica also felt that she fit in even though she was from New York City and Legacy University was in the south. She talks about having strong connections with the faculty in her education program and across other areas of her general curriculum at the institution:

Each teacher that I have had made me want to learn cause they were passionate about what they were teaching and that's what I love too. Because they were passionate it made me go hey, well I don't know that. Well I want to know it too. So I feel really connected to my faculty. (Erica, Individual Interview, November 18, 2008)

Participants in the former majors group also felt a sense of comfort at the university. They felt the faculty in all areas of their program was welcoming and overall "good people." As a result they feel a certain connection and fit that allowed them to focus on their academics. Tommy describes his opportunity to fit in at Legacy University as follows:

I think I fit in very well because I'm pretty well rounded person. I don't mind walking up and talking to people or starting conversations, so I think I am a perfect candidate for Legacy... I am currently not really in any social groups right now. I have been in social groups. Like in high school I was in the history club, comedy club, um its some

more but I can't really think of them right now.... Its kind of hard to have a social life when I was in education because trying to prepare for the Praxis, you know, I'm not going to say it's difficult, but it is hard. So a social life is pretty much out of the question. (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 8, 2008)

However, Tommy does clarify exactly where at Legacy University he feels he fits in and clarifies that he does not subscribe to an all-inclusive fitting in at the university:

I definitely do (feel isolated in education department) cause I can come in the history department, I can still like, I feel at home... I feel like they'll have a conversation with you, talk with you, as oppose to going to education department, its all about business....its nothing personal, you don't feel valued. (Tommy, Focus Group, December 8, 2008)

Reassurance was also defined by the participants as being a part of an extended family or support group at Legacy University Scott explained it this way:

Also, the faculty, I guess they'll more like your parents or grandparents cause they have it and I guess they're trying to guide you through. So in that sense it's like we're all trying to work together towards a common goal. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

In addition to fitting in the participants describe the experience at Legacy University as being an extension of their own family in which they receive support, guidance, and role modeling. Scott corroborated the family-like quality that is embracing to student in stating that:

I fit in well here, I'm a real social person, so I don't have a problem talking to people if I don't know them. Feels like a big family, in the sense of there are people in the family who you just love and people who are just not getting it yet, but they are still my family. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

He further specified:

It's both ways actually, I guess my peers are like my siblings cause we're all trying to get the same thing, our degree. Also the faculty, I guess they'll be more like your parents or grandparents cause they have it and I guess they're trying to guide you through. So in that sense its like we're all trying to work together towards a common goal. Graduating and being successful (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

Erica discussed the significance that she has received in the teacher education phase by stating:

The secondary education program is real good they are there to encourage you. Like I have Dr. B. and another lady and they are really encouraging. We have to take the Praxis. They don't want us to worry about it. They make you feel real relax, if you have any questions or anything you can always go to the education building to speak to them and, I don't know, it's a very less stressful environment. They make you feel you can do it (Erica, Individual Interview, November 18, 2008)

Moreover, these participants equate their supportive environment with how well they are informed by those members of faculty and administration. They talk about this in a lot of detail. In terms of certain areas being more consistent with disseminating information of all type to them represents to them how much those in leadership positions care about their success. Patrice describes her experience in education as being pretty good because: “Dr. C. she is really nice, she is really, really nice. She sends out e-mails, she lets people know what’s going on in secondary education and she is really good” (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008). However, when she talks about situations that have occurred in her content area, she has much less praise for the department in regard to their demonstration of a caring family-like environment:

Like education majors are separate from the biology majors. For instance, like on blackboard, biology they have a link to the biology department, but all the biology majors had this link, but none of us biology education majors had the link. And the link was telling you about what was going on in the department and everything. And the only way I knew stuff was going on was because I had friends to tell me.... We didn’t know what was going on in my own department (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 11, 2008)

The experience of the former majors was different in that they did feel the family like supportive environment was overall true, but they articulated that the reception they often received from the professional studies department was much less supporting than in their content area. Tommy said:

I don't think they help you as much on a personal level as much as the history department would for me. I feel like I can come and talk to the people in the history department and it would be ok. As oppose to me going to the education department and I don't really know anybody over there. The only person I know is Dr. C, you know and she's busy a lot, so I really don't have time to talk to her, so it's kind of hard. So I feel when you get down on a more personal basis its easier to come talk to people, here's what you need to do, get a little encouraging word. As oppose to going into education department, and you're looking around like you're in a lost city (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 8, 2008)

Carl substantiated Tommy's claim when he said:

...not having that one on one thing with the people that work in the education department. I feel very much so isolated in the education department. No one can say well this person can help you out with whatever question that you need, this person can help you out.  
(Carl, Individual Interview, December 4, 2008)

### *Legacy*

The second indicator under the natural cultural assimilation environment category was legacy which was defined by the participants to include the early generational connections to the university as a result of other family members attending and/or being alumni of the university. Patrice, a current major passionately discussed the impact her family attending the university had on her decision not only to attend the institution, but her high expectations of it and her ability to be successful there:

My parents are from Greensboro, and they both went here. My brother graduated from here, my older brother, and he was like you just need to enroll to Legacy U. So I enrolled and I feel comfortable here. My advisors know me and actually advise me. She checks up on me all the time. Like my brother said they look out for you most of the time here (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Similarly Carl, a former education major, sustained this perspective when he reflected that:

Well pretty much, hopefully if I can graduate, I'll be a third generation Legacy graduate, so pretty much it's a tradition. So, it was just, I grew up here, and I went to every homecoming every since I was a baby. I know this place, my dad had the same major, agriculture education as I had, so.... I have to keep that HBCU in my family, because my mom went to Brenner and my father went to Legacy and both my grandparents went to Legacy.

Its like an extension of my family, its always been a part of my family, so. My family is all about the HBCU... so since my sister went to Chapel Hill I figured it was up to me to keep the tradition going and I hope if I have kids they will come here. (Carl, Individual Interview, December 4, 2008)

Again, Tommy, a former major stated:

My aunt, she's an alumni here and I remember she would just come home and just, I guess she was showing how much she was enjoying college. I was like ok I think I am going to try that. And my brother went here too, so it seemed like a good school. If my aunt and brother went it should be a good school, so that's why I chose it. (Tommy, Focus Group, December 8, 2008)

Another component of legacy was the significance of being a part of and continuing the tradition of the HBCU experience for their families and their communities.

Erica states:

I went on one of the HBCU college tours with a YMCA about two years prior to graduation. Coming from N.Y. we don't see, we don't have the campus life, we don't have that. So when I came here this campus was beautiful. I loved everything about it, the atmosphere, it was welcoming...being here it has a history that promotes excellence. Coming from N.Y. I only know people from N.Y. But now I feel like I can talk to anybody (Erica, Individual Interview, November 18, 2008)

Scott talked about the fact that he:

Had the opportunity to go to State and Pembroke, but I really loved Legacy, basically because of the general HBCU history and I was just drawn to Legacy. There are many successful people that went here and went on to do great things. So why not me (Scott, Individual Interviews, November 20, 2008)

Furthermore, Scott thought this was important because he had had such wretched schooling experiences before he came to college. He craved the experience of attending an HBCU like Legacy as he posited:

I guess going to my high school, which was still majority white, I just wanted something different. I mean I had the opportunity to go to State and Pembroke but I really loved Legacy and I guess the history and general HBCU history for some reason, I was just drawn to Legacy. So I chose to go there (Scott, Focus Group Interview, December 6, 2008)

Patrice talked about the fact that her parents and brother are graduates of Legacy University. Consequently, she knew this would be a good school and a place where she could excel and obtain her goals (Patrice, Focus Group Interview, December 6, 2008)

#### Summary of Theme One

Similarities existed between the participants' type of sociocultural capital and their habitus. All of the participants had a strong sense of family influence and the role in their parents played in preparing them for education and careers is primary. However, how these students used their sociocultural capital differed. Current majors all seemed to have families that were supportive and encouraged educational success. This encouragement was further enhanced by actions their parents or families took to ensure that they had opportunities in their pre-college schooling and community experiences and extracurricular activities. This allowed the current majors to build up more capital that they would be prepared to spend towards investing in their success in college and future careers. These activities often encouraged them to work with building up and educating young people, building their own self-confidence and autonomy.



The former majors came from families that were also supportive in terms of encouraging them to get educated and helping them understand the importance of having a good education in order to have a good future. Yet, these participants had less exposure to extracurricular activities that promoted experience in education. There were few efforts made by family, community, or extracurricular activities that promoted independence and confidence that they could actually do what they set their mind to. The current majors often discussed that they were placed in challenging cultural activities by their families and encouraged to stay committed to challenging tasks until they had made a good faith effort to master them. Such activities included playing the piano, writing poetry, and painting. Whereas there was no mention by former education majors that they were encouraged by their families or parents to participate in activities that were out of the norm or challenging to them. Therefore, their sociocultural foundations were connected to their ideas about being committed to a major that required a significant amount of critical capital to complete.

Both groups agreed that the assimilation process was overall an easy one from their home environment to Legacy University. Both groups felt confident about how well they fit in at the university. Both groups felt comfortable at the university as a result of the connections they felt to the institution as a whole and then to their individual major programs. The difference, however, was that the comfort level of current majors was demonstrated through their habitus. In other words these participants were fully engaged and central to the pulse of the university. They had built up significant relationships with faculty from their content area and equally significant relationships with the faculty in

education as well. Most of the participants in this group saw the importance of the education component of their program because they had some level of affiliation with the education department in conjunction with their content area. Again, their sociocultural capital assisted them in understanding the importance of formulating relationships and connecting with the education culture. Although the former majors felt strongly that their sociocultural capital made them feel comfortable and secure in their program, the habitus that they illustrated spoke differently. These students rarely reached out on their own to establish social relationships and get socially engaged with the education component of their program. They felt much more comfortable in their content area because those individuals seem to reach out to them, rather than them having to make the effort.

Sociocultural capital was a primary function in determining the various levels of success at the higher education level for the participants. In other words, because both groups seemed to have sociocultural capital that they could use at the institution to succeed, the differences in utilization of sociocultural capital determined who was better able to be retained in secondary teacher education.

### Institutional Capital

The theme of institutional capital appeared consistently throughout the data. Several of the participants spoke of being able to build strong, formidable, and worthwhile relationships at the institution, on both the social and professional level. These students felt really capable of being able to network with their peers to gain social and professional relationships that could assist them as they matriculated through their careers as students. They also strongly felt that they had built relationships with faculty

and institutional administrators that were more than just student-faculty or student-administrator interactions. They saw their connections with these individuals as a “real relationship” that fostered their growth as professionals and that would stand the test of time and assist them beyond their college years. At the same time many also complained about the limits of the institutional capital in combination with lacking sociocultural capital created restrictive barriers for them. Such obstacles were very real concerns for these students. Current majors saw themselves as having the adaptability skills to figure out how to overcome these difficulties and they demonstrated how they used these adaptable skills to continue being successful in their field of study. However, they felt that the administration really needed to seek reformation strategies to eliminate what they deemed as unnecessary obstructive mechanisms in their education programs.

#### *Socio-Professional Networks*

The category socio-professional networks has two major indicators. The first indicator is resources which is based on participants’ perceptions of having access to competent faculty that worked in the secondary education program and also opportunities for academic and professional networking. The second indicator is relationships.

#### *Resources*

Participants defined resources as having good secondary education faculty that they could get information from and receive a sense of guidance from as they progressed through the program. Most of them agreed that the faculty did an excellent job of that. The participants also felt it was in their words “a two way street” in terms of them having a responsibility for seeking out such available resources. Both the current and the former

majors really made a point to discuss how they had good experiences with the university in this area. For instance, David expounded that:

Really, its just, like I said you have to take initiative, they are not going to throw themselves at you per se, but if you talk to them and get to know them....So I actually run errands, talk to various people on different levels in the school of ed. I working on a proposal so I go to my mentor, Dr. G, he is a very good male figure. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Another example that David used to exemplify how students have used the faculty as positive resources is:

Once I went with my friend to see one of his professors. The professor started talking to me about what my major was and what my classification was, so when I told him I was a math major, he was like do you want to make some money. I was like who is going to say no? So he gave this information about a scholarship and internship opportunity and I got it. So, now every year I have some extra money and get to do an internship every summer to make more money, so that's just another example of how the faculty helps me out. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Tommy said that:

Like the classes I did take I had some good teachers, so they seem really informed about what was going on in classes and they seem to know what's going on. They are pretty good over there. Can't say anything bad about them. (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 8, 2008)

Additionally, Alex talked about his experience with relationships with education faculty and staff as follows:

The people over there are good people. They are real good, I can't say anything bad about them. They get excited about seeing a Black male trying to teach. Tried to give me a little extra push. So yeah, they were real good over there. (Alex, Individual Interview, December 5, 2008)

Participants like the fact that they had opportunities to participate in academic social groups which could help them in their future professional and social endeavors. They felt their ability to communicate and socialize with a variety of people provided them with the opportunity to expand on their already developed leadership and social skills. As Erica explained:

I can be around any group now and I can have a conversation with anyone as oppose to me just sitting there looking around. I've never been the type of person that if people are talking in front of me, not having something to say. Always having something to say, always know something that that person is talking about, don't just have people talking in front of you and you don't have no comment or anything like that. So now I can actually comment and I can sit there and I can ask them questions. (Erica, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

David's assertions further supported Erica's notions when he talks about:

I'm going back to the open doors thing, you have to just jump into it, it benefits you as a whole. The social networks, even the social networks, talking to my peers around me is going to help me. Just getting to know where they are trying to go, as far as their career, is going to help me. I'm going to need some of those connections later on. Its connections. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

I was invited to the alumni breakfast to speak as a, one of two students to speak as far as experiences at A&T and this invitation came about through the association of the Associate Dean of CAS, Dr. I had been her daughter's mentor last year. After speaking, Dr. P. came up to me and shook my hand and ask me about if I had an internship. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

### *Relationships*

Participants felt strongly about relationships have developed as a result of connections with other students and faculty at Legacy University. Scott said of faculty that:

The connection with students is great. I mean I know it's a 2-way street sometimes, like for myself, like I said I don't go and seek them out as much, but they are always coming to me, so I guess I need to return the same thing, like when they say hi is so so, you can stop by anytime, I should really do that. So I guess the people in the program really greet you with open arms when they find out that you're an education major. (Scott, Individual Interview, November, 20, 2008)

Scott did reveal that there are areas in which there are issues with making connections and building relationships with other students and that these issues need to be addressed in order to ameliorate relationship building opportunities:

In foreign language, I mean we are a small major, and we really don't know each other. I met one the other day, I was like are you a freshman, and they were like no, I'm almost a junior. So, there needs to be more done in the department. I mean we could have a mixer or social or something just so we can get to know each other and know who each other is. (Scott, Focus Group, December 6, 2008)

Scott, who characterized himself as “a real social person so I don't have a problem talking to people if I don't know them” felt his department lacked the interest in bringing the students together as well bring students and faculty together in collaboration to strengthen networks (Scott, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008). Similarly, Patrice felt:

Our department is small too, and we really don't know each other either. And I agree, I think the head of our department, I don't know, she could have a mixer or something. She could do something so that we can get to know each other and the faculty too, you know. (Patrice, Focus Group, December 6, 2008)

David elaborated on how some relationships were ongoing and encouraging, which he determined as imperative to his support system:

Dr. B., even though I don't really talk that much to her now after African-American Experience. She is a phenomenal woman, she loves her subject, .... And she likes talking about life in general. I walked by her a couple of times this semester, she just ask me how are you doing? Are you staying on point? Are you doing what you need to do? I was like yes ma'am. That's just the kind of relationship that I have built with a lot of faculty, a lot of administrators too, to the point it's almost like having a family. Like a little mini support team (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Erica felt that she had taken advantage of the relationship building opportunities in the teacher education program because:

They really seemed to want to help you succeed and achieve your goals. Ms. B always is trying to help the students relax and not worry about, like the Praxis and they give you good information about what you need to do and they will definitely help you and check on you, so I really like that. That does not happen in my content area. Most of the faculty over there doesn't even know your name, but they do in education (Erica, Individual Interview, November 2008)

Former secondary education majors agreed that there were a lot of "good people" in the education department and that these people were good at what they do. Carl said:

I developed good relationships in education. I can say that if you needed help then help was there in the education department at Legacy. I had met people that wanted to help you out. I told you about the opportunities they had in education. There was a lady I had a good relationship with her, her name was Dr. B. and Dr. S. and I pretty much had good relationships with them. They seemed like they were passionate about teaching and education. They told me



about a lot of opportunities. (Carl, Individual Interviews, December 4, 2008)

Former major Tommy explained that “I had such good relationships with the faculty in education and I hope to use such connections to get a teaching position when I graduate”. (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 8, 2008). While most of the current and former majors agreed that the opportunity for relationship building was good overall at Legacy University they did believe there was room for improvements in both their content area and the teacher education program. For instance Patrice said:

When I go around them in education it seems like the focus is on teaching fellows. Teaching Fellows do get treated a lot better cause the coordinator communicates with here students. She finds like scholarships and everything for people who are in teaching fellows. And where I am from, Detroit, I never even heard of teaching fellows until I came here (Patrice, Focus Group, December 6, 2008)

### Summary of Theme Two

Current and former majors discussed the various forms of institutional capital they have been able to acquire as they have transitioned and matriculated through college and their teacher education programs. The socio-professional networks category was derived from two major indicators: resources and relationships.

The participants referred to resources mostly in terms of human resources which occurred through making connections with peers, faculty or administrators at Legacy University. By gaining access to these resources they were able to take advantage of

certain privileges and benefits for the present and the future. This was extremely important to the participants and all of them felt that having these resources positively impacted their experience at the university. Students that seem to have a stronger and a more abundant supply of sociocultural capital seemed to be able to transform that capital form into more valuable and useful institutional capital.

Relationships were also a very significant indicator that was constantly discussed by the participants with regard to how much opportunity they felt was available for them to develop social and professional networks that would benefit their progress and transitioning from student to professional. Most of the participants in both groups saw the relationship building factor as positive on campus. Most of the participants felt they had made good relationships here with their peers, faculty, and administrators at Legacy University. They expressed that such relationships made them feel connected and supported overall at the institution. Most of the current participants were also pleased with the opportunities they had embarked on to participate in important academic social groups which they also saw as a good learning experience and practice for their future careers.

### Polity Capital

In terms of polity capital both groups of participants seemed to have an abundance to utilize. The participants expressed deep societal concerns and a public commitment to improving their communities. They revealed that they wanted to be advocates and active members of social groups that seek to uplift their society. This

again, links back to their communities and the sociocultural capital they had acquired as a result of the impact and influence of their home environments and experiences.

The highest value of polity capital was found within current majors, which, of course, illustrated stronger determination to bypass and/or overcome obstacles within their education programs. Furthermore, these students had a strong resolve to continue, not quit, their education programs because they were so committed to the idea of transforming their schools and communities. As such they felt their education programs were extremely relevant to assisting them in reaching those lofty goals. However, it is imperative to note that in both groups participants seemed adamant about making a difference in the communities in which they grew up, as well as nationwide. They seemed to have a deep social concern about improving academics for students in the future, particularly African American students. They also expressed concern with transforming the system of education by assisting with diversifying the “look” of leadership in public schools. Participants talked about wanting to be a part of increasing the number of African Americans and African American males in the classroom. They felt this was important for secondary students to see. They also thought they could reach and connect better to ethnic minority students, who may come from similar backgrounds as them.

Some of the participants thought it was important for them to make something of themselves so that they could remedy negative stigmas about African Americans that continued to be perpetuated in their home communities. In other cases participants who had seen and been exposed to upstanding professionals during their formative years

wanted to continue to play that positive image forward for the next generation and to stop what they believe to be the beginning of regression of African American professionals with the upcoming generations. Only one category emerged for polity capital: transformational attributes.

### *Transformational Attributes*

The transformational attributes category is defined by two indicators: revolutionaries and role modeling. The current majors and some of the former majors were motivated by the opportunity to make a difference or change the school system for the better. They also wanted to transform their communities by earning their teaching credentials and, as such, becoming a credit to their community. Participants in both cohorts agreed that being an educator would provide them the opportunity to bring about change that could be revolutionary for themselves, their families and their communities. Again, this is very reflective of their sociocultural background in which all of the participants said that they had always been encouraged to get educated because that was the key to a successful future. Most of the participants want to continue that message beyond their college days as they go back into their communities to educate future generations. Although all participants agreed that transformation is possible through becoming an educator those with the least or different sociocultural capital thought they could transform future generations through befriending and mentoring then and saw little value in the actual teacher education program in helping them be transformative agents. Those that had the higher sociocultural capital seemed to see a direct link in the

opportunity to be transformative change agents and them having a good teacher education background along with their content knowledge.

### *Revolutionary*

Participants consistently talked about wanting to be a teacher who made a difference. Making a difference was the equivalent of being a transformational figure. This was a recurring concept throughout their narratives. Several of the participants chose to stay in secondary education because of their commitment to fulfilling the dream of being “somebody” by building up others that were like them through academics. Scott explained:

In my hometown, is still separated by race. In my hometown, education didn't focus on minorities, I want to change that. I want to inspire other students like me that they can do it. Because education can make you the same as everyone else. If you get educated you can achieve your dreams and get out of poverty. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

At first I wanted to be a history teacher cause I really liked history. Wanted to be a history teacher cause I wanted to let other people know this! I want to let other people know this, so why not be a teacher? I was really hoping to change things? There really aren't that many Black teachers, Black male teachers. I was hoping to get in and teach, educate and get my people to be inspired like maybe I can do it too. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

David talked most specifically about changing the attitudes of African American students about math and getting them to understand, but most importantly enjoy it and see how

much fun it can be. He felt that he has a gift for making math relevant for students and helping them understand mathematical concepts:

My main motivation for my major being mathematics secondary education lies within the interest of my peers and the students behind me. I have found the major reasons for students dislike of the field of mathematics is because they say “I can’t understand it.” “It is too hard” or “The teacher cannot teach it right.” I plan to teach mathematics to the point where students cannot only grasp and understand the concepts but have fun also. I see myself as a major advantage to the school system and my parents. (David, Reflective Essays, September 22, 2008)

I do not even see myself as a potential educator because I am already educating and teaching mathematics to students. I just do not possess my license to say I am certified. However, I see myself as a major advantage to my school, parents, and students...(David, Reflective Essays, September 22, 2008)

Scott and David were not alone in their notions of building up and promoting the idea of learning for African American students that seem to get lost and forgotten in the system.

Erica recalled:

I had a supportive family during my pre-college education years, but saw many of my neighborhood peers who did not, and how they fell through the cracks of the educational system. I want to help students like that because I know where they are coming from, I can understand. (Erica, Individual Interview, November, 2008)

Like her counterpart Scott, Patrice links her desire to be an agent of change to her own academic experiences that were not so positive. As a result she realizes the importance of changing the educational system in positively radical manner for the next generation, in order to alleviate the stagnation, and discouraging environment that often currently exist for many ethnic minority students:

I have had teachers who didn't care and I have college professors who were very knowledgeable but just didn't know how to get the students to understand the subject. There are too many teachers that are just working for a paycheck and don't care about the students.... I feel that I can relate to the students and help the students who are not as well off or come from educated families. I feel that education is the key to being successful in life... I believe that all people unless they have some form of mental disability can learn, but some students need different motivation to achieve their goals. (Patrice, Reflective Essay, September 22, 2008)

These participants felt they were needed and that they were what was missing in terms of closing achievement gaps and promoting students of color to academic greatness. As

Patrice stated:

“based on my observation experiences or other experiences with students in an academic setting I think that many of the students that were African American have low self-images, low self-esteem, and lacked the drive to move on and matriculate through institutions of higher learning, so I want to help them see that they can succeed and go to college” (Patrice, Reflective Essay, September 20, 2009 ).

The current majors maintained that part of their transformational ability to be transformer was linked to being a savior, so to speak, for the upcoming students at the secondary level. Not only did they want to serve students in the classroom, but they also wanted and needed to transform the educational system. David emphatically discussed how well the program was preparing him to be an agent of change in a number of ways and also preparing him to be a massive transformational figure in his personal life as well as his professional life:

Making a difference. Like the stuff they have us focusing on like taking the initiative, being leaders outside of the classroom. Working in communities where teachers like do group learning. It's just going to make me a better teacher and also it'll help me outside like if I decide to go into like higher, institutions of higher learning if I just want to become like a part of a professional organization. Like how the skills will be able to work with people and then just get up and just learn to adapt to new situations. So I think some of the major benefits of the education I'm getting. (David, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Scott also saw the inclusion of the education component of his program as a pathway and a resource to take back to his hometown and promote students that came from communities similar to his by changing their attitudes and experiences with schooling in a positive way and encouraging them in a way that he had not been encouraged during his pre-college school experience. He talked a lot about the blatant discrimination and prejudice that he received at the hands of white teachers and administrators in his primary and secondary school terms:



In my hometown there were teachers who were like “oh my little black students” its always them getting into trouble. Like it would be , in reality, just one black student but the whole group, like all of us would get in trouble for it. Like “ya’ll always acting bad, ya’ll always bad” and it would be just one person and we’d be like what we do? So in that sense it just made me want to be different from them. I believe that all teachers should want their students to have equal opportunities to learn.

I hope to bridge the gap between parents, students, and teachers. I don’t want to just read a textbook or give worksheets. I want my class to go out and research beyond what is written, to read between the lines, and help as many young people as I can achieve great things. I hope that especially young black males can look at me and see where you come from is only the foundation of what you can build, and I want them to build skyscrapers. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

In his narrative essay he mentioned an interesting incident with his white teacher in elementary school:

In 1<sup>st</sup> grade I remember my teacher calling all of her black students “her little monkeys.” I didn’t fully understand why she referred only to her black students as monkeys, so I asked her. Her response opened my eyes to racism in my local school system. She told me that black people were originally monkeys, and all of her little black kids (the students) looked just like little monkeys. I never want another young person to be told by an educator that they can’t do this or that they were less than others because of their skin. Because I know how that feels. (Scott, Reflective Essays, September 21, 2008)

Tommy explained:

I feel me being, you know, a history professional opposed to somebody being history education, I think I can connect better to the students. They'll be like "Mr. G. is better cause he can relate to me, cause he's still by the book, but at the same time I feel like he's a friend at the same time. So first he's a teacher and then he's a friend, you know he can come talk to me about any problem, so (Tommy, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Alex agreed and elaborated:

That's right you don't need no education degree, a degree is good, but you don't need no degree. All you need is people skills. If you can connect with people you can do anything. That's with anything. Cause say like with your co-workers, if you can't communicate with them you're not going to be successful regardless. If you don't connect with them its over. So its all about people skills. You don't need no degree. You can learn those things (Alex, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Both groups were convinced that they not only could, but was responsible for changing the way students got educated and for making a positive impact on their communities as individuals and in a professional way. However, the current majors made the connection between what they were getting from the education component of their program and achieving overarching success in their goals for big change in education and in their communities.

### *Role Modeling*

The second indicator under the transformational attributes category is role modeling. The participants defined this as using their education to represent success for the next generation who may need to see people like them achieving high goals in life. They hoped this would assist them in inspiring the next generation of African American students to be inclined to do well in school and see academics as important. For instance, Scott thought it was important that he as an African American male would better relate to ethnic minorities and be a role model for all students. This was significant for him because as he explained:

I never had a black teacher, in my hometown, I never had a black teacher, actually there was one and I have no idea where she was from.... She said the same thing (as the white teachers). Cause like sadly, there are black people that are lucky enough to go to college so they come back and act like they are on a whole different level from the rest of us.

So I was hoping to change things. I mean there really aren't that many black teachers, black male teachers, so I guess from watching my high school ... I was hoping maybe that it might be a way to get in and teach, educate, and get my people inspired like maybe if he can do it, I can do it too. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

My passion for education, and love for my community and the people in it.... I know that everyone has the potential and opportunity to achieve... I hope to influence students to not just believe, but to chase their dreams and achieve. (Scott, Reflective Essay, September 21, 2008)

Patrice believed that the education experiences, although difficult at times were preparing her to alter racial/ethnic minority students' disposition and attitudes toward school. She felt this was something she was already good at and with her educational background she could really make a difference in assisting marginalized students in embracing education and using their education to improve themselves and ultimately their societies. She stated:

Growing up I had a lot of exposure to black doctors, lawyers, engineers , just all kinds of professional people since I grew up in Detroit. So because I grew up in a large city I got to see black people be successful at a lot of different jobs and careers. In the south a lot of people who I have met are getting their education but they don't know a lot of adults who they can look up to. (Patrice, Individual Interviews, November 21, 2008)

Patrice thought this was important and a major extrinsic motivator for her to continue on the path to becoming an educator. She is cognizant, based on her academic experiences, about the lack of qualified teachers that seemed to be in secondary education:

I want to teach at the secondary level because of the subject are and I think we need more qualified teachers because there are a lot of students leaving high school who are not prepared for the college or the workforce. Since being at Legacy University I have had two field experiences and working with the students I saw that some of them need a lot of help. (Patrice, Reflective Essay, September 22, 2008)

She thought that K-2 students are lagging behind in various areas of development not only academically. As such, qualified teachers are needed that can reach these students and prepare them for life as well as the next stage of academics:

I was surprised because so many students said they wanted to go to college but had no idea of how to get into college. I feel that it is important in secondary school to have a good teacher because in middle school children are going through puberty and they go through a lot of emotional changes and some teachers don't understand that. (Patrice, Reflective Essay, September 22, 2008)

Erica also believed that the most important aspect of her experience in education was her opportunity to work with diverse people; she felt this was important to her because she also wanted to be an agent of change for marginalized students in pre-college academics. She felt that her experience in education made her more comfortable with communicating and understanding diverse ways of life, which, in her opinion, was essential to her being successful in transforming students attitudes about school and then changing them into individuals who could appreciate the opportunity to learn and assist them in realizing that that was the key for them being completely successful as a person. This according to Erica will “advance the youth of tomorrow” and ultimately the educational system. She explains it this way:

As an educator you have to be a role model. Some of the things you may believe in, may go against what is necessary for you to teach your diverse group of students. That's what I have learned in education, how to deal with diversity so that I can be effective in promoting my students in a positive way. I have to understand where they

are coming from so that I can help them reach their goals, not just learning the regular classroom things. As a teacher you can just keep to your own point of view, you have to be open and then you can understand what your students need to succeed. The education department has taught me that, and that's what I like. (Erica, Reflective Essay, September 23, 2008)

Two of the former education majors also saw themselves as transformers or agents of change for future generations of students, with a specific emphasis on African American students. They not only saw their responsibility as being transformers for future students that they would teach, but also, for their personal lives and their families.

Tommy said:

By be getting an education and a good professional job, that going to also help my family, you know move them up too. So, if I get a good education I can do more for my family and improve their lives and we can all live good. So that's something else that motivates me and keeps me going. (Tommy, Focus Group, December 11, 2008)

Although these students wanted to be educated and take back what they learned to their communities, they did not express as clearly how they thought they could do that beyond having a good grasp of their content and being able to connect with students as a friend or mentor. They talked about wanting to reach students and make them feel comfortable. They were convinced that this was the key to them transforming students.

### Summary of Theme Three

Making a difference became a recurring statement made by all of the current major participants as well as most of the former major participants. They deemed their

future as an educator was a purposeful one both personally and professionally. Most of them saw education as important, but also a social institution that needed to be transformed on many levels. According to these participants most of those changes needed to begin with a focus on students that are members of marginalized ethnic and cultural groups would be provided a more equitable education that consisted of more than just academic consumption, but that related to the whole student. Current majors felt their education program was preparing them well and placing them in an opportune position to make big changes in secondary education as a teacher. They felt they were agents of transformation because as a result of their education program and their personal capabilities, (a) they are able to communicate with diverse student populations, (b) they can relate and understand the cultural background from which many of the racial/ethnic minority students are from, and (c) they truly believe that all students can learn and succeed in the proper school environment.

### Personal Capital

Personal capital is deemed to be the dispositions, efficacy, power and attitudes one has that may be used to obtain and maintain one's place in the world or group. Participants in both cohorts had perceived themselves to have a good amount of personal capital. Each of the participants attributed their ability to develop positive relationships and communicate well with people to not only their morals and values, but also the right attitude. They were open-minded and very sociable and interactive with people. They all felt these were significant qualities that would help them achieve their goals in terms of their careers, regardless of whether or not they continued in their education program.

Personal capital was clearly noted among the participants as reflected in the category of self-efficacy.

### *Self-Efficacy*

All of the participants provided discourse on some level about their interactive qualities which included the fact that they saw themselves as outgoing and sociable people. They commented a lot on the fact they had consistent and formidable initiative in that they were “go-getters” and “determined,” a sentiment articulated by former majors as well as current majors. All of the participants characterized themselves as being highly capable of achieving their goals, particularly those participants that wanted to teach. This was very interesting coming from former education participants, who felt strongly that they would make great teachers even without the formal training that was provided in the teacher education program from which they had withdrawn. Current majors saw themselves as being great teachers, but in large part because they were being well-prepared by their teacher education program.

Self-efficacy is defined by how participants’ interactions, initiative, and capability qualities influenced and impacted their decisions and current status at Legacy University.

### *Interactions*

The interactions reflect participants’ perceptions about their people skills. One characteristic that participants in both groups felt confident about was their ability to interact with others by being outgoing, open-minded, and accepting of diversity. Erica explained:



Well, being that I am from N.Y., honestly, I didn't really meet too many people that are not from N.Y. so I lack the awareness of other people other than New Yorkers cause honestly, all I knew is N.Y. so when I came here I met people from Washington, I met people from California, it kind of showed me something that I had never seen before. Their different traits, they act different, they listen to different music, and I think that is a good experience for me in that I am going to be teaching children of different diversities... I can be around any group now and I can have a conversation with anyone as oppose to me just sitting there looking around... (Erica, Individual Interview, November 18, 2008)

As David reflected on his self-efficacy he directly linked it to his ability to be engaged and interactive with the faculty in his whole education program. He took pride in the fact that he had these interactive relationships throughout the institution:

I'm just interactive with faculty, with students; they'll come to me for help. I can come to people for help. Campus events, I'm there sometimes, I'm off at off campus events. There is always something to do. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Scott also saw himself as sociable and interactive and felt characteristics had assisted him in developing a strong sense of self-efficacy with regard to his ability to teach and make a difference:

I am a real social person, so I don't have a problem talking to people... Even though I don't seek them out in education as much as I should, but they do meet you with open arms. In my content area, my mentor Miguel in Spanish, he introduced me to people and started the whole thing of networking.... Also, I got so many praises as a freshman

from faculty in my content area (Spanish). They just have so many high expectations of me... so I kind of got a big head, thinking the education classes aren't going to be nothing. I can do it once I put my mind to it. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

All of the former majors, Tommy, Alex, and Carl, continually espoused that they were very sociable people and they had the ability to really connect with people:

I have always been a very sociable person. I have always been liked and respected for my leadership skills. So, people often come to me to help resolve issues or to create things because they know I am going to be upfront with them and not take sides or whatever. And then its like I always try to be fair with people, so I got that from my family. (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 8, 2008)

I am a sociable person, I am a real people person. That comes from the moral and ethical upbringing by my family. So I think that is what will make me a good educator because I'll be able to reach my students. (Alex, Reflective Essay, October, 2008)

Although the former majors consistently boosted and confirmed that they were very sociable and enjoyed being around people, as well as being in leadership roles this was not reflected in actual practice within their college or home communities. Both Tommy and Alex talked about how either academics and/or work keep them from getting involved in any extracurricular activities:

No, I 'm not involved in any social organizations at this time. I need to focus on school right now, so no I want to focus on my work at this time... Not ever really been involve in a lot of organizations here, but I know a lot

of people, you know I like to get to know people, so (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 8, 2008).

No, I am not involved in no activities. I work 20-25 hours a week so between work and school no time for anything else really. (Alex, Individual Interview, December 5, 2008)

Carl participated in some activities, but most of his affiliations were social groups, such as his fraternity:

Yeah, I pledged a fraternity and I am an Aggie Ambassador, but no, I didn't really get involved in any of the programs in education. Don't really know a lot of people over there, you know. Like I know the teacher for Praxis I and I had another class over there and I had another teacher, but I don't really know a lot about what goes on over there (Carl, Individual Interview, December 4, 2008)

### *Initiative*

Initiative was the second indicator of self-efficacy. This indicator was defined by the participants as their ability to be committed, determined and “go-getters” with great morals and values that assisted them in being achievers and reaching their goals. Current majors saw barriers in their program as just “par for the course” and not enough of a limitation that they would ever consider changing their major. Patrice said that “all majors have their difficult courses and have to prepare you for your career” These participants talked about the fact that they would endure whatever circumstances necessary and just “push through” to achieve so they would have the opportunity to do

what they deemed important because “the program prepares you to do something that gives your life purpose” (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)). As David explained:

I’m a go-getter, I’m determined. I could be a 4.0 student but because of all of my activities I am a strong A & B student, but I am the go to guy on campus. I do a lot of tutoring and I am always figuring out new ways to reach students, using different strategies and they work. I get to know the students, find out what they are interested in and figure out how to use that to help them learn. So that has worked and the students are like wow, I can’t believe I got it! So, I do that.

My parents taught me to be independent, so I take the initiative. If you give me the work, I’m going to do the work. That’s not going to be a problem. Cause like I said I’m a go-getter. (David, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

Former majors, Carl and Tommy both had strong connections with Legacy University as a result of having family who had attended and successfully completed degrees. This seemed to prompt self-initiative for Carl and Tommy. Carl talked about:

My family is really into the HBCU. So I felt it was my Duty to continue the tradition, since my sister [didn’t go to an HBCU]. But I have been coming to the institution since I was a baby. My dad went here and had the same major as me. And my grandparents went to HBCUs too. (Carl, Individual Interview, December 5, 2008).

Tommy continued with:

I chose this school because I have family that went here and they always talk real good about it, real good about it and everything, so I figured I could come here to and

I would like. Its been good overall. (Tommy, Individual Interview, December 2008)

Their perceptions about receiving a college education were significant for them and served as a major motivating factor. Alex revealed that his initiative came from the fact of knowing that he has an opportunity to improve himself that many others do not get to pursue:

Then too, just to go off of what they said, college ain't for everybody. So, if you come to college and you complete it, whether it's in 4 years, 5 years, 5 ½ years that's a major accomplishment. No matter what you major in, just comes to your dedication. You can say, Yeah I did that, a lot of people can't say that. (Alex, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Tommy's perception was similar, but the purpose of education, according to him was to provide individuals with opportunities that would not be afforded to others that may share his background:

I think if you don't have an education, you're at a disadvantage. You can't get a decent job; you need a high school degree just to clean rooms. Its getting, like in today's society, you need more and more education just to do things. So I feel like with an education I can reach the next level as far as things I want to do for me, my family, and you know whoever I decide to marry. So I think education is key. That's why everybody should be getting one you know. But college isn't for everyone. (Tommy, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

### *Capability*

The third indicator related to self-efficacy was termed capability which the participants described as their skills to teach with or without educational preparation; it also included the idea that they could learn the educational components at anytime, and the belief that education courses were not necessary for them to teach well at the secondary level. Participants felt that they have proved to be capable of being excellent transformative educators because they have certain qualities such as being autonomous, motivated, and sociable people.

Both Tommy and Alex were still interested in being secondary education teachers, although they had dropped the education component of their programs. Both still remained confident that they “would still teach and be good teachers” (Tommy & Alex, Focus Group, 2008). Tommy further echoed this belief when said:

I think it's a disadvantage, a small disadvantage, cause you don't have the same kind of experience as a teacher with education, education classes would. For example, for example, doing work plans, um what's it called? Lesson plans. Doing lesson plans, that's a big disadvantage. Like me personally, I don't know how to do lesson plans. I can learn, I know it shouldn't be hard, but I'm still at a disadvantage to someone who took the class who learned how to do lesson plans and the method classes on how to deliver information to students. So, I think I'm at a small disadvantage, but same thing, I can still learn those things and still do the same thing as a teacher would do it.

Cause I think grades are important, like what you do in the classroom, like making good grades in the class is real important, but its all about people skills too. You can put on a show and be a great teacher in front of your teachers, but when it comes to your students you might not be able to

connect because you're too uptight or by the book. I think I can connect better to the students. (Tommy, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

His point of view was further substantiated by Alex:

Yeah, you got to be a people person... a degree that's good, but as far as you connecting with the students, you don't need no degree. You just need people skills and connect with students on a one on one basis. (Alex, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Carl, who no longer had any interest in teaching, also explained that he sees little need to jump through the required hoops of education when opportunities on the professional track of his major are much more rewarding. Furthermore, education credentials is something that can be obtained anytime "if one chooses to do that sort of work later on."

He explained:

You can always go back and get your teaching license. If you choose a profession and it doesn't work out you can always go back and be a teacher. The thing is you should do something that makes you happy, but at the same time you should get paid... I feel like being a teacher, dealing, that's kind of hard for me that I'm going to have a kid that you know I'm working with them, I'm passionate about what I do and I'm not getting through to him or her. Man, its kind of hard to stomach that because it's like I'm not getting paid that much. (Carl, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Current majors also felt very confident in their abilities to engage in education. Some of them admitted that initially they did not take the education component of their secondary education program very seriously as indicated by Scott:

Going into education he had a big head and was somewhat arrogant. With the initial course I took I was like this is nothing I can do it. And it was completely different from Spanish. So my first education class, it was like this is serious. So I was trying to apply the same amount of time for Spanish courses to education courses, but the grades were not coming out exactly the same at first. I had to make an immediate change; I just had to grow up... It was a wake up call. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

However, he soon realized that the education coursework was significant and required a commitment to learning that subject in order to achieve his ultimate goal. Realizing this Scott still remained confident in his capabilities to learn what he needed to know, while he recognizing that he needed to take the work seriously as indicated in this statement:

I am taking the most education credits I've ever taken so far here. So I'm anxious about that... I am a confident person and that helps a lot. So I'm like its not going to be that hard. I can do it if I set my mind to it... I'm ready to get started on it. (Scott, Individual Interview, November 20, 2008)

Participants in both cohorts felt confident and capable of being great professional educators. One reason that the participants came to this conclusion was due to the systemic barriers that they encountered and endured in their teacher education programs. The current majors felt that they were able to endure and sustain their commitment to the profession of education in spite of those restrictive aspects that they faced while matriculating through the program. For instance Patrice felt that one of her courses was



poorly taught; she complained that it was poorly organized and taught but she was able to get through it:

This was teacher was crazy, I didn't learn anything and I put that on the evaluation... We wasted a lot of class time just watching a movie...I was like she just wasted our whole time...You couldn't talk to her either she would get mad, she would get an attitude. I was going to be quiet come to class, sign the attendance, do whatever she ask, whatever. And I got an "A" out of the class, but it was ridiculous. (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

In addition to this issue, she saw significant problems for many students in the way the course offerings were organized in teacher education as she stated:

The online courses, I think too many things are offered online. And I think there are some things that need to be one on one or not necessarily one on one, but in the classroom so we can see more examples. Because some teachers are good online. Some teachers aren't. Then sometimes the technology breaks down or blackboard isn't up of sometimes it just too much... Some of my teachers, who might drive me crazy, I have to just hold my tongue sometimes and just say ok this is their classroom... All I need is the grade. (Patrice, Individual Interview, November 21, 2008)

While she thought the workload of some courses was unfair, she knew she was capable of getting it done:

The online teachers also gives so much work. So much work. I mean I had this one class and I would be working

all day to get my work done. My friends would come by and be like “you still working on that, what are you doing.” I was just like “she gives so much work.” But I got it done and got through it, I mean what else could I do. But it was just too much and I don’t think that’s fair, but I did it. (Patrice, Focus Group, December 6, 2008)

Her point was corroborated by her cohort member Scott:

Well, I noticed the refund check was a little different. It’s more expensive to take an online course, it happened to me more than once. Like the computer froze. I had to get the teacher to re-open it. And they are like “well how do I know your computer really froze?” “How do I know you didn’t take it?” So it’s kind of hard to accept a failing grade for your computer freezing? If you knew them on a one on one basis they may be able to trust you more cause they know what kind of person you are as far as your character...but I just deal with it, try to do the best I can. I mean I just have to get through it. But since we are going to be classroom teaching, I guess it’s probably better if we don’t have online classes. But I get through it. (Scott, Focus Group Interview, December 6, 2008)

The current majors saw the obstacles as restrictive, but as a price to pay to reach their life-long goal. So, they figured out different ways to get through their barriers and work within the program to succeed and move on to the next challenge. The former majors determined that the systemic barriers within the teacher education program were unreasonably restrictive. Although most of these participants were confident that they had what it took to be a great educator they felt the program requirements were unnecessary barriers. Alex commented that the program was:

Too demanding. It's like what he was saying, it's more business over there. I like real relaxed, you know, on a friend basis. I can do my work better that way if I can personally relate to you. You know as far as business, get in and get your work and go home, turn it in. I really can't go like that. (Alex, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Tommy explained:

It's kind of tough to get through the education program cause it so many different requirements. For me it was just tough getting in the program. I felt I had taken more history classes. So I figured like I'll still be a teacher, but I'll just change it to professional, so I can go back and get my licensure, and still be able to teach

I think the classes were too hard. Honestly, I liked the classes because it was real like informative. But I just felt like it was too much criteria to try to get in and to maintain the criteria was even harder, you know? I can't say the classes were hard cause I didn't get to far along in the program for me to be like, "Oh this class is difficult". But the classes I did take they were easy... but the same time it was too hard to maintain the criteria just to be in it. (Tommy, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

Carl, who no longer has any interest in teaching really emphasized how the teaching program was a difficult process that yielded few personal benefits for teacher education candidates:

I can make more money and have more options on the professional track. The education has too much criteria and you are not even going to be getting paid that much as a teacher, and you can't do anything but teach. With the professional track I can work in the government or in

corporate America or yes, even teach if I later decide to do that. But I really don't want to teach. Just not worth it. (Carl, Individual Interview, December 4, 2008)

Just to feedback with what Chris said, it's just the criteria. My family said they are trying to be at a graduation in May 2010. So I have to get in and get out and I can do that on the professional track. (Carl, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008)

...in agriculture they always expose us to job opportunities, internships, and scholarships. They don't do that in education. Maybe if they provided more opportunities and brought people from schools in to talk to us about job opportunities more people would be willing to stay in education. And then the money in teaching isn't really all that good, and you have to go through all that. Then you might have students that don't want to learn and I'm trying my hardest to teach and then I'm not getting that much money. So that's kind of hard to take. (Carl, Individual Interview, December 4, 2008)

Even though both Alex and Tommy still expressed a desire to teach after they graduated from college neither of them felt they may lack the necessary skills to go into the classroom. Based on their perspective, they are more than capable of doing a great job as a teacher because as Alex said, "all you really need is people skills, if you don't have people skill you are going to be at a disadvantage wherever you are, so people skills are most important, you don't need no degree" (Alex, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008). In essence these participants felt they were capable and have even outsmarted the system by getting around the barriers and going into teaching without dealing with the restrictions imposed on teacher candidates, as Tommy confirmed:

I think it is a disadvantage, a small disadvantage, cause you don't have the same kind of experience as a teacher with education, education classes would. For example...doing lesson plans, I can learn. I know it shouldn't be that hard but I'm still at a disadvantage to someone who took class who learned how to do lesson plans, and the method classes on how to deliver information to students. So I think I'm at a small disadvantage, but the same thing. I can still learn those things and still do the same thing as a teacher would do it. But its all about people skills too...I can connect better to the students (Tommy, Focus Group Interview, December 11, 2008).

#### Summary of Theme Four

Participants in both groups believed their interactions with others will benefit their aspirations to be educational transformers as future educators. They also understood their capability to connect and reach out to students, but most importantly they feel that the students will reach out for them because they have excellent interpersonal skills, which they believe the students will appreciate. They felt their people skills will also work in their quest to make changes as they work with their colleagues in education.

The self-efficacy of the current majors elevated their societal concern and commitment to improve the communities they would come in contact with in the future. They also saw that the morals and values they brought to the field of professional education were essential to further enhancing their sense of confidence. Due to these attributes they found themselves being able to access societal memberships that would ensure they would be able to obtain the resources to uplift their communities. The participants' narratives indicate that they feel by having the content and education preparation as well as polity and personal capital they will achieve their educational goals

as they complete their education program and as they move into their professional careers as educator.

The former majors, like the current majors, talked about the quality of their morals and values and the important role those qualities will play in them completing college and teaching in the future. Their main goal was to go back to schools in their home communities and be mentors to the students and serve as role models and friends to students that may be disadvantaged. As such, these participants stood equal with their current major counterparts in their belief that they “can still teach” and stated that they are only at a slight disadvantage compared to those that have taken education classes. However, they still think they can learn what they need to know when they become a teacher. They constantly talked about how the education component was difficult and demanding, so demanding that it seemed to be an impossible mission for them. This was the reason they withdrew from the program. While two of the former majors still wanted to teach, they could not see the fallacy in their belief that they could learn what they needed to know after they start teaching, even though they could not learn it while they were in the education program.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This case study examined the impact of sociocultural capital on the retention of African American secondary teacher education majors among participants at Legacy University. The study explored how the differences in capital among these former and current secondary education majors influenced their decisions to continue or not continue on the pathway of teacher education. This chapter discusses (a) the findings as they relate to the research questions that guided this study, (b) implications for teacher education programs, and (c) suggestions for future research.

#### Research Questions

##### *Research Question #1*

*How do African American secondary teacher education majors describe their sociocultural capital?*

Initially, I sought to investigate the social/cultural capital of the participants as defined by Gordon (1999). However, the results of the participants' narrative illustrated that their social/cultural capital was not isolated but was influenced by other forms of capital and also influenced the acquisition of other important cultural forms. Such capital included institutional, polity, and personal capital. Together these four forms of capital comprise the students' sociocultural capital. Consequently, I merged Bourdieu's (1973) theory of cultural capital with Gordon's (1999) theory of social capital, resulting

in the concept of sociocultural capital. Following is a discussion of how the participants described their capital.

Both cohorts described their sociocultural capital as being the strong foundation that assisted them in understanding the importance of education. Their sociocultural capital was described as being composed of meaningful family values, supportive cooperative “family-like” communities, and enhancing extracurricular activities. However, within the current majors group the participants described their sociocultural capital as being academically supported from early childhood in terms of having quality educational tools both material and non-material. They talked about the strong social networks they developed and maintained from their home, family, or community environments. Some of the current majors stated that their sociocultural capital was developed as a result of being able to engage in “high value” culture activities, including learning to play the piano, writing poetry, and painting art, in addition to developing relationships with prominent African Americans to utilized as role models. Former majors had supportive families, but most of them had limited resources in terms of opportunities and experiences that could have promoted more academic achievements prior to coming to college. Most of their extracurricular activities were school sponsored sports or neighborhood games that their parents encouraged to keep them out of trouble, but not to necessarily enhance their academic progress.

Sociocultural capital is described by the participants as being very influenced by their rural or urban communities. These communities influenced the major components of the participants’ social/cultural capital such as beliefs, behaviors, dispositions, and the



types of experiences they had prior to entering college. All of these elements were brought with them into the institution of higher education. These components helped them navigate and matriculate through the teacher education program and Legacy University. Both current and former secondary teacher education majors perceived that they had a good amount of social/cultural capital that they brought with them to Legacy University. Both groups also described their sociocultural capital as relevant. Based on the results of their narratives they seemed to perceive that because they possessed specific positive elements of social/cultural capital they were confident they would survive and succeed. For instance, the participants in both groups perceived that their sociocultural capital helped group members face various types of adverse circumstances in their hometown.

Based on many of the participants' discussions race was significant to the social/cultural foundation as it relates to their home communities. The discussion of race among the participants described a wide array of racial climates endured by these individuals. Some students were members of communities in which they faced negative experiences in different social and academic institutions of the communities they lived in because they were African American. Such incidents included de facto segregation experiences, derogatory name calling, and enduring a limited access to academic/social resources that would benefit African Americans. One participant discussed how his small hometown still had a White section of town and a Black section of town. This reveals a lot about the negative racial setting that he experienced growing up and demonstrates one factor in the type of social/cultural capital he was able to acquire from

his home-community. Further discussions about the overt racial comments made by people in authority, such as his teachers; also provide insight into how race was a part of the social/cultural capital of this participant. Moreover, the lack of ethnic minorities in positions of authority, especially in schools was another important factor that reveals how some of the participants' communities forced them to be cognizant of race and race relations. As a result of these experiences participants that had endured such circumstances were compelled to not only improve their own circumstances, but to be a role-model and a voice to uplift and encourage the next generation of students.

However, there were other participants who saw their communities as being beneficial to them in terms of providing positive outlooks regarding race, especially in terms of helping them develop positive self-images about being African American and about being capable of being a successful African American. Some of the participants discussed that their highly valued social/cultural foundation owed a lot to the positive African American community they were members of at home. Some of the participants discussed having the opportunity to see and socialize with affluent African Americans in their communities, which assisted them in believing that they must be part of the next generation of successful African Americans. They also realized that their experiences could make a difference to the upcoming generations by sharing their experiences and being able to be role models for the next generation. Such experiences provided these participants with a deeper understanding of society and a different lens through which they viewed the larger hegemonic structure of society. This lens influenced their perspective of education and the role of teacher education in their lives.

The participants' narratives linked sociocultural capital with critical race theory (CRT). CRT scholars believe that race is an analytical tool to compare and contrast social conditions, which can deepen the analysis of educational barriers for people of color, as well as illuminate how they resist and overcome these barriers (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). This is evidenced in the narratives of these participants who used their counterstories to share how their life experiences impacted their perspectives and decisions regarding their educational path. As CRT points out, race is a tool for understanding of inequities, as these participants did in describing their sociocultural capital and how that influenced their counterstory (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004).

Social/cultural capital was described as being salient because it provided these participants a foundation to build on other forms of capital such as institutional capital, in which they would gain more access to institutional resources. Current and former majors described institutional capital in terms of socio-professional networks derived from resources and relationships. Resources were the connections they made with peers, faculty or administrators at Legacy University. Relationships were also a very significant indicator that was constantly discussed by the participants with regard to how much opportunity they felt was available for them to develop social and professional networks that would benefit their progress and transitioning from student to professional.

Social/cultural capital also opened the door for these participants to build on their polity capital. The early acquiring of polity capital was a result of their social/cultural foundation which comprises of ones expressed deep societal concerns and a public commitment to improving their communities. They revealed that they wanted to be

advocates and active members of social groups that seek to uplift their society. As they matriculated through their college years and the teacher education program they learned more roles they could engage in so that they could gain more empathy and opportunity to be agents of change. Participants agreed that being an educator would provide them the opportunity to bring about change that could be revolutionary for themselves, their families and their communities. The participants defined this as using their education to model success for the next generation who may need to see people like them achieving high goals in life. These goals by both groups represented the need for them to find purpose in their careers. Both groups social/cultural foundation seem to place a great deal of emphasis on being aware of their home community and being aware that they were significant because they were some of the distinguished members of their home environment and much was expected of them in terms of responsibility to the next generation (Irizarry, 2007). This also represents how important it was for them to represent their families well and to achieve what others in their family had achieve or in other cases to pick up the torch and be the first to graduate in their family from an institution of higher learning (Garibaldi, 1984)

The participants in both groups addressed how the role of their valuable social/cultural capital assisted them in acquiring significant and valuable personal capital, such as the ability to assert themselves in social settings, maintaining strong self-efficacy, and a sense of power that would ensure success regardless of obstacles and barriers they may have to endure (Gordon, 1999). Again, there was an underlying message that one could overcome extensive barriers, such as racism or class bias, that you may have

endured and still may be enduring through acquiring education (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004; Gordon, 1999).

### *Research Question #2*

*How do African American secondary teacher education majors describe the utilization of their sociocultural capital in matriculating through the teacher education program? a) How do they as individuals utilize their sociocultural capital? b) How does the institution utilize their sociocultural capital? c) What is the impact of this utilization on their success in the teacher education program?*

The African American current secondary teacher education majors explained that they were able to use their sociocultural capital to get into college, which was not something that many African American students are able to do, as stated by some of the current and former major participants. It also was a major factor in assisting them in matriculating through the teacher education program by employing social and collaborative skills learned from their home environment. For current majors their sociocultural capital was what they greatly relied on to keep them motivated to stay in the teacher education program. Both groups also thought they were able to utilize their sociocultural capital to help them understand the importance of social networking and then employ that understanding in establishing and building social and professional relationships. Participants in the current majors' group also revealed their sociocultural capital assisted them in feeling confident, comfortable, and capable of reaching out to their peers in the teacher education environment as well as in the general college environment which helped them establish formidable and supportive relationships that

encouraged them to keep working through the obstacles they encountered in college and in teacher education. Similarly, their sociocultural capital was utilized in formulating collaborative and mentoring relationships with faculty and administrators that were significant in helping them maintain connections within their major and college environment.

Although sociocultural capital obtained by former majors was beneficial in keeping them retained in college, it did not provide them with enough capital to keep them in the teacher education program which seemed to require more individual autonomy, self-reliance and self-motivation to succeed. Although the former majors claimed to be self-sufficient in social and professional networking settings, most of them felt that the school of education did not reach out to them and therefore, they often felt lost and isolated in the school of education as opposed to their content area discipline. Their sociocultural capital seemed to be sufficient in settings that were less populated and had faculty that took more of a one on one approach with them. Due to the fact that the School of Education housed a much larger population of students and the fact that secondary education majors are not a part of that environment on a daily basis as they are with their content area the former majors admitted to being less comfortable with the people in that department. As such they made no real connections and did not feel like they were really important to the School of Education. Unlike the current majors who were able to navigate their own way to comfort in the School of Education, the former majors just felt that more should have been done by the faculty and administrators to embrace them and help them with navigating through the teacher education program.

When such actions were not put in place they determine they would cope with the situation by leaving the program and finding their own way to meet their academic and future career goals.

The participants' sociocultural capital also included a strong sense of self-esteem and self-accountability, in that they saw themselves as responsible for taking a lead role in formulating the environment that would help them succeed. As current majors were able to connect not only with their peers but also gain access to the institution's key players they were able to be positively impacted and gain assurance that they could and would succeed. The current majors built up a valuable amount of institutional capital as a result of their efforts to fully engage in the teacher education program's environment. They were able to get important program information earlier than some of the other students, so they seemed to be better prepared to meet deadlines. They were also sought out to participate in events that gave them a lot of exposure to the professional world of education, whereas these insightful opportunities were often missed by the former majors.

Some of the ways that former majors used their sociocultural capital included formulating peer relations that were socially supportive. These groups were important in helping the participants feel comfortable and interested in being retained at the university. Unfortunately, the groups did not provide a supportive base that would assist the former majors to be academically successful in the teacher education program. Also, unlike the current majors, they did not necessarily use this sociocultural capital to assist them in formulating academically supportive relationships in the teacher education program. The

former majors were able to establish “per chance” types of relationships with some members of the institution and these relationships helped them maintain the desire to stay at Legacy University. Yet, they did not have any relationships that emphasized the benefits of them staying in the teacher education program. As such they did not use their sociocultural capital to pursue collaborative networking environments that would provide them with the resources to be successful teacher candidates. Additionally, they took less interest in asserting themselves to establish relationships with teacher education faculty and personnel than most of the current education majors. The former majors, although they saw themselves as being go-getters, initiative driven, and very sociable like their counter cohort group, they placed the responsibility of connecting with students and reaching out to potential candidates on the individuals in the School of Education. They felt that the stakeholders in the School of Education had not done enough to reach out to them. As such they built up less institutional capital, which could have provided more value to their social/cultural capital. The former majors felt they had a great rapport with their content area faculty and personnel. According to the former majors the faculty and personnel in their content area reached out to them and made them feel comfortable.

The current majors’ group agreed that the teacher education program’s faculty often affirmed their sociocultural capital by having an open door policy for students. This encouraged them to establish collaborative relationships with their faculty. Much like their families in their home-communities who often used encouragement to motivate the participants some faculty members in the teacher education program really tried to use words of encouragement and supportive devices to assist the students in overcoming



some of the tangible barriers that teacher candidates faced. The participants felt their sociocultural capital provided them with the desire, commitment, and determination to pursue education as their career and the program facilitators and faculty did try to use these components to retain students in the program. Their sociocultural capital was used to open doors for them in teacher education and provide them with a lot of beneficial opportunities that would better prepare them for their future as an educator, for instance one of the current majors received the opportunity to be a Teaching Fellow, which yielded a variety of positive, beneficial opportunities for him as he matriculated through the program. As a result of being in this organization the participant was more willing to endure the challenges of the teacher education program. The participants revealed that they thought that students with the opportunity to engage in such prominent organizations as Teaching Fellows gave them a sense of power in that it provided them with the opportunity to participate in an organization that is semi-professional and prepares them for their future career path.

Yet these efforts were not consistent enough or overarching enough. For instance, some of the current majors did not qualify for such programs as Teaching Fellows and felt that more programs similar to it should be offered so that more students can take advantage of such opportunities.

The former majors stated that their efforts on the path to becoming a teacher by traditional means were often thwarted by the teacher education program's barriers. Such barriers included financial burdens, lack of assistance to students to help them meet the academic requirements of the program (ie: passing licensure exams). These issues made

it difficult for them to be retained and kept them stressed as they attempted to pursue their teacher education credentials. Although they agreed that the faculty was very good, they did not see the methods utilized by the program's faculty and administration as impacting enough to keep students in the program and that such methods used did not illustrate real effort on the part of the program to retain students. They felt that there was little reaching out by the faculty and administrators in the School of Education. They were lost, uninformed, and undervalued in the teacher education program. In essence, according to the participants, there was no or very little appreciation or recognition of the sociocultural capital and polity capital these students brought to the program.

The current majors believed that their sociocultural capital was used to assist them in engaging fully in the teacher education program and the university in general. Many of the current majors utilized their sociocultural capital to gain leadership roles in the teacher education program as well as in the general university environment. Overall, the participants agreed that the university in general made better use of the sociocultural capital of both cohorts. Both groups explained extensively how they felt that the university seemed to reach out to them and meet their needs with regard to comfortability. The university offered a lot of social organizations, professional networking activities such as career fairs and departmental internships. In addition, the university provided more outreach and general support mechanisms for students to keep them retained in college. This encouraged the participants' sense of agency because they felt valued and thought the university made major efforts to keep them satisfied and make them feel wanted. Within specific content areas, most of the participants felt valued and

important. Most of these participants from both groups felt empowered in their content area. For instance, most of the former majors had great relationships with at least one person in their content area, but most felt like they were really a major part of the content area that they represented. They discussed how all of the major faculty and chairpersons knew them by name, which was very significant to these students because this provided them with a sense of importance and made them feel comfortable presenting concerns.

The secondary teacher education program could have better utilized the sociocultural capital of the former majors by reaching out to them more, making them feel valued in the teacher education program. These participants' sociocultural capital provided them with a strong sense of self, but they also relied on cooperative communities to support them in order for them to reach their goals. As such the teacher education program should have more formal and organized mentorship programs. The former majors' sociocultural capital gave them a strong sense of self-efficacy and a "can do anything" mentality if provided the appropriate resources, but they lacked financial resources. As such the teacher education program could have provided more opportunities for average, but willing students to engage in opportunities that they could participate in to relieve some of the financial burdens required in the teacher education program. Some suggestions from the participants included moderate compensation for observations and internships or some compensated tutorial programs that secondary teacher education students might be able to participate in to cover the cost of licensure examinations. Additionally, since many of the required courses in teacher education are offered as online only options with no face-to-face option, there may need to be some

way that the program offset that additional cost to students by offering secondary students more opportunities to get teacher education program grant funds or small additional scholarships.

The impact of the utilization of participants' sociocultural capital on their success in the teacher education program is lucid for the current majors. The current majors frequently discussed their ability to persevere because they were "go-getters" and they knew how to take the initiative in order to achieve their goals. The social/cultural foundation that was transmitted to them from their parents, family, community and extracurricular activities provided them with a social/cultural that valued overcoming challenges; in addition to this social/ cultural capital they achieved significant personal capital. The combination of social/cultural capital and personal capital assisted these participants in developing resiliency that kept them committed to the teacher education program despite its challenges. Their resiliency was also the result of the penetrating belief they had in their abilities and adaptability qualities. They consistently referred to their ability to overcome or face obstacles with success and often reference other circumstances in which they had proven themselves in this way. Most of the participants seemed motivated by the challenges they faced in the teacher education program. Based on their backgrounds they knew they could endure and be successful as a professional educator as a result of facing these challenges. This represented a deep spirituality in terms of believing in their own capabilities, which the students relied upon to get them through the program and keep them motivated toward their ultimate goal. Phillips (2000) reported that religious affiliation and frequency of spiritual practice were positively

related to African American students' adjustment to college and that greater levels of adjustment then contributed to greater academic success. In a study on the roles of religion and spirituality in relation to the academic performance of college students, Walker and Dixon (2002) found that African Americans who indicated higher levels of spiritual beliefs and behaviors had higher grade point averages, more academic honors, and fewer academic suspensions and probations. Because of their significance within the broader African American culture, religious and spiritual elements are likely to be used by African American students in the context of dealing with various life stressors and adversities.

The former majors relied on their self-efficacy or capability to cope and make their dreams come true regardless of the obstacles they found difficult to overcome. Their sociocultural capital nurtured a positive sense of self and capability to do well. This foundation allowed the former majors to acquire a sense of personal capital that was instrumental in shaping their ideas about how they wanted to move forward towards their academic goals. Much like the current majors, the former majors had a strong sense of self and a deep belief in their abilities to reach their goals regardless of the barriers and obstacles they had to face in the teacher education program. Despite the fact that these participants did not continue in the teacher education program they did not believe that such a decision would negatively impact their futures. As previously mentioned two of the former majors still believed it would be possible for them to be educators. Similar to the current majors, through the intersectionality of their sociocultural capital and their personal capital they managed to develop a strict belief in their capabilities to reach their

career goals. The belief system that they developed convinced them that they could discover alternative routes to a career as a teacher. Therefore they dismissed the idea that traditional protocol and policies would be more important than their determination and resiliency. This sense of self was imbued with spirituality which assisted in their maintenance of faith that they would not only graduate, but also teach. The literature supports this notion in that the motivation for the career development of African American college students are directly tied to their level of intensity towards religion or spirituality (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Cole, 2006). This belief in self, spirituality and faith which assisted them in believing that things would eventually work out in their favor that they acquired through sociocultural capital and personal capital. The former majors utilized all of these elements to establish the justification for finding alternative routes to becoming a teacher. It is interesting that spirituality, more so than religion, seemed to be a dominant factor in the career development of many African American students, according to current literature. The current literature highlights the role of spirituality in the career development of African American college students in providing critical emotional support during the process of choosing a career. Rather than engaging in self-doubts about choice of career or educational pursuits, the literature supports the idea that African American college students felt that their life's purpose was being fulfilled through their career choice (Constantine, Miville, Warren, & Gainor, 2006). This is evident in my study in that participants in both cohorts felt that their career choice as a teacher was a calling or something their faith and/or beliefs led them to pursue and as

such they will be successful in fulfilling that goal regardless of the barriers they have to confront.

### *Research Question #3*

*Does gender and/or socioeconomic status affect their decisions and descriptions regarding their teacher education experiences?*

The participants in both groups initially stated that they thought there was little impact on their decisions or descriptions regarding their teacher education experiences as a result of gender. However, within the context of their answers both groups indicated that they felt that Black males were much more strongly encouraged by administrators and faculty members in the teacher education program. They felt that this was due to the high value placed on increasing Black male representation in the classroom. However, both groups also indicated that for the most part there was no better academic treatment for males or females in the program. They felt that both gender groups were held equally accountable for meeting the criteria for successful completion of the program.

The former major group revealed that they did perceive a difference in gender with regard to teachers and how they themselves responded. In the former major group, which consisted of all Black males, they all revealed that they responded better to female teachers and saw females as better teachers for them because they usually had a more nurturing side. This is interesting because although most of these male participants still wanted to teach, but thought that they did not need to pursue a teaching career by going through the extensive criteria that the program required. This provides insight into the perception of what these participants perceive about whether teaching is a real profession.

Although they do provide clear statements that teaching is an important profession they also deem it as a profession that is female-oriented and therefore should perhaps not have such stressful and strenuous requirements; especially since the most important component according to their perception is to have “people skills” and be “nurturing.”

Another important difference among the males in the two cohorts was how they engaged in reactive coping strategies to overcome difficulties they faced within the program. The current males who seemed to have a strong academic identity felt less pressure to engage in extreme reactive coping strategies. Often times they felt very comfortable about asking questions or seeking out help when dealing with issues related to their secondary teacher education program. They felt very comfortable with going to their professors or peers to ask questions and let others know that they were having some problems. They did hesitate or feel that their masculinity was threatened because they did not know something or needed to get assistance. However, the former majors were much more likely to adopt the reactive coping strategy, in which they sought more extreme and individual methods of dealing with challenges they faced in teacher education. It is important to note that most of these males had a less prominent academic identity than their counter cohort males. Although they felt strongly that they had capabilities for succeeding academically, they did admit to having some deficiency in certain areas like writing. They also verbalized that they had problems seeking out help if they determined they needed it. However, when these participants did have issues they often would determine that the issues, problem or challenge was not due to any deficiency on their part, but rather something to do with the lack of effort on the part of



the teacher education program. As such these males often had a high self-image of themselves and their capabilities although these attributes were not noted in their actions. However, because these participants had this perceived self-image they would often invoke the reactive coping strategy, which would lead them to determine that the program was the problem and not them as individuals. Much of the research characterizes Black masculinity and the Black male experience as a deviant, if not pathological, compensatory adaptation to the circumstances of their position in the race and class structure (McClure, 2006). Also, as illustrated with Black Masculinity Theory (Gause, 2008), Black males often rely on their own wits to solve their problems and see weakness in admitting they need help or in seeking out help. The males in the former majors cohort often tried to cope or “fix” their own problems. This resulted in some of the former majors making extreme choices such as giving up on completing the teacher education program even though they still had an interest in teaching. In making such decisions they revealed that they did not consult with anyone prior to making their choices and did not give a lot of consideration to the potential long-term issues they may face by making such quick and ill-informed decisions. Again, as Black Masculinity Theory according to Gause (2008) describes how Black males often believe they can and will be able to adjust and adapt to whatever situation comes along as a result of their decision-making, but the most important thing for them is to feel in control and self-reliant when it comes to making decisions, this is particularly important for those Black males that have more non-dominant social/cultural capital (Gordon, 1999; Gause, 2008). It is this posturing of the Black male being assertive and in control that may be more important than making wise

decisions (Gause, 2008; Noguera, 2008). It is well-reported that Black masculinity often comes into question for those Black males that seek higher education in the first place, as such some of these Black males from the more non-dominant social/cultural backgrounds that seek higher education must also find ways to hold onto their perceive Black masculinity and power ( Matthew, 2002,Gause, 2008).

### Implications for Teacher Education Programs

The implication of the results for secondary teacher education programs at HBCUs begins with full recognition and integration of the students' sociocultural capital derived from their social/cultural foundation. Teacher education programs should be sure they understand what the majority of students bring with them to college regarding background, community, and extracurricular experiences; but equally as important these programs should be sure to recognize what their students do not bring to the program upon entering. As such teacher education programs should learn to mesh what students bring with what the program needs for them to acquire. For example, participants in this study talked about the importance of collaborative learning environments that they had at home, even though many of these students attended schools that focused on individual task mastering, the former majors that found it difficult to be retained in the teacher education program had difficulties in academic settings that did not employ collaborative and cooperative learning strategies. Most of the former majors talked about the lack of relationship building that made it difficult for them to get information. They also found the academic environment difficult to get through. Due to the fact they felt they had no one, including peers, to collaborate with they lost interest in staying in the program.

These participants discussed how they always had someone to go to if they had problems in their content area. They had both faculty as well as other students that they could collaborate with on any kind of issues they had to face, including academic problems. These collaborative opportunities made them feel more comfortable and capable. As a result these collaborative learning environments made them feel more connected and, therefore made them want to stay in the program. It is important for teacher education program stakeholders to keep in mind that a lot of teacher education program requirements are centered on individual effort. Teacher education programs at HBCUs should offer more assistance to their students in transitioning from the accustomed collaborative home environments to individual task accomplishments.

Another, component is that many African American students prefer to have one-on-one instruction format and not online classes because not only are they more expensive, but many of the students find it difficult to keep up with online courses because it is vastly different than what they have been accustomed to throughout their K-12 school experience. Teacher education programs at HBCUs should provide tutorials and a better transition to get students acclimated with online instruction.

Teacher education programs should do more to focus on how they can incorporate more of the students' diverse background into their learning community in order to improve retention in the program. Furthermore, the HBCU should not take for granted that African American students on their campuses are able to fully engaged and transition automatically into their community. Although many come with similar backgrounds that are related to the overall university environment, there are still others who may find it

difficult to navigate their way into formal organizations of the institution, resulting in a negative impact their ability to be retained and successful in the university.

Sociocultural capital of African American students in teacher education programs at HBCUs and the institutional capital they acquire offer a lot of opportunities for the program to improve retention among teacher candidates. African American students in teacher education programs have sociocultural capital that is rich in the elements of comfortability and relationship building. Based on these findings for this study, African Americans often find comfort when they feel valued. African American students often find it difficult to sustain in any program if they feel they and their cultural behaviors and norms are not valued and embraced by the program's leaders. As such teacher education programs should really focus on establishing cohorts, faculty and peer mentorship programs, and other opportunities that would allow these students to formulate relationships within the program from the time they initially enter the school of education. Ensuring that students are aware of the professional hierarchy within the teacher education program is also important because it will allow students to know who they can contact if they have questions, concerns, or need resources.

Both teacher education programs and HBCUs should continue to focus on incorporating policies and practices that will offer African Americans opportunities to increase their institutional capital. This can be accomplish by the teacher education program recognizing the power and impact of its own institutional capital which can be used to foster initiatives that will lead to students having more accessibility to resources

and financial relief from the traditional monetary burdens that many of these students currently face.

Teacher education programs at HBCUs should also recognize the polity capital that many of their African American students build as a result of their social/cultural foundation. It is important that teacher education programs at HBCUs understand the purpose that many of their teacher candidates have for going into teaching. Most of these students' primary purpose for considering teaching as a career choice stems from their desire to uplift their communities and serve as a role model for upcoming generations of students. As such, teacher education programs should use this knowledge to continue to motivate teacher candidates to be retained. Teacher education programs can provide opportunities for teacher candidates to begin employing their polity capital by presenting various ways these candidates can prepare to be transformative education practitioners. Coursework and field experiences should consistently focus on this important motivating factor that many African American teacher candidates use to keep them interested in the field.

Teacher education programs at HBCUs should be aware that the sociocultural capital that African American teacher candidates have offer them a unique personal capital that they use to keep them motivated and driven toward their goals. The self-efficacy component of most teacher education majors should be capitalized on by the teacher education program. These students have a strong sense of capability when given the correct resources and opportunities they are capable of achieving any goal. Teacher education programs should determine how to embrace and promote the self-efficacy of

their students by coupling these aspects with the academic resources these students need to be successful and retained in teacher education.

This study implies that African American teacher education candidates bring important components to teacher education programs by way of their sociocultural capital. Students, institutions, and teacher education programs need to better utilize this capital by valuing its core elements. Students should become aware of how important their backgrounds are for improving the much needed diversity in the educational setting. The counterstorytelling African Americans bring to the field is essential to our multicultural educational environments, according to Critical Race Theory. By understanding the importance of their unique backgrounds African American students can be further motivated in knowing that teacher education programs at HBCUs and PWIs need them in terms of what they bring to 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

This study emphasizes the need for African American college students to feel comfortable and capable to completely matriculate through a teacher education program. They also have to have the opportunity to utilize their social skills to develop strong social and professional networks within teacher education programs at HBCUs and PWIs. Development of these networks may further substantiate their sense of self-efficacy and capabilities to endure through the rigorous program's requirements.

Lastly, this study implies that teacher education programs at both HBCUs and PWIs should take into account the impact of African American students' belief systems. This includes recognizing how religion and spirituality affect their motivation in terms of their career choices and development. The literature states that religious affiliation and

frequency of spiritual practice were positively related to African American students' adjustment to college and that greater levels of adjustment then contributed to greater academic success (Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Cole, 2006). This is important for teacher education programs to understand when trying to understand and resolve issues related to African American retention.

### Implications for Further Research

Based on the finding of this research, implications for future research include the following:

- A. Follow-up qualitative studies on a broader scale to include a larger pool of African American participants and a longer data collection time period.
- B. More studies on the role of forms of human resource capital that African American college students bring to teacher education programs and its impact on their retention in secondary teacher education.
- C. A quantitative study that utilizes a survey to be administered to a larger pool of current and former education majors to determine if these findings can be further generalized to most African American teacher education majors

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## APPENDIX A

### Participants' Consent Form

#### UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

##### CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN PARTICIPANT

Project Title: What is the Power Of Capital?: African American Teacher Education Students' Perspectives On The Significance of Socio-Cultural Capital in Matriculating Through Teacher Education at an Historically Black College or University

Project Director: Dr. Ceola Ross Baber/Ms. Sonya Ricks

Participant's Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

We are conducting a study to help us understand what African American secondary education students' believe about how socio-cultural capital affects their completion of a teacher education program. You were selected to participate in this study because you are currently a teacher candidate in one of the secondary teacher education programs or you are a former secondary education major. You will be asked to write an essay that gives some brief biographical information, describes why you decided to pursue teaching as a profession, and describes your experiences in NCA&TSU's teacher education program. It should take you 2-3 hours to write the essay. You will also be asked to participate in three 1-hour individual interviews and one 2-hour focus group interview. The researcher will audiotape the interviews.

There is minimal risk for you to participate in this research. You might experience a little discomfort with some of the questions but you will not be forced to answer any questions that cause you discomfort. Your real name will not be used in the study and you will be able to choose your own pseudonym. Following the closure of the project the data will be stored at the researcher's residence for five years. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet; only the researcher will have access to this file cabinet. At the end of the five years following the completion of the research project the data will be shredded and burned.

There are several potential benefits of this study. You will benefit because the study will assist you in understanding the social and cultural capital you bring into the teacher education program and how you can better use this capital to successfully complete the program. Future teacher education students can benefit in the same way. Teacher education programs at both HBCUs and PWIs will benefit by gaining a better understanding of how to affirm the social and cultural capital of racial/ethnic minorities and how this capital can be used to increase recruitment and retention of African American students. The potential benefit for K-12 schools will an increased pool of African American teachers.

As a token of appreciation for your participation in this study, you will receive a \$10 lunch gift card. This gift card will be dispensed during the focus group interview. In order for participants to qualify to receive the gift card they must participate in the required phases of data collection for the duration of the data collection process.

By signing this consent form, you agree that you understand the procedures and any risks and benefits involved in this research. You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any time without penalty or prejudice; your participation is entirely voluntary. Your privacy will be protected because you will not be identified by name as a participant in this project.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved the research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered by calling Mr. Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. Questions regarding the research itself will be answered by Dr. Ceola Ross Baber (crbaber@uncg.edu) or Sonya Ricks (336-706-0936). Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue participation in the project.

By signing this form, you are affirming that you are 18 years of age or older and are agreeing to participate in the project described to you by Sonya Ricks.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX B

### Current Majors' Interview Protocol

Name:

Date:

Time:

1. What do you determine to be your socio-economic status?
2. How do you think your background and family life experiences shaped your thoughts and beliefs about education?
3. Why did you choose to attend A&T?
4. How well do you think you fit in at A&T? Why?
5. What qualities did you bring to college that has helped you be successful in your program? What qualities do you think you may have lacked that made your college experience a challenge? How has this lacking impacted your progress?
6. What kinds of professional relationship(s) have you developed within your secondary education program? How do you perceive the faculty and administration's connection with students in your secondary education program?
7. How would you describe your comfort level in your secondary ed. program? Why do think that?
8. Do you had to adjust your attitudes or beliefs in order to succeed in your secondary education program? In what way? Why do you feel these changes were necessary?



## APPENDIX C

### Former Majors' Interview Protocol

Name:

Date:

Time:

1. What do you determine to be your socio-economic status? Why?
3. How do you think your background and family life experiences shaped your thoughts and beliefs about education? Discuss the community that you lived in relative to the social groups you were part of, your schooling experience prior to coming to college, diversity, etc.
3. Why did you choose to attend A&T?
4. How well do you think you fit in at A&T? Why?
5. What social groups do you belong to at this time?
6. What qualities did you bring to college that has helped you be successful in your program? What qualities do you think you may have lacked that made your college experience a challenge? How has this lacking impacted your progress?
7. What kinds of professional relationship(s) have you developed within your secondary education program? How do you perceive the faculty and administrators' connection with students in your secondary education program? (include content area, education area, and institutional wide administrators)
8. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being not at all comfortable and 10 being extremely comfortable, how would you describe your comfort level in your secondary ed. program? Why do you say that? Provide some examples, if possible of when you did or did not feel comfortable in your program.

9. Did you feel that you had to adjust your attitudes or beliefs in order to be successful in your secondary education program? If so, In what way? (If not, why?) Why do you feel these changes were necessary?
10. Explain how you feel about the opportunities for networking in the secondary ed program that you were in, this includes your content area and education area. Did you ever participate in any networking opportunities?

## APPENDIX D

### Current Majors' Focus Group Interview Protocol

**Focus Group Members:**

**Date:**

**Time:**

1. Do you think education majors are highly valued in the institution? In your content area? In comparison to other majors on campus?
2. Have you noted differentiated treatment of any kind based on gender in your secondary education program?
3. How does your home community (upbringing) compare to what you have experienced in this college campus community.
4. How do you feel about the extensive use of online courses in the education portion of your program?
5. Have you had any personal experience regarding gender bias in your program? In the university?
6. In discussing school & your future career choices with family (parents) what has been stressed more, doing something that you enjoy or making money? Something else?
7. What hobbies do you have? What got you interested in those things? What about the hobbies of your parents?
8. In what way(s) do you think your education will pay off for you in the future?

## APPENDIX E

### Former Majors' Focus Group Interview Protocol

**Focus Group Members:**

**Date:**

**Time:**

1. As a former secondary ed. major, do you think education majors are highly valued in the institution? In your content area? In comparison to other majors on campus?
2. Do you think gender plays a significant role at this institution? In secondary education? Did you note any differentiated treatment of any kind based on gender in your secondary education program?
3. Have you had any personal experience regarding gender bias in your program? In the university?
4. How does your home community (upbringing) compare or not compare to what you have experienced in this college campus community.
5. Did you have any experience with online courses while in your secondary education program? How do you feel about the use of online courses in the education portion of your program?
6. How much do you think the relationship building that you experienced while being an education major factored into your decision to not pursue education, as a major? Did you discuss your decision to change your major with any of the faculty in education prior to doing so? Why or Why not?
7. In discussing school & your future career choices with family (parents) what has been stressed more, doing something that you enjoy or making money? Something else?

8. What hobbies do you have? What got you interested in those things? What about the hobbies of your parents?
9. Two of you still want to be teachers, so I still have to wonder why you would change your majors from education? Can you explain to me what disconnect that occurred that made you decide to not pursue education for study, but want to still pursue it as a career?
10. In what way(s) do you think your education will pay off for you in the future?

**APPENDIX F**  
**Emerging Themes Data Analysis Chart**

<b>THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>DATA POINTS (no. of participant responses)</b>
Social/Cultural Capital	Social /Cultural Foundation	Home/Family	Family supportive (14)
			Family structure (7)
			Family/parents stressed education(12)
		Community	Socio-economic status(11)
			Demographics (13)
			Rural v.s Urban Not much to do in a small town (8) Exposed to a lot of different things in big city (7)
			Race Relations (5)
		Extracurricular	Pre-educator experiences (14)
			Participates in high-culture activity (8)
	Played a lot of sports (7)		
	Natural Cultural Assimilation Environment	Comfort (succor)	Fit in here (20)
			Like a family (10)
		Legacy	Family/parents went here (8) HBCU tradition important (5)
Institutional Capital	Networks	Resources	Good faculty in sec. ed. program (12)
			Have good connections (14)
	Relationships	Made good relationships here (15)	
		Participation in academic social groups (4)	

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>DATA POINTS (no. of participant responses)</b>
Polity Capital	Transformational Attributes	Revolutionaries	Make a difference (17)
			Make a change in school system (14)
			Be a credit to community (10)
			Improve my community (8)
			Improve life's status (9)
		Role Modeling	Inspire students like me (9)
			Be a credit to my community
Personal Capital	Self-efficacy	Interaction	Sociable person (14)
			Have people skills (8)
		Initiative	I'm a go getter, determined (8)
			Great morals and values, all I need (7)
		Capable	Can still teach (7)
			Can learn what I need to know when I am a teacher (6)
			No need for education courses (8)