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## **Degrees Are Not Enough : Success and Challenges of Black Women Pursuing College Degrees.**

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DEGREES ARE NOT ENOUGH: SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY  
BLACK WOMEN PURSUING COLLEGE DEGREES

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The School of Education

by  
DeQuinten Shrez Glenn  
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## **Preface**

While attending Louisiana State University, I received many resources for support because I identify as a Black man (i.e., a member of an underrepresented group at the university which I attended). While working on campus as a student leader I noticed a lack of resources directly allocated for my Black female colleagues. According to the Black Male Leadership Initiative page on the LSU website, “The BMLI Fellows Program is designed to improve the retention, graduation and participation rates for black male students through mentoring, leadership development and academic support, while connecting these students with faculty, staff and the campus community.” (<http://www.lsu.edu/diversity/bmli/>)

This organization molded me through lectures on resume building and seminars on professional dress. As I went through this program and others of the sort I could see that even though my female had higher GPAs, graduated faster, and were getting more jobs but they were not receiving the same type of assistance that I was experiencing. Witnessing the disparities between the resources offered to Black men and Black women on the university campus brought me to wonder what factors contributed to the continued success of Black women even without the extra resources that I benefited from. The purpose of the current study is to gain an understanding of what factors help Black women to succeed academically, while living through negative situations (i.e., racism, oppression). As the researcher I will address the definition of academic success and seek to discover the factors that promote success in the environments of my participants. The current study is significant because it may shed light on a topic that does not get talked about openly, especially at a predominately white institution.

My interest in this topic started well before my college career with my family. My grandmother Margaret Glenn received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Southern University during the late 1960s. She told me stories about her lack of support and the disrespect of her coworkers and some classmates because of her being a woman pursuing her Master's. From her stories about discrimination to being the only person at her second graduation and having to drive six hours back home after she walked across the stage I have always been interested in how Black women overcome their circumstances.

### **Researcher Bias**

As a Black male and a researcher I must talk about my personal biases. I was born in the rural town of Mansfield Louisiana and I have lived my entire life in Louisiana where I have experienced overt racism and the daily microaggressions of racism. Both in social life and the professional world I have been the victim of racist incidents. Living through these experiences and witnessing them occur on such a frequent basis has given me a certain perspective on situations that include Black students not receiving fair treatment from professors or equal resources from the institution. Since I attended a predominately white institution in the Deep South my frame of mind has been set to see racism as it exists in today's society.

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## Abstract

Black women are succeeding highly across the country in Higher Education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010) Black women received 66% of undergraduate degrees received by Black people in America in the 2007-2008 school year. This extreme success reflects their abilities to compete at the highest levels while attending institutions of higher education. Their success is not rewarded with job opportunities and equal wages which is reflected by their lack of representation in highly paid fields including science and medicine.

America has been organized and governed by systemic oppression of certain groups this oppression stems from a combination of White privilege and male privilege. White privilege has been documented since McIntosh (1988) published "*White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondence through Work in Women's Studies*". The discussion of sexism and racism has been a topic of scholarly research. The blatantly obvious wage gap in America between men and women is an example of how racism and sexism work together to oppress these women. According to (National Science Foundation, 2015), only 2% of practicing scientist and engineers were identified as Black women; this statistic is one example of how Black women are not given equal access to these fields. The story of Black women experiencing these situations are told throughout this research in an effort to help bring light to their great success and lack of equality even in this day and age.

## Introduction

In the current study, I explored the trend of postsecondary academic success of Black women despite numerous challenges associated with their racial and gender identity. One of the confounds of this study is that there is literature that supports Black women's high graduation rates being a reason they do not have as many resources. I would argue that even though they are succeeding at higher rates than their Black male colleagues the degrees they receive do not equate to the unfair treatment and oppression they face on the road to their degree.

In terms of the current study, I defined success as a student's ability to persist and retain attendance at an institution in spite of obstacles. The problem today is that Black women are extremely capable of academic success, but do not receive resources on the same level as their colleagues at our current university. I personally believe this is an issue of privilege: both White privilege and male privilege are evident in the way our country works everyday. White privilege has been documented since McIntosh (1988) published "*White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondence through Work in Women's Studies*". The discussion of sexism and racism has been a topic of scholarly research.

Black women face uncommon issues even when compared to most marginalized groups, such as limited access to higher education and lack of representation in certain occupational fields (e.g., STEM). According to (National Science Foundation, 2015), only 2% of practicing scientist and engineers were identified as Black women; this statistic is one example of how Black women are not given equal access to these fields. Although universities around the country have made a concerted effort to reach out to Black women in STEM fields through initiatives such as XCITE (a residential camp for women interested in STEM majors at Louisiana State University), as well as organizations that benefit Black women with extra resources which

include but is not limited to NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers), more appears to be warranted to improve the numbers of Black women in STEM fields. In an effort to cull from norm this literature promotes synthesis of programs that promote the success of Black women, in this literature review I pull from recent articles that speak of the issues of these students and possible resolutions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Researchers concluded that Black female students lack knowledge about higher education costs and the amount of time it takes to finish terminal degrees (Williams, 2005). For my study I will build on three primary themes within contemporary research on the success of Black women in higher education: (1) parental/community influence, (2) university influence, and (3) personal narratives.

The premise of this study was to find what motivated Black women to succeed at high levels even with the constant scrutiny associated with the combination of racism and sexism. The questions in interviews surrounded the subject of their motivation to succeed and their determination to give back to other Black women. My study participants included four Black female undergraduate students at Louisiana State University. The methodological framework for this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology was defined as a study that uses past experiences and consciousness as evidence. I discovered this evidence through two interviews with each of my participants. The first interview was composed of up to six questions on the subject of their struggles and successes. The second interview focused on how each participant viewed herself giving back to other Black women in her respective career field.



## **Literature Review**

Throughout this literature review I have created 3 major factors that help define the literature. One of the factors that I explored was the critical importance of parental and community influences. Parental/community influences are combined in this group because of the way Black culture has developed in America. There is usually more than just the mother and father but a community effort used to help a child achieve academic success.

Parental/community influence covers direct family members and school officials that play a major role in a student's life. Brothers and sisters, as well as friends that are in higher education, can support a student's dream. The literature presented in this review around this theme shows how important these outside factors are in a student's success. Gilford and Reynolds (2011) found that even though Black females persist and stay resilient through their various troubles, with assistance from outside sources they are more likely to succeed. Not having any access to higher education knowledge or experience can hinder a student from attending a university at all.

University influence in the current study is defined as the support the students receive directly from their institution. These factors include the administrators and higher education professionals they come in contact with on campus. Students account for the resources that are afforded to them such as organizations and community initiatives that encourage them to succeed. Early access programs that reach into communities are a huge help when it comes to determining the success of Black female students. Ezeala-Harrison (2014) discussed the amount of support a group of Black female students felt at their various HBCUs. This support could be seen as directly related to their overall success in their individual programs.

The final theme found in this review was that of the personal. These stories of Black women going through their college journey are critical moving forward as a professional. These

articles are filled with the personal stories of students that have graduated from various programs. This information gives us a direct look into the minds of students that we service. Currently the literature is limited because this subject has only recently been seen as a need in the area of higher education. Black women's stories are very powerful and can show gaps in the resources provided on college campuses. This information can be used to create programs and initiatives that can directly benefit this population. Mawhinney (2012) explains that administrators at Historically Black Colleges & Universities' and Predominately White Institutions need to discuss the needs of their students and create solutions.

### **Parental/Community Influences**

Gilford and Reynolds examined how parentification impacted eight Black female college students' development. Gilford and Reynold's (2011) study found the following: parentification is defined as a boundary distortion where the parental-child relationships become altered or reversed (Wells & Jones, 1998). Parentification is a result of struggling, sometimes dysfunctional families, and has been viewed as necessary for the continuity and survival of the Black family (p. 56).

Single parents have to face more struggles due to the lack of assistance, this can begin to effect students' dedication to school because their primary focus may be helping their family (Gilford & Reynolds 2011). All of these factors together create a need for Black women to receive equitable resources to make up for the deficit created by society. Overall Gilford and Reynolds (2011) discovered that Black women that go through parentification actually persist through college because of their deep family connections. In the case of the eight participants in the Gilford and Reynolds (2011) study their parentification helped motivate them towards completion of their degree program.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010) Black women received 66% of undergraduate degrees received by Black people in America in the 2007-2008 school year. This poses the question: How would these students performance improve if they received equitable resources in education? Gilford and Reynolds (2011) discussed the lives of Black female students from single parent homes and distressed situations to understand how parentification affected their college career. Researchers Gilford& Reynolds (2011) took eight students and put them through a focus group which discussed matters of race, discrimination, and other topics unexamined in society. The eight students were picked from an original 32 students that responded to the advertisement.

Multiple students agreed that they wanted to go to college because they knew it would be too much stress staying at home and going to school. The women in the study also felt that leaving home for college would add stress to their home by them being absent. According to Gilford and Reynolds (2011), *“These women discovered early on that not only were their distressed families unable to provide much financial support to a child in college, they were also less equipped to provide support and validation”* (p. 64).

Many of the students, even through increased pressure to come home, stayed in school with support from their network of administrators and friends (Gilford & Reynolds, 2011). A staff of dedicated administrators that work with students and bridge the gaps of support may make a huge difference in students’ experiences. Our job is to make sure each student receives a holistic experience in college so by knowing their stories we can do our job more effectively.

Researchers in this study worked exclusively with Black women to challenge and provide a more complex perspective to that of previous studies about this group. Research in the past suggested that students from single parent homes do not do well in systems of higher education.

“The results from this study suggest that despite the many demands, challenges, and barriers to finishing college, the parentified Black women participating in this qualitative study were able to fully engage in the college experience” (Gilford & Reynolds, 2011).

The authors concluded that these events actually motivated these students to persist and complete their degree. Despite the apparent strength and resilience of the women interviewed for this study, more supports are needed to ensure the academic motivation and persistence of parentified Black female students.

### **University Influence**

In a 2016 study researchers Mahatmya, Lohman, Brown, & Conway-Turner sought to discover the role of race and teachers’ cultural awareness in predicting educational attainment of their students. The researchers started by analyzing the dropout rates of American students and found that Black students’ dropout rate is disproportionately high compared to other groups. The researchers also found that socioeconomic status was an indicator of the level of possible success a student will have in higher education. This study was created to gain an understanding of how the level of the educators understanding directly affected students’ success.

There were two components used to determine how the students are affected by their teachers cultural awareness; the first is addressing how the system discriminated against minorities and the second how the community that is being discriminated against responds to the oppression. In the 2016 study Mahatmya et al., used funding, staffing, and historical policies that show how the system directly affects these minority students. The second is determined by the perceptions of students on how they feel their community responds and fights against their situation to gain educational equality.

This work shows teachers as actors of the system that play a major role in the success of students and their persistence through education. Teachers are more than just there in class practices and behaviors, their actual perceptions of students and the culture that makes up the university. Over the past two decades, scholarship in teachers' cultural awareness highlighted the need for intentional trainings and assessments about teachers' beliefs regarding their perceptions of cultural diversity and their students within the classroom walls (Castro 2010). By training our teachers that their mindset and perceptions of the students actually affects their performance can help breakdown pre-established barriers to our student's success.

With the current study, I am seeking to the research on how the multicultural classroom is growing in America and the need for culturally responsive teachers is growing. There is no longer a place in education for policy or teachers that are not able to view things from another cultures' view point because of the dynamic of our classrooms. To address students' needs effectively a teacher must have knowledge and a positive perception of the students they service. In conclusion, researchers in this study worked to prove that actually preparing our teachers to work with diverse populations will reap greater results from the diverse students in the classrooms.

Smith (2008) researched the mothers of Black female students and the process of them choosing a college. In this 2008 study Smith emphasized that parents are a huge factor in the college selection process. Students that come from households with low SES have a lower exposure to higher education because of the lack of knowledge on the subject. The lack of knowledge of financial aid contributed to parents deterring their students from attending colleges (Smith, 2008). *"In this highly competitive climate for admission into the "best colleges" the children of working-class and low SES parents are increasingly disadvantaged and in many*

*ways marginalized according to the findings from contemporary empirical research” (Smith, 2008,p.1) .*

Smiths’ (2008) study revealed that there is a greater need for information to be distributed more regularly to parents in these areas. I find that as educators we do not recognize how important the knowledge of the parent’s affects our students. This knowledge is critical because it could mean the difference between retaining or losing students. Overall, we as administrators in higher education must embrace first generation students and their parents. We have to learn to understand the situations our students are coming from so that we can serve them better. This literature places the duty in the hands of the educators to help our students reach their goals instead of saying they need to change themselves.

According to Ezeala-Harrison (2014),

Several factors contribute to the college retention rates of Black students. There could be issues related to the student’s own personality attributes, personal and/or family circumstances, financial factors, background events, social factors, as well as a myriad of institutional factors associated with the school system and/or a particular school itself. (p. 1)

Ezeala-Harrison article discusses techniques that promote success in Black women in higher education. One of the most reoccurring things that creates a successful environment for students is the opportunity for mentorship programs. During this study one of the most important factors that promoted retention in students is a good support system. Administrators are on campus for more than research and putting on programs to improve the university and achieve the mission statement. At our most basic level we are there to support our students and we must not lose sight of this objective.

### **Personal Narratives**

There is a lack of research that describes the lived experiences of Black women in college settings. *“What was most striking in the graduate students’ narratives were the discussions on*

*Affirmative Action and the students' perceptions of what their White colleagues, professors, and undergraduate students thought about its policies"* (Williams, 2005, p. # for quote). The participants varied in their experiences but there were clear themes in the data culled from the interview with the 3 students. It showed that no matter the campus there is some level of inequality and racial encounters and feelings of being an outsider as well as wanting to give back to their community.

Students in this study have similar fears and face similar challenges which means that the system that has been created to educate them is flawed. By using actual stories from these students we have a firsthand look at how our jobs are being done. This study adds to the research that says Black females need more resources directly related towards them.

This research is twofold because it not only informs educators but can benefit other students that identify with the participants. When women create new knowledge that plays an integral role in their environment it is beneficial for it to be distributed so that others can benefit from it. Williams (2005), spoke about Black women being able to read each other. Reading each other, means treating each other with respect and support. When Black women read each other, they become aware of and more sensitive to the experiences of other Black women despite their social positions.

Magano (2011) conducted a qualitative study in South Africa with three Black female postgraduate students. Magano's study was interesting in the context of literature review because the study was located across the world, and yet, Magano's participants faced some of the same issues as women here in America. The study was designed to get accurate descriptions of the students' journey towards their degree. The standing research question is "What are the experiences and challenges of female Black students at postgraduate level?"(Magano, 2011). For

all three students, their universities did not have support structures where postgraduate students could go for pastoral care. Although these students succeeded at high levels there is a common fear of the price of graduate school and the amount of time it takes to get a degree.

One of the participants talked about her doubt in the program because of the amount of time it was taking for her to gain her master's degree. She spoke about her perception of her professor thinking she was not good enough to complete the program she was enrolled in.

Another student going back to school to get her doctoral degree discussed the issues regarding her perceptions that professors did not have confidence in her work. She reported facing a mix of sexism and racism in a situation where she could not control or receive any assistance.

Magano (2011) concluded that practitioners must create programs that work on the weaknesses of our students so they can develop holistically. There is no lack in understanding but a lack of support from our side when it comes to these students feeling confident in graduate degree programs. Research such as this raises other questions about the distribution of higher education information. With the common fears of the cost and time it takes to receive a terminal degree there must be an issue with this specific group getting correct answers to their questions. In concluding this study, one can say that postgraduate students need support and mentoring from their supervisors in a variety of ways and relating to a variety of issues (Magano, 2011).

Mawhinney (2012) describes the relationships between Black female faculty and their students. Literature of this nature showcases the rapport between faculty members themselves to work more effectively with students. Mawhinney talked about being a new faculty member at a PWI transitioning from an HBCU to the new environment. She discussed how even the overall mission of an HBCU is very different from that of a PWI. In the article, the author discussed her



role as a mother to her students in certain circumstances because she was a Black woman and someone they could relate to easily (cite the study here).

Mawhinney (2012) used autoethnography to describe a phenomenon particular to Black staff at universities around the country. According to (Mawhinney, 2012) autoethnography is a study in which the author looks inward at themselves and analyzes their surroundings to discover the answer to a question. Othermothering is a term the author used to explain the level of care Black educators take on in HBCU settings specifically. She stated that in settings in which students are away from their parents, educators or advisors must fill the gap and express that care for students. In this narrative the author looks inward on her own experiences to analyze a situation that goes on around the country. To explain the concept of othermothering, Mawhinney (2012) discussed how her office became a safe space for students and how it slowly drained her emotionally and eventually forced her to leave her HBCU. This type of research is important because it can help professionals understand that other professionals are in their same position.

In a final study the authors researched the process of mothers of Black female students assisting their daughters in choosing a college. The researchers emphasized that parents are a huge factor in the college selection process. Students that come from households with low SES have a lower exposure to higher education because of the lack of knowledge on the subject. The lack of knowledge of financial aid contributes to parents deterring their students from attending colleges (cite). “In this highly competitive climate for admission into the “best colleges” the children of working-class and low SES parents are increasingly disadvantaged and in many ways marginalized according to the findings from contemporary empirical research.”(Smith, 2008)

Smith’s study reveals that there is a higher need for information to be distributed more regularly to parents in these areas. I find that as educators we do not recognize how important the

knowledge of the parent's effects on our students. As a professional that worked in a department such as admissions research, this is critical because it could mean the difference between gaining students and losing them.

### **Methods/Limitations**

For this study, I interviewed four Black women that are currently undergraduate students from Louisiana State University. I contacted my participants through direct email and phone calls. The participants were located through the directory of the Summer Scholars Program at LSU. This study was comprised of two meetings with each participant; if a participant could not meet with a researcher at the designated times, the interviews were sent through email and transcribed. This study is limited to the experiences of Black women that are current students at Louisiana State University. The first interview focused on the past experiences of the individuals in the study, while the second centered on their future plans and if giving back to other Black women were in their plan. All participants were asked the same 12 questions which are displayed below.

### **Interview Protocol Questions**

- 1) How would you define academic success?
- 2) Where do you see yourself at the end of your academic journey?
- 3) Why do you feel even though Black women graduate at higher rates they have fewer resources allocated to them?
- 4) What challenges do you feel were put in your way specifically because you are a Black woman?
- 5) What assistance, if any, did you receive from your family in your educational journey?
- 6) Where did your biggest source of inspiration come from to pursue your dreams?
- 7) Who is your current role model or what Black woman do you look up to in your field?
- 8) How did your university directly aid you in your quest so far in the form of resources and mentors?

- 9) ) What role if any did on campus organizations play in your direct success ( through positive role models or help getting to the next level)?
- 10) What plans if any do you have on giving back to help Black women facing the same struggles?
- 11) What would you change about your university that could help Black women achieve higher levels of success?
- 12) Is there anything else you would like to add perspective to this research?

## Findings

To analyze the findings the four undergraduate participants results can be broken up into two groups based on the similarity in their responses and how effectively they answered each set of questions. I will use the responses from group one to analyze the first interview and the responses from group two to analyze the second interview. Interview one focused on the students present situation. Asking them about their personal struggles and the things they found most challenging so far in their educational journey. This first interview discusses the social capital that these women entered college with as well as how they feel about their place in their educational journey.

The first group of students defined success as being able to graduate successfully and continue the pursuit of their dreams in their chosen career field. Participant one is an Athletic Training major and participant two is an Engineering major, both heavily male dominated fields.

Participant one goes into detail about how even though Black women graduate at higher rates she believes that Black people in general have to work harder than any other race because of the way this country was established. Participant two believes that Black women are extremely determined and that fact persists with their high graduation and retention rates. In the discussion of personal struggles because of their walks of life participant two discusses her first few years of college as a Black woman in engineering. "Being a black woman in engineering, I often times faced issues with working with predominantly white males. At times, they may not think you were capable of understanding the material as if you weren't working to get the same degree as them". (Participant Two, 2018)

The first two participants share personal experiences and seem to be aware of the small incidents in their lives that people tried to shut them out for being Black women. Both

participants spoke on the subject of moral support from family members. Even though men dominate both of their fields both participants in group one expressed how their parents encouraged them to succeed no matter the circumstance.

This first group also mentioned that they believe Black people in general need to work harder than anyone else because of the way this country was established. This belief is translated into Participant one's answer to the final question of interview one, "Where did your biggest source of inspiration come from to pursue your dreams?". "My environment has constantly remained my source of inspiration throughout my life. My circumstances were a set that could have kept me down, and I could have ended up on a very different path in life. Every day, I choose to rise above them and better myself. I choose to work hard and strive to be the best version of myself that I can be. I know where I come from, and I will never forget. However, I am not where I came from." (Participant One, 2018)

The second interview discusses the external factors that contribute to the success of these women. Questions in this interview talk about role models in their field of study as well as support directly from their institution. This final interview also brings up the point of giving back to other Black female students in their position and how they feel their current institution can be positively changed for their demographic. Group two is comprised of two Pre-medical major students one planning to attend dental school the other will attend medical school after graduation.

Participants three and four mentioned that their role model from their field are Black women in the medical field across the country. They mention how empowering it is to see a Black woman in these positions and how it gives them hope to continue their individual journey. When asked about the direct aid of the university both participants in group two talk about the

Ronald E McNair program and the Summer Scholars Program. They describe these programs as organizations that bring students together and mentor them while giving them actual professional opportunities. Participant three discusses how she wants to go to dental school and the McNair program gave her research experience as well as gave her the confidence to deal with her oncoming workload.

Another major support from these programs that we discussed was the financial support towards tuition and books. Finally networking was another huge asset that these young women discussed. Participant four spoke about organizations giving her the opportunity to present at professional conferences and give her service opportunities. Participant four goes on to discuss how these organizations have contributed to her communication and leadership skills which are both necessary in her professional career.

When asked about giving back to Black women going through their same struggles in the future group two both answered with mentoring. Participant three discussed wanting to establish her own business in her hometown to inspire local children and young adults. She also discussed becoming a mentor to college students going into the medical field as well as creating community programs that benefit Black teens. Participant four shares her feelings about becoming a mentor to Black women in college in various science fields. “One of the biggest struggles of black women and progression is that we are so independent that we are not always accepting or looking for help. I plan on using my knowledge to help other black women know that they do not have to struggle alone. “ (Participant Four, 2018)

This group also shared two crucial changes they would make directly to their university to improve the success of Black women particularly. Participant three discussed how counseling in her particular department is not supportive of their population of Black students. She discusses

how her peers have been encouraged by counselors to simply change their majors when they have an issue. She believes that if students had more encouragement and support from the counselors for their specific majors there would be more minorities graduating with degrees in her field.

Participant four went into detail about how more discussions with Black women in particular about the struggles they face in their field. She talks about how open discussions can prepare these students for the lives they are moving toward. “One program I really loved and was inspired by was when LSU showed Hidden Figures and then had a panel with women of all races in STEM and talked about the discrimination and microaggressions women encounter at work.” (Participant Four,2018)

Finally when asked would they like to add a final statement to the research participant four added, “Black women, or black people in general, step into LSU off of hope and have to fight every year to keep that hope. The school itself, in terms of the counseling for STEM and pre-health advisors, are not sensitive to the adversities minorities in large, PWI colleges. There is not enough emotional support. You often feel isolated when you are one of 5 black people in a class and no one speaks to you.”

### **Analysis**

The findings of this study were amazing to me I started out trying understand what gave my Black female colleagues the initiative to continue to succeed at such a high level. I discovered after my interviews were over that these women were not deterred by their circumstances but motivated by them. Even though they are fully aware of the wage gap between men and women they are determined to get into their field of work and inspire others.

I expected these women to be at least angry about how they are treated but they find these situations as preparation for the real world. One of the interesting things I discovered about my participants is that there cannot be deterred from their dreams. All of the women involved in the study were completely aware of their place in the world and how they are not treated fair but there is a common belief that because of the way this country was established on the basis of racism that Black people will always have to work harder then any other race. This belief causes these women to take any obstacle and move through it without even thinking about it.

Each participant shows a hunger for knowledge and success. All of the participants in this study are pursuing degrees in science fields, which are dominated by men but are not afraid of the challenge.



## **Conclusion**

The literature presented in this review is all about creating a positive trend for Black women in an effort to bridge gaps in present literature. These students are currently stigmatized and it is said that they can only succeed under certain circumstances. Through more recent research we see that these students are extremely resilient and continue to succeed under the harshest conditions. Even without proper knowledge or preparation in most terms Black women still continue to be the largest minority group in colleges around the country. So this brings up the issue of what can our universities do to improve their experience.

This study continues a positive trend of research that can be used to inspire Black students and other marginalized groups. Research like this bridges the gap and works to eliminate the stigma that students that do not come from traditional backgrounds cannot be successful. This literature can be used to create programs directly addressing the needs of these students and those like them in universities around the country.

The themes identified in this literature show trends that these students can succeed in any environment but need more space to create. These students need more programs and facilities to be themselves and express their needs. During some of the narratives the students spoke about detractors from their professors and feeling doubt about the process of higher education. The lack of resources has created a misconception that postgraduate degrees are extremely expensive and take much longer than they actually do to complete. It opens a doorway of opportunity for educators and administrators to create more programs that promote Black women to succeed. We must all work together to make sure our student get the best experience possible.

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## Appendix. IRB Certification

### ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair  
130 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
[irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu)  
[lsu.edu/research](http://lsu.edu/research)

**TO:** Roland Mitchell  
ELRC

**FROM:** Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** December 21, 2017

**RE:** IRB# 3981

**TITLE:** A Qualitative Inquiry of the Academic Success of Black Women: Challenges and Supports

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:** New Protocol

**Review type:** Full \_\_\_ Expedited X **Review date:** 12/21/2017

**Risk Factor:** Minimal X Uncertain \_\_\_\_\_ Greater Than Minimal \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved** X **Disapproved** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approval Date:** 12/21/2017 **Approval Expiration Date:** 12/22/2018

**Re-review frequency:** (annual unless otherwise stated)

**Number of subjects approved:** 4-6

**Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal:** (if applicable)

**By:** Dennis Landin, Chairman 

#### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

##### Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc.**

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

## **Vita**

DeQuinten Shrez Glenn, born in Mansfield, Louisiana, has worked in secondary education for over several years while pursuing his bachelor's degree from Louisiana State University. His love for the reform of education for the children in Louisiana led him to start his first company Click Four Help Tutoring LLC, in January 2016. While working in his community and promoting change he decided to attend Louisiana State University again in the Department of Education. Upon completion of his master's degree, he will continue working in communities around the state of Louisiana and promoting college access.