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Adrian Derrick Johnson  
*University of North Florida*

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Running head: TAPPING INTO THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF AFRICAN AMERICAN  
ALUMNI OF URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

**Tapping Into the Potential of African American Alumni of Urban High Schools**

by

Adrian D. Johnson

A dissertation submitted to the  
Department of Leadership, School Counseling, and Sports Management  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Educational Leadership

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

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July, 2015

By Adrian D. Johnson

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The dissertation of Adrian Johnson is approved:

Signature Deleted

Christopher A. Janson, Chair

Signature Deleted

Warren G. Hodge, Ph.D., Committee Member

Signature Deleted

Francis E. Godwyl, Ph.D., Committee Member

Signature Deleted

Sophie Maxis, Ph.D., Committee Member

Signature Deleted

Christopher Johnson, Ph.D., Committee Member

5/26/15  
Date

5/26/15  
Date

5/26/15  
Date

5/26/15  
Date

5/26/15  
Date

Accepting for the Department:

Signature Deleted

Christopher A. Janson, Ph.D., Interim Chair  
Leadership, School Counseling, and Sport Management

5/26/15  
Date

Accepting for the College:

Signature Deleted

Marsha H. Lupi, Ed.D., Interim Dean  
College of Education & Human Services

6/11/15  
Date

Accepting for the University:

John Kantner, Ph.D., Dean  
The Graduate School

Date

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. Despite numerous improvement efforts for several decades, the academic performance of urban high school students has failed to keep pace with that of their suburban counterparts. This research was framed around the premise that the rich legacies and diverse cultural experiences of African American alumni of urban high schools could mitigate the outside factors that negatively impact student performance at urban schools. These funds of knowledge, as Moll and Amanti (2005) described the cultural and cognitive resources that are derived from the lived experiences of marginalized people, are unique to African American alumni of urban high schools. The 45 participants of this study were African American alumni of two prominent urban high schools, Jean Ribault High School and William Raines High School, located in Jacksonville, Florida. Using Q methodology, participants sorted 38 statements reflecting how they perceived that African American alumni could best contribute to their former schools. The researcher then employed statistical software to correlate the 45 Q sorts, factor analyzed those correlations, and extracted five collectively held factors. However, since the fifth factor was bipolar, the researcher interpreted the five-factor solution as having six perspectives, one for each of the first four factors and two opposite perspectives for factor five. The six perspectives were named *College Preparation*, *Relationship Building*, *Spirituality*, *Self-efficacy*, *Visibility (students)*, and *Visibility (parents)*. Through the lens of social capital, these resulting perspectives were then systematically interpreted to provide a rich description of how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools.

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

The differences in educational achievement of African American and White high school students are most notable when urban high schools are compared to suburban ones. One neglected resource that has the potential to raise the performance of urban high schools is the involvement of individuals who inherently possess the shared histories and similar backgrounds to students who currently attend those schools. The individuals whose histories and backgrounds most resemble current African American urban high school students are African American alumni of urban high schools. The potential impact that African American alumni of urban high schools could have on their former schools is sizable and has largely gone untapped. These alumni have sat in the same classrooms, walked the same halls, and successfully navigated many of the same challenges that current African American urban high school students experience. This chapter will provide an overview of this study's statement of purpose and research question, the study's description, the conceptual framework, the methodology, and the study's significance.

### **Statement of Purpose and Research Question**

This study began with the premise that the rich legacies and cultural experiences of African American alumni of urban high schools could be harnessed in a holistic manner in order to mitigate many of the challenges that urban high school students face. The researcher surmised that no other individuals more closely identify with urban students and their cultures than African American alumni of urban high schools. Many African American alumni of urban high schools continue to be responsive, connected, and concerned about the histories, cultural norms,

and performance of their schools as well as the surrounding communities. As an alumnus of Ribault Senior High School, one of the two high schools that were at the center of this study and also a long time resident of its surrounding community, the researcher personally experienced the positive potential that cultural connection and identification can have on the self-efficacy of urban high school students.

Working from that premise, the purpose of this study was to discover how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. By highlighting their potential, the researcher hoped to reframe and reshape the traditional discourse surrounding African American alumni of urban high schools so that they might be included in urban high school improvement efforts. To that end, the study explored the following research question: How do African American alumni of urban high schools perceive that they can best contribute to their former schools?

Of specific interest for this study were African American alumni of Jean Ribault High School and William Raines High School, located in Jacksonville, Florida. Both Ribault and Raines high schools are overwhelmingly Black and located within two miles of one another in the northwest quadrant of Jacksonville, Florida. The district serving the schools is Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), which is the 22nd largest school district in the nation serving more than 125,000 students at 195 schools.

### **Historical and Sociocultural Factors of Urban High Schools**

As far back as the *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) ruling that abolished the “separate but equal” policy between Black and White schools, there has been a stream of educational initiatives that were guided by attempts to improve the performance of disadvantaged schools and to abide by court mandated integration orders. As a result, in the early 1970s, states and

school districts began to offer parents and students school choice options. Magnet schools offered one of the first school choice options (Davis, 2014). Magnet schools became popular by offering alternative programmatic specializations designed to increase college readiness.

The popularity of magnet schools continued into the 21st century with a moderate amount of success at integration and college readiness until charter schools exploded on the scene (Siegal-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011). Charter schools boasted the efficiency of private-public partnerships typically with a programmatic theme similar to that of magnet schools. The growth of charter schools increased substantially during the first decade of the 21st century (Siegal-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011) although their academic outcomes and integration measures have not been much better than those of regular public schools.

Other school choice initiatives that became popular due to tax incentives and state vouchers were open enrollment, distance learning, option demand, single-sex, and home schooling (Bielick & Chapman, 2003; Davis, 2014; K. A. Ranch, personal communication, September 11, 2014; Povich, 2013). School choice options were also expanded to more rigorous initiatives such as Advanced Placement (AP) programs, early college, and even International Baccalaureate. Additionally, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 brought about strict accountability measures of teacher's and student's performance in the form of minimum standards and assessments (Borg, Plumlee, & Stranahan, 2007; Cross, 2005). Even with the myriad of options, none of these initiatives have shown to significantly improve the performance of urban schools, nor have they been successful at integrating them.

In contrast to school choice initiatives, researchers have theorized that separate from the academic factors that are already being addressed, the poor performance of urban students is negatively impacted by the socioeconomic conditions faced at home and in their communities

(Gold, Simon, Mundell, & Brown, 2013). Berliner (2009) posited that urban students disproportionately perform poorly academically due to factors outside of school such as inadequate medical care, food insecurities, difficult family relations, and neighborhood characteristics. He referred to those external influences as outside factors (OSFs) and advocated a more holistic approach that addresses both pedagogical concerns as well as OSFs. Buttressing the need to look outside of the classroom for answers in closing the education gap between children in urban and suburban areas, Knoff and Batsche (1995) described how reformers focused their efforts on the classroom while ignoring the underlying causes, which emanate and extend into the communities and homes of urban children. The researchers further explained that as long as reformers fail to include the community, there would be few, if any, breakthroughs in education reform.

The state of urban communities and the resulting effects on the people living in them have been described as one of America's most shameful social issues (Berliner, 2009). The residents of urban neighborhoods are exposed to a disproportionately high unemployment rate, high crime rate, high drug use, as well as the poorest performing schools in the United States. These conditions were exacerbated during the 1970s and 1980s when urban areas became vulnerable to industrial and geographic changes resulting in suburbanization, disinvestment, and business outmigration leaving these areas overwhelmingly populated by poor residents of color (Glickman & Scally, 2008; Wilson, 1996). The compounding negative effects that declining urban neighborhoods have on youth was emphasized Daneen and Catanese (2011):

Safety is a fundamental requirement for civilized life; those who can afford to flee from crime-ridden cities do just that. This includes not only residents with marketable skills, but also the kinds of commerce



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and industry that promote jobs; and so the prospects for these communities and their young people spiral down. (p. 18)

Further, urban neighborhoods are severely depleted of positive Black male role models due to high incarceration rates, joblessness, drug addiction, and violence (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1995; Harding, 2011; Richardson, 2012). Exacerbating the issue is the disinvestment, outmigration, abandoned property, and other manifestations of decline that continue to plague inner-city communities (Glickman & Scally, 2008). These negative images and sounds leave children with little hope and too often influence their behaviors at a far greater rate than the hard working positive adult role models who reside in urban areas.

Not unlike the neighborhoods of urban students, the high schools in these areas enroll a disproportionately large number of African American and Hispanic American students (Berliner, 2009). In fact, many urban high schools are composed nearly entirely of children of color. These students perform at a substantially lower academic level than their more affluent suburban counterparts across the nation as well as drop out of school much more frequently (Witherspoon, Speigt, & Thomas, 1997). Consequently, children coming from economically depressed backgrounds become isolated from mainstream society, underserved, and disempowered (Jargowsky, 2003; Katz, 2004; Warren, 2011). As a result, urban high schools are being disparagingly labeled as failing, poor performing, or struggling.

Thus, many urban neighborhoods and the high schools located within their borders contain many of the same disparate circumstances that isolate one another from the larger society. In fact, Glickman and Scally (2008) described them as being inextricably linked when they found a direct connection between healthy communities and schools that perform well. Glickman and Scally (2008) continued by describing how poor schools compound the burden of

improving communities while good schools are essentially elements of thriving communities.

Likewise, Warren (2011) found that not only are urban schools and neighborhoods similar; they are inseparable through their shared cultures. Schools reflect the socioeconomic conditions and the cultures of the communities in which they are situated.

For this study, the term *urban* was used to describe an area in the northwest quadrant of Duval County where African Americans relocated to in large numbers following Jacksonville's consolidation with Duval County in 1968. The community of interest encompasses a geographical area that during the era of consolidation saw a transition from a nearly all White population to one that persists today as nearly all Black. In lockstep with the transition of the communities from predominantly White to Black were two high schools that lie at the center of this study, Jean Ribault Senior High School and William Raines Senior High School. Ribault had opened its doors in 1957 as a junior high school. It was situated in a community that was nearly all White and its student body remained nearly all White until a 1971 court ruling to integrate all schools and to pair Ribault and the relatively newly constructed Raines High School. Unlike Ribault, Raines opened its doors in 1965 with a student population that was nearly all Black. There was and continues to be the belief that Raines was constructed exclusively for Blacks as well as to prevent Blacks from integrating Ribault (Washington & Wright, 2012). Both of these schools were located in area of Jacksonville, Florida, that later became known as the northwest quadrant.

Although the northwest quadrant of Jacksonville may not have been considered urban back the 1970s, population shifts to more suburban areas have resulted in changes to socioeconomic levels in this area. The Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC), a national organization whose mission is to drive economic prosperity and growth within inner cities,

described inner cities as geographical areas having poverty rates of 20% or higher. The United States Census Bureau simply described individuals as being in poverty if “the resources they share with others in the household are not enough to meet basic needs” (2014). The Florida Department of Health listed the geographical areas of the northwest quadrant of Jacksonville Florida as encompassing zip codes 32206, 32208, and 32209 and as having poverty rates ranging from 22% to 46% (2013), far exceeding ICIC’s definitive of poverty. For the purpose of this study, the terms inner city and urban will be used interchangeably and will refer to the areas of Jacksonville, Florida, that encompass zip codes 32206, 32208, and 32209.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Because theory can never be sufficient to account for the complexity of reality (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012), a conceptual framework was used in order to provide a roadmap that would permit the reader to logically follow the study’s path. A framework can be thought of as an undercarriage that lends support to the external skeleton of a building (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). The researcher borrowed from several theories in order to build a conceptual framework that was unique to the study rather than attempting to fit it to one that had already been created (Maxwell, 2005). As such, the researcher utilized the following conceptual framework as a logical path for readers to follow as well as a rationale for the methodological decisions made throughout the study. For a Q methodological study, the conceptual framework is also used to help construct the Q sample or research instrument as well as to make meaning from the resulting factors. The following sections outline the study’s conceptual framework.

**Funds of knowledge.** Viewing the accumulation of knowledge experienced over a lifetime, albeit from students who may have been historically marginalized as intellectually and culturally valuable, is at the core of the funds of knowledge concept (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). For this study, the researcher extended this definition to incorporate the resources that African American alumni of urban high schools could provide as inputs to their former schools. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) asserted that the home and community lives of individuals should be viewed as assets that foster educational development. Zipin (2009) similarly noted how essential it was that the view that researchers have of non-elite families be replaced from that of a deficit to one that values their knowledge, experiences, and culture as educational assets. As such, the researcher forwarded the idea that African American alumni of urban high schools are individuals who possess a significant amount of knowledge through lived experience that they can contribute to their former schools.

**Whole person paradigm.** Although Covey (2004) was writing about leader development, the researcher applied Covey's concept of the whole person paradigm, which championed the holistic develop of the body, mind, heart, and spirit as a means of mitigating the effects of outside forces on students' success. Neglecting any one of the four parts that make up the whole of person, the author explained, results in a person being perceived as a thing rather than human. In his view, Covey (2004) asserted students are more likely to excel cheerfully when interactions result in the nurturing of the mind, heart, body, and spirit. The author went so far as to describe the failure to treat others as whole persons as the core problem of the ills of our society. The four parts of nature that make up the whole person were physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual intelligences, which extend human capacity. Of the four intelligences, Covey (2004) viewed the spirit as being most fundamental because it acts as the source of

guidance for the other three. Feeding the mind, body, heart, and spirit of students was essential in connecting how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could contribute to their former schools.

**Ecological model.** Examining the contributions of African American alumni of urban high schools from an environmental perspective leads to the ecological approach. Although the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) focused on child development, this study will utilize elements of the model to magnify the potential of African American alumni of urban high schools to form the relationships that are essential to improving their performance.

Bronfenbrenner was concerned with human development over the course of a lifetime within one's lived environment. Bronfenbrenner was a psychologist whose seminal work distanced itself from much of the work of its time that was devoted to the "science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 513). In contrast, Bronfenbrenner was much more concerned with studying the development of children in real-life environments resulting in real-life consequences. Essential to understanding the ecological model was that human development evolves in the presence of progressively, increasingly complex interactions between the person being studied and the corresponding human, symbol, or objective stimuli. These complex interactions, according to Bronfenbrenner (1994), must occur regularly and are referred to as proximal process.

In addition to recognizing that human development is contingent on proximal process, Bronfenbrenner (1994) also stressed that they serve to buffer individuals against environmental differences in developmental achievement. Bronfenbrenner's assertions of proximal processes were applied to the framework for this study since they contained essential elements, be it

human, symbolic, or objective, that could serve to bolster students' abilities to perform better in high school. However, in contrast to this study's purpose to discover how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive that they can best contribute to their former schools, Bronfenbrenner's model diverges from this study's framework in that he found that proximal processes are not as effective in urban environments as they are in more stable ones.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) noted that proximal processes provide declining dividends based on the degree and amount of negative environmental influences such as single parent households and lack of college education. Of the five environmental systems (microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, chronosystems) which Bronfenbrenner (1994) identified as being sources of proximal processes, microsystems provided the most insight for this study. He described a microsystem as:

A pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment.

(Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 39) The immediate environment that is occupied by the microsystem described by Bronfenbrenner is the same environment that the researcher hypothesized will be occupied by African American alumni of urban high schools in their roles of contributing to their former schools.

**Overlapping spheres of influence.** Epstein (1995) identified the home, school, and community environments of students as overlapping spheres of influence that serve as positive contributors to academic achievement in the presence of high-quality interactions. However, she asserted that inadequate or infrequent interactions between these environments lead to dissimilar messages

and poor school performance. Epstein (1995) continued by explaining how common messages between the environments leads to more consistent signals of the importance of working hard and remaining in school. Further, Epstein (1995) stressed that partnerships that foster similar messages between the home, schools and community of students serve to “[engage], guide, energize, and motivate students to produce their own success” (p. 82). Thus, in its most basic form the overlapping spheres of influence imply that students fail to be successful when one or more of the three major environments in which they interact are missing or inadequate. Therefore, the overlapping spheres of influence model (Epstein, 1995) was used by the researcher as holistic way of ensuring the continuity of messages received by urban students between their homes, community, and schools.

**Social capital theory.** The researcher hypothesized that social capital that was inherently derived from the rich legacies and diverse cultural experiences of African American alumni of urban high schools would serve as an important contribution to their former schools. Social capital was described as a complex construct (Dufur, Parcel, & Mckune, 2008) involving the presence of objective and subjective social relationships built around the interaction of trust, mutual understanding, reciprocal communication, as well as a shared sense of commitment, values, and norms (Beabout, 2010; Ciabattari, 2007; Dika & Singh; 2002; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009). In more general terms, social capital is “anything that facilitates individual or collective action generated by networks of friendships, reciprocity, trust and social norms and the access to resources that such connections allow” (Coleman, 1988, p. 97).

A review of the literature revealed that researchers have mostly studied the impact of teachers, parents, and various community groups as motivators of academic improvement but have neglected to study those who have already demonstrated that they were successful while

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attending urban high schools. African American alumni of urban high schools have shown that they were capable of navigating the difficult environment that is encountered within urban schools as well as in their accompanying neighborhoods. Additionally, the researcher theorized that the insight of African American alumni of urban high schools into the schools, neighborhoods, and home lives of urban high school students had the potential to demonstrate to urban high school students what successful careers resemble, provide exposure to expanded social networks, as well as reinforce the discipline, self-efficacy, and preparation that it takes to be successful.

Central to the researcher's conceptual framework, which was partially derived from the social capital theory, was that African American alumni of urban high schools should be considered as essential components of education improvement efforts. These individuals are uniquely suited and potentially possess the intangible characteristics that are lacking by others who have attempted to contribute to the performance of urban high schools. Further strengthening the researcher's conceptual framework were the concepts proposed by Moll and Amanti (2005) who explained how community members, such as African American alumni of urban high schools, "[draw] on their funds of knowledge, [and] can contribute ideas and experiences that are not available to teachers from the mainstream culture" (p. 192). Further, funds of knowledge that could potentially be infused by African American alumni of urban high schools encapsulate the "varied bodies of knowledge that underlie families' productive activities" (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). The funds of knowledge concept is similar to that proposed by McKnight and Block (2012) who coined the phrase the *abundant community* to stress how the community itself has the capacity to self-actualize. They proposed



that communities reach their potential through robust interrelationships that value one another's self-worth and unique strengths.

Smrekar (1996) suggested that social capital played a compensatory role in the lives of students who were at risk for negative exposures. On a similar note, "constructivists consider a community the school's natural extension since its students exhibit cultural traits that spring from within the community they come from" (Smrekar, p. 14). Sanders (2012) advocated that community members should be critical components of schools by being both directly and indirectly involved in the performance of students. Additionally, Epstein's (1995) theoretical perspective termed *overlapping spheres of influence* suggested that the home, community, and the school all have interrelating influences on the academic performance of children. Finally, Plybon, Edwards, Butler, Belgave, and Allison (2003) provided evidence that the involvement of positive neighborhood role models enhanced the performance of school students.

One could surmise from the conditions of urban neighborhoods and the performance of the schools located within their boundaries that each lacks social capital, but how is social capital rated in the homes of urban children? According to Bourdieu (1986), all individuals inherit a certain amount of cultural capital by virtue of being born into a given family with given economic means, background, education achievement, and social networks. These elements of cultural capital help to predict the academic and job opportunities of a given individual. When persons are born with low levels of cultural or social capital, their chances of being successful in school are negatively impacted (Diez, Gatt, & Racionero, 2011). Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, and Sealand (1993) found that urban students are less likely than their suburban counterparts to come from two-parent homes, a situation which inherently exposed them to the decreased social capital of a single parent.

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Coleman (1988) studied the educational background of the fathers of urban students and found links between their levels of social capital and confidence in assisting with homework. Wooley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) described social capital as a protective factor that promoted resilience and successful academic performance. Social capital, therefore, has the potential to be a significant component in mediating the negative effects of urban neighborhoods, poor social conditions, and vulnerable parents who lack the education and resources to thrive in society. Additionally, Bryk and Thum (1989) argued that high levels of social capital are associated with improved student achievement and lower dropout rates. Other researchers found that the role of social capital was a critical element in contributing to students' decision to remain in school (Coleman, 1988; Gibson & Bejinez, 2002; White & Glick, 2000).

Conversely, when children are raised in homes and neighborhoods and attend schools imbued with significant amounts of social capital, their academic performance is positively affected. How, then, can the level of social capital among underperforming urban high school students be improved to compensate for the lack of social capital at schools and in their communities and homes? Imagine urban neighborhoods and the schools located within their boundaries infused with adults who inherently possess the social capital that is so sorely absent. The researcher theorized that social capital provided by African American alumni of urban high schools is the missing link to improving educational outcomes. The involvement of African American alumni of urban high schools directly challenges the deficit perspective, which solely situates the basis of the poor performance of urban high school students on themselves, their families, and culture (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Valencia, 2010). Ishimaru (2013) described social capital as an enabler that permits individuals to be more productive through engagement with persons who possess a wider dispersion of resources. Social capital provided by alumni,

therefore, can be in the form of information, opportunities, social, or other educational resources that urban high school alumni inherently possess as a result of their histories and experiences.

The researcher used the descriptions of social capital by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Renee and McAlister (2011) as a network of resources that are built upon mutual trust and obligations, which provide the resources that individuals would not ordinarily possess. Smrekar (1996) extended this description by explaining that social capital is a resource that includes the elements of shared attitudes, norms, and values as well as promotes and facilitate open communication and trust. Shirley (2009) and Wilson (1996) argued that social capital is a critical element that in large part is absent in urban neighborhoods. Further, the researchers viewed social capital as an extension of networks that focus on relationship building, which is critical to academic success (Dika & Singh, 2002; Preston, 2011; Warren et al., 2009). The researcher rounded out his definition of social capital similarly to that of Crowder and South (2003) who asserted that social capital is a commodity that is derived from diverse relationships. These relationships were developed through mutual trust and respect while enhancing an individual's ability to tap into society's resources. Thus, the researcher's conceptual framework is also informed by the interrelationship and sharing of resources and values as described by social capital theory. This social capital, when shared by African American alumni with current students in urban schools, seems to hold great potential in improving outcomes for their students and the schools in which they learn.

## **Methodology**

The methodology that the researcher chose was Q methodology. William Stephenson pioneered Q methodology to be applied in the field of psychology, describing it as an approach that permits a systematic assessment and discernment of individuals' subjectivity (Shinebourne

& Adams, 2007). Since its development in 1953, it has been applied to rich and diverse research contexts and disciplines. In particular, Q methodology has been increasingly used in the examination of topics in education. Not unlike the qualitative methodologies, Q methodology produces thick, rich data that allows researchers to focus on differences between individuals' subjective meaning and their understanding (Simons, 2013). Q methodology, however, differs from qualitative methodologies in that it employs statistical means to correlate and factor-analyze the resulting data.

Q methodology further distinguishes itself from qualitative methodologies in that it does not limit participants to draw only from their own experiences, as is the case during interviews. With Q sorting, participants are permitted to draw from all of the possible opinions and perspectives that have been rigorously developed for the Q sample (Simons, 2013). The Q sample is a set of statements that have been painstakingly assembled to capture an umbrella of perspectives surrounding a given topic. Moreover, Q methodology inherently enables one to view things from the native's perspective, thereby limiting researcher bias since categories are constructed based solely on information received from the research population (de Graaf & van Exel, 2008). This was especially important for this study in light of its attempt to illuminate the perspectives of African American alumni of urban high schools that had been virtually invisible to the research community.

Q methodology also diverges significantly from quantitative methodologies. Although data is statistically correlated and analyzed when using Q methodology, Brown (1972) emphasized that Q methodology is not concerned with generalizing to larger populations; instead, its purpose is simply to show existence of particular viewpoints. De Graff and van Exel (2008) echoed this view when they wrote that it was essential to understand "[that] this technique measures the

existence of subjectivities within a population, and not the exact distribution of clusters of opinions” (p. 71).

In Q methodology, data is gathered as a result of the Q sorting process. Q sorting occurs when participants sort the statements of the Q sample in relation to each of the other statements based on how much they perceive that each statement resembles their own perspectives.

Consequently, Q sorting is a unique technique that contrasts traditional data gathering procedures such as interviews, observations, and document analysis found in qualitative research methods as well as the traditional surveys and questionnaires typically used by quantitative researchers.

Watts and Stenner (2005) described a completed Q sort as “set of items [that] have been differentially valued by a specific participant according to some face valid and subjective criterion” (Watts and Stenner, 2005, p. 69). Unlike the rating scales that are typically used in more traditional methods, Q methodology does not fix responses a priori but instead permits participants to impose their meaning on the stimuli by ranking items in relation to importance to one another (Lazard, Capdevila, and Roberts, 2011).

After all of the participants’ Q sorts have been collected, the researcher then inputs the data into a statistical software package, typically PQMethod 2.11, to analyze the factors and identify the range of viewpoints held by the participants (Schmolck, 2002). The resulting viewpoints are then systematically interpreted using factor arrays and crib sheets as well as responses to post survey questions and demographic information. This technique enables insight by the researcher into a fuller, more holistic “condensation of information” concerning the perspectives of the target population (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This study was conducted in five phases: (a) development of the Q sample, (b) establishment of the P set, (c) Q-sorting by the participants, (d) factor analysis and interpretation, and (e) reporting of findings and conclusions.

## **Significance**

This study is significant because there is a void of empirical research aimed at disclosing the perceptions of African American alumni of urban schools. Why is it important that we understand the perceptions of African American alumni of urban schools? First, understanding how people perceive circumstances can necessarily determine how they value them (de Graaf & van Exel, 2008). How can one value the perceptions of African American alumni of urban high schools if they have no idea what they are? Having a grasp of the perceptions of African American alumni of urban high schools is vital for individuals external to this study such as policy makers, school administrators, and teachers. However, it is equally valuable internally for individuals to be aware of the range of perspectives held by their fellow African American alumni of urban high schools who make up the focus of this study.

Further, as de Graaf and van Exel (2008) noted, a person's view of the circumstances surrounding a situation determines if they person sees it in first place. From the review of the literature, the researcher has discovered that African American alumni of urban high schools have been invisible to the research community. As such, African American alumni of urban high schools have essentially been rejected as having the capacity to contribute to their former schools. If this is the case, then the perceptions of African American alumni of urban high schools provide an unexplored context for reframing and reshaping the role that they could play in contributing to their former schools.

Moreover, perceptions are important because they have the potential to set boundaries of what can be done and said in a specific context (de Graaf & van Exel, 2008). The researcher asserted that if no one would have ever asked African American alumni of urban high schools, no one would have ever known how they perceived that they could best contribute to their

former schools. Disclosing the potential of African American alumni of urban high schools could, therefore, serve as a springboard for challenging the existing views, conversations, and theories of who should be included in education improvement efforts at urban schools, thus, enabling school administrators and school officials to better understand how to invite African American alumni into urban schools as well as how to best utilize them once the alumni are there.

Most importantly, this study was significant because the disclosure of how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive that they can best contribute to their former schools could be a starting point for mitigating many of the factors that impede student progress. For instance African American alumni of urban schools might perceive that they are especially adapted to minimize the effects of the dissimilar messages (Byrd & Chavous, 2009; Spencer, 1999) that are received from their homes, communities, and schools. Additionally, being raised in neighborhoods plagued with high poverty, dilapidated buildings, drugs, and crime presents a completely different environment than what most teachers assume of students. However, African American alumni of urban high schools diverse backgrounds and experience might serve as indispensable tools to mitigate the cultural difference that exist within and outside of the classroom walls. Further, the disclosure of the perceptions of how African American alumni of urban schools can contribute to their former schools might reveal that they are the most appropriate persons to counter the negative effects of OSFs that were identified by Berliner (2009) such as inadequate medical care, food insecurities, difficult family relations, and neighborhood characteristics

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### Summary

Nearly six decades after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed “separate but equal” in the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case, which ended the practice of drastically unequal schools systems for Blacks and Whites, Daneen and Catanese (2011) reported that the majority of urban schools students do not acquire a basic education. This is significant because a majority of the students being educated at urban schools are from marginalized groups. The challenges that drive the poor performance of urban schools stem from complex, interconnected, and multifaceted issues of poverty, racism, and a lack of internal and external capacities in the form of economic, human, and social resources (Anyon, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Warren, 2005). The literature suggested that the performance of poor schools in many ways reflects the desperate conditions of their surrounding communities.

The purpose of this study was to discover how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. The conceptual framework that guided this study was developed from theoretical elements from the following theories: funds of knowledge (Moll and Amanti, 2005), the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995), and elements of the whole person paradigm (Covey, 2004). Each of these theories was viewed through the lens of social capital theory (Dufur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2013) in order to situate and ground the conceptual framework. The researcher employed Q methodology, which capitalizes on the potential range of responses, rather than on a qualitative or quantitative approach that could have been limited by participants’ ability to draw solely from their own views (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Thus, the use of Q methodology permitted the researcher to provide a rich description of how African



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American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of the study was to explore how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. Chapter 2 entailed the review of the literature surrounding the topic and served to narrow and clarify its discourse (Machi & McEvoy, 2009). In so doing, the first section of this review provided an overview of the basic premise of the study. The second section discussed the state of urban high school students and introduced the reader to the lack of progress that had been made in education reform efforts. The third section detailed the perceived link between urban schools and their surrounding communities. The fourth section detailed the evolution of the Northwest Quadrant of Jacksonville, Florida and its journey to segregation. Lastly, section six expanded this review of the literature by exploring how social capital, abundant communities, alumni engagement, mentoring, self-efficacy, culturally connected communities, identification, and social support services might support the aim of this study, which was to discover how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools.

### **Premise of Study**

The premise of this study was that the rich histories, legacies, and cultural experiences of African American alumni of urban high schools could be harnessed in a holistic manner that could mitigate many of the challenges that urban high schools' students face. These individuals have a grasp of the cultural norms, community assets and networks, as well as the potential pitfalls prevalent in urban neighborhoods. African American alumni of urban high schools continue to be responsive and are concerned with the life circumstances, family values, and cultural norms of the surrounding communities (Epstein, 1995). Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) advocated that persons possessing such assets serve as "brokers of social capital" (p. 74).

They have proven to be culturally savvy enough to successfully navigate their way through urban schools and communities as well as diverse enough to be successful through college and in their chosen careers. Therefore, African American alumni of urban high schools were an untapped resource who had the potential to provide a holistic approach to mitigating many of the challenges that urban high schools students face.

Instead of viewing poor minority students as culturally deficient and their communities as pathological, teachers and administrators must develop an understanding that all cultures possess unique and valuable social assets (Moll et al., 1992; Payne, 2008; Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 2001). Hence, the appreciation of the worth of local wisdom, regardless of the socioeconomic status of those possessing it, has the potential to increase the relevancy of curricula and the likelihood that students will want to learn (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). No other individuals embody the rich legacies and cultural experiences of urban neighborhoods and schools as much as do African American alumni of urban high schools. Thus, the purpose of this study was to discover how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools.

### **State of Urban High School Students**

Academically, urban children perform at a dramatically lower level than their suburban counterparts. In fact, research indicated that approximately only half of all African American and Latino students graduate from high school on time (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Schott Foundation, 2000). Further, urban students, who are disproportionately students of color, generally obtain lower grades, drop out more frequently, and fail to attain the level of education as does the general population of school students (Witherspoon et al., 1997). Darling-Hammond

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(2010) found that in 2005, the average Black or Hispanic twelfth grader was reading at the same level as the average White eighth grader.

Deneen and Catanese (2011) explained that the poor performance of African American students is generally lost in an array of averages and statistics, which are included in with the general population. For example, young “Black males represent 9% of the student population; however, they make up 20% of all students enrolled in special education classes, and only 4% of those in gifted and talented programs” (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009, p. 233). Among the minority school population, African American males have shown exceptional vulnerability within the educational system comprising nearly one third of those diagnosed as “educable mentally-retarded,” nearly one third of those identified as having serious emotional disorders, and nearly one third of students identified as “trainable mentally-retarded” while only accounting for 26% of the population of school students (Harry & Klingner, 2006, p. 87).

Dwarte (2014) noted that African American males continue to represent the lowest rung of academic achievement in nearly every measure. Similarly, Few (2004) found that 43% of African American males have failed at least one grade by the time that they reach high school. Howard, Flenbaugh, and Terry (2012) referenced data from the Schott Foundation report (2000), which indicated that in 2008, as many as 47% of African American males did not receive diplomas after four years of high school in 2005, and dropout rates were as high as 60% in some cities during the same year. The dismal consequences, which symbolized the continued disparities between the graduation rates of African Americans and White Americans, were illuminated by Darling Hammond (2010) when she purported the following:

With a more educationally demanding economy, the effects of dropping out are worse than they have ever been before. In the years from 2001 to 2006, a 21-

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year-old high school dropout who was Black had less than a one-in-four chance of being employed full-time, and the odds for his White counterpart were less than 45%. Even recent high school graduates struggle to find steady jobs. Among African American high school graduates not enrolled in college at 21, only 46% were employed full-time, as compared to 59% of White graduates at 21. (p. 23)

Further, children of color, who make up the vast majority of students in urban schools, are often subjected to the racist and classist structural ideology that hinder their performance (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lightfoot, 2004; McKenzie, 2001; Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Solorzano, 1997; Yosso, 2005). This ideology often results in African American students being disproportionately poorly instructed, underserved, and wrongfully categorized (Beachum, Dentith, McCray, & Boyle, 2008; Jackson, 2008; Obiakor, 2007; Obiakor, Harris-Obiakor, Garza-Nelson, & Randall, 2005). This outlook on the innate lack of abilities of minorities, often referred to as the “deficit view,” points to the “learner and consider[s] cultural identity to be the primary reason why certain students are not achieving in school” (Welch, 2011, p. 39).

Complicating the theory even further is how teachers tend to use linguistic patterns, structures, and pedagogies that students from more affluent families are readily familiar with but are often foreign to lower income students, thereby resulting in the perception that they are unwelcomed, isolated, and disconnected (Bourdieu, 1986). Further, when students mostly see certain cultures in subservient jobs, Welch (2011) asserted that the message is sent that *different is deficient* and achievement is relegated to dominate cultures. Although there has been a myriad of improvement efforts aimed at enhancing the performance of urban high school students, they continue to perform at or near the bottom of nearly every academic statistic (Dwarte, 2014). This

sobering fact predicts a troubling future for African American urban high school students, a life of high unemployment, incarceration, poor health, and poor quality of life (Daneen & Catenese, 2008; Dwarte, 2014; Gibbs, 1998; Lipps, 2008; Schott Foundation, 2000)

### **Education Reform Efforts**

Efforts aimed at improving education over the past 60 years were guided by the social changes that shaped the United States (Elmore, 1996; Sanders, 2012). For instance, in the 50s, *Brown v Board of Education* struck at the heart of education reform when 13 Topekan parents convinced the Supreme Court to overturn the longstanding racially “separate but equal” public school system. During that tumultuous time, Black children were forced to commute past neighborhood schools, which were exclusively White, to schools designated as Black only (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). Black students endured dilapidated school buildings, insufficient educational resources, as well as teachers who were either poor performing or did not want to teach in those conditions.

During the 60s, the focus of education reform changed. Upon the recommendation of the National Science Board to increase our nation’s prosperity, the federal government directed education improvement efforts towards students’ knowledge of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Robinson, Dailey, Hughes, & Cotabish, 2014). Efforts to improve STEM education was heighten by the Soviet Union’s launch of the Sputnik satellite along with the race to become the first country to land on the moon.

As a means of empowering parents and improving the performance of poor performing schools, a number of policy initiatives were implemented as early as the 1980s that provided parents school choice regardless of their home zip codes (Archbald, 2004; Povich, 2013). At the core of the school choice initiatives was the belief that competition generated by schools would

lead to improvements in poor performing schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Davis, 2014; Hoxby, 2002; Nathan, 1996). Magnet schools were one of the first school choice options offered by school districts beginning in the mid-1970s (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011). This school choice imitative, however, experienced its biggest expansion during the past decade. Magnet schools have offered alternative programmatic specializations designed to increase college readiness as well as integrate school districts. In some respects, magnet schools achieved both of these aims, but they tend to segregate once diversity is no longer a primary concern (Siegal-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011). The future of magnet schools depends on whether integration or innovation will be the primary targets of federal policy.

Most prevalent among the school choice options has been charter schools. Although charter schools existed many years prior, the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative promoted by President Obama has led to a substantial increase in the number of these public-private initiatives within the past decade. Although the number of charter schools has increased substantially over the best few decades, their academic performance have not proven to be much better that of public schools. (Gill, Timpane, Ross, Brewer, & Booker, 2007; Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwoyer, 2010) Even more alarming, others have argued that charter schools actually perpetuate segregation within school districts leading to an even wider gap between well-performing schools and poor-performing schools (Reardon, 2011; Stone, Trisi, & Sherman, 2012).

State vouchers and tax incentives provided still another means for parental choice in the form of open enrollment, distance learning, option demand, single-sex, and home schooling (Bielick & Chapman, 2003; Davis, 2014; K. A. Ranch, personal communication, September 11, 2015; Povich, 2013). Since 2007, there has been a 450% increase in the number of students who are enrolled online and as many as 1.77 million K-12 students homeschooled (Lynch, 2014).

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Additionally, as parents have been empowered with more choice low-income students have become increasingly segregated in urban schools (Archbald, 2014; Kathleenberg, 2001).

There has also been an array of initiatives introduced by nonprofit organizations aimed at improving the performance of disadvantaged students. In 2012, the Take Stock in Children nonprofit organization purchased over \$135 million in Florida Prepaid Scholarships to distribute at-risk kids (Take Stock in Children, 2013). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation introduced the College-Ready Education program that is designed to dramatically increase the number of students who receive postsecondary degrees and certificates (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015). Similarly, EdVestors is a foundation that leverages funds from foundations, corporations, and other organizations that are aimed at improving urban schools through innovation (EdVestors, 2013). Although school choice has provided an array of options for parents and students, the disparity in achievement between urban and suburban students has persisted.

At nearly the same time that school choice options were at the forefront, public education efforts began to take on a very different feel. The achievement gap between Black and White students became one of the primary concerns of educational reformers across the nation. During that era, many policy makers, business leaders, and parents attributed the poor performance of urban high schools to ineffective teachers and poor accountability. The NCLB Act of 2001 sought to address this issue by mandating strict accountability mechanisms, student performance assessments, expanding choice, as well as minimum teacher qualification standards (Borg et al., 2007; Cross, 2005). In fact, one of the strictest standards, which proved to be unachievable, was the requirement that all students read at or above their grade level by 2014 (Ravitch, 2010).

Especially critical of NCLB was Ravitch (2010) who described it as being ineffective and too rigid. Instead, Ravitch (2010) believed that there was no smoking gun that would resolve the



achievement gap and suggested that long-term consistency was the key to improvement. Steen and Noguera (2010), likewise, stressed that the NCLB Act of 2001 focused on short-term gains rather than sustainable improvements. There were, however, some positive aspects of the NCLB Act of 2001. For the first time, districts were required to begin reporting student performance based on categories such as ethnicity and economic level. As a result, disadvantaged students were uniformly categorized as needing improvement (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semington, 2008).

An argument could be made that initiatives to improve the performance of students across the nation has been ineffective at best and inhibiting at worst. The NCLB Act of 2001 was a bill proposed by newly elected President George W. Bush that was championed as his first major legislative initiative. Although proposed as a means for defeating the expectation of low achievement, some argued that it focused almost exclusively on in-school factors that affect student achievement while excluding factors that limit student success that lie outside of the school (Warren, 2005). The NCLB “[reflecting] and enhancing the accountability oriented zeitgeist in which we live, focuses almost exclusively on school outputs, particularly reading and mathematics achievement test scores” (Berliner, 2009, p. 4). The policy was designed to ensure that teachers and school administrators improved the performance of schools located in impoverished communities with a no excuse stance (Berliner, 2009).

In response to the NCLB Act of 2001, school districts have increasingly used controversial standardized testing, increased graduation requirements, and more stringent methods for reporting the performance of schools (Thorton & Perreault, 2002). These accounts of their responses to the NCLB Act are in stark contrast to the increasing number of researchers who have begun to consider outside of school circumstances as contributors to underachievement

(Barth, 1990; Carnegie Council Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989; Elmore & Associates, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Newmann, 1993; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1995). Recently, the trend has been to attribute the isolation, criminal activity, disparity, and joblessness that are prevalent in urban neighborhoods as inputs to underachievement (Berliner, 2009; Shutz, 2006).

### **Link Between Urban Neighborhoods and Schools**

Increasingly, the concentration of poverty in urban areas over the past 30 years has spurred interest in the links between poor-performing schools and poor communities (Aaronson 1998; Bowen, Bowen, & Ware, 2002; Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson 1994; Garner and Raudenbush, 1991; Harding 2003; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004; Wilson, 1987; Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Glickman & Scally (2008) believed that schools and the communities in which they are located are inextricably linked through their cultures. Thus, the rhetorical question was posed: Can “community-building and development efforts succeed in revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods if the public schools within them continue to fail their students?” (Warren, 2005, p. 133). Warren (2005) asserted that the two have to be addressed simultaneously.

Schools in poor, urban neighborhoods mirror the chronic problems of their surrounding communities, often experiencing high teacher turnover, excessive disciplinary issues, funding shortages as well as other chronic issues that negatively impact academic success (Beabout, 2010). These issues are compounded by the fact that urban schools are primarily comprised of disadvantaged students of color while the student populations of suburban schools mostly live above the poverty line, and these populations have increasingly gotten whiter (Glickman & Scally, 2008; Warren, 2005, 2011). Similarly, Orfield (2001) noted that the White and Black,

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rich and poor, urban and suburban divide have persisted over time, and in some instances, have even increased.

Glickman and Scally (2008) vividly described the condition of urban neighborhoods as those plagued with disinvestment, outmigration, and decrepit buildings. These “clusters of corrosive conditions, evidenced by dense, dilapidated housing, threat of violent crime, inaccessible health care, lack of employment opportunities, and limited public transportation give rise to an entrenched culture of fear, disconnection, and distrust” (McCray, Grant, & Beachum, 2010, p. 337). Massey and Denton (1993) went so far as to describe these poverty stricken urban areas as the “American Apartheid.”

Urban neighborhoods, Wilson (1987, 1996) noted, were once largely populated by working class families, but have suffered from widespread urban flight. As a result, they are now composed predominantly of low income minority families while the Whiter, more affluent populations have flocked to the more suburban areas (Jargowsky, 2002; Katz, 2004; Kingsley & Pettit, 2002, Wilson, 1987) resulting in a neighborhoods with nearly 40% of the residents living below the poverty line (Ellwood, 1988). Wilson (1987, 1996) attributed the migration of Whites to suburban neighborhoods to the industrialization of large metropolitan areas, which he claimed left behind joblessness and despair. Children growing up within neighborhoods with such little hope were found by Anderson (1990, 1999) to have less respect for their neighbors, more behavioral problems, less concern with educational attainment, and were more likely to possess a survival attitude than those raised in more affluent neighborhoods.

The conditions found within the inner cities undoubtedly affect children’s behavior; however, there is mounting evidence that the academic progress of students is also influenced by neighborhood factors (Browning, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2004; Coulton, Korbin, & Su,

1999; Simons, Simons, Conger, & Brody, 2004). These findings were validated by a robust study conducted by Ainsworth (2002) of over 13,000 middle and high school students. The researcher provided evidence linking student achievement to neighborhood characteristics by analyzing a data set that was derived from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1988 matched to zip code census data from 1990. Even while controlling for ethnicity, school performance, and family socioeconomics, the researcher demonstrated that neighborhood characteristics can be used to predict school performance. Specifically, students residing in poor urban neighborhoods marked by high unemployment, deteriorated buildings, high crime, and isolation scored lower than suburban students as measured by math and reading scores. From his study, Ainsworth (2002) concluded that the presence of high-status residents in students' neighborhoods outweighs the negative characteristics that are commonplace in urban communities. Consequently, more "than half of the negative influences of living in a more economically deprived neighborhood are due to the lack of high economic status residents in such neighborhoods" (Ainsworth, 2002, p. 131).

In an attempt to connect neighborhoods to student performance, Plybon et al. (2003) examined whether neighborhoods that were high in resources positively affected school outcomes of African American students, and also whether neighborhood cohesion resulted in improved outcomes. After undergoing a rigorous approval process, the researchers and their team met with each of the 400 6th grade students of their study to discuss the questionnaire in order to ensure proper understanding. The questionnaire used was the eight-item School Self-Efficacy scale. As predicted, there was a positive correlation between neighborhood cohesiveness and positive school outcomes. The researchers hypothesized that, "cohesive neighborhoods may affect the school system because of a variety of economic and social reasons

(e.g., a stronger tax base, higher funding for school initiatives, higher pay for school staff, a lower pupil-to-teacher ratio) and, thus, may have more cohesive schools in which teachers are less stressed, employ more *researcheritative* teachers, and are more physically and emotionally available to students” (Plybon et al., 2003, p. 403).

Research it has been demonstrated that the involvement of parents in the school lives of students pays significant dividends in academic progress. In a study of 6,400 public high school students having diverse ethnic backgrounds, Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) discovered that students performed best when their parents were most involved in their academic lives. This involvement can be in the form of actual help with homework, continuous encouragement, school visits, and assistance with selecting school courses as well as attending extracurricular activities at school. The improvement in the students’ performance, explained by the researchers, was most evident by increased grade point averages. Students attributed the increased GPAs to their ability to more fully concentrate and self-efficacy resulting from the attention that they received from their parents, which they described as warm and accepting with a degree of democracy and autonomy.

Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) used a nationally representative sample to conduct a quantitative study of the relationship between family protective factors and school outcomes. Specifically, the researchers examined the impact that family support, family satisfaction, family integration, and home academic culture had on sense of school coherence, avoidance of problem behavior, and academic performance. Their diverse sample included 2,099 middle and high school students that had been derived from a two-stage stratified design in an attempt to ensure representation across ethnicity, gender, school size, community population, and region. Of importance to this study, through student self-report, the researchers discovered that only the

academic culture of students' homes resulted in higher grades. Additionally, student's satisfaction with their neighborhoods was associated with school coherence. Contrary to racial stereotypes, however, neither academic performance nor the avoidance of problematic school behaviors was a product of the children's environments (Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Further, both Black students and other racial minorities demonstrated significantly higher levels of school coherence.

Flowers and Flowers (2013) analyzed data from the Education Longitudinal Study (2002) that was derived from a sample of 752 diverse schools in an effort to identify an association between hours spent on homework, expectations of the parents, and educational attainment. Over 30,000 students, parents, teachers, principals, and librarians responded to the questionnaires. From the data, the researchers identified that family income had a significant and positive effect on reading. Additionally, the researchers found that hours spent on homework and parent expectations significantly and positively influenced educational outcomes.

Beabout's (2010) account explained how the dire economic circumstances found in many urban communities, combined with the isolation of its residents, has played a significant part in accelerating the downward spiral of the academic performance of minority students. Accordingly, one could surmise that the dismal socioeconomic status of urban communities counteracts academic progress in a manner that results a negative impact on performance (Clark, 1983; Driscoll & Kerchner, 1999). Similarly, Beabout (2010) professed that there are equally positive strong linkages between wealthy communities and high performing schools.

The percentage of affluent neighbors has been linked to the likelihood of students remaining in school (Duncan, 1994). Neighborhoods are commonly believed to affect students' access to various resources and opportunities as well as be a source of motivation and values.

Even after accounting for confounding variables such as parenting interaction and school performance measurements, Eamon (2005) found that students raised in neighborhoods containing high violence, apathetic neighbors, and run-down buildings were predictive of reading achievement. Plybon et al. (2003) advocated a similar line of thinking when they linked neighborhoods containing high levels of social cohesion to students who possessed high self-efficacy. Additionally, neighborhoods having fewer than 5% of the adults with professional careers correlate more with the number of students who drop out of high school than those having a higher percentage of professional adults (Crane, 1991).

Cohen-Vogel, Goldring, and Smrekar (2010) combined Geographic Information System mapping software of health and crime data from 20 middle schools and the communities surrounding them to determine how neighborhood conditions affect school-community relations. The researchers specifically sought to discover the relationships that developed between educators, parents, and community members at schools located in diverse communities. In addition to analyzing teacher surveys and principal interviews, Cohen-Vogel et al. (2010) examined data from the U.S. Census Bureau and metropolitan police and health departments. Their findings reinforced their hypothesis that there would be substantial differences in the relationships and interactions between teachers and community members in low liability zones as opposed to those in high liability zones. Educators from schools located in high liability zones reported fewer interactions with parents through activities ( $t = 3.17, p < .05$ ) and chance meetings ( $t = 4.47, p < .05$ ) and by living in the same community ( $t = 4.02, p < .05$ ) than their low liability counterparts. Their findings suggest that students who live in urban areas do not benefit from interactions with their teachers and school administrators outside of class as often as suburban students do.

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It was the researcher's experience of being raised and serving a community in a career that expanded over 25 years in an urban community that the challenges many students face are even more difficult than the literature suggested. On the extreme end of urban life are the individuals who spend the majority of their day on street corners openly gambling, drinking alcohol, selling or using drugs, fighting, robbing, or even killing. These individuals, who are the community adults, demonstrate very few positive behaviors that might motivate students to remain in school, study hard, seek out Advanced Placement classes, prepare to take college entrance exams, work closely with guidance counselors for career opportunities, or any other number of ways that adults can positively impact the academic success of high school students. Brewster (1994) similarly noted that student performance suffers when they are surrounded by a paucity of adult role models who reinforce the value of education.

These findings, however, do not paint an accurate picture of the challenges that are inherent in the lives of urban parents. Typically, low-income parents who reside in poverty stricken neighborhoods are assumed to be unconcerned about their children's progress in school even though evidence suggests that urban parents value their child's education at a similar level as suburban parents (Clark, 1983; Epstein & Salinas, 1991; Jarrett, 1995; McLaughlin & Shields, 1987; Spencer, 1999). What is found to differ is the level of involvement of parents from low economic backgrounds in their child's progress, which is often affected by lingering negative experiences from their own school years. Having felt unappreciated, unwelcomed, and isolated during their journey through school, parents from poor urban communities face an uneasy relationship with school administrators and teachers (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Howard, Flennaugh, & Terry, 2012; Humpage, 1998; Izzo, Weissberg, Kaspro, & Fendrich, 1999; Ramsay, Hawk, Harold, Marriot, & Poskitt, 1993).



Complicating matters even further, Mutch and Collins (2012) claimed that urban parents are more likely to be burdened as the sole breadwinner, young, from large family settings, and have high mobility rates. Unfortunately, parents who struggle to make ends meet are constantly faced with matters that they perceive to be more pressing than their child's education. The willingness of low income parents to become involved has also been found to be impacted by a school culture that is perceived to be judgmental and unwilling to accept their contributions on an equal footing while regarding their lack of college education as being subservient (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Humpage, 1998; Izzo, et al., 1999; Ramsay, et al, 1993; Warren, 2011). Still another factor is the relationships between parents and teachers that are often stained by mistrust and poor communication (Harrison, Mitylene, & Henderson, 1991; Lightfoot, 2004). Lastly, the real or perceived difference in socioeconomic class plays a subconscious or conscious factor in the level of respect that administrators afford to urban parents of color (Rutherford, Anderson, & Biling, 1995).

### **Evolution of the Northwest Quadrant**

African American alumni of urban high schools of Jean Ribault and William Raines High Schools, who were the participants in the study, remain a very tight group of community members who are invested in seeing their schools and communities return to their former status. The researcher posited that the bond between African American alumni of urban high schools and their former schools and surrounding communities persists today and is one that might be considered foreign to many suburban high school graduates. What led to such a tight bond between Ribault and Raines High School alumni was the evolution of the Northwest Quadrant into a segregated community at a time when their civil rights had only recently begun to be realized. The phenomena of *White flight* that historian Jim Crooks remembered was fueled by the

consolidation of Jacksonville with Duval County in 1968 (Washington & Wright, 2012). Prior to that period, Blacks lived almost exclusively near the downtown area of Jacksonville, and Whites lived in the areas that were then the counties surrounding the core of Jacksonville.

Less than a decade before the 70s, when White flight was most notable, Blacks were still being treated as second-class persons in nearly every area of their lives. Spencer Meeks, a local principal, athletic director, coach, and mentor, remembered how Blacks were not served by many businesses, and those that did, often placed limitations such as “colored only” lunch counters or “colored” water fountains (S. W. Meeks, personal communication, November 1, 2014). Local activist, historian, motivational speaker, and author Rodney Hurst recalled how Blacks were not discriminated against only by private businesses; as late as the early 60s, Blacks were also still relegated to sit in the rear of buses when they used public transportation (Hurst, 2008). Vividly, Marjorie Brown who is a retired US Postmaster, secretary of the youth branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and longtime resident of Grand Park, recalled how *The Florida Times Union* perpetuated racial discrimination by having a separate section that was delivered only to Blacks titled “News For and About Colored People” (M. A. Brown, personal communication, October 14, 2014).

Although de jure racial discrimination was illegal, de facto racial discrimination continued to persist in the lives of African Americans in Duval County, a situation which was not much different from other Southern localities (Washington & Wright, 2012). Hurst (2008) described the precarious situation in which Whites placed Blacks during a time when “Jim Crow” laws were still enforced in the South:

In 1960, Woolworth represented one of the many vestiges of segregation that openly insulted Blacks daily. As a retail store that opened its doors to the public, Woolworth, as

well as W. T. Grant, Kress, McCrory's, and Cohen Brothers, would accept your money as a shopper at one counter, but not accept your money or allow you to shop at another. If Black shoppers wanted to eat in Woolworth after shopping, the process worked differently. Woolworth wanted you to spend your money, but only where they wanted you to spend your money. (p, 53)

Although there were small pockets of Blacks scattered throughout the area, prior to the White flight of the 1960s and 1970s, Blacks mostly lived segregated in the inner core of Jacksonville in the areas known as LaVilla, Mixon Town, Brooklyn, Durkeeville, and Sugar Hill. Even Black-owned businesses, recalled local historian Jim Crooks, were limited to Black areas and were patronized only by other Blacks (Washington & Wright, 2012). Referred to as the *Harlem of the South*, Hurst (2008) fondly remembered how the LaVilla and Ashley Street areas were the center of the Black business district, boasting Bar-B-Q restaurants, bar and grills, steak houses, taverns, smoke shops, stylish barber and beauty salons, premier men's and women's wear, candy stores, and the Ritz Theater. "You had to visit Ashley Street in Jacksonville, much as you had to visit Beale Street in Memphis and Bourbon Street in New Orleans" (Hurst, 2008, p. 16).

During that era, Emmerell Owens, who was a longtime resident of the Jacksonville's Northwest Quadrant and retiree from the paper industry, relocated her family from the urban core to Sherwood Forest in 1969 and remembered how the previously exclusively White community quickly became predominantly Black (E. F. Owens, personal communication, October 12, 2014). She recalled that Sherwood Forest, a community in the Northwest Quadrant, was only approximately 30% Black when she first moved there, but it transitioned to what she estimated as over 90% Black by the late 1970s. Similarly, the Harbor View and the Ribault

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Scenic communities, which bordered Ribault and Raines, were remembered by S. W. Meeks (personal communication, October 29, 2014) as experiencing a demographic change in the early 1970s.

Not unlike the aforementioned communities, Grand Park residents enjoyed living in the Northwest Quadrant of Jacksonville, displayed pride in their neighborhoods, and valued their tight knit connections (M. Brown, personal communication, October 14, 2014). She further recalled that they knew their neighbors well, children played in the streets, and violence was relegated to teenage fistfights. Benjamin Whootson, a 1972 graduate of Raines and local mentor, remembered how home construction began in the Magnolia Gardens and Floradale areas of Jacksonville's Northwest Quadrant for Blacks in the late 1960s at a time when Blacks were still being harassed by racist Whites when they walked down Edgewood Avenue (B. Whootson, personal communication, October, 8, 2014).

The northwest slowly evolved into an area of Jacksonville that African Americans could call their home. Playing a significant role in fostering the value of education was the *community teacher* who understood, valued, and cultivated the history and culture of the community (S. W. Meeks, personal communication, October 29, 2014). Because African Americans had relocated in large numbers from the core to Jacksonville's Northwest Quadrant, it would have been unusual for Raines and Ribault teachers to live outside of this community. The researcher, who was a product of the Northwest Quadrant, often reminisced about riding his bicycle through the neighborhood and pointing out the houses where his teachers lived. Jackson (Washington & Wright, 2012), one of the first African American teachers at Raines High School, bragged about how there was little separation between teachers, guidance counselors, and principals from the surrounding community because it was their own.

Further, it was not uncommon for Raines or Ribault teachers to stop and update parents on their child's progress while driving down the street and catching parents working in the yard (A. Johnson, personal communication, October 8, 2014). There was a comforting connection between parents and teachers that led to mutual respect and responsibility for the education of their children (Washington & Wright, 2012). Although their demographic composition involved into very similar makeups and their location within the Northwest Quadrant were so close to one another, Ribault and Raines could not have been more different in how they came to be the proud, segregated community schools that they evolved into.

**Journey to segregation.** Since its opening bell, a nearly exclusively White student population had attended Ribault High School. Historian Jim Crooks recalled how, in the 1960s, Jacksonville experienced White flight (Washington & Wright, 2012), marked by an ever increasing number of Whites who began to relocate away from the urban core towards more suburban populations such as the Arlington, Baymeadows, and Mandarin. Blacks saw it as a time when they were offered the opportunity to relocate to those suburban areas where Whites were readily vacating (M. A. Brown, personal communication, October 14, 2014). In 1971, U.S. District Judge Gerald Tjoflat (Poppell, 1998) mandated the integration of Duval County schools by cross-town busing. The 1971, court order plan also paired Ribault and Raines High Schools in hopes that their segregated population would spill over into one another.

Spencer Meeks recalled how the beginning how Ribault's attempts at desegregation were marred by racist fueled riots that were virtually ignored by the local media (S. W. Meeks, personal communication, February, 27, 2015). Spencer Meeks had accepted a job at Ribault in 1972 as Duval County's first African American athletic director and head coach. Coming from the majority Black Eugene Butler Junior High School, he remembered being directly involved in

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attempts to moderate the tension between the handful of Blacks who had only recently started attending Ribault and the White majority whose roots had been firmly implanted there. Spencer Meeks further recalled a major riot occurring on campus approximately two months prior to his arrival that sparked the governor to send the National Guard to camp out for over a week in the field across the street from the school. Anthony Johnson was a retired First Sergeant in the U. S. Army and 1977 graduate of Ribault High School. He remembered how the formerly racially-charged climate at Ribault had cooled as the school's population was quickly evolving into an even mix of Black and White students when he arrived there in 1975 (A. D. Johnson, personal communication, October 8, 2014).

Raines became a predominantly Black school in a completely different way than did Ribault. Raines was constructed in 1965 as a state-of-the-art school that the district lauded as an initiative to provide African American students, who were concentrated in the core of Jacksonville prior to consolidation, a brand new, innovative learning environment. Some African Americans, like Fred Matthews who was a 1971 alumnus, were initially skeptical, believing that the construction of Raines was a deliberate plan by racist White school board members to maintain school segregation by keeping Blacks out of Ribault and other White schools (Washington & Wright, 2012).

The first principal of Raines High School was a prominent African American leader named Dr. Andrew Robinson. Dr. Robinson was a charismatic, articulate, and disciplined leader, claimed David Thomas-Pastor, former NFL player and 1969 graduate, who was one of a small number of Blacks that had obtained a doctorate degree (Washington & Wright, 2012). M. F. Medlock reminisced how there was no greater leader than Dr. Robinson who she felt embodied what it meant to be an African American educator (Washington & Wright, 2012). Dr. Alvin

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White, who was a coach, teacher, and principal, recalled how Dr. Andrew Robinson's philosophy was that a person never arrived; instead persons should always climb (Washington & Wright, 2012).

Known as one of the most beloved as well as longest serving principals (1979-1995) of Raines High School, Jimmie Johnson described Dr. Robinson as a born leader who made others feel as if they could do anything (Washington & Wright, 2012). To empower the new principal, the District provided him free reign to select an all-Black faculty and staff. Raines quickly became the pride of Jacksonville's African American community. Many, however, argued that Dr. Robinson was removed from Raines too soon after he had helped it reach its pinnacle. Dr. Robinson was promoted to the District Office where his talents could be employed to improve schools across Duval. Later, Dr. Robinson continued his impressive career into higher education administration at the University of North Florida beginning in 1970. He quickly moved through the ranks to dean and eventually the first interim president, a position in which he served from 1980-1982. Poppell (1998) vividly described the intense pride fostered by faculty and staff at Raines:

The tone for the school was set by its founding principal, Dr. Andrew Robinson. Robinson, a 35 year-old native of Jacksonville, earned a doctorate degree from Columbia University and was recognized by school officials and community leaders for his scholarship and leadership ability. Dr. Robinson selected an outstanding faculty for the school which included both Black and White teachers. He led by example and constantly reminded teachers and students of the "gem" which the school district had provided for them. The school enjoyed a reputation of academic excellence, particularly in the area of science. With the benefit of

excellent, well-maintained facilities and dedicated teachers, students were expected to perform to the best of their ability in all areas of school life. Students were expected to adhere to a well-defined dress code and take responsibility for keeping their school clean and uncluttered. (p. 80)

Despite the pairing and attempted integration of the two schools by the Courts, by the 1997-1998 school years, more than 90% of their populations were Black (Poppell, 1998).

What developed as a result of the two schools being racially and geographically isolated yet being only a few miles from one another was an intense rivalry, coupled with mutual respect and admiration. Because the students of the two schools practically shared the same neighborhood, it would be nearly impossible to differentiate Trojans from Vikings as they traveled to and from school mostly on foot or bicycle. Often the only distinguishing features would be their direction of travel and the color of their outfits: Trojans proudly displaying their blue and white colors, Vikings boasting their burgundy and grey. In fact, Casey Barnum who was a 1988 Raines alum and founder of We Remember Alumni, Inc., vividly remembered hearing Raines High School football games play-by-play through his open bedroom window although he lived in Ribault Heights, which was an area near the intersection of Cleveland Road and Moncrief Road, whose residents were assigned to attend Ribault High School (C. E. Barnum, personal communication, October 17, 2014)

Elizabeth Henderson, a 1981 Ribault graduate and mayoral appointment to Jacksonville Fire and Rescue's Communication Center Manager, reminisced about how attending a predominantly African American high school adequately prepared her to get accepted to and graduate from the University of Florida (E. L. Henderson, personal communication, October 4, 2014). The Raines versus Ribault High School football game, known today as the Northwest



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Classic, first elevated into an intense rivalry back in the 70s. Over 40 years later, the weekend of the Northwest Classic rivals many college homecoming football weekends as can be attested to by hundreds of Facebook posts in the group Raines/Ribault Alumni Association. Attended by as many as 30,000 current and former students, the schools collaborate to host a parade and tailgating party, which all culminate in the game. Additionally, Charletta Green who is a 1986 Ribault graduate and long-time beauty salon owner in the Northwest Quadrant, credits Ribault with her long term success and boasts how there is no bigger source of school pride for Raines and Ribault alumni and students than the week of the Northwest Classic (C. Green, personal communication, October 4, 2014).

Although there has been a significant downturn in the academic performance of these urban high schools and the condition of the surrounding communities, the alumni are still vested in ensuring that they return to their former level of prestige (C. E. Barnum, personal communication, October 17, 2014). Alumni, not unlike the researcher, continue to have family members who reside in the area (E. L. Washington, personal communication, October 12, 2014). Many remain loyal to their barbers and beauticians who have operated within the urban core for many years (C. Green, personal communication, October 4, 2014).

The most important connection to the urban core, however, is the church. This researcher's experience has been that African Americans are baptized into a church at a very early age and remain members of the same church their entire life. Black churches became a place of refuge as well as an anchor point for the things that were going well in segregated communities (McCray et al., 2010). The Black church and the Civil Rights Movement were intrinsically connected during the 60s (Hurst, 2008). Black churches can be traced back through

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the history of African Americans as their fundamental institutional base (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Dwarte, 2014; McCray et al., 2010; Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000).

Initially, the researcher decided to conduct his study using a purposeful sample of participants: African American alumni of Ribault and Raines who graduated during the 1970s and 1980s. This span of time was initially selected because the 70s and 80s represented the only time that the national reading and math scores of African Americans closely resembled those of White Americans (Barton & Coley, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Barton and Coley (2008) reinforced the decision to include graduates from this time period: In tracking the gap in test scores, the report begins with the 1970s and 1980s, when the new National Assessment of Educational Progress began to give us our first national data on student achievement. That period is important because it witnessed a substantial narrowing of the gap in the subjects of reading and mathematics. This period of progress in closing the achievement gap received much attention from some of the nation's top researchers, driven by the idea that perhaps we could learn some lessons that could be repeated. (p. 2)

Additionally, the researcher rationalized that alumni who graduated during the 1970s and 1980s had reached the age where they were more likely to have contemplated or acted on the desire to give back to their former schools. "Until recently I did not fully appreciate the significance of the Raines and Ribault High Schools," recalled Emanuel Washington, a 1989 graduate and film producer of *We Remember Raines*, and their impact on producing some of Jacksonville's most influential African Americans (E. L. Washington, personal communication, October 12, 2014).

Similarly, Casey Barnum, a 1988 Raines graduate and founder of Still Alumni, Inc., realized how maturity brought about a sense of purpose concerning the plight of his former school (C. E. Barnum, personal communication, October 17, 2014). Moreover, Dr. A. Turner, a

1988 Raines graduate and local medical doctor, described how her concern with the success of her former school had only recently become her life's priority (A. Turner, personal communication, October 29, 2014). The researcher, a 1986 graduate of Ribault, only began in his early 40s to concern himself with initiating strategies to motivate fellow alumni to become more involved with the performance of their former schools. Thus, it was the researcher's position that graduates of this time period were most likely to have reached the point in their lives when giving back to their schools was most important.

However, as the researcher further developed the study, he discovered that the initial time span may have been too restrictive. The researcher surmised that he needed to include a wider span of time in order to obtain an umbrella of perspectives that would most closely resemble the discourse surrounding the topic. To this end, the researcher expanded the purposeful sample of African American alumni of urban high schools to those that graduated from Raines and Ribault from 1965 to the present. This time period permitted the researcher to include participants from the inaugural graduation class of Raines High School in 1968 as well as the inaugural integrated graduating class of Ribault High School in 1972.

**A change in times.** Crime and drugs resulting from fewer economic opportunities caused by outmigration eventually began to negatively affect urban neighborhoods in the 1990s. Incarceration rates during those years nearly doubled, resulting in more African Americans being incarcerated than there were in college (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Welton Coffey, an accomplished head football coach at both the high school and collegiate levels, remembered the Northwest Quadrant during the 1980s as a time when a lot of things were still good, but the increase in drugs and its associated crime had markedly begun to change the area (Washington & Wright, 2012). As a result, community teachers who previously would not have considered

relocating away from their communities began to look for safer, cleaner, and quieter neighborhoods. Closely following or accompanying the downturn in the community and the loss of many of its positive leaders and role models was the academic decline of urban students (S. W. Meeks, personal communication, October 29, 2014). Subsequently, during the 1990s, the nationwide gains in reading and math that propelled African American achievement abruptly halted and even began to decrease (Barton & Coley, 2008). Poppell (1998) described how suburbanization impacted the demographics of Ribault and Raines:

The desegregation order of 1971 paired neighboring Raines and Ribault High Schools. By redrawing attendance areas for both of the schools, each was expected to enroll a desegregated population, thereby eliminating, respectively, their all-Black and all-White student bodies. Over the years, Whites have moved out of the areas served by both of the schools and, as a result, in the 1990s both schools enroll a population that is greater than 95 percent black. (p. 80)

The communities that comprise the Northwest Quadrant of Jacksonville continue to face many of the same challenges that resulted from the suburbanization and outmigration of earlier decades. Similarly, these societal challenges manifest themselves in the classrooms of Jean Ribault and William Raines High Schools. However, the African American alumni of urban high schools of Jean Ribault and William Raines are still invested in ensuring that their schools return to their former status. Since the literature suggested that schools and their communities are linked, this study explored how African American alumni of urban high schools of Jean Ribault and William Raines perceive that their involvement can best contribute to their former schools as a result of their shared histories and backgrounds similar to current students in those schools, holistically incorporating each area of student involvement: the home, school, and community.

Hence, this study will put forward African American alumni of urban high schools as sources of social capital.

### **Social Capital**

Social capital allows access to resources through relationships that expand an individual's abilities, thus enabling the accomplishments of goals (Kao, 2004; Putman, 2000). From an organizational performance perspective, social capital can be described as the difference between the actual and potential resources that are derived from mutually beneficial relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Leana & Van Buren, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital has also been defined as "that facilitates individual or collective action generated by networks of friendships, reciprocity, trust and social norms and the access to resources that such connections allow" (Coleman, 1988, p. 97). As such, the researcher asserted that social capital was a resource that was absolutely vital to understanding how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they can contribute to their former schools.

Utilizing social capital as a framework, a phenomenological study by Drewry, Burge, and Driscoll (2010) analyzed the lived experiences of high school dropouts in an attempt to develop themes that might lead to dropout reduction. Although limited to five students, the researchers discovered that none of the students benefited from having meaningful conversations with their parents. Instead, several of the students recall having "basic chatter" with their parents, which they described as being limited to surface matters. Another pattern that data revealed was that each had a significant number of family members who also dropped out of high school. Additionally, the researchers found that the participants were mostly from families that experienced high mobility. Moreover, "the overarching theme found throughout each of the stories was that none of students in the study had relationships with members of their families or

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communities who had the capacity to assist them in their endeavors to complete school” (Drewry, Burge, & Driscoll, 2010, p. 515).

Since relationships are the fundamental element of social capital, it is important to develop an understanding of the types of relationships that exist between individuals when social capital flourishes. Bonding social capital can be thought of as the relationships developed between members of the same community, such as those between parents or between educators. Probably the most important bonding relationships are those that form the backgrounds of children’s families, which were shown (Edwards, 1992; Heath, 1983) to play a significant part in the academic achievement of African American students. Conversely, the relationships developed in bridging social capital are those between individuals outside of their normal circle and have the potential to lead to the expansion of educational, social, health, occupational, and financial resources (Beabout, 2010; Brisson & Usher, 2005; Putnam, 2000).

Social capital has also been studied through the lens of organizational performance. Findings suggested that social capital increases an organization’s intellectual capacity, access to external resources, ability to function collectively, as well as human productivity (Crosnoe, 2004; Dufur et al., 2008; Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001; Parcel & Dufur, 2001a, 2001b). It has been found that the flow of information within organizations having high stocks of social capital is enhanced (Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001). Interaction with the external environment is magnified in organizations with high stocks of social capital. According to Useem, Christman, Gold, & Simon (1997), the external linkages that are fostered by social capital improve access to suppliers, buyers, and other partnerships that are critical to the long-term profitability of corporations. The researchers also explained that social capital improves an

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organization's consciousness of the external environment through awareness of market trends, public perceptions, as well as threats and opportunities.

Overall, social capital benefits children in each of the major contexts of their lives. School age children benefit from the social capital that is derived from connections made by their parents through neighborhood contacts, work relationships, and those formed with school personnel (Crosnoe, 2004; Parcel & Dufur, 2001a, 2001b). Warren and Wood (2001) proclaimed that schools containing high levels of social capital perform better than those that do not possess the valuable commodity. Therefore, children that attend schools located in suburban areas where many of the adults are professionally employed, educated, and involved in their community perform better academically than urban children (Ainsworth, 2002; Frazer, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004). Baker (1999) and Marks (2000) asserted that social capital theory changes the nature of relationships between individuals in a manner that could lead to the reversal of the deficit view that many teachers have towards minority students. Enhanced dialogue, cooperation, and information sharing are all valuable attributes of relationships where social capital exists (Sparrowe et al., 2001). Although Warren and Wood (2001) conceded that social capital was not a cure-all, it permits schools with fewer resources, both economic and human, to make the most out of the few assets they do possess.

Students access social capital from several different contexts. Coleman (1988, 1990) purported that children benefit from social capital in both their school and family environments. The findings of Coleman (1988, 1990) and Dufur et al. (2013) suggested that social capital derived from the family is more beneficial than that originating within the school. Similarly, Grubb (2009) advocated that the effects of social capital from the school environment vary tremendously; therefore, policy makers should look towards both schools and families as

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sources. Amato and Booth (2000), on the other hand, pointed to the increasing importance of social capital that is derived from those outside of the kin circle. On a similar note, Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) conducted a study of the children of 252 young mothers and found that the children were affected by two general types of social capital, inside the home and outside the home.

A robust study of 9,041 middle school students from 51 schools over five states conducted by Wooley and Bowen (2007) provided unique insight into social capital in the form of adult social support across key contexts in the lives of adolescents. The researchers used the School Success Profile as an instrument to measure the five domains affecting school outcomes: school, family, peers, neighborhood, and health and wellbeing. Woolley and Bowen (2007) found that the presence of supportive and attentive adults in the lives of adolescents accounted for a 9% variance in school engagement. Consequently, the researchers concluded that attentive adults play a compensatory role in the academic progress of adolescents, serving to counter negative contextual elements.

A study conducted by Woolley et al., (2008) identified correlations in academic achievement between neighborhood social capital and physical conditions. They sampled predominantly African American children in the first through eighth grades from an urban midwestern city, a sample derived from a 2000 census, a community telephone survey, and citywide school achievement data. The researchers identified bonding social capital as a contributor to improved academic scores in reading and math. Interestingly, the researchers found that differences in economic resources did not account for improved academic performance. Additionally, Woolley et al. (2008) found a relationship between bonding social



capital and grade level, which suggested its importance in influencing performance as children progress through school and mature.

Although there is no shortage of researchers who believe that children benefit from the effects of social capital derived from multiple contexts, what appeared to be most beneficial is its synergistic effect. Eccles & Gootman (2002) found that the more continuity there is between the contexts where children receive positive resources and experiences, the better their academic outcomes will be. In the 1980s, Epstein introduced the concept of overlapping spheres of influence as a means of describing the interconnectedness of the home, school, and the community as sources of social capital (1987). Elements of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995) were highlighted when Johns (2001), Scales and Gibbons (1996), and Wentzel, (1997) affirmed that minority students in particular benefited academically from having caring adults within the schools and communities. Instead of using Epstein's choice of terms, Croninger and Lee (2001) and Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) selected the term *central microsystems* as a description of how the school, home, and neighborhoods are central to the amount of social capital available to students. Hence, this study examined the perceived contributions of African American alumni of urban high schools through a social capital lens in a manner that disclosed views that had not yet been studied.

### **Abundant Communities**

To counter the negative behaviors of disconnected teachers are community members who inherently possess knowledge gained from their lived experiences of navigating school, community, and home. McKnight and Block (2012) spoke of the capacities of community members as being worthy, insightful, and valuable. The term that they coined to describe such capacities was an *abundant community*. The abundant community views itself as contributors

who are ultimately responsible for their community's success (McKnight & Black, 2012). They accept one another for who they are, while valuing the gifts that emerge from their cultivation of others. Further, McKnight and Black (2012) believed that abundant community members benefit from their contributions as much as those who receive their gifts. This study will put forward African American alumni of urban high schools as individuals who exemplify the potential of the abundant community. The researcher insisted that their rich histories and legacies should be leveraged in a manner that serves as a springboard for current student success.

### **Alumni Engagement**

To date, there has been sparse research concerning ways to increase the engagement of African American alumni at their former high schools. In fact, a general search of One Search, which is the University of North Florida's online search engine, revealed zero articles or books referencing African American alumni high school engagement in general and none specific to this group's engagement with urban high schools. Perhaps this topic has not been adequately explored because teachers, principals and district personnel have failed to realize the resource potential of African American alumni especially within urban high schools. Whatever the true reason is that African American alumni have not been viewed as a resource potential at their former urban high schools, the engagement of college and university alumni in general has certainly been a major research topic.

One reason that alumni engagement at the university and college level has increasingly become a topic of concern is that the current economy has led to tightening budgets at these institutions of higher learning (IHL) resulting in an increased reliance on alumni donations to make up the difference (Lambert & Miller, 2014). However, alumni involvement does not solely revolve around economic incentives. Colleges and universities have are increasingly leveraging

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their alumni's community, human, and networking resources; thereby, helping them become better institutions in nearly every measurable area. For example, alumni surveys can provide valuable information that indicates an IHL's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities (Lambert & Miller, 2014). These researchers found that although the rates of surveys returned from alumni may be low, the results were just as representative as larger response rates.

Likewise, Singer and Hughey (2002) found that alumni's central roles in their involvement with their former schools range from academics, student affairs, to sports. Bernal and Mille (2014) suggested that departments of IHLs should develop strategies to provide future graduates and alumni mentoring experience so that they will seamlessly continue mentoring post-graduation. The researchers also stressed the importance of consulting alumni to ensure that the mentoring experiences that they eventually provide are consistent with industry necessity. Mentoring between alumni and future graduates will help ensure a continued stream of loyal graduates who will in turn contribute in a similar manner.

Although universities and colleges have been especially adaptive at fostering the commitment of students as they matriculate through the school years, IHLs have faced significant hurdles in keeping them engaged after they walk across the graduation stage for the final time. Hence, the cohort model was designed to foster student support for one another and establish bonds of devotion through mutual trust and reliance far beyond graduation (Rudolph, 1962). Further, Bernal and Mille (2014) found that alumni were more likely to give back to their IHLs at the department, micro, level rather than the college or university, macro, level. Engagement at the micro level was noted as being the result of alumni's familiarity with the academic professions that they contacted the most. Consequently, Bernal and Miller (2014) insisted that departments within colleges and universities rather than the IHLs themselves should

initiate and maintain contact with alumni. Also, the academic affairs department has proven to be an important institutional division that is critical in attracting and maintaining alumni loyalty since students are involved with these divisions throughout their matriculation through their majors and disciplines (Garland & Grace, 1994).

Capitalizing on electronic social networking to attract alumni contributions is an emerging tool that IHLs have been utilizing now that most adults have Internet access at their fingertip every moment of the day. Social networking software can serve to narrow the gap between older alumni and younger college students who may be miles apart but virtually right in front of one another (Chi, Jones, Lakshmi, & Grandham, 2012). The researchers further asserted that this type of software can serve to strengthen an IHL's recruitment and retention initiatives as well as its programs. One specific network software system, Smart Alumni System, combines traditional alumni systems with more recent networking media that utilizes data mining activities to identify essential information to improve alumni engagement (Chi et al., 2012). Thus, these systems enable IHLs to better leverage the resources of all stakeholders that utilize social networks, such as current students and faculty, visitors, community members, and alumni.

Alumni's ability to foster camaraderie, recruit new students, and foster an overall spirit of esprit de corps might be unparalleled by any of the other group associated with IHLs. Therefore, in order for alumni associations to remain relevant, they must contribute to their schools in more significant ways than by simply attending class reunions (Stuart, 2009). Although African American alumni at IHLs are less likely to be solicited for monetary contributions at the college and university level, Anft and Lipman (2003) found that Blacks give 25% more of their discretionary income than their White counterparts do. Further, Williams, Bonner, Monts, Louis, and Robinson (2014) asserted that Black alumni associations have "serve[d] as the African-

American voice on campus and [are] central in addressing issues pertaining to faculty, administration, and staff as well as issues related to campus diversity” (p. 429). Consequently, the researcher asserted that African American alumni of urban high schools engagement are vital to school improvement efforts.

### **Mentoring Initiatives**

Mentoring can be viewed as the passage of wisdom that has been derived from the tangible experiences from older more experienced individuals to younger persons (Wilson, Cordier, & Wilson-Whatley, 2013). Schargel and Smink (2001) described mentoring as the most important strategy employed by intervention, diversion, and prevention strategists. Essentially, mentoring provides at-risk youth with a mature role model to nurture, guide, and mediate them away from problematic behaviors. However, mentoring is not relegated to those who are at risk. Many high achieving individuals credit their personal mentors for steering them in the direction that ultimately led to their success (Cuomo, 1999). Thus, mentoring provides an individual with a personal role model who is committed to providing a positive path based on his or her own lessons learned through life experiences.

Mentoring relationships are beneficial in a variety of ways. Dubois and Silverthorn (2005) found that mentoring relationships increased the educational outcomes, employability as well as the physical and psychological states of mentees. Mentees have also reported improvement in their relationship skills, which led to improved behavioral attitudes (de Anda, 2001). Further, mentoring was found to help mentees develop empathy, corporative behaviors, and a sense of self-efficacy while feeling less social exclusion (Hoffman & Xu, 2002).

High school mentoring at Louisiana State University has taken on a solidly practical form that involves a co-mentoring initiative. In a program called EnviornMentoring, nearby high

school students are paired with two mentors each who accompany them through the completion of real-life science projects (Monk et al., 2014). The EnvironMentoring program proved to be beneficial for the mentees in that they enjoyed the bonds formed, environmental awareness, and practical understanding of the scientific method; the mentors benefited from the pride of giving back to their communities as well as in the students' work (Monk et al., 2014). Similarly, Hoffman and Xu (2002) reported that mentoring programs have been used to foster students' commitment to serving their community.

Another program called Men's Shed was initiated to connect positive role models with young men in male-friendly places in an effort to foster the development of practical skills and new interests (Wilson et al., 2013). Results from the Men's Shed mentoring initiative suggested that teenage boys benefit most from mentoring relationships by (1) practical and informal learning, (2) social interactions, and (2) concept of service. Mentees described their experience as "something different than the classroom" (Wilson et al., 2013). Further, specific to the study of the perceptions of African American alumni of urban high schools was a study conducted by Anderson (2007) involving third through eighth grade African American students that were enrolled in a program called Helping Hands. The author found that mentoring led to improvements in grade point average and standardized testing regardless of socioeconomic or special education variants. Hickman and Wright (2011) stressed that mentoring should not be considered a panacea:

By examining geographic data and predisposing and maintaining characteristics that may influence adolescents' academic achievement and behavior, it may be possible to determine which type of adolescent may or may not benefit by these types of programs. Students who have problems appearing at an earlier age may need more intensive and

comprehensive programs than mentoring alone can provide. Determining these factors ahead of time may afford adolescents more opportunity to seek the appropriate help they need and prevent the practice of placing adolescents in treatment programs that may not benefit them. (p. 31)

Since the advancement of the Internet and portable devices such as smartphones, laptops, and electronic note pads, mentoring has assumed a digital dimension. Electronic mentoring has been used in both the public and private sectors to expand relationships for many years; however, since electronic technology is expanding so rapidly, its uses are still evolving. Electronic mentoring or E-mentoring, as it is commonly known, provides flexibility and reduces barriers that might hinder face-to-face mentoring such as gender, ethnicity, disability, or geographical location (Bierema & Hill, 2005). Since E-mentoring mentoring does not have to occur face-to-face, mentoring can be scheduled around work schedules at times that are convenient to both individuals. Further, E-mentoring permits asynchronous communication between mentors and mentees, thereby not requiring either to be in front of their electronic devices at any certain time. E-mentoring, therefore, enables more frequent communication at times that are most conducive for personal relationship building (Ensher, Heun, & Blanchard, 2003). To enhance the correspondence between mentors and mentees who are engaged in E-mentoring even more, Chi, Jones, Lakshmi, and Grandham et al (2012) advocated the use of social networking, which enables daily or weekly alerts to foster better mentoring relationships. Mentoring, therefore, has been established as an effective means for improving the outcomes of individuals at all socioeconomic levels, and hold added potential for to enhance the contributions that African American alumni of urban high schools could make to their former high schools.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Many have argued that the more self-efficacy an individual possesses the better his or her performance will be (Bandura, 1977; Weinberg, Gould, & Jackson, 1979). Self-efficacy, as described by Bandura, who was regarded as the father of the self-efficacy theory, is the confidence that one has in his or her ability to initiate, sustain, and complete a task. Bandura (1977) further asserted that high self-efficacy positively affects one's coping and ability to persist, which help ensure the likelihood of success. Skill, however, also plays an important role in producing positive results. With the appropriate skill level, Bandura and Adams (1977) noted, the self-efficacy theory implies that the actual performance of an individual can be predicted by how much one believes in his or her abilities. Similarly, McAuley (1985) claimed that "efficacy expectations serve to determine an individual's choice of activity, the amount of effort that will be expended, and persistence in the face of obstacles or aversive stimuli" (p. 293). Fostering self-efficacy, therefore, could potentially be an essential weapon that African American alumni of urban might have in their arsenal.

Another essential element of the self-efficacy theory is that simply because an individual's performance is increased as a result of their conviction in their abilities in one context does not necessarily mean that they will be confident and that thus their abilities will increase in other contexts (Bandura, 1977). For example, a track star might have high self-efficacy when he or she runs a race on an indoor track but may lack self-efficacy when racing on an outdoor track. Further, a tri-athlete could be highly confident when playing basketball and football but might possess much lower self-efficacy when playing baseball. Consequently, self-efficacy is situation specific rather than a general personality trait (McAuley, 1985). Specific to this study, Arslan (2012) claimed that as long as individuals are given the opportunity to receive



self-efficacy training, they will become more efficient at overcoming difficulties along their educational journey. Bandura (1977) also asserted that there are measures that can modify self-efficacy. Specifically, he noted that individuals' self-efficacy increases when they successfully complete a given task. Further, he noted that verbal persuasion and vicarious learning positively impacted self-efficacy. Likewise, modeling a more experienced person's behavior while being physically guided through the steps of a task was reported as a means of increasing self-efficacy (Fetz, Landers, & Reader, 1979). Thus, self-efficacy can be both an innate trait and fostered through the imitation of other's behaviors.

Moreover, Bandura (1993) claimed that students having weak self-efficacy have difficulty staying on task, are less willing to learn, and do not persevere when faced with difficult assignments. These students, Margolis and McCabe (2006) posited, should be taught how to develop strategies to increase their persistency, such as providing moderately challenging tasks as well as encouraged to try new things. To develop self-efficacy, therefore, one must ensure "encouraging, motivating, moderately challenging classroom environments in which they feel comfortable and free to express themselves in an easy way" (Arslan, 2012, p. 1916). Similarly, Britner and Pajares (2006) found that the factors that most influence students' self-efficacy were verbal persuasion and performance accomplishment while vicarious experiences and psychological states were the least effective factors. Self-efficacy, therefore, serves a force multiplier that African American alumni could instill among the students at their former schools.

### **Culturally Connected Community Members**

Connecting the local culture to teaching in the classroom is not an easy task or one that many teachers and administrators feel is needed. Vulnerable students of color, however, could benefit from adults who possess cultural sensitivity to their journeys based on their own similar

experiences (Leff, Costigan, & Power, 2004). The reality in the classroom is that teachers who profess to understand the importance of integrating the lived experiences of students from poverty stricken communities within the lesson plan actually spend very little, if any, time in the surrounding communities (Warren, 2005). Simply acknowledging one's culture by teachers and administrators who may be far removed from the social norms may not suffice. Culturally relevant pedagogy, which integrates the lived experiences of African American children, therefore, should become a fundamental element within teachers' academic pipeline if gains in reading literacy are to be realized (Gay, 2000; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003).

In order to successfully integrate culturally sensitive learning into classroom strategies, skill and experiences must be obtained through school-community relationships as well as through teacher and principal developmental programs (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007). For instance, Tolbert and Theobald (2006) found that community members who were thoroughly familiar with the neighborhood culture were more adept at introducing authentic hands-on learning, which mimics issues that were affecting the community. It was also discovered that community members with long-standing careers with local businesses were able to relate their career fields to actual student learning objectives within the classroom, providing a real-life connection to academic topics (Foley, 2001).

Furthering the argument for the integration of local culture into the classroom were MacNeil and Maclin (2005) who found that schools having administrators and teachers who incorporated supportive, sensitive, and culturally responsive pedagogy into the classroom realized significant academic improvement. Acknowledgement of the importance of local context was also endorsed by Ladson-Billings (1994) and Loewen (1995) who advocated the benefits of teachers and school administrators developing an understanding of the surrounding

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community including the ethnic and linguistic differences that exist. Still others believe that teachers are so distant from the cultures and neighborhoods of minority children that it is impossible for them to connect in the classroom. Even more alarming, Zygmunt Fillwalk, Malaby, and Clausen (2010) claimed “altogether too frequently, teacher candidates practice a form of ‘guerilla teaching’—going into unfamiliar schools, briefly depositing limited content to children whom they have never met, and testing theory in the absence of even a basic understanding of the community in which the school is situated’ (p. 54). Thus, making the appreciation of the local culture an even more important reason for ensuring that it is infused into the classrooms of African American urban high school students.

### **Identification**

It is not a far stretch to perceive that individuals perform better at a given task when they feel good about themselves, their place in a given group, and their group’s place in society. These phenomena can be explained by the social identity theory, which Ashforth and Mael (1989) and Tajfel and Turner (1986) purported helps individuals conceive of themselves and their behavior in relation to their environment. Characteristics based on mutual understanding, whether they be viewed as positive or negative by society, distinguish individuals who belong to a particular group from non-group members (Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003). Recent educational research, likewise, has linked improved school attendance, improved grades, and increased graduation rates to a coherent sense of oneself, most notably among children of color (Chavous et al, 2003; Perry et al., 2003; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003; Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus, & Harpalani, 2001; Wakefield & Hudley, 2007).

Self-identify is an especially critical issue for African American urban high school students who have very few teachers and administrators who look like them. Only approximately

7.5% of all male teachers are African American, while African American men only make up 2% of teachers nationwide (Graham & Erwin, 2011). Conversely, White women comprise over 80% of educators. These sobering statistics provide urban students very few opportunities to interact with and emulate those who resemble them. Ostensibly, it prevents them from viewing a positive reflection of themselves (Berry, 2003).

Specifically pertaining to this study, viewing one's race as a positive attribute may lead to improved academic performance. Thus, feeling connected to their African American heritage for students who hold their group in high regard coupled with an awareness of social prejudices against the culture may be seen by students as an opportunity to overcome the perceived biases by striving to perform well in school (Chavous, et al., 2003; Sanders, 1997). Altschul, Oyserman and Bybee (2006) found a positive correlation between time spent on homework and days present in class and a strong connection of African American students to their culture. Thus, a strong connection with Black identity can be coupled with a sense of pride in the collective struggle of African American in ways that enhance the motivation to achieve, particularly in the presence of group barriers (Byrd & Chavous, 2009). The researchers, continuing their description of the benefits of identification in the lives of students of color, recognized identification as a compensatory factor that permits minority students to fill in the gaps where self-efficacy may be at a premium.

Conversely, Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, and Zimmerman (2003) and Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers (2007) discovered that the more ethnic minority students identified with Eurocentric stereotypes, the poorer they performed in school. Identification with one's racial group, therefore, can serve as an insulator against the negative societal messages that minority students undoubtedly receive while also affirming what is positive about their group

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(Grover, 1998; Haynes, 1989; Helms, 1993; Townsend & Belgrave, 2000; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff (2003). Racial identification is a multiple construct that was defined by Stellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous (1998) as the meaning that individuals attach to their racial group and to its place in society.

In a mixed methods study conducted by Gullan and Hoffman (2011) that utilized Erikson's psychosocial theory as a basis to examine the development of identity of urban African American adolescents, it was purported that there are two distinct components of identity. Information from focus groups revealed that identity is manifested in the self as an individual and the self in relation to a group as a whole. Focus groups also provided evidence that identity is influenced by the extent to which adolescents felt connected to others in their family, school, and neighborhoods, which reinforces Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence mode. Moreover, Gullan and Hoffman (2011) identified two additional themes that are relevant for this study. They found that adolescents who did not possess high identification with themselves as individuals or in relation to their group displayed low motivation to achieve as well as experienced more difficulty balancing the conflicting Black versus White cultures. Lastly, the quantitative results of the study revealed that participants who possessed greater self-identification and identification within their racial group reported greater motivation to succeed as well as a stronger sense of community.

Zimmerman and Caldwell (2012) sampled 541 African American adolescents from a larger longitudinal study of high school dropouts to determine if relationships with mentors influenced their ethnic identity and academic efficacy. In their mixed methods study, the researchers utilized face-to-face interviews lasting 50-60 minutes and a self-report questionnaire. Participants reported whether they had natural mentors, their racial identity, their beliefs in the

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importance of school, and the highest grade completed. The results of the study disclosed that mentors increased students' educational attainment through stronger beliefs in the importance of striving to achieve and that mentors increased resilience. It also demonstrated that non-parental adults have the potential to positively affect the academic performance of ethnic minority students.

Byrd and Chavous (2009) used linear modeling to draw an association between neighborhood context-level factors, racial identity, and academic outcomes from a sample of 564 African American eighth graders. In general, the researchers found that more organized neighborhoods were associated with higher student GPAs. They, however, discovered that higher neighborhood median incomes and higher expectations of parents were correlated with students valuing school less than those with parents having less income and expectations. Also, surprisingly, the presence of positive role models was related to increased academic performance but not to school utility. These outcomes directly call into question the validity of previous research and the assumptions of this researcher.

Although Thomas, Townsend, and Belgrave (2003) were specifically studying racial identity as it relates to children's psychological adjustment, two of their measures were school interest and teacher perceptions of students' classroom strengths. The researchers studied 104 African-American fourth-grade students who attended inner-city public schools. It was determined that Afrocentric values and racial identity were significantly associated, which substantiated other researchers' findings that the two are separate constructs. They also noted that "Afrocentric values are associated with a high self-esteem, and a stronger in-group identification, which, in turn, is associated with more positive psychosocial adjustment in the school settings" (Thomas, Townsend, & Belgrave, 2003, p. 225).

With the dominance of White teachers, urban students have been relegated to conform to Eurocentric standards while discarding their own cultural standards (Graham & Erwin, 2011). The devaluing of urban culture is probably most prevalent when it comes to African American vernacular or what has been termed African American English (AAE). There are many, however, who view AAE as a legitimate form of communication governed by rules that are different from but as valid as *standard* English (McWhorter, 2010; Morrison, 1993; Newkirk-Turner, Williams, Harris, & McDaniels, 2013; Rickford, 1999; Stockman, 2010). Conversely, individuals who speak AAE as their primary linguistic pattern are held in low esteem (Adger, Wolfram, & Christian, 2007) with their language *barriers* serving to contribute to poor reading, learning, communication writing and test outcomes (Newkirk-Turner, et al., 2013). Further, a study of pre-service teachers found that they viewed teaching culturally linguistically diverse students as challenging (Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005).

The American Psychological Association (APA) (2002) recognized that culturally held stereotypes, such as those associated with the use of AAE, can lead to negative subconscious attitudes. As a result, they laid out six principles to assist psychologists when working with linguistically different clients. Likewise, Perry and Delpit (1998) recognized AAE as a tool that enhances communication and social identity. Rather than a barrier, Perry and Delpit (1998) advocated the development of pedagogy that accounted for AAE as well as embraced it. Pearson, Conner, and Jackson (2012) posited “through understanding and appreciating the role of language diversity, one finds the motive and the means to remove barriers to achievement so speakers of nonmainstream varieties can perform at their potential” (p. 41).

Further, the view that teachers have of students’ home language communicates the value that teachers place on their family’s culture (Perry & Delpit, 1998). The home lives of African

Americans are steeped in the tradition of these alternative linguistic forms. The powerful ways that prominent African Americans such as Jesse Jackson, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Reverend William Borders, Dr. Cornel West, and Malcolm X used rhythm, rhyme, metaphor, and repetition in their speeches should elicit an awareness of the richness and beauty as well as legitimacy of *Black* language (Perry & Delpit, 1998). Instead of devaluing AAE, teachers should employ the rich language variations of students in a manner that will assist them in mastering *mainstream* English. African American alumni of urban high schools, many of whom have become experts at transitioning between *Standard* and *Non-standard* English can prove instrumental in reversing the classroom prejudices against AAE and instead foster teachers' appreciation of it.

There is little doubt that in order to be successful, African Americans must learn to use *Standard* English. However, African American students should embrace their family's linguistic abilities and be comfortable transitioning between it and more *standard* English. Depending on the environment, whether professional or casual, whether with unfamiliar people or with those who are familiar, or whether around other AAE speaking individuals or those whose primary speaking patterns are mainstream English, professional African Americans have the ability to assimilate their linguistic patterns without difficulty.

Dr. April Turner comfortably admitted that she speaks mainstream English when she sees clients at her general practice office; however, she relishes the chance to revert to her more natural use of AAE when she returns to more secluded areas of her office (A. Turner, personal communication, October 29, 2014). Similarly, Dr. Pedro Cohen appreciates his ability to express himself using nonstandard English but equally enjoys enunciating larger, more complicated words when in the appropriate settings (P. Cohen, personal communication, April 7, 2015). He



views it as “professional necessity” that enables him to navigate diverse environments. The seamless ability of African American to revert between the two linguistic patterns, the researcher postulated, could be a vital tool that African American alumni of urban high schools could employ to help teachers appreciate the cultural differences that exist among urban students. Consequently, African American high school students who are comfortable transitioning between standard and nonstandard English will likely have more confidence in their abilities.

### **Social Support Services**

There is growing support for schools becoming a source of social support for students as part of their journey towards improving educational achievement for urban youths (Glickman & Scally, 2008)). Schools offering social services, in some districts, are known as full-service schools and offer a broad scope of support through partnerships with community based organizations (Dryfoos, 1995; Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). Capitalizing on this education reform strategy, schools serve as a link between education, career, health care, and recreational services (McCray et al., 2010; Warren, 2005).

In addition to serving the needs of children, full-service schools also diligently work with the parents of students as well as other community residents to provide family support services such as English as a Second Language classes, adult education courses, and other community uplifting workshops (Davies, Burch, & Johnson, 1992; Dryfoos, 1995; Sanders, 2008; Warren, 2005). Teachers and school administrators, however, typically work in isolation. If comprehensive and coordinated services are to be provided in an efficient process, Mawhinney (1993) suggested that close integration of community services experts and school officials is required. The leap from schools that focus solely on education to those that provide comprehensive community services should not be a huge one since in many communities,

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according to Glickman and Scally (2008), schools already serve as the centerpiece for community enrichment activities and community development.

Providing comprehensive social services within the four walls of the school, however, may be much more difficult than it appears. Some researchers argue that it complicates the central mission of schools by diverting the focus of school administrators and teachers away from educating youth to the unfamiliar territory of close coordination with outside individuals. Fear and anxiety resulting from these types of invasive school/community relationships could lead to principals reverting to their normal unilateral decision-making posture (Cibulka, 1996; Crowson & Boyd, 2001; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001; Smylie & Hart, 1999).

Another huge obstacle that must be navigated is the tension that could potentially develop between teachers and social service experts (Adelman & Taylor, 1997). Adelman and Taylor (1997) found evidence that teachers and school administrators perceive outsiders, even those holding professional titles, as unfamiliar with the practical realities that are involved in educating students. In many cases teachers develop animosity toward them even though they fully understand that they are there to help students overcome factors that negatively impact their achievement. Additionally, teachers and school administrators view in-school social support services as just another education reform strategy that will dwindle away once the next wave of education reform is born. Past practices suggest that social support services provided to students have been among the first items to be eliminated from school budgets when the economy tightens (Adelman & Taylor, 1997). As a result, African American alumni could prove to be tremendous assets that could help ensure a seamless avenue for students and families to access social services as well as fill in the gaps when school budgets fall short.

## **Summary**

Over the past 50 years educators have struggled to improve the performance of poor performing schools that serve predominantly African American students. Even with the concentrated efforts of federal, state, and local school districts, the gap between White and Black achievement has at best remained constant and at worst increased. The literature suggested that the performance of poor schools in many ways reflects the desperate conditions of their surrounding communities. Chapter 2, therefore, provided an overview of the evolution on the Northwest Quadrant of Jacksonville, Florida, as well as introduced and expanded the concepts of social capital, abundant community, alumni engagement, mentoring, self-efficacy, culturally connected community members, alumni identification, and in-school social services.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This study used Q methodology to explore how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. This chapter detailed both the statistical and qualitative analysis of the 45 Q sorts that were gathered during this study. The statistical analysis was conducted via PQMethod Software Version 2.11; crib sheets were used to qualitatively and systematically analyze the Q sorts. Further, in this chapter the researcher described the study's methodology beginning with a description of its history and its essential concepts. The researcher then explained how Q methodology differs from the more common R methodological approach. The researcher described the appropriateness of Q methodology for exploring the topic. Next, the researcher detailed the development of the Q sample, participant selection, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and the data collection process. Lastly, the researcher described the statistical analysis of the data including factor extraction, factor rotation, and the examination of the factor characteristics that led him to proceed with the five-factor solution.

#### **Q Methodology**

The methodology used to explore how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools as a result of their shared histories and similar backgrounds to current students in those schools was Q methodology. Q methodology permits the systematic exploration of the perceptions and attitudes of individuals (Simons, 2013). The approach was invented by William Stephenson, a British physicist-psychologist, who explored human subjectivity in diverse situations (Shinebourne & Adams, 2007; Simons, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012). In the 1930s, Stephenson was employed as an assistant to two of the most famous British psychologists, Charles Spearman and Cyril Burt at

the University College in London (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Additionally, William Stephenson was a colleague of several British researchers, Cattell, Spearman, and Thurston, who conducted seminal work in the *factorist* tradition (Shemmings, 2006).

Stephenson introduced Q in direct opposition to the positivist assumptions which traditional researchers exclusively advocated prior to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Shemmings, 2006; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The positivistic era was characterized by research grounded in social laws and value-free neutrality (Shemmings, 2006). Q methodology should not, however, be misinterpreted as incapable of operating in a lawful fashion (Brown, 1996). Q methodology, conversely, permits researchers to systematically analyze human subjectivity (Day, 2008) while reducing the likelihood of interference of the researcher's preconceptions and biases (Ellingsten, Storksen, & Stephens, 2010). McKeown and Thomas (1988) noted that when "conjoined with specialized statistical applications of correlational and factor-analytical techniques, [Q methodology] provides researchers a systematic and rigorously quantitative means for examining human subjectivity" (p. 7).

Q methodology uses correlation and factor analytic techniques in a manner similar to the traditional R methodology; however, it differs greatly in that instead of employing tests or traits as variables, its variables are the participants themselves (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Additionally, Q methodology differs from R methodology in the way that it shifts the focus of research away from the columns, which are normally the tests or traits in a particular data matrix, to the rows, which are normally the participants. Consequently, with the development of Q methodology, or by-person or individual difference analysis, researchers are enabled to identify correlations between the perceptions of individuals rather than analyze differences in tests or traits using the traditional method.

Stephenson was absolutely concerned with the genuine comparison of individual differences as well as their holistic contributions (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Essentially, Stephenson sought to run by-person, as well as by-variable, factor analysis. He, however, quickly realized that data gathered through R methodological processes, albeit with inverted data matrices, were not amenable to Q analysis. To this end, Stephenson sought to develop a data collection method that was completely new and “[derived] when a population or sample of tests are measured or scaled relatively by a collection of individuals” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 15). The simple but ingenious response was the Q sample, which permits participants to “sort a pre-structured set of stimuli, in the form of words, pictures, smells, etc. into a ranked table that would yield a data matrix in which each row is constituted by the subjective evaluations of a single person” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 15).

This new data matrix created a gestalt entity in which each item in each row was evaluated against the others but was also singly represented. Now Q methodologists had a tool in their box that insured that all observations were fixed on a common unit of measurement, which was self-significance (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Further, Stephenson accomplished this simplistic but monumental feat of by-row standardization through the concept of psychological significance. Psychological significance can be thought of as a method employed by participants to rank stimuli from a first-person view based on how closely an item resembles their perspective (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The ranking process or distribution of stimuli is an operant process and is known as Q sorting. The inverted data matrix in which participants serve as the variable and the traits, characteristics, or other distinguishing features become the sample is referred to as the Q sample. Each of these concepts will be discussed in detail in sections that follow.

As mentioned previously, the Q methodologist is not only concerned with understanding the population as a whole but equally seeks to understand each individual's contribution to the findings of the whole population (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Referenced in a different manner, Q offers the opportunity to maintain the whole as opposed to traditional factor analysis, which is concerned with dividing the whole into parts (Brown, 1972). As such, the aim of the study was to capture the clusters of perceptions of how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive that they can contribute to their former school. Q methodology, then, offers researchers the opportunity to transfer clusters of perceptions to similar situations, such as urban high schools in other locations.

### **Rationale**

Q methodology has been selected as the research approach for several reasons. First, the researcher is an urban high school alumnus and was intimately close to the data. Q methodology provides an approach that will minimize researcher bias by enabling respondents to communicate their point of view from their internal reference through the operant process of Q sorting (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Self-reference, McKeown and Thomas (1988) argued, is fortified by the specifics of the statistics employed in Q methodology. Further, Q methodology privileges the researcher to less bias because the participants dictate the classification process and the factors are then derived statistically through factorization (Simons, 2013). Similarly, Simons (2013) argued that Q methodology benefits from the minimization of researcher bias because the themes and patterns are independent of the researcher and are derived solely statistically from the data. Consequently, Q methodology has been described as a means of uncovering participants' internal frame of reference through the communication of their specific points of view (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

Secondly, Q methodology, unlike a purely qualitative approach, enables participants of the study to interact directly with the Q sample, which is beneficial in reducing the chances that they will respond in ways that appease the researcher. This is backed by Watts' and Stenner's (2012) assertion that the essential element of Q methodology is data gathering through the participants' engagement with the Q set and their subjective interpretation of the statement's meaning. Additionally, the natural inclination of humans to impose meaning, organization, and structure on their environment, the Q sort in this instance, is what ensures a robust and rigorous assortment of viewpoints without interference of the researcher (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Barry and Proops (1999) noted that the participants' roles in Q methodological studies are far from passive. Instead, they actively drive the structuring of the Q sort while placing their own meaning on the statements. Furthermore, participants maintain a significant amount of control with Q methodology because it permits them construct their own versions of their subjectivity rather than relying completely on the interpretive skills of the researcher, so that meaning is only attributed to an item by the person sorting the statements at the point of sorting and in relation to the other items (Simons, 2013, p. 31).

Thirdly, Q methodology was selected as a research approach over a purely quantitative methodology because the researcher is not concerned with generalizing the findings to large population but instead is concerned with providing a voice for uncovering the unique perspectives of individual African American alumni of urban high schools. Vendables, Pidgeon, Simmons, Henwood, and Parkhill (2009) found that Q methodology is particularly appropriate for painting vivid pictures of individual perspectives as well as identifying distinctive points of view. Watts and Stenner (2012) explained that "Q methodology allows participants' [viewpoints] to be explicated in a systematic, holistic and qualitatively-rich fashion" (p. 42).



Fourthly, Q methodology is especially appropriate for use with social issues and their solutions that are contestable in nature (Kitzinger, 1987; Wallis, Burns, & Capdevila, 2009; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The question that the study attempted to explore was how do African American alumni of urban high schools perceive they can contribute to their former schools? This question was potentially a contestable social issue for a several reasons: (a) the lack of literature on this topic implied that urban high school alumni have not been viewed as important contributors to academic success; (b) the vast majority of urban high school alumni belonged to historically racially marginalized groups; and (c) the findings of the study may have contrasted with the role that school administrators, teachers, and policy makers perceived community members should play in the school setting thereby challenging tightly held negative assumptions.

Fifthly, the researcher selected Q methodology in an effort to take advantage of its holistic nature. In this respect, the participants in Q methodological studies are permitted to assert their meaning on a canopy of statements that encompass the research topic. This feature is in direct opposition to the limited range of participants' own knowledge that is inherent when gathering data through qualitative interviews or the limited options found in quantitative surveys. Simons (2013) stressed that Q methodology enables participants to respond in multiple directions when interacting with the Q sort as well as allows them to benefit from perspectives that they would not otherwise have access to during interviews.

Lastly, the most significant reason that Q methodology was selected for the study was because the researcher deemed it to be the most appropriate methodology for the research context. Curt (1994) suggested that among several other focuses, Q methodology is particularly suited for understanding a given subject matter within a specific setting. Since the researcher strove to understand the ways that African American alumni of urban high schools perceived

they could best contribute to their former schools, understanding of the participants' personal grasp of meaning is at the heart of the research topic. This understanding was accomplished in "relation to a person's own life experience, by focusing on a specific relationship, a specific set of circumstances or conditions, or by imposing a specific time frame" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 55). The researcher focused on the participants' specific circumstances or conditions as African American alumni of urban high schools.

Identifying groups of individuals with similar feelings and views relevant to the topic (Simons, 2013) as well as the discernment of unique perceptions attested to by Shinebourne and Adams (2007) is the goal of the factor analysis stage of Q methodology. Q methodology, however, has a gestalt characteristic, which means that it is incapable of separating subject matter into themes. What it does, however, is identify how themes are interconnected or related by a given group of individuals. In essence, it shows combinations of themes (Watts & Stenner, 2012). By using Q methodology, researchers are empowered to generate theory rather than simply test hypotheses (Simons, 2013). Further, Q methodology permits researchers to delve into the complexities that exist in the understandings of a well-defined population (Vendables, Pidgeon, Simmons, Henwood, & Parkhill, 2009).

Many of the misconceptions surrounding Q methodology revolve around the confusion that some researchers have with the more familiar R methodology. The confusion was fueled by the Rogers' approach to Q methodology, which played a part in misleading the research community into thinking that R and Q methodologies were synonymous (Watts & Stenner, 2005). Traditionally, in R methodology, "[correlation] summarizes the relationships among, and factor analysis denotes the clusters of, the N traits" (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 47). Q methodology, conversely, employs factor analysis to identify associations between patterns

expressed by individuals. Kline (1994) explained that Q methodology utilizes a transposed matrix model by turning the normal data matrix on its side. Q methodology, therefore, can be understood as indicating “any method which inverts the R methodological tradition by persons as its variables and in which traits, tests, abilities and so on, are treated as the sample or population” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 12). However, the inversion of data matrices created linearity issues that were corrected by Stephenson when he introduced the Q sorting procedure of data collection.

Another misunderstanding of Q methodology that has seen its share of attention is the perceived limited number of configurations that a given Q set can be structured, thus the implication that the method has a higher likelihood of error. Far from this misguided criticism is the reality, for instance, that a Q sort having 44 cards can be assembled in over  $10^{54}$  different ways, indicating that it is highly unlikely that the emerging patterns are by chance (Shemmings, 2006). Additionally, participants and researchers alike complain that Q sorting forces individuals to categorize all statements even though they may be ambiguous toward some of them (Simons, 2013). This argument is countered by Day (2008) who noted that participants act on their free will to distribute statements accordingly. Similarly, McKeown and Thomas (1988) noted that although participants who sort structured distribution are forced to place a certain number of items in each rank, they are completely free to place the items anywhere within the distribution that they like.

Lastly, there has also been considerable confusion over the inability to generalize the findings of Q methodological studies. Many researchers have argued that with so few participants, sometimes even as few as a single-case study, it would be unwarranted to attempt to generalize findings from Q studies to larger populations. Watts and Stenner (2012), however,

cautioned that generalization was not and could not be the aim of Q methodology. Instead, they argued, the aim of Q methodology is to simply establish the existence of a particular viewpoint. The existence of viewpoints, Watts and Stenner (2012) claimed, could serve to call into questions or even correct previously established generalizations that have been established through more traditional forms of research. Watts and Stenner (2012) poignantly surmised that simply “establishing the existence of a viewpoint can be a very powerful thing if it contradicts or somehow undermines established preconceptions about a particular category of people, or if it questions our current treatment or professional practice in relation to the category” (p. 73). In such cases, a single viewpoint might be used to realign and redefine how we understand and operate in general.

There has also been considerable discourse concerning the proper research paradigm to which Q methodology belongs. Lazard, Capdevila, and Roberts (2011) referred to it as an “uneasy fit” between the two major paradigms (p. 142); McKeown and Thomas (1988) described it as a completely distinct approach containing its unique ways of analyzing behavior. Cordingley, Webb, and Hillier (1997) and Shemmings (2006) also stressed how difficult it is to classify Q methodology due to the rich qualitative data that it produces balanced with its use of correlation and factor analysis techniques normally reserved for quantitative techniques. Similarly, Ellington, Storksen, and Stephens (2010) proclaimed that Q methodology uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the data collection and the analysis phases of research. James (2011) and Watts and Stenner (2012) comparably described how Q methodology contained a cross-disciplinary approach to subjectivity, containing a “curious blend” of qualitative and quantitative characteristics. (p. 225). Even more, Vendables et al. (2009) argued that the approach clearly has qualitative roots while Watts and Stenner (2005) coined the term

*qualiquantological* to represent the dual nature of Q methodology. Instead of classifying Q methodology as either qualitative or quantitative, Shemmings (2006) attested that its unique ability to identify patterns and themes makes it a good augmentation to existing qualitative analytic techniques. Likewise, Patton (2002) referenced Q methodology as an instrument that is relative to qualitative inquiry.

Q methodology, however, is not suited for the narrative analysis of beginning, middle, or ending of stories. Its focus is on a given period of time (Watts & Stenner, 2005). Buttressing this argument was Simons (2013) who explained how “Q pursues a snapshot or frozen image of a connected series of viewpoints” (p. 29). These frozen images can then be examined for shared viewpoints and favored themes (Watts & Stenner, 2005).

### **Communication Concourse**

Instead of mailing out surveys, performing in-depth interviews, or observing individuals in naturalistic settings, Q methodologists gather data via Q sorts. In Q methodology, the Q sample (also referred to as the Q set) is a collection of stimulus items that is presented to participants for ordering using their own interpretive and subjective “meaning-making” processes (Shemmings, 2006). Shemmings (2006) further described the Q set as being “[saturated] with meaning associated with the phenomenon under consideration” (p. 151). Prior to developing the Q sample, however, the researcher must develop a concourse of perspectives related to the topic (Simons, 2013). Lazard et al. (2011) referred to the development of the concourse as sampling the umbrella of perspectives surrounding a given issue. Sufficiently narrowing the concourse to develop the final Q sample is probably the most time consuming and taxing part of the data-gathering phase of Q methodology (Ellingsten et al., 2010).

**Concourse construction.** Identification of the concourse begins with gathering a canopy of perspectives, in the form of statements, from individuals having expert knowledge of the topic. Purposely identifying individuals who have expertise and are able to communicate their perspectives is essential (Ellingsten et al., 2010). Statements are normally gathered using naturalistic techniques, interviews, or conversations directly from an individual (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). McKeown and Thomas (1988) further noted that naturalistic sources have the added benefit of ensuring that the proper meaning of statements are not lost during the researcher's translation into Q sample items. Initially, generating an overly large number of statements (the concourse) is recommended so that the researcher can reduce the items to a more appropriate number that more accurately reflect the aims of the research question (Watts & Stenner, 2005). During concourse development, researchers should provide questions to subject matter experts that allow them to respond in multiple directions as to solicit the largest umbrella of responses (Cordingley, Webb, & Hillier, 1997).

The concourse consists of all of the known vantage points and perceptions of the topic at hand (McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Although there is an infinite number of new insights and perspectives that can be identified by a given population of individuals or experts, Vendables et al. (2009) suggested halting the process once one reaches "theoretical saturation" (p. 1092). Similarly, Eden, Donaldson, and Walker (2005) and Cordingley et al. (1997) stressed the importance of continuing to collect concourse statements until the researcher reaches the saturation point, which can be described as the point at which the statements provide no new insight.

Once the researcher determines that enough statements have been identified, through the receipt of repetitive themes, he or she can begin the process of identifying those that will be used

in the Q sample (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The Q sample is the tailored group of statements that have been derived from the concourse which more precisely represent the different facets of the research topic and will be sorted by participants (Ellingsten et al., 2010). The Q sample should contain a condensation of information directly related to the research question (Watts & Stenner, 2005). It is imperative that all statements found in the Q sample represent a potential response to the research question. The notion behind the Q sample is that individual's ideas and perspectives concerning a given issue are not singular or unique to themselves (Lazard et al., 2011). In contrast, the researchers advocated that when participants are applied to a sample of statements, clear patterns of culturally significant understandings emerge. The Q sample will ultimately become the tool for experimentation, also referred to as the stimuli, upon which participants will interact (James, 2011).

**Concourse refinement.** Following Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix A), the researcher proceeded to collect data in two distinct stages. During the initial phase of concourse development, the concourse prompts (see Appendix B) were electronically mailed to 20 purposefully selected participants. Participants for concourse development were sent an informed consent letter (see Appendix C) by email requesting their participation in the study. The informed consent detailed that the participants' completion of the questionnaire indicated their consent to participate in the study. The consent form also informed participants that they might later be asked to complete the data collection instrument. The data collected from the questionnaire during this phase was used to supplement and expand identified themes; therefore, responses from only a few individuals were sufficient to construct the Q sample. Of the 20 participants that were emailed concourse questionnaires, nine returned usable data. The data

collected from the concourse questions was used to construct the concourse as well as to ultimately develop the Q sample.

In developing statements for the Q sample, McKeown and Thomas (1988) proposed two distinct approaches to ensure proper coverage of the relevant topic. The unstructured approach involves the collection of items with little effort directed towards ensuring sufficient coverage of a given topic whereas researchers utilize the structured technique to systematically collect statements that are used to test hypotheses that are integrated into the sample design.

Unstructured approaches have the potential, however, to inadvertently introduce bias due to over or under sampling (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Structured approaches to Q sample design, conversely, are beneficial in ensuring that proper coverage of broad categories and themes is sufficient. Structured formats can be processed either inductively or deductively. The inductive route entails the use of open-ended interview questions to identify expressed statement patterns, while the deductive approach necessitates the use of prior knowledge of the researcher based on his or her theoretical assumptions of the issue (McKeown & Thomas, (1988). Watts and Stenner (2012) introduced the similar concept of abduction, which will be discussed at a later point, as a means that Q methodologists could use to exploit and test their theoretical assumptions.

McLeod and Ryan (1993) provided a more simplistic view of Q sample development when they asserted that statements could be obtained from direct quotes, interviews, academic literature, and a set of scales from previous research. Researchers can use direct quotes, individual accounts, and original sources mixed with academic literature to more accurately incorporate participants' viewpoints into the Q sample (Kitzinger, 1987; Rayner & Warner, 2003; Shinebourne & Adams, 2007). Moreover, in order to ensure that a particular object of inquiry is properly represented within an institution or specific environment, the Q sample



should contain items that reflect cultural heritage and common language use (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Similarly, in an effort to accurately capture the voices of those closest to the phenomena being explored, direct quotes should be utilized as often as possible when developing the Q sample (Kitzinger, 1987; Rayner & Warner, 2003). As a result, the researcher believed that he achieved the holistic representation that Eden et al. (2005) claimed was essential to proper Q sample development.

Once the researcher received the responses from the questionnaires of nine participants, he elected to employ the structured Q sample development approach that was described by McKeown and Thomas (1988). This approach was taken in an effort to narrow down the 136 concourse statements as well as to minimize the risk of overlooking key viewpoints resulting from being so closely connected to the data. Overlooking key viewpoints was believed by McKeown and Thomas (1988) to be an inherent concern of unstructured Q sample construction. Watts and Stenner (2012) described the steps to assembling a structured Q sample:

In designing a structured Q set, a technique (and mentality) is employed that often used in-scale or questionnaire development. The researcher begins the sampling process by breaking down the relevant subject matter into a series of component themes or issues on the basis of some preconceived theory or simply through research and observation. They might, for example, identify 10 key themes that the Q set must cover if the appropriate ground is to be covered. Items are then generated relative to each of them, with the aim of ensuring that the final Q set contains, say five or six items covering aspects of each demarcated area—resulting, in our example, in a structured Q set containing 50 or 60 items. (p. 59)

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Following the example of Watts and Stenner (2012), the researcher utilized two distinct steps to reduce the 136 concourse items to 38. First, the researcher identified six broad categories based on common themes that emerged from the data. The six broad categories were Fostering Parent/Teacher Relationships, Career Development, Restoring School/Community Pride, Tutoring Activities, Developing Cultural Connections, and Social Services. Each of the six categories had a minimum of six statements. Secondly, the researcher assigned each item to one of the broad categories while eliminating duplicates, combining those that had similar meaning and eliminating those that was extraneous to the research question.

To ensure content validity of the Q sample, the researcher conducted member checks with three participants who were involved in the concourse development (Yeun, Bang, Ryoo, & Ha, 2014). Additionally, the previously mentioned alumni provided feedback on missing items, and assisted the researcher in clarifying the wording of each statement. Each of the three participants agreed that the Q sample accurately and sufficiently represented a holistic view of the perspectives surrounding the study's topic. Further, the researcher's dissertation chair, Dr. Chris Janson, provided feedback on clarifying the number, as well as the readability of the Q sample statements. As an added measure of validity, an ad hoc committee of four individuals including the dissertation chair, two Ribault alumni, and the researcher was assembled to provide a final pass through the communication concourse, resulting in a 38 item Q sample.

The final 38 statements that comprised the Q sample was backed by Shinebourne and Adams (2007), who noted that although there is no standard number of statements to include, the typical number should be between 40 and 80. Taylor, Delprato, and Knapp (1994) found that as few as 18 and as many as 140 have been used. Kitzinger (1987) similarly noted that a

manageable number of Q sample statements is 30-60 items. He continued by explaining that the Q sample should never be thought of as complete: only sufficiently representative.

### **Participants**

Instead of applying tests to a number of participants, as is the case with traditional psychometrics, Q methodology applies a sample of participants to a number of statements (Shemmings, 2006). The statements or items, as previously noted, are known as the Q sample, whereas the participants are known as the P set. The engagement with the Q sample by the participants is how meaning is imposed and is referred to as the Q sort (James, 2011). Unlike traditional research methodologies, in Q methodology the items or statements, in the form of the Q sample, become the study's sample, and the participants are the variable (Watts & Stenner, 2005). The researchers, however, reported that the Q sample in itself does not represent any specific meaning other than the relative likes and dislikes, or agreements and disagreements of the participants. Lazard et al. (2011) noted, "In contrast to psychometrics, Q methodology does not 'test' its participants, measure variables or support/reject hypotheses" (p. 141). Instead, Q methodology simply discloses clusters of themes that can be employed to provide insight to existing theories.

The respondents in Q methodology are referred to as the P set and are in contrast to the R methodological tradition; they are treated as the variable (Ellingsten et al., 2010). These individuals will directly engage the Q set by sorting statements according to how much they perceive each item resembles their views. Accordingly, there is no set number of participants required for a given Q methodological study in a similar manner to there being no set number of variables in an R methodological study. Rather than expend effort on reaching a certain proportion of individuals to items in a Q set, the researcher should focus on ensuring that the

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relative viewpoints are represented (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This representation can be accomplished, as was noted by Shinebourne and Adams (2007), by purposefully selecting participants who all have expert knowledge with a mix of those with particular interests as well as those that have no particular interest in the topic. The latter, the researchers extended, lends itself to the identification of *hearing the unexpected* or *emancipatory ideals*. Ellingsten et al. (2010) noted that the number of respondents in the P set does not need to be large since Q methodology is not used to identify cause or generalize variables to large populations.

Q methodology then seeks to identify the existence of perspectives often employing “[small] numbers of respondents with the in-depth study of single cases not uncommon” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 11). Furthermore, participants in Q studies are employed as variables, and the number of variables used in both Q and R methodological studies are inherently limited (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Lastly, having a small number of participants to sort items in the study is supported by Kline (1994), who asserted that there should be two participants for each of the study’s variables, resulting in Q samples with twice as many items to sort as there are participants.

Initially, the purposeful sample for the current study was African American alumni of urban high schools of Ribault and Raines High Schools that graduated during the 1970s and 1980s. Alumni of the two high schools who graduated during the 1970s and 1980s were selected for the study because they attended during a time period when the performance of African American high school students most closely matched that of White Americans. As previously mentioned, these individuals were selected because age 40, which is how old 1970s and 1980s graduates were during the study, appeared to be the most likely point in alumni’s life that they became most vested in improving their former schools, as was evident in the documentary *We*

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*Remember Raines* (C. E. Barnum, personal communication, November 2, 2014; E. L. Washington, personal communication, November 2, 2014). These individuals, the P set or study variables, represented former students who were able to narrow the achievement gap that on a national level had steadily widened ever since (Darling-Hammond, 2010). If the trend in narrowing the achievement gap had continued as it did during the 1970s and 1980s, Barton and Coley (2008) projected that it would no longer exist. Darling-Hammond (2010) described the educational outcomes of Black and Hispanic students in the following manner:

By the end of the 1980s, the achievement gap had begun to grow again. Although it has fluctuated from year to year, after 1988 the reading achievement gap grew sharply again at all grade levels, and except for a recent improvement for 9-year-olds, has never been as narrow since. In 2005, the average Black or Hispanic twelfth grader was reading at the level of the average White eighth grader. The gap in mathematics achievement also widened for Blacks and Latinos after 1988, and although there has been progress since the mid-1990s at the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade level, that gap has remained a yawning chasm for students at the 8<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade levels. (p. 20)

The researcher selected the purposeful sample from the closed Facebook group Raines/Ribault Alumni Association. The population of Raines/Ribault Alumni Association was over 1,300 members. Because it was critical to identify relevant variables, which are the participants in Q methodology, the researcher of the study avoided opportunity sampling and instead strategically selected individuals (Watts & Stenner, 2012) whose opinions had been posted at least three times weekly for the one month period spanning October 1, 2014-October 31, 2014.

The researcher, however, avoided selecting a homogenous group of individuals having similar beliefs and perceptions. The former was accomplished by inviting participants who had posted well-defined views within the Facebook groups; the latter was achieved by selecting those who posted less pointed views but had an unusually large number of posts. Watts and Stenner (2012) referred to participant groups containing a heterogeneous mix of individuals as balanced or unbiased. This mixture, Watts and Stenner (2012) asserted, could be accomplished not only by identifying individuals who have differing level of opinions on the topic at hand, but also by ensuring a sufficient representative of different age groups, gender groups, and other demographic factors. To ensure that the sample was unbiased and diverse, the researcher expanded the limitation that alumni must have graduated in the 1970s or 1980s to all African American alumni who ever graduated from Ribault or Raines.

### **Q-sort Procedures**

Watts and Stenner (2012) noted that the natural inclination of humans to impose meaning, organization, and structure on their environment, the Q sample in this instance, ensures a robust and rigorous assortment of viewpoints. Q sorting takes full advantage of this natural inclination by involving participants in the physical manipulation of statements that are usually printed or written on small cards. The statements are then ranked by participants according to how much they perceive that it is most representative (e.g., most agree +4) or least representative (e.g., least agree -4) of themselves (McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Stowell-Smith, & Foley, 1999). Statements that are viewed as being most neutral to participants are placed towards the center of the distribution while those that are most and least representative are placed at the extreme ends of the distribution (Simons, 2013). Thus, typically the distribution grid resembles a quasinormal distribution with the majority of the statements congregated close to the center and fewer

towards either end. It is a procedural trap to become caught up in the shape of the distribution because it has no methodological or statistical consequence (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). The quasinormal shape of the distribution, they argued, only provides a more systematic approach that simplifies the sorting process.

In addition to providing a systematic approach during Q sorting, the kurtosis, or the slope of the distribution grid, is modified based on how well the researcher expects the participants to be able to communicate their knowledge of the topic (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Platykurtic or flattened, distribution grids are used when researchers expect participants to have a variety of opinions concerning the topic, thereby requiring the researcher to make finer discriminations between statements (de Graaf & van Excel, 2008). Conversely, leptokurtic or peaked, distribution grids are employed when participants are expected to have fewer very distinct perceptions of the topic. The response grid was constructed in a platytokurtic configuration (see Table 1 for response grid) because the researcher expected African American alumni of urban high schools to have significant relevant knowledge on how they perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. Additionally, as noted by the volume of conversations that are posted on the discussion boards of the closed Facebook group Raines/Ribault Alumni, Inc., the researcher was assured that the participants were capable of imposing their viewpoints during the Q sort. Table 1 illustrates the sample grid used for the study.





Following construction of the Q sample, the second phase of data collection involved participants sorting Q sample statements within the distribution grid. An informed consent letter (see Appendix D) was sent to each potential participant providing a description of the study, the nature of their involvement, and how their personal identifiers were kept anonymous. Further, the informed consent form explained that by clicking on the embedded FlashQ link, participants were consenting to the study. Once participants clicked on the embedded link, they were directed to the FlashQ website to begin the Q sort. Of the 92 purposefully selected participants that were invited to sort the Q samples, 45 returned usable Q sorts. Participant anonymity was maintained through the use of FlashQ, which forwards the data from each participant's Q sort to the researcher's email address with no identifying information. Additionally, the participants were asked to complete postsort questions (see Appendix E) to aid in the interpretation process.

The participant sample was fairly representative of the population. Notably, of the 45 participants, 19 were male and 26 female. Further, 21 of the participants were Ribault graduates while 24 graduated from Raines. There was, however, less diversity in the range of participants who self-reported on the level of current involvement at their former schools or the decade in which they graduated. Of the 45 participants, only five reported that they were currently involved at their former schools former schools at a frequent level or higher (> 7 times annually), whereas 33 participants described their level of involvement as infrequent or never (< 3 times annually). There was a similar disparity in the decade range in which the participants graduated from their former schools. There were only two participants who graduated from their former schools in the year 2000 or after, seven who graduated in the 1970s, zero who graduated in the 1960s, and an overwhelming majority of 36 participants who graduated in the 1980s and 1990s.

As described by Shemmings (2006), the condition of instruction was offered to participants prior to their sorting the statements and served as a guide that prescribed a reference point for sorting the statements. McKeown and Thomas (1988) referred to the condition of instruction as an “internal frame of reference” (p. 17). James (2011) proposed that the condition of instruction serves as a guide to be utilized by participants that ultimately dictates the structure of their Q sorts. The condition of instruction that was presented to each participant was this: *Sort these items based on what best represents your perspective on how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive that they can best contribute to their former schools.*

Once the participants read the condition of instruction, FlashQ (Shemmings, 2006; Shinebourne & Adams, 2007; Watts & Stenners, 2012) prompted them to initially sort the items in three separate piles according to the ones most like them, most unlike them, and most neutral to them in an attempt to simplify sorting of the large number of statements. Participants were then instructed by the FlashQ software to begin their Q sort drawing from and depleting each pile prior to proceeding to the next pile of statements. Prior to participants’ sorting the Q sample remotely, the researcher witnessed three individuals electronically sort the Q sample in person as a measure of validity (Watts & Stenner, 2012); additionally, witnessing individuals sort the items in person helped the researcher gain a better feel and appreciation for the process (C. Janson, personal communication, October 11, 2013). Once the researcher was assured that participants could easily follow the prompts and complete the Q sorts, all Q sorts were conducted remotely through electronic mail.

The researcher then emailed 92 individuals to invite them to participate in the study. The invitation email informed potential participants about the general purpose of the study, its use, and the method of preserving anonymity. Embedded in the invitation email was a link that

directed them to the FlashQ website containing this study's Q sort. Once individuals accessed the website, they were informed that by clicking the "continue" button, they were consenting to the study. Of the 92 participants invited to participate in this study, 49 completed Q sorts. Of the 49 completed Q sorts, 45 contained usable data while the remaining four contained either no accompanying demographic information or the data set was incomplete. As a result, a total of 45 usable Q sorts containing completed postsort questions and participant demographics were used for this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Factor analysis provides Q methodologists with a tool to identify nuanced meaning between similarities and differences that would otherwise prove difficult to discern using purely qualitative methods (Woods, 2012). The first step in analyzing factors involves inputting Q sort scores into PQMethod 2.11 to identify correlations and intercorrelations between Q sorts (Collins & Liang, 2014; McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Schmolck, 2002; Wright, 2013). Wright (2013) lauded the use of PQMethod:

The software also allows the user to see which member of the P-set loads to which factor. Further analysis provides the research with a list of statements that most distinguish each factor and statements that are areas of greatest disagreement and consensus. From this analysis, the researcher interprets the factors to provide a qualitative view of each of the viewpoints identified by the analysis (sometimes referred to as "discourses" in Q). By placing these individual discourses together, the research provides a full narrative account of the qualitative views of the individuals studied. (p. 156)

For this study intercorrelation of Q sorts resulted in a set of factors containing shared understandings, as well as differences, of how African American alumni of urban high schools

perceive that they can best contribute to their former school. Thus, people “with similar views on the topic will share the same factor, enabling the calculation of the variance amongst the respondents in terms of how many factors explain the degree of agreement and disagreement amongst them” (Curry, Barry, & McClenaghan, 2013, p. 635).

**Correlation between sorts.** At the heart of interpreting Q methodological data is determining the optimum number of factors to extract. Although there are an infinite number of possible factor solutions, Watts and Stenner (2012) argued that it is up to the Q methodologist to determine which warrant extraction based on the aims and purpose of the study. For this study, factor rotation, extraction, and interpretation began when the researcher input the data collected from the Q sorts into PQMethod 2.11.

The researcher then instructed PQMethod 2.11 to analyze the data that resulted in the correlation matrix between sorts (see Appendix F), which represents the correlations and intercorrelations between all 45 Q sorts, thereby representing 100% of the study’s meaning and variability (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Each element of the data matrix contained correlations between two participants (Q sorts); consequently, the resulting correlation matrix was a 45 x 45. On a scale of -1 - +1, high positive as well as high negative correlations indicated that the two participants sorted in a similar fashion, which means that they had similar views. Conversely, a Q sort having high positive correlation in relation to one having a high negative correlation indicated that two participants views contrasted (Butler, Hare, Walker, Wieck, & Wittkowski; 2014). The closer that any two participants’ Q sorts correlations are to 0, the less their viewpoints have in common. This extremely large correlation matrix,  $n(n-1)/2$  relationships, however, presented a formidable amount of data to readily permit pattern identification (McKeown & Thomas; 1988); accordingly, factorization was employed to tease out those patterns or clusters of

similarities. For this study the data matrix contained 45 Q sorts, which indicated that 903 correlations were required,  $45(45-1)/2 = 990$ .

The essential function of factor analysis is to explain as much of the study's variance as is possible. Variance, Kline (1994) noted, can be divided into three categories: First, common variance is the portion of meaning shared by the group; second, specific variance is the meaning that is particular to individual group members; third, error variance is the meaning that is due to the imperfections that are inherent as a result of data gathering during all studies. The goal of factor analysis, then, is to explain "as much as we can about the relationships that hold between the many Q sorts in the group—through the identification of, and by reference to, any sizeable portion of common or shared meaning that are present in the data" (Kline, 1994, p. 98). Therefore, factorization is a data reduction technique that is efficiently used to lend statistical clarity of similarly as well as dissimilarly performed Q sorts rather than attempting to "eyeball" the similarities and differences. Further, factorization substantiates the typical nature of participant's perspectives on a given topic (Watts & Stenner, 2012), which for this study was to explore how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive that they can best contribute to their former schools.

**Factor extraction.** As was mentioned previously, PQMethod permits researchers to extract factors using either Centroid or Principal Component Analysis (PCA) (Curry et al., 2013; McKenzie, Braswell, Jelsma, & Naidoo, 2011). Watts and Stenner (2012) noted that any data matrix could potentially contain an infinite number of solutions and factor extraction to support various factor solutions that can be achieved using either Centroid or PCA. In fact, using either centroid or PCA will produce results that are virtually indistinguishable statistically so that the decision as to which to choose is theoretical (Watts & Stenner, 2012). However, for this study,

PCA was selected because, compared to Centroid, it is a more “elegant and mathematically precise factoring system” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

Researchers have at their disposal a number of methods, both statistical and theoretical in nature, to use in determining final solution. The most common statistical means employed to determine which factor should be rotated is the eigenvalue criterion, which is derived by summing the squared factor loadings (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). If this value, McKeown and Thomas (1988) noted, is 1.00 or higher, the factor is assumed to be statistically significant and, thus, warrant inclusion in the study. The researchers, however, cautioned readers concerning the sole use of statistical criterion to determine the inclusion or exclusion of factors. For example, a researcher may have a priori knowledge concerning the backgrounds of one or more members of the P set who hold unique theoretical interest. Hence, not including a factor that is significantly loaded on by such a participant might exclude an important perspective from the study. For this study, the author was unaware of any African American alumni of urban high schools who possessed unique insight in the topic, such as being current urban high school teachers. Their unique insight, for example, could have prompted the researcher to include a factor that was previously excluded based on an eigenvalue being less than 1.00.

Another flaw in relying solely on statistical significance to determine which factors should be rotated is the potential exclusion of factors containing participants whose viewpoint carries weight (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). This point was made clearer by the researchers when they explained how including a factor loaded heavily by an organization decision-maker might be a viable option even though the factors eigenvalue is less than 1.00. Common sense, theoretical importance, and contextual significance must all guide the researcher when determining factor relevance (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Finally, McKeown and Thomas

(1988) cautioned against relying solely on eigenvalues since they could potentially be mere artifacts of the Q sample and P set size and therefore have no meaning. In such a case, the “[loadings] of all respondents do not exceed the standard error of a zero-order loading” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 51) although the eigenvalue of the extracted factor is greater than 1.00. Conversely, to determine the best solution (i.e., number of factors to be rotated) Webler, Danielson, and Tuler (2009) advocated using the criteria of simplicity, clarity, distinctness, and stability. The goal, Webler et al. (2009) noted, was to select the number of factors that explain as much variance as possible while simultaneously having the greatest number of participants loaded on each factor.

The unrated factor matrix is unique in that each factor extracted is based on the premise that it contains high factor loadings of correlated Q sorts (participants), which implies that they have similar subjective views (Khoshgooyanfar, 2011). Shabila, Ahmed, and Yasin (2014) referred to these factors as the prominent common viewpoints. Each factor, accordingly, represents groups of participants whose Q sorts are similarly loaded highly on them. For example, if three participants (Q sorts) are highly loaded on a factor, it means that they have similar view points, and this new viewpoint is what constitutes the factor. The first factor is always the strongest one because it accounts for the most variance. Consequently, each successive factor accounts for sequentially less variance (Butler et al., 2014). Brown (1972) emphasized that the number of factors that are developed is purely empirical and depends solely on how participants perform during the sorting process. This is the surprising fact that Watts and Stenner (2012) referred to when they described how the researcher will not know in advance the number or structure of the factor solution.

However, by default, PQMethod 2.11 extracts eight unrotated factors. To determine the number of factors that would then be subjected to rotation, the researcher adopted the following stringent criteria: First, only factors having at least two significantly loaded Q sorts were rotated. These highly loading Q sorts were referred to as exemplar sorts, which, after rotation, will be further used to create a composite Q sorts that ultimately will be used to represent each factor (Honey, Bryant, Murray, Hill, & House, 2013). Secondly, each extracted factor had a very conservative loading significance level of  $< 0.01$ ; thus a factor loading of  $2.58 \times (1/\sqrt{38}) = 0.4185$  or above was considered significantly loaded; thirdly, factors having eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were extracted, which represented the amount of variance accounted for by each factor. By including factors that had eigenvalues  $>1$ , the researcher ensured that each unrotated factor contributed to the total unexplained variance at a level greater than one single variable or participant in Q methodology (Honey et al., 2013). Eigenvalues are calculated by summing the squared factor loadings of each significantly loading Q sort (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Each unrotated factor solution yielded eigenvalues greater than 1.0.

An additional tool used to verify that the five-factor unrotated solution was most appropriate for rotation was Humphrey's rule. Humphrey's rule indicated that the product of the Q sorts with the highest loadings, regardless of their sign, must exceed two-times the standard error (SE). The two highest loading Q sorts are used because they suggest a meaningful correlation between a factor and a Q sort (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The SE formula is  $1/\sqrt{N}$ , where N is the number of Q sample statements. For this study,  $SE = 1/\sqrt{38}$  which resulted in  $SE = 0.1644$ . Further,  $2 \times SE = .32$ . Consequently, each of the five unrotated factors met Humphrey's rule (.60, .39, .37, .52, and .33).



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The researcher then imposed two additional criteria on the eight default factors produced by PQMethod 2.11. The first was total variance, which Brown (1980) indicated to be an important element in deciding which factors would be rotated. For this study, the five-factor solution accounted for 52% of the total variance with zero Q sorts significantly loading on more than one factor (confounding Q sorts). As a result of the aforementioned factor extraction criteria, the five-factor solution was deemed to be the most suitable for rotation; however, as an added measure in the quest to determine the optimal final solution, the researcher rotated the four-, five-, and six-factor solutions. Table 2 illustrates that the combined five factors contributed to 47% of the total study's variance.

Table 2:

*Values Used to Determine Factor Rotation*

Factor Rotation Solution	Eigen Value Included	Explained Variance	Number of Participants Loaded	Correlation Among Factors	Reasoning
6 Factors	2.9580	52%	29 out of 45	All below .2723	Rejected: Has the least correlation among factors and includes the fewest participants
5 Factors	2.4939	47%	32 out of 45	All below .2987	Accepted: Correlation among factors is the highest but includes three more participants than the six-factor solution and the second highest explained variance.
4 Factors	2.2609	41%	32 out of 45	All below .3567	Rejected: Has a moderate amount of correlation among factors and the least explained variance.

**Factor rotation.** Factor rotation is a process whereby the researchers' aim is to ensure that the final solution of factors is maximally saturated with Q sorts so that each offers the most

complete or informative viewpoint (McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Each factor, according to Watts and Stenner (2012), represents a dimension; therefore, the space that the factors occupy is conceptually meaningful. The origins of each factor, then, can be thought of as the subject matter. One could thereby reason “all the study factors are looking at this point of origin from the respective poles of their factor axes and all the Q sorts from their own unique position or viewpoint” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 116). The relative positions of all Q sorts serve as individual participants’ perspectives and are plotted on a map, which displays their unique perspective (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The research question narrowed by the condition of instruction is the target by which each Q sort is aimed. Thus, Q sorts that are closely mapped represent individuals with similar viewpoints. Similarly, Q sorts that are far apart represent individuals who have dissimilar perspectives. Consequently, during rotation some factors that are formerly nearly purely saturated become mixed while others that are mixed become more pure; however, McKeown and Thomas (1988) noted clearly that the relationship among Q sorts does not change. The positions of Q sorts are fixed; so what actually change during factor rotation, the researchers argued, were the reference points from which data are viewed. Watts and Stenner (2012) noted that the rotation of factors discloses unexpected relationships that are leveraged from the physical positioning of Q sorts.

In order to properly interpret factors, their viewpoints must be aligned to most closely approximate clusters or groups of Q sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012). To leverage this approximation, factors must be rotated towards two or more Q sorts using either by-hand procedures or varimax through the PQMethod software. Choosing to use by-hand factor rotation as opposed to varimax is a decision that is driven by whether a study is exploratory or based on

existing theoretical constructs (Watts & Stenner, 2012; Wright, 2013). Varimax is a purely statistical procedure that permits researchers to maximize the differences between factors, whereas, by-hand rotation allows researchers to rotate factors so that they illuminate specific perspectives (McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Watts & Stenner, 2012; Wright, 2013).

Placed in simpler terms, factor rotation can be conceptualized as a quest for simple structure whereby researchers employ either objective measures such as varimax, quartimax, or equimax to achieve maximized factor saturation or the by-hand subjective technique to clarify specific viewpoints that have been determined to be especially relevant (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Each method, objective or subjective, has very different aims but is individually warranted (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The most widely used statistical factor rotation method is varimax, which involves the orthogonal rotation. Orthogonal rotation permits factors to maintain their 90-degree relationship, thus, remaining statistically independent with zero correlation (McKeown & Thomas, 1988; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

For by-hand or judgmental factor rotation, researchers are challenged to make a convincing argument that one or more participants (Q sorts) have such unique insight that theoretically or judgmentally rotating a factor to maximize its take on an individual's perspective is warranted. The researcher's argument has to be made so convincingly that it overcomes the statistical certainty that the maximum number of Q sorts will, without exception, be loaded on each extracted factor using varimax rotation (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) referred to judgmental factor rotation as an *abductive* process whereby researchers use intuitive and deliberate means that are drawn from a priori hypothesis to guide rotation. In a sense, researchers are employing Q sorts as reference variances when they rotate them judgmentally (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). For this study, a reference Q sort might have been an alumnus

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who was also a teacher at his former high school. However, no such participant was included in this study.

The primary advantage of by-hand factor rotation, an infinite number of solutions, simultaneously serves as its most widely known weakness. Other researchers or publishers might dismiss this method in favor of a statistical one, which results in a finite number of solutions. Conversely, having no limit on the number of solutions allows researchers the latitude to make the decision on maximizing factor saturation through by-hand rotations based on their theoretical and practical insight. The goal, however, of any rotation method is to bring focus and clarity to each extracted factor (Watts and Stenner, 2012); thus, there is no right or wrong method.

The researcher decided to rotate factors by varimax for several reasons. First, there has been scarce research conducted on African American alumni of urban high schools, thus providing theoretical underpinnings for this study. Secondly, there was no reference participant whose viewpoint would have been especially instrumental; consequently, the researcher aimed to ensure that the maximum amount of study variance was accounted for. Accordingly, varimax permitted the researcher to capture the majority of the viewpoints with each Q sort having high factor loadings with only one factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In its quest to maximize variance, Watts and Stenner (2012) explained how factors that are rotated by varimax are always drawn “towards the crowds” (p. 125). The researcher, then, leveraged the strength of varimax, which is its propensity to disclose the majority of perspectives (Shabila et al., 2014). Thirdly, the researcher elected to use varimax rotation because it is the default rotation method employed by PQMethod (McKenzie et al., 2011). Lastly, varimax rotation was selected because the research community is more familiar with it as a valid factor analytical tool (C. Janson, personal

communication, August 18, 2014). McKenzie et al. (2011) lauded the utility of rotating by varimax:

A computer algorithm known as varimax rotation is perhaps the best known and most often used tool to enhance interpretability. It works with factors that are uncorrelated with each other and makes each factor load as high as possible with a few sorts while having little or zero correlation with others, so that each factor represents a distinct cluster of related sorts. Because it is not just the clustering of participants but the nature of the shared points of view that is at issue, we use factor analysis rather than a cluster method. (p. 2136)

The main drawback to varimax rotation, however, is that the procedure is completely blind concerning the reality or practicality that informed the configuration of factors. As was discussed previously, varimax rotation is blind to theoretical assumptions and instead gravitates towards the crowds.

Finally, the researcher examined the results of four, five, and six rotated factors for the final solution. Of the three solutions, the five-factor solution yielded the most clarity and resulted in at least five Q sorts significantly loaded on each factor. Brown (1980) indicated that having more than two defining Q sorts for each factor balanced with theoretical meaning results in a factor that is reliable and stable. Table 3 shows that a total of 32 Q sorts defined the five-factor solution. Of the 32 Q sorts, 29 significantly loaded on one of the factors, which are indicated by factor loading values ending with an X. Further, 13 Q sorts did not significantly load on any of the factors, and zero were confounded (significantly loaded on more than one factor).

Notably, the five-factor solution yielded two participants who were negatively loaded on the fifth factor resulting in a bipolar factor. Thus, the researcher described the final five-factor

solution as having six perspectives. One interpretation was made of each of the first four perspectives, followed by the interpretation of both the positive and negative perspectives of five-factor, which are essentially mirror images of one another. The researcher then began the interpretation process by studying the consensuses and distinguishing statements that are provided as a PQMethod output (James, 2011). It is the close attention to the interrelated clues provided by consensus and distinguishing statements, in conjunction with the crib sheets, that leads Q methodologists back to the viewpoint that each factor represents (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

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Table 3

*Factor Matrix With an X Indicating Defining Sorts*

		Loadings				
	Qsort	1	2	3	4	5
1	M86RIMI	0.4642X	-0.1401	0.0373	-0.0373	-0.1056
2	F86RIMI	-0.0039	-0.0560	0.3347	0.3600	0.5905X
3	M86RADF	0.5089	-0.3005	-0.2059	0.6332X	-0.0385
4	F86RAAI	0.3510X	0.0927	0.0153	-0.1833	0.0202
5	M82RABI	0.1362	0.0533	-0.2315	0.2684	0.2304
6	F99RIMI	0.7946X	-0.0363	0.1075	0.2251	-0.3242
7	F89RABI	0.4745	0.1057	0.5100	-0.9950	0.2042
8	F91RIHI	0.2003	-0.0176	0.1367	0.0067	-0.5051X
9	F88RAHI	0.4209X	0.1591	0.1258	0.0979	-0.1103
10	M89RIAI	0.5768	0.2208	-0.1434	0.5088	0.0858
11	M76RAHN	-0.0368	0.1019	-0.0878	0.6403X	-0.1169
12	F03RIAI	0.0368	0.1314	0.1778	-0.1399	0.5506X
13	F90RIBM	-0.1171	-0.3474	0.4777	0.3556	0.1905
14	F90RADI	0.3990	0.0399	0.1000	0.4126	-0.1156
15	F04RIMI	0.7136X	0.1111	-0.4210	0.2254	0.2488
16	F91RAMN	0.7639X	0.3323	0.0467	0.0433	0.0979
17	M76RIBI	-0.0090	0.2893	0.0232	0.0741	-0.5629X
18	F85RIAI	-0.1860	0.5316	0.0479	0.2921	-0.0988
19	F70RAHI	0.1328	0.1423	0.1122	0.5715X	-0.2895
20	F94RIO	0.1018	0.7001X	0.0605	-0.0175	0.1030
21	M86RIDN	0.2338	-0.2492	0.5620X	0.2053	0.0088
22	M90RAAF	0.1290	0.5600X	-0.2502	-0.2754	0.2805
23	M86RIAN	0.0773	0.2781	0.3877	0.4516	0.0584
24	M86RIAI	0.5017	0.3593X	0.2524	0.2810	-0.1472
25	F77RABN	0.4243	0.2337	0.0365	0.4949X	0.0015
26	F88RABI	0.0176	0.1955	0.6404X	-0.3506	-0.0860
27	M74RADN	0.1132	0.3826	-0.0213	0.1063	-0.2587
28	F92RIBI	0.0703	0.5889	0.0683	0.5172	0.1277
29	M80RAMI	0.2439	0.1157X	0.4791X	0.0580	-0.0870
30	M87RIDM	0.6015X	-0.4841X	-0.1180	0.1118	0.0141
31	F71RAMI	-0.0491	-0.3565	0.5884	0.5446	-0.1423
32	M82RIHN	0.2306	-0.2241	0.0992	0.5608X	-0.0654
33	F89RIDM	-0.1096	0.0476	0.5659X	0.0684	0.4382
34	F83RAMM	0.1700	0.2590	-0.1351	-0.0172	0.4520X
35	M81RIBF	0.4521	0.4796	0.3284	0.1204	-0.1383

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36	M76RAHN	0.0201	-0.0012	0.0219	0.8296X	0.0934
37	F88RADN	0.1330	0.1570	0.1802	0.5697X	-0.2931
38	M88RABO	0.2929	0.0910	-0.1962	0.5018X	0.0547
39	F87RAMM	0.5325X	0.1780	0.0930	0.1746	0.3119
40	F88RABN	0.0252	0.4232	0.4378	0.1758	0.2436
41	F8RABO	0.0187	0.0385	0.3474X	-0.1247	0.2475
42	F85RAMF	0.4752X	-0.0506	0.3136	0.2168	0.3110
43	F86RIHI	0.5229X	-0.1424	-0.0795	0.1013	-0.0224

Additionally, Table 4 shows that the relationship between all factors was minimally correlated (0.2745 or less) with the exception of Factors 1 and 4, which were modestly correlated at 0.3987.

This adds further statistical validity for the decision to interpret the five-factor solution.

Table 4

*Correlation Between Factors*

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
1	1.0000	0.1874	0.2745	0.3987	0.0359
2	0.1874	1.0000	0.0444	0.1731	0.1220
3	0.2746	0.0444	1.0000	0.0593	-0.0460
4	0.3987	0.1731	0.0593	1.0000	0.0035
5	0.0359	0.1220	-0.0460	0.0036	1.0000

**Factor characteristics.** Table 5 illustrates the number of defining variables for each factor, their average reliability coefficients, composite reliability, and the standard error of scores as each related to how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. As could be gleaned from the table, Factors 1 and 4 have the most defining variables at 10 and 9, respectively. Reliability is a measure that indicates factor stability in as much as participants are likely to arrange them in a similar fashion during subsequent sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Consequently, the degree of error decreases as the factor reliability increases. The factor reliability is a high 0.800 for each of the factors. The



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composite reliability score for the five factors ranged from 0.952 – 0.976. These high coefficients indicate how distinct each factor array is from the next.

Table 5

*Factor Characteristics*

	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Number of Defining Variables	10	5	6	9	5
Average Reliability Coefficient	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800
Composite Reliability	0.976	0.952	0.96	0.973	0.952
Standard Error of Factor Scores	0.156	0.218	0.2	0.164	0.218

**Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher employed Q methodology to gather data to explore how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. In so doing, the researcher detailed the study’s methodology, described the history and essential concepts of Q methodology, as well as compared and contrasted it with R methodology. Further, the researcher described the appropriateness of Q methodology for the study, the participant selection process, the IRB approval process, and the data collection procedures. Lastly, the researcher detailed the statistical analysis of the data including factor extraction, factor rotation, and the examination of the factor characteristics that led to the decision to proceed with the five-factor solution.

## **Chapter 4: Interpretation**

The purpose of this study was to discover how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. The researcher hoped to reframe and reshape the traditional discourse surrounding African American alumni of urban high schools so that they might be included in urban high school improvement efforts. In so doing, the researcher utilized statistical and qualitative measures to narrow the participants' perspectives down to five factors, which entailed six perspectives because the fifth factor was bipolar. Thus, this chapter provided a comprehensive description and interpretation of the six perspectives, which were informed by postsort surveys and participant demographic information.

### **Data Interpretation**

In order to interpret and provide thematic representation of each perspective, the factors must be first statistically analyzed. Unlike factor interpretation in other applications that are assessed using factor loadings, Q methodology first requires researchers to obtain factor estimates using all Q sorts that significantly load on each factor (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). However, Q sorts that load significantly on more than one factor are said to be confounded and are typically not used to construct factor estimates (Watts & Stenner, 2012). To obtain factor estimates, factor weights must first be obtained following a three-step process. First, initial factor weights are obtained by dividing each factor loading by one minus each factor loading squared. Second, the reciprocal of the largest factor loading is obtained by dividing 1 by the highest factor loading. Third, the final factor weights are obtained by multiplying each factor loading by the reciprocal (established in the second step) of each factor loading.

Since some Q sorts are more associated with a particular perspective than are others, the calculation of factor weights, which permit the identification of the differing associations,

precede factor scoring (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). After the final factor weights are obtained, factor scores are derived by assigning rankings in the same manner that was used during the original sorting distribution grid (i.e., 9-points for a +4 - -4 distribution grid). Factor scores are then used to help determine the part that each statement plays towards constructing each factor (Khoshgooyanfrad, 2011). These rankings are then multiplied by the factor weights that were derived in the previous step to obtain weighted scores (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The final factor estimates are then obtained by summing the weighted scores across each item.

In Q methodology, however, the weighted scores do not permit the researcher to cross compare factors due to their likely being an unequal number of significantly loading Q sorts for each factor. To equalize or normalize the weighted scores in order to permit cross-factor comparison, *z* scores must be obtained (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Fortunately, the PQMethod 2.11 output provided factor estimates as well as *z* scores, thereby relieving the researcher of countless calculations.

The next step of data interpretation involves converting *z* scores into a single factor array (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Factor arrays symbolize the combined averages of Q sorts, thus, providing a conceptual representation of each factor (Woods, 2012). Shinebourne and Adams (2007) noted that “the Q-sorts of all participants who loaded significantly on a factor are merged to produce a single configuration which serves as a factor array, or factor exemplar, [which are] used as the basis for preparing narrative accounts of each factor and in factor interpretation” (p. 106). Table 6 provides an illustration of the factor arrays.

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Table 6

*Factor Arrays for Five Factors*

Item number and wording	Factor Arrays				
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
1 Participating in parent-teacher conferences	0	2	-1	-3	2
2 Accompanying student field trips	1	1	-4	-1	4
3 Serving on school community councils	-2	2	-1	-2	-1
4 Facilitating school ground enhancements	-4	2	-3	2	-3
5 Facilitating job shadowing opportunities	3	0	3	4	-3
6 Preparing parents to assist w/ homework	2	1	2	-3	3
7 Returning to be a teacher in former school	1	1	-2	-3	3
8 Organizing school visits of community members	2	-3	0	2	-2
9 Introducing positive elements of fraternities/sororities	-3	-2	-1	0	-3
10 Educating students and families on paying for college	2	-1	1	-1	-1
11 Assisting students with college entrance processes	4	-1	2	0	0
12 Staffing and supporting in-school support services	-1	3	-1	1	0
13 Facilitating parent-teacher connections through e-commun	-2	4	0	-2	1
14 Facilitating teen education workshops	0	2	3	-1	-2
15 Residing and being visible in the community	1	-3	-4	2	3
16 Enrolling your child in your former school	-1	-4	-4	-2	0
17 Providing financial support	3	-1	3	-1	-1
18 Teaching students the importance of professionalism	3	3	4	4	2
19 Supporting sporting events	-1	4	0	4	4
20 Publicizing and promoting positive school attributes	2	-2	0	3	3
21 Being active at school board meetings	-3	-2	1	0	1
22 Visiting students and families in their homes	-4	0	-3	-4	-4
23 Facilitating events that highlight school history	1	0	0	3	0
24 Serving as tutors	4	1	1	0	-1
25 Providing student prep for standardized exams	4	0	1	-2	-4
26 Facilitating after school career training for parents	-1	0	-2	0	-4
27 Attending PTA meetings	-3	1	-1	-3	4
28 Supporting student led groups	0	0	2	1	0
29 Providing spiritual guidance	-4	-4	4	-4	1
30 Facilitating parenting workshops	-2	-2	2	-1	2
31 Serving as cultural intermediaries between parent/teacher	-2	-1	-2	1	1
32 Assisting teachers with integrating community culture	0	-3	-3	1	-2
33 Facilitating cultural/ethnic awareness events	-1	-1	-2	2	-1
34 Developing mentoring relationships	3	4	3	3	1
35 Connecting student with cultural organizations	0	-3	0	3	2

36	Connecting student/families with spiritual organizations	-3	-4	4	-4	-2
37	Connecting student/families with social support services	0	3	1	0	-3
38	Facilitating volunteer opportunities	1	3	-3	1	0

Next, the researcher placed the statements back into the original Q sort grids (see Appendix G) so that he could visualize what a typical Q sort resembled for participants who loaded highly on each factor (Shabila, Ahmed, & Yasin, 2014; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) stressed that creating Q sorts that are best representative of each factor assists with the concept of holism that Stephenson sought:

The creation of factor arrays for interpretation—which is necessary in principle—is nonetheless carried out as an acknowledgement of this thoroughgoing holism. It re-establishes the gestalt nature of the data and shouts loudly that the whole viewpoint is, and has always been, our primary concern.

The next step the researcher used to progress closer to a fuller appreciation of each factor’s viewpoint was the creation of crib sheets (see Appendix H) from the previously assembled factor arrays. Watts and Stenner (2012) identified the production of crib sheets as a method that encourages researchers to engage each item in the factor array. Further, the authors proclaimed that crib sheets provide a quick and effective method of identifying statements that make the most profound and important contributions to a given factor. Following Watts’ and Stenner’s (2012) suggestion, the researcher began producing a crib sheet for the first factor by making a pass through its factor array and extracting items ranked at +4 as well as those ranked at -4. Secondly, the author extracted items ranked higher in the first factor than in each of the other factors. Lastly, the researcher extracted items ranked lower in the first factor than in all others. Finally, the researcher compiled crib sheets in the same manner for each of the other five factors.

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As a result of examining the +4s, +3s, and +2s, the researcher finally began to identify the dominant view of each factor. To understand the clusters of perspectives more clearly, however, the researcher named them according to their developing theme (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Subsequently, the five clusters of perspectives offered a starting point for the researcher to understand the subjective and intersubjective constructions of each factor (Jeffares & Skelcher, 2011). The perspectives were (1) College Preparation, (2) Relationship Building, (3) Spirituality, (4) Personal Efficacy, and (5) Visibility.

**Factor 1: College preparation.** The *College Preparation* perspective accounted for the largest explained variance at 19% and was defined by participants 1, 4, 9, 15, 16, 30, 39, 42, and 43. The results revealed that seven out of 10 of the alumni who held the College Preparation perspective were female, eight out of 10 lived within 15 miles of their former schools, and seven of the 10 graduated in the decade of the 1980s. Demographic data for the participants that loaded on Factor 1 is provided in Table 7.

Table 7

*Demographic Information of Participants Loading on Factor 1*

Sort ID	Sex	School graduated	Year grad	Distance from school in miles	Education level	Participation level at former school	Occupation
1	M	Ribault	1986	10	Masters	Infrequent	Civil Service
4	F	Raines	1989	12	Associates	Infrequent	Pastor
6	F	Ribault	1999	15	Masters	Infrequent	Quality Analyst
9	F	Raines	1988	45	Hi. school	Infrequent	Logistics Manag.
15	F	Ribault	2004	2	Masters	Infrequent	Sub-teacher
16	F	Raines	1991	15	Masters	Never	Finance Manag.
30	M	Ribault	1987	5	Doctorate	Moderately	Program Manager
39	F	Raines	1987	6	Masters	Moderately	Entrepreneur
42	F	Raines	1985	400	Masters	Frequent	Teacher/Middle
43	M	Ribault	1986	13	Hi. school	Infrequent	Executive Chef

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It was clear that the primary view of these participants was assisting students in continuing their education after high school. The participants having this view were notable by their desire to assist students with college entrance requirements (11: +4), serve as tutors (24:+4), and provide students with standardized exam preparation (25: +4). Participants 15 and 22 are employed as teachers. Additionally, participants who displayed the College Preparation perspective believed that organizing school visits of community members (8: +2), educating students and families on paying for college (10 +2), and providing financial support (17: +3) were important in the overall spirit of College Preparation.

The level of education achieved by these alumni might have influenced their strong views concerning attending college as well as their ability to provide financial support. As can be gleaned from Table 7, 70% of these alumni obtained a graduated degree or higher. Additionally each of these alumni attended school in the late 1980s, which reflects a time that the literature suggested there was a demographic population shift that may have negatively impacted urban schools and communities. As a result, education attainment might be a compensating mechanism that was adopted to a greater extent by these individuals. Participant 6 commented on how important it was to expose students to what will be expected of them once they enter college so that they can better evaluate what they need to accomplish in order to be prepared once they get there.

Those having the College Preparation perspective, however, did not view close connections with students as an important contribution to their former schools. It was evident that this perspective was firmly against visiting students and families at their homes (22: -4) as well as providing spiritual guidance to them (29: -4). The opposition to visiting families and students at their homes was voiced in the postsort questions by Participants 4, 9, and 39 who

were concerned about alumni safety. The safety concern seemed to make perfect sense especially considering that all three participants were female who might be more concerned about safety than male participants. Further, participants 9, 15, 16, 39 commented on their belief that religion was a personal choice that students and their families should attend to on their own.

Further, participants having the College Preparation perspective were opposed to enhancing the appearance of the grounds of their former school (4: -4), which might be explained by 70% of these participants being female and desiring to be involved in more traditional feminine roles. Similarly, this perspective saw little value in supporting sporting events (19: -1) and being active at school board meetings (21: -3). The low ranking of these alumni concerning their involvement in sporting events or school board meetings could be related to their high educational attainment, which might suggest that they were high achieving introverted individuals. Perhaps they see themselves as experts in helping students prepare for college on a one-on-one basis, but they prefer to remain away from the crowds associated with sporting events and school board meetings.

The College Preparation perspective was a view that resonated with Ribault and Raines alumni. Several participants (6 and 42) described how successful they were at not only persevering through the college admission process themselves but also in assisting their children through the process. Participant 43 believed college preparation to be such an important perspective that she felt that high schools should have senior college academic signing days similar to what occurs for seniors who sign sports scholarships. Likewise, being members of fraternities or sororities appeared to have influenced the affinity towards the College Preparation perspective of participants 15, 42, and 43 who noted how those groups helped them better



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navigate college life. These individuals potentially loaded on the College Preparation perspective because fraternity and sorority life expanded their network of resources on campus.

Answers to postsurvey questions indicated that many alumni had little college preparation support in high school. Other alumni commented how they believed that their mediocre grades resulted in school administrators and teachers never even mentioning the possibility of college to them. Still others indicated that they had no idea that college was an option since none of their family members had ever attended (Participants 16 and 39). Yet other alumni admitted that even if they had had the desire to attend college, their parents certainly could not have afforded tuition cost. In general, those Ribault and Raines alumni who loaded on the College Preparation perspective were college graduates who felt that they could be especially helpful in not only motivating current students to attend college but also assisting them in every aspect of the college admissions process.

**Factor 2: Relationship building.** The *Relationship Building* perspective of this group was one that was firmly implanted in the notion that increasing the interaction between alumni and students and their families was an important contribution to their former schools. Participants 18, 20, 22, 27, 28, and 43, whose views accounted for 8% of the explained variance, defined the Relationship Building perspective. Of the six participants who belonged to this perspective, all lived within 20 miles of the school, and only two of the 10 continued their education beyond an associate's degree. Further, this group was split nearly evenly among Ribault versus Raines alumni and male versus female participants. Demographic data for the participants that loaded on Factor 2 is provided in Table 8.

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Table 8

*Demographic Information of Participants Loading on Factor 2*

Sort ID	Sex	School graduated	Year graduated	Distance from school in miles	Education level	Participation level at former school	Occupation
18	F	Ribault	1985	15	Associate	Infrequent	H-school Coach
20	F	Ribault	1994	15	Associate	Numerous	Dispatcher
22	M	Raines	1990	20	Associate	Frequent	Ed. Manager
27	M	Raines	1974	20	Doctorate	Never	Faculty Manager
28	F	Ribault	1992	5	Bachelors Hi.	Infrequent	Intake Specialist
43	M	Ribault	1986	13	school	Infrequent	Executive Chef

Most notably, participants having the Relationship Building perspective were interested in developing mentoring relationships with students (34: +4). In their response to postsort questions, Participants 27, 28, and 43 alluded to the concept that mentors better understand “the rules of the game” for being successful in their careers. Additionally, members holding this perspective lived closer to their former schools, a situation which allows a shorter commute in their interactions with students. They were also very interested in increasing parent-teacher connections through electronic media (13: +4) and supporting sporting events (19: +4). The value that these alumni placed on supporting sporting events might be attributed to the close bond that the Northwest Classic football game has fostered between graduates of all ages. Participant 20 noted that she believed that establishing a booster club for her former school’s football team might serve to encourage alumni involvement.

Other views that highlight the Relationship Building perspective were participants becoming involved in parent-teacher conferences (1: +2) as well as visiting students and families in their homes (22: 0). Although visiting students and families in their homes was valued at what

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would normally be considered neutral (22: 0), in this case it was noteworthy since the other four perspectives had it ranked either -4 or -3. A common element of members who significantly loaded on the Relationship Building perspective was their chosen profession. Of these six participants, all worked in a service-related industry, possibly accounting for their affinity to work closely with individuals. Additionally, Participants 27 and 28, who mentioned in their postsort responses that they became teenage parents, ranked staffing and supporting in-school support services (12: +3), and connecting students/families with social support services (37: +3) as important contributions.

Conversely, this perspective was categorically against being involved with students in any spiritual way as was stressed by their low ranking of providing spiritual guidance (16: -4) and connecting students and families with spiritual organizations (36: -4). These participants also frowned on assisting students with college entrance requirements (11: -1), which might be attributed to 66% of them not achieving advanced degrees. Oddly, individuals having the Relationship Building perspective did not place much value on contributing to their former schools by organizing school visits of community members (8: -3), publicizing and promoting positive school attributes (20: -2), or connecting students with cultural organizations (35: -3). One would expect that alumni who clustered most around the Relationship Building perspective would be most interested in ideals that foster interaction; however, this was not the case for these participants.

The Relationship Building perspective, which at 8% was the view that accounted for the second highest explained variance, appeared to be all about ensuring that students were aware that someone cared about them and their education. It was important to note that each member loading on this perspective resided within 20 miles of his or her former school. A notable Ribault

alumnus fondly reminisced how he developed a close relationship with a teacher who later “ignited a fire” in him for reading. Another Ribault alumnus, who has operated a beauty salon in the Ribault/Raines community for over a dozen years, remembered how the dean of girls was like a mother to her.

Furthermore, assisting students’ ability to see past the present was a concept that seemed to resonate with participants 27 and 43. They believed that their success was attributed to adults who enabled them to see themselves as career-oriented adults with families and community obligations. Still other alumni stressed how they as students were more likely to form relationships with school adults who they believed possessed a genuine connection for them. Relationship Building that exposes students to people, places, and opportunities that they may not ever have realized existed was a vital element identified by Participant 43. Sparking excitement about joining the military was what another alumnus remembered most about his relationship with a teacher. She described how she and her best friend entered the Air Force under the buddy system as a direct result of one of her teachers who was an Air Force reservist.

**Factor 3: Spirituality.** *Spirituality* was another perspective deemed as a critical component of participants’ contributions to their former school. Participants 21, 26, 29, 33, 41, and 44, whose views accounted for 6% of the explained variance, defined the Spirituality perspective. Each of these alumni graduated during the decade of the 1980s and was college educated; they were divided exactly evenly between Ribault and Raines alumni as well as male and female. The alumni having the Spirituality perspective on average lived slightly further from their former schools than did the previous two factors, and all six achieved a minimum of bachelor degrees. Also, none of the participants who loaded on the Spirituality perspective

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graduated during the previous decade or the 1970s. Demographic data for the participants that loaded on Factor 3 is provided in Table 9.

Table 9

*Demographic Information of Participants Loading on Factor 3*

Sort ID	Sex	School graduated	Year graduated	Distance from school in miles	Education level	Participation level of participation	Occupation
21	M	Ribault	1986	10	Doctorate	Never	Project Manager
26	F	Raines	1988	20	Bachelors	Infrequent	Business Serv.
29	M	Raines	1980	20	Masters	Infrequent	Civil Service
33	F	Ribault	1989	30	Doctorate	Moderately	Sales Manager
41	F	Raines	1984	26	Bachelors	Never	Safety Sup.
44	M	Ribault	1981	3	Bachelors	Moderately	Civil Service

The priority that participants placed on spirituality was noted by their emphasis on providing spiritual guidance to students (29: +4) as well as connecting students and their families with spiritual organizations (36: +4). This affirms the findings of this study’s literature review, which stressed how the Black community has historically used the church as a place of solace from the larger environment. Teaching students the importance of professionalism, which would have been expected from a group who are all college educated, was also a main concern of this perspective (18: +4). Additionally, these participants believed that facilitating teen education workshops (14: +2) and supporting student led groups (28: +2) could serve as important contributions to their former schools. Participants 29 and 44 affirmed this perspective when they attested in their postsort responses that serving in leadership roles in high school and college helped foster professionalism.

On the other hand, it was evident that these participants had little concern for being visible in the community (15: -4) as a form of contribution to their former school. This perspective was also decisively against both enrolling their children in their former schools (16: -4) and accompanying students on field trips (2: -4). These views did not fit well with their demographic information since several of these participants lived within 10 miles of their former schools. Further, cultural activities were not a huge concern of these individuals, which was indicated by their low ranking of facilitating cultural/ethnic awareness (33: -2). Equally, this perspective did not see the significance of facilitating volunteer opportunities as contributions to their former schools (38: -3). Perhaps alumni loading highly on this perspective might use spirituality as a buffer from environmental influences, thus reducing their reliance on cultural/ethical concerns.

It was apparent that the Spirituality perspective was not tied to a particular religion or even attending a physical church. Participants 21 and 29 noted that students could be directed towards other spiritual avenues, such as television ministry or online media. Being a minister himself, participant 33 affirmed participants' 21 and 29 perspectives with his own view that ministers should direct people toward the appropriate spiritual resources rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Further, the Spirituality perspective appeared to be another item in the toolbox that alumni could use to bolster students' propensity to do what is right. Participant 41 explained how her family's consistent emphasis on the belief of a higher power helped her overcome many of the temptations that were prevalent during her teenage years. Similarly, participants 21 and 41 expressed their belief that students who lack moral compasses are more vulnerable to stray in the wrong direction.

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Participant 26, who has remained in the Raines/Ribault community her entire life, noted that she can generally tell in the first few minutes of speaking with a student whether or not he or she has an internal belief in a higher power. Another alumnus felt that providing students with positive affirmations prior to each school day would be beneficial in helping them maintain a positive outlook on the school day. Still other alumni stressed the importance of the services and resources that spiritual organizations have that could be provided to students and their families to fill in the gap where the school is not equipped. Consequently, the Spirituality perspective also appeared to contain a social support theme. These participants seemed to be internally motivated to give back to less fortunate community members.

**Factor 4: Self-efficacy.** For the *Self-efficacy* perspective, participants were concerned with improving how students felt about themselves and their culture. Participants 3, 11, 19, 27, 32, 36, 37, 38, and 45, whose views accounted for 6% of the explained variance, defined the Self-efficacy perspective. This perspective was unique in that eight of the nine participants were Raines alumni. Additionally, five of the nine individuals having the Self-efficacy perspective graduated during the 1970s, while the remaining graduated during the 1980s. This was quite remarkable due to there being only eight 1970s graduates who participated in the study. Also notable was that all but two alumni having this perspective identified their involvement level with their former schools as infrequent or never. Demographic data for the participants that loaded on Factor 3 is provided in Table 10.

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Table 10

*Demographic Information of Participants Loading on Factor 4*

Sort ID	Sex	School graduated	Year graduated	Distance from school in miles	Education level	Participation level at former schools	Occupation
3	M	Raines	1987	10	Doctorate	Frequent	Nonprofit Exec.
11	M	Raines	1976	10	Hi. school	Never	Civil Service
19	F	Raines	1970	5	Hi. school	Infrequent	Nurse
25	F	Raines	1977	200	Bachelors	Never	Education
32	M	Ribault	1982	1	Hi. school	Never	Civil Service
36	M	Raines	1976	10	Hi. school	Never	Civil Service
37	F	Raines	1988	20	Doctorate	Never	Physician
38	M	Raines	1988	15	Bachelors	Numerous	Management
45	M	Raines	1987	2500	Associate	Never	Exec. Manager

Of most importance for the Self-efficacy perspective was teaching students the importance of professionalism (18: +4). Equally important, the alumni having this perspective placed a high value on facilitating job-shadowing opportunities (5: +4). However, they felt strongly that supporting sporting events was an important aspect to their potential contributions (19: +4). Keeping with the self-efficacy theme of this perspective was the value that participants placed on facilitating events that highlight their former schools' rich history (23: +3). Further, these participants were very interested in facilitating cultural opportunities as a means of improving their former schools. Specifically, they were interested in assisting teachers with integrating community culture in the classroom (32: +1), facilitating cultural/ethnic awareness events (33: +2), and connecting students with cultural organizations (35: +3). The importance of cultural and ethnic awareness emphasized by members holding this perspective would be



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expected of participants who attended Raines in the 1970s, which marked a time when Dr. Andrew Robinson was principal.

Spirituality as a means of assistance, on the other hand, appeared to be rejected by individuals having the Self-efficacy perspective. Apparently, they are against providing spiritual guidance (29: -4) or connecting students and families with spiritual organizations (36: -4). They also obviously saw little value in interacting with students and families. Furthermore, they were squarely against visiting students and their families in their homes (22: -4). This view might be attributed to the difference in age between current students and members holding the Self-efficacy perspectives since four of them were over 55 years old. To a lesser extent, these individuals did not want to become involved in parent-teacher conferences (1: -3); nor were they interested in helping parents to become better prepared to assist students with their homework (6: -3). Lastly, their perspectives fell short of the belief that returning to teach at their former schools was an important contribution (7: +3).

The Self-efficacy perspective, therefore, appeared to represent the primary means in which students could identify with a positive representative of themselves. Participant 3 noted that students attending Ribault and Raines consistently hear negative comments about their schools. If one lets the media tell the story, participant 3 noted, the school and its surrounding community have no positive aspects at all. Participant 25 noted how alumni have to be committed to the progress of current students by demonstrating to them what success looks like. Likewise, participant 45 stressed how alumni of Raines must own their history by assimilating freshmen students into the *ichaban* culture that had been fostered by Dr. Robinson over 50 years earlier. Meeting Joyce Morgan, a former prominent African American local news anchor, in high

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school fostered the self-efficacy needed by participant 38 to pursue a communications degree in college so that she could someday achieve her dream of becoming a newscaster as well.

Elements of the Self-efficacy perspective also appeared to focus on the ability of participants to foster professionalism among current students. Participant 19 described how she is especially adept at providing professional job interview training for high school students. Likewise, participant 25 noted how current students could benefit from her expertise by enhancing and expanding their ability to effectively function in diverse environments such as will be required in their future careers. Further, participant 32 stated that student self-efficacy could improve by inviting students to attend the meetings of different professional groups that are composed of prominent African Americans.

The Self-efficacy perspective accounted for 6% of the study's explained variance. It was apparent that Ribault and Raines alumni strongly believed that the development of self-efficacy was at the core of how they overcame many of the barriers that were prevalent in their environment during their high school years. Moreover, it was the Self-efficacy perspective that appeared to receive the most conjecture of all the perspectives that were addressed during the postsort surveys. Among other things, this suggested that the participants felt strongest about their potential to foster self-efficacy among current students, as compared to the other perspectives.

**Factor 5: Visibility (*students*).** The *Visibility (students)* perspective entailed a view mainly concerned with being seen on campus and in the surrounding community. Participants 2, 8, 12, 17, and 34, whose views accounted for 5% of the explained variance, defined the Visibility perspective. Uniquely, all five participants of the Visibility (*students*) perspective were female; all but one of the five were Ribault alumni; and all but one of the five identified their level of

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current participation with their former schools as infrequent or never. Demographic data for the participants who loaded on Factor 5 is provided in Table 11.

Table 11

*Demographic Information of Participants Loading on Factor 5*

Sort ID	Sex	School Graduated	Year Graduated	Distance from school in miles	Education Level	Current Participation level at former school	Occupation
2	F	Ribault	1986	5	Masters	Infrequent	Daycare Direct.
8	F	Ribault	1991	7	Hi. school	Infrequent	Customer Serv.
12	F	Ribault	2003	10	Associates	Infrequent	Para-profess.
16	F	Raines	1991	15	Masters	Never	Finance Manag
33	F	Ribault	1989	30	Doctorate	Moderately	Sales Manager

Apparently, the individuals holding this perspective felt that it was vital that alumni are present in some capacity on a regular basis both on and off their school campuses. Specifically, these participants felt that accompanying students on field trips was a vital contribution (2: +4). They also viewed the support of sporting events (19: +4) and attending Parent Teacher Association meetings (17: +4) as the most significant contributions that alumni could make to their former schools. These views might be attributed to Participants 2, 12, and 16 who stated in their post sort responses that they were concerned that Ribault and Raines had among the lowest participation of parents at Parent Teacher Association meetings.

To a lesser extent, this perspective included those who felt that residing in the communities of their former schools is important (15: +3) as is enrolling their child in their former school, which was ranked (16: 0) in a sea of highly negatively ranked factors. Likewise, returning to teach in their former schools fell in line with the Visibility (students) theme of this

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perspective. On a slightly different note, these individuals felt that assisting parents in being better able to work with their children on their homework was of value (6: +3).

Working closely with parents, however, did not appear to be valued by the Visibility (students) perspective. Participants holding this view ranked visiting students and families in their homes low (22: -4). Equally, they were opposed to facilitating after school career training for parents (26: -4). Oddly enough, this perspective was the only one that was clearly opposed to assisting students with their academic performance even though these participants contained fairly equal representation of college attainment. Specifically, they ranked providing preparation for students on standardized exams the lowest (25: -4). These participants also appeared to be mildly against serving as academic tutors (24: -1) or facilitating teen education workshops (14: -2). Additionally, this perspective devalued developing mentoring relationships (34: +1) and connecting students and families with social support services (37: -3). Participants 2, 12, and 33 pointed out that a lack of time hindered alumni presence in their former schools.

Participants who loaded on the Visibility (students) perspective viewed its importance in several contexts of students' lives. Accompanying students on educational field trips was valued by participant 2 who felt that alumni in this setting might help expose students to more diverse environments. Participant 8 stressed how she believed that the more students saw positive representations of their future selves, the more inclined they would be to model positive behaviors. Participant 12 valued the visibility of alumni as an important substitute for parents who did not or could not regularly attend Parent Teacher Association meetings. Additionally, participant 16 noted that the visibility of alumni might be a way of fostering more diverse learning opportunities that are sometimes not as robust in urban schools due to limited funding.

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She further recalled that while visiting her former school, she noticed that a particular classroom only had one specific set of science books that had to be shared between classes.

**Factor 5: Visibility (parents).** Because the *Visibility (student)* perspective was negatively loaded on by two participants, a mirror account of this perspective was provided, which from this point forward will be referred to as the *Visibility (parents)* perspective. Participants who clustered around the *Visibility (parents)* perspective appeared to believe that it was important not only to be visible to students but also to be visible to students' parents. This was apparent from their ranking at the top of the scale both visiting students and their families at their homes (22: +4) and facilitating after school career training for parents (26: +4). Perhaps these individuals viewed visibility through the lens of the parent's eyes versus those of the students. Another element that might have had an impact on their view is that 90% of these alumni viewed their current involvement with their former schools as infrequent or never. Perhaps this group of participants believed that the biggest impact that they could make on their former schools is not on campus but in the home lives of students and their families. Potentially even more impactful on the *Visibility (parents)* perspective might have been that all five participants were female. This group also viewed as essential providing students with preparation on standardized exams (25: +4). This view might stem from the increased importance that females place on education over males, which is in line with the national trend that indicates females slightly edge out men in college enrollments.

Conversely, alumni who had the *Visibility (parents)* perspective did not value interactions with students without the parents. They ranked accompanying students on field trips very low (2: -4). They were also firmly against supporting sporting events (19: -4), which could be attributed to the larger number of males than females who are typically active in sports. Surprisingly,

however, participants having the Visibility (parents) perspective did not find it beneficial to be visible at Parent Teacher Association meetings (17: -4). Conceivably, while in high school, these participants were positively impacted more by their parents than they were by school personnel. There is also a possibility that participants who clustered around the Visibility (parents) perspective had negative experiences at Parent Teacher Association meetings or found that that they had little value.

It appeared that alumni loading on both Visibility perspectives (students and parents) mostly believed that their presence on campus, after school, and in the community would pay dividends on students' performance. A recurring theme of both Visibility perspectives was recognition of the importance of assuring that students had an example of how they would be expected to present themselves once they graduate and enter the real world. It was noted by several of them how few successful African Americans reside in their former neighborhoods unlike it was when many of them were students at Raines and Ribault. Another alumnus stated that he doubts if there is one student who actually knows where any of the teachers reside, which was completely opposite of his high school days when he could identify nearly all of his teachers' houses.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher interpreted each of the six perspectives that were disclosed in Chapter 3. The six perspectives were a result of one of the fifth factor being bipolar thereby warranting the interpretation of a sixth perspective. The six perspectives were *College Preparation, Relationship Building, Spirituality, Self-efficacy, Visibility (students), and Visibility (parents)*. The interpretation of the six perspectives was aided by both postsort responses as well as participant demographic information.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This study explored how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. This study began with the premise that the rich legacies and cultural experiences of African American alumni of urban high schools could be harnessed in a holistic manner that could mitigate many of the challenges that urban high school students face. The researcher hoped to reframe and reshape the traditional discourse surrounding African American alumni of urban high schools so that they might be included in urban high school improvement efforts. The elements of existing theories and concepts used to inform the conceptual framework that guided this study were the funds of knowledge (Moll & Amanti, 2005), the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), the whole paradigm (Covey, 2004), the overlapping spheres influence (Epstein, 1995), and social capital (Dufur et al., 2008). The study addressed the following research question: How do African American alumni of urban high schools perceive that they can best contribute to their former schools? Chapter 5 detailed this study's findings, strengths, limitations, and implications for theory, implications for future research, and most importantly, implications for practical applications.

### **Discussion of Study**

The relevant context of this study was the poor performance of high schools located in urban areas across the nation compared to those in more suburban areas. This issue has been compounded by the fact that the majority of students who attend schools located in urban areas are African American and face outside factors that further limit their abilities (Anyon, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Warren, 2005). These students generally obtain lower grades, drop out more frequently, and fail to attain the level of education of their peers (Witherspoon et al., 1997). Darling-Hammond (2010) found that in 2005, the average Black or Hispanic twelfth grader was

reading at the same level as the average White eighth grader. Further, Few (2004) found that 43% of African American males have failed at least one grade by the time that they reached high school. These statistics paint a grim picture of the state of African American students as compared to their suburban counterparts.

Although there has been a myriad of strategies aimed at reversing the downward trend of urban schools, the disparity persists. As such, the deficit view of urban students has become prevalent among educators, community members, and lawmakers alike. As a counter to the deficit view, the researcher posited that African American alumni of urban high schools are uniquely suited to contribute to their former schools. The rich legacies and cultural experiences of African American alumni of urban high schools could be leveraged in a holistic manner that could mitigate many of the challenges that urban high schools students face. The researcher theorized that there are no other individuals who more closely identify with urban students and their cultures than African American alumni of urban high schools. African American alumni of urban high schools have walked the same halls, sat in the same classrooms, and navigated many of the same school and community challenges as current urban students. Accordingly, this study aimed to challenge existing theories and beliefs concerning the contributions that African urban high school alumni could make to their former schools.

Using Q methodology, the researcher identified the range of viewpoints held by African American alumni of urban high schools concerning how they perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. The research process proceeded in two stages. First, the researcher gathered all of the known relevant perspectives concerning the research topic. These data were collected from African American alumni of urban high schools through electronic mail in response to a questionnaire containing two prompts. Once all known perspectives were



collected and narrowed, 38 statements were found to be most representative of how African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools. These 38 statements formed the Q sample, which was then sorted electronically by 45 participants in the second stage of the study. Additionally, the 45 participants responded to postsort questions and demographic information that would later aid in the data interpretation phase.

The researcher then analyzed the data using the PQMethod 2.11 software (Schmolck, 2002) with Principal Component Analysis and varimax rotation. From the eight default factor solutions that were calculated using PQMethod, the researchers chose the five-factor solution because it provided the most clarity while accounting for the most variance and least communality. The five-factor solution was then rotated in an effort to maximize their saturation with participants' Q sorts. Finally, the researcher began the interpretation phase when he produced factor arrays that then permitted the creation crib sheets (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Subsequently, crib sheets were used to thematically interpret the five factors, which represented the perspectives held by the participants who most closely identified with them. The researcher, however, found that the fifth factor was bipolar, meaning that it included participants who represented two opposite views. Thus, the five factors were interpreted as having six perspectives. Those six perspectives were labeled *College Preparation*, *Relationship Building*, *Spirituality*, *Self-efficacy*, *Visibility (students)*, and *Visibility (parents)*.

The factor that accounted for the most explained variance was the *College Preparation* perspective, which was a particularly important finding since Darling-Hammond (2010) noted that only 46% of African Americans who did not continue to college attained full-time jobs. Also, Brewster (1994) found that the performance of students suffered when few role models

who reinforce the value of education surrounded them, which supports both the identification and mentoring concepts that were explored in this study's literature review. Most importantly, the College Preparation perspective confirmed a key element of this study's conceptual framework that African American alumni of urban high schools identify themselves as proximal counter measures to the negative environmental influences that were proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1994) in his Ecological Model. Ribault and Raines alumni perceived that their experiences with navigating the complexities of college enrollment, funding, and entrance testing better enables them to help prepare students for college. One alumna boasted how she made it through undergrad and graduate schools without a job and with almost no economic support from her parents. Another alumna described how she completed her degree even after becoming pregnant during junior year of college. These accounts of successful college completion despite experiencing atypical challenges underscored the importance of the contributions that Ribault and Raines alumni could make in helping to ensure that current students fully embrace the resiliency that is needed for success in college.

Viewing the College Preparation perspective through a social capital lens, one can easily imagine how African American alumni of Ribault and Raines could generate an increased interest in attending college. In fact, this is related to the central idea behind social capital: It exposes recipients to resources that they would not otherwise have access to, thereby enabling them to expand their possibilities. In the spirit of social capital, the College Preparation perspective provided Ribault and Raines alumni with a tool for establishing college enrollment as a standard or basis of norm (Dufur et al., 2008). This was particularly important to several alumni who felt that current students do not benefit as much as they did when they were students from receiving college enrollment advice. These alumni expressed their belief that teachers were

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more invested in their students' success when they were in school, which was demonstrated by consistent mentoring and coaching.

Moreover, the number of guidance counselors available to assist students with college preparation, only one per several hundred students, is insufficient, they believed, to provide individual College Preparation attention. Contrary to the small number of guidance counselors that are available, Ribault and Raines alumni who are familiar with the college entrance process range in the thousands. One alumna worked in higher education and indicated that her career provides her with unique insights into college acceptance that she believes would prove especially useful to current students. Potentially, college preparation, enrollment, and funding training could be offered on a regular basis by teams of alumni either during or after school hours throughout the school year.

The abundant community concept (McKnight & Block, 2012) was also affirmed by the College Preparation perspective. In countering the deficit view, McKnight and Block (2012) claimed that communities possessed the expert knowledge and experiences essential to improving their own socioeconomic status. The abundant community concept is especially appropriate for the neighborhoods surrounding Ribault and Raines, and there are no other individuals who are more knowledgeable of their rich histories than the alumni from those schools. This study revealed that Ribault and Raines alumni continue to value as well as cherish the histories of their former school's communities. Many of them shared their memories of their old neighborhoods during a time when they flourished with professionals who were both college educated and blue color workers. Other Ribault and Raines alumni stressed how important it is not to simply steer all current students towards college but also to have them consider skill training. Consequently, the alumni demonstrated that abundant communities do not exist only in

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the form of those that are saturated with college-educated individuals but also in communities that value their diversity and historical richness.

Further, the College Preparation perspectives revealed by Ribault and Raines alumni could be beneficial to students' parents as well. Brooks-Gunn et al. (1993) found that single parent homes, which the literature suggests are more prevalent in urban rather than suburban communities, may have been a barrier to college completion for many parents. The lack of college educations among urban parents has been noted as negatively impacting the relationship between parents, teachers, and administrators due to the subservient misperceptions that the latter have of the former (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Humpage, 1998; Izzo et al., 1999; Ramsay et al., 1993; Warren, 2011). In effect, the parents of urban high school students tend to lack what Dufur et al. (2013) referred to as *social closure*, which, they insisted, is needed for parents to interact effectively with teachers. Through the College Preparation perspective, there is not only the potential for urban high school students to attend college at a higher rate by gaining a better understanding of the application process and funding opportunities; there is also the possibility that parents might be inspired to continue their college education as well. An increase in the number of parents pursuing higher education could prove to be a huge asset to the Ribault and Raines communities, which, according to the Florida Department of Health, have poverty rates exceeding 46% (Florida Department of Health Duval County, 2013). Imagine how empowering it would be if there were a significant increase in the number of parents that completed college degrees. The empowering effects of parents pursuing higher education might have a reciprocal effect on their students as well.

Additionally, the College Preparation perspective suggested that African American alumni of urban high schools placed substantial emphasis on the importance of college entrance

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as a means of countering the pipeline of African Americans who become involved in criminal activity. This was particularly noteworthy in light of the two-fold increase of African American males that entered the prison system during the 1990s (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The responses to postsort questions indicated that Ribault and Raines alumni were concerned that students encounter few adults outside of teachers and guidance counselors who consistently preach the importance of obtaining a college education. Potentially, Ribault and Raines alumni in partnership with the respective school principals could hold college prep rallies similar to pep rallies held prior to big football or basketball games.

Another viewpoint collectively held by African American alumni of urban high schools was the *Relationship Building* perspective. The key element of the Relationship Building perspective was increasing the interaction between students, families, and African American alumni of urban high schools. Conceptually, Dufur et al. (2008) stressed the importance of interactions that foster mutual trust, communication, and respect between individuals. This form of social capital leads to mutually beneficial relationships that link individuals to broader resources and enables them to better accomplish their goals (Kao, 2004; Putman, 2000). Ribault and Raines alumni expressed how relationships with key school administrators and faculty were a beacon of light during their otherwise confusing high school years. One alumna noted how the Dean of Girls at Ribault, who resided in the surrounding community, was almost like a mother to her while another alumnus stated how his basketball coach, who was also his psychology teacher, ensured that he did not stray down the wrong path. The Relationship Building perspective, therefore, puts forward Ribault and Raines alumni as caring adults who can be trusted in the same manner that key administrators and faculty members were trusted back when alumni were students.

The Relationship Building perspective also confirmed the importance of the findings of the phenomenological study conducted by Drewry et al. (2010) that indicated “[none] of the students in the study had relationships with members of their families or communities who had the capacity to assist them in their endeavors to complete school” (p. 515). If urban students are less likely than suburban students to form relationships with family members, then they may be more likely to confide in those who may not have their best interest at heart and consequently steer them in the wrong direction. If this is the case, then relationships formed at Ribault and Raines might prove particularly crucial during the context of the increased gang violence that was occurring during this study. Additionally, the Relationship Building perspective stands to reverse the negative trend of African American men who experience disproportionately high rates of unemployment, incarceration, poor health, and poor quality of life (Daneen & Cateneese, 2011; Dwarte, 2014; Gibbs, 1998; Lipps, 2008; Schott Foundation, 2000).

Even more, the Relationship Building perspective of African American alumni of urban high schools also affirmed elements of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model (1994). In his model, Bronfenbrenner spoke of complex interactions that occur regularly and frequently as a means of bolstering one’s abilities. Similarly, African American alumni of urban high schools referenced their ability to expand the boundaries of their relationships outside of the school walls and into students’ homes. Interactions occurring in the immediate environment of students were said to involve the microsystem by Bronfenbrenner, which for students of Ribault and Raines encompass both the home, community, and school. Thus, Ribault and Raines alumni might be beneficial in improving the commonality of positive messaging that current students experience between each of those environments.

Similarly, the overlapping spheres of influence concept (Epstein, 1995) was a critical piece of this study's conceptual framework that added validity to how Ribault and Raines alumni perceived that they could contribute to their former schools. Relationship building does not have to be fostered by alumni only between themselves and current students. It can also be fostered by alumni through their networks with individuals outside of the Raines and Ribault community. Postsurvey responses indicated that several alumni felt their ability to foster relationships between students and prominent persons outside of the Raines and Ribault community was an important contribution. The Relationship Building perspective can, therefore, expand the potential that current students will be exposed to individuals from diverse backgrounds. Exposing current students to a diverse range of influential individuals outside of the Ribault and Raines communities might also serve as a valuable learning tool that enforces the importance of networking opportunities, thereby increasing the potential that they will develop additional mentoring relationships.

This study also revealed that African American alumni of urban high schools collectively clustered around the *Spirituality* perspective. The alumni having this perspective were most interested in providing spiritual guidance to students as well as connecting students' families with spiritual organizations. As a component of this study's conceptual framework, Spirituality was viewed by Covey (2004) as the essential element of the Whole Person paradigm. Among the four elements—the mind, body heart and spirit, Covey (2004) asserted that the spirit serves as a source of guidance for the other three. Without spiritual intelligence, Covey (2004) suggested, humans might lack the moral compass to guide their minds, bodies, and hearts in the proper direction. It was gleaned from postsort responses that alumni believed that students make bad decisions and get involved with the wrong behaviors in part because they lack the belief in a

higher power. One Ribault alumna suggested that she would like to provide students with affirmations or positive thoughts that would be announced over the loudspeaker each morning. However, she clearly understood that the increased emphasis on the separation of church and state might make this concept difficult to implement.

The Spirituality perspective was also strengthened by the reliance that African Americans have historically placed on the Black church and religion. McCray, Grant, and Beachum (2010) explained how religion served as an anchor point as well as a place of refuge through the Black church in historically segregated communities. Religion and spirituality, however, are separate constructs with the former characterized by a system of beliefs and practices and the latter distinguished by the belief in a higher power (Holt et al., 2012). Several Ribault and Raines alumni stressed the importance of helping students to identify an inner moral guide rather than to connect them with a church organization that embodied the separation of the two constructs. Consequently, the participants believed that the Spirituality perspective could potentially act as a buffer for students that will aide them in navigating the complexities of high school and the distractions associated with being a young adult.

Lastly, the alumni's ability to assist with social support services was confirmed by the Spirituality perspective. This holistic approach signified that Ribault and Raines alumni understood the difficulties that many urban students face when they do not have the basic medical care, meals, or clothes that more affluent families take for granted. Berliner (2009) noted how difficult it would be if he had to attend school with a toothache or could not read the dry erase board due to not having the proper eyeglasses to wear. To counter such debilitating constraints, one alumnus asserted that through his church he had access to a variety of children's size clothes that he could provide students; another participant who was a pastor described how



his organization targets specific homes to provide complete social support services for entire families. This type of social support service magnifies the abundant community concept that was an integral part of this study's conceptual framework.

Further, African American alumni of urban high schools collectively clustered around the *Self-efficacy* perspective. One way that self-efficacy is bolstered in adolescents is through consistent interactions with adult role models with whom they identify and who exemplify their potential. For example, Altschul et al. (2006) found that African American urban high school students who felt good about their group and had positive connections to it were found to perform better in high school as was measured by time spent on homework, days present in school, and GPA. Additionally, Lareau (2003) linked reading achievement to the influence of community background while Townsend and Belgrave (2000) identified increased school efficacy as contributors to students' academic interest and motivation to succeed. Roderick Jackson, a 1986 Ribault graduate and standout football player, remembered how strong Black males like Coach Austin, Coach Lee, and Coach Wilkes inspired him to become a teacher/coach (R. Jackson, personal communication, June 15, 2014). The Self-efficacy perspective can then be thought of as a confidence builder that is more likely to be effective when it is fostered by individuals with whom current Ribault and Raines students might naturally assimilate, such as African American alumni.

Like each of the other perspectives, the Self-efficacy perspective can also be viewed through a social capital lens. Self-efficacy is bolstered when individuals have confidence in their abilities as well as believe that they have the potential to achieve (Bandura, 1977). Current students will undoubtedly experience an increase in self-efficacy through the identification that they will have with alumni. Ashforth and Mael (1989) and Tajfel and Turner (1986) purported

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that social identity helps individuals conceive of themselves and their behavior in relation to their environment. Ribault and Raines alumni could stress how they sat in the same classrooms, walked the same halls, and participated in the same extracurricular activities as do current students. Moreover, many of Ribault and Raines alumni responded to postsort questions by suggesting that students can easily see themselves in them through their completion of college and success in their diverse career fields such as college professors, chefs, engineers, business owners, teachers, attorneys, civil servants, and medical doctors. Clarence Wingate, a 1983 graduate of Ribault, noted how he never saw himself becoming a firefighter partly because he had rarely seen a Black firefighter (C. Wingate, personal communication, November 11, 2014). Thus, African American alumni of urban high schools could potentially serve as a crucial component of self-efficacy by enabling students to see future versions of them.

The *Visibility* perspective was another important contribution identified by Ribault and Raines alumni. For children of more affluent racial groups, the visibility of their parents is not as much as an issue. More affluent students have a larger percentage of parents who are college educated, are more often reared in two parent homes, and have parents with careers that afford them more opportunities to be available to visit their children's schools. The Visibility perspective was supported by the study of Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006), who asserted that positive school behaviors, such as attendance, homework, and attentiveness, are associated with the presence of caring adults at school and at home. Likewise, Johns (2001) found that supportive and caring adults are especially important to the success of ethnically diverse children. Ribault and Raines alumni stressed that teachers were very visible in their communities because they resided there, often only blocks apart from their own homes. One alumnus even reminisced how several of his teachers would routinely stop by his home to update his parents

and older siblings, whom they had previously taught, on his progress in school. These findings suggested that the increased visibility of Ribault and Raines alumni not only inside the school walls but also in their communities might compensate for the lack of teachers that currently reside in there.

Finally, if indeed urban parents are not as visibly involved at their children's schools and the lack of involvement negatively affects student performance, as the literature suggested, then the Visibility perspective of Ribault and Raines alumni is an important one. The Visibility perspective reinforces the abundant community concept of Moll et al. (1992), which suggested that African American alumni of urban high schools have a consortium of historically accumulated and culturally developed knowledge and experiences. The visibility of these culturally rich individuals who have successfully navigated the educational systems at Ribault and Raines could serve to counter the negative perceptions that Beachum, Denthith, McCray, and Boyle (2008) claimed that educators often have of urban culture. Rudy Jamison stressed his belief that the mere presence of African American alumni during and after school hours might challenge the negative perceptions that some teachers and administrators have of Black culture (R. Jamison, personal communication, January 21, 2015). Hence, the Visibility perspective of African American alumni of urban high schools could potentially close the cultural gap that exists between students and educators in schools where the availability of parents representative of the dominant culture might be at a premium.

### **Strengths**

One of the primary strengths of this study was its timeliness as well as its timelessness. Arguably, the challenges that urban schools students continually face are as difficult as they have ever been in history. The recent recession has left many families struggling to obtain basic

necessities, often foregoing essentials such as regular meals and doctor visits that help to ensure the health of their children. Parents work multiple jobs to make ends meet, leaving little time to devote to their child's educational needs. Moreover, this difficult economic climate inevitably suggests to students that it is more profitable to become involved in crime than complete high school and pursue college degrees.

Also, this study was conducted at an opportune time to directly challenge the stereotypical view of African American communities. With its abundant community theme, this study illuminated the potential that Raines and Ribault alumni have to improve their own schools and communities. The researcher argued that no other individuals have the capacity to positively impact the performance of urban high schools more effectively than the alumni of those schools. Ribault and Raines alumni's historically accumulated and culturally developed knowledge and experiences are immeasurable. The potential contributions of Ribault and Raines alumni could prove to be especially beneficial to current students in light of the escalation in gang activity that had become particularly prevalent within the Northwest Quadrant of Jacksonville.

Further, making this study even timelier is the growing momentum led by a group of committed alumni, headed by Casey L. Barnum, who is a 1988 graduate of Raines High School. This group of alumni, under the auspices of Still Alumni, Inc., has united in an effort to improve urban schools. The goal of Still Alumni, Inc. is to enrich students' learning potentials via innovative technology, culturally relevant intervention, and strategic career mentoring initiatives that foster student engagement. Using their vast database, Still Alumni Inc. aims to match alumni having special knowledge and expertise with students who are in need (C. E. Barnum, personal communication, March 7, 2015). This database of remarkable alumni will provide a ready pool that school administrators and teachers can call on to mentor both in person and via an electronic

platform. This novel approach to addressing the needs of students will potentially empower alumni to practically apply each of the six perspectives identified in this study: *College Preparation, Relationship Building, Spirituality, Self-efficacy, Visibility (students), and Visibility (parents)*.

The results of this study are timely in that Raines High School is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year reunion during the month that this study was concluding. Hundreds of alumni who attended Raines from as far back as its inaugural year in 1965 ascended on its campus and surrounding venues to commemorate the impact that Dr. Andrew Robinson and his faculty and staff has had on their lives. These alumni, who are from all walks of life, have spread their wings and impacted the communities across the nation. They are also recommitting themselves to providing positive contributions to their former schools. As a result, this study has the potential to serve as a rallying cry to further galvanize African American alumni Ribault and Raines towards a concerted effort for school improvement.

### **Limitations**

Of course, there are limitations of this study that are inevitably engrained in Q methodology. Most notably, it was evident from the postsort responses that this study's participants sorted the Q sample from slightly different contexts. Some participants sorted statements from a first person account of how they themselves could best contribute to their former schools while others sorted according to how they perceived in general that alumni could best contribute to their former schools. The different contexts, consequently, rendered the researcher incapable of separating the findings of a personal perspective from those of a general perspective. For instance, several participants indicated that they could not attend Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings because they lived hundreds of miles from their former schools

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whereas other participants who responded to this item addressed it from a general perspective of whether they believed attending PTA meetings would be an important contribution.

Also, due to the large number of participants that are typically used in survey studies, those who are more familiar with quantitative methods might argue that this study's number of 45 participants lack statistical reliability resulting in its not being generalizable to the larger populations. However, by virtue of its very nature, the findings of a study employing Q methodology are not generalizable. Q methodological studies are designed to identify the existence of clusters of perspectives in a given population rather than make statistical claims concerning the distribution of clusters (Brown, 1996). Thus, a well-constructed Q sample containing a wide range of opinions will reveal the relevant clusters that can expand the discourse surrounding a particular topic (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Accordingly, these findings can be used only to expand or challenge existing discourse surrounding the population of Ribault and Raines alumni. Additionally, other researchers can utilize these findings as a starting point for identifying the perspectives that are most likely held and are unique among African American alumni of similar urban high schools.

Lastly, because only seven of the 45 participants graduated prior to 1980 and only two graduated after the year 2000, there was the potential that perspectives were missed. Thus, the researcher did not sufficiently tap into the potential unique perspectives that African American alumni of urban high schools of Ribault and Raines possessed during the eras before 1980 and after 2000. Further, the researcher collected data only from African American alumni of Ribault and Raines who were members of the Facebook group *Raines/Ribault Alumni Association*. As a result, there was opportunity that perspectives were missed from the thousands of African American Ribault and Raines alumni who were not associated with this organization.

### **Implications for Theory**

This study found that African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools through *College Preparation, Relationship Building, Spirituality, Self-efficacy, Visibility-student, and Visibility-parents*. These perspectives require alumni to be intimately involved in the proximal environments of students. Epstein (1995) described the proximal environments of students as being their homes, communities, and schools. The home, community, and school, Epstein (1995) asserted, overlap one another thereby requiring consistency and similar messaging among the three contexts. The findings of this study, however, imply that the overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 1995) model could be viewed in a manner that distinguishes the people rather than the context as equally important. Thus, a new direction for the overlapping spheres of influence might involve consistency and similar messaging between parents/care-givers, community members (i.e. African American alumni of urban high schools), and school teachers/administrators. Viewing the overlapping spheres of influence from a people rather than contextual perspective further highlights the potential of the social capital that African American alumni of urban high schools inherently possess—their funds of knowledge.

### **Implications for Future Research**

While this study's findings suggested that African American alumni of urban high schools embody the abundant community concept (McKnight & Block, 2012), as well as the funds of knowledge concept (Moll & Amanti, 2004), this dissertation begs that further research is conducted to explore the specific measures that can be taken in order to leverage the potential of alumni. Also, further research is needed to identify strategies school administrators and teachers can employ in order to enlist the assistance of African American alumni of urban high

schools so that their knowledge and skills can be easily and conveniently matched with students' needs. On the opposite side of the coin, these findings suggest an exploration into what urban high schools students believe that alumni can best contribute to their performance. What relationship building barriers do students believe will exist between African American alumni and themselves? These findings also suggest that further research is needed to identify specific strategies designed to galvanize African American alumni of urban high schools. Even more, how do African American alumni associations leverage the potential of their members for school improvement?

Further, the engagement of community members has yet to be directly linked to student improvement on standardized tests (Glickman & Scally, 2008; Shirley, 2009). Therefore, the question remains: Should the contributions of alumni be considered failures when there is not a corresponding improvement in standardized test scores? If not, how can researchers legitimately measure how well community members' contributions are working? Perhaps further research might be conducted to explore how approaches that are more holistic such as portfolios might be employed to gauge how well student performance improves as a result of the contributions of African American alumni of urban high schools. Perhaps research could even be conducted to explore if schools should even be concerned about performance measures that indicate the impact of alumni.

Lastly, now that research has shown that these perspectives exist, how much are they informed by the setting? Were the perspectives that were revealed by African American alumni of Ribault and Raines unique to urban high schools, or would rural high school alumni reveal similar perspectives? What influence does ethnicity have on the perspectives? Would alumni from schools predominantly populated by Latino, European, or Haitian communities cluster



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around similar perspectives that were revealed by the participants of this study? How often should the perspectives of African American alumni of urban high schools be studied? Will they transform over time in correlation with changes in laws, policies, social influences, or the transition in racial demographics that is occurring across the nation? Moreover, are there other groups whose perspectives have been invisible to the research community as well? Perhaps other groups that are influential within the school and community environments such as janitors, school bus drivers, or school crossing guards need to be examined for their unique insight into how they can contribute to their former schools.

### **Implications for Practical Use**

A study's practicality is probably its most important element. For this study, practical insights can be applied at the national, state, and local levels. Nationally, several *whole child* initiatives have recently been topics of discussion. Congress is considering a bipartisan bill that will increase the number of grant funded full-service schools across the nation. Proponents for reauthorization of the NCLB Act argue that its passage will improve the ability of states to direct monies where they are needed to address the full needs of the child, such as before and after school as well as summer enrichment programs (Crawford, 2011). Moreover, in an effort to promote the health and safety of students, the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child initiative has been established to promote the health and safety of students (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). These initiatives relate directly back to how African American alumni of urban high schools can apply their perceived contributions by bolstering self-efficacy through college preparation and relationship building, the reinforcement of spirituality, as well as alumni visibility in students' communities, homes, and schools.

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Statewide, Florida has recently transitioned away from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and adopted the even more controversial Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). Transition to the new standardized exam has been marred by technical difficulty resulting in nearly half of Florida's counties having to push back both their exam starting and completion dates (K. A. Ranch, personal communication, March 11, 2015). Both the FCAT and its replacement the FSA have been described as critical thinking exams that will better prepare Florida's students for college. If these exams are indeed designed to increase Florida students' critical thinking abilities so that they will be better prepared to be successful in college, then the College Preparation perspective of African American alumni of Ribault and Raines is particularly relevant.

Locally, the results of this study can be practically applied to two of the four central goals outlined in the strategic plan introduced by the district office in November 2012 (Duval County Public Schools, 2015). One goal listed in the District's strategic plan that relate directly to the potential contributions of Ribault and Raines is to to engage parents, caregivers, and the community. Several alumni expressed how their close ties to the Ribault and Raines community might assist them in breaking barriers in their attempt to form relationships with parents and caregivers. Even more important, having access to so much community, historical, and professional social capital makes Ribault and Raines alumni particularly relevant in assisting the District's cultivation of its Whole Child Initiative, which is an integral part of its strategic plan. Moreover, visibility in the schools, communities, and even homes of current students might assist the District in its attempts to envelop students in each of their proximal environments. There is also an opportunity for Ribault and Raines alumni, through their Self-efficacy perspective, to utilize their expertise to help develop parents at the proposed Parent Academies,

which are a part of District's strategic plan. Raines and Ribault alumni could assist parents in becoming better education advocates for their children, assist parents in becoming better able to help with their children's homework as well as provide parents with job training, readiness, and interview skills. Lastly, the Spirituality perspective also aligns with the goal to involve the faith-based community in efforts to improve students' performance. Several of participants advocated faith-based social services as assisting the District with morally grounded extracurricular activities for students.

Because the District office has experienced success in implementing a hybrid high school diploma that helps prepare students for the workforce as well as college, Ribault and Raines alumni through their diverse careers might provide invaluable expertise that can serve to sustain and bolster students' real-life' learning experience. Further, the cultural and historical experiences of Ribault and Raines alumni could prove to be vital contributors to the single-gender schools that have been established. Lastly, Ribault and Raines alumni College Preparation perspective also begs to be employed as an integral part of the District's goals to infuse a college-going culture into schools, heighten students' awareness of the importance of taking advanced placement courses and taking advantage of dual enrollment as well as benefiting from the expansion of technical programs.

One specific practical initiative resulting from this study is a proposed program that could be jointly established at Ribault and Raines that incorporates the completion of real world projects into mentoring relationships. The idea is to leverage the resources (i.e., social capital) of Ribault and Raines alumni who are also students at either the University of North Florida (UNF) or Florida State College of Jacksonville (FSCJ) through partnerships with the Duval County Public School District in a manner that will facilitate students' involvement in real life, hands-on

career training. The hands-on, real life projects will be completed by five person teams which will include two alumni who are in the same career field and three students who have interest in those same careers.

Mentoring teams will compete against one another with the top three being recognized and receiving awards for their accomplishments. The UNF and FSCJ students who will serve as mentors during their senior years will receive a grade for their projects, community service hours, and college credits. Among other criteria, the projects will be graded based on how well involved each of its members was, the applicability of their projects, as well as how valuable the mentoring experiences were rated by the alumni and students. These mentoring teams will support several of the findings of this study including the Relationship Building, Self-efficacy, and Visibility perspectives as well as the concepts of identification, mentoring, abundant community, and funds of knowledge.

### **Summary**

Although there has been some improvement, the performance of students attending urban schools continues to lag behind the performance of their counterparts located in more suburban areas. Many researchers have argued that school administrators and teachers alone do not have the capacity to accomplish the task of educating urban students (Anyon, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Warren, 2005). Instead, they advocated the combined efforts of parents, communities, and educators to provide a more holistic approach to education reform. Berliner (2009) also challenged the notion that urban school improvements can take place solely *within the four walls* of schools. The complex nature of improving urban schools requires a broader notion of responsibility that encompasses parents, community members, and educators.

Further, Steinberg et al. (1992) discovered that one of the most important determinants of a student's academic success is the involvement of the parents. Michael, Dittus, and Epstein (2007) found that school attendance and academic achievement were enhanced in schools where parents and community members were involved. However, this study's review of the literature revealed that single mothers who work several jobs and are consumed with making ends meet often head urban homes (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993). On their own, many urban parents lack the critical components of social capital such as a college education, expanded social networks, and a positive high school experience that will enhance children's academic success (Davies, 1987; Warren, 2005). Moreover, many researchers have argued that there is a paucity of positive role models in many urban communities. This deficit view rings an element of truth with the realization that urban neighborhoods are likely to have fewer professional adult community members than do suburban neighborhoods while having a disproportionately high number of blue-collar, underemployed, or unemployed community members. A local banker recalled how the Northwest Quadrant once had two walk-in theaters and one drive-in theater that, to her, signified a prosperous community (B. K. Hardy, personal communication, August 8, 2014). Consequently, the lack of socioeconomic prosperity might contribute to the failure of students and their community to view it as abundant. Since there is considerable evidence linking the performance of schools with their surrounding communities, it is logical to believe that one cannot substantially improve without the other.

Thus, this study presents a counterargument to the deficit perspective that has prevailed in much of the prior research concerning the plight of urban schools. Viewed through the lens of social capital, African American alumni of urban high schools inherently possess and are uniquely situated to address the factors affecting student performance that lie outside the

capabilities of administrators and teachers. One alumnus bragged that “Ribault and Raines students will respond to us because we are successful people who look and act like them because we once were them” (E. L. Washington, personal communication, March 4, 2015).

Furthermore, African American alumni of urban high schools continue to have a strong connection to the communities surrounding their former high schools as is exemplified by Tosha Haynes, a 1986 Ribault alumna, who has owned and operated a preschool facility for over 20 years, as well as by Charletta Green, a 1986 Ribault alumnus, who has owned and operated a beauty salon for more than 10 years. Their continued close community connections resonate with parents and teachers in ways that increase the chances of alumni being accepted as a school asset rather than a barrier (Glickman & Scally, 2008; Tolbert & Theobald, 2006). Stories like these from Tosha and Charletta help to assure the researcher that progress has been made towards reshaping and reframing how the public views Ribault and Raines alumni so that they might serve as centerpieces in future urban high school improvement efforts.

The graduates of these schools have rich legacies and successful careers that administrators, teachers, and parents should embrace to ensure that their schools have the resources available to reach the whole child and help each fulfill their potential. Tonyaa Weathersbee, who is herself a Raines alumna, eloquently described the strength that is embodied in graduates of Raines High School as individuals who “[show] us all what can happen when the high expectations we hold for ourselves are stronger than the negative stereotypes held by society” (Weathersbee, 2015). In the documentary *We Remember Raines*, each of the former educators, students, coaches, and administrators vividly recounted the positive educational environment that was fostered by their close knit school community. It is this researcher’s belief

that the exceptionally academically motivating environments that were depicted by these alumni need to be replicated in urban classrooms today.

Most importantly, this study offered a beginning point to dispel the deficit view that is typically associated with urban communities and schools. This study forwards the discourse surrounding the potential of African American alumni of urban schools and can be used to challenge the negativity that is often associated with urban communities. Countless positive events occur daily in the Northwest Quadrant; however, a few negative ones typically overshadow them (P. Cohen, personal communication, April 7, 2015). As a result, the negative discourse that levitates over urban communities can now be replaced with the ideal that African American alumni of urban high schools embody the social capital that is organic to their schools and communities.

This study provided seminal work that identified the range of contributions that African American alumni of urban high schools perceived that they could make to their former schools. The range of perspectives that African American alumni of urban high schools clustered around were *College Preparation*, *Relationship Building*, *Spirituality*, *Self-efficacy*, *Visibility (students)*, and *Visibility (parents)*. African American alumni of urban high schools who embody the abundant community concept (McKnight & Block, 2012) are well versed in their community's history, have access to communication networks, and understand the potential pitfalls that are prevalent in their community. They are responsive and are concerned with the life circumstances, family values, and cultural norms of the surrounding neighborhoods (Epstein, 1995).

This study concluded that African American alumni of urban schools perceived that they could best contribute to their former schools by providing social capital. The social capital that African American alumni of urban schools possess is unique to their culture and was derived

from their remarkable histories and legacies. These funds of knowledge, as Moll and Amanti (2005) described them, were the result of the alumni's lived experiences and were cultivated within their close-knit, intellectually and culturally connected communities. This study demonstrated that African American alumni of urban high schools continue to be invested in ensuring the well-being of their neighborhoods, businesses, and children, thereby exemplifying the concept social capital that often comes at a premium in urban environments. Consequently, the funds of knowledge that are possessed African American alumni of urban high schools form a unique and distinctive form of social capital that has not yet been sufficiently utilized. Moreover, current students are most likely to identify with and assimilate to these funds of knowledge that are unique to African American alumni. Therefore, it is this author's assertion that this study makes the successful argument that this distinctive form of social capital possessed by African American alumni of urban high schools is vital to urban education improvement efforts.





Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
1 UNF Drive  
Jacksonville, FL 32224-2665  
904-620-2455 FAX 904-620-2457  
Equal Opportunity/Equal Access/Affirmative Action Institution

## **MEMORANDUM**

UNF IRB Number: <u>668334-1</u> Exemption Date: <u>12-18-2014</u> Status Report Due Date: <u>12-18-2017</u> Processed on behalf of UNF's IRB <u>KLC</u>
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**DATE:** December 18, 2014

**TO:** Mr. Adrian Johnson

**VIA:** Dr. Chris Janson  
Leadership, School Counseling & Sports Management

**FROM:** Dr. Jennifer Wesely, Chairperson  
On behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board

**RE:** Declaration of Exempt Status for IRB#668334-1:  
"African American Alumni: Their Overlooked Potential to Improve Student Performance"

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Your project, "African American Alumni: Their Overlooked Potential to Improve Student Performance" was reviewed on behalf of the UNF Institutional Review Board and declared "Exempt" category 2. Based on the recently revised Standard Operating Procedures regarding exempt projects, the UNF IRB no longer reviews and approves exempt research according to the 45 CFR 46 regulations. Projects declared exempt review are only reviewed to the extent necessary to confirm exempt status.

Once data collection under the exempt status begins, the researchers agree to abide by these requirements:

- All investigators and co-investigators, or those who obtain informed consent, collect data, or have access to identifiable data are trained in the ethical principles and federal, state, and institutional policies governing human subjects research (please see the FAQs on UNF IRB CITI Training for more information).
- An informed consent process will be used, when necessary, to ensure that participants voluntarily consent to participate in the research and are provided with pertinent information such as identification of the activity as research; a description of the procedures, right to withdraw at any time, risks, and benefits; and contact information for the PI and IRB chair.
- Human subjects will be selected equitably so that the risks and benefits of research are justly distributed.
- The IRB will be informed as soon as practicable but no later than 3 business days from receipt of any complaints from participants regarding risks and benefits of the research.
- The IRB will be informed as soon as practicable but no later than 3 business days from receipt of the complaint of any information and unexpected or adverse events that would increase the risk to the

Your study was declared exempt effective 12/18/2014. Please submit an Exempt Status Report by 12/18/2017 if this project is still active at the end of three years. However, if the project is complete and you would like to close the project, please submit a Closing Report Form. This will remove the project from the group of projects subject to an audit. An investigator must close a project when the research no longer meets the definition of human subject research (e.g., the data are de-identified and the researcher does not have the ability to match data to participants) or data collection and analysis are complete. If the IRB has not received correspondence at the three-year anniversary, you will be reminded to submit an Exempt Status Report. If no Exempt Status Report is received from the Principal Investigator within 90 days of the status report due date listed above, then the IRB will close the research file. The closing report or exempt status report will need to be submitted as a new package in IRBNet.

All principal investigators, co-investigators, those who obtain informed consent, collect data, or have access to identifiable data must be CITI certified in the protection of human subjects. As you may know, **CITI Course Completion Reports are valid for 3 years**. Your completion report is valid through 10/30/2017 and Dr. Janson's completion report is valid through 4/10/2015. The CITI training for renewal will become available 90 days before your CITI training expires. Please renew your CITI training within that time period by following this link: <http://www.citiprogram.org/>. Dr. Janson will need to update his CITI training on his IRBNet User Profile after he has renewed his CITI training in 2015. Should you have questions regarding your project or any other IRB issues, please contact the research integrity unit of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs by emailing [IRB@unf.edu](mailto:IRB@unf.edu) or calling (904) 620-2455.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within UNF's records. All records shall be accessible for inspection and copying by authorized representatives of the department or agency at reasonable times and in a reasonable manner. A copy of this memo may also be sent to the dean and/or chair of your department.

UNF IRB Number: <u>668334-1</u> Exemption Date: <u>12-18-2014</u> Status Report Due Date: <u>12-18-2017</u> Processed on behalf of UNF's IRB <u>KLC</u>
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**Appendix B**

Concourse Prompts

As a result of your shared histories and similar backgrounds to current students at Raines or Ribault HS, how do you perceive you can contribute to your former school?

*(Please list and describe up to eight)*

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

In general, as a result of their shared histories and similar backgrounds to current students, how do African American alumni of urban high schools perceive they can contribute to their former schools?

*(Please list and describe up to eight – if different from those provided above)*

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

Demographic Information

Age	
Sex	
Race	
Occupation	
Year Graduated	
Zip Code of Residence	
Highest Level of Education Obtained	

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent Letter for Communication Concourse

My name is Adrian Johnson and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Florida. I am conducting dissertation research on how African American alumni of inner city high schools perceive their involvement can contribute to their former schools' success as a result of their shared histories and similar backgrounds to current students in those schools. I am requesting your participation in this research study.

The questionnaire is very brief and will only take about 20 minutes to complete. The information gained from your answers will be used to complete the communication concourse for a Q-study and ultimately contribute to the final dissertation research instrument, which you may also be asked to complete. Additionally, you will also be asked a series of brief questions about your background.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous. In compliance with IRB requirements and to insure data security, your answers will be stored on a secure UNF server and destroyed at the culmination of this research. No personal identifiers will be collected. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no foreseeable risks for your participation. One possible benefit from taking part in this research is the knowledge that you are adding to the body of research on how African American alumni of inner city high schools perceive their involvement can contribute to their former schools' success as a result of their shared histories and similar backgrounds to current students in those schools.

The University of North Florida, Institutional Review Board has approved this survey. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board Chairperson by calling 904.620.2498 or by emailing [irb@unf.edu](mailto:irb@unf.edu). Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at

or

Completion and return of the instrument implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research. Please print a copy of this form for your records or future reference.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Adrian D. Johnson  
Principal Researcher

## Appendix D

### Informed Consent Letter for Q sample

My name is Adrian Johnson and I am a University of North Florida (UNF) doctoral student. I am conducting a research on how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive they can contribute to their former schools. I am requesting your participation in this research study. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to sort a series of up to 45 statements each reflecting how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive they can contribute to their former schools. I estimate that this sorting process will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Your participation is voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous. In compliance with Institutional Review Board requirements and to insure data security, your answers will be stored on a secure UNF server and destroyed at the culmination of this study. No personal identifiers will be collected. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. There are no foreseeable risks for your participation. One possible benefit from taking part in this research is the knowledge that you are adding to the body of research on how African American alumni of urban high schools perceive they can contribute to their former schools.

The University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board has approved this survey. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board Chairperson by calling 904.620.2498 or by emailing [irb@unf.edu](mailto:irb@unf.edu). Should you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at [redacted]. Completion and return of the instrument implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research. Please print a copy of this form for your records or future reference.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.  
Sincerely,

Adrian D. Johnson  
Principal Researcher

## Appendix E

### Postsort Questionnaire

Please concisely describe how the statements you placed under the "+4" column would best contribute to your former school. Likewise, please describe why you believe the statements you placed below the "-4" column would contribute least to your former school.

**Finally, please answer the following questions regarding your background.**

Please select your race/ethnicity.

Please select your sex.

Please list the title of your current position.

Please list the year you graduated.

In terms of distance, how close do you currently live to your former high school?

What represents your level of education achieved?

How often were you involved with your former school over that last 12 months?

What is your current occupation?

Have any of your children attended (or currently attend) your former school?

Please indicate your current family income range.

Optional: Please list any statements that you believe should have been included, but were not?

**Appendix F**

Correlation Matrix Between Sorts

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	100	18	18	11	8	29	32	0	15	15	3	-17	-10	19	24
2	18	100	13	0	8	-8	30	-17	-1	27	20	30	49	-4	20
3	18	13	100	7	20	55	-1	-5	27	48	34	-12	10	34	49
4	11	0	7	100	-10	27	22	11	-8	16	6	15	-10	55	33
5	8	8	20	-10	100	-1	2	-25	21	28	2	15	-10	-7	9
6	29	-8	55	27	-1	100	30	31	49	51	16	-7	2	23	45
7	32	30	-1	22	2	30	100	10	37	10	2	4	14	16	31
8	0	-17	-5	11	-25	31	10	100	-18	14	19	-19	3	6	-6
9	15	-1	27	-8	21	49	37	-18	100	24	-6	-15	-1	14	28
10	15	27	48	16	28	51	10	14	24	100	30	-5	12	31	62
11	3	20	34	6	2	16	2	19	-6	30	100	-25	0	21	9
12	-17	30	-12	15	-15	-7	4	-19	-15	-5	-25	100	19	-7	10
13	-10	49	10	-10	-7	2	14	3	-1	12	0	19	100	23	5
14	19	-4	34	5	9	23	16	6	14	31	21	-7	23	100	28
15	24	20	49	33	15	45	31	-6	28	62	9	10	5	28	100
16	15	9	30	21	7	47	30	17	37	55	-8	11	-9	40	58
17	15	-10	3	-3	-20	23	2	9	23	3	10	-25	1	15	-15
18	-14	-8	-5	-9	12	-7	-8	4	4	16	8	1	-10	-2	-6
19	9	18	30	-8	20	30	9	13	28	35	30	-16	24	41	25
20	4	15	-13	21	-9	11	29	-19	26	8	15	28	-28	9	19
21	19	10	25	10	6	34	23	2	8	11	-5	23	50	30	23
22	2	-3	-20	-1	16	-15	5	-27	20	9	-21	7	-37	-14	8
23	17	27	12	6	0	15	22	-4	26	24	39	0	17	38	11
24	9	-9	36	22	-10	49	32	31	28	41	23	5	1	41	31
25	-10	3	55	10	19	40	12	16	35	48	21	-3	13	33	39
26	-8	3	-46	11	-23	-6	43	19	5	-17	-32	11	15	-9	-6
27	35	2	-2	-5	7	8	-19	7	7	33	12	-10	-13	12	25
28	-9	31	8	-7	32	12	8	4	5	48	28	11	17	32	31
29	41	17	7	28	-6	20	41	10	27	1	12	-15	15	23	8
30	33	-1	58	2	14	40	14	-3	20	27	-2	-19	-5	32	31
31	10	28	38	-11	-1	17	7	2	15	5	17	-11	50	28	-4
32	5	30	52	14	-7	48	13	21	12	38	49	-16	14	20	24
33	-17	-19	-4	16	2	12	6	12	20	-19	-5	-14	3	13	-29
34	-19	-5	8	10	-1	-1	26	-21	-1	16	7	29	-14	14	17
35	12	11	4	9	-9	36	35	34	9	44	17	9	-10	34	37
36	1	40	48	-15	12	12	12	5	8	10	40	62	-13	14	35

Running head: TAPPING INTO THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ALUMNI OF URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

37	-2	6	46	11	2	40	-4	20	2	41	27	4	18	21	36
38	16	-5	45	-6	55	23	5	-19	17	37	18	-15	6	39	33
39	12	26	20	26	11	23	26	36	0	49	6	13	7	32	39
40	-6	21	0	16	22	3	30	-29	24	8	11	4	-1	0	10
41	2	17	-21	5	10	0	9	-10	4	2	-9	12	-7	-16	11
42	34	30	26	-11	11	30	40	13	32	27	1	-15	18	26	35
43	26	6	37	13	22	28	20	10	18	31	2	10	-4	23	34
44	17	16	23	10	11	42	39	16	19	36	14	-10	21	28	34

	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
1	15	15	-14	9	4	19	2	17	9	-10	-8	35	-9	41	33
2	9	-10	-8	18	15	10	-3	27	-9	3	3	2	31	17	-1
3	30	3	-5	30	-13	25	-20	12	36	55	-46	-2	8	7	58
4	21	-3	-9	-8	21	10	-1	6	22	10	11	-5	-7	28	2
5	15	7	-20	12	20	-9	6	16	0	-10	19	-23	7	32	-6
6	47	23	-7	30	11	34	-15	15	49	40	-6	8	12	20	40
7	30	2	-8	9	29	23	5	22	32	12	43	-19	8	41	14
8	17	9	4	12	-19	2	-27	-4	31	16	19	7	4	10	-3
9	37	23	4	28	26	8	20	26	28	35	5	7	5	27	20
10	55	3	16	35	8	11	9	24	41	48	-17	33	48	1	27
11	-8	10	8	30	15	-5	-21	39	23	21	-32	12	28	12	-2
12	11	-25	1	-16	28	23	7	0	5	-3	11	-10	11	-15	-19
13	-9	1	-10	24	-28	50	-37	17	1	13	15	-13	17	15	-5
14	40	15	-2	41	9	30	-14	38	41	33	-9	12	32	23	32
15	58	-15	-6	25	19	23	8	11	31	39	-6	25	31	8	31
16	100	-3	-4	20	33	8	25	17	48	63	11	21	38	16	30
17	-3	100	14	29	32	-3	9	6	11	-5	2	27	7	14	-10
18	-4	14	100	6	17	-3	8	22	31	30	10	15	33	-6	-20
19	20	29	6	100	28	18	-30	14	6	30	9	30	61	17	-2
20	33	32	17	28	100	-17	25	31	14	8	11	15	40	14	-23
21	8	-3	-3	18	-17	100	-25	13	32	11	18	13	3	12	16
22	25	9	8	-30	25	-25	100	2	14	1	-9	26	10	-1	-22
23	17	6	22	14	31	13	2	100	36	31	3	20	31	39	-1
24	48	11	31	6	14	32	14	36	100	57	10	1	27	32	13
25	63	-5	30	30	8	11	1	31	57	100	-13	2	40	30	11
26	11	2	10	9	11	18	-9	3	10	-13	100	-2	14	8	-14
27	21	27	15	30	15	13	26	20	1	2	-2	100	30	12	-16
28	28	7	33	61	40	3	10	31	27	40	14	30	100	7	-24
29	16	14	-6	18	14	12	-1	39	32	30	8	12	7	100	-6
30	30	-10	-20	-2	-23	16	-22	-1	13	11	-14	-16	-24	-6	100
31	-6	7	3	23	-25	59	-41	44	20	25	3	3	-3	27	19



Running head: TAPPING INTO THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ALUMNI OF URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

32	12	-4	-5	36	-12	2	-32	27	6	33	-21	0	15	23	24
33	2	8	29	14	-4	26	-32	24	22	25	38	-8	0	23	-4
34	21	-13	16	-19	27	3	20	1	18	22	-1	-14	6	-4	4
35	52	13	20	19	36	10	10	28	58	20	30	27	41	16	13
36	8	11	-5	17	43	4	0	19	39	30	41	-27	-7	38	8
37	3	21	36	40	0	44	-18	21	49	29	1	22	39	-1	-5
38	20	-1	39	26	5	13	-7	23	33	40	-15	-9	37	-7	34
39	51	-12	8	-2	1	16	26	22	49	35	-2	5	24	25	27
40	9	7	26	1	24	19	34	29	30	25	14	0	23	41	-20
41	14	-41	9	-15	3	7	-13	24	-3	-3	18	4	13	10	15
42	37	2	3	40	2	34	0	2	24	26	17	8	19	30	22
43	30	-7	-17	17	-5	3	-4	12	13	24	8	-8	6	-4	31
44	39	12	4	26	4	49	-6	36	33	25	34	27	17	22	23

	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
1	10	5	-17	-19	12	1	-2	16	12	-6	2	34	26	17	5
2	28	30	-19	-5	11	40	6	-5	26	21	17	30	6	16	23
3	38	52	-4	8	4	48	46	45	20	0	-21	26	37	23	28
4	-11	14	16	10	9	-15	11	-6	26	16	5	-11	13	10	14
5	-1	-7	2	-1	-9	12	2	55	11	22	10	11	22	11	20
6	17	48	12	-1	36	12	40	23	23	3	0	30	28	42	17
7	7	13	6	26	35	5	-4	5	26	30	9	40	20	39	20
8	2	21	12	-21	34	8	20	-19	36	-29	-10	13	10	16	8
9	15	12	20	-1	9	10	2	17	0	24	4	32	18	19	8
10	5	38	-19	16	44	40	41	37	49	8	2	27	31	36	19
11	17	49	-5	7	17	62	27	18	6	11	-9	1	2	14	24
12	-11	-16	-14	29	9	-13	4	-15	13	4	12	-15	10	-10	2
13	50	14	3	-14	-10	14	18	6	7	-1	-7	18	-4	21	14
14	28	20	13	14	34	35	21	39	32	0	-16	26	23	28	9
15	-4	24	-29	17	37	8	36	33	39	10	11	35	34	34	23
16	-6	12	2	21	52	11	3	20	51	9	14	37	30	39	-4
17	7	-4	8	-13	13	-5	21	-1	-12	7	-41	2	-7	12	13
18	3	-5	29	16	20	17	36	39	8	26	9	3	-17	4	13
19	23	36	14	-19	19	43	40	26	-2	1	-15	40	17	26	17
20	-25	-12	-4	27	36	4	0	5	1	24	3	2	-5	4	12
21	59	2	26	3	10	0	44	13	16	19	7	34	3	49	16
22	-41	-32	-32	20	10	-19	-18	-7	26	34	-13	0	-4	-6	4
23	44	27	24	1	28	39	21	23	22	29	24	2	12	36	34
24	20	6	22	18	58	30	49	33	49	30	-3	24	13	33	28
25	25	33	25	22	20	41	29	40	35	25	-3	26	24	25	3
26	3	-21	38	-1	30	-27	1	-15	-2	14	18	17	8	34	4

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27	3	0	-8	-14	27	-7	22	-9	5	0	4	8	-8	27	0
28	-3	15	0	6	41	38	39	37	24	23	13	19	6	17	8
29	27	23	23	-4	16	8	-1	-7	25	41	10	30	-4	22	-2
30	19	24	-4	4	13	15	-5	34	27	-20	15	22	31	23	16
31	100	33	49	-25	4	47	39	12	0	22	9	22	-2	47	37
32	33	100	13	4	10	57	30	-2	19	13	5	24	20	26	20
33	49	13	100	-23	19	6	25	-1	-23	32	27	1	3	29	24
34	-25	4	-23	100	0	6	-13	8	24	19	-10	-2	-4	-2	3
35	4	10	19	0	100	16	39	12	35	26	22	27	7	15	43
36	47	57	6	6	16	100	30	30	25	19	-7	27	7	15	43
37	39	30	25	-13	39	30	100	29	15	19	-12	11	21	27	32
38	12	-2	-1	8	12	30	29	100	16	7	-6	17	24	24	18
39	0	19	-23	24	35	25	15	16	100	24	5	33	11	24	28
40	22	13	32	19	26	19	19	7	24	100	13	20	-8	38	19
41	9	5	27	-10	22	-7	-12	-6	5	13	100	-2	-20	16	23
42	22	24	1	-2	27	27	11	17	33	20	-2	100	24	49	20
43	-2	20	3	-4	21	7	21	24	11	-8	-20	24	100	22	0
44	47	26	29	-2	53	15	27	24	24	38	16	49	22	100	36

**Appendix G**

Exemplifying Q sort Grids

Factor 1

	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
4	21	3	19	35	38	10	34	24	
22	27	30	16	32	15	8	18	25	
29	36	31	26	1	7	20	5	11	
	9	13	12	37	2	6	17		
			33	14	23				
				28					

Factor 2

	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
29	32	21	11	25	24	4	38	19	
16	35	30	31	28	6	3	37	34	
36	15	20	33	23	2	1	18	13	
	8	9	17	22	27	14	12		
			10	26	7				
				5					

Factor 3

	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
2	32	33	27	13	24	6	17	29	
15	38	31	12	35	25	11	5	18	
16	4	26	9	23	10	30	34	36	
	22	7	1	20	37	28	14		
			3	8	21				
				19					

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Factor 4

	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
36	1	3	17	21	31	8	34	5	
29	6	16	10	37	28	15	20	18	
22	7	13	14	9	12	33	23	19	
	27	25	2	24	32	4	35		
			30	26	38				
				11					

Factor 5

	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
22	9	36	17	23	21	18	20	27	
25	4	32	3	12	31	30	15	2	
26	5	8	33	28	29	35	6	19	
	37	14	24	38	34	1	7		
			10	16	13				
				11					

## Appendix H

### Crib Sheets for Five Factors

#### Factor 1

---

##### **Items Ranked +4**

- 11 Assisting students with college entrance process
- 24 Serving as tutors
- 25 Providing students prep for standardized exams

##### **Items Ranked Higher in Factor 1 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 10 Educating students and families on paying for college
- 17 Providing financial support

##### **Items Ranked Lower in Factor 1 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 4 Facilitating school ground enhancements
- 19 Supporting sporting events
- 21 Being active at school board meetings

##### **Items Ranked at -4**

- 4 Facilitating school ground enhancements
  - 22 Visiting students and families in their homes
  - 29 Providing spiritual guidance
- 

#### Factor 2

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##### **Items Ranked +4**

- 13 Facilitating parent-teacher connections through electronic communication
- 19 Supporting sporting events
- 34 Developing mentoring relationships

##### **Items Ranked Higher in Factor 2 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 1 Participating in parent-teacher conferences
- 3 Serving on school community councils
- 12 Staffing and supporting in-school support services
- 22 Visiting students and families in their homes
- 37 Connecting student/families with social support services
- 38 Facilitating volunteer opportunities

##### **Items Ranked Lower in Factor 2 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 8 Organizing school visits of community members
- 11 Assisting students with college entrance processes
- 20 Publicizing and promoting positive school attributes
- 35 Connecting students with cultural organizations

**Items Ranked at -4**

- 16 Enrolling your child in your former school
  - 29 Providing spiritual guidance
  - 36 Connecting student/families with spiritual organizations
- 

Factor 3

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**Items Ranked +4**

- 18 Teaching students the importance of professionalism
- 29 Providing spiritual guidance
- 36 Connecting student/families with spiritual organizations

**Items Ranked Higher in Factor 3 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 14 Facilitating teen education workshops
- 28 Supporting student led groups

**Items Ranked Lower in Factor 3 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 33 Facilitating cultural/ethnic awareness events
- 38 Facilitating volunteer opportunities

**Items Ranked at -4**

- 2 Accompanying student field trips
  - 15 Residing and being visible in the community
  - Enrolling your child in your former school
- 

Factor 4

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**Items Ranked +4**

- 5 Facilitating job-shadowing opportunities
- 18 Teaching students the importance of professionalism
- Supporting sporting events

**Items Ranked Higher in Factor 4 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 9 Introducing positive elements of fraternities/sororities
- 23 Facilitating events that highlight school history
- 32 Assisting teachers with integrating community culture in the classroom
- 33 Facilitating cultural/ethnic awareness events
- 35 Connecting students with cultural organizations

**Items Ranked Lower in Factor 4 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 1 Participating in parent-teacher conferences
- 6 Preparing parents to assist with homework
- 7 Returning to be a teacher in former school

**Items Ranked at -4**

- 22 Visiting students and families in their homes
- 29 Providing spiritual guidance

36 Connecting student/families with spiritual organizations

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Factor 5

---

**Items Ranked +4**

- 2 Accompanying student field trips
- 19 Supporting Sporting events
- 27 Attending PTA meetings

**Items Ranked Higher in Factor 5 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 6 Preparing parents to assist with homework
- 7 Returning to be teacher in former school
- 15 Residing and being visible in the community
- 16 Enrolling your child in your former school

**Items Ranked Lower in Factor 5 Array Than in Other Factor Arrays**

- 5 Facilitating job-shadowing opportunities
- 14 Facilitating teen education workshops
- 18 Teaching students the importance of professionalism
- 24 Serving as tutors
- 34 Developing mentoring relationships
- 37 Connecting student/families with social support services

**Items Ranked at -4**

- 22 Visiting students and families in their homes
  - 25 Providing student preparation for standardized exams
  - 26 Facilitating after school career training for parents
-

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**Vita**

Adrian D. Johnson

Education

2015	Doctor of Education	University of North Florida Educational Leadership
1997	Master of Science	Jacksonville University Business Administration
1993	Bachelor of Science	Jacksonville University Business Administration

Professional Experiences

2009-2015	Program Director Emergency Medical Services	Southeastern College
2006-2010	President	Jacksonville Brotherhood of Firefighters, Inc.
1995-1999	Assistant Operations Officer	Florida Army National Guard
1993-1997	Operations Officer	Scroll Transportation, Inc.
1988-2015	Professional Firefighter	City of Jacksonville