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# Understanding the Academic Success of Black Caribbean Immigrant Students Who Have Earned a Graduate Degree at an Ivy League University

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# UNDERSTANDING THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF BLACK CARIBBEAN IMMIGRANT STUDENTS WHO HAVE EARNED A GRADUATE DEGREE AT AN IVY LEAGUE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

Submitted by

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## APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE


**Sheila Newton-Moses,** has successfully defended and made the required modifications to

the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Summer Semester 2018**.


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submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

**Abstract**

Caribbean-American students who pursue higher education at Ivy League institutions most often maintain a strong ethnic identification with the race and culture of their birth. As described by Waters (2001a) and Vickerman (2001), the ethnic pride and solidarity of these first and second-generation Caribbean immigrants have made a positive impact on their self-image, thus enabling many to become upwardly mobile as they confront prejudice and resist societal misperceptions of their culture (Waters, 2001; Vickerman, 2001). Therefore, even after they have spent many years absorbing American culture while "sitting comfortably at the black and white table," Caribbean-Americans do not see themselves as exemplars of European culture (Waters, 2001; Vickerman, 2001).

Waters (1996; 1999), believes that West Indians prefer to create a positive association with race and that double marginalization rarely exists in the self-perception of Black Caribbean immigrant students.  However, studies reveal that a growing number of researchers are examining issues to determine what students are doing "right," compared to what they are doing "wrong" (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, and Treviño, 1997; Fries-Britt, 2002; Shushok and Hulme, 2006; Griffin, 2006).

With the understanding that first and second-generation Black Caribbean immigrants view race and the issues of blackness differently than Black Americans, the research questions are implicitly informed and formulated accordingly. Therefore, this study examined the perception of Black Caribbean immigrant graduates from Ivy League institutions as they explained the phenomena of how their successes are often influenced by social, cultural and economic factors to overcome barriers to graduate degree from the Ivy League Universities.

The study sought to analyze the perception of these graduates, particularly the willingness of black immigrant graduates to step away from a deficit model because of one or more of the following factors to gain visibility in their efforts. These included: (1) the increasing enrolment of Black Caribbean immigrant students in Ivy League universities; (2) The strategies Black Caribbean immigrant students used to advance their standards of excellence; (3) The Black Caribbean immigrant students' perception of the Ivy Leagues and how this perception influenced their academic and professional lives; and (4) The growing need for diversity in higher education in order to influence positive psychological discourse in education.

Qualitative data were collected from Black Caribbean immigrants who graduated from Ivy League University in the USA. Fifteen (15) semi-structured, personal interviews were conducted. The results enhanced, supported and added to the limited research on Black Caribbean immigrant students' journey through the Ivy Leagues and their lived experiences. The findings provided insight on how early socialization, intrinsic motivation, cultural awareness, teachers input, academic preparedness, parents support, extended family support, the grit mind-set and community reinforcement shaped and informed these students' ability to navigate the Ivy Leagues to graduate. Subsequently, the analysis revealed that these characteristics mentioned above all worked together to provide the understanding of the academic success of Caribbean immigrant students. The participants recommended that more Black Caribbean immigrant students should be given the opportunities, as well as the resources and support to navigate these selective universities. Additionally, one recommendation was that a feeder institution could provide efficient use of human resources and could help enhance talents. This could be

accomplished by harnessing growth and shaping the direction and effectiveness of what

motivates and sustains Caribbean immigrant students to greater nation building.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family with special emphasis on three extraordinary people in my life:

My sister, Esther Gail Newton;

My brother, Dr. Isaac Newton;

and

My daughter, Nikko Alexander Fredericka Moses

You have given me the courage and the strength to persevere. Robbed of your efforts, kindness and support, this task would have remained a dream unrealized. The only way I felt the gift of your presence, during the design and completion of this dissertation was through the effect of your time.  What is believed inspires everything. You believed in me.

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**"The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they,**

**while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night."**

(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1858, S.10)

**CHAPTER 1**

**Introduction**

As the discussion continues regarding whether or not the increase in black immigrant students enrolled in higher education, especially the Ivy League, is a restitution for Affirmative Action, one thing is certain: The United States is the top nation in the world that provides many Caribbean immigrant students with the opportunity to obtain an academic degree (Massey, Mooney, Torres, and Charles, 2007). In 1980, approximately 286,000 students enrolled in U.S. colleges. However, by 1999, there was a significant increase, with over 481,000 international students enrolled (U.S. Dept. of Census, 1999). Since then, several reports have confirmed the continued trend, which shows a steady percentage increase of immigrant students pursuing higher education in the U.S. For example, the 2011 Open Doors Report, revealed a 5% increase in international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the U.S. during that year. Similarly, the report presented by the US Department of Education (2012), suggested that between 2007 and 2008, nearly 15% of all black undergraduate students enrolled in U.S. postsecondary institutions were immigrants.

Although most of the immigrant population in the United States are predominantly Asians and Hispanics, the Black immigrant population made up of mostly African and Caribbean nationals, have more than doubled during the period 1990-2010 (Capps, McCabe, and Fix, 2011). Interestingly, between 2000 and 2009, while the total immigrant population rose by approximately 23%, within that increase, the Black immigrant population grew by 34% (Capps et al., 2011). Thus, by 2009, Black immigrants accounted for approximately 8.5% of the total

immigrant population, contributing to at least 20% of the U.S. black population growth between 2001 and 2006 (Kent, 2007).

While the academic achievements of African Americans, Whites, Jews, and Asians are publicized, especially if they take place at Ivy League institutions, very little is written about Caribbean academic excellence (Waters, 1996a). However, a study conducted by Massey et al., (2007), indicated that Caribbean Black immigrants formed the largest component of immigrants admitted to the Ivy Leagues. By region, the Caribbean takes the lead, representing 43.1% of black immigrant's students at selective colleges, followed by Africa with 28.6%, Latin America with 7.4%, and other countries representing a combined 20.8%. By country, former British colonies, Jamaica and Nigeria, with 20.5% and 17% respectively, are at the top (Massey et al., 2007).

In academia, education in the Ivy League remains the official standard of excellence within the Caribbean-American middle class. This goal has served to inspire the perseverance that is essential to personal success. Since the study, "Black Immigrants and Black Natives Attending Selective Colleges and Universities in the United States" conducted by Massey et al., (2007), there have been other studies that took a fresh approach in observing other aspects of this immigrant population. These studies suggest that the significant academic accomplishments of Black Caribbean immigrants in the United States may partly be attributed to their previous socialization in similar cultural surroundings in the Caribbean, where they are the ethnic majority and have opportunities to pursue personal and economic success (Corra and Kimuna, 2009; Dodoo, 1997). Additionally, academic motivation and the pursuit of excellence are important criteria in predicting a person's educational goals and future achievement (Aydin and Coskun, 2011). Thus, the quest for excellence is shaped by the manifestation of specific social,

economic, historical, religious and cultural contexts of persons with a Caribbean background (Hughes and Chen, 1997).

The pursuit of academic excellence is common to many cultures. However, it is particularly characteristic of Caribbean immigrants (Massey et al., 2007), where the ideals are taught at an early age and nurtured as priority values (Waters, 1996a). These ideas are noted in several success factors. One such success factor is the generational transfer of excellence among Caribbean immigrant students. Highly placed among the Caribbean's many areas of achievement, such as music, sports, and tourism, is its long history of academic excellence which is revered. This academic achievement is a cultural hallmark of this small region.  For example, it has produced three Nobel Laureates. In 1979, Sir W. Arthur Lewis from Saint Lucia for pioneering research in economics; in 1992, Derrick Walcott, a playwright from Saint Lucia and, in 2001, Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, TC, a writer from Trinidad and Tobago.

Unique to the cultural adaptation of Caribbean immigrants are specific strategies that are deployed, not only as value-based abstractions, but also as integral parts of their behavior, thinking, and attitude towards academic success in the USA (Peter and Massey, 1983). Caribbean students are motivated, ambitious and likely to succeed. They also have higher GPA's, acclimatize readily, and are persistent (Cutrona and Al, 1994). Still, to survive, they developed coping skills, which was needed to be accepted in both black and white communities (Peters and Massey, 1988 as cited in McAdoo, 2007). This bi-cultural socialization of Caribbean-Americans enabled their black children to interact in both societies, often shifting between the two.  The role of Ivy League universities is considered critical to harnessing and replenishing those ideal strategies and resources for academic excellence, that ultimately are expected to fulfil a student's aspirations for well-grounded social, cultural, economic and professional success.

Still, despite the increasing presence of Black immigrant students on college campuses, their educational experiences are often overlooked; especially when they are reviewed in combination with Black/African-American students (Kim, 2014). To date, there is insufficient research comparing the academic achievement of Black Caribbean students at Ivy League universities to their counterparts (Massey et al., 2007). Additionally there is little evidence of whether any further research was conducted on the question of, why Caribbean immigrant students in elite Ivy League universities prioritize and value such an education. However, there have been gains made in other studies that have started to examine other aspects of this population. Typical studies of this type include, In the Ivy or Nothing (Burrell-McRae, 2011); Race, Income and Enrollment Patterns in Highly Selected Colleges, (Reardon, Baker, and Klasik, 2012) and Immigrant and African-Americans (Waters, Kasinitz and Asad, 2014), among others.

Given the dearth of research in understanding the role of Caribbean immigrant students at highly selective universities and colleges, this research extended the line of inquiry initiated by Massey et al., in 2007, to pioneer the study of different aspects of this immigrant population.

**Background of the Study**

Approximately 13% of blacks within the United States, between the ages of 18 and 19, represent first or second-generation immigrants (Massey et al., 2007). However, when compared to native Blacks in the United States, immigrants - especially Caribbean immigrants - have an extremely larger representation at the most selective US colleges and universities, (Bennett and Lutz, 2009; Massey et al., 2007). Various writers, (Mitchell, 2005; Thomas, 2012; Kent, 2007), have indicated that the Black Caribbean population is the largest minority sub-group in the

United States. This is evident in the increased numbers of first, second and even third generation

Black Caribbean immigrants attending many high performing colleges (Jaret and Reitzes, 2009;

Massey et al., 2007).

Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (NLSF) researchers examined the

enrolment of black students at 28 selective public and private institutions, colleges and

universities (Massey et al., 2007). Table 1 below further highlights the breakdown of the black

native/black immigrant ratio in the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen:

| Table 1 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Composition of Black Population by Immigrant and Native Origins in the NLSF** | | | |
| **Kind of School** | **% Native Origin** | **% Immigrant Origin** | |
| All public | 76.9 | 76.9 | |
| All private | 71.2 | 28.8 | |
| Private universities | 71.3 | 28.7 | |
| Private colleges | 70.7 | 29.3 | |
| 10 most selective | 64.4 | 35.6 | |
| 10 least selective | 76.2 | 23.8 | |
| Ivy League | 59.4 | 40.6 | |
| All institutions | 73.3 | 26.7 | |
| Compilation of National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen (as cited in Massey et al., 2007 p.248.) | | | |

The study revealed that of the total, approximately 27% represented first or second-generation black immigrants, when compared to those of native origin.  Interestingly, the survey also showed that at private colleges, the ratio of immigrants was higher than at public institutions. For example, the most competitive colleges in the group, the Ivy League, comprised 41% of immigrants, with the Caribbean having the highest total (Massey et al., 2007). In the case of Caribbean immigrants, students mostly from middle-income families, are pursuing admission to elite Ivy League universities (Jaret and Reitzes, 2009; Massey et al., 2007).  It should be noted, that for Caribbean immigrant students, Jamaica represented 20.5%, the highest percentage of all Black Caribbean immigrants.

Many reasons have been given for the continued increase in the enrolment of black immigrants in colleges and universities in the U.S. However, there is still the suggestion that within the top-notch academy institutions such as the Ivy League, there is an over-representation of black immigrants, seen mostly at the exclusive stratum (Massey et al., 2007).

Over time, there has been quite a debate on what would account for this disproportionate ratio, between natives and immigrants, at these top colleges and universities.  One point of view put forward by Harvard law professor Line Guinier which catapulted much debate, was that most black minority students at elite colleges are "voluntary immigrants," that is, immigrants who are not descended from slaves (Jaschik, 2007).  Guinier further contended that these immigrant students, who look like African-Americans, benefit unfairly from the societal guilt that lends support to the concept of Affirmative Action as a program to right the wrongs of past injustices suffered by African-Americans (Jaschik, 2007).   However,  other writers have taken a different position, suggesting instead that Black Caribbean immigrants have been favored over African-

Americans for Affirmative Action in college admissions, ostensibly because they are more cooperative (Bennett and Lutz (2009).

On the other hand, it has been proposed that one reason for the greater percentage of Caribbean students at U.S. colleges and universities in comparison to their African-American counterparts was that in the past few decades, Caribbean-American students aspired and adapted themselves to the roles of minorities in a corporate setting. With corporate employment as their goal, they were more likely to be self-motivated to go on to college and obtain a quality education (Ogbu, 1998).

Further, the assertion was made by some, that the academic achievements of Black Caribbean students are influenced by both social and personal elements, including cultural frames of reference, social and cultural capital, the propensity toward upward mobility and employment opportunities (Mitchell, 2005; Ogbu, 2003, 2004). In most cases, Caribbean immigrant students often must develop a form of dual socialization to increase their social and cultural capital. Dual socialization is the extent to which individuals, (in this example, Black immigrant students), function well in two different cultural environments by adjusting their behavior to meet the norms of each culture. The utility of dual-socialization is determined by the degree to which these two cultures share common beliefs, perceptions, and norms (De Anda, 1984).

These bi-cultural socialization processes, enable black children to interact in both societies and often shift between the two. Here, the role of Ivy League universities is considered crucial to harnessing and replenishing those ideal strategies and resources for academic excellence that ultimately are expected to fulfill student aspirations for real social, cultural, economic and professional success (Massey et al., 2007). These ideals and goals for Caribbean

immigrants, taught at a very early age, are nurtured as priority values. Because of this, the socialization that occurs in families, especially Caribbean families, results in data showing trends of successful integration and scholarly prowess in rigorous academic settings (Hanniford, 2012).

Thus, Black Caribbean students who pursue college degrees are perceived to be creating more and better options for their futures, while increasing their opportunities to move away from difficult living conditions (Boyer, 1987; Feagin, Vera and Imani, 1996; Freeman, 2005; Simms, 1995). Research shows, that students who enroll at a prestigious college and university, accrue increased social and cultural capital (McDonough, 1997; Mickelson, 1990). Therefore, since college-educated students enjoy increased access to better opportunities, it is imperative to extend such opportunities to as many students as possible.

## Statement of the Problem

The quest for academic excellence is not limited to particular groups. Instead, its cultural features have a near-universal appeal that is especially evident among the people of the Caribbean (Massey et al., 2007). Peters (1997), suggests that this quest for excellence is a product of the social, economic, historical, religious and cultural histories of persons from the Caribbean. For example, within the Caribbean-American middle class, individual and group perseverance is the usual ethic that leads to academic excellence and the pursuit of Ivy League degrees, as well as providing for the transfer of these norms as a cultural inheritance to Caribbean immigrant students (Hughes and Chen, 1997).

While in some instances, there are no marked differences between black immigrants and African-Americans. In an article entitled, "The Immigrant Factor," published in 2007, Scott

Jaschik highlighted some notable demographic differences between the aspirations and success rates of Caribbean immigrant students and their African-American counterparts, including:

• The parental role in the development of Caribbean immigrant students, who were more likely to be raised in two-parent families, (56.9% compared to 51.4%, respectively);

• The likelihood that Caribbean students have fathers in the household, (61.2 % compared to 55.6 % respectively);

• Fathers of Caribbean immigrants are formally educated, (55.2% had advanced degrees, compared with 23% of fathers of native black students); and

• Schooling, which plays a major factor in determining which immigrant black students were most likely to attend private schools, (41.7% compared with a 27.3% of other students who were black).

Therefore, there is a need for further study of the academic progress of immigrant students, specifically to identify and examine the influences that motivate successful academic careers at selected universities and to identify methods they use to overcome barriers to success (Massey et al., 2007). Moreover, the cultural/educational experiences of Black immigrant students on college campuses tend to be overlooked (Kim, 2014). Often, their data and observations are lumped together with those of African-Americans, creating one overarching ethnic group without acknowledging the variety of unique and diverse ethnic experiences of Caribbean-Americans, in their quest for academic success at Ivy League universities.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to contribute to the literature, by examining the factors that affect Black Caribbean immigrant students in their quest for academic success and the impact of their culture, motivation, and aspiration on their ability to achieve academic distinction at Ivy League universities. The research sought to expand the line of inquiry put

forward by Massey et al., (2007), while drawing on other studies that examine the visibility of Black Caribbean students at these Ivy League universities.

## Research Questions

Despite the adversities, racial disparities and negative perception of blacks in America, Caribbean immigrant students must break through those barriers to overcome them (Burrell-McRae, 2009). This research employed an over-arching question and three sub-questions to address and add to the argument of the socialization of Caribbean immigrant students who have graduated from an Ivy League university as follows:

Overarching Question:

How does the Caribbean immigrant students who graduated with a graduate degree from an Ivy League institution, describe the influence of their early socialization on their aspirations and motivation to succeed?

Sub-questions:

• What role did academic backgrounds play in influencing their college aspirations and completion?

• How did cultural norms affect the participants' aspiration and ultimate college completion?

• What barriers did they face and how did they overcome them?

The answer to these questions contributed to providing a keen understanding of the experiences of Black Caribbean immigrant students as they pursued excellence.  It also identified factors that can help advise administrators and faculty members in recognizing Caribbean immigrant students as legitimate academic contenders.

## Purpose of the Study

Knowledge about a particular group helps to bring to the fore, certain group-specific characteristics which can contribute to the structuring/strengthening of certain theory and practice. Hence, their inclusion in this research is necessary. The purpose of this qualitative study was to present a better understanding of the academic pursuit of first and second generations Black Caribbean immigrant students. It gave voice to their stories, identified the barriers they overcame and examined the cultural influences that supported their endeavors.

The study extended the line of inquiry by Massey et al., (2007), that began looking at the achievements of Black Caribbean immigrant students and their prevalence at Ivy League universities. It carefully explored the phenomena of strategies that influenced the excellence of Black Caribbean immigrant students' academic, personal and professional aspirations, and make visible the academic pitfalls they encounter as a sub-population at Ivy League universities.

There is a lack of research on issues related to Black Caribbean immigrant students at Ivy League institutions. These are issues which may affect not only overall student performance, but also the intellectual involvement of students in all aspects of university life. Since these issues could lead to a less-integrated campus life for many students and less awareness of their need for administrative services, the research undertook to establish a different viewpoint from which the needs of Caribbean immigrants can be evaluated. This is important, since these students need sufficient services and resources to maintain their progress in the Ivy League universities. Also, the research and findings addressed the needs of colleges, universities, educators and practitioners and add to their cultural responsiveness, (Villages, 1998), since they serve a culturally diverse and unique student population.

In brief, better awareness of the issues that affect this group ultimately redefined and improved the entire scope of experiences of what they should expect and what they need. A critical study of student retention made by Tinto (1993) provided the best summation of these issues. According to Tinto (1993), the first principle of effective student retention is assuring student success through an "institutional commitment to students." To quote Tinto (1993): "It is commitment that springs from the very character of an institution's educational mission" (Tinto, 1993 p.146).

As mentioned previously, there is a lack of literature on this subject. Hence, there is a need to re-examine this rarely visited and possibly outdated data. This study recognizes the opportunity for additional inquiry, (Villages, 1998), as it builds pathways for information that may help fill this data gap. It therefore sought to explore the experiences of Black Caribbean immigrant students, who have navigated the Ivy League and achieved academic success towards completion of their graduate studies, despite the many obstacles they have encountered along the way. Furthermore, this qualitative study was intended to give voice to this small invisible sector of university students, whose unique needs, aspirations and achievements are often overlooked when their performance data has been lumped in with that of African-American students (Kim, 2014). This study noted their progress, explored their challenges, validated their experiences and documented their journey to academic success at Ivy League universities in the USA. It thus expanded the inquiry and demonstrated the validity of continuing research that will focus specifically on the experiences of Black Caribbean immigrant students at Ivy League universities since 2007.

## Significance of the Study

Although Caribbean-American students share similarities with African-American students, they are uniquely different in their respective cultural experiences, which help to shape their pursuit of excellence (Villages, 1998). However, there is little research on the perceptions of Caribbean-American students as they pursue academic excellence at Ivy League institutions (Massey et al., 2007).  Since a college education increases rewards and opportunities for graduates, it is important to recognize and address those perspectives of the black community that pertain to their pursuit of higher education (Ogbu, 1998).

There are many studies of international students as they adjust to college life, (Gordon, 1964; Mio, 2000; Wu, 1993 as cited in O'Connor, Lewis and Mueller, 2007). While the statistics contained in these studies are useful, their limitations underscore the importance of hearing the voices and stories of the students who are the subjects of this data (Allen, Epps, and Haniff, 1991).

Given the population growth of Caribbean-American students attending selective Ivy League institutions, it is prudent for administrators to recognize and examine this trend to improve their responsiveness and the capabilities of stakeholders as they collaborate to provide the best pathways for these students.   It was imperative to direct attention to this small group of Black Caribbean immigrants, whose needs and accomplishments are often overlooked because they are placed within the broader categories of African-American student data (Kim, 2014).

In a larger sense, this study was an examination of the values of Black Caribbean-American students as they seek to legitimize their presence at American's prestigious universities. This study also recorded their pursuit of excellence and attempted to validate their presence at Ivy League institutions. The inquiry added new insights to existing literature. It

expanded the limited visibility of the Black Caribbean immigrants. It also provided much-needed relevant research on the beliefs, perceptions and strategies of these students, as they navigated Ivy League schools to graduate with degrees. This approach consequently led to a more informed understanding of how to best serve these students academically.

**Definition of Terms**

In this study, the following definitions have been adapted from different kinds of literature and are repeatedly used throughout the research. These include:

Academic Excellence: For the purpose of this study, it refers to the discovery and development of ideas and insights that result from the pursuit of academic achievement, creativity, scholarly endeavors and practical inventions.

Black Caribbean Immigrant**:** The term Black Caribbean immigrant, refers to persons born in any of the Caribbean islands as well as members of the Caribbean Diaspora.

British Caribbean: For the purpose of this study, these are Black Caribbean persons, born in one of the British Caribbean islands colonized by Great Britain, who have received background schooling in the Caribbean and who have attended college in the USA, either on a student visa, or since becoming a permanent resident or citizen (Howe, 2005).

Black immigrant: The term refers to an individual who is black and foreign-born and who has migrated to the United States with the aim of becoming a naturalized US citizen or established permanent residency in the United States (Kim, 2014).

Caribbean:   These include the thousands of small islands that stretch from the tip of Florida to Trinidad and Tobago in the South. In addition, Belize and Guyana which are not island, the latter situated on the continent of South America is considered part of the Caribbean (Wikipedia.org).

Caribbean-American:  A person of Caribbean descent or a Black Caribbean person now living in the U.S., but whose ethnic heritage can be traced to a Caribbean country.  Persons within this group have at least one parent from the Caribbean, are racially classified as black and are English speaking, (but may also speak another language) (Howe, 2005).

Caribbean Culture:  A term that defines the artistic, musical literary, culinary, political and social elements representative of Caribbean culture. Caribbean culture historically has been influenced by European culture and traditions, especially British, Spanish, Dutch and French.

Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC):  An institution within the Caribbean Community, (CARICOM). This council is empowered to regulate the usage of all relevant examinations and to specify qualification requirements. Members of the Council come from 16 territories and the region's two universities: The University of Guyana and the University of the West Indies (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991-2014).

Common Entrance Exam:  The Education Exam in Britain and the British Caribbean is a highly competitive entrance examination, taken by public school children at age 9-11 to determine which high school each will attend. Placements are determined by Common Entrance Exam test results (Harper Collins Publishers, 1991-2014).

Cultural Capital: A term used to identify non-financial social assets that function as currency, as they afford social mobility to owners beyond what may be available to them through economic means.  The relative importance of each type of cultural capital varies in response to changing values held by groups within the general population. Cultural Capital may help or hinder individual social mobility, as much as income or wealth (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1997).

Cultural Identity:  The sense of belonging that includes a shared sense of companionship, beliefs, interests and basic principles of living. How a person identifies with their culture is often

determined by their involvement and willingness to continue holding onto traditions passed down through the years, (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1997)

Diaspora: The Diaspora in this case consists primarily of those individuals who have moved to the United States from the Caribbean islands with the intention of establishing residency and U.S. citizenship (Capps et al., 2011).

Ethnic Identity: This refers to the ethnic group with which an individual self-identifies. Ethnic identity is determined by more than a simple checkmark that denotes a person's skin color. Instead, it results from a complex and multifaceted process within the overall development of an individual, (Dona Dance-Schissel, 2016).

First Generation Caribbean: For the purpose of this study, these persons were born and raised in the Caribbean. First Generation Caribbean persons have completed some form of secondary education in their native countries. Although they have migrated to the United States, they continue to self-identify with Caribbean culture.

Ivy League:  Initially this was referred to as a sports university athletic gathering.  Later it was expanded to incorporate predominance in scholastics, with an emphasis on instructive reasoning intrinsic to the America's most seasoned schools. Now it is referred to as a group of long-established colleges and universities in the eastern U.S.A. Each Ivy League institution has earned high academic and social prestige; rates among the best in the U.S.A. and internationally. It frequently ranks within the top ten schools in the U.S. News and World Report College and University ranking. In 2014, the U.S. News and World Report placed all eight Ivy League institutions in the Top Twenty Universities in the world, (University Ranking, U.S. News and World Report, 2014).   Internationally, the Ivy League universities rank among some of the most prestigious schools in the world. Thus, their superior status is reflected by ambition of many high

school students, (and their parents), to obtain an Ivy League education. These institutions represent academic excellence, selectivity and prestige.  Included in the Ivy Leagues, are the following eight schools, seven of which were founded in the colonial period, except Cornell University, which was established in 1865 (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).  They are:

- Brown University:  This school was founded in 1764 as the "College in the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations."  It is best known academically for its highly regarded programs in English and History and its highly ranked Warren Alpert Medical School. It is also well known in the sporting arena, as the men's soccer team is consistently ranked amongst the top 25 teams in the nation (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

- Columbia University: Columbia University, founded in 1754, was originally called King's College. It is located in New York City, and is included in the list of the very best Ivy Leagues schools. The University's campus occupies 36 acres in upper Manhattan. Its graduate programs include those of its highly ranked Business School, Teachers College, Law School and the Mailman School of Public Health. It also has a prominent Graduate School of Journalism (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

- Cornell University: Located in Ithaca, N.Y., and founded in 1865, this institution has well over 500 student organizations on its campus as well as a very robust hockey program. It is also renowned for its famous College of Arts and Science and its College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

- Dartmouth College: Founded in 1789 and located in Hanover, New Hampshire, it has approximately 6,100 enrolled students, with nearly 25% of them participating in its N.C.A.A. Division 1 Varsity sports programs. Dartmouth is best known for its School of

Business, School of Engineering and School of Medicine (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

- Harvard University: Harvard is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Originally established in 1636 as "New College," it is renowned worldwide for its excellent departments of science, law and medicine, (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

- Princeton University, located in Princeton, N.J., was established in 1746 as the "College of New Jersey." It has approximately 7,500 enrolled students. Although it offers fewer programs than other Ivy League schools, almost all of them are highly rated, especially programs in fields such as economics, mathematics, and physics (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

- The University of Pennsylvania: Benjamin Franklin founded this in 1740. It has an undergraduate population of approximately 9,725 students and has 12 schools, including the famous Wharton school of business. Other schools offer degrees in education, engineering, law and medicine. Other notable schools include the Design School and School of Dental Medicine. More than 2,000 students in 70 countries participate in Penn's international programs. It has a strong basketball, athletics and lacrosse teams, ten college houses and 45 fraternities and sororities. Notable alumni include Presidents William Henry Harrison and Donald Trump, and author and poet William Carlos Williams (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

- Yale University: Located in New Haven, CT, it was founded in 1701 as the "Collegiate School." It has many great programs in science and medicine and is also famous for its excellent Master's Degree Programs, especially those in medicine (U.S. News and World Report, 2014).

Black Ivy League graduates: For the purpose of this study, these are Black Caribbean immigrants (first or second-generation immigrants), who have earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from one of the eight Ivy League universities in the U.S.A.

Lesser Islands: This is a group of islands located in the West Indies. The term refers to the northern islands of the Lesser Antilles chain that starts east of Puerto Rico and ends at the point where the north eastern Caribbean Sea meets the western Atlantic Ocean (Wikipedia.org).

Nobel Laureate: Any recipient of the Nobel Prize, honored for significant achievement (Wikipedia.org).

Primary Education in the Caribbean: Begins at age five in the Caribbean and ends at age 11 in most Caribbean countries. In some Caribbean countries, it ends at age twelve. All students sit standardized tests at the end of their primary education to determine their placement in secondary education (high school). The main emphasis at the primary school level is focused on language arts, science, mathematics, English and social studies. Primary education adheres to the following pattern: number of years at Primary School: 6-8 years; entrance to primary at ages 5-7; infants, (lower levels), start at ages 1 and 2. Primary refers to the (higher levels) 3-5 (Meditz and Hanratty, 1987).

Quest: For the purpose of this study, it is a long or arduous search pursued with great vigor.

Second Generation Caribbean: For the purpose of this study, these are persons born in the U.S.A. with at least one parent who is native to the Caribbean Islands.

Secondary High School in the Caribbean: Typically called "high school" in the Caribbean, it includes several levels (known as "grades" in the USA.) Lower School-Forms 1-3 with students ages 11-13 years old (grades 7-9 in the U.S.A.); Upper levels - refers to Forms 4

and 5 or grades 10-11, (grades …. in the U.S.A.). In the fourth form, students choose 6-10 subjects to study. However, eight subjects are the average number selected by students. At the end of the fifth form, students usually sit the school exit exams known as the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examination. In the Caribbean, these exams take them on to Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (C.A.P.E.), (Hewlett-Thomas, 2009).

Shared Vision: For the purpose of this research, it is a vision that is thoroughly conceived. It is duly expressed and its persuasion has the ability and potential to inspire, motivate and elevate those individuals with shared common goals and purpose (Senge, 1996).

Strategies: For the purpose of this study, these are action plans or policies designed to achieve important or far-reaching goals (Merriam-Webster.com).

Windward Islands:  A set of islands in the West Indies. In England, this term refers to the southern islands of the Greater Antilles chain. They encompass the larger Caribbean Islands which are most exposed to the wind (Wikipedia.org).

**Summary**

Chapter I provided an introduction and background to this study. It detailed guiding assumptions, stated the problem, identified the purpose and significance of the study, defined terms and offered a summary. Chapter II integrates the relevant theoretical frameworks related to this study. A thorough justification of the qualitative methodology chosen to collect and analyze the data constituted Chapter III. Chapter IV showcases the findings, and Chapter V addresses conclusions, recommendations and implications that flowed logically from this study.

## CHAPTER 2

## Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews the literature on Black Caribbean immigrants, who have earned an Ivy League graduate degree and the strategies that enabled them to achieve excellence at these Ivy League universities.  It explores theories on students' success, immigrants' background and cultural capital from both a historical and contemporary perspective. Next, it assessed secondary and higher education and the role of equity in the Caribbean rooted in college and socio-economic choice. This is followed by an analysis of the literature around ethnic and immigrant identity as these relate to the aspirations and motivations that led to high academic achievement, as well as barriers to success encountered by Caribbean immigrant students.

## Introduction

The black student population of the nation's most elite colleges and universities continues to grow due to the increase in the enrolment of immigrants from the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa (Fears, 2007).  Based on a study conducted by sociologists from Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania, immigrants comprise 13% of the nation's college-age and the black population account for more than one-quarter of the black students that are enrolled at Ivy League and other selective universities, (Massey et al., 2007).  The study further asserted that the principal rationale among schools for increasing minority recruitment evolved from initial restitution to Black Americans, to embracing a broad spectrum of ethnic diversity. Camille Z. Charles, an associate who co-authored the study, posited that as many of these institutions publicize their increased black enrollment, it could be determined that this increase also demonstrates the growth of their black immigrant populations.  Fears (2007), in describing the

results of this policy, suggests that the more elite the school, the greater the number of black immigrants enrolled.

Many Caribbean immigrants are part of a much larger population of second, third and older generations of Caribbean descendants, who came to the United States in the last four decades, with more than 1.4 million legally migrating to the U.S. alone since 1990, (Hughes, 2010). Various reasons have been attributed to the migration of black persons to the United States. These include educational advancement, better economic opportunities and the ability to improve their standards of living (Hagelskamp, Suarez-Orozco, and Hudges, 2010).

In her article, "The Black Survivors: Courage, Strength, Creativity and Resilience in the Cultural Traditions of Black Caribbean Immigrants," Leonie J. Brooks (2013) asserted that many black Caribbean immigrants migrated from various islands with a profound sense of empowerment, as members of a racial majority, and as descendants of those who had successfully cast off the "mantle of colonialism." Within the United States, this group often considers the most significant aspects of their identity to be either their nationality or their status as immigrants, with race only a secondary aspect of their identity (Brooks, 2013).

These immigrants are proud of their cultural heritage and national identity and believe that they can control their fates and success in a white majority country, such as the United States (Baker, 2005). Other writers such as Thompson-Cudjoe, (2015), in her dissertation: "Education Motivation and Academic Achievement," suggests that black Caribbean people in the United States integrate and self–identify as African Americans, but are differentiated by racial family structure, culture, financial stability, levels of education and social status. Their difference from African-Americans is also evident culturally and ethnically, as illustrated in their cultural

heritage and voluntary minority status (Waters, 1996b; William et al., 2007 as cited in Thompson-Cudjoe, 2015).

These immigrants have had an indelible influence on popular American culture, e.g. music, language, hairstyles, modes of dress, as well as major sectors within the US including education, politics and the economy.  Yet, it is also true that the American culture has significantly impacted Caribbean immigrants and by extension, the culture, politics, education and economics of the Caribbean region (Allen and Slater, 2001; Kasinitz, 1992).

Before the 1960's, educational opportunities for people of color from the African diaspora were virtually non-existent in the United States because of de facto and de jure segregation.  Subsequently the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination in education, and educational opportunities for blacks in the United States transcended old norms.  To effect change, President Lyndon B. Johnson initiated various "affirmative actions" to increase black enrolment at educational institutions.  President Johnson's reasoning for this initiative was restitution for the past failures of the nation and to afford African-Americans the same access to upward mobility (Waters 1999). With a governing philosophy in American society, which includes equality of opportunity and access to positions of influence for all persons, it is well established that educational attainment is the central venue in which upward mobility can occur (Lillard and Garner, 1999, p. 706).

However, some authors such as Black American scholars: Henry Louis Gates and Lani Guinier of Harvard University, have suggested that white educators are skirting long-held missions to resolve historical wrongs against native Black Americans, by instead enrolling immigrants who only look like Black Americans (Fears, 2007). Although reliance is placed on test results, usually, it is the wealthier students, (including black immigrants), who are enrolled,

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as their scores are higher because they can more readily afford to pay for test preparation

services. Guinier further asserted that these Caribbean immigrant students do not encounter the

same barriers to education faced by black children in the United States, since most times their

fathers are better educated, and most often, this significant representation of Caribbean

immigrant students are from countries where blacks were in the majority (Fears, 2007). For the

Caribbean immigrant, introduction to education at an early age sets the stage for future success.

In Caribbean culture, education is seen as a pathway out of poverty and an advancement of social

status that accompanies a desirable quality of life (Mitchell, 2005; Ogbu, 2003, 2004).

While there are similarities between Caribbean-American and African-American

students, there also are many areas of uniqueness (Burrel-McRae, 2009).  For example, each

group has a distinctly different experience in college due to differences in social and economic

status, which influence their choice of college. Research shows that many factors contribute to

successful performance at Ivy League universities (Burrel-McRae, 2009). For immigrant

students, these may include being raised in a two-parent household that includes a well-educated

father who is a successful earner (Jaschik, 2007). This research offers various perspectives on the

relationship between academic success and those parental roles that produce the best outcomes.

Research furthers shows that often, Socio-economic Status, (SES) is another component

that determines college aspirations and choice (Burrel-McRae, 2009).  Socio-economic status is

defined as any measurement used to classify individuals, families or households based on

characteristics such as occupation, education, and income (Marshall, 1994).

Within the United States, there is recognition that there is a relationship between socio-

economic gaps and educational gaps (Ogbu, 1978). As explained by Sewell and Hauser (1980),

SES affects the values that are passed down from parents that influence children's educational

aspirations and achievements. Yet, Berkner and Chavez (1997), argue that socio-economic status does not affect attendance or enrolment negatively at highly selective or competitive schools if students have the necessary qualifications.  Mundy (1976), affirms this assertion by arguing that although students often identify with others based on family income, there is not a strong correlation between family income and the costs of attending college.  On the other hand, Tillery and Kildegaard (1973), contend that for students with parents in a low economic bracket, the financial burden of college tuition has a greater bearing on whether a student attends college at all, rather than on a question of which college the student may choose.

In contrast to positions put forward by Berkner and Chavez (1997), and Mundy (1976), other scholars suggest that SES heavily influences both students' aspirations and their college choice, especially when they are applying to selective educational institutions (Hanson and Litten, 1982; Manski and Wise, 1982). Therefore, there is a need for greater research to be done on the role of social and economic status as an influence on Black Caribbean immigrant families that include children who attend Ivy League colleges and their prospective place in the social and economic structure (Burrel-McRae, 2009).

Cultural and social capital is inherited and passed down within families, specifically through one's parents (Bourdieu and Passerson, (1977). Cultural capital is the acquired tastes, values, languages and educational qualifications that can signal membership in a privileged social and cultural class (Nieto (1999). Parents transmit cultural capital, which leads to social capital, by ensuring that their children understand the value of obtaining a college education and the potential economic benefit of such an education (McDonough, 1997). This accumulation of network and social contacts through memberships in privileged institutions then strengthens opportunities for those who hold access (Ogbu, 1978). Writers such as Brown and Davis (2001),

also share the view that an increased network and resources are only acquired by attending specific types of institutions. Therefore, the type of college or university one selects plays a major role in a student gaining "appropriate" cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977; DiMaggie, 1982). Still, some researchers believe that attending any college or university can generate social and cultural capital as these colleges and universities provide other opportunities for students to accumulate both cultural and social capital (McDonough, 1997).

This access to capital, which leads to upward mobility, is particularly important for students who are not born into families who understand the value of such capital (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1977). In a phenomenon known as acquiring cultural capital, colleges offer students an opportunity to function "productively" in society by learning the rules, behaviors, values and expectations of the dominant culture, a culture one must understand well to become upwardly mobile (Bourdieu, 1977). In addition, many of these institutions give students a chance to increase their networks and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977). The definition of social capital being actual or potential resources linked to group membership (Bourdieu, 1990).

## Framework of the Study: Vincent Tinto

The Vincent Tinto concept is a theory of students' successes, including their academic progression at universities and their ability to graduate. The theory provides an explanation as to why college student retention and graduation reflects the quality and holistic approaches these students may have experienced in their interactions with the university (Long, 2012). Tinto explores questions of why some students succeed in college while others do not (Long, 2012), and why some students tend to identify with their cultural heritage and racial background while others do not.

Tinto's theory of student departure, perhaps best answers these questions, with conclusions based on overall student development. While, all students enter college with unique qualities and individual characteristics that can include family support, cultural values, family circumstances, social values and social and economic circumstances, as well as their central motivating factor for pursuing a degree (Long, 2012), Tinto asserts that students who do not have good interactions with faculty and administration at their colleges and universities tend to drop out. He further argued that students often have developed identities that allow them to form new concepts and competencies. This ultimately enables them to acquire new skills and build self-confidence (Long, 2012).

Writers such as Levitz (1958), put forward the position that the drive and perseverance of students that lead them to meet their goals in education, is a key predictor of their future success. Still, Tinto's theory suggests that a commitment to students by the institution, which grows out of an institution's adherence to its mission and dedication to the academic progress of each student, results in student's success, which is seen as a product. The theory further suggests that the accrediting agencies, policy makers, students and their families, as well as the public, are all interested in the overall product, as well as the retention and graduation (Tinto, 1993, Kuh et al., 2005).

Over the past 40 years, there has been significant research based on the Tinto studies of motivation, goal setting, expectancy theory, self–efficacy beliefs, academic self-concept, motivational orientations, and optimism. These noted theories were used to gain additional insight into the retention patterns and persistence of college students (Demetriou and Sciborski, 2011). The key approach of the theory examines the interaction between students, community and institution, and the role it plays in student success, development and graduation. This holistic

approach seeks to evaluate informal and formal student experiences outside the institution, along with the casual factors that affect their ability to develop.

Tinto put forward the view that the commitment of students to their institution increase when they integrate socially in their campus community and to a greater extent are highly likely to graduate (Tinto, 1975; Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). In the last 30 years, Tinto's model has been attacked, supported and revised. Nevertheless, it has significantly influenced how practitioners and researchers view under-graduate retention and graduation (Swail, 2004). Hence, Tinto's theory is used for this research as it best reflects implicit assumptions of this study.

## Review of Research Literature

## Specific to the Topic or Research Questions

### College Choice for Immigrant Students

The idea of excellence, though less written about, is experienced primarily as a part of the socializing training that Caribbean-American students receive within their close and extended family circles (Massey et al., 2007). Still, the Caribbean-American family has long recognized the difference in perception of how African-American children view themselves and how their parents view them, especially concerning the high academic expectation parents have for their children.

Attention is focused specifically on how individual-level factors, such as student worldview, or *habitus*, shape the ways in which Black students from immigrant backgrounds make decisions about attending college, the colleges to which they consider applying and where they will matriculate (Griffin et al., 2012). As family income and education level increase,

students begin to think more seriously about their post-secondary plans (Hamrick and Stage, 1998). Habitus is described as shaping the ways in which people make decisions, and which inclines them toward certain behaviors based on what is viewed as appropriate given their social position (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Reay, 2004). Therefore, a student's habitus is not brought into being in a vacuum, and in Bourdieu's (1977) early conceptualizations, it was presented as being largely shaped by class standing (Griffin et al., 2012). Several scholars have posited, that to understand habitus, it is imperative to explore cultural capital, which is of similar, yet separate constructs (Dumais, 2002; Reay, 2004 as cited in Griffin et al., 2012).

Dumais (2002) describes cultural capital as the summation of a student's resources, while habitus is described as their orientation toward those resources. Thus, an individual's concept of what is fitting and customary develops in relation to their cultural capital. Together, cultural capital and habitus have great influence on how students navigate educational systems, (Griffin et al., 2012). This framing of habitus suggests that it is largely based on class background. Re-conceptualization of the construct incorporates the way membership in other marginalized groups can shape one's view of the world and place within it, (Dumais, 2002; Reay, 2004).

Although high aspirations and commitment to higher education can by themselves influence a choice of college, also of importance, is the knowledge of the college marketplace. However, obtaining information about colleges is sometimes challenging for some students. These students are usually from several under-represented groups, notably, students from immigrant backgrounds, whose parents have had little higher education or who were not educated in the United States (Erisman and Looney, 2007). On the other hand, it was found that parents with a college education are better able to access information regarding college choices and thus are in a better position to help their children (Perna, 2000).

Still, some scholars argue that it was more likely for black immigrants to gain access to higher education than their peers, based on socio-economic status, parental values and emphasis on education and academic preparation, (Bennett and Lutz, 2009; Massey et al., 2007). In constrast, writers such as Erisman and Looney (2007), noted the stark differences in rates of college access for black students from immigrant backgrounds, especially regarding citizenship status, nation of origin and timespan of migration. It was further posited, that similar to their U.S. counterparts, when engaging in the college choice process, black immigrants face challenges financially as well as having sufficient information regarding college preparation (Erisman and Looney, 2007).

Notwithstanding this reality, a gap still exists in literature and further research is needed to explore the ways in which Black immigrant students perceive and experience college choice, and whether and how individual-level factors, particularly cultural and immigrant background, influence this process. To address the gap in the literature by contributing to an emerging area of research, this study explored factors that influence the college choice process of Black immigrants.

**Social Economic Status and College Choice**

There are various perspectives in literature, on how parental role affects the outcome of academic success. Research in many areas, including academic performance, shows that once enrolled, parental role contributes to the successful performance of students at Ivy League institutions. Parental roles in the lives of immigrant students, raised by two parents, were described as a 61.2% with fathers as opposed to 55.6% without fathers. It further states that in those household more likely to have a father present, who was better educated and more

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financially secure, students most likely do much better than those without a father (Jaschik, 2007).

Although Caribbean-American and African-American students have some similarities, each ethnic group is unique in many cases. Differences between the two have resulted in distinct college experiences for each group, with social economic status often being a determining factor in college choice. Research shows that Socio-Economic Status (SES), often adds another dimension to college aspirations and choice. Socio-Economic Status is defined as any measure used to classify individuals, families or households based on characteristics, such as occupation, education and income, (Marshall, 1994). Some writers theorize that social economic gap in the United States is influenced by a corresponding educational gap (Ogbu, 1978). Others indicate that SES influences those parental values that are passed down to their children and ultimately influence educational aspirations and achievements (Sewell and Hauser, 1980). On the other hand, Berkner and Chavez (1997), contend that Socio-Economic Status does not affect attendance or enrolment negatively at highly selective or competitive schools, if students have the necessary qualifications. Mundy (1976), affirms this assertion by arguing that although students often identify with others based on family income, there is not a strong correlation between family income and the cost of attending a highly selective or competitive school. As Tillery and Kildegaard (1973) noted, students whose parents are in a low economic bracket often find that the financial burden of college tuition has a greater bearing on whether they will attend college at all, rather than on what college they might attend. In contrast to Berkner and Chavez (1997), and Mundy (1976), other scholars suggest that SES heavily influences both student aspiration and college choice, especially when considering selective educational institutions (Hanson and Litten, 1982; Manski and Wise, 1982).

Still, a review of the literature suggests that there is a need for further research to understand more clearly the role Socio-Economic Status plays in influencing the children of Caribbean-American families to attend Ivy League colleges, which determine their future placement within the social economic structure. Such research may help to deepen the understanding of factors in Caribbean-American families who encourage their children to pursue higher education in the Ivy League.

**Culture and Social Capital**

According to Bourdieu and Passerson (1977), cultural and social capital is an inheritance passed down within families, most often from parent to child. Parents transmit cultural capital, which leads to social capital, by ensuring that their children understand the value of obtaining a college education and the potential economic benefits of such a decision, (McDonough, 1997). Nieto (1999) defines cultural capital as the acquired tastes, values, languages and educational qualifications that signal membership in a privileged social and cultural class. Bourdieu (1990) defines social capital as actual or potential resources linked to group membership.  This accumulation of network and social circles through memberships in privileged institutions then enhances opportunities for those who acquire access.

Colleges and universities provide another environment where students have the opportunity to accumulate both cultural and social capital, (McDonough, 1997; Bourdieu, 1977). Such access to capital that leads to upward mobility is particularly important for students who were not born into families with valuable capital (Bourdieu and Passerson, 1977).  Higher education institutions offer students an opportunity to function "productively" in society by learning the rules, behaviors, values and expectations of the dominant culture; a culture that must

be well-understood by aspirants to upward mobility through a process known as acquiring

cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977).

Although some researchers believe attending any college or university can generate

social and cultural capital, others assert that increased networks and resources can only be

acquired by attending specific types of institutions, (Brown and Davis, 2001). Therefore, the type

of college or university one selects, plays a major role in the student gaining "appropriate"

cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977; DiMaggie, 1982).

Disagreeing with some scholars' assertions that colleges and universities offer

opportunities to accumulate cultural and social capital, Yosso (2005), argues that much of the

discussion of cultural and social capital as applied to students of color are presented from the

perspective of a deficit model. Scholars who have based their work on Bourdieu and Passerson's

(1977) ideas of cultural and social capital, argue that students of color, particularly Blacks and

Latinos, need to build social networks and aspire to values and expectations classified either as

middle and upper class or as dominant in society. However, Yosso (2005) disagrees with this

theory, providing another concept called Community Cultural Wealth that is based on critical

race theory.  The idea, as outlined by Yosso (2005), provides six forms of cultural capital: social,

linguistic, aspirational, navigational, familial and resistant. The idea is that it will equip students

of color with the appropriate capital to be successful, although these forms of cultural wealth are

under-appreciated in the larger context of the society as a whole.  As determined by this research,

elite, predominantly white, institutions are gateways to the achievement of both cultural and

social capital for those who believe that learning the nuances of the dominant culture is relevant.

Although it is understood that cultural and social capital are indeed valuable and relevant

to lives and college choices of students, it is unclear how they specifically influence Black

Caribbean immigrants in their pursuit of Ivy League education. Besides, it is important to determine whether they influence Caribbean-American students' choice of elite, predominantly White institutions, such as Ivy League colleges and universities. Finally, it is vital to know if Caribbean-American students subscribe to the dominant, prevailing views of cultural capital, or to the community of wealth model introduced by Yosso (2005). Hence, further research will help to assess the influences of these two opposing views of cultural and social capital on Caribbean-American students.

**Secondary and Higher Education and the Role of Equity in the Caribbean**

Traditionally, Caribbean societies place a high value on education, especially secondary school education (Ellis, Ramsey, and Small, 2000). During the colonial period, secondary education differed from primary education and other technical training. It was designed to cater for 'An academic education for the intellectual elite of the Colony,' and was seen as "an avenue for the few to reach the universities and enter the learned professions" (Trinidad and Tobago [T&T] (Government, 1947, p.18 as cited in De Lisle, 2015 p. 112). Before the 1960s, many restrictions limited access to college for Caribbean persons in the general population. As a result, a pathway to secondary education has long been a tradition held in high esteem (Campbell, 1996, 1997).

As indicated in the literature, this high demand for secondary education in the face of limited resources meant that from early on, some method of standardized testing to determine access would be required. This created a desire among Caribbean residents to emulate successful locals while reinforcing the notion that schooling is the most productive route to social mobility and success (Alleyne, 1996; Brereton, 2007). As asserted by De Lisle (2012), the high-stakes system of regulations and testing with early base selection, created a competitive atmosphere for

a test-based early selection system in the Caribbean. This, in turn, led to a widely held belief that the test was infallible. Therefore, the Secondary School entrance examination is a test-based selection and placement system stationed at the transition point between primary and secondary schooling (De Lisle, 2012).

The education system in the Caribbean is mainly based on the British model. Hence it is important to understand the system of education that exists. As outlined by Hewlett-Thomas (2009), the primary division extends from pre-kindergarten to the fifth grade. At the end of the primary stage, students sit the Common Entrance Exam, which they must pass to advance to Secondary School or High School. The Secondary School section comprises forms one through five. In the fifth Form, students sit the Caribbean Examinations Council, (CXC) test for individual subjects. Successful completion of a given number of these tests - five or six in various configurations at stipulated standards - is the lower level requirement for admission to the local university (Hewlett-Thomas, 2009).

Also of significance, is a study by De Lisle (2012), on the educational systems of Trinidad and Tobago that was developed during the colonial era with unique characteristics aligned to the function and purpose of the test-based selection system. Based on the study, the prominent features of education in Trinidad and Tobago include the following: (1) high societal legitimacy and valorization; (2) overall administrative stability and persistence and (3) experimentation and tinkering without evidence and persistence. De Lisle (2012) asserts, that in Trinidad and Tobago, the valorization of successful test takers, along with their relatives and institutions, goes back to the dawn of high-stakes public examinations for Chinese public service (Miyazaki, 1976).

In contrast, even though this system has received high praises from most residents of Trinidad and Tobago, it does have its critics. For example, H.O.B Wooding, a local Trinidadian, has opposed the actions of administrators who fought to preserve the College Exhibition as the proven pathway to success (Campbell, 1996). His opposition came in response to a plan to enlarge the number of intermediate school spots available to high performers in the College Exhibition (De Lisle, 2012). His strong advocacy of a selection examination was indeed reasonable, given the concept of success held by the test takers themselves. In addition, De Lisle (2012) contended that those who performed well on the test were the chosen few who would be inducted into the colonial administrative system and structure. In his view, these systems are gatekeepers that determine entry and placement into what was a cherished open path to advancement. As such, they remain part of the colonial legacy (De Lisle, 2012).

On the other hand, De Lisle (2012), also noted that successful test-takers demonstrated "the success of the system as a vehicle for social mobility," (De Lisle, 2012, p.115) when they have received college degrees. In most cases, access to higher education in the Caribbean has been disproportionately skewed for the more privileged, in a system that failed to recognize that intellectual ability and talent are not reserved for a privileged few, but instead are widely distributed throughout societies, and that development of all human potential is vital (Hewlett-Thomas, 2009).

Roberts (2003), providing another perspective on equity of access, contends that access to higher education is simply not a path that is open to everyone in the manner so often portrayed by the government and influential media. Ultimately, she said, it is "the size of the door, what lies in front of it, and the appeal of what lies beyond it. These all impact on whether people avail themselves of the opportunity" (p.53). Roberts (2003) also noted: "Not everyone who wishes to

enter is chosen," (p.53), contending: "Enrolment in tertiary education is therefore only a crude and limited indicator of access" (p.53). As mentioned by Hewlett-Thomas (2009), the problems of access and related issues of equity have been raised over concerns that address issues in the Caribbean.

**Student Motivations and Aspirations toward Academic Achievement**

A body of research compiled in the past two decades, has identified the fact that many scholars have questioned the notion of a relationship between student aspiration and student achievement. This trend was first identified by Khattab (2015), using the Longitudinal Study of Young people in England (LSYPE). This study examines "how a combination of aspirations, expectations and school achievement can influence students' future educational behavior" (when applying to university at ages 17-18).

The study showed that students whose expectations and aspirations are high, tend to have more school achievement than those persons who tend to exhibit a lower aspiration or expectation (Khattab, 2015). Likewise, the study noted "complete alignment between high aspirations, high expectations, and high achievement is the most important predictor of future educational behavior among students" (Khattab, 2015).

For the most part, the author concludes that students with high aspirations, combined with high school achievements, demonstrate that low expectations have no negative impact on a student's future behavior. Expectations are more likely to be associated with social-economic circumstances, a relationship that makes them better predictors of school achievement, (Beal and Crockett, 2010). As stated by Khattab (2015), expectation involves an assessment of the likelihood that an event, behavior or outcome will occur. For example, Gorard et al. (2012), define expectations as "what an individual believes will happen in the future" (p.13).

Additionally, Mickelson (1990), states that expectations are based upon actual values that, in turn, are based upon the empirical realities of student lives. For example, their social and economic backgrounds, present academic performance and past histories, all impact how well students think they will perform. Often students who have high expectations without the possibility of achieving them or meeting their goals, often are left with bitterness, frustration, disappointment, social withdrawal, and dreams unfulfilled by wasted talent (Hanson, 1994).

Khattab (2015), suggests that recent and earlier studies on school achievement and aspiration have focused primarily on the question of whether goals can be utilized as a vehicle to raise school accomplishment (Goodman, Gregg, and Washbrook, 2011; St. Clair and Benjamin, 2011; Gutman and Schoon, 2012; Rose and Baird, 2013; St. Clair et al., 2013). However, many scholars no longer endorse the idea that school achievement can be predicted based on aspiration, or that aspiration can be inferred by knowing which college a student selected. Additionally, the authors contend that it is likely that many students from different ethnic, racial and social economic backgrounds can cultivate great academic and occupational aspirations that may not be related to their current performance or how they will perform in the future (Michelson, 1990; Hanson, 1994; Schneider and Stevenson, 1999; Goodman et al., 2011; Carter-Wall and Whitfield, 2012; Cummings et al., 2012; St. Clair et al., 2013)."

**Factors that Influence Immigrant Students' Academic Self-Efficacy**

As the immigrant student population continues to grow in the U.S.A., the mental outlook and educational aspects of these students' lives will receive increasing attention, (Mori, 2000). At present, however, observations of the academic performance of this population are anecdotal and generalized, although these students are thought to be successful (Edwards-Joseph and Baker, 2014).

One study restates the belief that students raised in the Caribbean bring a strong sense of academic achievement with them when they attend college in the U.S. High achievement by students from the former British colonies is often attributed to their immersion in a British school system model for most of their academic lives (Edwards-Joseph and Baker, 2014).

Students are motivated to do well based on strict parental control and a strong religious faith, which help them focus on academic activities to ensure success (Edwards-Joseph and Baker, 2014). In general, however, there is no documented evidence to support the observation that students carry a strong sense of academic value with them to their college studies in the U.S. (Edwards-Joseph and Baker, 2014).

While there are many pressures such as academic, language barriers, financial concerns, and interpersonal adjustments that are experienced by students in general, (Chen, 1999), for the immigrant students, these adjustment stresses may have a positive impact. This is because they help to promote self-efficacy in these individuals as they navigate the host's culture (Edwards-Joseph and Baker, 2014).

 A body of research on self-efficacy, coupled with the notion of social cognitive theory, has formed a link with motivation in the academic setting (Bandura and Waters, 1963). Research also shows that self-efficacy plays a major role in the attitude one has towards goals, tasks, and challenges and is therefore a strong predictor of academic performance, (Pajares, 1995), as cited in Edwards-Joseph and Baker, 2014). In addition, emotional adaptation to an unfamiliar surrounding is easier if there is self-confidence upon arrival to the new environment (Bandura, 1986).

As a determinant of successful outcomes, self-efficacy is often more important than specific skills (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, within persons who hold a high sense of their value,

their personal well-being and overall accomplishment is enhanced (Bandura, 1994). Yet, Bandura (1994, 1997), argues that people who have lower efficacy tend to have low achievement and aspiration, and are less likely to accomplish their goals as they dwell on personal problems and their deficiencies.

**Ethnic and Immigrant Identity**

The term ethnic identity defines a sub-group that is part of a racial group. Elements of ethnicity include qualities of individuals that separate them from others within their racial group (Gollnich and Chinn, 1994). For instance, ethnic identities within the population of "people considered black," may include, but are not limited to African-American, Continental African, and African-Caribbean (Gollnich and Chinn, 1994). Within this study, markers of ethnic identity may include family, student activities and communities.

According to Burrel-McRae (2009), many Caribbean students who migrate to the United States to attend college, later decide to stay. (It should be noted that Burrel-McRae, 2009 did not provide figures to support this claim). This is also true about families who move away from the Caribbean to seek job opportunities and economic benefits (Burrel-McRae, 2009). Nevertheless, many of these Caribbean families and communities maintain strong ties and preserve alliances with their native families and loved ones. Consequently, as students in the U.S., Caribbean emigrates tend to build new communities and acquire friends of the similar Caribbean ethnicity (Burrel-McRae, 2009).

Saylor and Aries (1999), agree with this idea, as they observed that Caribbean students identify with their home culture despite moving away and that Caribbean students may maintain their cultural identity by forming tight bonds with other Caribbean students and associating with them (Saylor and Aries, 1999). A prevailing notion, is that cultural identity for immigrant groups

involves not only self-image, but also family cohesiveness and identity, with an emphasis on family cohesiveness as an important aspect of Caribbean culture.  It is believed that close ties to family are likely to help students in their adjustment to American colleges (Saylor and Aries, 1999).

Awareness of one's group membership, and the value and emotional significance attached to it, comprise that part of an individual's self-concept referred to as social identity (Saylor and Aries, 1999). Research on ethnic identity by Holcomb-McCoy (1997), asserts that positive cultural outcomes may result from individual identities that are based on their experiences.  The author further contends that these persons likely developed self-confidence and pride in their ethnic group through these personal experiences (Holcomb-McCoy, 1997, p.23).

 Along with these observations, is the view that effective immigrant identities usually have a strong basis in ethnic identity Caribbean-American students often rely upon their ethnic identities to help them develop immigrant identities that include a strong sense of self-confidence, purpose and culture to support their prospective lives as immigrants  Waters (1996a), asserts that as they work and expand their families, immigrants choose how much they want to engage in American life and assimilate into American culture. Caribbean immigrants often make a conscious or unconscious decision about how to raise their children.

Waters (1996a), a renowned scholar on immigrants, asserts that these identities affect the types of interactions that second-generation immigrants have with each other, as well as with those outside their ethnicity and race. Further, ethnic-identified second generation Caribbean children, mostly from middle-class families who have significant social capital, have the family resources which enable them to attend ethnically and racially diverse schools.   Children in this category know and believe that racial disparities exist, but do not allow that knowledge to limit

their aspiration to upward mobility. Academic achievement and success by their children are a primary focus of foreign-born immigrants (Kent, 2007; Vickerman, 2001; Rong and Preissle, 2009; Waters, 1999; Waters, 1996a).

Black first-generation immigrants are willing to sacrifice for their children's academic success (Vickerman, 2001; Waters, 1996a). Many of these immigrants do not allow racism and discrimination to influence their children's outlooks or their social-economic outcomes (Waters, 1997). Essentially, they teach their children to work hard, meet the highest standards, reach for the stars and compete at a high level of social economic standards. In addition, they encourage their children to remain diligent in their academic pursuits and to reject distractions in the wider community regarding race and identity issues (Waters, 1997).

A review of the literature on the strategies that enable Caribbean-American students to facilitate successful results for excellence to the Ivy League universities provides a foundation for this study. According to Fears (2007), there is a substantial increase in the number of immigrants, from Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America as the nation's supreme colleges and universities are boosting their black student populations.

A study conducted by Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania, (Massey et al., 2007), revealed that immigrants account for approximately 13% of the nation's college-age black population and represent more than 25% of black students at Ivy League and other selective universities. The study further suggests that the high representation of black immigrants has taken place as school focus has shifted to that of achieving wider diversity. This replaces an earlier concept of college access being restitution to Black Americans, who for decades were excluded from elite colleges. An observation made by Masse et al., (2007) and cited in Fears (2007) was that: "The more elite the school, the more the number of black immigrants who are

enrolled." However, the study by Massey et al., (2007) also suggested that the increase in the

black immigrant population contributes to an increase in the population of black students at these

institutions.

Two Harvard University Black scholars and professors, (Fears, 2007) have both

articulated the view that white educators in the USA are extending long held opportunities to

black immigrants, instead of African-Americans, to "correct the long historical wrongs against

African American." This is done by enrolling black immigrants who look like African America

into these elite schools (Fears, 2007). The suggestion made by one of the professors, was that the

gap did not really result from the immigrants, but rather had more to do with the admissions

officials who placed reliance on tests scores.  These scores favored wealthier students, (including

black immigrants), who can afford to be tutored to better prepare for the tests. He further asserted

that the successful outcomes for black immigrants are due in part to their background. In these

countries, (especially in the Caribbean and Africa), blacks are the majority and often times have

never had to experience the type of stigma that is often experienced by the majority of black

children in the USA Another factor pointed out, was that fathers of these students tend to be

much better educated and financially secure (Fears, 2007).  The professors also concluded that

the admission system, prefers, rewards and values wealth (Fears, 2007).

However, according to the University of Pennsylvania's Dean of Admissions, while one

aspect of the mission of the school is to increase diversity, the exact root of the student is not the

focus.  Therefore, while the university notes an applicant's background, it does not assign sub-

categories of students, for example Caribbean-American, African-American or African (Fears,

2007).  This student originates from all walks of life, and includes African-American students,

with many of these students having roots in the southeastern United States (Fears, 2007).  This is

reflected in the data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen, which revealed that the survey included 1,028 students who are black. Of this amount, approximately 281 of them were identified as immigrant students. The Black immigrant students were identified as those coming from nations such as the Caribbean, African, and Guyana, (which is on the South American continent but share similar cultural norms as the Caribbean and identify as Caribbean), as well as the black diaspora or their sons and daughters who are American born. The highest percentage of blacks were enrolled in universities such as Stanford, Duke, Columbia, Vanderbilt and Harvard in the fall 2006-freshman classes (Fears, 2007).

**Caribbean Students and their Cultural Identities**

Caribbean students may maintain their cultural identities by forming tight bonds with other Caribbean students and associating with them. A prevailing notion is that cultural identity for immigrant groups involves not only self-image but also family cohesiveness and identity, with an emphasis on family cohesion as an important aspect of Caribbean culture. Additionally, close ties to family are likely to help students adjust to college life in the USA (Saylor and Aries, 1999). Awareness of one's group membership, and the value and emotional significance attached to it, comprise that part of an individual's self-concept referred to as social identity (Saylor and Aries, 1999).

Research on ethnic identity by Holcomb-McCoy, asserts that positive cultural outcomes may result from individual identities that are based on their own experiences. She further contends these individuals likely developed self-confidence and pride in their ethnic group through these personal experiences (Holcomb-McCoy, 1997, p.23). Along with these observations, is the view that effective immigrant identities usually have a strong basis in ethnic identity. Caribbean-American students often rely upon their ethnic identities to help them

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develop immigrant identities that include a strong sense of self-confidence, purpose, and culture to support their prospective lives as immigrants. Waters (1996a), asserts that these identities affect the types of interactions that second-generation immigrants have with each other, as well as with those outside their ethnicity and race.

Many of these immigrants do not allow racism and discrimination to influence their children's outlook or their social-economic outcomes (Waters, 1997). Essentially, they teach their children to work hard, meet the highest standards, reach for the stars and compete at a high level of social economic standards. Also, they encourage their children to remain diligent in their academic pursuits and to reject distractions in the wider community regarding race and identity issues (Waters, 1997).

**Synthesis of the Literature**

As prospective students engage in reviewing or applying for college and universities, these institutions are being challenged to be more responsive culturally to their interests and mindsets, (Villages, 1991). Students have and are able to add value to institutions, such as colleges and universities through various means, including knowledge, culture, background, ethnicity, perceptions and strategies (Glaser, 1984; Resnick, 1989; and Tharp and Gallimore, 1998).

The demonstration of culture is evident in several ways, including group aspirations, psychological outlook and social habits and views (Villegas, 1998, 1991). Some writers have also suggested that how individuals establish and look at the composition of their culture are determinants for cultural norms, patterns, and indicators (Nieto, 1994; Villages, 1998). These views of social and cultural capital are more exemplified by the Caribbean-American belief that

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the Caribbean Diaspora is building a pathway to a new society (Ogbu, 1991). Although numerous studies have been done on general models of culture and the mindset and aspirations of immigrant groups, hardly any research has focused on the views and aspirations of black Caribbean immigrant students and parents who seek acceptance in the Ivy League.

Within these institutions, they must compete academically with top-performing students of Asian, Caucasian and all other racial and ethnic backgrounds (Massey et al, 2007). The lack of research on this sub-group is apparent, although black Caribbean immigrants comprise the largest percentage of black students at some of these elite institutions and achieve high academic standing in competition with all groups. The overall experience of this research shows that the cultural values, strategies and ethnicity of Caribbean-American students, contribute significantly to their desire for an Ivy League education. Their pursuit of the very best society offers is rooted in their upbringing (Waters, 1999).

Despite adversities, racial disparities and negative perceptions of blacks in America, Caribbean-Americans train their children to rise above it and persevere to obtain the best in all aspects of life (Burrell-McRae 2009). It can be argued that Caribbean-Americans not only view themselves and others in consistent terms, but actively create social constructs that support their self-images (Villegas, 1998; Waters. 1999). This study will take a detailed look at how black Caribbean immigrant students formulate and exercise strategies to achieve and maintain their status at Ivy League colleges and universities, as well as how their perception of academic excellence shapes their personal and professional experiences. I continue to seek literature that explores strategies developed by Caribbean-American students to facilitate their admission and performance at Ivy League universities. This study has shown a general lack of research and debate on the subject of this sub-group of immigrants in the U.S.

**Summary**

Although much research has already been done on the importance of ethnic and cultural identities, and how the role they play affect college choice, more research is needed to highlight the journey of Black Caribbean Immigrant students in the Ivy League, (Massey et al., 2007). Ethnic identity is rooted in a multiplicity of contexts, such as mindset, standards, expectations, family, language, cultural background, social class, geographic region, political conflict and social mobility (Gollnich and Chinn, 1994; Saylor and Aries, 1999). Community, background and parental expectation, extended family, peer influences, and social and economic expectations all play significant roles is determining why Caribbean-American students go to selective colleges and universities (Massey et al., 2007). Additionally, cumulative life experiences, access to education, and educational achievement all play a vital role in college evaluation, selection, and attendance (Alexander and Eckland, 1975; Sewell, Haller and Portes, 1969). Therefore, this study will expand the limited body of research previously conducted on the motivation and experience of Black Caribbean immigrant students at highly selective universities. It will add to existing studies that pertain to these students, while providing a line of inquiry for the decade since 2007 on a topic that has now started to encourage others to explore this small and often invisible group. It is the researcher's view that more research is needed to help establish useful data and understanding of the academic successes of the Black Caribbean Immigrant students at Ivy League universities. This research has given real voice, and added to the visibility of these students so that more investigations can be done on the Caribbean immigrant population and enhance their academic experiences in the learning environment of highly-selective universities. The next chapter details the methodology used to engage this research.

**Chapter 3**

**Methodology**

**Research Design - Qualitative Approach**

This section provides an overview of the research context and a rich description of the sample population. Research design around data collection and analysis are accounted for. The characteristic of qualitative research is that it is all about knowing "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009 p. 4). This qualitative research employs a phenomenological approach, as the study seeks to gain an understanding of the academic success of Black Caribbean students who have earned a degree from an Ivy League University. This qualitative approach design offers structure and flexibility and directly answers the researcher's questions as the information from the subjects unfolds (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

To provide further clarification, Maxwell (2008) identifies five components of qualitative inquiry. Firstly, the qualitative study focuses on the purpose of the study, thus providing a method to determine and analyze the study's ultimate objectives and goals. It will examine what is to be learned, the purpose of the research, and will identify the audience this research is attempting to persuade.

Secondly, it asked the following question: who and what practice is the research trying to influence? Thirdly, what exactly does the research suggest about the concept being examined and the need to organize earlier research of phenomena being studied. Therefore, it is necessary and important to point out and clarify research questions or areas of immediate concern, to the research category that hopefully will add to the already existing research knowledge.

Fourthly, as the research question is given, it will be investigating the best possible methods and specialized techniques that will facilitate compiling all information needed to

address the research question fully, which will be the focus. Finally, the research will closely examine how to maintain trustworthiness of the information gained, so that the researcher can account for an accurate interpretation of all the information gathered. Therefore, the qualitative research when presented will have as little bias as possible.

Moreover, as stated by Hewlett-Thomas (2009), a qualitative design allows the researcher to discover why, how, and in what direction a given situation has evolved. In addition, it synthesizes human, historical, cultural, sociological, economic, and other factors that were determinants of the situation being researched (Hewlett-Thomas, 2009).

Five major components are employed to influence the various aspects of conducting a qualitative approach and application. As expressed by Nutall et al., (2011), qualitative research is a deep, relatively emotional understanding of peoples' motivations and desires, and may incorporate the perspectives of both the researcher and the subject (Nuttall et al., 2011). This method, therefore, allows for a thorough interpretation and analysis of subjects studied with their participation, in which they provide a rich, lived experience (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This is consistent with the triangulation of the data and narratives of the lived experience (Nuttall et al., 2011). Therefore, the goal here is to connect with the researcher to get the information needed.

To achieve the purpose of the research, the researcher will look at how the relationship with participants will develop over the time it takes to acquire the data for the research. Since the relationship is a continuous process (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005), it requires the researcher to interact with the participant, thus enabling a process of negotiation and renegotiation throughout the research. This type of negotiation involves choosing the site selection and sampling options.

This study sought to gain a specific understanding of Black Caribbean immigrant students' academic success, to determine how these students adjusted socially to a given setting,

and to learn how their experiences and cultural backgrounds help shape the outcome.  This qualitative research method helps the researcher to provide a clear voice and a genuinely detailed view of their experiences. This study permits usage of labels to indicate that a product is a rich, "thick" representation of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998).

Essentially, it utilizes a qualitative design that allows the researcher to investigate how a given set of circumstances have evolved to follow a certain directional course.  It also permits the researcher to examine how cultural, social, economic, historical and human dynamics of a situation produce the determinants being research or investigated (Maxwell, 2008). This was accomplished by looking at the live experiences of the participants, by gathering data by way of an interview.  This study incorporates interviews and surveys which sought to draw inferences about Black Caribbean immigrants and their understanding of what inspired them to achieve a graduate degree at an Ivy League University.  Therefore, the data was done in the form of a questionnaire, and one on one interviews, with open-ended questions.

This qualitative research design is relevant to the very nature of the research under investigation as it allows for an in-depth holistic view of the subjects through their narrative voices by way of their participation, perception and personal experiences, which are seldom expressed in today's literature (Moustakes, 1994).


**Methodological Approach: Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is qualitative research design and a philosophy that also has implications for the method utilized (Ponce, 2014; Creswell, 2013, Marshall and Rossman, 2010). The word "phenomenology" is derived from the Greek. It has several meanings including "apparition or

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manifestation" (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). It has also been defined as the philosophy or school that explains being and consciousness by the analysis of observation phenomena (Litchman, 2006).

The general concept of phenomenological design is to understand and determine what each participant is describing as a means of obtaining a general picture of the situation being studied (Hamrick and Stage, 1998). According to Moustakes (1994), this approach enables the researcher to provide a certain structural analysis, which is based on data collection or information gathering. The researcher then attempts to view the totality of the experience that is prevalent to the subjects, looking at it from a holistic, universal human experience (Atieno, 2009). This approach, which elicits lived experience from the participants, was relevant to the study undertaken by the researcher.

A theory offered by Padilla-Diaz (2015) is represented by a view that allows the researcher to compile and arrange the experiences and voices in a pattern that make sense to the whole around them and place those experiences with real interpreted meaning (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). Moustakes (1994) agrees with the researcher when the understanding of all participants' experiences and behaviors acts as a vividly important part of the entire experience, thus making it complete.  The assertion is made so that the researcher, as well as the participants, is viewed as integrated parts of the experience, in which they are both telling and viewing the holistic story with their own voices (Moustakes, 1994). To understand the "text" and the "context", it is vital that the researcher analyzes not only what is said by participants, but also its meanings   (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).  This is used to illustrate the ideas and support the research the participant voice.  The intentionality of consciousness refers to the search and identification of subjacent, subjective elements of consciousness which surpass the intention of understanding reality from a single point of view (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

Looking at each participant's holistic experience, the objective of the phenomenological approach is to be able to piece together the experiences of the participants so that their drive, and what accounts for their choices, motivations, aspirations and achievements are understood (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). Looking at each participant and mapping their similar voices and experiences over a time span of many years that begins in elementary school to where their journeys take them as they develop their goals (Creswell, 2013). The researcher, therefore, is considered an instrument in the process of data collection and analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). As cited in existing research literature on college selection, students who attend college are being influenced as early as the seventh grade (Hamrick and Stage, 1998; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987).

Additional literature suggests that students' motivation, college aspiration, and upbringing play a role in how their perceptions are formed in the process of college choice (Hamrick and Stage, 1998). Therefore, the questions asked by the researcher were relevant in seeking the phenomenological understanding of the academic success of black immigrant students who have earned a graduate degree at an Ivy League University. Phenomenology research can be considered directive, as its sampling method is purposive (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

**Participant Selection**

For the purpose of this study, Black Caribbean Immigrants were identified as those who completed some form of high school in the Caribbean and attended universities in the USA either on a foreign student visa or since becoming permanent residents or U.S. citizens. Most of

these participants were first and second-generation Caribbean students who self-identify as Black Caribbean immigrant Americans, meaning each have one or more parents of Caribbean descent. I included Caribbean Americans who are naturalized as citizens of the United States. The population was purposefully sampled from the eight Ivy League colleges and universities in the USA with the research based on a sample size of twenty-four Black Caribbean immigrant students from both the Windward and Leeward Islands who hold an undergraduate or graduate degree (for an explanation of this difference between the islands, please see Chapter One under "Definition of Terms").  The eight Ivy League colleges or universities included in the research are based on rankings provided by U.S. News and World Report in 2016. They include Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, Dartmouth, Cornell, Brown and the University of Pennsylvania.

Participants differ slightly based on the cultural or geographic diversity of the Caribbean, ranging from the Windward Islands to the Leeward Islands. Therefore, in the qualitative research design, purposeful sampling is widely used for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomena of interest (Kuzel, 1999). Purposive sampling focuses on characteristics of a population that are of special interest and that will best enable the researcher to answer the research question (Patton, 2002). This preferred method of sampling lends itself to the viability of the outcome studied. However, it is not considered a weakness. Instead, it is regarded as a choice in which the purpose varies, depending on the type of purposive sample (Kuzel, 1999). Purposeful sampling assumes that the researcher understands gains and discovers insights, and therefore has or will select a sample from which the most information can be learned (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

## Recruitment

For this research, the recruitment efforts targeted a very diverse group of Black

Caribbean immigrants who had completed a graduate degree at one of the eight Ivy League

colleges or universities. To ensure the widest possible geographic distribution of participants

from the Caribbean Islands, I sought to ensure as far as possible that both male and female were

equally represented and span various states and islands.

The sample size included nine males and six females, from across the Leeward and

Windward Islands respectively (for an explanation of this difference between the islands, please

see Chapter One under "Definition of Terms").  Initially I wanted 24 subjects but of the people

who responded, only 15 qualified as subjects for this research.  However, though the sample

includes representatives from both the Windward and Leeward Islands, it is skewed towards

participants from the Windward Islands, as these islands are larger than the Leeward Islands in

both area and population.

Each person within the selected sample met the following criteria which guided the

recruitment effort:

- The participant had attended and graduated or had some level of secondary education in
  the Caribbean.
- The participant was a Black Caribbean immigrant who attended university in the USA on
  a student visa or since becoming a permanent resident or citizen.
- The participant was a graduate member of one of the eight Ivy League colleges or
  universities.

This sampling technique, allows researchers to recruit participants from the targeted

population who are accessible, eligible and available to take part in the study (Bono and

McNamara, 2011). This type of sampling was most appropriate for this method of recruitment because it reflected efficiency, feasibility, and convenience.

To attract Black Caribbean immigrants, and graduates of Ivy League universities, I advertised through an organizational media (i.e., an online Caribbean newspaper, News Americas Now) to solicit potential participants for the study, the advertisement included information about the nature of the study; research questions; who is qualified; criteria for qualification; the list of Caribbean nations that could volunteer; the racial identity of the person who could volunteer; and the purpose of the study and what it seeks to understand. Interested participants were required to contact the researcher via email. Once I was contacted, a follow-up contact was made by me with the interested parties, to get the participants' consent prior to their engagement in the research (consent was based on the signed consent form). In addition to recruitment of participants via advertisement, some participants, who volunteered for the study, referred others.

## Sample Population

Purposeful sampling is the process of deliberately selecting specific settings, persons or events to obtain important information that could not come from sources other than these same selections (Maxwell, 2008). From a review of past research studies and approaches which used the qualitative method, it was determined that the researcher need to use a sampling method called the criterion-based selection, or purposeful sampling. This approach was most appropriate for this research, as it employs the practice of choosing samples with care and guided purpose (Marshall and Rossman, 2010). This means that the subjects had to meet certain criteria associated with specific experiences and produce relevant information necessary to answer those

questions that pertain to research inquiries made for this study.  The recruitment yielded only 15

qualified participants. Of the 24 individuals who responded, only 15 of them met the

requirements to participate in the research.

**Table 2: Table of Participants Information**

This table reflects the degree each participant acquired from the Ivy League. The names listed

below are pseudonym, participants true identities are disguised for confidentiality.

| Participant | Age | Gender | Country of Origin | Degree/Year | Ivy School Attended |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethan | 53 | M | Antigua (L) | Ph.D. | Brown University |
| Harriet | 46 | F | Trinidad (W) | Ph.D. | Dartmouth University |
| Jason | 35 | M | Barbados (W) | Ph.D. | Cornell University |
| Randy | 54 | M | Jamaica (W) | Ph.D. | Cornell University |
| Lisa | 42 | F | Jamaica (W) | M.D. | Columbia University |
| Daniel | 49 | M | Grenada (W) | Ph.D. | Yale University |
| Alicia | 37 | F | St. Kitts (L) | J.D. | Yale University |
| Jennifer | 48 | F | St .Maarten (L) | J.D. | Princeton University |
| Leon | 51 | M | St. Croix (L) | M.A. | Princeton University |
| Pauline | 32 | F | Antigua (L) | M.D. | Columbia University |
| Wendell | 44 | M | Jamaica (W) | MBA | Columbia University |
| Claire | 57 | F | Jamaica (W) | M.A. | Columbia University |

| Karen | 31 | F | St. Vincent (L) | Ed.D. | University of Pennsylvania |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anderson | 39 | M | St. Thomas (L) | Ed.D. | Harvard University |
| Winston | 55 | M | Barbados (W) | MBA | Harvard University |

The table above represents the background of the people in the study. These participants fall into three major categories: gender (male or female), their level of education (or graduate), and geographic location (Windward Islands or Leeward Islands). The total number of participants in this sample is fifteen. Five males and four females are from the Windward Islands, the larger of the two sets of islands. The remaining six participants from the Leeward Islands include three males and three females.

The selection is broken down into participants from the graduate program. The participants graduated from the graduate program are nine from the Windward Islands and six from the Leeward Islands respectively. In one instances, the number of participants for the Windward Islands includes an unequal number of males and females within the given sample size. Whereas the number of participants in the Leeward Islands have equal amount of male and female. In this research, participants were interviewed and insight was gained through their personal experiences combined with their cultural identities, thus enabling the researcher to gain an adequate perspective and a comprehensive knowledge of the phenomena studied.

**Data Collection Procedures**

According to Creswell (2009), determining how to interpret the data collected, and establishing methods of collection are the first steps to understanding data. Thus, the overall emphasis while analyzing data should be placed on the essence or (common experiences), and on

the significance of the experience (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Data collection consisted of a formal questionnaire and interview. The primary data collection instrument used was the semi-structured interview questions. The following steps were employed to conduct this study:

Once selected, the participants were asked to carefully read and sign the Informed Consent Form, prior to their participation in the study. I made every effort to witness signatures on the Informed Consent Form.  If this was not possible for all participants, I mailed the Consent Form.   A stamped self-addressed envelope was sent out with the consent forms. Fifteen subjects were selected as consent forms were sent to each. Participants selected were both males and females. The questionnaire sent out did asked the selected participants to provide basic information, to include age, degree year/degree, Ivy League college attended, ethnicity, gender, and country of origin. This was collected to get some important background that I didn't want to cover during the interview.  I also sought to ascertain if any member of the participant's immediate family attended an Ivy League university or had completed a graduate degree program. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time if they so choose.  Data were collected from participants; however sites and names of participants remained strictly confidential. Each interview was structured and in-depth, with open-ended questions. The participants' permission was sought for before audiotaping the interview. The interviews were held at a location picked by the participants, however, if the location was out of the country or required long-distance travel, I arranged for video interviews via Skype. There were 3 videos conferences via Skype.  The remaining 12 in person's interviews were conducted with audio recording.  Each interview varied from approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. Several questions were asked, for examples:  What motivated you to attend an Ivy League University? And, how did your socialization influence your experiences at the Ivy League University? With

sub questions, such as, how did you overcome challenges at the Ivy League University? And what role did your family and community played in your support at the Ivy League University? All related to the research topic. Interviews were conducted in such a way that they reflected the following comments made by Seidman (1991):

> When we ask participants details of their experiences, they select events from their past and in doing so, impart meaning to them. When we ask participants to tell stories of their experiences, they frame some aspect of it with a beginning, a middle and an end, thereby making it meaningful, whether it is interview one, two, or three (p.12).

Thus, interviewees were closely observed to monitor their reactions to questions as well as their responses. Thank you notes were issued to all participants who consented to participate in the study.

Field notes that report real time observation were taken to enable the researcher to grasp the essence of the intended interpretation or expression better. In taking and conducting field notes, two types of concepts were utilized. I focused on the observational aspect of field notes, watching interviewees respond to the methodological questions. For example, I noted participants' facial expressions in response to the questions asked and their general body language when responding to the questions. For detail and comprehension, observations were summarized. Conversely, I reviewed the field notes to garner the analytical aspect needed to assess the interview progress.

## Data Storing

Data from the interviews were stored on an audio recording equipment. I had a secondary audio recording equipment as a backup, in case the primary recording was not usable. All questionnaires, audio recordings, and field notes were labelled with the I.D. of the interviewee

including start/stop times, dates, and locations of the interviews and were stored in a securely

locked file cabinet at a residential office. The files were kept exclusively in the second drawer,

separated from other general files to ensure safety and confidentiality of the information. Data

were stored on a USB drive. During the duration of the research, no other persons had access to

this file cabinet. Data collected will be discarded three years after this research has been

completed.

## Data Analysis Procedures

According to Yin (20090, "Data analysis is formatted for the purpose of testing,

categorizing, examining, tabulating or putting together evidence, to draw an empirical

conclusion" (p.126). The data gathered from the interview process was analyzed using the cross-

case analysis.  This analysis allows me to find patterns thus preventing me from determining any

premature conclusions, thus allowing me to examine the data from many different angles (Yin,

2008).

I examined sets of data, categorizing similarities and differences found in each set of

data.  For example, I compared interview responses of participants who held degrees prior to

attending an Ivy League university in the USA with those who did not have earlier degrees and

comparing responses from those who had family support arriving in the USA and those who did

not have family support, arriving in the USA. I carefully sub-categorized this data by gender.

Next, I examined similar sets of data for differences and contrasted pairs for similarities.  The

analysis therefore was completed to determine patterns and themes between immigrant students

with a degree in variety of disciplines, who arrive in the USA with family support verses those

without, taking special care to note experiences, motivation, barriers and coping strategies they used while earning their degrees.

As pattern began to emerged, I looked for differences within the patterns. If conflicts arose within the pattern, I followed-up with focused interview questions to confirm or clarify data to show the relationship to the statements of the finding. This allowed me to identify differences and similarities in the experiences, and better enabled me to answer the research questions. All these themes were developed into categories and subcategories and merged into the overall view of a black Caribbean immigrant student's experiences at the Ivy League University.

Emergent themes were developed into the categories and sub-categories to mirror the overall view of black Caribbean immigrant students' graduate experiences in an Ivy League University. This evolved into an understanding of the phenomena of Black Caribbean Immigrant student experiences through the Ivy Leagues. The data were coded to identify trends showing patterns in reporting.

According to Creswell (2005) Data analysis is the process whereby data is taken apart and then put back together to examine and summarize the findings. Merriam (2009) states, that in qualitative research of human experience, generalization is difficult to establish because no two-individuals process information identically. It follows that no two students will have the same experiences as they acquire motivation, and encounter barriers and fulfil requirements for a graduate degree. Differences found within the Merriam (2009) states that in qualitative research in human experience, generalization is difficult. Additionally, sample selection should also be used in finding meaning similarities that apply to other educational settings (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, coding procedures were used to formulate and examine patterns about the

participants' experiences throughout their completion of a graduate degree for an Ivy League

University. Categories were organized in pattern and themes, then color coded and listed.  This

coding procedure was utilized to examine the influences, the meaning and finally the

implications. This allowed for specific themes and patterns to emerge from the data, to best

analyze the dependability of the data.  Although the specific details of experiences may vary, a

researcher attempts to build a general explanation that fits the individual experiences (Yin,

2008). With this in mind, I examined the data carefully for influences, meaning and implications

and organized them accordingly. Additionally, I interpreted the findings of the meaningful

categories and described how these categories were connected. These important analyses were

then used to report the findings in chapter 4.


## Limitations of the Study

Several limitations placed restrictions on this study.  A larger population size might have

provided a much clearer picture of the outcome of the study. Sample constraints also contributed

to this small population size. A broader sample size could have provided a wider study.  I wanted

24 participants from the sample population, however out of the persons who responded to the

research, only 15 participants qualified based upon the criteria of the research.   Therefore,

because of a lack of established research directly related to this subject, I was compelled to rely

on research indirectly related to the general sample group, so that I could have formulated my

inquiry. Additionally, knowing more variables of the background of the participants may have

proven helpful. Perhaps what we don't know about them could be helpful. For example, if we

knew their birth order, and why role modelling makes sense to these participants, this could have

been helpful, in teasing out some of the nuances of participants' motivation. It was possible that I

could have missed vital information needed for specific interpretations, because of my own experiences both as a second generation, black Caribbean immigrant and as an Ivy League graduate. I discussed strategies for reliability and validity. Inevitably, data were allowed for various interpretations of perceptions and experiences.

## Role of the Researcher

I am a Black Caribbean Immigrant who attended some schooling in a British Caribbean Island. I migrated to the United States as an early teenager and there attended undergraduate and graduate schools.  I attended a private academy, and came from a two-parent family, where academic expectations were very high, and Christian values were promoted.

I believe that family and the community at large had a great influence in shaping my goals and my overall success.  I have three advanced graduate degrees including one from an Ivy League school, Columbia University in New York City and was led to this topic because of the lack of available research on Black Caribbean immigrant students' experiences at the Ivy League universities. The intent of the research was to place a spotlight on the topic to generate more inquiry and promote interest in this sample population. I am persuaded that this helps to identify the academic pursue of excellence with some Black Caribbean immigrant students as well as solve the problems of how Black Caribbean immigrants– students' needs are met at selective institutions. Likewise, how best administrators can interact with these students to help them reach their fullest potential.  My experiences as a Black Caribbean Immigrant and an Ivy League

graduate may benefit this study, through my first-hand knowledge and background relating to the

sample population. This resulted in my ability to easily identify with participants' experiences.

Uniquely, I am experientially and emotionally able, to understand their motivation and

aspiration, thus, equipping me with a resonance needed to give a clear voice to participants'

experiences.  On the other hand, my background that has similarities to those of the participants

in this study might also have a negative effect. That is to say, because I understood the potential

detrimental effect; I paid special attention to adhering to the interview protocol. This included

restrictions of my non-verbal and verbal responses, to prevent any undue influence of the

participants' responses. I was careful not to provide leading questions but as the interview

unfolds, probing questions were asked based upon the participant responses. I was mindful not to

ask any leading questions so as not to affect the answer, and I took special care to record

verbatim the answers that were given.  Being conscious of both the benefits and deficits of

sharing in the experiences of participants compelled me to discuss reliability and validity

strategies that were employed to limit any bias or influences that my background could have on

the outcome of the study.

### Reliability and Validity Strategies

I incorporated and designed the study to be "trustworthy." I made every effort to account

for any personal biases. The process was authentic, since assumptions were being filtered for

personal bias by the researcher (Robert, 2010). Not only did I follow the protocol of the

interview and stuck to restrictions of all verbal and nonverbal responses, but I made sure how I

asked the questions related solely to the research purpose, problem statement and anticipated

significance. These cautionary measures were employed to ensure that all the questions asked addressed the researcher's questions, and all records reflected the clear interpretation of the data.

In this light, I coded, interpreted and analyzed the data in ways that reflected the accuracy of the each participant's description, which served to support my findings. All questions were vetted by my dissertation advisers to make sure that they were consistent, transparent and pertinent to the research question. This process I repeated to guarantee consistency. These strategies both informed this qualitative research and reinforced the credibility and implementation of this study.

Further, the interview protocol was reviewed and approved by my mentors. In addition, I tried to counter possible potential subjectivity and biases by constantly adhering to the interview protocol. The interview protocol restricted my verbal and nonverbal input and was tailored to illuminate attempts at influencing the way the participants responded to the interview questions. During the face-to-face interviews, I employed silence, which was done to encourage participants to speak freely and without undue interruptions.  This pattern remained consistent, except when I was clarifying or probing for more direct responses. I kept detailed notes. These were consistent with the probing, and the questioning techniques deployed.

## Credibility

As an attempt to develop a strategy to enhance credibility after each participant completed the interview process, I returned all transcribed interviews transcript to the participants for member checking.  This meant that all the participants reviewed, checked and corrected their transcripts for accuracy.  All misconceptions and misunderstandings were addressed and corrected. This reinforced the trustworthiness of the interview protocol. According

to Merriam (2009) Member checking is a vital form of getting participants' direct feedback and accuracy of the researcher understanding and interpretation of the interview.

I adhered to all the guidelines already established by the Seton hall University Institutional Review Board.  Pseudonyms were used to established and protect participants confidentiality.  Information gathered and used in this study was kept securely, stored and locked in files, in which only I had access to, for the duration of three years.

## Transferability

According to Merriam (2009), to ensure transferability, maximum variation in the sample used, will allow for a much greater application of the research finding, by the readers of this study. Joining this line of reasoning, Guba and Lincoln, (1985) contents that transferability is the process, whereby the finding of the study can be applied in other contexts. Therefore, the difference amongst the participants' experiences in the Ivy League universities, and the sample selection, (educational background, family support, cultural heritage, religious background, types of high school attended and their individual experiences) accounted for transferability in a different educational context.  No two students are alike or no two students' experiences are the same. By extrapolation, these research findings will help educators and administrators to transfer the findings in the practice of providing adequate services, and enhanced sensitivity to the Caribbean immigrant student population.

**Reliability**

Merriam (2009), describe reliability as to the extent, to which the finding of a qualitative research study can be replicated. Likewise, it is a process that is dependable on keeping account of an audit trail to provide accurate data collection. I believe that the protocol and strategies followed, the documented decision making processes used, and the built-in assurances that accounted for the researcher's biases, throughout the entire dissertation process, could be replicated by another researcher.

**Conformability**

To adequately address and ensure conformability, my mentors with my department at the Seton Hall University, and some participants who participated in the study, assisted in the evaluation of the findings this study.

**Ethical Conclusion**

Boundaries and honesty are needed for the researcher to respect the ethical standards of the research. The following steps were taken to show respect for the participants: Each participant was addressed within his or her cultural framework of honor and respect. The privacy and rights of each participant were strictly governed by confidentiality. Each participant was advised of his or her right to withdraw from the study. To ensure that each participant

understood the research objectives, each objective was clearly articulated. Moreover, I adhered

to all procedures, rules, and regulations outlined in Seton Hall University guidance for

dissertation completion.  All participants and research sites remained strictly anonymous and

confidential. Materials and written interpretation were made available to all participants. A copy

of the Consent Form was given to each participant all questions and concerns about the process

and aim of the research were explained before personal signature was appended. Ultimately, I

attempted to interpret all data collected without personal bias.

## Summary

This chapter highlighted the various components that were used to conduct this study.

The research questions guided the study and provided an appropriate design for the research. An

overview of the qualitative methods as well as the technical style of the phenomenology chosen

was established. The research sample size, participants, informed consent, the recruitment

process, the questions asked, the survey formulated, the confidentiality of the research, and the

guided design, have all been fully examined and formulated to maintain the integrity of the

study. The researcher presented ethical considerations to each interviewee, along with sites,

selections, participants, data collection procedures, analysis procedures, and limitations of the

study.  Several limitations of the study were highlighted, which reinforces the need for validity

and reliability. Checks for biases and challenges to this study were embedded in the process,

which justified its pursuit.   It is anticipated that an essential study of the issues, combined with

and an intimate understanding of the research participants, will yield practical insights for

understanding the academic success of Black Caribbean immigrant students who have earned a

degree at an Ivy League university.  Constant analysis of the findings yielded suggestions for

future research and added to the participant's visibility, and much more. Thus, it is important to

know and consider the true intent of the research and the ultimate problem it aims to resolve,

(Padilla- Diaz, 2015). The next chapter reports the findings emerging from this study.

**CHAPTER 4**

**Findings**

This study explored how black Caribbean immigrants, who graduated with a graduate degree from Ivy League institutions, described their early socialization experiences and how these perceptions influenced their aspirations and motivation to succeed academically. Specifically, the study further explored a better understanding as to why they attended the Ivy League and their desire for upward mobility. This chapter presents the findings from interviews conducted with fifteen (15) participants. It focused on the totality of their experiences as they pursued an academic degree at an Ivy League institution. One overarching research question and three sub-questions guided the study.

**Research question 1: How do Caribbean immigrant students who graduate with a graduate degree from an Ivy League institution describe the influence of their early academic socialization on their aspirations and motivation to succeed?**

- **What role did academic backgrounds play in influencing their college aspirations and completion?**
- **How did the cultural norms affect participants' aspiration and ultimate college completion?**
- **What barriers did they face and how did they overcome them?**

When participants spoke of challenges, they all felt it was a necessity, even a sacred duty, to be successful for families, siblings and community members at large, who was rooting for their success. Participants believe that their academic achievements were in some ways

dependent on their level of academic preparedness and their cultural socialization. Each expressed their satisfaction in fulfilling their graduate degree requirements.

Participants disclosed that intrinsic motivation and teacher's reinforcement of learning at an early age helped them to succeed academically. For example, participants were able to identify positive experiences and influences, such as hard work and expectation of excellence from family, friends and the wider community, as critical to their early socialization in the Caribbean. Likewise, many participants believed that these factors contributed towards academic preparedness and affirmation of positive self-esteem, both of which were sources of motivation during the completion of their studies at the Ivy Leagues.

Additionally, the combined responses of participants provided greater insight, clarification and depth on how early socialization shaped and informed their ability to navigate the Ivy Leagues. Notably, the challenges expressed for example: adjusting to a new culture and discovering ways to socially fit into the college environment as a black Caribbean minority student. Establishing strategies to socialize with people of similar cultural background were directly consistent with previous studies, which explained Caribbean immigrants' socialization, cultural experiences and motivation towards upward mobility (Villages, 1989; Massey, 2007; Ogbu 1998).

Yet, this study revealed several innovative coping mechanisms that students employed, for example: joining clubs for Caribbean students that engaged in activities that centered on their cultural norms. The conceptual framework for this study was based on Vincent Tinto's theory of students' progression at universities, combined with their academic successes, and their ability to graduate. Tinto's theory influenced this study by identifying factors of why college students' retention and graduation reflects a holistic approach as they interact with the university (Long,

2012).  He was primarily concerned with two fundamental factors: why some students succeed in college while others do not; and why some students tend to identify with their cultural heritage and racial backgrounds while others do not (Long, 2012).

The study also relied on Douglas Massey's studies of black Caribbean immigrant students as they pursue academic excellence at the Ivy League universities. Minimal research has been conducted on the perception of Black Caribbean immigrant students as they pursue academic excellence at Ivy League universities (Massey, 2007).  In 2007, Massey conducted a national longitudinal study of freshman, based on demographic data that focused on enrollment and graduation trends for immigrant Caribbean students. Important as this was, Massey's study, and no study since then, has sought to understand these students' experiences from their own voice.   Survey from Massey's study revealed that at private colleges, the percentage of immigrant students is higher than that at public institutions, with the highest percentage enrolled at the most competitive colleges, for example: 41% of black students in the Ivy League were Caribbean immigrants (Massey, 2007).  The study also provided information on the countries of origin for Caribbean immigrant students, with Jamaica comprising 20.5 percent, the highest percentage of all the Black Caribbean immigrants (Massey et al; 2007).

Fifteen Ivy League graduates from the Caribbean, who had some form of early schooling in the Caribbean, participated in the study.  The use of a semi-structured interview for a period of 45 minutes to an hour captured their responses. Participants agreed to a one-time interview session with no follow up interviews. The findings from the collection of the data and analysis of the responses yielded seven dominant themes and sub-themes as they emerged. The seven themes were as follows: (1) external and internal influences on participant's aspiration and motivation to succeed. Sub-themes: Significant influences of parents, family and teacher; (2)

positive experiences and influences with family socialization in the Caribbean: Sub-Themes: Intrinsic motivation to perform; communal high regard; (3) the role of the community; (4) values and cultural norms that influence their academic aspiration; (5) cultural support from immediate and extended family; (6) strong cultural identity, (7) personal pride and the grit mindset. These seven themes that emerged from the data are presented to show how the evidence aligned with the main research questions and sub-questions that guided the study. This chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings.

When the researcher analyzed the responses from the participants answer to the question: How their early socialization and educational experiences influenced their aspiration and motivation towards success at the Ivy League?, four main themes emerged:   intrinsic motivation to perform; influence of parents and families; teachers playing a vital role in participants academic and school playing a part in preparing for their academic journey. From the overarching question: How do Caribbean immigrant students who graduate with a graduate degree from an Ivy League institution describe the influence of their early academic socialization on their aspiration and motivation to succeed?

**Intrinsic Motivation to Perform**

Motivation is what drives people to act. Intrinsic motivation is an internal drive where an individual strives towards a goal of personal fulfilment. Most participants had a general sense of academic accomplishment in attending the Ivy Leagues. Whether it was Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth or the University of Pennsylvania, many of the graduates expressed that they had accomplished something much bigger than they had expected.

Many of the participants explicitly shared their experiences of studying at the Ivy Leagues as an experience well remembered.  Jennifer a graduate of Yale law school shared the following:

It was such an indiscernible joy to finally study at Yale. I always wanted to go to a university considered the best in its field. Every extracurricular activity that I did, and all those nights of study and hard work, was done with a single focus in mind - going to an Ivy League university.

Yet, although very challenging, many participants felt that they could hold on to their own values of good work ethics and reinforce positives ways to make it.  They often conveyed an aura of having risen to the occasion and met the challenges of academic excellence. Participant Leon put it this way:

Going to Princeton was the apex of my academic aspiration. When my feet touched the campus, I felt a rare joy running through my spine. 'One down,' I told myself. Graduating top of the class was number two.

For the black Caribbean immigrant, the stage was set for future success in education at an early age.  Education was viewed as a direct pathway out of poverty and upwards mobility; thus, moving towards excelling in scholastic activity was like a rite of passage for social status. Performing exceptionally well in school was viewed as a desirable quality of life (Mitchell, 2005; Ogbu, 2003, 2004). Many participants strived to do well in school. They believed that this was tied directly to their success both professionally and academically. They wanted to succeed.

Apparently, what drove participants' pride, was a profound belief in themselves and their abilities. They expressed that they could accomplish anything they put their minds to.

A wonderful illustration of the graduates' motivation coupled with the recommendation of a teacher to succeed was shared by Participant Pauline:

> Well what motivated me, what was my incentive to go… again I didn't really think of Columbia as an Ivy Leagues, I knew it was like a top-rated university, and in fact when I was there, it was like: 'is it number five, is it number three?' And then I remembered thinking: 'Oh, it is top ten.' …  I went there because I knew it was a good school; it fulfilled a dream of mine.

Positive ways to view their experiences were shared among many of the participants. Participant Wendell, a graduate of Columbia University who majored in business administration and acquired an MBA, felt a sense of pride towards his accomplishment. The cadence of his voice and his ringing laughter filled the researcher's ears.  To have graduated from Columbia, he said, meant that he wanted to become the best. Caring for his family and making his community proud meant adopting a certain professional lifestyle, which began with having an Ivy League degree. When asked: What motivated you to attend an Ivy League University, he said:

> Self-motivated first; and motivated by the family second. Thirdly, I was inspired by my parents' hard work and commitment. And lastly, I was motivated to obtain and achieve and to become my best self. Those were my motivators.

Many of the participants applied themselves without any distraction to graduation: Harriet, a Dartmouth graduate shared this: "I often applied myself; I did what I know was expected of me. I wanted to succeed, and I was going to do just that."

Early motivators served as a guiding light for many participants to continue to succeed. The ideology that they could compete at an Ivy League University academically and graduate with flying colors was bolstered by their early successes in high school. Jason, a graduate from Cornell University, stated:

> I was motivated in and of myself to do well. I wanted to attend an Ivy League college once I knew that they were good schools. I did my research and found out everything I needed to know in advance. I was going to get good grades and move on by faith, with no monies really. I was lucky. I got scholarships.

Participants were not afraid to meet the challenge of the academic rigors of the Ivy Leagues. In fact, many perceived that they were mentally and academically prepared and welcomed it. Participant Jason, a graduate from Cornell University, with a Ph.D. in economics, knew that he could compete with anyone academically and expressed this happily. He stated that his early socialization had prepared him to meet the challenge. He was encouraged from an early age to embrace learning. He needed to do well and kept the focus on his academic goals to get good grades so that he could attend a good college. He explained this realization as follows:

> Unfortunately, my brothers and sisters saw me ... I wasn't special in any sense. I wasn't treated differently from the others, but they knew that I loved knowledge. I yearned for knowledge and I would go after it. I would seek it out wherever it was. I was very assertive in doing that. They would say: Yes, he is going to be the one that academically will do the best.' In my time there was a national exam and I ranked second. Yeah, what that meant is that from that national exam, the top 30 would get a scholarship to high

school education. By the end of that, I was ranked number one. The girl who beat me out in the national exam, I beat her out at the end of high school.

In the case of participant Claire, who did not come from a typical nuclear family home and whose mother was a registered nurse, she believed it was imperative for her to succeed, as her mother often told her so. Additionally, the burden of being a mentor to her siblings rested on her shoulders and therefore an expectation of her performance in the Ivy League was enormous. There were times she felt less prepared, but she had overcome those feelings and motivated herself.

I think that it's an expectation that I had," she said. "Just the expectation … and in college, there were times of being very discouraged, but I just kept at it. I think I had a lot of self-motivation and I also had expectations from my family.

A good illustration of the participants' enthusiasm and their intrinsic motivation towards their graduation from graduate school was expressed. While the consensus among many participants was one of strong self-confidence despite being discouraged many times, participant Karen thought that the Ivy League did not meet her expectations. However, she was going to focus on her goals and graduate.

When analyzing the data, I discovered that neither performing well in high school or getting good grades at the Ivy Leagues evidenced an increase in participants intrinsic motivation; it was simply a function of familial, communal and teacher's influences. Participants explained that several teachers took charge of their academic success while community leaders happily

contributed to their sense of competencies. For some, like Anderson, he expressed that his success is directly linked to the elders of his community:

> Oh Jesus, I knew people who took charge of my academic success. They were more than interested. They took more responsibility to make sure that I succeeded. One such person was the former education officer. She had a national responsibility, but she made me her personal responsibility. At every juncture of my life, she made decisions constantly, looking at what the next decision was going to be for me academically. Teachers and community members - from church to various groups - made a distinct impact on my life. They were my primary motivators.

## Influences of Parents and Families on Participants

As postulated by (Levine, 1988; Ogbu, 1993): "Socialization refers to the process whereby an individual learns the skills attitude, values and disposition to function competently in a particular society." Teachers and families also communicated a clear vision of the participants' academic path and personal development society. Participants expressed that the most common external influences were the expected norms that their immediate family reinforced in their lives. One such expected norm is the degree in which their family held them to high academic standards. A good illustration of the participants' family influences and the role they played in their early socialization towards completion from a graduate school is expressed by these six participants' sentiments.  Daniel, a Brown University graduate revealed:

> There was always pressure on me to perform, at home and school, because of the track record that my siblings made … They were always pushing excellence. So, I was always expected to duplicate. It was positive.

Likewise, Wendell shared that his family's religious ideologies were important throughout his life and thus was a guide towards his completion of his academic goals. Wendell states with passion:

> My family and I are religious. Religion played a very important role in shaping my consciousness. You know it helped me decipher between right and wrong and to build a moral compass: food of the spirit, joy and happiness. You know, they lived decent and right and had a relationship with God.

These, and other types of ideologies, were often guiding lights for many of the participants. Many participants often grew up with some form of religious belief. This was practiced on a regular basis, from church attendance to religious community activities. Therefore, this created a greater bond within the family structure and the family community at large. This made them confident in their views of the world and their abilities to tackle their academic goals.

Further evidence is shown in Ethan, a graduate in law from Columbia University School. Ethan believed that his family's academic standard influenced his decision and expectation to attend college and graduate. Ethan stated with pride, as he took a deep breath, that he was happy with his family as his role models.

> We were an academic college family. My mom is a retired teacher, so growing up in her teaching environment, was very cool. In special education, we were told that tertiary education was not an option, but every one of us was expected to get one, a master's degree or graduate studies. We can go off to do it, meaningful academic training. It was stressed often that we all must pursue higher learning.

Another participant echoed Ethan's sentiments. According to Leon, a Princeton University graduate:

> There was nothing other than that's what you were going to do. There was never any thought than that you would attend college. You know, we came here to the US, so my dad could get his doctorate. My mother had two masters. There was no way that we, their children, could do anything but go to college.

These participants' indicated that it were their family influences and disciplines that informed their introduction to learning. Taken together, these factors were instilled at a very early age and formed the foundation for future success. Further, many participants understood that they were setting a family example for the other siblings. Succeeding was important, but striving to be a positive example in the family structure was extremely vital. Jason opined:

> We were taught this by our parents very early. If it's one thing they made sure of was that we didn't miss a day in school. That's not just me but for all my siblings; so we would do a lot of work in the farm during the holidays but during the school time we were in school. I would say, from as early as I can remember, an education, going to school, was always seen in the family as a positive thing; something that we all should do.

Some participants' families were working class and dedicated much of their efforts to making sure their children understood what was expected of them. These families assured their children, that if they focused on academic excellence, they could eventually help their families financially. A strong work ethic was noticed by many of the participants' parents, and therefore

this was reinforced in their psyche. This is evident in Andrea's statement about her parents' working history. She took a lot of pride in relaying their ability to support the family by any means necessary:

> Well my parents weren't professionals; my mom, basically was a domestic….. What's the word….engineer, she did housekeeping. And my dad, first my dad, was a tailor when he was in Jamaica, and then, you know once he moved to England, he was a bus driver there. Once he came to the U.S, he learned refrigeration and air conditioning and he worked at different companies doing those things. He learned a trade and worked with it.

Many of the participants learned from their parents, at an early age, that hard work was necessary for their future success, be it academically or professionally. Participants expressed that the most common external influences were the expected norms that their immediate families reinforced in their lives. One such expected norm is the degree to which, the family saw participants as direct role models. Ethan, a Brown University graduate with a Ph.D. in physics, shared that his desire to do well was keyed into being a role model to his siblings. Ethan believes that he was to be a role model to his younger siblings and setting an example was paramount for his family. It was as he put it: "a stated expectation and a constant reminder." This desire was also attached to being the family's financial bedrock to reduce hardship:

> I knew my family counted and depended on me to do well to help support the family after graduation. There was pressure in the sense that there was an expectation. An expectation that look, you have this, to use a phrase, you have this gift, so don't waste it. You have this gift, so make good use of it.

Other participants, like Harriet, alum of Dartmouth College, with a graduate education in biomedical sciences, felt her family was responsible for how academic excellence was instilled into her consciousness. She wanted to do well for her family:

> My family promoted and pushed education as we grew older. It was important. I mean, it was a priority because you don't have a choice but to go to school. You can't drop out; you need to go on. I mean, it's pretty much like, if you don't go on to college - I don't want to say this, but I will say this - that you're a failure. You must go on to make something of yourself and do something with your life. There was that high expectation and good pressure that came from my family.

Teachers played a vital role in participants' academic progress. Teachers were a vital part of participants' lives and their cultural experiences.  Teachers, along with parents and family, helped prepare the participants for their role in academia and the wider community at large. According to Winston, an MBA graduate from Harvard University, there was a combination of reinforcement of values both at home and at school. "The teachers I had in secondary school were very encouraging, a lot of the values for aiming high came from school," he revealed.

Although adult learning skills are relevant to a productive role in society - as expressed - it is to be noted that far more emphasis is placed on the actual learning of the norms, attitudes, and values that prepare people for their social roles, (Ogbu, 1993). This resonates with Harriet, who earned a Ph.D. at Columbia in Educational Psychology. She explained the importance of external motivation towards her own academic progress as she prepared herself for the social role she would take in society:

> Well, I knew exactly what I wanted to do before I went to college. I knew it had to be something that was going to give me stability in some way. And to get there, I would

have to perform well in college, of course. That's what it was. My teachers often told me

I had to be something, be it a lawyer, a teacher, a doctor, or some other profession.

Another participant Jason, a graduate of Cornell University with a Ph.D. in economics, positively expressed his yearning to do well in college. He was focused on attending an Ivy League university and he did. Jason demonstrated the notion of intrinsic motivation that he felt all along growing up. It was as if he was predestined for a favorable career outcome. For him, that influence was expressed in a desire to educate himself far beyond high school:

I always knew I would become something. I had the desire all along within myself to

learn and grow. My parents did not have to tell me and instruct me to do my homework

or assignments. I just did them. I would walk for miles once a week to go to see Teacher

Henry to help me with my math. As a child, the sun would beat down on me, but I was

determined to get an A in math and I loved learning. I had a deep yearning to get as much

knowledge as I would possibly get for myself. Learning to me was fun.

In his persistent search for social forces, Bandura (1963) noted that the infant child is ready biologically to begin the process of socialization; this process can be defined, as shaping and or modifying behaviors. But this is done through interaction with others, which helps to conform to the general expectation of race, class, and gender. In general, many of the participants held a perception of their role in the community. They believed that much was expected of them to perform academically and to set an example, especially for the younger members of their community. The influences the community had on their academic and professional trajectories were significant. Many felt that they had a sense of responsibility to help

their community, as their communities were undoubtedly supportive of their journey to excellence.

Caribbean-born, Ivy League graduates were told that they could make it if they focused on their immediate goals, they would eventually succeed. This contributed to the enthusiasm informing their attitudes to graduate. Participants asserted that their teachers played a special role towards their success. According to Vincent Tinto, one key concept from his studies on graduation and retention examined the interaction between students, community and the institution. He found that the teacher plays a direct role in the development, successes, and graduation of students (Long, 2012). From the framework of a holistic view, Tinos's theory explains casual factors that affect students' ability to develop.

Many of the participants revealed that their teachers were instrumental in their lives and their academic training. They spoke about their teachers as extended family members. They further held the view, that their teachers added value towards their inspiration, confidence and motivation. The participants saw their teachers with admiration and spoke fondly of them. Their early academic training with their teachers encouraged them to pursue a passion for learning. It is no doubt that their teachers were a driving force towards their academic progress as lifelong learners. When asked about their teachers, this is what four participants had to say.

Wendell had a big smile on his face as he stated with joy:

Your teachers, of course, you know! Those were the people, older people; they were teachers in the village who knew your family. They were supportive, very, very confident. I would say it just took a whole village to raise a child. Yeah, from the time I was a child all the way up.

Likewise, Daniel saw his teachers as pushing expectations, holding him to high standards. Much was expected of him since his teachers knew and taught his older siblings. According to Daniel:

There was always pressure on me to perform by my teachers because of the track record of my older siblings. They were always pushing, so I was always expected to duplicate. It was positive.

Other participants like Leon understood that they were expected not to disappoint their teachers. Their teachers were invested in their academic progress. They believed in their students and wanted the best possible outcomes for them. Leon stated:

I had amazing teachers. I felt very comfortable. I had people who really believed in my capabilities and I didn't want to disappoint those teachers,' so I lived up to their expectations.

Teachers were a part of not only their academic, but cultural and family experiences which enabled the participants to have the confidence they needed to achieve their academic long-term goals and complete a graduate degree. Ethan summed it up as follows: "Teachers reinforced learning both at home and school. It was all about the village; it just was."

School played a role in preparing participant for their academic journey. Randy asserts that school played a vital role in his upbringing:

I always felt a sense of responsibility to give back to my community and help the younger folks. I saw others in my school community did this, especially the older folks. The Elders were constantly telling us we had to give back to the community. There was a

saying my father use to say to us: 'One hand wash the other, both hands wash the face.'

And at Sabbath school, I learned at an early age, 'God loves a cheerful giver.' We had to

repeat that every Saturday at Sabbath school. So, giving back was drilled in us at a very

early age.

He said that the school community presented a concrete way to stay connected to his

culture and his values. For Randy, the school and community provided new visions of social

encouragement.  Another participant Lisa said:

I always felt a sense of loyalty to my school community. Many of the elders supported

me. They would ask my family for me ever so often; checking to see how I was making

out. I think that wherever I go, I always reached back and tried to help my community at

large. That is the community influence I saw as a child, especially while growing up in

my school, doing community service. This experience exposed me to leadership

responsibilities at an early age.

Leon, another participant, believed that he was well prepared for his academic journey.

He contended that his high school enabled him to succeed and as a result, he was able to build

upon his fundamentals. Leon stated with vigor:

Oh, I was thoroughly prepared. My high school prepared me for Wesleyan and Wesleyan

then more than prepared me for Columbia. So, I felt very prepared academically.

Ethan, another participant, expressed that in grade school he was expected to excel and

do well academically. This early expectation from the school community and his community-at-

large was ingrained in him. Having this level of encouragement at an early stage, set the stage for a more confident outcome: He asserts:

> I think by the time I started grade school it was just expected that I was supposed to excel academically, and that expectation was kept by the school, teachers and the entire community.

Participants such as Daniel and Wendell shared that having an academic environment that allowed them to excel and participate in extra-curricular activities was helpful to their academic confidence. This allowed them to excel academically.

"Well I was in the top 3% of my school for that year," said Daniel. "The 3% of the class, the highest grades would form an academic corps and would represent the school in public debates and mathematical competition, throughout the island."

Wendell added, "In high school, my status was either first, second or third basically. I think they prepared us well.

Many of the participants felt a sense of gratitude when talking about their school as a community. It is clear that they believed that their schools were instrumental in their academic success and served as a model of encouragement and support.

**Research question 2: What role did academic backgrounds play in influencing their college aspirations and completion?**

**Positive experiences and influences with academic expectations from teachers, parents and community in the Caribbean:**

Many of the participants shared that there was a positive affirmation of their academic preparedness towards completion of studies pursued at the Ivy Leagues. They believed their academic preparation helped them to be successful in college. Some of their responses on how Caribbean immigrant students, who graduated with a graduate degree from an Ivy League institution described the influence of their early academic socialization on their aspiration and motivation to succeed, shows there were some overlapping responses in how respondents answered the first research question. This overlapping of their responses also relates to their perceptions on their academic preparedness for the Ivy League institution of choice, which created some unique insights on this specific question. The most common feeling was that they felt prepared for the Ivy Leagues academically. One participant identified as Lisa shared the following:

> I think from the time I started grade school that it was just expected that I was supposed to excel academically and that expectation was pushed by my parents and the school teachers and my community at large. I had great teachers and felt well prepared academically. I was always first in my class and I knew I could handle any academic challenges. I was not afraid to work hard. I was considered very smart by my peers and teachers.

Likewise, another participant shared her experience with her academic expectations from her parents and community-at-large. This participant focused on working hard; she did not go out to play until her homework was completed. This was practiced by her every time a homework assignment was due. She was consistent in following through on her academic assignments. She saw this as a sense on her duty; her responsibility was to get good grades. This

participant believed that this allowed her to become more proficient in her academic

performances. She practiced reinforcement of her school work as much as possible and learned

at an early age that she needed to focus on her academics before play. She was given the verbal

support by her neighbor, who was mindful that her parents expected her to do her school work

first before play. Another participant had similar experiences. According to participant Daniel:

> Homework was serious business when I was growing up. Teachers actually would check
>
> on your parents to make sure we did our homework. For example, during the week on
>
> Wednesday night, they were prayer meetings at our neighborhood church and most every
>
> parent would be there. This also included our teachers, who could actually see and talk to
>
> your parents. They would remind the parents that so and so homework was due. So, you
>
> had to take it seriously; they were consequences for not doing your assigned home work.
>
> Homework was seen as reinforcement between the teacher and the parents. Each team did
>
> their part.

Likewise, participant Lisa's math teacher was an added benefit to her preparation. The

additional tutoring she received, helped her to develop better math skills, thus boosting her

academic confidence.  She felt that this type of academic expectation and preparedness enabled

her to focus on her academic goals and objectives. Likewise, participant Jason recalled his

experience growing up:

> I learned from an early age to study real hard and always do my homework first before I
>
> played. My teachers were always there to help me with any academic issues. I recall my
>
> math teacher coming to my home helping me with my math after school. My parents did
>
> not pay her. Old Miss Harris, the neighborhood watch, would ask us kids: "Did you all

finish your homework? And remember, you are not to play until you are finished with your school work. We would laugh at her as children, but this was all a part of the academic readiness and discipline we were learning. It carried us all through life. As a result, I always made A's; I strived for that. It was excellent preparation academically.

The broader picture here is that most of the participants had a shared experience towards their academic expectations. Their teachers, parents and community-at-large all had a direct influence on their academic expectation. Therefore, these participants felt the need to live up to a standard that was expected of them. This reinforcement of their academic expectation was directly drilled into their sub-conscious mind, towards a greater understanding of their abilities and responsibilities to the wider societal family.

**Academic Preparedness and the Educational Support That Was Received**

Many of the participants shared that they felt there was a positive affirmation about the education they received in their early years and the academic preparedness in their later years. They believed that this academic preparedness towards completion of their studies at the Ivy League helped them to be successful in college. This section focuses on participants' academic preparedness and the actual education they received during their years of early schooling and the influence they perceived it had on their completion of graduate degrees. The most common feeling among the participants was that they felt that the education they received was adequate in helping them succeed in college. One participant, Lisa, shared the following:

I think all the class assignments and extra home work really gave me a push. It was a sort of reinforcement for me. I felt as if I was always working on my academics in school and out of school. My teachers would also give us summer work; although rough, it was very

good for me. I was never behind. I kept the pace up very well. My grades increased

throughout the years. I went from a B student to straight A students by end of high

school.

Other interviewees like Daniel always felt that education preparedness was of real value

to his long-term success at the Ivy League because as he said it: "I had the fundamentals." He

added, "Education preparedness played a pivotal role because everything we did was secondary

to the academic preparation that we had, so it was a matter of surviving for the family."

In the context of the Caribbean, teachers, mentors and community leaders reinforced the

practice of excellence and refused to accept mediocrity from participants. They expressed that

people in the community were expecting and supporting them to do well as a symbol of upward

mobility. One participant, Winston, talked about the experience of growing up in his community:

I had pressure from the community because I came from a strong community that

encouraged education. Everyone supported each other; everyone looked out for each

other and everyone wanted to see that each person achieved whatever goals that they set

forth to achieve. So, there were pressures there from the community to do well.

As noted in the research, a combination of community support fused with student

aspirations and expectations often yielded high school achievement amongst students' future

educational behaviors, (Khattab, 2015).

**Communal High Regard**

Cultural and social capital are inherited and passed down within families, specifically

through one's parents, (Bourdieu and Passer son, 1997). If cultural capital is the acquired tastes,

values, language and educational qualifications that can signal membership in a privileged social and cultural class, Nieto (1999), it is dependent upon transactions evident by explicit favors, mutual exchanges, and collaboration. It can be said, that these associations are used to gain advantage and facilitate collective action or produce powerful assets.

Similarly, participant Ethan noted that the educational values that were instilled in him were passed down by his parents, which gave him the drive to succeed academically. He believes that his parents provided him with a good education by sending him to good schools. Further, they were instrumental in reinforcing his academic values by making sure he was consistent in his assignments and producing the desired grades needed to excel in school.  They provided him and his siblings with additional help via school tutoring and often asked others to help them with areas they needed help in. Ethan believes that this type of conduct helped influence his academic outcome - to graduate from college.  "Well my parents always promoted and pushed education," he said. "They always wanted us to advance ourselves and they knew that one way out is through education, so they always promoted education, always created avenues so that we could be exposed to being educated."

In like manner to Winston, participant Randy expressed a keen understanding of the expected social capital values. These values leveraged education and going to school. He explained the belief shared by other students that the community's high expectations served as an energizing currency, which helped them tap into the social asset.  "It was important. I mean, it was a priority because you don't have a choice but to go to school," he said.

You can't drop out; you need to go on. I mean, it's pretty much a given. If I didn't go to college … then you're a failure. You have to go on make something of yourself and do

something. Everyone is looking at you, so most of us try to understand that we represent our families and the community tacitly and actively to make them proud.

In differing ways, what is being articulated is a strong sense of community awareness towards academic progress. Participants from a young age knew that they were expected to excel and set an example for the larger community. Education was viewed as a way out of poverty. To drop out of high school would be seen as a failed attempt to graduate from high school and this could make a difference in their economic life if they would get a good job or go on to college. Clearly, the participants' attitudes for academic credentials were promoted through different channels. Thus, family and community outlets were important for these subjects at an early age.

Participant Alicia shared the following: "There was a combination of home, school, and church. Everyone was expecting you to do well academically. They knew you were capable and encouraged you every chance they got."

Although there clearly are other aspects to cultural upbringing, participants seemed to focus on placing a high premium on education. This is keeping with the notion that education is the key to economic and social mobility.  This rich tradition was passed on through processes of family and community socialization. Added to this idea was the notion of well-being of the community at large.  This was expressed through diverse forms of high expectations with special emphasis on being academically prepared. Participant Jason felt confident that he could compete with anyone academically.  He believes that the early education he received prepared him to meet any academic challenge.  Such was the confidence expressed by many of the participants. There was added pride that they had been given an adequate early education, which likely increased their ability to succeed at the tertiary level and cope with the academic challenges. As Randy put it:

I was never intimidated that I was attending an Ivy League school. I was always

prepared. I knew I was given a good education. To tell the truth, most of my course work

was somewhat of a breeze. I could handle it with ease; not that it was not challenging, but

I was academically prepared. I realized afterwards that I received a first-rate education. I

thought my teachers were a bit old fashion when I was in high school, but that education

did me good.


Taken together, familiar influences - which this development depends on in part – is the

relationship shared between a child and their parents.  Each relationship plays a role on the

greater outcome of the individual; thus affecting the other family members over a period of time

(Maccoby, 1984).  According to Maccoby (1984), who discussed the effect of the development

of a child bi-directionality, such development progress includes the following: physical growth,

language development, concepts of others and the actual autonomy of the child inter-connection

and interaction with their family members, especially their parents.  Likewise, according to

research, neighborhoods that advance this model, while controlling family background and social

class, enhance students early school achievement (Baker et al, 2000).

Beyond the immediate family, it is often viewed that the larger community's influence on

a young person can strongly influence a child's achievement or progress, (Baker, 2000).  In some

communities, a conceptual model that demonstrates the functionality between social accessibility

and common outlook provides for a supportive social order, (Baker, 2000).  It is further noted

that in these communities, members therefore expect their relationships with other community

members to be useful, friendly and supportive. This is based upon these community members

similar world view, (Baker, 2000).

Cultural Capital, according to Cole (2018), is the accumulation of people behaviors, their skills learnt, knowledge that an individual can tap into to demonstrate individual cultural competencies and their social status in the community or society. According to French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, who came up with the terminology 'Cultural Capital' in 1973, this accumulation of cultural capital is used to reinforce class differences, thus inferring that different groups of people have access to all kind of direct resources (Cole, 2018). He further asserts that these resources come in the form of education, socialization and culture and exits within us as assets, a form of capital for the greater usage of the society-at-large and communal influences. These virtues merged together, working to provide a stimulating environment that fosters academic excellence in participants.

In what has been shared so far, participants implied that their academic preparedness and the educational support they received were cultivated through their community's commitment to reinforced values of excellence. These values, when linked to familial encouragement, served as motivational factors for graduates to attend and graduate from the Ivy Leagues.

Participants' were expected to perform and excel academically. As such, they were given cultural support from their immediate and extended families as answers to the question: 'What role did cultural background play in influencing college aspiration and completion?'

**Research Question 3: How did the cultural norms in the Caribbean affect participant's aspiration and ultimate college completion?**

**Cultural Support from Immediate and Extended Family**

One of the fundamental ways we can achieve gratification is by paying attention to the needs of others. Caring for others is central for people to become responsible for their own

success. "It takes a village to raise a child, clearly expresses the message of the whole community playing a role in the development and growth of its children in the broader community," (Roekel, 2008).

Some participants felt a responsibility to set a standard for their younger siblings and members of the community. Yet, they thought that a standard was already set for them. When older children or parents demonstrate guidance, responsibility, excellence, duty, self-control and resilience, their children or siblings will mimic good behavior. This researcher's interviews focused on the relationship between cultural background and graduates' motivation to study at the Ivy Leagues. Many participants expressed that a standard or example was already set for them. Cultural support from their family filtered through values and norms. This was viewed as bedrock to graduates to aspire to be the best role models they could before attending an Ivy League University. This perspective was mirrored in the notion that graduates drew on cultural expectation of exploiting brain power for self-development, familial security and community expansion.

Participant Andrea, a female Harvard Graduate, put it this way:

My older sisters were my role models more than anything. They set the standard to follow. I guess I was pretty young but understood that I had to follow their example. So, I looked up to them, and my three sisters went to college and took sciences', and all were able to have careers after college. One sister went on to Columbia Medical School; another sister went on to earn a Ph.D. in chemistry, so I would probably say I looked up to them more than anything else and had to follow their examples. As well, I then had to set examples for my younger brother. That was the way it was. My parent used to say: 'Set the right example for your little brother, he is watching you.'

It is not that culture is ultimately responsible for all our actions and thoughts. It is also immediate family dynamics that create a platform for future success and failures. Socio-economic factors and inherited tendencies serve as a pathway, leveraging the spirit of learning and development that facilities competitiveness towards achievements (Levitz, 1968).

A second direct source of influence on participants is a wider social networks and extended family groups. These relationships serve as a function of common values and descent. Researchers have documented the value of the extended family within low-income urban, African-American communities. One example is the role of grandparents in single-parent situations. In studying the influence of these networks, findings show they are important sources of educational and financial resources (Ford and Harris, 1991; Pearson et al. 1990).

Claire, who was from a single-parent household, was expressive:

My grandmother was always there to help us with the household responsibilities and with the care of my younger siblings. She was also a big source of help spiritually and financially to my mother. Therefore, we got by with what we had but I knew I had to remain focused on my goals and help out; my family depended on that.

Graduating from the Ivy Leagues has social implications - what participants called "social responsibility to the community at large;" as people believed in them and were depending on them to make it. However, unlike many of the participants, Harriet had a unique experience, which allowed her to build upon her parent's guidance as role models in her community. She felt it was her social duty to do well, beyond simply believing in herself or psychological self-reliance. This participant also shared that because her parents gave her confidence and extended their goodwill, favors and care. This was embedded in the societal norms and extended to the

cultural family norms of Harriet's experiences.  Her parents provided the type of security and cultural understanding she needed to succeed. They instilled in her a sense of her social responsibility to the community-at-large:

> Well my parents went to a number one Ivy League school at that time. After coming to this country, I grew up really on the campus of Columbia University. But we moved to New York for my father to get his doctorate. So, we were living in campus housing. In fact, I grew up in campus housing. And so, I literally grew up in the shadow of Columbia. So that was my first experience with an Ivy League institution as it was the institution that brought us to America. So, I was given a privilege and I was expected to live up to it. My parents constantly told me that I had a social responsibility to the community to give back and set an example. It was a given from a cultural prospective. This extended to our immediate family practices. Eventually, we moved back to the Caribbean. My community believed in me and therefore I was expected to give back by doing well and succeeding.

Participants shared that their family ties stretched across the immediate family. In addition to psychological encouragement, the community offered social and financial support in terms of caring for the elderly, academic tutoring and encouragement, nurturing children and cooperation through shared labor. As participant Jason puts it:

"We had an understanding that 'each one helps one;' our community pitched in and helped with whatever they could to support our success. It was just the way things were back then; the community on a whole really cared about our progress."

Participants did not describe disadvantageous experiences from their 'community family.' They accented only benefits. These benefits were used to supplement limited resources and spread goodwill. When participants were asked: 'How did their cultural background help them to overcome barriers - perceived or real - at the Ivy Leagues?' they gave two fundamental responses: strong cultural identity and personal pride coupled with the grit mindset.

**Strong Cultural Identity and Personal Pride**

Another experience that the participants shared throughout the study was the sense of their cultural identity and personal pride. This was evident in the way participants viewed their heritage and expressed a strong sense of identity. When asked how they were able to socialize on campus, virtually every participant said they found comfort in connecting with other Caribbean students and diverse friends from other nations.

Participants emphasized the value and the deep emotional significance that was attached to their cultural identity. This, they claimed, sustained them. Yet, they found other students to share in campus experiences. This is congruent with Holcomb McCoy's research on ethnic identity. The research concludes that positive cultural outcome from individual experiences leads to a greater sense of self-confidence which further leads to cultural pride (Holcomb McCoy, 1997, p.23). This, in turn, fosters the desire for cross-cultural interactions. Participant Ethan summed up what many others expressed:

> I had friends from the Caribbean. In terms of our cultural perspective, we had a good understanding of our pride and our rich cultural heritage. However, I had friends that were not just West Indians. I created a couple of friendships with people who were obviously from the United States, but also people from Asia, Europe and Australia; so, it was very diverse.

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Of interest to the researcher were comments made about how graduates built

relationships with professors and engaged with other organizations to overcome barriers. Most

participants coped by seeing barriers as obstacles to overcome. Thus, they persevered.  Upon

reflection on their experiences, participant Randy made an interesting observation of how

graduates were able to bond together to succeed:  "We would go to our peers …we had a very

steady group of Caribbean peers … if there was something we needed. If we had a problem, we

would band together to help each other work it out," he said:

> We bounced things off one another because we had that connection and we had that
>
> relationship with each other. Of course, we all had our own hill to climb but we assisted
>
> each other in climbing that hill as much as possible - be it moral support, financial
>
> support or just academic support.

For participant Lisa, the experience helped her cultivate determination, purpose and a

spirit of taking risks.  The desire to join a few organizations for blacks, Latinos and Europeans

were less intimidating. "These organizations provided not only a safe space for building

networks, but they also provided critical information, resources and a place to call our own," she

added. Many participants found ways to cope to help them best navigate their social experiences

on campus while maintaining their cultural pride. Likewise, many built strong relationships with

their Caribbean peers and did not entertain barriers as necessarily negative obstacles. As stated

by Daniel:

> We Caribbean students did not see barriers; there were no barriers we could not
>
> overcome back then; and we heard of racial barriers. We did not deny that hurdles existed

but for most of us, we had too much riding on our shoulders to make a big deal out of

barriers. We were solutions oriented. We just overcome them and moved on. We had one

goal in mind - to do well and graduate. Nothing was going to stop us because we were

determined.


Participant Anderson also noted that when he thought of his personal goals and the

barriers he had to overcome, he drew on his heritage of courage, hard work, determination and

burning the midnight oil: "Life was not always easy for me and my colleagues. We were living

in a different culture and people, we were outsiders, and at least we felt like it," he reminisced.

We had lots of financial problems, housing problems and social problems. But we knew

why we were there; we had to overcome our barriers and get through them. We studied

long hours, worked part-time jobs, and prayed for strength and courage. We did not let

that stop us, I certainly did not; neither did most of my colleagues. We pushed through,

always.

Several participants, however, felt a sense of isolation and exclusion - as if they did not

belong. Participant Jason's words stood out: "Sometimes, we felt as if we were not included in

general activities. You feel a bit isolated and left out." Participants also related experiencing a

strange feeling of being left out of many activities. However, participant Daniel reported that he

always knew who he was and was not concerned with how others viewed him, especially in an

exclusive light. He stated:

Those feelings of confidence and self-pride were instilled in many of us, even from

childhood. My father would always reinforce who we were, our purpose, and that we

were earmarked to do something great in our society. Even as a child, we knew we had a

destiny, we had a purpose; and that preparation was going to be the way by which you could do that. Therefore, others could not make us feel less than; we didn't know what that feeling meant; we did not feel less than to begin with.

Several participants felt like they saw themselves no differently from their peers - whites or blacks - so they navigated their way through. Various issues, including the feeling of being different on campus due to their minority status, did not prevent them from mitigating negative situations to cope and succeed. Participant James reported that his father often instilled an ethic of caring about others, but only as this enhances one's goals and integrity. Character mattered to him more than skin color. He voiced that he and others had a profound pride in their abilities and did not allow anyone to ruin their chances for success.

> I was always mindful of my behaviors and other people attitude towards me. I was taught proper ethics and I knew when others were being malicious intentionally. I was not brought up like that, looking down on people, nor was I thought to view people from their skin color, I looked at their character. I knew what I could do and I tried to do it very well; I took pride in myself and my work. So, I did not bother with those persons who were not of like character. I kept moving and wouldn't give them my good time. I had too much to concentrate on.

As participant Daniel put it: "Superiority is not a matter of pronouncement, it is a matter of performance, and we Caribbean students performed to the best of our abilities."

Another participant echoed the sentiment reported by other participants. There was a general perception of being very fortunate to have attended an Ivy League University. Upon reflection, participant Claire felt accomplished about her achievement. She was glad she had the

courage to overcome because this had strengthened her outlook on life.  Participant Claire said she would recommend the experience to any Caribbean student who is willing to persevere from trial to triumph.

Not all participants, however, felt positively about their experience at the Ivy Leagues. A few felt that though they successfully managed, the contradictions they saw on various campuses meant that these intellectual circles could not keep faith with the tenets of inclusion, diversity and fair play.  For example, participant Harriet stated:

> It opened a lot of doors for me and put me in position to take advantage of opportunities; so, it gets me in there but it was still hard getting through all the racism, exclusionary behaviors and slights. I had to work harder and prove myself to others, who were not as academically gifted or prepared as I was.

Harriet's account indicates that subtle forms of racism exist at the Ivy Leagues, often known for critical thinking and intellectual rigor. However, she concluded that she would recommend it more than any other universities to Caribbean students.  She believes it could strengthen their networking experiences and expand their horizons.


**Research question 4:  What barriers did they face and how did they overcome them?**

**The Grit Mindset**

Duckworth (2015) affirms that the traditional concept of intelligence may be only a very small part of the reasons why some people become high achievers and others do not. She and others argue that character strength is also an essential aspect of healthy human development, (Aristotle, 1925; Damon, 1997; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Kamenetz, 2015; Lerner et al., 2005).  Duckworth asserts that those who advanced the idea of inherited intelligence perhaps

could be wrong. In addition, she contends that self-control and tenacity are also contributing factors. Likewise, she further notes that such characteristics as the "Grit" mindset can help to facilitates extraordinary achievements (Duckworth, 2015).

The "Grit" mindset is rooted in perseverance and passion. This is coupled with a dogged focus on long-term goals and overcoming obstacles. In essence, grit, which represents zeal, hard work, tenacity and determination, is more predictive of achievement than talent (Eskreis-Winkler et al; in press; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

In analyzing the participants' responses, many had the belief that they could accomplish their task regardless of plight or predicament - academic, financial and social issues they had to wrestle with. While there were some challenges on their journey to attending and graduating from the Ivy Leagues, each participant demonstrated stamina and endurance. Each stayed on task without distraction for a long period of time. This focus was led by their internal desire to do well, a sort of dogged quality.

**Academic Challenges**

The finding suggest that many participants had to overcome mental barriers towards their academicals challenges, meaning they were faced with a situation in which they were in an academically challenging environment and they had to perform at their maximum capacity. Given the many issues that they faced, be it lack of resources to provide adequate tutorial in center classes, such as one participants expressed, for example physic and chemistry. While the university suggested a number of initiatives for assistance in tutorial, enough was not provided to aid him in these particular areas of the sciences. Therefore many of the participants had to find creative ways to tackle their academically challenges be it big or small. For example, participants Pauline expressed:

We had our academic challenges. We had very little support on campus, because we were

a small group. When I had some issues with my academics, I could not afford a tutor, so I

spend many long hours teaching myself how to do my work. I often when to my friends'

dorm room and they would help me with my assignments. We supported each other.

Academic problems exited for these participants but they found unique ways to deal with

their challenges to preserve and not give up.  As participant Winston, an MBA graduate from

Cornell University puts it:

I did not create any mental barriers for myself … and I tried to ignore some of the

nuances that would interfere with my focus, so I could concentrate on my academic

objective fully, without any distraction. I focused on the end goal and concentrated on my

objective - that was to graduate, obtain my degree and advance myself. Nothing was

going to stop me. Nothing!

In many cases, participants expressed confidence and pride that they were talented. In

fact, twelve of the fifteen said that they were viewed as smart from childhood. However, many

reported that talent alone was not enough. They were surrounded with love and support from

their families and friends, which gave power to their determination to succeed and graduate. This

led to their individualized capacity to isolate any academic weaknesses and work to overcome

them. Participant Daniel shared:

I believe from a child my mother used to tell me I was talented. My teachers told me so

also. However, I realized early, that talent alone was not enough. You needed sheer will

power, tenacity and emotional strength. I believe I had to develop a strong self. I believe I did.

This participant referred to a 'strong self' as having developed from childhood the determination to be academically successful. He gained the discipline and tenacity to be able to maintain and endure his studies. Another Participant felt that her family love and the joy they gave her helped her along the way. Claire said:

My Grandmother used to bake me Black Cake, a traditional Island rum cake. I would share with all my International friends, and they loved it. My favorite Aunty, often sent care packages and I looked forward to receiving them. She bragged about my progress with every person she met. I felt really loved; they really took good care of me. I missed those days.

This participant was able to convert the love she was showed by her favorite Aunt, to an actual feeling of confidence towards her studies and her every day academicals challenges. She felt she was given the reassurance and support of her Aunt to continue on with her studies. It made her days much more pleasant as she was better able to cope with her academic challenges.

Participants Daniel and Anderson conveyed that they concentrated on their abilities to get the work done. Participant Daniel shared:

I always focus on the task in front of me. I really never lose focus. I knew I had a job to do and I did it. Things for me was not easy, I had some academic problems, trying to find my way. Sometime I felt isolated but I relied on getting tutors and friends, especially from the Caribbean. It was not a lot of us, but we bonded together to help each other out.

This participant was able to rely on his Caribbean peers for academic support. He also got tutoring, that made him more confident in his academics. He indicated although there was not a lot of Caribbean students, he felt the connection through their bonding. Throughout the research, I see that it was the Caribbean student's strong connection to each other and their support of each other that helped them persevere through their studies.

Yet, many of these participants spent sleepless nights and long hours to push forward, overcoming academic challenges and an array of the financial and social obstacles as well. Participant James also explained that he had self-discipline towards his academic studies and the will-power not to give in or give up, which is the reason he attributes to his success.

I had the need for self-actualization. The ethic was instilled with us from childhood; it was learned. You knew you were meant for a purpose and that you have a goal and you will see it through to completion. I met a challenge and I was determined to deal with it head-on. That's the driving forces to being your best self.

This participant had role models in his life. His father was a hardworking man and taught him the value of discipline towards success. Therefore, he was shown from a child that hard work does pay off. He was able to convert this ethic of hard work and discipline throughout his studies, which made it much more rewarding, towards being his best self.

Many of the participants demonstrated the passion to preserve and overcome any academic obstacles. Participants acquired a spirit of single-mindedness towards any obstacles; they displayed a stubborn resolve not to abandon the task ahead of them but instead choose to persevere, with a strong focus on the goal ahead, which was to acquire good grades, graduate

and excel above their peers at the Ivy Leagues.  In addition, Participant Karen explained that her parents instilled the notion of perseverance from childhood:

I always try to finish whatever I start. I am a determined person, since from childhood. My mother used to tell us, children, 'Finish what you start; don't waste time.' My dad often used to say to one of my brother, who was always looking at the set-back as obstacles: 'don't look at the setback, focus on the goals.'  So I did just that, I looked at the goal and no setback could not and did not deter me. I was there to get an education and I was there to get it as fast as I could and get out of there. Take advantage of all the school had to offer. I wouldn't call then barriers - there were challenges. I was determined to achieve my academic goals with high marks.

Several participants felt that they had dealt with Ivy League environments capably well, despite trials. They flatly ignored the perception that they were at the Ivy Leagues purely based on Affirmative Action.  According to many participants, this notion was expressed quite often, whether in a conversation about affirmative action or just an innocent question, such as, according to few participants, 'how did you get here?'

Contrary to this belief, they felt that they got there on the sheer strength of years of academic and leadership excellence, expressed by their grades and accomplishments. Although there were a lot of other challenges happening at the same time, for most participants, it was their internal compass of knowing what they could and could not do, which helped them deal with the wide variety of challenges, especially academic challenges they experienced.  This is voiced by clearly identifying the range of challenges and the different strategies they employed to overcome them, such as their financial challenges.

**Financial challenges**

The visa and employment status were uniquely different for many of these participants, who were considered international students. Many participants had F1 visa status that did not allow them to work. Some participants had green cards that did allow them to work, and those that could, find employment part time, sometime many participant reported they found night employment full time to help support their expenses. Many employed different strategies when dealing with their financial challenges.  Those who simply were not in the immigration status to work relied on their immediate families and extended families. Additionally, many participants demonstrated the abilities to over their financial challenges by finding ways to survive.

Winston was direct:

Many of my days were filled with lots of everyday Black Immigrant challenges, especially financial. I had to rely on my family members to contribute sometimes. Things were hard.  I was an International student and could not work, like most.

Winston, was given the support by his family, since he did not have a Visa that allowed him to work as a student. He dealt with this by receiving financial assistance from his immediate and extended families. As he further said, "everyone pitched in to help me".

Likewise, Participants James contends:

Life as immigrant students was very hard. Resources for me were scarce. What I did not have I do without, but my friends and family always came through. I did not burden my family too much, as I know the younger ones were coming up. It was hard just trying to survive and keep excellent grades, but I did it. Looking back, I don't quit know how I did it.

This participant worked part time on campus to pay some of his personal expenses. He survived on just providing for himself the basic needs, as he did not want to further burden his family. Many of his friends and family provided meals and clothing throughout his studies. He conveyed that, "my friends were supportive, with hot meals often".

Two participants who felt negatively towards the Ivy Leagues, expressed that they too were just as determined to master their challenges. They expressed they felt isolated and everything was at a high financial cost. One of these participants did express that she did not received the financial package she was expecting. This resulted in a strained on her financially. She felt the problem was not handled in a manner that she felt satisfied. Her financial problems created additional obstacles as she put it, "I had to utilize the school services to compensate for my lack of finances towards private tutorial services, especially in the areas of Calculous and Statistics. I could not afford these services".

However, in spite of it all, they took academic assignments seriously but used the flexibility of the curriculum to produce solid outcomes. As one of these participants said, "I took all the help I could get from tutorials", the other participants contends, "I used my time wisely for studying". They put in long hours of study, attended tutorials classes, managed their time wisely and completed their work diligently. Not surprisingly, they embraced their financial limitations and endure them, and graduated top of their classes in the end. Some participants had very little financial resources. One such participant expressed this:

Resources, you mean financial resources? There was just support, meaning just your family trying to verbally support you and pray for you. There weren't any financial resources from my family. They did not have it.

This participant indicated that he was able to get a scholarship and work for most part of his studies. He worked odd jobs part-time all year round and then worked as a security guard full time in the summers. He contends, "It was very difficult for me, trying to maintain varies part-time jobs and maintaining good grades".  Here, we see the dedication of these participants, in which they are able to work through their financial obstacles, in spite of their many issues to overcome and make it to graduate.

**Social Challenges**

Overall, the results suggest that while the participants find ways to cope with their social challenges, that many had it difficult at first with fitting in.  Additionally, the combined responses of the participants towards social challenges provided a much greater understanding on how they handle navigating their social concerns. Many found solitude in their Caribbean peers, while others join clubs and started on campus clubs to enrich their social experiences. Others simply did not care to fit in and did not attempt to do so either, while others found international groups and join them to help ease the social challenges they had to face.

Participant Claire said: "I was not really as impressed with the Ivy Leagues, I felt I got a lot more from my undergraduate college. I often felt my culture was misunderstood, as most thought, I was African American, and it was difficult just explaining my culture all the time. I felt isolated".

She stated, "all forms on campus contained, African American or other, I always picked other". This participant felt that she was not identified properly. She was often mistaken for African American, and many persons, including administration that did not understand or know the difference. She believes if the difference was thought about, more resources could have been available to help facilitate positive experiences on Campus.

This participant felt that more resources needed to have been allocated to address social issues on campus, to accommodate Black Caribbean immigrant students. Therefore, she helped to establish a Caribbean organization. She expressed: "Well, as I said, we had the interaction with other Caribbean students and also we had a very vibrant and well financed Caribbean Students Association".

Another participant Randy explained, he was often questioned about how he got to his university:

Other students always wanted to know, how I got there. I told them, the same way they got there, I earned it. I felt isolated sometimes and wondered what the university was doing to include us. We had to find ways to include ourselves. We were not noticed at all.

Clearly, this was a social challenge for him. The feeling of isolation was, as he felt, not being socially accepted. They felt others were inquiring by virtue of their question, it he was given a pass to the Ivy League. He felt he earned his pass through diligent and good grades, throughout his life time. He and other participants expressed that they felt that they belonged there, because, they worked hard for it.

It is noted that many of the participants did not try as hard to fit in, as one participant said, "I could not be bothered," They work together as a team and was able to encourage each other along the way. They also created avenues for them to appreciate their cultural pride. One participant put it, "We had our parties and had a great time too".

In order to cope socially, many participants found their peer group for bonding. One participant shared: "We had lots of Caribbean peers, most of them from the medical school and

dental school. And we respected each other, it was mutual respect. We socialized and encourage

each other".

Other participants also had the notion that they were responsible for their own socializing

and did not let fitting in bother them. One participant clearly stated, "It wasn't an issue at al."

In light of their responses towards social challenges in the Ivy League, many of the

participants had a positive approach to overcoming obstacles.  Many expressed, they were not

obstacles at all, but there were challenges to overcome. Karen expressed, "we overcame them

and graduate. It was just that simple".

It is noted that many of the participants did not try as hard to fit in, as one participant

said: "I could not be bothered, another participant tells, "Did racism exit? Yes it existed, that had

no impact on how I saw myself".

These Participants found ways to cope with their feeling of isolation.

We went out a lot. We went to Central Park, and I initiated, planned, and coordinated

certain activities to go to the theater. Also we went to plays at student discounted prices.


In addition participant Anderson shared a different experience:

I had some problems, believe it or not. I lost focus, when my sister died while I was

studying. I could not concentrate on nothing. I fell into a deep depression and had to

struggle to pull myself up to fit in.   It was one thing after the other. But I pulled through.

I kept my faith and prayed.

This participant was able to seek help from the school counseling services. He was able to express his feeling about his sister's death and was given the support by his peers. This enabled him to pull through and refocus on his studies, while fitting in socially with his peers.

Participants generally resisted the temptation to give up. They displayed tenacity and demonstrated a great deal of self-discipline as a way of putting passion above obstacles. These participants showed 'grittiness,' stubbornness in sticking to their goals despite the barriers. They demonstrated a consistency to remain goal focused. They did not give in to social pressures on campus and often believed that failure was not an option and the loudest demonstration of genuine grit was the stubbornness to stick to a task and accomplish it. As participant Pauline said:

> All of us from the Caribbean came here knowing that we simply could not fail. In spite the challenges. It was not an option. It was never discussed. We did not come to socialize; we came to work hard and graduate. We would help each other out in any way we could because, if we were going to leave the Ivy League in a coffin, we had better be shipped home with our degrees in hand.

This participant summed up the tenancy these students had that governed their dogged focus. They were determined to succeed and stopped at nothing to do so. Their attitude echoed many of their sentiments, that failure was certainly not an option. They were given an opportunity to attend an Ivy League University and they were going to make the best use of it and make their families proud, while working to improve her lives.

**Summary**

Taken together, each theme outlines notions of hope and steadfastness, which were the underlying threads that integrated participants' desire to overcome obstacles encountered at various Ivy League Universities. Graduating from these selected universities was seen as a step towards upward mobility. Participants perceived the Ivy Leagues as the gold standard for economic and professional advancement. This view propelled them to the notion of outshining their peers.

Despite wealth disparities and class polarization, Black Caribbean immigrant students did not fall prey to self-doubt. Equipped with self-confidence, determination, the grit mindset and cultural pride, they maintained focus on their goals. While struggling to embrace their cultural heritage, they displayed an extraordinary capacity of indigenous values, in a foreign land. These values seen in the research are not static, they are very much alive. Graduates gave voices to their willingness to tackle their fears and worked diligently to reach their stated desire to graduate from the Ivy League universities. To them, they embraced this accomplishment as evidence that they had achieved ultimate academic success while appraising their cultural identity.  In the end, participants demonstrated a kind of organic link to their compelling island heritage. Yet, they did not lose sight of their educational goals and objectives. In fact, they achieved their agenda to graduate, from graduate school at the Ivy Leagues University.

The research on ethnic identity resonated with the overall sentiments expressed by each participant. This research claims that positive cultural outcomes may result from individual identities that are based on their own experiences. It is further implied that these individuals likely developed self-confidence and pride in their ethnic group through these personal

experiences (Holcomb-Mccoy, 1997, p.23).  The next chapter is devoted to discussion,

recommendations, policy, practice and conclusions flowing from this research.

**CHAPTER V**

**Discussion, Recommendations, Implications and Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the major findings of this study through the lens of theories informing the study and linked to the research question explored. Relevant applications associated with the study are addressed in the form of discussions, recommendations, further research, conclusions and policy and practice.

This study explored the perceptions and feelings of black Caribbean immigrant students who have earned a graduate degree from an Ivy League University in the United States. Through the described academic experiences of such students, the study sought to understand how the influence of their early socialization (i.e. black Caribbean immigrant students) affected their aspiration and motivation to succeed. From the responses from the participants seven themes and sub themes emerged. These themes are as followed: Motivation to Succeed; Significant influences of parents, family and teacher; Positive experiences and influences with family socialization in the Caribbean: Sub themes: Intrinsic motivation to perform; Communal high regards; the role of the community; Values and cultural norm that influence their academic aspiration; Cultural support from immediate and extended family; Strong cultural identity; personal pride and the Grit Mindset.

Additionally, the study hoped to decipher the role their cultural norms and academic background played in influencing their college completion, as well as the barriers they faced and how they overcame them. Emphasis was placed on students whose earlier academic schooling, at the secondary or postsecondary level, took place in their country of birth. The sample selection of participants was 15 black Caribbean immigrant graduate students, who graduated from Ivy Leagues Universities in the U.S.A. This study was rooted in the logic of past research, which has

shown that adjustment to academic life is more challenging for immigrant students than for second generation students (Charges and Colleagues, 2008).

The study was also intended to complement the demographer Douglas Massey's work, which began in the early 2000s. The study further looked at the positive experiences and influences their teachers, communities and parents played in influencing their college aspiration and completion.

The instrument used to collect the data was a forty five minute to an hour interview with semi-structured questions. Participants' feedback was found to be relevant to the conclusions reached in this research study. Emerging patterns and themes from the semi-structured interviews were briefly presented in several categories and sub sections, based upon the research questions posed.

The purpose of this study was to understand how Caribbean Immigrant students who have earned a graduate degree from a selective university in the United States describe their graduate schooling experiences. Specifically, the study seeks to understand the barriers these students faced and how these barriers were overcome. This study tells their live experiences and their journey through the Ivy League University. The proposed study focuses on these students whose earlier academics schooling at the secondary or postsecondary took place in their country of birth. This group was selected because past research has shown that adjustments to academic life is more challenging for immigrant students that for second generation students (Charles and Colleagues, 2008). This study is also aimed to complement the demographer Douglas Massey's work, which began in early 2000.

The interviews found that participants' motivation and inspiration were born out of their cultural experiences, social class, family expectations, community anchoring and the grit

mindset. Participants reported that their experiences at the Ivy Leagues were both riddled with challenges and an exceptional experience to complete their graduate degree. Therefore, they would not only recommend other students to attend the Ivy Leagues they would encourage them to do so. As such, they gave testimonies that the status as Ivy League graduates opened doors to their current careers. They believe that their discipline and hard work gave them the mobility for career advancement. Likewise, their family support, community support, academic preparedness, early socialization, intrinsic motivation, cultural prospective, all played a role in them achieving their academically goal to graduate from the Ivy League University.

Understanding the journey of these participants and their lived experiences, conveys the message that the road to excellence is paved with hard work, dedication and a grit mindset; therefore, when analyzing the results of this study, ones come to clearly understand that foreign-born immigrants value and validate academic achievement so much so that they reinforce this value into the psyches of their children. This was particularly evident in Caribbean immigrant students (Kent, 2007; Vickerman, 2001; Rong and Preissle, 2009; Waters, 1999, Waters, 1996a).

Cumulative life experiences, access to good education, and quality of educational achievement played a vital role in Caribbean immigrant students' selection, evaluation and college attendance (Alexander and Eckland, et al, 2007).

**Discussion**

**Research Question 1: How do Caribbean immigrant students who graduated with a graduate degree from an Ivy League institution describe the influence of their early socialization on their aspirations and motivation to succeed?**

The study found that, notwithstanding their lack of resources in their early schooling experience, participants believed that their experiences were very positive and contributed to their academic success. It was discovered that participants were academically prepared for an Ivy League institution. They attributed this preparation to early interventions from teachers, community members who practically helped to reinforce values of excellence. Extended family members, who projected and promoted high expectations regarding participants' future success, played a supportive role in their lives. Taken together, early interventions in education created a passion for learning and a motivation to succeed.

Participants had an intrinsic motivation to perform. This drove their individual desire to act and perform. This was embedded deep into their subconscious internally, which helped them fulfill their academic goals. Most Participants had a sense of accomplishment rooted within them. Many felt that they had what it take to succeed and likewise, they strive beyond their own expectation to obtain their dreams. Many of the participants contend that they had a natural desire to do well and to be successful in their academicals pursuits. They had a strong belief that they could succeed against all odds. Their beliefs were expressed, "As long as they could perceived it, they could do it." These beliefs are congruent with Ogbu's research on Caribbean students.

Ogbu (1998), underscored that Caribbean students are most likely to aspire and adapt themselves to a corporate setting, thus striving to improve their employment thus enhancing their lives, especially in a corporate setting. Therefore, they are most likely to be self-motivated to go to college and obtain a quality education.

Ideally, many participants revealed that their parents and immediate family members played an important role in their early socialization experiences. They further understood that

they were expected to do well and was driven by this reality. This academic value was embedded in their psyche from a child and throughout their early socialization, and was construct in such a way, that they were reinforced by their families. They believe that this type of socialization towards academic pursuits helped them to strengthen their own perspective towards the Ivy Leagues education.

Massey in his study further expressed that these student believe the established goal of an Ivy League education as the ultimate reward for academic excellence (Massey et al; 2007). According to Massey and Mooney, (2007), participants were often seen as role models in their respective communities. They were identified as high achievers, which meant that they were earmarked very early for success. The quest for academic excellence is a near-phenomenon in this group. He further posits that cultural norms among the people of the Caribbean are a contributing factor. These cultural norms serve to intensify their pursuit of higher education. Although participants were driven academically at an early age, it was their hard work and devotion to completing their academic work that compelled them to eventual success. Additionally, cultural pride would become a source of early socialization. But it was not taken as an aversion to the unknown or a tendency to fear differences in values or beliefs.

Furthermore, participants felt that their family structure and their wider community were their motivating factors to succeed. Although this emerging pattern remained constant among most of the participants, several participants did not have family or extended family support, but were still able to motivate themselves to succeed. There were some cases in which certain male participants described their academic journeys as extremely challenging. Yet, they drew strength from the formative years of schooling in the Caribbean, as many of them felt that they still had to live-up to the standard of excellence that the community back home had set for them. Guiffrida

(2006) and Freeman (2005) found that familial connections from pre-college to adulthood could instill confidence in students reaching and achieving their aspirations; thus enabling them to develop required skills to succeed.

**Research Question 2: What role did academic backgrounds played in influencing their college aspirations and completion?**

Vincent Tinto's concept of a theory of students' successes, which focuses on the academic progression at universities, and the student's ability to graduate, looks at why some students succeed in college while others do not (Long, 2012). Many Participants shared that their academic background served as a function that helped to prepare them for post-secondary education. Likewise they believed that there was a direct link, which positively affirmed the academic benefits of their early academic preparedness.

When asked to share about the role their academic background played towards their college aspiration, many participants felt there was a strong connection with their academic preparedness and the adequate education they received from the early years in their schooling. These academic values were based in part, on participants' keen understanding that academic preparedness had a direct influence on their social and economic standing in the community at large.  From the added perspective of the fifteen participants, their academic background accounts for their college aspiration and therefore provided a keen focus for them to be successful in completing their graduate studies at the Ivy League Universities.  The study of the finding supports Edward-Joseph and Bakers findings on Caribbean Immigrant students.

Perhaps one of the foremost compelling pieces of evidence is that according to one study that states the belief that students, like these participants, raised in the Caribbean bring somewhat of a strong sense of academic achievement with them, when they attend college in the U.S.A.

(Edwards-Joseph and Baker, 2014).   The study found that these students are generally considered to be successful. They often have many factors or beliefs that influence their self-efficacy during their attendance at U.S. universities. Likewise they are often focused on their academic agendas.

In essence, all fifteen participants in the interview sample placed a high value on school attendance. Thirteen of the participants identified school attendance as the most important priority towards their academic success. One participant stated: "It was important and of high priority to attend school, school was where you were academically prepared to be successful." He further expressed, as well as many of the participants, that failure was not an option.

High achievement by students from the British Colonies is often attributed to their immersion in a British School System model for the most of their academic lives (Edward-Joseph and Baker, 2014).

In describing their viewpoints, many of the participants believed it was clear that they felt confident with their academic background, and therefore felt it was a powerful asset towards the completion of their graduate degree at an Ivy League University.  As a determinant of successful outcome, self-efficacy is often more important than specific skills (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, within persons who hold a high sense of their value, their personal well-being and over all accomplishment is enhanced (Bandura, 1994).

**Research Question 3: How did cultural norms affect participant's aspiration and ultimate college completion?**

Nieto's (1999), cultural capital is seen as acquired by values, language, educational qualifications and taste, which signals membership in a privileged social and cultural class. Although Caribbean American students have some things in common with their African

American counterparts, there are some important differences. These differences are in their respective cultural experiences that have helped shaped they educational development and goals of each group (Villages, 1989). Kim (2014), articulated that Caribbean student's achievements and experiences are often lumped together with their African American peers, thus ignoring the variety to be found in their unique ethnicity, cultural and diverse experiences of both groups.

According to Swartz (1997), culture provides the actual foundation for human interaction and communication. It can also be seen as a source of domination. He notes that all symbolic system, languages included, is not only responsible for shaping the reality and forming the basis for our human communication. Yet these symbolisms help to establish and maintain social hierarchies. For this study, cultural integrity was achieved in significantly credible ways, by understanding and appreciating how participants' traditional values, contextually informed their overall experiences.

All participants placed a very high value on their cultural capital. They displayed a sense of belonging and believing in themselves and their abilities. Eighty percent (80%) of the participants were at the top 1-5 percentile of their class performance. Thirteen interviewees identified that their teachers told their parents that they were marked for academic success and were seen as most likely to succeed. One participant reported going to live with her teacher who informed her mother, that she would personal invest in this student's academic results.

More than educational qualifications, Khattab (2005), shows that students whose expectations are high often tend to have much better achievement rates at school than those persons who tend to have lower expectations. These participants showed intrinsic motivation to perform and were determined to exemplify excellence consistently. However, they also felt that

they had to set the bar high for others to follow as well. This is directly congruent with the literature.

Cultural status not only indicate the positioning of movement up and down the social ladder within communities, However, it highlights the extent to which people will resist the helplessness and despair brought about limited opportunity structure (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1974, 1978).

Further, instead of looking at their worth from the dominant social group's standpoint, people often tend to produce semi-autonomous and resourceful cultural "Toolkit" (Swidler 1986) to evaluate each other's social actions as well as their own. Likewise, both Social Psychologist and Sociologists have argued how maintaining certain cultural processes often provide dominate individual an alternative means of measuring or maintaining their self-esteem and judging their self-worth (Crocker and Major 1989; Duneier 1992; Lamont 2000).

For example, Bandura's work in self-efficacy, coupled with the ideology of social cognitive theory, suggests: "That students who are motivated to perform and have high standards for themselves and others, often have a high sense of their values, therefore allowing their personal well-being and their overall accomplishments to be enhanced." (1997).

Thus migrating to accomplish their task is far more eminent in professionals when they are unable to attain the type of economic status, such as middle class lifestyles in their own countries (Portes and Rumbant, 1990). It is not therefore surprising that immigrants' concentrated environments offer a great deal of advantages to immigrant. Further they provide emotional and social resources that can come from a sense of the community (Portes and Rumbant, 1990). This is transferred into resources in which, the concentrated settlement community of immigrants, can provide labor and market present, and increased in political

strength (Portes and Rumbant, 1990).  Many Participants made the decision to immigrate to earn

economic freedom, generating monies directly for the cause of improving their lives and their

family's social position when they return to their communities of their origination (Portes and

Rumbaut, 1990). The same authors imply that family reunification for many immigrants is also a

major underlying factor to this particular type of migration.

**Research Question 4: What barriers did they face and how did they overcome them?**

Participants routinely shared that, vital to their capacity to overcome challenges and

barriers during their tenures at the Ivy Leagues Universities, were their strong cultural identity

and their personal pride. Most participants were able to successfully identify and handle their

challenges. This was coupled with social opportunities and responsibilities for building

relationships for best practices. Many participants understood that beyond academic productivity,

it is often the quality of friendships forged that lead to the birth of further advancement. With this

in mind, discovery of resources and the cultivation of open and honest interactions with

professors and students alike lighted the burden of their barriers.   Many participants often

translated barriers into clear defined goals to overcoming them in order to help shape their

personal objectives to succeed.

Participants reported finding comfort in socializing with other Caribbean students and

other international students.  Not only were they able to socialize outside their cultural group, but

many participants enjoyed the experience of forming alliances within and across ethnic enclaves.

Many participants expressed they were eager to meet and greet new people and felt a great

appreciation for this experience. Some relished these experiences for shared resources. Others

derived encouragement and support while others viewed it as a prized opportunity to get

guidance on future careers while reciprocating with time and emotional support.  However, in-

spite of their many barriers, such as economic, cultural and social, most reported that the Ivy leagues are the best place for individuals to showcase their academic strengths with the freedom to value each other's expertise and to be honest in aligning common interests with short-term or long-term goals.

One participant said, in overcoming barriers, it was always a challenge to stay on top, because students in general were dedicated and much focused towards their life goals and completing their graduate studies. However, many participants saw it fit to emerge themselves through coping mechanisms. Some participants reported not missing any occasions to meet what could turn out to be a future world leader in art, music, business, academics, politics, entertainment, religious or public life on campus. It was their way of fitting in and overcoming their social barriers. In the end, participants intentionally built strategic relationships with their professors and other organizations. An underlying aim was to garner resources needed to cope, and as a social context, to overcome barriers.

There was a deep connection between self-identify and academic mission. Participants viewed themselves as well grounded in their culture, which is why they used cultural pride as a way to navigate their way through the feeling of alienation and isolation on campus. Barriers were seen more as obstacles to overcome rather than shackles to keep them back.

Many participants did not report giving in to social pressures. That is because they had a strong appreciation for the Caribbean heritage that was tied to their academic mission, to complete their graduate studies. They were driven. Nothing could stop them from accomplishing their goals. Many participants expressed at best that not succeeding, by not graduating, was not an option to entertain for them. Some participants considered their differences in approach as a means of overcoming their barriers. They did not insist on any singular approach to overcoming

barriers.  Some took the approach of informing others - be it professors, leaders of social clubs, organizations or other students- when they were faced with any barriers, so that they could become advocates for their issues. Some decided to start or revive Caribbean organizations on campus to solicit resources from the university in order to funnel them on to other Caribbean students for support.  Other participants joined social and academic organizations to increase their abilities to succeed socially on campus.

Implied, were feelings of alienation that participants felt from the dominant culture at the Ivy Leagues. Some found it difficult to fit in. Although some of the participants wanted to fit in, many choose to focus on graduating.  Some participants reported, the need to fit in was not that important to them. One participants expressed her desire to overcome barriers was echoed with her mother's constant voice in her head, "Learn to stand on your two feet!" and "Push through the pain; it will be over soon."

The unspoken notion of white privilege and the long quest for social justice by American-Africans and other minorities in the USA was the area that seemed most uncomfortable to participants during the interview process. The nexus between race, education and legacies of preferential treatment given to whites in ways that made the US educational system pregnant with institutionalized forms of unequal educational practices (Wise, 2005),  was the elephant in the room.

The implication is that Caribbean immigrants who attend the Ivy Leagues are mere beneficiaries of affirmative action policies as opposed to being merely highly motivated students with cultural capital. From the standpoint of the participants, they expressed that they have had to confront blatant and outright racial prejudices at the Ivy Leagues. Most said, that they were able to cope and in most cases, felt that those persons, who acted indifferently were often

ignorant about the richness of Caribbean culture and the academic discipline that derived from a merit system.

It appeared that participants' academic performance was not only boosted by their need to destroy racial stigma and stereotype but was reinforced by their sheer passion for academic excellence. They used this passion to study in groups where possible and to tap into each other's intellectual talents. What was clear however was that none of the participants revealed any self-doubt due to undertones of race-based preferential treatment, they believed a combination of zeal, hard work and talent did the job. In spite of their adversities, they demonstrated stubbornness to eventually completing their studies and graduating with a graduate degree from the Ivy League Universities. These qualities can be referred to as "grit mindset," the ability to persevere and overcome challenges with a dogged mindset. This set the standard for the way participants handled barriers. They tackled them head on. They were not afraid to represent their issues and resolve them. They were persistent in their pursuit of excellence. They did not feel the need to give in to social pressures. To all participants, the recurring phrase was, "failure was not an option." They demonstrated self-control, competence and confidence, realizing that they had the potential for excellence.

The new body of research on success and achievement found that the predictive validity of self-control tended to rival that of IQ and even that of family and socioeconomic status when one predicted academic performances in adolescence, as well as in their wealth, health and even in their civic behaviors in adulthood (Ductwork & Seligman, 2005; Moffitt et al.; 2011).

Many of the participants demonstrated that they had "dispositions to act, think and feel in ways that benefited the individual and society" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Did participants show strength of character? Character strength has long been considered as an essential aspect to

have in order to hone a well-developed, healthy human (Aristotle, 1925; Damon, 1997; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015; Kamenetz, 2015, Lerner et al. 2005).

Every participant showed strength of character. This includes other accompanied skills such as cultural integrity, religious virtues and social and emotional learning competencies. The grit mindset served valuable to participants' as they persevered challenges to graduate from the Ivy Leagues.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as these relate to education, motivation and immigrants' achievements:

- That the relationship between the Caribbean's rich cultural heritages for academic performance should be studied for its independent value and not merely as a lumping effect with other immigrants from Latin America or Africa;

- That this study serve to provide pathways for immigrant children and their families, to take advantage of higher education at the Ivy League University;

- Explore research, which considers whether their motivation for academic success is seen through the completion of college and university. And how this translates into outstanding professional achievements and effective entrepreneurial pursuits;

- As the literature revealed, Caribbean immigrants are highly motivated, hardworking and confident in their accomplishments. In theory, many educators and administrators are often aware of the cadre of best practices in the college and universities setting that researchers have long advocated. A focus on the practical application of these best practices can be just as elusive without understanding and knowing the Black Caribbean

immigrant students' backgrounds and the necessary strategies to implement these

practices. Educators and administrators of Ivy League Universities could learn about the

cultural backgrounds of these students.  This could be accomplished within the context of

who they are, where they are from and what they bring to the table. This can help

administrators' better tailor academic support and provide the resources they need to

better facilitate their journey from admission to graduation and furthermore, help them to

better transition into an academic or professional career;

- Administrators can facilitate planning to implement strategic changes in the future.

  Therefore, this study can therefore serve to address what best practices are needed to best

  serve these students. Perhaps, they should look at the potential of these students and

  determine how best their experiences at the Ivy Leagues can be harnessed to unlock their

  potential to serve the global society;

- Administrators and educators in the Ivy Leagues need to implement a system of

  networking within the student body that allows these students to fit in. This would allow

  a smoother transition of these students and better adaptation to the college and university

  environment, thus producing far better possible outcomes for institutions and students.

  This recommendation is based upon the premise of Vincent Tinto.  He asserts that

  students who often do not have adequate interaction with administration and faculty at

  colleges and universities are more than likely not to retain attention;

- A reoccurring notion in the research from participants responses, is that there exit some

  inequities, in the communication and recruitment for Black Caribbean immigrant

  students. More efforts are needed to communication and interaction with administrators

  to best service these students.  This effort is critical for student development. More

outreach is needed to ensure that some of the brightest Black Caribbean immigrant students can be given the same advantages as other students, who are well sought after. Therefore, recruitment needs to be focused and targeted. The point is that equal opportunity is critical to resolving issues of race and cultural biases that can silently pervade the premise of equal opportunity for Black Caribbean immigrant students. It is recommended that these immigrants should be more vigorously recruited in the way equally qualified students are sort after;

• That Ivy League Institutions foster greater opportunities for qualified Black Caribbean immigrant students. This can be done by forming relationships with schools and universities in the Caribbean and identifying those students to enhance access in a more equitable manner. This equity group that can be identified can best contribute to national and regional development with the coveted academic and social experiences of the Ivy Leagues Universities supporting them. It is fair to assert that the particular group identified in this study is still very poorly under-represented at select universities. It is paramount to understand effective changes are not solely the responsibility of the leaders, but the wider educational community. This community should work together for the betterment of the students involved. They should both take the initiative to communicate with high schools, leaders, administrators, counselors and educators to intentionally bring about the type of focus needed to create sustainable relationships;

• That an organization is established to harnesses the cultural capital of the talented Black Caribbean immigrant students in the Ivy League University. If there is a collaborative effort to harness Black Caribbean immigrant student talents, a direct approach to improve

educational empowerment leading to economic empowerment for these students and their nation states is likely to be achieved on a sustainable basis;

- That a group of researchers from the Caribbean regent focus on this group of students and conduct further studies in their background varies from different ages to see if these factors discover in these research remain consistent over the years;

- That this research be used to help not only the Caribbean students but the African American students as well, to help them re-established their purpose, their values, and their heritage;

- Additional research is needed to determine whether the themes emerging from the findings could be institutionalized into creating a feeder academy for Caribbean immigrant students to attend the Ivy Leagues, thus promoting visibility and access to these selective universities. Private educators, Ivy Leagues Alumni from the Caribbean, and Educational Entrepreneurs could consider developing a helpful cost-benefit analysis between an Ivy League experience and the added value this experience has on Caribbean immigrant and their offspring economically. This could provide useful and rich information to all involved. This could help administrators and educators reframe their understanding of this unique group of students; and

- That Caribbean High School and Junior Colleges in the Caribbean begin to form the type of diplomatic relationship with these Ivy Leagues University and solicit the support, scholarships for their brilliant students.

## Research Contribution

- The dissertation will make a valid contribution to the knowledge base of the Black

  Caribbean Immigrant students, and their academic success at the Ivy League Universities.

  It will provide a more central, unique perspective that was not explored before, in this

  particular manner. Specifically, a rich understanding of the participants' voices who they

  are and how their cultural experiences, early educational, socialization influences and grit

  mind set, motivated their decision to graduate with a graduate degree from the Ivy

  Leagues Universities.  This could help policy makers to choose the best practice required

  to recruit and support black Caribbean immigrant students in graduating from the Ivy

  Leagues. In addition, it could provide a richer understanding, to filling the gap in this

  particular group in research. This study provides high visibility of this particular group,

  the British Caribbean region and their educational influences. This leads to understanding

  their social academic life which could lead to the potential for further inquiry and

  research.

## Further Research

- Further research is needed on the phenomenon of Black Caribbean immigrant students at

  the Ivy League Universities articulates the following.  While there is the growing

  evidence of the number of Caribbean Immigrant students at these universities, this unique

  group is still underrepresented. The finding suggests that while a small number of this

  group is represented there needs to be more initiatives implemented, which could result in

  increased efforts to enhance the percentage of this group at these selected universities.

  Enough has not been done in these selective universities to increase access in an equitable

manner. Continued examination of this group is needed to track successes and failures post the Ivy Leagues experience.

- Further research could probe, if there is any relationship between the acquisition of an Ivy League degree and graduates' perception of success. This could determine what additional competencies outside the Ivy Leagues are needed to decipher how immigrant students maneuver their way to economic successes.

- Minimal research has been conducted on the perceptions of Black Caribbean Immigrant students as they pursue academic excellence at Ivy League Universities (Massey, 2007). Therefore there is a need to conduct greater research on the role of the cultural, economic and social status as direct pathways, on black Caribbean immigrant families' whose children attend the Ivy League Universities and their impact on their immediate society if any.

- Likewise, there is a huge limitation on the literature of Afro-Caribbean immigrant communities. Most research exiting often is based on the emphasis of ethnographic studies of geographically and distinct, this serves as an added limitation to the immigrant communities (Bashi, 2007; Foner, 1998; Water, 1999). Therefore, more research is needed to study the Black Caribbean immigrate communities and their specific lived experiences in selected universities and colleges.

- The research surmised that more research should be done in the area of cultural and ethnic identities and the intersecting role they play in determining college choice. This conclusion affirms researchers' (Massey et al., 2007) inclination to highlight the actual journey of Black Caribbean immigrant students in the Ivy League University.

**Policy and Practice**

To what extent do the educational experiences derived from attending the Ivy Leagues contribute pathways for graduates to solve small nation problems in the following areas: healthcare, education, tourism, innovative developments, economics, public policies, technology, medicine, public health, food security and crime? As automation rapidly replaces traditional jobs, knowledge becomes more and more obsolete. A feeder institution could provide efficient use of human resources and could help enhance talents. This could be accomplished by harnessing growth and shaping the direction and effectiveness of what motivates and sustains black Caribbean immigrant's students to greater nation building. These efforts and more could motivate those students who attend the Ivy Leagues to contribute to the success in the wider world and to build their small nation states for economic sustainability. If these suggestions were to occur, they could emerge a prospective in which these students are no longer invisible and their unique heritage could serve as an advantage to further their leadership abilities in the global society, adding value to their academic accomplishments and eventually their economic stability. Furthermore, According to Arthur (2004), Since there is the tendency to treat these immigrant as members of a homogenous group of learners, more focus is needed to explore the variability in their academic and personal preparation, this makes their differences imperative to explore.

## Conclusion

Professor Gates, Harvard law School, states "We need to learn what the immigrant kids have so we can bottle it and sell it. Since many of the African American members of their communities, especially the chronically poor, often times, lost their purpose and values, thus producing the type of generation we have today" (Rimer and Arenson, 2004). This study provided insights into the motivation, strategies and sources of resilience that Caribbean immigrant students capitalized on to attend and graduate from the Ivy Leagues. By listening to students who have kept quiet, the research expanded the line of inquiry set fought by Douglas Massey in 2007 and drew on other research projects to explain the emergence of black Caribbean Immigrant students at the Ivy League Universities. In this fast-paced, technologically driven global society, within which these Caribbean immigrant students must function and compete, being on the cutting edge is too late.  They must rise to the occasion to continue to make a positive difference in their personal, professional, familial, communal, national and international spheres. Post the Ivy leagues, these graduates must find innovatively, hope in despair, as they navigate growing innovation for progress, interfaced with globally advancing society and balance unique ethnic challenges. It is hoped that this study contributed to making their intellectual accomplishments both viable and visible.

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# APPENDIX A

Sheila Newton Moses
Doctoral Candidate
Seton Hall University
College of Education and Human Services, Jubilee Hall
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, NJ 07079

[Date]

To Black Caribbean Immigrant Students Who Have Earned a Graduate Degree at an Ivy League University.

Dear Colleague:
I am inviting you to participate in a research study. I am a doctoral candidate at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey in the Department of Educational Leadership, Management and Policy, under the Executive Educational Leadership Ed.D. Program. Currently, I am writing my dissertation, which is focused on understanding the experiences, motivations, and barriers to academic success of Black Caribbean Immigrants who have received a graduate degree from an Ivy League university. These universities are identified as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Dartmouth, Brown, Cornell, and the University of Pennsylvania.

The purpose of the study is to conduct qualitative research that may result in a better understanding of the academic motivations, achievements, and barriers to success encountered by first generation Black Caribbean immigrant graduate students at Ivy League universities. Additionally, this study will add to the limited body of existing research on this subject as it extends a line of inquiry that began in 2007. This study may increase awareness of this subject by addressing the objectives of administrators, admissions counselors and recruiters to be culturally responsive to this specific population within a university environment, and by identifying resources that will enable key staff members to be more effective in guiding students to successful degree outcomes at elite schools.

With this in mind, I am asking you to consider volunteering to be interviewed for the purpose of this research. I look forward with great enthusiasm to the process of gathering data for this research. Procedures for this research are as follows: Prospective participants must be at least 18 years old, may be male or female, and must be from the Caribbean and belong to one of the following categories: Black Caribbean immigrants; permanent residents or visa holders who have migrated from the Caribbean; or American citizens raised and educated in the Caribbean prior to their academic pursuits in the Ivy League.
To participate, you first must indicate your interest in volunteering. You then will receive a consent form that explains this study in detail. This form also states that this process is entirely voluntary. You must sign and return this form in order to participate in the study. During the interview with the researcher, you will be asked 25 semi-structured questions. This interview will be conducted in a relaxed environment. With your consent, your responses will be recorded

with a portable hand recorder. The interview process takes approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The identities of all participants will remain secure and confidential throughout this study.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and each participant has the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There are no penalties involved if participants choose to withdraw. Participants will remain anonymous and will be identified only by numerical code during the research process. All Participant data will be stored in a secure locked cabinet in the sole possession of the Researcher. All data collected from the research interview will be stored only on CD or USB. All data will be kept for three years after the research, and then will be discarded.

I do hope you will say "Yes" to participate in this important research. Once you choose to participate, I will send you a detailed email within 24 hours.

I extend my warmest regards and wish to thank you in advance for participating and responding to my letter of solicitation. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully yours,


Sheila Newton Moses
Doctoral Candidate, Seton Hall University

**Informed Consent**

**TITLE OF STUDY:** Understanding the Academic Success of Black Caribbean Immigrant Students Who Have Earned a Graduate Degree at an Ivy League University.

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER:** Sheila Newton Moses, Student in the Executive Leadership Doctoral (Ed.D.) Program

**FACULTY ADVISOR:** Dr. Elaine Walker

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the academic goals and achievements of Black Caribbean immigrants at Ivy League universities, and to understand how social, cultural and economic factors impact the academic performance of these immigrants. A secondary purpose is to give voice to the stories of Caribbean immigrants, and to identify barriers they have overcome. Also, this study is intended to renew interest in a subject that has not been the focus of formal research since the work of Douglas Massey in 2007. Participants in this study will require approximately forty-five minutes to an hour in an interview.

## Procedures

Subjects will be asked to respond to a series of semi-structured questions that will be presented by the researcher in a one-on-one interview format. The interview is expected to take approximately 45 minutes to an hour and will be audiotaped with the consent of the participant, and later transcribed by the researcher.

Before the interview session begins, the researcher will explain the study. Each participant will be assigned a coded name, which will be used throughout the study. The researcher will ask questions that will seek to answer the research questions below:

- How do Caribbean immigrant students who graduate with a graduate degree from the Ivy League institution describe the influence of their early academic socialization and motivation to succeed?
- What role did their academic backgrounds play in influencing their college aspirations and completion?
- What barriers did they face, and how did they overcome them?

## Instruments

An information sheet will be given to all participants that will ask the following information: Place and preferred time to contact participants; Name of the institution the participant graduated from; Number of years of schooling in the Caribbean.

The interview protocol will be semi-structured questions that seek to understand the graduate experiences, what motivate them, their academic aspirations, their college choice, their barriers, and their cultural and social dynamics that influences their educational success.

### Voluntary Nature
Participation in this research study is voluntary, and participants can decline to answer any question. Any participant may leave the study at any time without prejudice.

### Anonymity
The anonymity of participants will be carefully preserved. No data that serves to identify participants will be noted. All participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Consequently, no one will be able to link data to any individual participant.

### Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept confidential. All data acquired will be stored on a USB memory stick in a secure and locked cabinet. Upon completion of the study, all records (notes, transcripts, and recordings) will be secured/locked in cabinet for a minimum of three year.

### Records
A digital copy of the research data will be stored on a USB. All recordings made as part of this research will be kept in the sole possession of the researcher and will be stored under lock and key in a file cabinet at the researcher's residence. No information from this research will be kept on any computer or any database. These tapes will be kept for at least three years, after which they will be destroyed. Any digital notes and recordings made during this interview also will be completely deleted.

### Potential Risks and/or Discomforts
There are no known or expected risks associated with this research study.

### Potential Benefits
There are no direct benefits to participants.

### Compensation
No compensation is associated with participation.

### Contact Information
Participants may contact the office of IRB, Institutional Review Board with questions pertaining to this research: 973-313-6341, Fax (973)275-2361, email: irb@shu.edu the researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Elaine Walker, PhD. Seton Hall University, 400 South Orange Avenue, President Hall, and Room.325. South Orange, NJ. 07079. Telephone number; 973-761-9000.

### Participant Consent:

I have read thoroughly and understand the above research. I have also been given the opportunity to ask any questions pertaining to this research. I am 18 years of age and have agreed to participate in this study.

A signed and dated copy of this Informed Consent Form

Parents' educational background _____ Parent(s) grade completed _____

Has anyone else in your immediate family attended an Ivy League school? _____

Have any family members received a graduate degree in the Ivy League? _____

At which Ivy League institution did you complete your graduate degree? _____

# APPENDIX C

## Email to Participants

Dear Participant,

Please indicate a date; time and place where you would like me to conduct your interview.  All interviews must be completed before April 30, 2017.  I can schedule a morning, afternoon, or evening appointment to meet your schedule.

Please let me know how best to contact you as we schedule the best time for your interview, which will take approximately an hour and a half to complete. Please be aware that this interview will be conducted privately, and that its contents will remain confidential.

Also, please be advised that if you cannot provide a face-to-face interview, kindly provide your Skype account information to schedule a video interview.

I wish you all the best. Thank you and best regards,

Sheila Newton Moses

**APPENDIX D**

**Participants Thank You Letter**

March 30, 2017

Mrs. Sheila Newton Moses

Dear Research Participants

I wish to express to you my gratitude for your participation in my research study.  I wholeheartedly enjoyed the time we spent together during the interview process.  It was truly exciting to spend an hour and a half with you to hear you relate childhood experiences and describe your journey from admission to graduation.

Please know that your participation will inspire and help others to achieve their dreams of attending school and earning an advanced degree from an Ivy League university. I hope that we will meet again.

Again, your time, effort and valuable input is highly appreciated.  Thanks, and best regards.


Sincerely,
Sheila Newton Moses