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The Impact of Self-Imposed Barriers on African Americans Successes

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Researchers and economists have argued that the economic and social stagnation of African Americans is the result of their lack of self-confidence, initiative, and commitment toward their own advancement. This qualitative study examined whether historical conditioning and personal experiences have created a hypersensitivity in this population to events triggering behaviors that mirror the success fearing personality when seeking social, economic, and political advancement. It used Zuckerman and Allison's fear of success scale to identify the range of success fearing in 30 African American men and women aged 35 years or more; this group was also interviewed regarding their lived experiences when pursuing advancements in the United States workforce. The interview questions were formulated using Cohen's fear of success factors; responses were inductively coded and organized using ATLAS.ti 7 software program. Regardless of their fear of success scale (FOSS) scores, the participants' interview responses revealed that even in the absence of explicit or implicit discrimination, there was an unconscious expectation of racism, and that strong family, religious, and educational influences aided in preserving these expectations. The participants were also found to be hypersensitive to events that triggered behaviors mirroring the characteristics of success fearing personality. The findings of this study can have far-reaching implications for the overall social and psychological betterment of African Americans in organizations, educational institutes, and political/civic action groups. It should be used to begin an alternative conversation of personal and social reconciliation, emotional healing, and pride, which participants asserted was the cornerstone of African American progress in the 1960s.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to the future of African Americans and to their potential, in hopes that they will embrace the urgency to change their mindsets about what they have and can contribute to the global success of humanity. More importantly, I hope that they cease to anticipate or perceive the actions and opinions of others as a threat of racism or discrimination, and instead enter every situation with a mindset of excellence and ethnic value. May you know that living boldly does not mean minimizing the experience of fear or rejecting your ancestral past, but rather deciding to value your fears and your past to strengthen your future.

Acknowledgments

It can come across as an expected cliché to say, “First giving honor to God…,” because everyone says it. However, despite the social stigmas, stereotypes and my own self-sabotaging behaviors associated with being an African American woman, God always insisted that I had a greater purpose. It is for this reason and so many others that I embrace this cliché to thank God for His patience during my “Jonah Experience.”

A million thanks to the many friends, professors, colleagues, and acquaintances that incessantly encouraged me to follow through with this project! You challenged me to have courage when I doubted myself the most. I also acknowledge my adversaries: those who made it their goal to keep me bogged down with dumb stuff. While you meant it for harm, God used it for my highest good.

Finally, special thanks to my Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. James (Jimmy) Brown, and my Committee Member, Dr. Lori LaCivita. I appreciate your willingness to mentor, encourage and inspire me through the many reiterations of this dissertation. Dr. Brown, there are no words that could express my appreciation for your dedication to demand the best from me for the success of this research. More importantly, you recognized from the very beginning the passion I had for it, making sure I honored that passion through excellence. I hope to be a legacy of your academic contributions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Many Americans have interpreted Barack Obama's presidential election as an important step toward changing social perceptions that will make people more comfortable with African American authority figures (Visconti, 2008). The U.S. news media described the positive response to the election of an African American president as evidence of a *post-racist society*, and a catalyst that would resolve the underrepresentation of minorities in key leadership positions (Bobo & Dawson, 2009; Schorr, 2008; Speri, 2014; Wing & Ashtarilf, 2014; Wong, 2008). However, others expressed less optimism: Many corporate executives and advocates of African American achievement argued that the victory of the first minority President did not advance African Americans in the United States (Lum, 2009; Payton, 2010; Wong, 2008).

A study by Rosette, Leonardelli, and Phillips (2008) on the differences in evaluations of White and minority leaders in the United States indicated that the continued disparity in African American advancement was systematic, other activist and researchers view the issue as a dilemma within the African American culture. In other words, it is believed that many African Americans will forfeit their opportunity to obtain key leadership positions within the framework of the U.S. society because they lack the self-confidence, initiative and commitment to meet the demands of the 21st Century (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Gregory, 2006; McWhorter, 2005; Reya, 2007).

For example, McWhorter (2005) argued that the current problems within the African American community are the unintended byproduct of the Civil Rights

revolution. This social rebellion created a crippling mindset where most African Americans embraced a state of victimization. McWhorter (2005, p. 182) asserted this mindset was a "meme" called "therapeutic alienation." The Oxford English Dictionary (2014, para. 1) defined "meme" as an "idea or behavior that is passed on generationally within a culture" – in this case cultural ideas and beliefs regarding race and discrimination. McWhorter suggested the meme of therapeutic alienation is an ideology that has hindered African Americans from adapting to the demands of a changing society. What began as concrete activism, an effort concerned with realities and actual instances of racism that drove the 1964 Civil Rights Movement, aimed at getting justice, shifted into abstract gestures unconcerned with justice, and African Americans took on a sense of counter-culture defiance (McWhorter, 2005).

During the mid–to late–1960s and into the 70s, widespread tension polarized the United States' society regarding ideas about the Vietnam war, race relations, sexual traditions, women's rights, and conventional forms of authority (Anderson, 1995; Mankin, 2012; McWhorter, 2005). This counter-culture or social defiance proved to be good to American citizens who sought to abdicate their personal and social responsibilities. However, once this social defiance no longer served their purposes most Whites simply abandoned the act of *social estrangement* they championed. McWhorter argued this was not the case for African Americans—the tactic of alienation that motivated the Civil Rights Movement continued well past its usefulness.

McWhorter (2005) pointed out that the lingering effects of this "counter-culture had devastating effects on the sense of honor and shame, the sense of responsibility, and

the value placed on effort and persistence" (p. 205) in some parts of the African American community. McWhorter further asserted "the counter-culture that roused the National Welfare Rights Organization needed to demand access to welfare for all poor African Americans, not as a stopgap measure, but as an inalienable, open-ended right" (p. 320). As a result, a culture of welfare dependency was created. Thus, for McWhorter, the counter-culture of alienation that was made fashionable in the late 1960s was so "therapeutic" (2005 p. 155) that the perceived benefits overshadowed its true destruction.

Further, according to McWhorter, the mindset of this counter-culture found its way to the political discussion table, and also produced a generation of social philanthropists. Now, embedded in the framework of the United States was a conscious zeal of social altruism, which gained satisfaction by ignoring the transgressions and criminal activities of this counter-culture, and advanced this distorted sense of entitlement. This defiance, as noted by McWhorter, simply programmed many African Americans with a general sense that the rules are different for them (p. 165).

For instance, the continuing race-based acts of segregation and discrimination in housing, employment, and education faced by African Americans in the United States during the post-war years was viewed as the fundamental reason why African Americans were unable to succeed. Numerous organized civil rights and religious groups began to form in order to bring these political and social challenges to the forefront of Americans' consciousness. One such effort was the 1963 political rally known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Such public show of social and political solidarity led to the civil rights movement of 1964, and White Americans became less guarded, and

more open to considering the plight of African Americans. This social consciousness justified the alienation of this counter-culture and made discrimination and racism a convenient and established scapegoat. Thus, creating a mindset of entitlement. For McWhorter, the most crucial and damaging aspect of this mindset is that it was passed from person to person and generation to generation, even though it was no longer relevant, because it felt good to the soul, regardless of the societal conditions and stagnation.

The assertion, as made by researchers such as Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Gregory, 2006; McWhorter, 2005; Reya, 2007 that many African Americans lack the self-confidence, initiative, and commitment, leads to several considerations. For example: (a) potential origins and explanations involving whether African Americans may lack self-confidence, initiative, and commitment toward their own advancement; (b) potential impacts of changing the mindset of African Americans' underrepresentation in key leadership positions; and (c) the potential of this mental shift being an attainable goal or resolve. Especially, since much of literature reveals that many organization and institutions in America remain defiant when it comes to promoting African Americans in key executive positions (Beasley, 2004; Davis et al., 2004; Gardner, 2005; Phillips, 2008; Salter, 2008; Simon, 2007).

In this study, I will explore a resolve for two of the questions: first, the accusation that African Americans lack self-confidence, initiative and commitment toward their advancement, what is the origin or impetus of such state of being; and second, if changing the mindset of African Americans could resolve the underrepresentation of

African Americans in key leadership positions within society, what specific mentality would need to be changed? Further, in this research, I take the possible unpopular position that McWhorter perspective of African Americans being the victim of a meme called "therapeutic alienation" may offer a measure of insight. However, much still needs to be explored. To offer more insight into this phenomenon I will closely examine the theory fear of success (FOS) as a possible factor. Exploring the origin and characteristics of this theory, may reveal a more specific perspective into the mindset and beliefs of African Americans where change can be address more effectively.

One major factor of the FOS construct that is relevant to the African American history is the experience of having one's efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of more powerful others or a social system, which leads to a lower expectations and other self-sabotaging behaviors (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horner, 1968; Tresemer, 1977).

Background of the Problem

Although many U.S. companies point out their multicultural workforce and showcase their successful African American managers and entrepreneurs in such magazines as *Black Enterprise*, *Forbes* and *The Black Collegian*, there are still significant systemic inequities. For example, within the framework of U.S government, which is thought to exemplify equality because of its many historical initiatives that resulted in laws and regulations regarding equality at all levels of employment there remains a smaller number of African Americans in key leadership positions (Corporate Board Initiative of the Committee of 100, Inc., 2007; Glenn, 2009; Menendez, 2010; National

Urban League, 2009; The Alliance for Board Diversity, 2008; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006). In a study on the inconsistency of minority representation in senior positions in U.S. Federal Agencies, Glenn (2009) found African Americans held 24.2% of entry level positions, compared to that of European Americans who held 56.7% of these positions. African Americans held 19.1% of mid-level positions, compared to 66.1% of Whites, and mere 6.5% of senior positions compared to that of Whites at 86%.

At the time of this study, while the United States had an African American commander-in-chief, 99% of the country's Fortune 500 businesses did not. As of 2015, only six African-American were active CEOs in Fortune 500 companies. From 1999–2015, a total of only 15 African American have held the position of CEO, two of which were women. There are also no African American-owned companies in the Fortune 500 rankings (Isidore, 2012). While substantial progress has been made in correcting the underrepresentation of minorities in U.S. corporations since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and despite the historical gains in education, the gap in occupational achievement between African Americans and European Americans has not declined (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004; Menendez, 2010; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Tomaskovic-Devey et al., 2006).

A large majority of African Americans view corporate America as an unwelcoming place dominated by white Americans who traditionally make it harder for them to enter and succeed than their white counterparts (Beasley, 2004; Davis et al., 2004; Kyser, 2008; The Executive Leadership Council, 2008). Many minority

professionals are frustrated and disillusioned by the hidden biases that occur in task assignments, informal mentoring and performance appraisals, which experts call “the new face of discrimination” (Edkins & Lindsey, 2012; Gardner, 2005; Liswood, 2010; Tucker, 2013). Not having fair access to these everyday activities further alienate African American from promotion in a business world where European American men are 98% of the CEOs and 95% of the top earners in Fortune 500 companies (Gardner, 2005; Liswood, 2010).

Among some social scientists and legal scholars(Corning & Bucchianeri, 2010; Hirsh & Lyons, 2010; Kaiser & Major, 2006), there is a growing consensus that in this post–civil rights era, racial discrimination as once perceived, expresses itself in a new way called *contemporary discrimination*. The new expression of discrimination rarely involves tangible events that calculatedly exclude racial minorities from opportunities. As noted by Hirsh & Lyons (2010), contemporary discrimination, quite often, does not consist of clear, distinct actions of exclusion. Rather, it occurs through, but are not limited to, the differentiation of compensation, assignment, or classification of employees; training and apprenticeship programs; recruitment and promotion processes; and harassment and retaliation.

This new contemporary discrimination is a ‘‘fluid process’’ embedded in everyday interactions and organizational structures (Green, 2003, p. 102). Therefore, the subtle and diffuse nature of this kind of discrimination makes it difficult for those who have both personal and contextual perceptions of racism to resolve the situation. Hirsh & Lyons (2010) further suggests that regardless of race or gender “lower-status individuals

are more likely than higher-status individuals to perceive any number of situations as discriminatory." This perception, and/or expectation of discrimination shapes both their objective and subjective experiences (Hirsh & Lyons, 2010). These earlier experiences may play a significant role for individual moving through an organization or the United States' social system when attempting to obtain key leadership or other policy-making positions.

Thirty years after racial discrimination was legally banned, companies continue to spend billions of dollars on diversity initiative, equal employment opportunity, and affirmative action, yet African Americans in key leadership positions remain disproportionately low (Menendez, 2010; National Urban League, 2009; The Alliance for Board Diversity, 2008; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006). So the issue remains, if statutes and ordinances, such as Jim Crow Laws (1874 – 1965) no longer relegate African Americans to an inferior status, then there may be other social and psychological constraints responsible for these social inequalities. Much of the research in this area has examined the external factors such as corporate policies and practices, government laws and regulations or social consciousness regarding the disparity of African Americans in top leadership roles. Very little research has examined the possibility that African Americans have an unconscious psychological hand in this persistent gap. In other words, there may be preexisting anxieties that African Americans hold in a psychological reservoir that acts to maintain the persistent disparity of African Americans in American society.

Purpose of the Study

From slavery to stereotype threat to institutionalized racism, there is a plethora of research regarding the systematic methods of discrimination that serve to block the advancement of African Americans. However, there is little research on whether the unconscious racial and cultural anxieties and hostilities harbored by African Americans may act as barriers toward their own advancement. Austin (2000) suggests there are unconscious, self-imposed thoughts and feelings that hinder an individual's potential for achievement, which ultimately influences every decision they make. The purpose of this study was to obtain a candid first-person perspective, through individual interviews, to determine whether there are factors within the psyche of some African Americans that act as conscious or unconscious self-saboteurs, to perpetuate the underrepresentation of African Americans in executive leadership positions within the framework of the United States.

Hence, I explored two questions related to the assertion that African Americans forfeit career opportunities due to a lack of confidence, initiative and/or commitment. The fundamental element contributing to the development of SFP is the experience of having one's efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction from more powerful others or social system when an individual appears to be gaining skills and independence (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan et al., 1989; Horner, 1968; Pappo, 1972). In this study, I closely examined this element as it relates to the historical relationship between African Americans and European Americans and other factors that may contribute to shaping self-induced limitations in achievement. In other

words, given information (historical experiences or knowledge of racism and discrimination) that breeds certain expectations of a negative outcome in situations, African Americans may unknowingly avoid any situation that triggers stresses that are associated with such experiences. Therefore, I will explore the lived experiences that may shape an individual's decisions to seek out certain opportunities of advancement while avoiding others.

Research Questions

Phenomenology is considered to be a scientific way of answering questions related to "inner experiences in order to meet the discipline's methodological requirements" (Kendler, 2005, p.320). The objective of this qualitative study is to examine the historical experiences as interpreted by African American participants' in their own words regarding their barriers toward success, and the following research questions guiding this study: (a) whether historical conditioning and a series of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP), and (b) whether these characteristics lead to reluctance and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination.

Cohen (1974) identified nine factors, which were considered as providing a meaningful account of the success fearing personality. For this reason, these nine factors will be used to better explore the two research questions: does the historical subsequent intermittent reinforcements of racial discrimination correlate with the characteristics of

the success fearing personality (SFP); and do the characteristics of SFP lead to reluctance and doubt ATS in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination. These nine factors are:

1. Anxiety over the expression of needs and preferences,
2. Reluctance to acknowledge personal competence,
3. impaired concentration and distractibility,
4. Indecisiveness,
5. Safety valve syndrome—fear of loss of control,
6. Illegitimacy of self-promotive behavior,
7. Anxiety over being the focus of attention,
8. Preoccupation with competition and evaluation, and
9. Preoccupation with the underplaying of effectiveness.

Theoretical Foundation

FOS researchers have argued that when personal success is highly probable, some individuals will indulge in behaviors that drive them to self-sabotage in order to avoid experiencing the fullness of their success (Campbell, 1997; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Fleming, 1982; Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Horner, 1969; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1972; Tresemer, 1977).

FOS has been historically associated with inhibiting an individual's efforts toward achievement (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan, 1989; Cohen, 1974; Fleming & Horney, 1992; Horner, 1972, 1974; Tresemer, 1977). However, it has also been considered a significant element of study in the field of psychoanalysis and cognitive

psychology. While some literature exists on the occurrence of FOS within the African American population in relationship to academic and athletic achievement (Campbell, 1997; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Fleming, 1982), few studies have examined FOS's development within the constructs of the African American community and their historical interaction with White America.

Some researchers (Campbell, 1997; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Fleming, 1982; Horner, 1969; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1972) have asserted that the development of FOS starts within the family structure, during the stages of early childhood. They suggest that behaviors are further developed through earlier life experiences that foster ideas, and feelings about other people, preferences for certain activities, and hidden, yet intense emotional reactions when in particular situations. Ultimately, these experiences create an individuals' thoughts and feelings about their self-concepts (Campbell, 1997; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Fleming, 1982; Horner, 1969; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1972). However, there is limited information as to whether a history of slavery, Jim Crow laws, debt peonage, lingering blatant racism, and the mental conditioning of being viewed and treated as subhuman and inferiority is unavoidably communicated to children within the family structure and society, thereby creating multiple generations of success fearers.

In 1969, Horner proposed that women had a greater motivation than men to avoid success because of "the notion that success in competitive situations would lead to negative consequences" (Horner, 1969, p. 38). In other words, it was believed that a

woman succeeding in a competitive environment such as the workplace, public office, sports, etc., would lead to being ostracized, ridiculed, loss of relationships, and other acts of social disparagement. A critical aspect of Horner's theory that is relevant to the studied population of this research is Horner's hypothesis that generations of cultural conditioning causes some individuals to repress and internalize their assertiveness for success.

Statement of the Problem

Several studies have argued that overt racial barriers no longer exist (Burell, 2010; Corning & Bucchianeri, 2010; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Davis et al., 2004; Fairlie & Robb, 2008; Hill, 2006; McWhorter, 2005; Murray, 1995; Lum, 2009). Conversely, other studies have asserted that there is still a large disparity of African Americans in key leadership roles in the framework of the United States compared to the general population (Bobo, 2011; Collins, 2009; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Gregory, 2006; Hewlett, Luce & West, 2005; Rosenberg, 2007; Wise, 2006). Over the past three decades, African Americans have made substantial and meaningful progress in advancing to mid-management levels positions; however, the advancement into key executive level positions is less impressive (Beasley, 2004; Hewlett, Luce & West, 2005; Simon, 2007; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999), and entrepreneurship is even more dismal (Bonds, 2007; Noyes, 2005).

It is proposed that the racial and discriminative barriers that once blocked African Americans' advancements no longer exist ((Burell, 2010; Corning & Bucchianeri, 2010; Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; Fairlie & Robb, 2008; Hill, 2006; McWhorter, 2005; Lum,

2009), yet the disparity of African Americans in key leadership positions continue throughout the United States' corporations (National Urban League, 2014; The Alliance for Board Diversity, 2013). Therefore, something more menacing may be at work causing such contradiction in reality.

Definitions of Terms

African American: A term used in the 2010 U.S. Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) to refer to people who indicated their race(s) as Black, African American, or Negro, or as a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa, such as Nigerian, Kenyan, Haitian, or African American.

Board of directors: A group of elected individuals that act on behalf of the stockholders of a corporation. These individuals establish management-related policies and make decisions on major issues such as: the hiring/firing of executives, dividend policies, options policies, and executive compensation (Investopedia.com, 2015).

Contemporary discrimination: Discrimination characterized as the biases of those who openly denounce prejudice views, but also take part in subtle, indirect practices of discrimination that are often rationalized behavior (Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009). These practices include, but are not limited to lower compensation; undesirable assignments; and fewer opportunities in training, apprenticeship programs, recruitment, and promotional processes (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006; Royster, 2003). Also referred to as *modern racism* (McConahay, 1986).

Debt peonage: A form of slavery that requires individuals to work off debts with little to no compensation for their labor (Blackmon, 2008). Also known as "debt servitude."

Executive or senior management teams: A team of individuals at the top of an organization's hierarchy who hold specific executive powers granted to them by a board of directors and/or shareholders. These individuals are responsible for managing an organization's day-to-day operations (BusinessDictionary.com, 2015).

Institutionalized racism: A process of discriminating against certain groups of people who are deemed as inferior to a dominant group that takes place by denying equal access or treatment in politics, housing, education, medical care, law, etc. (Knowles & Prewitt, 1969).

Intermittent reinforcement: A term describing when rules, punishment, rewards, or personal boundaries are handed out or enforced inconsistently and occasionally. As a result, certain behaviors are hard to change when the consequences received as a result of these particular behaviors are unpredictable or inconsistent (Skinner, 1965).

Internalized oppression: The practice of individuals engaging in roles or actions that reinforce stereotypes and/or sabotage their own efforts (Harro, 2000). This practice, ultimately perpetuates a system of self-imposed oppression.

Jim Crow laws: Local and state laws enacted in the United States between 1876 and 1965 that mandated segregation of the races in all public facilities, under the guise of "separate but equal" conditions for African Americans. These laws sanctioned the substandard treatment of African American by European Americans of all classes,

legalizing a number of social disadvantages toward African Americans, which included, but not limited to economic, educational and judicial injustices (Chafe, Gavins& Korstad, 2001).

Meme: A transmission of ideas or behaviors that are passed on generationally within a culture that imitates a way of life through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, etc. (Dawkins, 1976).

Nigrescence theory: A racial identity development theory describing the African American process of self-actualization by four themes: Pre-encounter; Encounter; Immersion/Emersion, and Internalization (Cross, Jr., 1995).

Racial socialization: Cultural strategies and coping methods that are communicated within African American families to their children. These actions promote cultural pride and dignity, and teach how to survive in mainstream U.S. society while dealing with racism and discrimination (Stevenson, Davis, & Abdul-Kabir, 2001, p. 46).

Socialization: A development process where individuals are taught to behave, think and feel in socially acceptable ways within their culture or society, especially during childhood.

Stereotype threat: A social-psychological happening thought to be most common in individuals who identify strongly with the negative stereotypes associated with a social group (in the context of this study, African Americans), an area in which they are being evaluated, and an expectation of discrimination. This is often the result of past experiences (Steel & Aronson, 1995; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A U.S. federal law that ended segregation in public places and banned discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin as it related to employment. This protection was further expanded by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was designed to bring greater equality to African Americans (Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, 2014).

Therapeutic alienation: A counter-culture mindset adopted by African Americans from mainstream society in the late 1960s that encouraged rejecting the dominant values and behavior of society. Because of its perceived benefits of abdicating one's personal and social accountability, this mindset and behavior persisted beyond its social necessity (McWhorter, 2005).

White: A common term used to refer to a person with a visible degree of European ancestry (Baum, 2006; Bonnett, 2000; Dee, 2004). The 2010 U.S. Census defines White Americans as those with origins originating from Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East. This includes those who identify their race(s) as "White" or other entries such as Caucasian, Irish, Arab, Moroccan, German, Italian, or Lebanese, and is used synonymously with European American in this study.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

It is the assumption of the researcher that centuries of having their efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of a more powerful social system, may have led to African Americans having a strong contradictory attitude about success. Whether this experience was direct, indirect, or vicarious, it is the position of this research that this experience may have created a mindset of

multigenerational adaptive behaviors (specifically, ATS) that act as self-imposed barriers or self-sabotaging behaviors that thwart the very efforts African Americans engage in to achieve advancement.

Jacqueline Fleming's 1982 study of African Americans college students, offers one example of this. Fleming found that the success anxieties African American males experienced in the academic environment were connected to the cultural and historical threats experienced by other African Americans when pursuing success. Thus, the negative consequences that a person who stands out in some way (in this case race) might experience or that an individual (a minority) would possibly be punished for being assertive in certain situations by another more powerful group (in this case White Americans) for being assertive are very relevant points to be consider as it relates to FOS and the African American experience.

The scope and impact of fear of success, must be considered from a fundamental human perspective – there is a substantial gain in denying or minimizing the existence of fearing success—even among those who actually exhibit characteristics of the FOS. Therefore, a major limitation will be in whether participants of the study will interpret or acknowledge the meanings, actions, and consequences of everyday behaviors as survival or defense mechanisms, or as traits of the success fearing personality and the hypersensitivity to situations that trigger this personality. For example, a candidate in a leadership development program may drop out of the program stating work/life balance conflict as the reason for their departure. This person may consciously use the conflict of work/life balance to rationalize their behavior as survival, when unconsciously their

action of leaving the program may be linked to their fear of competition or doubting their ability to complete the program successfully (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Fleming, 1982; Pappo, 1972).

Expressing this same scenario from the psychological framework and experience of an African American candidate, the action of resigning from the program may be driven by an unconscious belief that discriminatory practices or racial stereotypes will determine the successful candidate. Thus, the distress of dispelling racial stereotypes or being preoccupied with unfair judgment and criticism may cause the African American candidate to perform below his or her capabilities, which leads to the unwanted outcome of being eliminated from the program. While the unconscious actions of the African American candidate were self-sabotaging, he or she may explain the negative outcome in terms of a defense mechanism, viewing the outcome as evidence of an unfair social system. Even more damaging, there may be an expectation of being systematically eliminated through contemporary racism. In an effort to shield themselves emotionally or avoid the disappointment of being eliminated, the African American candidate may simply resign from the program (Atkinson & Birch, 1978; Fleming, 1982; Hewlett, Luce & West, 2005; Kaplan & Fishbein, 1969; Oswell, 2005; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Wise, 2006).

Another limitation is not being able to obtain the participants' exact interpretations of their earlier experiences at the time of the occurrence. Thus, the purposed study is limited by the passing of time to achieve accuracy of historical accounts of an experience. The study is also challenged with possible biases from both

the researcher and the participants. Long-held hostilities relating to race relations may also affect the objectivity of participants.

Significance of the Study

Marice Pappo (1983) defined fear of success as, "An emotional phenomenon that can affect the cognition, motivation, and behavior of an individual" (p 37). Pappo proposed that individuals will experience psychological states that cause them to become paralyzed, or to withdraw in the face of perceived success, which ultimately creates the success fearing personality (SFP). While this psychological state is counterproductive on an individual level, it also inhibits the progress of society as a whole (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978).

With the reported forecast that approximately 50% of the current senior executives in Fortune 500 organizations will leave their positions within the next 5-10 years (Simon, 2007), and the mindset of many future African American professionals and college students as potential leaders, opting out of corporate America (Hom, Roberson, Ellis, 2008; Kyser, 2008; Simon, 2007), this will leave a great void in the dynamics of diversity in key leadership positions.

Competence and skill are highly revered and valued in the United States culture. Therefore, an individual's advancement to a position of leadership is based on whether a person's leadership skills and task competencies meet the standards set by a society (Connelly et al., 2000; DeVries, 2000; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). According to the leadership categorization theory, an individual is viewed as an effective leader when they are perceived to have prototypical characteristics of leadership (i.e.,

dominance, self-confidence, intelligence, task-relevant knowledge, and level of energy) (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Stogdill, 1998). For the success fearing personality, many of these leadership characteristics act as stress triggers.

Statistics show that, compared to their European male counterparts, African American males are plagued with a negative social image(Austin, 1996; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Wise, 2006), such as higher imprisonment and criminality rate (45% to 30% white males), more drug (cocaine use only: 17.1 to 9.9 white males) and alcohol abuse (75% to 87.1% white males), higher homicide (33.4% to 3.3% white males) and suicide rates (5.5% to 3.4% white males), higher unemployment (12.2% to 5.4% white males), and more mental disorders (16% to 10.9 white males), the total opposite of the prototypical characteristics of leadership (Carson & Golinelli, 2013; Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2012; National Urban League, 2015). African American women also face the perception of being difficult to work with because their personalities (the “angry Black woman” stereotype) often don’t fit the typical feminine demeanor their white male counterparts are accustomed to dealing with (Karon, 1975; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Wise, 2006). African American women are often expected to assume a more subservient, nurturing role in the workplace. They are often faced with a veiled, yet clear rebuke to tone down their communicative style when disagreeing with a point of view, or offering an opinion – something not experienced by their white counterparts (men or women) in similar situations (Austin, 1996; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Wise, 2006).

Oswell (2005) suggests these images of intellectual inferiority perpetuates the perception that pours the first layer of cement of the concrete ceiling that keeps African Americans from positions of power in corporate America. It is the excessive concern of having to compete on the prototypical characteristics of leadership and then to be judged and criticized that are three of the five characteristics of the success fearing personality. More importantly, the prejudices regarding work style triggers deeper issues linked to a preconceived or expected negative outcome, and motivates some African Americans to act in self-sabotaging ways that include, removing or avoiding high profile situations so not to experience the ridicule and what is seen as unfair selection practices; another characteristic of SFP.

Researchers of the success fearing personality (SFP) have conducted a number of studies focusing on areas such as, its origin, achievement motivation, oppositions, and intrinsic satisfaction. While the research motivation differed, researchers often agreed on five implications: (1) while the influences and consequences of the SFP is often minimized, it is a considerable problem in the United States; (2) the reasoning that occurs with the SFP is mainly in the unconscious mind; (3) the core characteristics of the SFP is rooted in childhood experiences; (4) it is continuously reinforced through family, religion, cultural and social experiences; and (5) it is communicated through various forms of self-sabotaging behavior (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Pappo, 1972; Tresemer, 1974).

Pappo (1972) proposed that the core characteristics of the SFP were expressed in five ways: (1) self-doubt; (2) anxiety in situations of competition; (3) a sense of dread

during periods of evaluation; (4) down-playing personal competencies; and (5) self-sabotaging behaviors. These characteristics become more injurious within a group whose history is laden with social contempt.

The phenomenon of FOS is significant for the African American culture because many of the characteristics are exhibited long after the originating experience (in this case a history of blatant racial discrimination) that created the SFP no longer exist or is irrelevant to the current existence (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978). In other words, the dread toward the consequences of success that may have been cultivated through earlier cultural conditioning or social experiences reaches across the span of time and generations to arouse those earlier learned behaviors, ultimately frustrating any possible opportunities of achievement later in life. More importantly, failure to explore the possibilities of these internal factors as self-imposed barriers to African Americans' advancement promises a future of greater lack, if not an extinction of African Americans in key leadership positions within organizations and the framework of the United States as entrepreneurs.

Another significant factor that is connected to phenomena FOS and is relevant to the African American experience is one's beliefs and attitude toward an expected outcome, which will dictate an individual's decision whether to approach or avoid a particular goal. According to Fishbein (1963), every belief about a particular event, person or situation affects an individual to some degree. These affects then causes the individual to have a predetermined mindset toward all similar, future occurrences. The stronger or more ingrained the beliefs and their affects, the greater the influence those

beliefs will have on the individual's life as a whole (Kaplan & Fishbein, 1969). In other words, the motivation to engage in an activity of significance is linked to the expectation (belief) that one's behavior or actions will lead to the desired outcome; and that desired outcome is of great significance to the individual. Thus, it is postulated that people will engage in achievement-related behavior as long as there is the confidence that particular actions will lead to their valued goals (Atkinson & Birch, 1978; Kaplan & Fishbein, 1969; Petri & Govern, 2004). This may very well provide some insight to the second question of this study, whether these characteristics lead to reluctance and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination, which ultimately leads to the forfeiture of social and economic opportunities.

Summary

According to Campbell (1996) the core consciousness of the U.S. culture is pathologically competitive and rivalrous. This perspective is supported by a study conducted by Hofstede (2001) regarding the values in the workplace of American culture relative to other cultures. The study revealed individualism (91%) as the highest value within the U.S. cultural. Hofstede suggests that in an individualist society, the mindset is to only look after oneself and their direct family. In the international student guide to education and study in the USA (DeVry, 2012), it is reported that competition is viewed as one of the basic principles of American philosophy. The report further advises there is a strong belief that competition brings out the best in people and in businesses. It is within this context that individuals develop distorted perceptions of advancement. Add to

this core consciousness the historical knowledge of slavery; Jim Crow; Debt Peonage, The Civil Rights Act of 1964; and the present-day intermittent reinforcing acts of contemporary discrimination and stereotype threat, and one's distortions may become more destructive.

While many argue whether the proverbial glass ceiling remains securely in place as an obstacle for minorities, Hewlett, Luce and West (2005) supports the perceptions African Americans have regarding social and economic advancement by suggesting barriers such as the "Jell-O floor" exist (p. 78): a situation that keeps minorities stuck in uncertainty and negative stereotypes. In a study of 1,600 minority professionals within various U.S. organizations, Hewlett et al., (2005) noted that many (over 40% of the women, and over 53% of the men) revealed experiencing feelings of exclusion; or lost opportunities for failing to comply with or assimilate a particular *style* within a work environment designed for and by white men. Hence, having to compete in what is thought to be a biased system or to compete with a rival who is perceived to have greater privilege may negatively affect the efforts of some African Americans obtaining key leadership positions or cause them to sabotage their efforts. Others may unconsciously avoid these positions altogether or never make any attempt to compete for premier positions.

These dynamics bring about another cognitive dissonance that Horney (1992) refers to as basic conflict or basic hostility. According to Horney, every neurotic symptom points to underlying unresolved conflicts that produce states of anxiety, depression, indecision, inertia, detachment, etc. Conflicts play an infinitely greater role in

human neurosis than many assume. Unfortunately, these human conflicts are harder to detect because they are basically unconscious. More importantly, those affected by these unresolved conflicts will go to any length to deny their existence (Horney, 1992).

Austin, 2000; Campbell and Fleming, 2000; Horner, 1969; Pappo, 1972 asserted that the success fearing personality (SFP) theory provides insight as to why some individuals may aspire goals, personal or professional, that seem lower than their actual capabilities; engage in self-sabotaging behavior, or downplay their successes. These researchers also note that the general society has a tendency to dismiss the fear of success phenomena as isolated occurrences or as a characteristic that only affect a small fraction of the American populace or the weak. However, with all the alleged social and economic opportunities for advancement available in today's American society, there is something at work that continues to cripple the stability of African Americans' advancement.

To answer this question, the psychological effects rooted in blatant bigotry and discrimination; the acceptance of being oppressed, and marked as inferior to avoid social retribution or even death, cannot be disregarded (throughout this study these effects will be referred as *psychological residue*). Long after slavery, Jim Crow Laws, Debt Peonage, and the tribulations of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 are believed to be over, the impact of being deprived of impartial social and economic advancement afflicts not only the African American culture, but continues to diminish their value in the American society as a whole (Beasley, 2004; Davis et al., 2004; Gardner, 2005; Menendez, 2010; Noyes, 2010; Rosette, Leonardelli & Phillips, 2008; Salter, 2008; Simon, 2007), which ultimately diminishes Americas strength as a nations in the eyes of the world.

Although African Americans have long processed the right to be counted as American citizens, they are still faced with the arduous task of conveying to their children what they need to know to succeed, and to be safe in a society that continues to struggle with racism – a task that European American families are not faced with. Unfortunately, African Americans families, like other racial minority groups, are conditioned to remain in the stipulated *racial parameter* of an archaic system of the past. This antiquated system instilled deep-seated images of inferiority regarding the African American race that genuinely influenced the social consciousness of not just mainstream society, but in the minds of African Americans themselves (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2005; Blackmon, 2008; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Goffman, 1963; Osborne, 2007). Many African Americans have an unconscious mindset that there are benefits for complying with the social stereotypes—that they are inferior, irresponsible, and weak (Aronson, 1999; Karon, 1975; McWhorter, 2001; Reya, 2007; Simon, 2007; Wise, 2008).

Consequently, this unconscious, yet self-sabotaging behavior has become a tremendous ally in maintaining the social bigotries of America's past social values. However, considering this from a mental and emotional perspective, it could be said that in many cases, the African American community's attempts to create coping mechanisms that complied on the surface in order to mask a stronger inner need to compete and succeed in unfavorable situations has led to a mindset that is apprehensive about success (Campbell, 1997; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Horney, 1992; McWhorter, 2001; Reya, 2007; Wise, 2008), and a hypersensitivity to racism (Aronson,

Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Beasley, 2004; Corning & Bucchianeri, 2010; Hirsh & Lyons, 2010; Salter, 2008; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Historical literature provides substantial narrative of the disenfranchisement of African Americans in the United States being linked to acts of overt or covert discrimination and racism (DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Dworkin & Dworkin, 1999; Karon, 1975; Rothenberg, 2005; Wise, 2008). However, if a society ignores or denies its responsibility to seriously consider what part, conscious or unconscious, fears, self-sabotaging behaviors, and hostility plays in the advancement of one racial group over another, it will fail to reach its ultimate potential—nationally and globally. In the pages that follow the goal is not to blame, but to trigger the uncomfortable undertaking of self-reflecting both individually and collectively within African American culture and society as a whole.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the literature pertaining to the theoretical concept of the success fearing personality, its origin, and how it relates to the African/White American historic relationship. Other related theories, such as therapeutic alienation, and the stigma theory, will also be discussed in this chapter. Chapter 3 includes the research design and rationale used to explore the two research questions from a first-person perspective in three areas: (a) the specific attitudes held by African Americans about their prospects of achieving executive level positions of leadership or entrepreneurial opportunities within the United States; (b) whether there is a lack of self-confidence, initiative and commitment to their advancement that suggests traits of the success fearing personality; and (c) what level of control and responsibility African Americans feel they have in

changing the dynamics of African American representation in key leadership and decision-making positions within the United States.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the role of the researcher, possible researcher biases, and other ethical issues that may occur doing the study. Further, I addresses any conflicts of interest and the plan for addressing these issues. I also identify the population, the number of participant, and how participants will meet the research criterion. Along with stating the criterion on which participant selection is based, it also explains the methodology, tools and procedure used to collect data. Finally, Chapter 3 includes a discussion of how participants were debriefed, as well as the follow-up procedures.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the results and analysis revealed through use of the qualitative methodology. Chapter 5 contains the significance of the findings, presents the conclusions of the research based on the results, discusses the implications for the future, and offers the author's recommendations for additional research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In U.S. culture, successful people are envied, esteemed, celebrated, and emulated as models for life (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978). In general, Americans assume that success is a universal, unobstructed commodity available to all who seek it (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Cohen, 1974; Rothenberg, 2005; Wise, 2008). Therefore, most Americans cannot fathom that seemingly normal people may be apprehensive or ambivalent in obtaining success; a behavior defined as the *fear of success* (FOS) (Campbell, 1997; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Fleming, 2000; Freud, 1915; Horner, 1972; Pappo, 1983; Tresemer, 1977). This section presents the foundation for this study's primary research questions:

a) Whether historical conditioning and a series of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP).
b) Whether these characteristics lead to reluctance and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination.

For this study, the major theme, keywords, or terminology used in searching for literature were: fear of success, terms related to racial discrimination in the U.S., self-sabotage, expectation and incentive theory, African American racial identity, African Americans in key leadership positions, diversity in the U.S., stereotype threat, African

American attitude in the workplace, historical experience of African Americans in the U.S. In most cases reviewing the literature related to the key themes warranted an expanded review of other terms and phrases not initially identified such as, human motivation and emotion, black religious experience, African American family structure, and individualism and collectivism. The resources used in identifying the literature were: published books, SocINDEX, ERIC, The Dissertations and Theses database, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, Psychology Databases, Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, and SAGE Premier.

Fear of success has a lengthy history in psychodynamic literature, dating back to Freud's (1915) description of people showing neurotic symptoms when faced with the real possibility of success as "wrecked by success" (p. 320). According to Freud, as long as there are no significant signs of success, a person in conflict with success works passionately and with little (if any) ambivalence toward their desired goal. However, when the success of that goal becomes probable, a person in conflict experiences an abundance of emotional restraints associated with obtaining success. This person will then engage in several self-sabotaging activities or abandon their efforts toward success altogether (Freud, 1915).

Campbell, 1996; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner and Gumpert, 1978; Fleming, 2000; Horner, 1972; Pappo, 1983; and Tresemer, 1977 identified very similar participant behaviors to Freud (1915). These researchers found that their participants also experienced a sense of fear in regards to their own success, and unconsciously acted in neurotic ways to avoid or sabotage it. These study authors defined this behavior as a fear

of success (FOS) and/or the result of success-fearing personality (SFP). SFP is a psychological state that causes noticeable paralysis, avoidance, or withdrawal when the desired goal is consciously recognized, and success is of great probability. According to Pappo (1972), the origin of the SFP is found in the early stages of personal development; as a result, FOS is likely to be exhibited in a wide range of settings if competition with others is perceived. These settings include social situations involving popularity, physical attractiveness, relational successes, financial and professional pursuits, and all sorts of exhibitions and explicit/implicit contests involving skills and talents.

Freud (1959) and later FOS researchers discovered that as long as the goal for success is perceived to be far-off, or the success-fearing person does not consciously recognized it, they may make every effort to successfully strive toward a desire goal. On the other hand, something as simple as receiving a personal compliment or other meaningful feedback relating to success may trigger a sense of anxiety in the success-fearing person. In response to this anxiety, the success-fearing person will react in ways that minimize their anxiety, which often leads to self-sabotaging behavior.

While these later researchers (Campbell, 1997; Canavan-Gumpert et al. 1978; Fleming, 2000; Pappo, 1983) have provided adequate discourse on FOS and its consequences in the areas of academic and athletic achievement. The extant body of literature is limited in its examination of the possibility of this phenomenon functioning as an element in the achievement gap between the mainstream population and disenfranchised groups in the United States. In this study, I explored the success fearing personality (SFP) as it relates to whether historical conditioning and a series of personal

experiences of subsequent intermittent reinforcements of racial discrimination contribute to African Americans' reluctance toward achieving greater levels of success in key leadership positions. This focus aligned with common components in the writings of Campbell and Fleming (2000); Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978); Horney (1937), and Pappo (1983).

The Theoretical Foundation

In 1969, Horner proposed that women had a greater motivation than men to avoid success because of "the notion that success in competitive situations would lead to negative consequences" (Horner, 1969, p. 38). In other words, it was believed that a woman succeeding in a competitive environment such as the workplace, public office, sports, etc., would lead to being ostracized, ridiculed, loss of relationships, and other acts of social disparagement. Although women's need for achievement was equal to or higher than that of men, Horner described the lack of achievement motivation in women as perplexing. Horner described this response phenomenon as avoidance or fear of success, which when triggered resulted in anxiety about succeeding, especially in competitive situations. This anxiety surfaced when there was a high probability that success would lead to an experience of (a) being seen as less feminine, (b) damaging their self-esteem, and (c) social rejection. Horner suggested this anxiety was the result of adopted motives, rather than from an individual's own incentive value toward a success goal. According to Horner, an individual's beliefs and expectations regarding their own character, and the notion of experiencing negative consequences as a result of engaging in competitive achievement is the determining factors for experiencing the anxiety of success.

A critical aspect of Horner's (1969) theory that is relevant to the studied population of this research is the hypothesis that generations of cultural conditioning causes some individuals to repress and internalize their assertiveness for success. Thus, an individual's psyche and unconscious self are not primarily a result of familial upbringing, but rather socially determined by role conditioning. Just as Horner's study suggested that women experienced internal conflict when they demonstrated a depth of competencies, interests, and abilities that went against their stereotypical and internalized sex role, the same could be a viable explanation for the disproportionate lack of African Americans in executive leadership roles.

While Horner popularized the theory of FOS, its roots go as far back as when Freud (1916) recognized that his male clients exhibited neurotic symptoms when facing the possibility of success. Freud referred to this neurotic behavior as being "wrecked by success" (p. 320). Freud suggested that this learned behavior would later cause individuals to occasionally fall ill when a deeply cherished goal had been realized. Freud stated, "It seems as though they could not endure their bliss …" (as cited in Jones, 1959 p. 324). Freud further noted:

It is not at all unusual for the ego to tolerate a wish as harmless so long as it exists in phantasy alone and seems remote from fulfillment, whereas the ego will defend itself hotly against such a wish as soon as it approaches fulfillment and threatens to become a reality. (Jones, 1959, p. 324)

According to Freud (1959), this neurotic reaction frequently prevents an individual from taking the final step in achieving their success (e.g., actually getting

married or going after long desired important position or promotion). Freud went on to note when external frustrations occurred feelings of anger, unhappiness, and yearning may be triggered, but did not cause neurosis. The neurosis resulted from the internal conflict between the person's urge to satisfy their strong desires and needs, and their conscience prohibitions against fulfilling those desires. Therefore, when success was probable, the guilt and anxiety associated with deeply rooted internal conflict surfaces (in the case of African Americans—social oppression) creating even more internal prohibitions to an already frustrating reality.

According to Rabstejnek (2009) and Schuster (1955) the Oedipus and castration theories are useful metaphors beyond its sexual implications. The Oedipal conflict represents the child's interpretation of the love-hate relationship with his or her parents. The helpless child who fears the severe punishment of the all-powerful parent suggests the castration theory. Fear and hatred is not the only thing that complicates this interaction, love for the parents make it more difficult as well. Both perspectives can be applied to the adulthood interaction between an individual and someone of greater authority, as well as the historical interaction between African and White Americans.

Since Freud and Horner presented their findings, considerable contributions have been made to elaborate on this theory by researchers such as Ovesey (1962), Cohen (1974), Tresemer (1977), Fleming (1982), Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978), Fleming (1982), Horney (1992), and Campbell (1997). One significant change made by later researchers was the assertion that FOS is not gender specific as originally suggested by Horner and Freud, but rather a phenomenon experienced by many, no matter their gender

or station in life (Campbell, 1997; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Cohen, 1974; Fleming, 1982; Pappo, 1972; Tresemer, 1977). While there are no empirical numbers to corroborate what percentage of the American population is affected by the FOS, these researchers suggested that it occurs at a more significant degree than most scholars and laypersons want to acknowledge (Campbell, 1997; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Pappo, 1972).

Researchers of the FOS or the success fearing personality (SFP) (Campbell, 1997; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Cohen, 1974; Fleming, 1982; Fleming, 1982; Horner, 1969; Horney, 1992; Ovesey, 1962; Tresemer, 1977) viewed fear of success as feelings of anxiety that occur when an individual approaches self-defined goals that are considered important accomplishments, and the attainment of these goals are both sought after by the individual, while also being avoided for fear of reprisal, isolation or losing something of value. Also according to these researchers, there were five common recurring personality characteristics: (a) self-doubt; (b) anxiety in situations of competition; (c) a sense of dread during periods of evaluation; (d) down-playing personal competencies; and (e) various forms of self-sabotaging behaviors.

Origin of the Success Fearing Personality

Since Horner's 1968 research on FOS or the success fearing personality (SFP), further development of the theory has followed two popular paths of reasoning. One group of researchers concurred with Horner's original line of thought, which argued that FOS origins start early in childhood, and is a single personality disposition, which triggers an expectation of negative consequences when in competitive achievement

situations. For example, researchers such as Canavan-Gumpert, Garner and Gumpert (1978), Fleming (1982), and Pappo (1972) argued that the dominant factor furthering the development of the SFP is the transmission of anxiety to a child by a parent when the child begins to perform at a level of independence that separates them from the parent. Subsequently, the child devises a myriad of ways that will enable him or her to cope with the anxiety and any subsequent situations that may trigger their anxiety.

Over time, these methods gradually evolve into elaborate defense mechanisms that form the pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize the success fearing personality. The anxiety and insecurity initially produced by the negative parental reactions to a child's success eventually become internalized by the child and operates independently as the "dictates of conscience" (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978, p. 118). Therefore, the early anxieties learned in childhood is carried into adulthood, and is inclusive, far-reaching and recurrent (Atkinson, 1958, as cited in Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978, pp. 115-120).

A second group of researchers (Bremer & Wittig, 1980; Lockheed, 1975; Monahan, Kuhn, & Shaver, 1974; Tresemer, 1977) viewed the avoidance of success as being situational. These researchers argued that avoidance was primarily dependent on the individual's expectations about the consequences of their behavior – positive or negative. They further argued that these expectations are triggered by the cues that the individual receives in a particular situation. In support of the social aspects of the fear of success position, Bremer and Wittig (1980) found that participants of their study (both men and women) wrote higher FOS responses to non-traditional success situations, as it

related to genders, than to traditional success situations. Therefore, according to this response, Bremer and Wittig suggests that FOS is not a psychological barrier (motive) within an individual, but rather the individual's perception of the consequences associated with success. In other words, an individual's increased negative response is not toward success itself, but toward the perceived consequences of success in particular situations.

While there are differences of opinions among theorists as to the origination of fear of success or the success fearing personality, one major argument seems common, whether the fear of success originates primarily in the individual, or in real events (i.e., rejection and disapproval) in the external social world, which then affects the individual. Tresemer (1977) summarized it like this:

To sum up the wide range of forms that success avoidance can take and the various theories put forward to account for it… the point should be made that all the sorts of apparent avoidance of attainment of a desired goal—from inhibition of symbolically sexual achievement based on parental prohibitions experienced in childhood to "restriction of output" among workers in a machine shop to superstitions about the overly successful based on transgression of expectations—are related to each other, even if not as systematically as might be desired. In each case, a limit of intolerability set up by a personal or social normative system has been exceeded and there exists an expectation of negative consequences for performance above a certain level (p. 79).

I propose that both perspectives are relevant factors; with each feeding off the other, one nurturing its existence, and the other maintaining or reinforcing its existence. As noted by Tresemer (1977), both lines of thought are related to each other, even if they

are not as systematically correlated as might be desired. In this case, one viewpoint proposes an internalized, learned reaction, while the other proposes a reaction to an externalized stimulus. However, further review of the literature might lead one to conclude as Tresemer did: "In each case, a limit of intolerability has been set up by a personal and social normative system that has been exceeded, thus there exists an expectation of negative consequences for performance above a certain level" (pp. 12-13). Additionally, it is the position of this researcher that both elements may prove to have the potential of becoming even more complex and devastating when a long history of social rejection, abuse and social oppression is added to the equation (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1999; Karon, 1975; Lowery, Knowles & Unzueta, 2007; Rothenberg, 2005; Wise, 2008).

Therefore, I will explore both related perspectives of *expectancy* through the historical lens of the African American experience. The first research question: Whether historical conditioning and a series of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP), follows the first line of thought regarding FOS—that generations of cultural conditioning causes one to repress their assertiveness for success because of an expectation of negative consequences when in competitive situations. The second research question: whether these characteristics lead to reluctance and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination, follows the second line of thought—that the avoidance of success is primarily dependent on the individual's expectations about the

consequences of their behavior, and that these expectations are triggered by the cues that occur in certain external situation.

Characteristics of Apprehension and Ambivalence

Researchers of FOS recognize that those who fear success have strong conflicting attitudes or cognitive dissonance about success; they view success as having various positive virtues and results, while also being darkened by potentially costly and negative results (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983). The experience of having their efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of a more powerful social system, may have led to African Americans having a strong contradictory attitude about success (Campbell, 1997; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Corning & Bucchianeri, 2010; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Hirsh & Lyons, 2010; Karon, 1975; Reya, 2007; Salter, 2008; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Wise, 2008).

One example of this attitude is revealed in Campbell and Fleming's (2000) study of success anxieties in African American males. The study revealed that FOS could be related to the negative consequences of a person standing out in some way or being assertive in relation to another more powerful group (White society), which may punish or retaliate against an individual (African Americans) for being assertive. According to Beasley (2004), while these beliefs may be more of one's perceptions than reality, the experience of African-Americans may have primed them to misinterpret many situations, as well as their contradictory attitudes regarding success. According to Canavan-

Gumpert, Garner, and Gumpert (1978) those who have this strong contradictory attitude about success are highly ambivalent about success

In the following sections I briefly discuss the five general characteristics of FOS and other behaviors linked to these characteristics. The goal of this research is to explore the possibilities of these traits being expressed in the qualitative interviews as rationalizations or defense mechanisms when explaining the efforts they will exert, and their expectations in obtaining executive or key leadership positions.

Self-Doubt and the Denial (Repudiation) of Competence

Self-doubt and a negative self-evaluation are important characteristics of the SFP. Individuals who are apprehensive and ambivalent toward their success are likely to experience feelings of uncertainty and a lack of confidence in their intellectual abilities. They also have a tendency to underestimate and avoid taking responsibility for their own successful performances by downplay the importance of their competence. As a result, success-fearers attribute their successes to factors external to themselves (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Cohen, 1974). Thus, the characteristics of self-doubt and the denial (repudiation) in the SFP are linked to one's internal/external locus of control (LOC).

Rotter (1954) referred to the locus of control as the expected degree to which a person believes he or she can control the events that affect them. One's locus can be either internal (the belief that one controls their life) or external (the belief that one's environment, a higher power, or other people essentially control the decisions and events in their life). Along with a more negative self-esteem, success-fearers also are more likely

to have an external locus of control—contributing the successful outcomes to chance, fate or other people. For example, Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978) and Cohen (1974) found that success-fearers expected to be significantly less likely to win in a competitive or an evaluative situation than those who did not fear success. They cited "luck" as more responsible for determining their successful outcome; as well as regarding the unimportance of the task (low stakes) as more important than their ability.

According to many researchers (Bremer & Wittig, 1980; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Goffman, 1963; Horney, 1992; Karon, 1975; McWhorter, 2005; Pappo, 1983; Petersen, Maier & Seligman, 1995; Rabstejnek, 2009; Rotter, 1954; Wise, 2006), individuals who belief they are helpless as it relates to controlling the consequences in their lives are more susceptible to anxieties of expectations. Further, since having confidence in one's ability predicts the possibility of success; the SFP may attempt to avoid the anxiety associated with their success by accepting an attitude of low self-esteem and a lack of self-assurance. Success-fearers also report having greater apprehension and rate their competitors as having a significantly greater competitive orientation (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Cohen, 1974). In other words, in an attempt to minimize the anxiety of experiencing their success efforts being affected adversely and repeatedly by the negative reaction from a more powerful external source, success-fearers may come to accept a limited self-view and thoughts of lacking competence.

Some researchers suggest that the truer hindrance to the consistent progress of African Americans is in their acceptance of servility and inferiority (DeGruy-Leary,

2005; Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951; Karon, 1975; McWhorter, 2001). This can be considered a form of self-doubt and a denial (repudiation) of competence or learned helplessness. It should also be noted that researchers such as Chance and Imes (1978), Horner (1972), Kets de Vries (2005), and Rabstejnek (2009) have also linked the characteristics of self-doubt and the denial (repudiation) in the SFP to the imposter phenomenon (IP). The imposter syndrome is described as a psychological occurrence that prevents an individual from internalizing their accomplishments. In other words, individuals who, despite evidence of their competence, dismiss their abilities and are convinced that they are incapable of such accomplishments; therefore, they do not deserve the success they achieve. Just as success-fearers and those with an external locus of control, those with IP attribute their success to being in the right place at the right time, being a good con-artists, or just mere luck.

Preoccupation with Competition and Evaluation

According to some of the researchers of FOS (Campbell, 1997; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horney, 1992; Tresemer, 1977), the core consciousness of the U.S. culture is pathologically competitive and rivalrous, and it is within this context that individuals develop distorted perceptions around competition and rivalry. Because conflicts about competition and competitive success are often the central to success-fearers, they are likely to exhibit a significant preoccupation with competition and evaluation. Therefore, the SFP has a tendency to feel they must be vigilant regarding situations that may contain competitive elements. At the same time, they are highly likely to be concerned with how others evaluate their performance.

The SFP pursues competitive goals in an aggressive attempt to defeat their rivals. However, they are soon plagued by their cognitive dissonance between fear of failure or negative consequences, and their fear of success. There is the anticipation of experiencing contempt from others should they fail; so there is the anxiety of facing unbearable humiliation. If they succeed, there is the anticipation that others will become envious and hostile toward them; feelings that they themselves may have harbored toward others that are successful (Bremer & Wittig, 1980; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983; Rabstejnek, 2009). Therefore, the basic underlying dynamic in the SFP as a competitor involves an ambitious desire to win in competition, a fear that winning will lead to envy and rejection, and a fear that failure will lead to painful humiliation.

Of the five FOS characteristics, Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978); Goffman (1963); Pappo (1983), and Tresemer (1977) saw the anxieties associated with competition and evaluation as the strongest defense mechanism. These defense mechanisms are constructed by the individual to distract them from their true inter-conflict; retribution for achieving a greater level of competence and skill. For example, according to Simon (2007), the adaptation for many minorities in white-male dominated organizational hierarchies is the development of a dual-consciousness at work. This dual-consciousness has become a defense mechanism where the individual's focus is divided between the awareness of their own racial stigmatized status and the perceived reactions from the majority culture as a result of their race, while simultaneously continuing to meet the performance demands of their role as a senior executive. Therefore, the perception

(accurate or not) of constantly having to prove oneself (*be on* as termed by participants) while keeping their shield up, is psychologically detrimental for many, if not most minorities (Simon, 2007). Thus, this dual consciousness may act as a defense mechanism to redirect their focus away from their competence and places it on being preoccupied with the evaluations made by others regarding their performance in a competitive situation. It should also be noted that success-fearers have a tendency to perceive neutral or noncompetitive situations as competitive, and may feel evaluated in instances where no evaluation is occurring.

Self-Sabotaging Behavior

One of the most striking effects of the SFP is self-sabotaging behavior. Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978), Cohen (1974), and Pappo (1972) suggested that success-fearers sabotage their performance when they are confronted with the fact that their competence has been effective and success is imminent. Before discussing the behavior, there are two terms deserving of an honorable mention: sabotage and competence.

In the context of this research, the use of the word sabotage suggests that the interference of one's performance is a subconscious act that serves as a function for the person. Thus, he or she will repeatedly behave in ways that inhibit or decrease the quality of their performance. As it relates to the SFP, when a person accepts that he or she is gaining competence in a particular area, they are also acknowledging that they are capable of doing something they were unable to do before. The acknowledgement of competence implies that the person has defined the task, they have accepted a standard that the performance is measured by, and that the new skill has been tested against their

prior skill performances. The belief in one's competence can induce pleasurable emotional arousal, which will produce an increase in the person's liking for the situation and the task that created the pleasurable feelings (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Cohen, 1974; Pappo, 1972). It is the awareness of this pleasure that prompts success-fearers to engage in actions of self-sabotage.

Once success-fearers are actually confronted with the conscious knowledge of their success, they often engage in acts of repudiation of their success in an attempt to reduce the anxiety of their cognitive dissonance (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Cohen, 1974; Freud, 1915). However, when these attempts fail, and success-fearers are forced to acknowledge that their success is imminent, they may unconsciously sabotage their efforts by avoiding or abandoning a desired goal partially or entirely, performing more poorly, or undermine the experience of pleasure they may receive from the success (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Cohen, 1974; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1972; Rabstejnek, 2009).

Therefore, according to Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978), the proximity of success and being confronted with the undeniable evidence of their competence in what is perceived as a forbidden task, as well as the inability to abort their involvement in the success will lead the success-fearers to sabotage the very behaviors that are instrumental in achieving a goal. So a conversation about self-sabotage is never really practical unless a person has made some progress, through their efforts, toward a desired goal (Bremer & Wittig, 1980; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983; Rabstejnek, 2009).

The act of sabotaging one's performance can be seen in such tasks as cognitive-intellectual tasks (e.g., reading comprehension and memory skills) or socially oriented tasks (e.g., communication and interpersonal interactions) (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983; Rabstejnek, 2009). In essence, if a task is seen by the success-fearer as offering some form of success, there is a potential to self-sabotage. For example, if one accepts the concept that African Americans may self-sabotage their efforts toward success, consider a previous discussion of Goffman's (1963) findings regarding mixed contact. African American individuals may enter a certain mixed contact situation that results in successful affiliations. However, with a personal history of racial antagonism, a hypersensitivity to stereotype threat, and the expectation of a negative outcome; the awareness of engaging in this pleasurable activity results in some form of self-sabotage as a way to minimize the anxieties that may be experienced.

The self-sabotaging characteristic of the SFP is also linked to behaviors such as vacillation, indecisiveness and procrastination. An important factor regarding the self-sabotaging behavior is following success or performance sabotage, success-fearers show enhanced focus and performance on another unrelated task (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Cohen, 1974; Pappo, 1972).

The Current Social Landscape of African Americans

In their 2014 state of Black America report, "One Nation Underemployed: Jobs Rebuild America," the National Urban League noted that with the equality index set at 100%, Blacks stand at 71.2% in comparison with that of whites in economics, health,

education, social justice and civic engagement. While this is a slight improvement over the previous year's index of 71.0%, the index dropped from 56.3% to 55.5% in the area of economics. In the same report, Hispanics' equality index went to 75.8%, compared to 74.6% the previous year. However, their economics index declined from 60.8% to 60.6 %. It should be noted that according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), together, minorities (African-Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics) represented 33.7% of the total U.S. population. In the last ten years, growth for all three groups has significantly outpaced that of White Americans. Africans Americans make up more than 37 million individuals in the United States. Asians make up more than 13 million of the population, and Hispanics/Latinos comprise more than 45 million. Unfortunately, these numbers are not reflected in the selection of executive leaders in the United States top corporations, nor the U.S. federal government.

Many corporations acknowledge that having minorities in senior executive positions would be extremely important to providing innovation and new ideas. They also admit that having minorities in key leadership positions would better represent the diversity of their consumers. However, few practice what they say. The "good old boy" corporate culture that thrives on insider networking is still fully operational when it comes to diversifying key executive positions (Executive Leadership Council, 2008; Hutchinson, 2007). For instance, while African Americans make up 12.6% of the general U.S. population, they hold only 6.5% of senior government positions and 7.2% of private sector professional positions (Executive Leadership Council, 2008; Hutchinson, 2007). Government agency hiring patterns for minorities vary by departments when

representation is compared to relevant civilian jobs. However, the potential applicant pools that is stressed by demographic and economic pressures make it hard for many government agencies to compete with the private sector when recruiting more diverse applicants (Rosenberg, 2007). The National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the National Science Foundation released data (2008) regarding a survey of earned doctorates. The study, which is the latest data available, found that only 30% of economics doctoral recipients in 2005 were women. Foreign nationals received two-thirds of those economic doctorates, leaving the Congressional Budget Office without a diverse pool of viable candidates to recruit, and the available candidates often prefer to go where their compensation is twice that of what the government offers (Rosenberg, 2007).

In an article, "Federal Workforce Diversity: Why Agencies Seek Out Minority Workers" that appeared on GovCentral-Monster.com, Dan Woog (2007) quoted the chair of the National Organization of Blacks in Government, Farrell Chiles to say, "For African Americans in government, it can be hard to move up the ladder, especially into senior executive positions, if you don't have a mentor. Many African Americans leave government for better opportunities in corporate America..." Chiles further noted that even though government agencies attempt to encourage African Americans to take tests and advance in grade, the reality is, they are also competing against other minorities and veterans.

In an overview of the federal and private sector population, it was found that while African Americans held 17.1% of all lower level federal positions and 13.8% of all

private sector positions, they experienced the greatest decline in representation from Boards to executive management teams at 8.77% to 4.23%. In other words, this equates to about one out of every 11 Board member positions, and one out of every 24 executive team member positions is held by an African American. When the representation of Africans/African Americans on executive boards is compared to population statistics, they account for only about one-third of their U.S. population (13% of the total U.S. population), in comparison to White males representing 71.5% of board members in relation to the total U.S. population of Whites being 72% (Corporate Board Initiative of the Committee of 100, Inc., 2007; Menendez, 2010; National Urban League, 2009; The Alliance for Board Diversity, 2008, 2010; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006).

Following the election of Barack Obama, The Executive Leadership Council (ELC, 2008) conducted a study in response to the recurring conversation of whether the United States' first African-American President would impact opportunities for minorities seeking to move into top level executive positions. The findings showed that African-American women in particular continue to face serious challenges in making their way up the corporate ladder. One hundred fifty executives from various industries, services and regions identified several issues preventing or retarding the advancement of African-American women to executive positions. Three top issues were identified: 31% of the executives attributed these challenges to the feebler strategic networks available to African-American women; 24% attributed it to the stereotypical perceptions regarding

the competencies of African-American women, and 23% were associated with the demands of work/life balance (ELC, 2008; Collins, 2009).

In 2010, the office of U.S. Senator Robert Menendez conducted a voluntary corporate diversity survey, which was sent to 537 corporations ranked as Fortune 500 corporations. The purpose of the survey (the Corporate Diversity Report) was to examine how closely the leadership of United States' top 500 corporations reflected the diversity of its society. The report revealed White/Caucasian men comprise nearly 70% of executive team members (CEO and his/her direct reports). While women fared somewhat better on executive teams than on corporate Boards, they still represent less than one-half of their population. In general, minorities have far less representation on executive teams than they do on corporate Boards, accounting for 10.44% of executive managers, compared to 30% of their actual proportion to the U.S. population. More specifically, the average number of executive team members is 15.8; women comprise 20.00% of executive team members; Minorities comprise 10.44% of executive team members. That is, minority women represent 2.29% of executive team members; Hispanics/Latinos comprise 2.90%; Black/African Americans comprise 4.23%; Asians 2.55%; Native Americans 0.25%; other minorities represent 0.62%; and disabled persons comprise 0.44% of executive team members (Menendez, 2010).

In a similar report titled, "Missing Pieces: Women and Minorities on Fortune 500 Boards—2010 Alliance for Board Diversity Census," it was noted that more than three quarters of all corporate board seats were held by white men. Women hold 15.7% of board seats and minorities hold 9.8% of board seats. These findings indicate that white

men still overwhelmingly dominated corporate America. When adjusting the calculation for minority men and women, White/Caucasian men represent 77.6% of executive team members, White women represented 12.7% and minority (African-Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics) men and women combined represent 9.8%. (The Alliance for Board Diversity, 2010).

These statistics seem to reveal, for every organization that commits to making diversity more than a checklist activity, there are even more that praise themselves for having one minority on their board, or placing a few minorities in lower-level management positions (Hutchinson, 2007). Hutchinson notes while some of America's largest and best-known corporations have been widely commended for maintaining a good reputation for hiring and promoting minorities, they have also been plagued with lawsuits of discrimination and inequality. For example, Coca-Cola, Texaco, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Toyota have all suffered legally and publically, resulting in huge financial settlements or consent decrees with the EEOC. In 2005, 35.5% of all employee grievances within the federal government was due to claims of perceived racial discrimination. Monetary benefits paid out for race claims alone totaled $76.50 million dollars, this excluded benefits paid as a result of litigations (Starks, 2009). Hutchinson goes on to point out that the greatest injustice to minorities in the workplace is the relentlessly unfavorable environments that are created and maintained in many companies. Because complaints of racial harassment toward employees has continued to climb since 1990, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, under the E-RACE Initiative, maintains its focus on eradicating race and color discrimination within

the workplace and pursues new strategies of enforcement to address contemporary forms of overt, subtle and implicit biases of the 21st century (EEOC, 2011).

On college campuses, many African-American students are hoping to avoid corporate America all together when making career choices (Parker, 2006). Many are concerned that the corporate environment is not a good fit for them. Others feel ill-equipped to take on the demands they believe corporate America represents or will expect of them. Still others are deciding to sacrifice the opportunities they might gain in corporate America because of the highly publicized lawsuits and allegations of racism and practices of inequality. The alternative is to strive toward entrepreneurship. However, the outlook in this area also shows a disparity amongst African-Americans (Parker, 2006).

Again, while the African-American community, including those of more than one race, is estimated to be over 13% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), they own only 5.2% of companies in America, and 87% of African American-owned firms pull in less than $50,000 per year in revenue, compared to 65% for all white U.S. firms (Fairlie & Robb, 2008; Noyes, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Personal wealth can be used as collateral to acquire business loans or to invest directly into the business. However, in their 2013 study, The Pew Research Center revealed that the median net worth of a White household in America is 13 times the median net worth of African American households, with White households at $141,900, while African-Americans disproportionally at $11,000 (Kochhar & Fry, 2014). Thus, the low levels of net worth in the average African-American household creates greater

complications when attempting to secure capital. This also provides insight into why research reveals that African-American entrepreneurs experience higher probabilities of loan denial for business startups, pay higher interest rates than their White counterparts, have inadequate startup capital, and are far less likely to have the advantages of a multigenerational family business, and the social ties that often lead to business partnerships among White-owned businesses (Fairlie & Robb, 2008; Noyes, 2010; Robb, Fairlie, & Robinson, 2009).

More specifically, access to startup capital is essential for the success of a business. A higher level of startup capital ensures that a business has a better chance to succeed; it experiences higher sales and profits, and is more likely to hire employees. The single largest factor contributing to racial disparities in African American-owned business performance is the fact that they start with significantly lower levels of financial capital than that of White-owned companies. Education and prior work experience in a similar type of business are important for entrepreneurial success. However, on average, African American business owners were found to have lower levels of education than that of White business owners.

Further, African American business owners have far less opportunities than White entrepreneurs to develop essential work experience by working in family businesses, which negatively affects their business knowledge and outcomes (Fairlie & Robb, 2008; Robb, Fairlie, & Robinson, 2009). The social affiliations that often lead to business partnerships or strong recommendations among small White-owned business are in many instances non-existent for African American owned. For example, despite the

government mandated that federal agencies and corporations do business with African American-owned vendors; many of them are never considered for supplier roles in most corporations, because vendors are often not selected through the traditional procurement process. Meaning, contracts are most often awarded to suppliers that the decision maker has an established relationship with, which in many cases; don't include African American-owned suppliers (Noyes, 2010). Noyes asserts that this is due to a "perception of incompetence," an unspoken preconception that works against many African American-owned businesses. The perception is that somehow African American-owned vendors have lower professional standards, thus making them inferior vendors.

There is also a common presumption that the prices of African American vendors are higher, thus making the cost of doing business more. In addition, many decision makers in large publicly held companies feel justified in overlooking minority entrepreneurs for business opportunities because they believe that white-owned firms are disenfranchised by government minority business programs (Wade, 2010). In essence, African American-owned businesses continue to face persistent constraints in external capital markets. The financing constraints that African American-owned businesses face may have a profound negative impact on African Americans as it relates to wealth accumulation, economic advancement, and job creation within their community (Noyes, 2010).

DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Hewlett, Luce and West, 2005; Rothenberg, 2005; Thomas, 1990 suggests when legislation that initiated affirmative action was passed, it did very little to address the underlying assumptions and stereotypes that plagued minorities in

organizations. For example, according to Thomas (1990), when laws forced organizations to hire and promote minorities into managerial positions, some did so with what Thomas referred to as malicious compliance; an act of deliberately appointing minority candidates who were weak or ill-suited for a particular position, so they had little chance of succeeding. Thomas' views were voiced earlier in a 1963 polling that appeared in Newsweek magazine, where it was noted that three-fourths of White Americans said, "The Negro is moving too fast in their demands for equality." Later, in October 1964, nearly two-thirds of Whites argued that the legislation of the Civil Rights Act should have occurred gradually. They emphasized that employers should have been persuaded to eradicate discriminate, instead of being forced to comply with equal opportunity requirements (Wise, 2006). Despite the efforts and progress of African Americans that contradict the assumptions and stereotypes held toward them, it could be argued that evidence supports the assertion, "While legislation that initiated affirmative action was passed, it did very little to address the underlying assumptions and stereotypes that plagued minorities in organizations" is still very real today (Wise, 2006).

The first half of this chapter discussed the history and origin of FOS. It also elaborated on the first major theme in the FOS construct, and the five general characteristics of FOS (self-doubt; denial (repudiation) of competence; preoccupation with competition and evaluation; and self-sabotaging behavior). The second major theme of FOS suggests there is possibly an unconscious self-inflicted element as well. The characteristics of FOS are multi-layered and are likely the direct result of the success fearer's unconscious conflict about competition and success. The response to this conflict

is the implementation of various defense mechanisms. The remaining discussion in this chapter will elaborate on the second major theme, which I propose is the result of modern-day apprehensiveness toward success (ATS).

Grounds for Modern-Day Apprehension and Ambivalence

Although past and present researchers identify the phenomenon of avoiding, withdrawing, or sabotaging a long sought out ambition as a fear of success, I strongly suggest that the passing of time has shifted this fear to a psychological state of apprehensiveness and ambivalence. It could be argued that this is merely a play on words, but I propose there is a subtle, yet significant difference that hinges on the zeitgeist of society in the U.S. For example, the ethos of the dominate culture after the emancipation of African slaves was one that saw newly freed African slaves as an imminent threat to the social and economic existence (Burrell, 2010; Foner & Brown, 2005; Karon, 1975; Rubel, 2005). While this newly received freedom meant a new beginning for African slaves in the United States, the spirit and general attitude of White America was of grave fear and was reflected in literature, philosophy and the law.

This fear was considered grave in itself, and not merely in the estimation of a few fearing people, but of a total society (Burrell, 2010; Foner & Brown, 2005; Rubel, 2005; Wormser, 2003). It should be noted that fear can be just or unjust, according to the impartiality or the reasons that lead to the use of fear as a compelling force (Bourke, 2005). White Americans' fear was based on a belief that the threats newly freed Africans presented to their social and economic well-being were possible, as well as inevitable. This social fear allowed society to ignore the penalties attached to actions that were

against the law (Bourke, 2005; Burrell, 2010; Foner & Brown, 2005; Karon, 1975; Rubel, 2005).

The case that apprehension is a more accurate present-day assessment than fear, can further be made base on their definitions. Fear, is an emotional response to a very clear and recognizable threat or danger. It is a basic human survival mechanism produced by imminent danger or pain (Bourke. 2005). On the other hand, the subtle difference in apprehensiveness is the distress of what "might" happen; an expectation or anticipation of what "might" occur. There is no imminent or present threat, just a suspicion of threat. Apprehensiveness is also associated with doubt, worry, hesitation and mistrust (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2011). In essence, fear is the response to a present, immediate and specific threat or danger, where apprehension is the response to a non-existent or a suspicious expectation of a future threat or danger.

For African Americans, what started out as fear of death, extreme physical beatings, physical mutilation, and other forms of deliberate and brutal punishment if they displayed an innate striving for self-sufficiency, now functions as a very sophisticated, less recognized form of racial intimidation (Bourke, 2005; Davidson-Buck, 2015; Wise, 2009). Thus the racial violence and systemic injustice that defined the Jim Crow era (even if main-stream society chooses naïveté over the awareness to the depths of its depravity) continues to be a reality in the 21st Century, despite their less obvious forms (Davidson-Buck, 2015; Reya, 2007; Thompson, 2014; Wise, 2009; Younge, 2014).

Therefore the ability to navigate through a far less easily recognized type of discrimination and racism that first created their fears of retribution becomes a more

complicated task of uncertainty. The result of such mental influences may be a state of apprehension and ambivalence in their current efforts toward success. This psychological residue relates to one of the key factors of the FOS theory: those who exhibit characteristics of FOS do so long after the originating experience (in this case a history of blatant racial discrimination) that created the fearfulness no longer exist, or the negative consequences are irrelevant to the current existence (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978). This may also lend itself to a previously mentioned suggestion by Austin (2000) that there are unconscious, self-imposed but powerful thoughts and feelings that can sabotage an individual's real achievement, influencing every decision they may make.

In this post-Jim Crow, Civil Rights Act of 1964 era, it is my position that the characteristics of apprehensiveness and ambivalence (to be referred to as *Apprehensive toward Success* [*ATS*]) greatly mimics the fear of success. However, it may be less about a present day fear, and more about what Johnson et al. (2003) referred to as perceptual baggage; the expectation of biases rooted in the past (Salter, 2008).

Psychologists have long recognized that individuals do not come to life events empty-minded, but rather, with perceptions and beliefs that includes their unique anthology of experiences, desires, and needs, as well as commonly shared cultural norms and philosophies (Bruner 1957; Johnson et al., 2003; Salter, 2008). According to Bruner (1957), there is no such thing as pure or uncontaminated percepts. Instead, individuals are more prone to draw from their experiences and their existing desires in order to reach beyond the context of information given.

Evidence of Historical Residue Revealed through One's Perception

In their study of more than 1,600 minority professionals, Hewlett, Luce and West (2005) found that despite the exceptional qualifications African Americans held in various skill sets, these achievements were eclipsed by personal style and cultural mannerisms. Everything from cornrows, ethnic jewelry, animated hand gestures, and certain manicures could alter what potential colleagues thought about African American candidates. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) determined that many judgments on hiring and promotions were made based on how people look, the shape of their bodies, and most significantly, the color of one's skin.

The Center for Creative leadership (CCL, 2003), a leadership development research organization in Greensboro, NC, conducted a study to examined the challenges minorities face in executive positions in predominantly white-male organizational hierarchies. The study pointed out that many minority professionals, managers, and executives perceived advancement in corporate America to mean assimilating within the dominant culture, and renouncing their racial identities. Minorities felt suppressing their racial identities were necessary because their differences were not understood or welcomed in the workplace. Whether real or perceived, such beliefs about assimilation caused minorities to experience emotional frustration and fatigue, as well as other unfavorable consequences on their personal and social well-being and effectiveness. It was also thought to diminished the professional enrichment and satisfaction experienced by minorities (CCL, 2003).

The study further revealed that White Americans were often unaware of the many dynamics experienced by Africans American in the workplace. For example, many White

Americans assumed that everyone shared their own perceptions of equity, which was frustrating to many minorities. Also revealed in the study was the challenge of miasma, the unpleasant or oppressive atmosphere minorities experience within organizations, which explained why minorities reported experiencing uncertainty and lack of trust toward the dominant culture (CCL, 2003). This experience of uncertainty and distrust caused African Americans to feel as though they had to continuously restrain themselves when faced with the misperceptions held by Whites about African Americans in general. For many minorities, whether an accurate perception or not, the awareness of constantly having to prove themselves while keeping their shield up, became particularly detrimental and debilitating because it consumed a considerable amount of energy.

According to Goffman's (1963) studies on social stigmas, an individual's appearance conveys social information, which varies according to whether this information is hereditary or not. Unfortunately, once this information is associated with an individual, or group in this case, it becomes a permanent part of them. For instance, skin color and hair texture is hereditary. On the other hand, while a tattoo or being physically maimed can be permanent, they are not hereditary. Thus, Goffman suggested that a person's identity could convey a visible message that resulted in a social stigma that discredited them—not because the stigmatized person held a negative opinion of themselves, but because of the perceivers preexisting negative impressions about the socially stigmatized person. This occurs without any input from the stigmatized person themselves; and often despite the stigmatized person's efforts to contradict the negative impressions. Goffman further asserted that if a stigmatized person is part of a group that

is viewed in terms of having visible markers that are socially devalued (such as African Americans, women), then their attempts at communicating a more desirable impressions in the minds of social perceivers that belong to groups that are accepted as having valued physical markers (in this case, Whites, especially White men) will be futile as soon as the stigmatized person come into a social situation.

In their study, the *African American Women's Voices Project* (2004), Jones and Shorter-Gooden surveyed numerous women throughout the United States and found a resonant theme amongst African American women. The overall consensus among the African American women interviewed was they still had to deal with pervasive race and gender based myths. Ninety seven percent of the women surveyed noted that they were aware of the negative stereotypes about African American women, and 80% admitted that they were personally distressed by the incessant racial and sexual beliefs. In response to this relentless debasing, African American women have had to master what Jones and Shorter-Gooden refer to as "shifting," a sort of ruse that African Americans as a whole have long practiced as survival skills in the United States.

The various ways African American women practice shifting has changed over time. For example, during the Jim Crow era, shifting was literal, casting her gaze downward or moving off the sidewalk when a White person approached. In the 21st Century shifting has taken a more subtle and disingenuous form; keeping silent when a White colleague sexually harasses her, worried that she would not be believed. Apprehensive about acting too eager or passionate in the workplace for fear that it may be interpreted as aggressiveness alienating her White boss or White co-workers. She then

shifts again with her personal friends or at home to appease her African American man who himself has to live with the pain and unfairness of society's subtle prejudices and animosity (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2004) further noted that under the pressure of their incessant pursuit to prove themselves and to put others at ease eats away at many African American women, emotionally or physically. Their sense of self is weakened because they start to believe the falsehoods, they doubt their own worth and capabilities. Over time, they become susceptible to an array of psychological issues, which include anxiety, low self-esteem, eating disorders, depression and self-loathing.

African American men are no strangers to their own kind of shifting. A shifting referred to as the teddy bear effect. In a study conducted by Livingston and Pearce (2009), it was revealed that one particular facet of African American man's climb to positions of power is having a "baby face." Livingston and Pearce noted that many traits of successful leaders transcend racial or ethnic constraints, such as credentials that establish intellectual and professional competence and achievement. However, Livingston and Pearce asked whether there were unique or additional traits that African American men might have to implement either by coincidence or by necessity to gain professional achievement.

The study revealed that cherubic features had a clear influence on professional achievement, both perceived and real. Therefore, it is suggested that if African American men aspire to reach the pinnacles of the C-suites, they must look less mature-faced than their White counterparts. Livingston asserted, for an African-American male to function

effectively within the framework of the United States, he must have a “disarming mechanism,” in this case, physical or behavioral qualities that alleviates the social perceptions of being a threat. In other words, he must disarm the mentality or fears of him being the ‘barbarian at the gate.’ Having disarming facial features much like the ‘goofy’ ears of President Obama, or the actor Will Smith can help ease these social fears. (Livingston & Pearce, 2009).

In a recent interview, Associate Professor of Psychology at Columbia University, Valerie Purdie-Vaughns (Jasen, 2015) also argues that Black children are perceived as being bigger, older, and more threatening from an early age. Sadly, once the little chubby cheeks are gone, which occurs around 5 or 6 years of age, the negative stereotype starts to set in. Thus, when an elevator door opens and an African American man steps in, there is the perception that the elevator is more crowded. Purdie-Vaughns suggest such stereotypes are powerfully effective because they influence perceptions of threat and safety. Just as Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2004) found in their study of African American women having to resort to the mechanism of “shifting,” Livingston and Pearce note that minorities are compelled to use various disarming mechanisms to help them function and achieve success while averting the flames of envy, resentment and fear still present in the United States.

Unfortunately, even cute cheeks, warm personalities, and professional accomplishments are no guarantee for African American. According to Livingston and Pearce’s study, African Americans were still considered to be less competent leaders than their White counterparts. To explain further the significance of this phenomenon of

personality traits and their influences as it relates to majority/minority status, Livingston pointed to the 2008 data from the U.S. presidential campaigns relating to voting preferences. It was revealed that having leadership qualities was the only factor that predicted a voter's preference for John McCain. In contrast, both Senator Obama and Hilary Clinton were favored not just on leadership, but on warmth as well. Livingston surmised that a lack of warmth was accepted when it came to White American males because they are 'entitled' to leadership. But there was far less tolerance for African Americans and women. There seemed to be the notion that they should feel 'lucky' that they were allowed to be there; so out of gratitude, they are expected to have a leadership style that is more modest, reverent, or communal. To have the idea that African Americans and women can simply *show up* and start telling people what to do and they follow would be a gross mistake – even in the area of politics (Livingston & Pearce, 2009).

The implications of Livingston's research points out that even with a more leveled playing field that exists today than past generations, African American are still confronted with a measure of unique challenges and double standards when in or seeking leadership roles. Livingston states, "African American leaders must have a heightened sensibility to the dynamics of their interpersonal relationships, while simultaneously meeting the daily demands of their jobs. And while their White counterparts are also faced with interpersonal concerns in the workplace, they have the privilege to ignore issues related to interpersonal relationships if they choose to. It could be argued that these examples reveal the possibility that there is psychological residue of learned racial

discrimination and the reaction of repressing the innate desire for achievement within African American community that have been built-up over centuries within the framework of the United States. This built-up psychological residue of historical racial interaction may also trigger African Americans' expectation of discriminative opposition in their efforts toward success. Again, those (in this case African Americans) who exhibit the success fearing personality do so long after the originating experience (in this case a history of blatant racial discrimination) that created the fearfulness no longer exist, or the negative consequences are irrelevant to the current existence (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978).

Again, while there is no immediate threat of life toward African Americans and their efforts of success that would constitute "true fear," there may be the psychological residue that has the modernized behavior of apprehension and ambivalence. Alternatively, as Austin (2000) suggests there are unconscious, self-imposed but formidable thoughts and feelings that thwart an individual's real achievement, influencing every decision they may make.

Finally, in 1999 Crocker, Luhtanen, Broadnax and Blaine conducted a study that focused on racial group differences in the United States regarding the belief that there was a government conspiracy against African Americans. It was found that African Americans were far more likely than White Americans to subscribe to theories about conspiracies carried out by the U.S. government obstructs African American advancement. According to Crocker, Luhtanen, Broadnax and Blaine the beliefs that African Americans hold about government conspiracies is the result of what is referred to

as system blame. In other words, the problems of racial discrimination that the African American community faces are attributed to a systematic government plot (Crocker et al., 1999), which may strongly bolster their expectation of discrimination. More importantly, Crocker et al., asserts that the conspiracy theories held by African Americans may be an attempt to cope with the dilemma posed by socially held stigmas and the fact that as a group, African Americans' quality of life is disappointingly far worse than that of White Americans.

The advocacy of a government conspiracy allows African Americans to externalize the problem, leaving them free of any responsibility to their own psychological well-being or introspection. In other words, system blame beliefs can act as a self-protective mechanism for the esteem and ego of African Americans especially in competitive situations, while also deflecting personal responsibility to their own achievement (Crocker & Major, 2003). To attribute the social challenges experienced by African Americans as self-imposed threatens the individual, as well as the collective self-esteem of the group. However, attributing these social challenges to an "all powerful system" of bigotry deflects these self-threatening inferences (Crocker et al., 1999, p. 943).

Why Can't They Just Get Over "It"!?

The social devaluing of African Americans began with slavery, giving legitimacy for people of African descent to be treated inferior during the Jim Crow era and beyond. Skin color, which is attached to the legacy of slavery was and is a badge of difference (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Harro, 2000; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Steele & Aronson,

1995). At a very early age, African American children are made aware of the distinction between skin color and that it will present a problem for them. Children (both African and European American) are also socialized in a way that is difficult to unlearn, that skin color is important and when compared to whites, being of African descent is inherently "bad" (Bronson & Merryman, 2009; Davis et al., 2004; DeGruy- Leary, 2005; Dworkin & Dworkin, 1999; Goffman, 1963; Goodman, 1952; Rothenberg, 2005; Steele, 1994; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

As noted by Davis et al. (2004), after years of being indoctrinated by families, peers, and mass media, individuals come into various life situations with stereotypes about those who are unlike themselves. Also according to Bronson & Merryman (2009) what parents say to their children depends heavily on their own race and cultural background. Hence, giving rise to the possibility that the expectation or perception of having their efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of a more powerful social system could be multi-generational. It is important to note that the multi-generational aspect of expectation or perception is not just in the African American family structure and cultural socialization, but also in the framework of White American families and cultural socialization (Bronson & Merryman, 2009). Horney (1937) argued that the United States failed to take into account that the possibilities for success are limited for some or that other factors (corruption, privilege, bigotry, affiliation, luck, etc.) act as significant components as to whether a person is successful or not. Horney's position is supported by other researchers (Bell, 1997; Bobo, 2011; Center for Creative leadership, 2003; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Foner & Brown, 2005;

Harro, 2000; Karon, 1975; Rothenberg, 2005; Wise, 2008; Wormser, 2003) who suggests that White Americans are often unaware of the many dynamics experienced by Africans American in society and the workplace.

A People Tarnished

The origin of the African/White American relationship was rooted in an enormous dependency of enslaved Africans on White America for their very survival. This dependency established a great need for the enslaved Africans to gain approval and to avoid at all cost disapproval, which could result in extreme physical brutality or death, spanned over centuries. As laws emerged, the physical brutality and threat of death was replaced with overt acts of extreme racial discrimination. Researchers have proposed that the main reason America's social system seems adverse toward the progress of minorities is the result of an unspoken fear that White males hold as a group. A fear that resides in the belief that if minorities were accepted as equals White men would lose their long held privilege of unchallenged dominance and control (Karon, 1975; Rosette et al., 2008; Rothenberg, 2005; Wolbold & Hammermeister, 2002; Wise 2006). Therefore, it could argued that such a history established a strong foundation for the proposed argument that African Americans' may have a predisposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger the ATS.

This already strained relationship presents the continuation of social tyranny, which is strengthened by veiled, yet varying intervals—referred to as *Anglo Conformity* (Dworkin & Dworkin 1999). Anglo conformity refers to the ideology of assimilation that was created by White Protestant males. A system where minorities were judged by the

standards of Whites, and citizenship was granted based on how closely a person could be compared to Whites. The idea was to eliminate all previous cultural and ethnic identity and embrace the appearance, life-style, and mindset of the dominate culture, in this case White America (McLemore, 1991). This created another layer of frustration and anxiety for African Americans.

Goffman (1963) points out that the term "stigma" was originated by the Greeks, who were strongly dependent on visual aids. A stigma, according to the Greeks, referred to markings on the body, which was used to publicize something bad and unusual about the moral state of a particular person. Marks were cut or burnt in the body of an individual, who was then advertised as being a blemished person (i.e., a slave, a criminal, etc.) and was to be shunned, especially in public. The term has maintained much of its original meaning in the United States, but refers more to the disgrace of an individual, and cuts or burnt markings are no longer used as indicators. Therefore, according to Goffman the term "stigma" is currently used to refer to an attribute(s) that profoundly harms the reputation and dignity of an individual. Goffman notes that not all attributes are viewed as undesirable, only those considered as inconsistent with the social ideal of what an individual should be, appear, and act like—the tenets of Anglo conformity.

Goffman deals with the term stigma and its synonyms from two perspectives: (1) does the stigmatized person assume his or her differences are already known or instantly evident to others (e.g., race, skin tone, etc.); and (2) does he or she assume the stigma is neither known about nor apparent to others (e.g., a controlled mental disorder). To stay within the scope of this research, only the first perspective will be explored. With that

said, in the first scenario, those who assume their differences are instantly evident will experience the continuous plight of being discredited. Goffman suggests there are three very different types of stigmas: various physical disfigurements; character blemishes (e.g., weak or cowardly, intellectually inferior, perversions, dishonesty, etc.); and finally, stigmas related to a racial group, nationality, and religion. These stigmas are genetic, which are likely to blemish all members of a group of people. In all of these types, the sociological theme is: the individual (or group of people) who might have been otherwise accepted in ordinary social interaction possesses a mark (in this case race) that can interfere with the attention span or preferences of the socially appointed "normal majority" or dominate culture (Goffman, 1963; Loury, 2002). In other words the individual or group of people (in this case African Americans) possess a stigma (character blemishes and tribal); or undesired differences from what the normal others expect (in this case, White majority standards).

According to Goffman, the rigid preference of the majority standards (the dominant culture) causes a society to believe a stigmatized person (group) is not equal or quite human. This assumption leads to the exercise of various acts of discrimination that are placed on the stigmatized person or group, and effectively reduces his or her chances of social advancement and equality. A greater tragedy occurs when the stigmatized person or group acts in defensive of him or herself. The "normal majority" perceives this defensive response by the stigmatized person or group to the situation as a direct expression of defect. Thereby seeing the defect and the response as just reckoning for something the stigmatized person or group's ancestors did, which justifies the way the

"normal majority" treat the stigmatized person or group (Gowman, 1957 as cited in Goffman, 1963, p. 6; Loury, 2002). Goffman goes on to point out what he considers a pivotal fact; stigmatized individuals or groups hold the same beliefs about identity as the "normal majority." Meaning, the stigmatized group's deepest feelings are to be "normal" and to be given a fair and equal chance that is based on their individual merit.

With the knowledge that their differences are instantly evident to others, the stigmatized person/group may perceive or expect, and rightfully so, that whatever the "normal majority" may say, they don't really "accept" the stigmatized person/group and therefore, will not interact with them on equal grounds (Goffman, 1963; Steele 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1998). To paraphrase Goffman, the standards internalized by the stigmatized person/group from the wider society equip them with an acute awareness of what others see as their flaws. Inevitably, this causes the group, if only for a time, to go along with the idea that they are less competent than they really are. In many cases shame becomes a constant influence, which is triggered by the group members' perception that one or several tribal attributes are seen as being a defiling hindrance (Goffman, 1963). This acute awareness becomes critical because of its influence on the individual's racial identity. Cultural identity is related to a group's membership status, and the perception a person has of that membership, ultimately shaping an individual's sense of self (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Jones, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2010; Schuyler-Gordon, 2000; Steele 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1998). Sellers et al., (1998) suggested that racial identities are influenced by situations and are stable properties of the individual that are related to positive self-esteem, which is associated with greater psychological well-being.

Goffman suggests there are several ways members of a stigmatized group may respond to the knowledge of their situation—in this case a defiled heritage and inferiority. First, some members will, when possible, make a direct or more drastic attempt to rectify what they see as the impartial bases of his or her failing (e.g., changing hair texture, plastic surgery, communication, etc.). An example of this is the first nigrescent attitude of African Americans, which is described in William E. Cross, Jr.'s Nigrescence theory as the pre-encounter stage. According to Cross' racial identity development model (1995), in the pre-encounter stage an individual African American absorbs various beliefs and values of the dominant culture, which includes the notion that "Black is wrong" while "White is right." According to Campbell & Fleming (2000), FOS is significantly related to the pre-encounter attitudes, and was the strongest of racial identity correlations.

While the internalization of negative African American stereotypes may not be in the individual's consciousness, he or she will still seek to assimilate and be accepted by Whites. In so doing, the individual will actively or passively distance him/herself from other African Americans. Unfortunately, the results are often dismal. The outcome is not the success of achieving full natural status, but a transformation of self—from the blemished self, to someone proven to have corrected the perceived flaw (Goffman, 1963).

Secondly, other members of a stigmatized group may take more actions that are indirect by attempting to master skills in areas previously closed to them, such as education, politics, sports, etc. Still others may break from reality and persistently attempt to escape from the characterization of his social identity. In other words, these members

of the stigmatized group are likely to use their stigma for "secondary gains," or as an excuse for their lack of success (Goffman, 1963). This reflects McWhorter (2005) argument that most African Americans have a crippling victim mindset, which is derived from a "meme" called "therapeutic alienation" (this will be discussed later). If Goffman's research on the effects of stigma was changed from a focus of physical deformity to that of the tribal stigma of race, a very relevant point can be made on how a stigma can be used for secondary gains:

Discrimination is looked upon as a handicap. For centuries the "scars" of social, racial, and systematic discrimination has plagued the African American community (Beaumont, 1999; Burrell, 2010; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Karon, 1975; Loury, 2002; Rothenberg, 2005; Wise, 2006). It is the "hook" which one can hang his or her inadequacies, discontentment, procrastinations, and all other unpleasant situations of social life. More importantly, one can become dependent on the lack of equal opportunities and discrimination not only as a rational escape from opposition, but as a protective mechanism from social obligation (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; McWhorter, 2005; Murray, 1995).

When laws and governmental regulations remove discriminative factors, the once disenfranchised members are released from the so-called "acceptable" emotional shield the handicap provided, and soon some disenfranchised members find, to their surprise and discomfort, that life continues to offer challenges. Lacking the assistance of a "handicap," and being ill-equipped to cope with this reality, these individuals may turn to

less complicated, but comparable behavior patterns that once served as protective mechanisms.

Thirdly, members of a stigmatized group may see their trials as a blessing in disguise, especially when they feel that the misery is supposed to teach them something about life. More importantly, when the individual sees their plight as a source of growth of character and personal triumph, he or she can come to re-assess the *normal majority* as having their own set of limitations. For instance, the normal majority may be very blind and deaf to the things that affect others in a real way (Goffman, 1963). Cross' (1995) latter two stages of the African Americans racial identity development model, Internalization and Internalization-Commitment, are an example of mindset in Goffman's findings.

According to Cross, African Americans who have reached the "internalized" stage in their racial identity development are willing to build meaningful relationships with Whites who acknowledge and respect their self-significance, while continuing to uphold their bond with their African American peers. Individuals who have reached the "internalization-commitment" stage of development have learned to fine-tune their personal idea of Blackness into a course of action or commitment" that focus on the issues facing the African American community, which can be sustained over time (Cross, 1995). A member of a stigmatized group at either of these two latter stages of racial identity development is rooted in a positive perception of racial identity, enabling them to equally perceive and transcend racial obstructions proactively.

As noted by Rosette, Leonardelli & Phillips (2008), in Chapter 1, statistics show when compared to their White male counterparts, African American males are plagued with a negative social image, such as higher imprisonment and criminality rate, more drug and alcohol abuse, higher homicide and suicide rates, higher unemployment, and more mental disorders, the total opposite of the prototypical characteristics of leadership.

African American women also face the perception of being difficult to work with because their personalities (the "angry Black woman" stereotype) and mannerisms are often different than the 'conventional women' their white male counterparts are accustomed to dealing with. Many African American women are expected to take on a more subservient, nurturing role or to "tone down" their persona when disagreeing with a point of view, or offering an opinion – something not experienced by their white counterparts (men or women) who are in similar situations (Austin, 1996; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Wise, 2006).

In an assessment of the interaction between the normal majority (White Americans) and the stigmatized (African Americans), Goffman notes the response of such encounter. According to Goffman, when in "social situations" where the stigmatized and the normal are in the same direct physical space, whether in an interpersonal encounter or in an unfocused gathering, the very anticipation of such contacts can lead both parties to create ways to avoid each other. This course of action has a larger consequence on the stigmatized, since the burden of rearranging life situations will usually be their responsibility. Hence, the stigmatized becomes self-isolated, suspicious,

depressed, hostile, anxious, and bewildered. As stated by Sullivan (1953 as cited in Goffman, 1963, pp 44-45):

> The awareness of inferiority means that one is unable to keep out of consciousness the formulation of some chronic feeling of the worst sort of insecurity, and this means that one suffers anxiety and perhaps even something worse, if jealousy is really worse than anxiety. The fear that others can disrespect a person because of something he shows means that he is always insecure in his contact with other people; and this insecurity arises, not from mysterious and somewhat disguised sources, as a great deal of our anxiety does, but from something which he knows he cannot fix. Now that represents an almost fatal deficiency of the self-system, since the self is unable to disguise or exclude a definite formulation that reads, "I am inferior. Therefore people will dislike me and I cannot be secure with them" (Sullivan, 1953).

This doubt occurs not only from the stigmatized individuals not knowing what categories he or she will be confined to, but also whether the classification will be favorable (Goffman, 1963). From Sullivan's assessment, it may be concluded that the tragedy lies with the stigmatized person knowing (or possibly assuming) that in the hearts of others they are really being defined in terms of his or her stigma. Therefore, in the mind of the stigmatized is a sense (conscious or unconscious) of not ever knowing what others really think about him or her. As a result, there is a constant expected threat to individuals who identify with a field (in this case executive leadership positions) in which a negative stereotype or stigma about their group is particularly prominent (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Goffman, 1963; Jones, Speight, & Witherspoon, 2010; Schuyler-Gordon,

2000; Steele 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1998; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Wise, 2006).

Further, during what Goffman refers to as "mixed contacts," the stigmatized individual may feel that he or she has to be "on." In other words, the stigmatized has to be cognizant and perceptive about their conduct and the impression he or she has on others – a level of scrutiny the stigmatized assumes others are not held to (Goffman, 1963). Goffman suggests when the normal majority and the stigmatized are in one another's immediate presence, especially during a conversational encounter, the primitive landscape of sociology occurs (a basic interactional problem to manage the tension) the cause and effects of stigma, in many cases, have to be confronted earnestly by both sides. At the same time, the stigmatized individual may interpret their minor failings or irregularities as an accurate representation of the differences that brand them. The stigmatized person may then be hesitant to engage in fervent exchange with others for fear his or her actions and/or words may be misinterpreted or seen to justify the stigmatization.

Due to what the stigmatized group members may face when entering a mixed social situation, some members might respond, through expressed anticipation, with defensive avoidance or retreat. Other stigmatized members may attempt to manage mixed contacts with antagonistic bravado, which may provoke another set of problematic interchanges. Still others vacillate between cowering and bravado (Goffman, 1963; Horney, 1992; Karon, 1975).

In a study conducted by Thomas and Gabarro (1999) on successful minority executives, it was found that minorities who experienced success at an executive level faced a greater degree of scrutiny. They were permitted 60% fewer failures, were expected to accomplish 30% more successes, and on average, it took them 3 to 4 years longer in the earlier stages of their career to advance than comparably qualified white peers who advanced. Stigma research also shows that African Americans have higher instances of discounting feedback that is seen as potentially damaging to their feelings of self-worth (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa & Major, 1991). Pappo also noted when the success fearing person receives a personal compliment or other significant feedback regarding his or her achievement; it acts to trigger earlier anxieties that a dangerous or threatening situation is approaching. There is substantial literature that African Americans have a long and significant history of being made to feel inferior in a variety of settings. This is also noted in Ashford et al. (2003) study that revealed people will employ various coping mechanisms to avoid, distort, or discount harmful messages that are received through feedback as a way to protect their ego and self-image. Ashford et al., suggest the types of messages that are believed to be most harmful to recipients of feedback are those that may trigger feelings of potential inferiority, especially in the workplace where it is important to feel competent.

There are two major themes in the FOS construct: (1) individuals who fear success have often experienced their innate striving for mastery being adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of more powerful others; and (2) those who demonstrate the characteristics of FOS do so long after the originating experience (in this

case a history of blatant racial discrimination) that created the fearfulness no longer exist, or the negative consequences are irrelevant to the current existence (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Cohen, 1974; Pappo, 1983). The interaction between both themes can be described as such: while an individual is passive in the origination of the success fearing personality, he or she may later unconsciously become active in maintaining their fear of success through protective defense mechanisms when it is no longer realistically relevant to their security needs. Thus, a fear that was realistic in its origin is not realistic in the maintaining of it.

Family: Propagating the Propaganda

Throughout their history within the United States, African Americans have been subjected to intermittent socially stigmatized reinforcements through the most trusted and acceptable vehicles of learning (family, churches, schools). Horney (1937) argued for the FOS to persist one must adhere to a set of cultural beliefs and practices with regard to winning and losing, competition, achievement, failure, and success. These cultural beliefs and practices are crucial, and are usually nurtured and reinforced within the framework of the family and other institutionalized channels of socialization, creating a breeding ground for intrapersonal conflicts about competition and success. When these beliefs and practices are incorporated into the family structure, they helped to create a framework that is often pervasive and inescapable. For instance, lingering, yet unconscious incorporated beliefs such as the myth of being socially inferior or the accepted majority aesthetic judgments concerning physical features.

One of the most important goals of all families is to prepare their members to be an asset to the larger society (Baron & Byrne 2004; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Horney (1937) argued that in addition to early childhood influences, cultural influences, acting as cohorts, play a significant role in fashioning one's ATS. These factors work to form the social context that fertilizes the development of neurotic fears built on competition and rivalry. For example, Horney argued that the United States is dominated by a competitive individualistic mindset (also known as capitalism). Competition is a driving force in a society's economic and interpersonal activities. The spirit of competition is first introduced and is common in families amongst siblings competing for parental attention and affection. It exists, in a society's educational system, and in its social/work relationships. Further, a society may tend to attribute an unrealistically positive set of characteristics (competence, courage, enterprise, etc.) to those who succeed, and a contrasting exaggerated set of negative attributions (worthlessness, incompetence, laziness, etc.) to those who are not successful.

However, one must keep in mind that the responsibility that generally occurs in the task of socialization and cultural influences carries an extra weight for African Americans who must attempt to both protect and prepare their children for the likelihood of discriminatory practices within the same society they must grow in (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Hill, 2006; Steele, 1994; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Strmic-Pawl, 2011; Taylor, Jackson, & Chatters, 1997). Horney further argued that unfavorable early childhood environments, particularly those in which the overarching theme is rivalry and competition between the strong and the weak (whether actual or imagined); generate

deep-seated feelings of insecurity, hostility, and anxiety in the children (Horney, 1937). Such is the historical relationship of inequality between African and White Americans.

While many African American parents do their best to raise their children with a sense of psychological well-being, all they have is their own, often socially tarnished, and experiences to draw from (Bronson & Merryman, 2009; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Strmic-Pawl, 2011; Taylor, Jackson, & Chatters, 1997). Hence, the family structure would unconsciously act as a tool to perpetuate the neurotic psychological residue of the past. This structure would condition all subsequent African American offspring from a place of extreme psychological injury. A psychological injury that created pseudo helplessness stemming from the Jim Crow era; Debt Peonage; The Civil Rights Act of 1964; and the intermittently reinforced contemporary discrimination within the U.S. institutions. Consider the implications of this psychological injury being handed down for hundreds of years, imitating techniques of survival or coping skills; from the African captives brought to America as slaves, to the modern day African Americans who may struggle with apprehension and ambivalence toward their own success.

Operating from a state of historical neurotic conflicts (fearing open retribution, bigotry, and social rejection) that first shaped the success fearing personality, African American parents, in many cases, unconsciously convey that risk and competition is inevitable. However, their efforts are based far less on their current reality, and more on the conscious knowledge of past (Davis et al., 2004; DeGruy-Leary, 2005). In other words, their motivations to achieve are exaggerated and irrational. Yet almost simultaneously they are undermined with an even greater urge (triggered by past fears of

obstruction or reprisal), to restrain themselves at the probability of significant progress (Horney, 1937).

In their 1996 report on African American achievement, James Coleman and Donald Campbell argued; “From an ethnic experience, the problem does not rest in a lack of aspirations, but that as children, minorities (in this case African Americans) are never taught how to achieve their goals” (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1999, p.183). With this in mind, one has to consider if it is feasible to expect that African Americans would have a solid grasp of achieving success. Hence, there may be an inability to teach it, which could be the greater hindrance.

Another element operating within the framework of family socialization is *learned helplessness*. Learned helplessness, as defined Petersen, Maier & Seligman (1995), is a mindset that leads an individual to believe that they have no control over the events occurring in their life. Or, that the negative events occurring in their life are because of their own failure, which they have no control over. In essence, helplessness is a state of mind resolving that the negative occurrences in life are inescapable or at least seemingly inescapable, which undermines an individual’s ability to apply the appropriate adaptive responses (Alloy, Jacobson, & Acocella, 1999). Petersen, Maier & Seligman, suggests when an individual accepts a mindset of learned helplessness, there are three erroneous philosophies in place; the individual: (1) becomes self-deprecating; (2) values helpless as an effective coping mechanism; and (3) is proficient at creating an entirely new realty scripted by the deception of helplessness. These misconceptions mirror those held by the success-fearing person.

According to Horney, African Americans who have experienced adverse conditions (racial oppression, discrimination, stereotype threat, etc.) will usually accept pseudo helplessness based on intimidation or accepting a state of emotional poverty. The more emotionally helpless an individual is made to feel, the less likely he or she will every dare to challenge or show opposition against the status quo, and the longer defiance can be dissuaded. It may also be at the core of the neurosis that exist in the unconscious psyche of African Americans—which results in an internalized oppression that sabotages efforts of obtaining key leadership positions.

Petersen, Maier & Seligman (1995), suggests that there are three criteria by which learned helplessness is recognized. First, learned helplessness is present when a group (in this case African Americans) displays misplaced passivity. That is, failing to meet the demands of a situation due to a sense of mental or behavioral submissiveness, instead of using effective coping skills. Second, learned helplessness is the result of recurring events that were genuinely unmanageable. Third, learned helplessness is reconciled through specific insights acquired when experiencing uncontrollable events, and then inappropriately generalized to new situations.

As is my position of this study regarding the FOS, learned helplessness is often acquired through the indirect experiences of others within the framework of the family and other institutions of personal growth and development. Bandura (1977) proposed that this intricate learning encounter occurs with corroborating aids referred to as vicarious reinforcement. Bandura further argued that individuals gain life skills through frequent exposure to particular attitudes and thoughts, and by emulating the behaviors or reactions

of others. This reinforcement is able to affect the observer in ways that are one-level removed from the actual experience. There is a strong cultural bond within the structure of the African American family that includes the extended family networks. This extended connection makes the impact of vicarious reinforcement even greater—the more communal, or involved the extended family relationships, the more influential the interchange (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; DeGruy-Leary, 2005).

Seligman (1975) and Powell (1990) argue that the constant experience of poverty and discrimination by African Americans are devastating not merely because they are deprived of material goods but also because they are deprived of psychological assets. Poverty and discrimination mean uncontrollability, and uncontrollability leads to passivity and defeatism. Feelings of inferiority uncontrollability or other social/racial hindrances tend to diminish an individual's self-concept, giving way to self-deprecating thoughts, resulting in a lower degree of self-confidence (Bobo, 2011; Burell, 2010; Connelly et al., 2000; DeGruy- Leary, 2005; Dworkin& Dworkin, 1999; Goffman, 1963; Horney, 1937; Livingston & Pearce, 2009; Steele, 1994; Steele & Aronson, 1995). These feelings trigger the ambivalent nature that an individual may experience when working toward a desired goal or in a competitive situation. Thus, African Americans may fail to persevere in situations in which perseverance is the deciding factor (Petersen, Maier & Seligman, 1995).

The reality of continued experiences of discrimination leads to learned helplessness. However, it should also be recognized that in some cases of passivity, people don't try because they perceive correctly that their efforts will not yield their

desired outcome. In other cases, they don't try because they have been punished for assertive attempts to control their outcomes (Petersen, Maier & Seligman, 1995). For example, Powell (1990) attributed the avoidance of mathematics and science careers by African American students as learned helplessness that stems from cultural expectations of failure which become self-fulfilling prophesies. Continuous experiences with failure seem to cause many African Americans to fall prey to learned helplessness in which they view their failure as inevitable and the result of personal faults. As a result, these students give up. Their belief is that they will not be able to succeed in science and mathematics. Thus, by the time they reach college, they have strayed away from mathematics or science, thinking that further failure can be avoided by simply staying away from the subject altogether.

Conclusion

There are two popular lines of reasoning as it relates to FOS: (a) the origins of FOS start early in childhood; and is a single personality disposition, which triggers an expectation of negative consequences when in competitive achievement situations. (b) FOS is situational: primarily determined by an individual's expectations about the consequences of behavior and whether they are positive or negative. These expectations are triggered by the cues in a particular situation. While mastery and success is a much wanted aspiration, African Americans who may be ATS are likely to be overly concerned with how others evaluate their performance. This leads to the belief that they must constantly be vigilant in situations that may contain discriminative elements. Therefore, they may have a tendency to approach success opportunities that are neutral or

noncompetitive in nature with the expectation of a negative outcome; and feel evaluated in situations where no evaluation is taking place, causing them to avoid or abandon the situation altogether.

It is the positions of this research that the factors related to the fear of success theory may provide a possible explanation for the underrepresentation of African Americans in top key leadership positions. While extensive research reveals that the external social hindrances for African Americans still very much exist, it is also the position of this research that African Americans may play a significant role, albeit unconscious, in their disparity; especially as it relates to coveted professions and key leadership positions. The unconsciousness of FOS refers to the point that success-fearers are usually unaware of the conflict regarding their strong ambivalence about success. They may be aware that they want to succeed, and that they do not want to fail. Success-fearers may even know that they become anxious when they are successful in a competitive situation. However, they are not aware that they are also reluctant to succeed, and that they regularly and actively engage in behaviors that hinder or sabotage their successes.

Therefore, using the theoretical constructs FOS to establish a reference point, this research will seek to answer two questions: (a) whether historical conditioning and a series of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP), and (b) whether these characteristics lead to reluctance

and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination.

Exploring these two questions will offer insight in two key areas as it relates to the disparity of African Americans achievement: (a) potential origins and explanations involving whether African Americans may lack self-confidence, initiative, and commitment toward their own advancement; (b) potential impacts of changing the mindset of African Americans' underrepresentation in key leadership positions; and (c) the potential of this mental shift being an attainable goal or resolve.

It is true that over the course of this nation's history, other minorities have encountered (and continue to face) oppression because of their race. However, the duration and severity of oppression against African slaves and their descendants is unprecedented in American history. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to question whether the disparity of African Americans in key leadership positions can be partially explained by the impact of their own perception of past discriminatory barriers on desired outcome expectancies.

Dealing with any aspect of the African American experience calls for an analysis that goes beyond common dimensions or measures of research. It means examining the sub-structure of emotional tensions, and the types of character and pre-disposition patterns that result in a particular behavior. In reading this research, it is necessary to remember the historical aspects of the African American experience in the United States. More importantly, it is imperative that these aspects be viewed in the context of the five characteristics of people who are apprehensive about their success (Campbell & Fleming,

2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Cohen, 1975; Pappo, 1983; Tresemer, 1977).

First, success fearing personalities are highly ambivalent about their success, which may lead to self-doubt and reluctance to exert effort toward their success. Second, this ambivalence represents a real or imagined competition or conflict of interest with powerful or important others. Third, the ambivalence is expressed by behaviors that are both success focused and success-avoidance responses (self-sabotage). Fourth, ATS beyond adolescence is seen as an irrational and largely unconscious behavior that is actively maintained through the individual's interpretation of their earlier (often time negative) experiences. And finally, those who are apprehensive and ambivalent about success engage in a wide variety of rationalizations or deep-seated defense mechanisms that protect them from the anxiety triggered by both their strong desires for success and their tendency to deny their desire for success. Among these defense mechanisms are low self-evaluation; a tendency to externalize their motivation to succeed as being driven by external requirements, rather than their internal desire to succeed; and when success does occur, there is a tendency to externalize the positive outcome by attributing it to luck, an easy task, or as a result of being assisted by others, rather than as being the consequence of their own abilities and efforts (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Cohen, 1975; Pappo, 1983; Tresemer, 1977).

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the method chosen to explore the possibilities of whether there is a pre-disposition for African Americans to have a low expectation for achieving success that ultimately causes them to unconsciously engage in behaviors that

mirror the characteristics of success-fearers. Chapter 3 will also discuss the study design, the participants' description, the data collection, as well as the measurement tools, and how data will be analyzed.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Researchers such as Campbell (1996); Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert (1978); Fleming (2000); Horner (1972); Pappo (1983); Tresemer (1977) identified FOS or the SFP as a psychological state that produces recognizable paralysis, abandonment or sabotage when desired goals are consciously recognized, and success is an imminent probability. According to Pappo (1972), since the origin of the SFP is found in the early stages of personal development, FOS would be exhibited in a wide range of settings in which an individual might view as being in a competitive situation with others. These settings are usually social in nature, and involve concerns of popularity, physical desirability, relational successes, financial and professional pursuits, and all sorts of exhibitions and explicit/implicit contests involving skills and talents.

According to Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978) and Pappo (1972), a significant limitation challenging FOS research is the strong probability of participants' misinterpreting or fabricating the meanings and outcomes of normal behaviors, as it relates to competence, success, and competition. More importantly, these fabricated accounts concerning their experiences are usually unconscious, so the participant is unable to recognize or report such occurrences to researchers. What might also be considered here is the social constructs that may exist among African Americans.

According to Berger & Luckman (1965), social construction is concerned with the ways individuals think about and use categories to structure their experiences and analysis of the world around them. Thus, an individual's social reality is the foundation

their social constructs are built on. It is unlike an individual's organic and personal reality, because social reality occurs outside the individual's conscious mind. More importantly, it is strongly based upon social mores, traditions, cultures and institutions (Berger & Luckman, 1965).

As it relates to social construction, human beings have personal realities that are unique to them and are based on their experiences of organic and social reality. Organic reality happens independently of each person, and social reality happens as a result of inter-subjective interactions. Inter-subjectivity occurs largely because a group of human beings (in this case African Americans) agrees or believes – whether explicitly, implicitly or subconsciously – that a thing exists (Berger & Luckman, 1965). Therefore, from a social construct perspective, the issue is not whether social and racial constraints exists within the African American community, but whether the values, needs, interests, expectations and biases of those who experience it will influence their explanation. Consequently, if an individual believes that discrimination still exists, they may lower their expectation of equality and success. They may also act as though elements of their belief exist even when there is evidence of another experience. Thus, one's social construct may influence an individual's behavior in a variety of potentially profound ways. For example, the belief and expectation of social inequity may determine the amount of effort African Americans will exert to gain key leadership positions – consequently, some may engage in self-sabotaging behavior that limit their opportunities.

This unconscious, yet self-imposed limitation results in a lack of direct access to an individual's earlier experiences that may be repressed as a method of coping, or due to

social constructs. Researchers have argued that much of what is thought to be conscious mental activity (i.e., how one feels or thinks about something) is not at all conscious; but could become conscious through conversation, interviews, or therapy (Creswell, 2007; Husserl, 1963; Maxwell, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). For that reason qualitative research is a superior means for gathering in-depth information concerning a person's thoughts and feelings. It also offers a flexible environment where subjective information can flow freely – adding a dimension of exploration not available in other methods.

There is a plethora of quantitative research offering patterns on the disparity of African Americans in high profile or leadership positions, but no explanation as to why this may be occurring. More importantly, little if any research (quantitative or qualitative) examines this phenomenon from the perspective of possibly having some measure of self-imposition. These self-imposed hindrances can be summarized as such: (a) those who are ATS are usually highly ambivalent about success, (b) their ambivalence represents a real or imagined competition or conflict of interest with powerful or important others, (c) the ambivalence is expressed through the dual behaviors of success-oriented efforts and success-avoidant responses or self-sabotage, (d) apprehensiveness beyond adolescence is seen as an irrational and largely unconscious motive that success-fearers actively maintain because of their interpretation of earlier experiences, (e) those who are ATS success employ a wide range of rationalizations or defense mechanisms that protect them from the anxieties that trigger their ambition and their tendency to thwart their success, and (f) there is an expectancy of having their efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of more powerful

others. Using a qualitative phenomenological method, I will analyze whether these self-imposed hindrances are revealed through first person conversations.

While questionnaires provoke narrow responses to a rigid set of questions, interviews offer more explorative opportunities regarding a topic, which allows researchers to delve into the origin of an opinion or the underlying dynamics of situations. More importantly, the free flow of interviews may open an avenue that leads the conversation in unexpected directions, and unanticipated insights (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). The qualitative method used in this study is the phenomenology design, which Creswell (2007) describes as a study that focuses on the essence of a lived experience. This methodology allows for the everyday lived reality of African Americans to be explored as it relates to the ATS; and their expectations of having their efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of more powerful others.

Methodology Background

The strength of qualitative research is largely based on its inductive methodology; its focus on specific people or circumstances, and its attention to words instead of numbers (Maxwell, 2005). According to Maxwell (2005), qualitative studies are best suited for five research pursuits: understanding the significance of something; understanding the specific framework of something; identifying unforeseen phenomena and impacts; conceptualizing the progression of events and actions taking place, and finally fleshing out explanations. First, is understanding the significance of something (cognition, affect, intentions, etc.) – the events, situations, experiences, and actions

participants were involved in. A qualitative study focuses not just on the physical and behavioral happenings, but also by what means participants make sense of such events and behaviors, and how their understanding and perspectives influence their behavior. Second, is understanding the specific framework of something. Qualitative research typically studies a fairly small sample of people or situations in order to preserve the originality of the study. However, in a qualitative research, the objective is to lower the probabilities of discovery failure, as opposed to lowering (quantitative) estimation error. For this reason, qualitative samples must be large enough to make sure the researcher draws most, if not all, of the important analyses.

A qualitative research will experience discovery failure if it is ineffective in discovering an actionable perception (attribute, opinion, need, experience, etc.) in a sizable amount of participants (Griffin and Hauser, 1993). In a qualitative study conducted by Griffin and Hauser (1993), in-depth interviews (IDIs) were held with a group of consumers. Using mathematical extrapolations, Griffin and Hauser found that an adequate qualitative sample size would be 20-30 IDIs in order to uncover 90-95% of the broadest range of perceptions and experiences; and to reduce the risk of missing key perspectives from a possible subgroup. It should be noted that the number of participants used in this study will be based on identifying a clear pattern. Thus, participant involvement may exceed the 30 count.

Third, is identifying unforeseen phenomena and impacts. Qualitative research is inherently open and flexible, which allows for modifications during the research process in order to understand new findings and correlations. This flexibility derives from the

particularistic quality of qualitative research, rather than the comparative, generalizing and restrictive focus of quantitative research. Fourth, is conceptualizing the progression of events and actions taking place. While qualitative research is concerned with results, its emphases are on the practices that lead to the outcomes. Fifth, is fleshing out underlying explanations. Quantitative studies tend to focus on whether and to what degree variances in x cause variance in y. In contrast, qualitative research tends to ask "in what way" x plays a role in causing y, and the process that connects x and y (Maxwell, 2005).

I considered using the grounded theory as a qualitative method. However, it was eliminated because it focuses on the question: What theory or explanation emerges from an analysis of the data collected about a particular phenomenon?" Grounded theory is also usually used to generate theory – the *how* and *why* something operates as it does, then seeks to provide explanations (Seamon, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Therefore, I chose to use the qualitative method of phenomenology because of its ability to explore the commonalities within a group, rather than focusing only on what is unique to the group. In other words, phenomenology is the interpretive analysis of human experience. Phenomenology also focuses on the question, "What is the significance, structure, and essence of a particular lived experience by numerous individuals?" and aims to describe and explore these experiences, which can only be accomplished by gathering information from individuals who have been through the experience (Seamon, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 2007).

Phenomenology was more appropriate because the objective is to weigh and clarify the human experience – its situations, events, and meanings (von Eckartsberg, 1998); not to theorize it. According to Pollio et al. (1997), phenomenology provides a thorough description of the human existence as it is lived and interpreted in its first-person authenticity, urgency, and uncertainty. Phenomenology also focuses on conducting in-depth interviews with those who lived the experiences, in order to provide rich descriptions of the common characteristics or essences of the experience. Thus, based on the focus aim, phenomenology was the most appropriate fit of qualitative methodologies to explore the two research questions from a first-person perspective in three areas: (a) the specific attitudes held by African Americans about their prospects of achieving executive level positions of leadership or entrepreneurial opportunities within the United States; (b) whether there is a lack of self-confidence, initiative and commitment to their advancement that suggests traits of the success fearing personality; and (c) what level of control and responsibility African Americans feel they have in changing the dynamics of African American representation in key leadership and decision-making positions within the United States.

Phenomenology gained popularity through Husserl (1963) work, which focused mainly on the study of distinct occurrences as experienced through an individual's consciousness. Its emphasis is on an individual's experience of the world as they have lived it, not as something that is lived separately from the person (Valle, King & Halling, 1989). It expounds on the realization of the individual's own experience, the self in various roles, goals or purpose. It stresses an awareness of others (inter-subjectivity,

empathy, as a collective whole), linguistic interaction (concerning meaning, communication, consideration of others), social interaction (including community activity), and everyday pursuits in a particular culture, or the surrounding world (Husserl, 1963).

Polkinghorne (1983) identified this emphasis as trying to grasp the meaning of human experiences as they are lived. The 'life world' as described by Husserl, is understood as what an individual experiences before self-examination occurs, without categorizing or conceptualizing, and quite often includes what is taken for granted or what is considered common sense (Husserl, 1970). The intent of phenomenology is to go back and reassess the experiences that may have been taken for granted in order to possibly uncover new and/or forgotten meanings. In many cases, according to Husserl (1963), the normal behavior of individuals is not to catalog an experience at the time they are going through it, nor do they have the capability to do so. For instance, anger or fear is an intense emotional state that will consumes all of an individual's psychological focus at the time of occurrence. As a result, when an individual finds themselves in a new situation they will pull from their background of familiar experiences to process or interact in those new circumstances (Husserl, 1963).

Woodruff (2005) suggested that being conscious of an experience occurs when an individual has a certain level of awareness about the experience at the time they are living through or performing it. Therefore, to tap into the full quality of this awareness candid group discussions and in-depth personal interviews are most effective in exploring the unconscious elements through the conscious intellect. The unique feature of the

phenomenology design offers an opportunity to explore the experiential or first-person perspective. This perspective also embodies the phenomenological view that a distinct occurrence is developed creatively, and favors a fluidity of methods and research measures. The use of phenomenological method makes the following claims:

1. The study involves the researcher having direct interaction with the phenomenon. The particular group's experience must be encountered as directly as possible. This involvement might include conducting in-depth interviews, taking part in the experience, or carefully observing and detailing the underlying situation or elements connected to the experience. In essence, the researcher must foster a closeness with the phenomenon through extended, personal immersion.
2. The phenomenologist assumes that they are not familiar with the phenomenon but possesses a genuine curiosity. Where positivist research typically begins an analysis knowing what they do not know, the phenomenologist does not know what they do not know – the phenomenon is unfamiliar ground to be explored. Thus, phenomenologists always adjust the approaches to the character and conditions of the phenomenon. Therefore, the key element for interpreting the phenomenon is the researcher. They must be guided yet pliable in the elevation of the phenomenon.
3. The researcher is at the soul of the phenomenological approach. As a result, the specific methods used should depict the human experience in first-hand exchanges. Meaning, the best phenomenological approaches are those that provide a rich, unstructured, multidimensional atmosphere that enables the human

experience to surface. For example, since the best way to collect a meaningful explanation of a phenomenon is through an in-depth interview, then the researcher must also be flexible enough to modify the questions, tone, and curiosity for both the respondents' explanations, and to the researcher's own ever-changing understanding about the phenomenon as more is learned (Seamon, 2000).

The Research Design

Having the occasion to identify how the day-to-day, inter-subjective world is composed by the individual who has lived a particular experience, is the primary characteristics and value of a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007; Giorgi, 1985; Schwandt, 2000). According to Creswell (2007) and Giorgi (1985), the first task of the researcher is to delve into the individual's life analyses (i.e. the conscious realization of perceived happenings in events), to comprehend the human phenomena as experienced, which further enriches this method. Thus, participants of the study must be intentionally selected.

One major factor of the FOS construct is the experience of having one's efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of more powerful others or social system, which leads to a pattern of beliefs and expectations. To meet the criterion of participant selection, this research will first specifically identify success-fearers from the participant samples. Participants identified as having a greater level of success fearing personality traits will be asked to participate in an in-depth standardized open-ended interview to explore their beliefs, experiences and expectations as it relates to the two research questions. (a) whether historical conditioning and a series

of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP), and (b) whether these characteristics lead to reluctance and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination. If the three assumptions of FOS are accepted: an unconscious barrier that is perceived not as a fear toward success, but rather as various practices of defense mechanisms created for survival; those who fear success find greater value in denying or minimizing its existence; and its characteristics are exhibited long after the originating experience (in this case a history of blatant racial discrimination) that created the fearfulness no longer exist or is irrelevant (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978), than exploring the potentiality of such an occurrence within the African American community is crucial.

Further, within the characteristics of FOS (lack of confidence; anxiety over competition and evaluation; down-playing personal competencies; and self-sabotaging behavior), a greater motivation may exist within the psyche of a group whose history is inundated in socialized denigration (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horner, 1968; Tresemer, 1977). Therefore, in the initial solicitation for research participation the following question will be posed: “Have you experienced or felt that your efforts toward success have been adversely affected by others in power?” This question will make the selection of potential participants more specific, and help in identifying more accurately the possible correlation between the African American experience and the ATS.

FOS, as defined by Horner (1972), is a state of anxiousness regarding one's probability toward achieving success, which is driven by the belief that success will result in a host of negative consequences. Zuckerman and Allison (1976) essentially agreed with Horner's perspective, however, to address the methodological problems found in Horner's projective measurement they proposed the Fear of Success Scale (FOSS). The original construction of the FOSS consisted of thirty-five, 7-point agree-disagree statements that measured (a) the values of success; (b) the perceived costs of success; and (c) the relative value of success in relationship to the alternatives. After administering the scale to 183 males and 193 female undergraduates, individual items were scored toward high FOS. Roughly half the items keyed as high FOS were agreement items; the remainder keyed as high FOS were disagreement items. To maximize the internal consistency of the scale, the 35 statements were analyzed, and based on the correlations of each item, with the total score excluding that item, eight statements were discarded. The coefficient alpha for the final 27-item version of the FOSS with item-total correlations for males and females revealed: .69 among males and .73 among females.

Subsequent studies using Zuckerman and Allison's (1976) scale had similar findings (Garcia-Ruffin, 2003; Metzler & Conroy, 2004). The Zuckerman & Allison FOSS was used in a study conducted by Fried-Buchlter (1997) to assess the fear of success among male and female marketing managers. Fried-Buchlter noted that the FOSS, which was created purposely to measure Horner's (1968, 1972) conceptualization of FOS, is clearly superior psychometrically, in that it is not situation-specific, and that it has good reliability and validity.

In a study conducted by Ragan-Gelbort and Winer (1985), the reliability and validity of five of the fear of success scales (Zuckerman & Allison FOSS [1976] being one of the five scales) was examined in order to determine the convergent and discriminant strengths of the instruments. Ragan-Gelbort and Winer reported a small (.18) but meaningful correlation between Zuckerman and Allison's FOSS and Horner's original measure for women. However, when the sample included men and women, significant correlations of .19 and .25 was reported for both instruments. Ragan-Gelbort and Winer also noted that there was considerable support for the predictive validity of Zuckerman & Allison FOSS.

Similarly, Griffore (1977) also examined what was consider the top three FOS scales to determine their convergent validity. The three scales were: (a) the empirically driven fantasy-based measurement of Horner et al. (FOS; 1973); (b) Zuckerman & Allison (1976) Fear of Success Scale (FOSS); and (c) Pappo's (1972) Fear of Success Questionnaire (FOSQ). Griffore discovered evidence of merging validity between the FOS instruments with positive correlations among all three tools. However, only the correlation between the FOSQ and the FOSS ($r = .299$, $p < .003$) was significant beyond the level of .05.

Zuckerman and Allison's scale was used in this study as a qualifier in determining the best candidates for the study. Using the FOSS eliminates the need for intensive clinical interviews, yet provides an opportunity to identify potential candidates who have richer experiences and to discover their unconscious information. The potential results of the FOSS range from 27 to 189 with scores of 110 and above suggesting high fear of

success (Zuckerman & Allison, 1976). The participants' scores will be ranked along a scale from 1 – 7, with one representing the lowest score (27 points) and seven representing the highest (189 points). Scores of 110 and above will be asked to participate in the research in-depth interviews.

In this research, I will follow the qualitative method of phenomenology in participate selection, forming questions, conducting interview probes, process of epoche, bracketing, data collection, organizing and analyzing the data. According to Moustakas (1994), when conducting a qualitative research using a phenomenological approach there are specific guidelines that are comprised of four main parts: research preparation; data collection; organize, analyze, and synthesize data; and the conclusion of the study. Creswell (1998) proposes the following process that is more specific:

1. A researcher using the qualitative method of phenomenology must have an appreciation for the philosophical views essential to the methodology, especially the idea of exploring how people experience a phenomenon.
2. Research questions are to be written in a way that explores the implication of the studied experience as lived by the individuals of the studied phenomenon.
3. Data is to be collected from individuals who are actually a part of the phenomenon being studied, which is generally gathered through in-depth interviews.
4. The protocol for data analysis is to collect and divide the data into real-world statements. These statements are then converted into meaningful clusters of data. The researcher interprets the converted data to provide a general

depiction of the phenomenon, which includes the characteristic qualities of what is experienced.

5. Finally, the phenomenological study ends with a presentation that offers the essential structure of the experienced phenomenon.

As it relates to preparing for research, Moustakas (1994) suggests that the researcher must first formulate the study's question; secure research participants, and develop topics, instructions, and questions to be used during the interviews. At the onset of data collection, Moustakas (1994) strongly encouraged the use the Epoche process in order to be prepared to view the collected data from a nonbiased state of mind. This is done by the researcher acknowledging and setting personal thoughts and possible biases aside. Moustakas suggested the researcher journal his or her personal thoughts before the data collection process begins. This technique helps the researcher manage their own thoughts regarding the topic. The researcher must then bracket the study's topic and question. This involves focusing solely on the study's main points without being distracted by lesser points. After these processes are completed, the qualitative interviews can be conducted.

In-depth interviewing is the most common method of collecting data for the phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Seamon, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 2007). Patton (1990) noted that the intent behind interviewing is to explore and learn from another's thought process, as it relates to their experience. Thus, I formulated interview questions that were open-ended, and ask the "what," "when," "where," and "how" of the participant's experience. Rather than a set of rigidly structured or

quantifiable questions, I began the interview asking the participants to talk about the experience, and to further support the validity of that experience through the explanation of the experiential findings. In essence, the interviews sought to go beyond the "here" and "now" conceptions of an experience to emphasize the what (composition) and how (practice) of an experience, rather than cause and effect (why and how). This provides an opportunity to reveal the distinct meanings for a person placed in a given social framework, during a particular time, in a particular situation. Unlike surveys or questionnaires, in-depth interviewing is candid, personable, and flexible, which allows the participants an opportunity to explain and/or clarify any inconsistencies or vagueness in their responses during the interview.

During this introspective process, Husserl (1970) suggested that in a phenomenological analysis there is to be two perspectives of a perceived lived experience: that of the researcher whose curiosity is driven by the phenomenon, and from the individuals living through the phenomenon. However, while it may be impossible to personally disconnect from things that are of personal value and interest, the researcher cannot impose their meanings upon the participants' responses. Thus, the researcher must be mindful that his or her own experiences are not inserted into the interviews and the analysis of data.

To organize, analyze, and integrate the data, Creswell (1998) and Moustakas (1994) suggest the researcher first identify the individual characteristic and structural descriptions of participants' accounts of their experiences; separating them into distinctive groups. Once this has been accomplished, a synthesis of the textural and

structural meanings into an overall whole should take place. For the final stage of the phenomenological design, the researcher is to summarize the study, note the implications of the results, and detail its outcomes. Creswell and Moustakas both note that it is important to relate the study's findings to the findings of the literature review and to present possible future research that may stem from the results. Lastly the researcher should relate the study to personal and professional goals and share the implications for potential positive social change.

Participants

Phenomenological research pursues the meaning of a particular occurrence from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Addison, 1989); thus, selection of participants will come from a specific pool of candidates. Participants will be African American men and women at least 35 years of age, economically and academically diverse, in the labor force as corporate professionals, business owners, and civic leaders; and will be recruited through the Texas Association of African-American Chambers of Commerce (TAAACC) membership. TAAACC, is the parent chamber of commerce, which all regional African-American Chambers of Commerce are under. The organization was established in 1988, and was the outgrowth of the Dallas, Texas African American Chambers of Commerce, which started in 1926. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), the state of Texas ranks 10th in the percentage of African Americans, with a population of 11.91%, and has 21 African American Chambers of Commerce that make up over 10,000 small and medium size businesses, with memberships comprising of companies, civic leaders, and individual business people.

To expand the reach for research participation, the on-line professional network site LinkedIn will also be utilized. With over 259 million members consisting of professionals, business owners, solo-entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs, and executives from every Fortune 500 company. Established in 2002, LinkedIn is the largest social Medias for professionals on the internet, and provides a platform for maintaining a list of contact details, employment listing and search opportunities and professional networking. This online professional network is also a platform for many group collaborations, which consist of special interest groups. There are numerous African American special interest groups that may prove to be a viable source for potential participants. An example of such groups are:

- The African American Board Leadership Institute
- African American Leadership Program
- African American Business Owners
- Success Minded African Americans
- African American Business Leaders for Excellence:

A short statement soliciting participation will be posted to these and similar group members requesting parties interested in participating to contact the researcher through email. This initial contact will result in an email reply attaching the research solicitation flyer (see Appendix B) and research consent form.

These two sample pools will provide a substantial population of potential participants that meet the conditions and parameters for inclusion into the study. The final

sample pool to participate in the in-depth interviewing process will consist of 20 - 30 African Americans who score in the top range of the FOS scale (110 – 189).

Issues of confidentiality and emotional distress are the ethical risks that could affect the participants of this study. To lessen the risk of confidentiality, participants are reassured that unless permission is granted by them, only the researcher will have access to the research results. Because interested participants will contact the researcher directly, no one in the TAAACC membership (executives, administrative staff, other members, etc.) will have information of those who participate. For further assurance, participants will be assigned non-descriptive identifiers, such as participant #1, participant #2, etc. To reduce the risk of emotional distress that may affect those participating in the in-depth interviews, the researcher will place strong emphases on being cognizant of verbal cues that may indicate various levels of stress associated with such conversations. If signs of stress are detected, the questioning will take another direction or stop at the request of the participant or when the researcher suspects emotional distress.

Measurements

Because the scale was developed to assess individual variances in the motivation to avoid success, Zuckerman & Allison Fear of Success Scale (FOSS) (1976) was chosen to better isolate final research participants, and to identify the characteristics of the success-fearing personalities. Hence, the scale identifies the characteristics of FOS that may be exhibited in various degrees and settings were the person could believe they are in a competitive situation with another. These situations include academic or financial

pursuits, as well as relational successes, social situations, and physical attractiveness (Zuckerman & Allison, 1976).

The Zuckerman & Allison FOSS (1976) measurement reveals success anxiety as being unrelated to specific achievement contexts, and seeks to avoid questions concerning stereotypical behaviors linked to gender roles. The items describe (a) the privileges associated with success (e.g., "When you are on top, everyone looks up to you"), (b) the price of success (e.g., "I believe that successful people are often sad and lonely"), and (c) the individual's mindset toward success in comparison to other choices (e.g., "The rewards of successful competition are greater than those received from cooperation").

Zuckerman & Allison's FOSS covers 27 items in a "yes-no" structure, prompting a response of either "agreeing" or "disagreeing" that the items are a description of their behavior or beliefs. Possible scores range from 27 to 189, with high scores of 110 and above indicating a high fear of success. Of the 27 items, sixteen are worded so that an agreement with the statement followed by "H" (indicated on the instrument key) reflects a high fear of success. Agreements with the remaining 11 statements followed by "L" (indicated on the instrument key) reflect a low fear of success. However, disagreement with the remaining 11 statements followed by "L" indicates a high FOS. More specifically, agreeing with 16 items, and disagreeing with 11 items indicate a high FOS. The participants' total scores will be ranked along a scale from 1 – 7, with one being the lowest score (27 points) and seven being the highest (189 points).

Procedures

Initially, potential participants for the study will be solicited through an advertisement in the Chambers of Commerce's electronic newsletter, website and other member email correspondence. To encourage the cooperation of TAAACC, the benefits of how the study will advance their organizational mission will be explained, and they will be provided an electronic three-page summary report of the findings in PDF format at the conclusion of the study. Subsequent contact with responding participants will be conducted via direct e-mail or phone calls. The initial qualifier for participation will be based on the question: "Have you experienced or felt that your efforts toward achieving success have been adversely affected by more powerful others?" Potential respondents are told that the study will focus on analyzing the current opportunities and hindrances of African Americans successes in the United States under the current social system. Potential participants that respond with an interest to participate in the research will receive a reply e-mail (see Appendix A of this study for the full version) with the Inform Consent Form explaining the procedure, the time commitment, the FOSS assessment as a selection qualifier, the interview method, the confidentiality agreement, and the data collection and revivification process. Individuals will be asked to respond within a week of receiving the initial reply email regarding their intent to participate in the research.

Once the consent form is returned indicating the respondents' agreement to take part in the study, the researcher will email Zuckerman & Allison's (1976) 27-item FOSS, which will be used to identify the final potential research participants. Participants will be instructed to return the completed questionnaire through email (no later than three-days after receipt) to the researcher, at which time the researcher will coordinate a date and

time for the one-on-one interview. Sample items from Zuckerman & Allison's FOSS that participants will be asked to answer (see the Appendix C of this study for the full version) are:

1. I expect other people to fully appreciate my potential.
2. A person who is at the top faces nothing but a constant struggle to stay there.
3. In order to achieve one must give up the fun things in life.
4. Even when I do well on a task, I sometimes feel like a phony or a fraud.
5. I believe I will be more successful than most of the people I know.

The final selection of participants will be based on the overall highest average participant scores within the set scale range of five (110 points) – seven (189 points). This phase will be carried out until approximately 20 - 30 participants identified in the higher range category of the FOSS agree to participate in the in-depth interviewing phase. Because participants are asked to recall and discuss events that may be emotionally disruptive, final selection will be based on the participants expressed desire to discover the outcome. This will also ensure their commitment.

The phenomenology approach pursues a richer, more accurate, and complete picture of specific human experiences, participation in the in-depth interview process may consist of approximately 20 - 30 participants. However, the number of participants is based on identifying a clear pattern. Therefore, while Griffin and Hauser (1993) noted that 20-30 IDIs is sufficient in uncovering 90-95% of the broadest range of perceptions and experiences, the number of participants in this study may or may not exceed the 20 -

30 count. For example, should the interview responses reveal a clear pattern after 15 participant interviews, the research will conclude with 20 participant interviews.

An informed consent that will also serve as permission to record subsequent interview sessions for collecting data and accuracy will be signed by final participants. The interviews will be conducted over the phone to provide a sense of anonymity, and will receive a private conference dial-in number and participant access code for further confidentiality. The researcher will coordinate with all participants to schedule the date and time of their interview. The private conference dial-in will be used to ensure clear and accurate recording of the interviews. The researcher will make every attempt to conduct the in-depth interviews no later than two-weeks after the final submission date of all FOSS.

Phenomenological research is made valid through first person reports of their life experiences. Thus, it will be the responsibility of the researcher to maintain freedom from suppositions. In other words, the researcher cannot assume things ahead of time without internal reflection and meaning by the researcher, which is done through the process of epoche (Creswell, 2007; Husserl, 1963; Maxwell, 2005; Moustakas, 1994; Schmitt 1968). Only the participants' own perception can point to truth, therefore, it will be imperative that the researcher stay curious through the interviewing process. All opinions about what is considered as truthful to the researcher is to be deferred and annotated in the margins of the interview notes so the focus will remain on the participants' experiences.

To further maintain this level of objectivity the researcher will engage in phenomenological reduction—describing only what will be observed in the actions or

behaviors of the participants during the interview, which is the relationship between phenomenon and the participants' self (Moustakas, 1994; Schmitt 1968). Thus, when the researcher describes an observation pertaining to the participant during the interview, which relates to the context of an experience, it will always be noted in a way that references textural qualities such as, angry and calm, animated or dull, etc. This is referred to as reduction because it leads back to an individual's own experience of how things were (Schmitt 1968).

The in-depth interviews will have a standardized open-ended structure. This gives the researcher the ability to be more responsive when an opportunity arises to have a participant expound on his/her remarks; determine when it might be best to explore a participants' character to a greater extent; or to pose questions about emerging new ideas that may not be originally anticipated by the researcher. Cohen (1974) identified nine factors that relate to FOS, which were considered as providing a meaningful account of the success fearing personality. For this reason, these factors will be used to construct the questions for the in-depth interview. The nine factors are:

1. Anxiety over the expression of needs and preferences
2. Reluctance to acknowledge personal competence
3. Impaired concentration and distractibility
4. Indecisiveness
5. Safety valve syndrome—fear of loss of control
6. Illegitimacy of self-promotive behavior
7. Anxiety over being the focus of attention

8. Preoccupation with competition and evaluation

9. Preoccupation with the underplaying of effectiveness

The instructions regarding the collection of data given to the participants are simple: the interviews will be conducted in the manner of a casual conversation. Every effort will be made by the researcher to create an environment where participants feel comfortable enough to speak freely about their experiences. Participants will be ensured that while the conversations are being recorded it is merely for the sake of accuracy, and strict confidentiality of all recordings will be maintained. Participants will also be advised that the researcher will take notes during the interview relating to any phrases, behaviors, tones, or expressions (verbal or non-verbal) that might stand out, which will also be kept confidential.

In order to develop a rapport with each participant and to put them at ease with the researcher, the first ten to fifteen minutes of the interview session will be spent discussing their thoughts and responses to the Zuckerman & Allison's FOSS (1976). This will allow the researcher to move into the interview process in a non-threatening manner. The interview will shift focus to gathering information about the participant's early life conditioning by asking them to discuss their learned values, familial cultural and social conditioning; and the intimate thoughts and beliefs regarding past and current opportunities of success opportunities for African American. This will allow the researcher to gain data on the unconscious interplay of FOS characteristics (i.e., lack of confidence, anxiety in situations of competition, a sense of dread during periods of evaluation, down-playing personal competencies, and self-sabotaging behavior); and

whether there is an expectation of negativity toward their efforts of achievement from White Americans they view as being more powerful.

The remaining interview will focus on exploring the two research questions. To stimulate the participants' passion and to set the stage for integrating the FOS factors established by Cohen (1974) into the interview questioning, participants will be asked to briefly discuss one particular incident where they experienced or felt their efforts toward achieving success have been adversely affected by more powerful others?" On average, the interviews are planned to be one hour in length and will be recorded. However, the interviews will not be dictated by time, and will end when the participant truly finishes discussing what is relevant to them. At the completion of the interviews, participants will be asked if they would agree to a follow-up contact if further clarity and accuracy is needed, and they will be encouraged to e-mail any additional thoughts or recalls they may have.

Ethical Responsibility to Participants

The ethical risks that may impact participants are privacy issues and possible emotional distress. Thus, The American Psychological Association's (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2003) standards relating to privacy and confidentiality and reporting and publishing of scientific information will be strictly followed. Participation in the study is voluntary, and consent forms will be used for both interviewing and the use of a recording device. All participant information, consent forms, and transcripts will be kept confidential in a privacy protected electronic file, with a backup copy on a USB flash drive, which will be kept secured at the researcher's office.

The participants' original transcriptions (hard copies and electronic files) will be kept for the duration of the researcher's doctoral studies and destroyed five (5) after the researcher receives her doctoral degree as required by IRB board. Per federal regulations, consent forms will be kept in the researcher's office in a secured location for three (3) years, which will then be shredded.

Having a person revisit and discuss their negative experiences can be emotional distressing. Therefore, the questions asked during the interviews are intended not to create undue stress. The researcher will listen for any signs of stress, so not to push a participant when exploring a participant's response to a question. Participants will also be advised that at any time they can refuse to answer a question, asks the researcher to move to the next question, terminate the interview, or withdraw from the study, should a question make them feel uncomfortable. In addition, participants will be informed about the involvement of the dissertation chair and committee member, and their access to participants' transcripts. However, they will be assured that the only the primary researcher will complete the in-depth analysis of their interviews, and maintain all raw materials.

To further ensure the confidentiality of the participants, all identifiers associated with the participants will be deleted or altered to nondescript identifiers, such as "participants #1; participant #2, etc." or "P#1; P#2, etc." before the dissertation committee reviews their information. Should a participant decide to withdraw from the research completely, all materials relating to that participant is destroyed after 10-days. The delay in destroying information after a participant withdraws from the research is in

the event the participant changes his/her mind and wants to reenter the research. After final analysis of the collected data is made, participants will be contacted to be debriefed, after which time a brief three-page summary of the findings in PDF format will be emailed to them.

Data Analysis

Bogdan & Biklen (1982) described qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). According to Maxwell (2005), data analysis assists researchers in working with large amounts of information, while systematically identifying characteristics such as: the regularities of used keywords by finding the more important structures in the information. This documented information is to be grouped according to the theorized framework, in order to offer a more meaningful analysis of the data.

In this study, I will adhere to Creswell's (1998, 2007) phenomenological perspective regarding the process of data analysis and representation, data management, reading, forming notes, deciphering , and categorizing. The raw data provides the groundwork for a reflective structural analysis that embodies the essence of a participant's experience. Data from the FOSS, e-mail correspondence, and in-depth interviews will be organized by participants' identifiers, and put into electronic file folders identifying participants by numeric coding. Using the "copy and paste" tools of Microsoft Word, the responses from the FOSS will be grouped within Cohen's 9 factors, which acts as an initial means of categorizing data into a more organized and useful

document for performing analysis, such as adding appropriate space for bracketing during analysis.

According to Zipf's Law (1949), every communication will divulge its key concerns or message by the words or phrases most frequently used. In other words given a sizable amount of spontaneous verbal communication, the excessive or recurring use of any word or phrase is inversely related to its rank in a frequency table. Thus, the most frequently used word or phrases will appear almost twice as much as the second most frequently used word, three times as much as the third most frequently used word, etc. Therefore, the process of analyzing the collected data will be as follows: a preliminary listening phase will be conducted of the interview audio recordings. The recordings will be reviewed in their entirety; memos will be made in order to pinpoint frequently used words or phrases later, and to form rough ideas about categories and associations in the data.

The original data acquired from interviews, which consisted of the unfiltered descriptions and dialogue obtained from the participants will be organized further to determine how the participants interpreted the experience. After all data is organized, the process of analyzing the general meanings will be conducted. According to Strauss and Corbin (2007), naming and categorizing the abstract world occurs through the use of nouns and verbs. Therefore, the analytic process will be used to detect the general categories that these things correspond to, such as work interests, social relationships, etc.

Once the preliminary notes are gathered, the audio recordings will be listened to for a second time to transcribe the participants' responses from the interviews verbatim

into a written Microsoft Word document, and to ensure accuracy for organizing the data into broader themes, issues, and topics at a later date. To ensure greater accuracy, after the written transcriptions are completed, the audio recordings will be listened to for a third time. Transcripts will be read in their entirety and the researcher will make notes and create an initial open coding system as part of the analysis. Coding focuses on identifying; naming, categorizing and clarifying the phenomena found in a text and can be accomplished through either a very formal and systematic approach or in a more informal way (Strauss & Corbin, 2007). With open coding, each line, sentence, etc. is read for the purpose of repeatedly answering the question, "What is this concerning" or "What is being alluded to here?"

After the coding is completed an analysis of the written data, which is based on participants' own words, will be conducted. This will include labelling descriptions and themes recognized in the participants' concepts and beliefs in reference to a question, as well as the researcher's explanation of these concepts and beliefs. Another electronic file folder will be created, which will consist of separate documents that detail the core themes of each interview. The core themes will then be studied to look for commonalities with the FOSS characteristics, which will then be grouped together in a second document in order to identify more specific themes. According to Spradley (1980), this search for relationships (common themes) should also be guided by this study's purpose, literature review, research questions, and method. Thus, another review of the second grouping will be conducted to identify other possible themes. These groupings will then be read and reread to make sure nothing is overlooked. Finally, the concluding categorization will be

developed and an examination of these categories as a whole will be conducted. This process will provide greater insight of what may be occurring within the information and provide a means to organize and understand the phenomenon as a whole.

The ATLAS.ti 7 software program (Kerlin, 2002) will be used in all phases of the study to manage the analysis of the data collected. This tool allows the researcher to work more effectively with the written content to simplify coding the collected data, and helps to identify the words and phrases quicker. Richards & Richards (1994) suggest that the ATLAS.ti 7 software supports theoretical analysis, allowing the recovery of indexed text, related memos, and other information searches. The software also helps in managing the interpreted data using a hierarchical structured tree to sequence index categories. All data will be put on a USB flash drive throughout the analysis phase as a backup file and kept in a safe and secure locked box in the researcher's office.

Threats and Biases

The two issues I considered in this study were: self-serving and social desirability biases. Knowing the true intention of the study may trigger the self-serving bias. In this case participants may justify or fabricate events to present a more favorable self-image that might be contrary to their true thoughts and actions (Petri & Govern, 2004). Because of the FOSS self-report assessment, social desirability bias is an issue. If participants are aware of the true objective of the FOS Scale they may respond to the scale in a way that paints a positive picture of them (Fisher, 1993). Therefore, the title will be removed from the fear of success scale as to not reveal its purpose.

Since those affected by the unresolved yet unconscious conflicts of FOS/ATS will go to any length to deny its existence, the primary limitation will be the participants resistance in acknowledging and interpreting the meanings and consequences of everyday behaviors that are often considered and guarded as survival or defense mechanisms, instead of internal characteristics of success fearing and the hypersensitivity to situations that trigger this behavior. Thus, social desirability bias may threaten the outcome of the study because participants might respond in a way that is viewed more favorably by the researcher, which may lead to over-reporting positive behavior or under-reporting negative behavior. This will pose a serious problem when participants respond to Zuckerman & Allison's FOSS (1976) self-report, as well as the interview questions.

Another concern relates to how the researcher may interpret the data, which could be polluted by imposing his or her own experiences, values, and expectations. Therefore, great effort will be taken to minimize this threat by employing what Husserl (1963) referred to as bracketing, which calls for the researcher to suspend personal judgments about the world prior to the phenomenological analysis. Bracketing also requires the researcher to maintain a spirit of curiosity and set aside questions regarding the true reality of the experience, as well as all other questions about its authentic nature (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). For example, a participant's statements of being discriminated against qualify as an experience, regardless of whether the discrimination was an actual occurrence or not. By bracketing discrimination as the individual's perception of an experience (for that matter, their entire view of the landscape in which the discrimination took place) as real, the phenomenologist can suspend questions

concerning the actual presence or absence of tangible facts, to consider only the experience that the subject has of it.

To further overcome this threat and to ensure accuracy, all interviews will be in audio recorded format. This will provide additional clarity, as well as capture other valuable involuntary remarks the researcher may have missed during the actual interview session. In addition, the researcher will maintain a rapport with participants after the initial interview for the sake of clarifying interview discussion with the participant. This practice is referred to as respondent validation. The benefit of qualitative research is the ability to obtain additional feedback or verifying with participants when interpreting the meaning of their thoughts and feelings, and critical to reaping a richer outcome.

Another threat relating to the researcher is reactivity, which is concerned with the researcher influencing the situation or the individuals participating in the research. This is a powerful and inescapable influence that may come into play during the interviews. According to Maxwell (2005), the interviewer and the interview environment will always have an effect on how the participant responds. However, rather than to try and avoid the probability of influence, in an attempt to avoid unfavorable outcomes, it is of greater value to understand how the researcher might be influencing the situation, and how this will impact the validity of what is gained from the interview. Therefore, the precaution of bracketing will be applied (Creswell, 2007; Husserl, 1963; Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to obtain a first-person perspective, through individual interviews, whether there were factors within the psyche of some African Americans that act as conscious or unconscious self-saboteurs that may help to perpetuate the underrepresentation of African Americans in key leadership positions within the framework of organizations within the United States.

The qualitative phenomenology approach was used to explore this issue from the perspective of possible self-imposed barriers associated with the SFP. The research further explored the assertion that African Americans would forfeit career opportunities because they lack confidence, initiative and/or commitment. Therefore, using the theoretical constructs FOS to establish a reference point, this research sought to answer two questions: (a) whether historical conditioning and a series of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP), and (b) whether these characteristics lead to reluctance and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination.

Exploring these two questions will offer a resolve in other key areas as it relates to the disparity of African Americans achievement: (a) potential origins and explanations involving whether African Americans may lack self-confidence, initiative, and commitment toward their own advancement; (b) potential impacts of changing the

mindset of African Americans' underrepresentation in key leadership positions; and (c) the potential of this mental shift being an attainable goal or resolve

In Chapter 1, I presented the charge that at a time when many companies are proud to point out their multicultural workforce; or showcase their successful African American managers and entrepreneurs in such magazines as Black Enterprise, Forbes and The Black Collegian, a truer reality exist. Chapter 2 included the theoretical history of the success fearing personality, and explored some of the literature pertaining to this theory, its origin, and how it relates to the historic relationship between African American and White American. It also presented other factors that may contribute to shaping the possible self-induced limitations in achievement that African Americans may hold.

Since Horner's 1968 research on the fear of success (FOS) or the success fearing personality (SFP), further development of the theory has followed two popular paths of reasoning. One group of researchers (Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Fleming, 1982; Pappo, 1972) concurred with Horner's original line of thought, which argued that FOS origins start early in childhood, and is a single personality disposition, which triggers an expectation of negative consequences when in competitive achievement situations. A second group of researchers (Bremer & Wittig, 1980; Lockheed, 1975; Monahan, Kuhn, & Shaver, 1974; Tresemer, 1977) viewed the avoidance of success as being situational. These researchers argued that avoidance was decided and primarily reliant on an individual's expectations regarding the positive or negative consequences of behavior; and that these expectations are triggered by the cues in a specific situation.

In this study it is my position that both perspectives are relevant factors; with each feeding off the other, one nurturing its existence, and the other maintaining or reinforcing its existence. As noted by Tresemer (1977), both lines of thought are related to each other, even if they are not as systematically correlated as might be desired. In this case, one viewpoint proposes an internalized, learned reaction, while the other proposes a reaction to an externalized stimulus.

Additionally, it was the position of this research that both elements may prove to have the potential of becoming even more complex and devastating when a long history of social rejection, abuse and social oppression is added to the equation (Dworkin & Dworkin, 1999; Karon, 1975; Lowery, Knowles & Unzueta, 2007; Rothenberg, 2005; Wise, 2008). Therefore, I explored both related perspectives of *expectancy* through the historical lens of the African American experience. Further, although past and present researchers (Campbell, 1997; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Fleming, 2000; Freud, 1915; Horner, 1972; Pappo, 1983; Tresemer, 1977) identify the phenomenon of avoiding, withdrawing, or sabotaging a long sought out ambition as a fear of success, I strongly suggests that the passing of time has shifted this fear to a psychological state of ATS.

For African Americans, what started out as subject to hostile brutality if they displayed an innate striving for self-sufficiency, now functions as a very sophisticated, less recognized form of racial intimidation (Bourke, 2005; Davidson-Buck, 2015; Wise, 2009). Thus the racial violence and systemic injustice that defined the Jim Crow era continues to be a reality in the 21st Century, but in less obvious, yet all the more odious

forms (Davidson-Buck, 2015; Reya, 2007; Thompson, 2014; Wise, 2009; Younge, 2014). Therefore, the ability to navigate through a far less easily recognized type of discrimination and racism that first created their fears of retribution becomes a more complicated task of uncertainty. The result of such psychological residue may be a state of apprehension and ambivalence in their current efforts toward success. This psychological residue relates to one of the key factors of the FOS theory: those who exhibit characteristics of FOS do so long after the originating experience (in this case a history of blatant racial discrimination) that created the fearfulness no longer exist, or the negative consequences are irrelevant to the current existence (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978). This may also lend itself to a previously mentioned suggestion by Austin (2000) that there are unconscious, self-imposed but powerful thoughts and feelings that stand in the way of an individual's real achievement, influencing every decision they may make.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the research design and rationale used to explore the two research questions from a first-person perspective. I discussed the role of the researcher, possible researcher biases, and other ethical issues that may occur doing the study. In addition, I addressed the conflicts of interest, and the plan for addressing these issues. I also identified the population, the number of participant, and how participants would meet the research criterion. Along with stating the criterion on which participant selection was based, I also explained the methodology, tools, and procedure used to collect data. Finally, in Chapter 3, I explained how participants would be debriefed, as well as the follow-up procedures.

Demographics

Phenomenological research pursues the meaning of a particular occurrence from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Addison, 1989); thus, I selected specific pools of candidates to participate in the research. Participants were African American men and women at least 34 years of age, economically and academically diverse, and in the labor force as corporate professionals, business owners, and civic leaders. Participants were recruited through the Texas Association of African-American Chambers of Commerce (TAAACC) membership. An organization established in 1988, and was the outgrowth of the Dallas, Texas African American Chambers of Commerce, which started in 1926.

With IRB's approval, the reach for research participation was expanded to include the on-line professional network site LinkedIn. With over 259 million members consisting of professionals, business owners, solo-entrepreneurs, entrepreneurs, and executives from every Fortune 500 company. Numerous African American special interest groups proved to be a viable source for potential participants. Groups contacted were:

- The African American Board Leadership Institute
- African American Leadership Program
- African American Business Owners
- Success Minded African Americans
- African American Business Leaders for Excellence:

These two sample pools provided a substantial population of potential participants that met the preliminary criteria and parameters for consideration into the study. Initial contact was made through the groups' or association's electronic posting board or newsletter as a result of the flyer (see Appendix B of this study: Invitation to Participate Flyer). Once a potential participant responded and agreed to participate, subsequent contact was made through the email participants provided where additional participation information was given and final arrangements were made for the phone interviews.

Along with working professionals, participants also came from other various backgrounds: African Immigrants, University Chancellor, City Mayor, Educators, Activists, Engineers, Military Veterans, Corporate Vice Presidents, Entrepreneurs/Small Business owners, and political officials.

Data Collection

My initial and subsequent contact with respondents was via direct e-mail. The explanation I gave potential respondents was that the study focused on examining the current opportunities and hindrances of African Americans successes in the United States under the current social system. I sent the research consent form explaining the procedures of the study, the time commitment, the FOSS assessment as a selection qualifier, the interview method, the confidentiality agreement, and the data collection and revivification process. Once participants signed and returned the consent form, a date and time for the survey and interview was scheduled.

To provide a sense of security and confidentiality, I contacted participants from a private telephone conference line, where the in-depth interviews were conducted. The

FOSS surveys (see the Appendix C of this study) were completed by participants, returned to me, and scored prior to the interviews. The surveys were saved to a designated electronic data collection folder for later review and analysis.

At the outset, the final sample pool to participate in the in-depth interviewing process was to consist of 20–30 African Americans who scored in the high range (110–189) of the fear of success scale (FOSS). Sixty individuals responded to the call for research participants. Of the 60 individuals responding and taking the FOSS, 15 respondents scored in the original specified high range. The remaining 45 respondents scored in the 70–90s (average and above average range).

Further analysis of the FOSS revealed many similarities between those who scored in the specified high range and those that scored in the upper 70 - 90s range, which warranted greater exploration. Therefore, with approval from IRB, rather than interviewing only participants that scored high on the FOSS, all participants, regardless of their scores were interviewed. The intent was to provide deeper insight of the research findings by comparing the conversations and experiences. The final 30 participants were randomly selected from the 60 surveys to participate in the in-depth interviews. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the number of participants, their final FOSS scores, and their gender.

Table 1

Top Five Items With Yes Responses: Scores and Gender

Total # of Participants	FOSS Survey Score	Male	Female
2	70	0	2
9	77	5	4
6	84	3	3
3	91	2	1
2	98	1	1
1	108	1	
4	119	1	3
1	126		1
1	133		1
1	140		1

Prior to the start of the in-depth interview (see Appendix D of this study for the interview questions), I reminded participants that the interviews were being recorded and their verbal acknowledgement and permission was given. The standardized open-ended question structure was used to conduct the interviews, which allowed the researcher flexibility in probing and exploring participants' comments, terms used and certain experiences in greater depth. This also allowed the researcher to pose questions about new ideas or perspectives that emerged during the interview. For example, W.E.B. DuBois's thesis of Double Consciousness (1994); the phrase, "Noise of our history," or the perceptions held by most participants regarding the "crabs in the barrel" mentality (P27).

During the in-depth interviews, I strictly adhered to the process of bracketing by first recording the in-depth interviews and asking for clarity of terms and phrases the participants may have used to avoid assuming or generalizing the interpretation of the phrases or terms. While the interviews were planned for one hour in length, most participants spoke an average of 90 minutes or more.

Initially, I was concerned with my vulnerability to biased interpretation or the threat of imposing my own meaning, values, and expectations, as a result of confirmation bias, as well as reactiveness to responses. As a precaution, Husserl (1963) principles of bracketing discriminations, was constantly observed. I purposely suspended all questions concerning the actual presence or absence of tangible facts in the participants' shared experiences in order to consider only the experience that the participants had. Therefore, to ensure my focus remained on the shared experiences of the participants, making note of my assessments, personal thoughts, reflections, general impression, and other comments were suspended until the first review of the recorded interviews. However, Creswell's (2007) protocol for qualitative interviews, which included instructions to participants, exploring certain responses to key questions, and allowing space for my notes, was followed during the interviews. Phrases, terms and ideas that provoked more exploration were indicated in the participant's individual notes, and discussed at the time of the interview.

Because of the potential for confirmation bias, I conducted all the recorded interviews before I began the analysis phases. This was done to minimize any chances of me influencing the interview direction or baiting a particular response from participants.

According to Darley & Gross (2000), confirmation bias is described as the potential of an individual to prefer information that validates their beliefs or assumptions regardless of the legitimacy of the information. As a result, they discriminatively store information, selectively recall the details of events, and interpret occurrences in a biased way. Darley and Gross further suggests these biases are particularly evident in emotionally significant issues and in deeply established beliefs. Risen and Gilovich (2007) viewed these outcomes as a one-sided analyze that focuses on one possibility, while ignoring all other alternatives. They further concluded, when all other influences are combined, this strategy can prejudice any end results that are reached in a study.

To continue this level of objectivity, I also used phenomenological reduction in both the original interviews and during the reviews of the recorded interviews. Only extreme changes in the participants' voice tones and pitches or long pauses that gave a sense of the participant's feelings (anger, excitement, regret, aggression, conviction, etc.) when responding to certain questions during the interview were indicated. When this occurred, I asked the participants to validate what I might have sensed and asked if they would like to expound on these verbal changes or feelings.

At the completion of the interviews, I asked the participants about their emotional state to ensure they were not experiencing any distress or anxieties as a result of the interview. I asked participants if they would agree to a follow-up contact if further clarity and accuracy was needed. I also asked participants to share any final comments, concerns, or suggestions they might have had, and encouraged them to e-mail any additional thoughts or recalls that may occur later.

Data Analysis

I administered 60 preliminary FOSS to potential participants. I scored their responses, and the results were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet for a final count of the number of responses to each item, and a comparison between participants that scored high on the FOSS and those that scored average. The preliminary analyzing of all 60 FOSS responses revealed some shared values in the participants' responses regardless of their overall scores, which will be discussed in the Results section of this research. This preliminary analysis prompted the researcher to expand the in-depth interviews to include participants who scored below the original FOSS scoring criterion for participation selection. It should be noted that all 60 surveys were only considered in the preliminary analysis of the FOSS. In the final analysis of the FOSS, only the selected 30 participants' surveys were considered for the research findings.

In the final analysis of the 30 participants' FOSS, I grouped the 27 survey items by Cohen's 9 factors, which acted as an initial means of categorizing and coding the responses. For example, the following FOSS items were grouped with Cohen's fifth factor: Safety Valve Syndrome—Fear of Loss of Control.

- For every winner there are several rejected and unhappy losers.
- A person who is at the top faces nothing but a constant struggle to stay there.
- In my attempt to do better than others, I realize I may lose many of my friends.
- Often the cost of success is greater than the reward.

Categorizing the 27-items from the FOSS into Cohen's 9 factors and focusing on the highest responses of "Yes" allowed me to identify the common values and thoughts among the participants' responses. I then focused on the following items from the FOSS that rank as the top five the final participants responded "Yes" to. As shown in Table 2, all but one of the items were scored highly on the FOSS.

Table 2

Top Five Items with Yes Responses: Questions and Ranking

FOSS Item	Ranking	% of Responses
It is extremely important for me to do well in all things that I undertake.	1	100%
For every winner there are several rejected and unhappy losers.	2	73
Achievement commands respect.	3	70
It is more important to play the game than to win it.	4	63
In my attempt to do better than others, I realize I may lose many of my friends.	4	63
A person who is at the top faces nothing but a constant struggle to stay there.	4	63
It is more important to play the game than to win it.	5	60
A successful person is often considered by others to be both aloof and snobbish.	5	60
I think "success" has been emphasized too much in our culture.	5	60
When I am on top the responsibility makes me feel uneasy.	5	60
Often the cost of success is greater than the reward.	5	60

The first item in Table 2 is indicated has being low on the FOSS. However, 100% of the participants responded “yes” to this item (this reflects all 60 survey respondents. Responses of all remaining items were based on the final 30 participants).

After all interviews were completed, I transcribed each recorded interview in its entirety to a formatted Word document, which also provided space for my assessments, personal thoughts, reflections, general impression, and other comments. I used the Express Scribe Transcription Software tool by NCH Software to assist me in the transcription of the recorded interviews. To ensure greater accuracy, after all recorded interviews were transcribed, I listened to the audio recordings a second time. This also allowed me to listen intently to the nuances of the participants’ responses in order to note reflections, general impression, and other comments of each interview.

I then converted all the transcripts into a single PDF document, which allowed me to create an initial open coding system as part of the analysis. According to Strauss and Corbin (2007), coding involves distinguishing; labeling, categorizing, and describing phenomena found in a text; and can be done informally or very formally and systematically. I initially used the informal method of open coding. I read each sentence and paragraph for the purpose of repeatedly asking and answering the question, "What is this concerning” or “What is being alluded to here?” as it related to Cohen’s 9 fear of success factors and the two research questions.

After I completed the informal coding, the document was uploaded into the ATLAS.ti 7 software program (Kerlin, 2002) for the final phase of analysis of all transcribed interviews. ATLAS.ti 7 software program is developed and published by

Scientific Software Development. I selected it as a formal open coding tool due to its ability to facilitate the analysis and interpretation process as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (2007). The program allowed the researcher to utilize a more systematic method of open coding, which simplified the process of indexing elements within the collected data. The program also made it easier to search for and identify words and phrases quicker.

As described by ATLAS.ti 7, codes are generally small snippets of text intended to reference larger fragments of text. Codes are used to establish sets of related information in order to effectively compare, as well as capture the meanings in data. They act as a means of labeling or classifying specific occurrences in the data for the purpose of further relating and comparing information.

Several researchers (MacMillan, 2005; Pateman, 1998; Richards, 1997; Russell and Gregory, 1993; St John and Johnson, 2000) have cautioned first-time users about over coding when working with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software like the ATLAS.ti 7. They argue that data can become unmanageable if researchers are not selective when coding. For instance, without careful coding a researcher can easily end up with too many themes and wordy categories. Richards (1997) describes this as a "coding fetish." In an effort to weigh the value of using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, MacMillan (2005) suggested that using software coding capabilities in literal terms is dangerous. It misleads the researcher into treating the data in terms of categories that only give quantitative significance. Hence, instead of using coding as a way of managing data, it becomes the process of analysis.

To avoid concentrating on the coding process and losing focus on examining the data, during the open coding process, the researcher followed the recommendation of the ATLAS.ti 7 user manual that emphasized the length of a code should be restricted and should not be too verbose. Thus, 18 brief and succinct code names were created for a "code by list" which appeared in the margin display of the program's window as data is review line by line. Cohen's 9 fear of success factors, the assertion that African Americans forfeit their opportunities, and the two research questions were used to create these code names. I used the following list of the codes to focus on elements pertaining to the research questions.

1. Anxiety over expressing needs
2. Minimizing abilities
3. Reluctance to own achievements
4. Family philosophy
5. Distraction
6. Early life experiences
7. Indecisiveness
8. Historical conditioning
9. Safety valve syndrome
10. Expectation of inequity
11. Self-promotion
12. Success beliefs
13. Anxiety over focus of attention
14. Concern with competition and evaluation
15. Responsibility to change stereotypes
16. Assertion: Cultural Self-sabotage
17. Self-concept
18. Cultural Mental Shift

For example, the code "Safety valve syndrome" focused on statements that indicated the unconscious need to protect themselves from possible rejection. A recurring

theme within the interviews was participants felt it was important not to get too excited about things they really want; otherwise, it would wear on their self-esteem.

Two other coding tools in the ATLAS.ti 7 program were also used to look for other possible themes or patterns: the Text Search Tool, which was used for simple string matching of phrases; and the Word Cruncher, which counted and ranked the frequency of words used. According to Zipf's Law (1949), words and phrases that are said most often offer insight into important concerns in every communication. In other words given a sizable amount of spontaneous verbal communication, the excessive or recurring use of any word or phrase is inversely related to its rank in a frequency table. Thus, the most frequently used word or phrases will appear almost twice as much as the second most frequently used word, three times as much as the third most frequently used word, etc. The results from each coding tool were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet, where the frequency of words and phrases were analyzed as it related to their contextual use in the interviews.

I analyzed the written data, which included identifying descriptions and themes of the participants' beliefs and concepts derived from their own words, as well as my interpretation of these concepts and beliefs based on the coded information.

Results

I set out in this research to explore two questions related to the assertion that African Americans forfeit career opportunities due to a lack of confidence, initiative and/or commitment. First, whether historical conditioning and a series of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive

to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP). Secondly, whether these characteristics lead to reluctance and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success [ATS]) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination.

In this section, I will briefly discuss the common findings of the Zuckerman and Allison FOSS; and will then address the research question by presenting the findings from the interviews as they were grouped in Cohen's 9 Factors of FOS. It should be noted that the responses related to participants' experiences in the United States.

What was clear during the interviews was the recurring, yet unconscious efforts of the participants to describe their responses to the experiences they had in terms that indicated coping skills or methods of mental, emotional, and financial survival. Four very common themes resonated through all participants' conversations that echoed literature findings:

First, Hewlett, Luce and West (2005) perceptions that African Americans' social and economic advancement is plagued by barriers such as the existence of the "Jell-O floor" (p. 78): a condition that keeps minorities mired in negative stereotypes. The participants spoke very candidly about the challenges of the negative cultural stereotypes which are *always* back of mind. Most of the participants presented the argument of whether the proverbial glass ceiling remains securely in place as a viable obstacle for minorities, or just a recreational conversation – a distraction to a deeper issue. The common view was that the general population of African Americans have never really been able to gain a solid footing to actually stand up and push against the glass ceiling.

It should be noted that all of the participates expressed that the instability or *Jell-O floor* experienced within the African American community is threefold, caused by the crab in the barrel mentality (Participant 27) within the African American community, the individuals own apprehensiveness based on their experiences, and the *new* social framework of discrimination.

Second, the SFP pursues competitive goals in an aggressive attempt to defeat their rivals. However, they are soon plagued by their cognitive dissonance between fear of failure or negative consequences, and their fear of success. There is the anticipation of experiencing contempt from others should they fail; so there is the anxiety of facing unbearable humiliation.

It was clear that every participant strongly valued achievement and was extremely concerned with their image as it related to doing well. This was evident by 100% (taken from the 60 surveys collected) of the participants answering yes to the question, "It is extremely important for me to do well in all things that I undertake." It was very clear that every participant was his or her greatest critic – often times, to a fault. However, this motivation was driven not just by their personal need to do well, but also by their awareness of the social stigmas associated with being African American.

It was also clear that this cognitive dissonance was magnified by the participants' pseudo obligation to represent and uphold the image of the entire African American race in an attempt to disprove societal myths and stereotypes, as well as shouldering the balancing act of "racial shifting" (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Participants also expressed that there is always a constant *whispering* of distrust within themselves when

entering into certain situations whether they are being setup for failure or merely a *token*. However, it could be suggested that the participants reflections presented here are the results of their historical conditioning.

Third, of the five FOS characteristics, Canavan-Gumpert et al. (1978); Goffman (1963); Pappo (1983), and Tresemer (1977), saw the anxieties over competition and evaluation as the strongest defense mechanism. These defense mechanisms are constructed by the success fearer to redirect their attention away from the true issue of their internal conflict – retribution for achieving a greater level of competence and skill.

While all of the participants spoke in depth about the lingering, vindictive, yet covert activities of racism and discrimination that still existed within mainstream society, they were more distressed over the vindictive actions they experienced at the hands of other African Americans. The greatest devastation and betrayal experienced, as candidly expressed by the participants, came at the hands of other African Americans; as if they, themselves, were totally oblivious of the African American struggle within this country.

For them [participants] retribution was like a double edged sword, where they were being cut from both mainstream American, and the African American community itself. There was a great sense of distress and disillusionment about being ostracized and shunned by other African Americans for having academic aspiration or seeking a greater quality of life. Participants frequently referred to terms such as jealousy, envious, the "crab in the barrel mentality" (P27), and mind-numbing when describing some of their interactions with other African Americans.

Finally, according to Simon (2007), the adaptation for many minorities in mainstream organizations with white-male dominated hierarchies is the development of a dual-consciousness at work, which becomes a defense mechanism where an individual's concentration is split between the self-awareness of their own minority (stigmatized) status and the discriminatory reactions from the majority culture, while simultaneously being cognizant of the demands on performance when in a senior executive role. Therefore, the perception (accurate or not) of constantly needing to prove oneself (be "on") while keeping their shield up, oppresses the esteem of many minorities. This dual consciousness, acting as a defense mechanism, redirects their focus away from their competence and places it on being preoccupied with the evaluations made by others regarding their performance in a competitive situation.

Simon's view was supported by many of the participants' responses, especially from those in political and upper management positions. The common experiences shared pertained to always being mindful of how they, as African Americans, approached their white counterparts – both verbally and physically. Participants expressed a frustration of always feeling they have to focus more on their verbal and non-verbal presentation when interacting with or in hearing range of white counterparts, than the content and validity of their subject matter. This frustration was the utterance that typifies Jones and Shorter-Gooden's (2004), and Livingston and Pearce (2009) assertion of easing White Americas' fears of the barbarian at the gate or the angry black person syndrome. Participants were annoyed by the fact of always seeming to have to prove and re-prove their abilities and competence within the same work environment, or among the same white colleagues.

They were also aggravated by the feelings of not being able to speak from a place of their expertise because they had to "temper" their passion or conviction, otherwise they would be seen as aggressive.

Results of the In-Depth Interviews

According to Pappo (1972), the root of the SFP can be found in five characteristic: (a) lack of confidence; (b) anxiety in situations of competition; (c) a sense of dread during periods of evaluation; (d) down-playing personal competencies; and (e) self-sabotaging behavior. These five characteristics may create a greater weakening in the psyche of a group whose history is one of socialized deprecation (in this case African Americans).

The second major theme of FOS suggests there is possibly an unconscious self-inflicted element as well. The characteristics of FOS are multi-layered and are likely the direct result of the success fearer's unconscious conflict about competition and success. The response to this conflict is the implementation of various defense mechanisms. Although past and present researchers identify the phenomenon of avoiding, withdrawing, or sabotaging a long sought out ambition as a fear of success, I propose that the passing of time has shifted this fear to a psychological state of ATS.

For African Americans, the racial violence and systemic injustice that defined the Jim Crow era continues to be a reality in the 21st Century, but in less obvious, yet all the more odious forms (Davidson-Buck, 2015; Reya, 2007; Thompson, 2014; Wise, 2009; Younge, 2014). Therefore, the ability to navigate through a far less easily recognized type of racial vengeance that first created their fears of retribution becomes a more

complicated task of uncertainty. The result of such residue may be a state of apprehension and ambivalence in their current efforts toward success. This psychological residue relates to one of the key factors of the FOS theory: those who exhibit characteristics of FOS do so long after the circumstances that originally created the fearfulness no longer exist, or the negative consequences are irrelevant (Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978). This may also lend itself to Austin's (2000) suggestion that there are unconscious, self-imposed but powerful thoughts and feelings that stand in the way of an individual's real achievement, influencing every decision they may make.

In this post-Jim Crow, Civil Rights Act of 1964 era, I propose that the characteristic of ATS greatly mimics the fear of success. However, it may be less about a present day fear, and more about what Johnson et al. (2003) referred to as perceptual baggage; the expectation of biases rooted in the past (Salter, 2008).

Psychologists have long recognized that individuals do not come to life events empty-handed, but rather, with perceptions and beliefs that includes one's unique compilation of experiences, needs, and desires, as well as the commonly shared cultural beliefs (Bruner 1957; Johnson et al., 2003; Salter, 2008). According to Bruner (1957), there is no untainted percept. To be more precise, individuals are inclined to draw from their experiences and their existing desires in order to reach beyond the context of information given in a particular context.

To explore these experiences from a semi-structural perspective, Cohen's (1974) 9 factors relating to FOS were used to construct the questions for the in-depth interview. The nine factors are as follows:

1. Anxiety over the expression of needs and preferences
2. Reluctance to acknowledge personal competence
3. Impaired concentration and distractibility
4. Indecisiveness
5. Safety valve syndrome—fear of loss of control
6. Illegitimacy of self-promotive behavior
7. Anxiety over being the focus of attention
8. Preoccupation with competition and evaluation
9. Preoccupation with the underplaying of effectiveness

Based on these nine factors that relate to FOS, participant responses revealed a discernible trend evident in African Americans' thoughts and feelings regarding success. Moreover, a pattern of interplay between FOS and ATS emerged which underscored the role of unconscious forces that most likely shaped the participants' responses.

The results obtained from the pre-interview survey analysis indicated behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP), and foreshadowed participants' recorded and transcribed responses to the interview questions. The following section is the interview results as categorized according to the nine factors that relate to FOS, or what I propose is an ATS. In this section, I explore the responses of participants as it relates to the two research question: (a) whether historical conditioning and a series of personal experiences regarding racial discrimination created a pre-disposition to be hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the success fearing personality (SFP), and (b) whether these characteristics lead to reluctance

and doubt (apprehensiveness toward success – ATS) in some African Americans when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination.

Additionally, I will present the actual thoughts and feelings of the participants in response to the research questions. To ensure confidentiality the participants will be identified as P01; P02; P03, etc. In many cases, participants shared very similar or the same views and experiences relating to certain questions. In this case, one or two responses are presented.

Anxiety over the Expression of Needs and Preferences

Many participants confided some degree of anxiety about their decision-making abilities during times of crisis. However, as it relates to Cohen's (1974) defined anxiety over the expression of needs and preferences as "Feeling uneasy asking others for things; or trouble saying no to others" (p. 54). From this context, several participants stated the importance of expressing their needs and preferences at just the right time in order to coincide with external factors, such as others' moods, whereas other participants stressed the importance of adaptability in the face of constant change. A common phrase among participants was the need to control their emotions. More specifically, to remain emotionally detached, and to not let uneasiness or frustrations interfere with expressing or accomplishing their needs and goals. Participant 09 commented:

> Because I govern a black and brown community, you're not viewed with the same value as others. When you have to make executive-leadership decisions, you kinda deemphasize the emotions. You have to learn to have a perspective that you

> have to manage your emotions so you can still do what you need to do to meet your objectives. Otherwise it's used against you.

Participant 20 expressed this thought:

> My father used to challenge us with different types of discussions. He would often ask us, 'If you were a slave, is it more important, to survive slavery and take some mess to help free your people? Or do you challenge the system and get killed?' That's a decision you have to make based on your disposition and where you're trying to go. Unfortunately, as a black man, the decision is always the same – it's often better not to challenge the system.

Participants were acutely aware of others' expectations of them, but much of the cognitive processing of these expectations was internalized, and therefore, left unexpressed. Learning to "stuff" their needs occurred early for many of the participants. As P02 put it, "As a child my wants were never important at our house. I also learned from my father, who wasn't in the home, that what I wanted was far less important than what he wanted." While this experience can be true within any family structure, regardless of race, the message of this experience is more devastating when one receives similar recurring messages from a society plagued with a long history of racial discord and undertones of racial discrimination as it relates to African Americans. Therefore, as this research asserts, within the African American culture, the origination of fear of success or the success fearing personality is developed in one environment, and maintained or reinforced in the other.

Another very common theme participants expressed was they found it hard to say no when ask to take on additional tasks because it triggered an internal childhood reminder of the responsibility or obligation for African Americans to be the best. While others (in this case anyone of non-African descent) could get away with doing less or not doing anything at all – this was not the case for African Americans. The need to overextend themselves was also driven by feeling culturally obligated to not perpetuate the social stereotypes held by others about African Americans of being lazy or unable to handle the workload.

Dealing with others' perceptions of them was also paramount for participants, whereas the expression of personal needs and preferences was not as prioritized or, seemingly, not as important to them. Nevertheless, a mosaic became obvious, one that was laden with terms such as stressed out, makes me anxious, internal, and internalize. Participant 10 responded: "I experience anxiety when attempting to express my true thoughts to authority figures who really don't want to give me a chance." While P10 fully understood that leveling with white superiors *could* be beneficial in terms of advancement, P10 chose not to express his/her true thoughts based on their experiences, and the conditioning received growing up. A conscious aversion to expressing true awareness that manifests itself as anxiety was a reiterative theme among the participants.

Indeed, the resultant cognitive dissonance overarches much of the data obtained and analyzed. Participant 06 pointed out the dual-consciousness that is an ever-present anxiety-provoking feature of cognitive dissonance in a more salient manner by stating:

> You either have to stay silent and be the Uncle Tom to be able to get along and sustain your position. Or you take on your values and beliefs and do what's fair and right, and that means staying true to a higher calling, which may isolate you.

For these participants, it was less about experiencing anxieties when expressing needs and preferences, and more about being conditioned to not recognize their needs and preferences as valuable, or that their needs and preferences were to be sacrificed for that of others.

Reluctance to Acknowledge Personal Competence

One of the characteristic traits of those who are reluctant to acknowledge personal competence is a doubtfulness about their abilities that affects most of their efforts of achievement. When asked "When are you most reluctant in expressing or openly acknowledging your skills and abilities?" most participants associated their actions of not acknowledging their skills and abilities from the standpoint of whether it would benefit them to do so. Others' reluctance had a lot to do with who they were in the company of, and their skepticism about the motives of others. A more common response from participants was whether they were the only African American present in a group, which caused them to be much more conscious of what they were going to say or how they handle themselves.

While many participants acknowledged this could occur in various situations, such as with family, friends, or a social interaction, they were more reluctant in the workplace. It should be noted; that participants expressed this reluctance was greater

when interacting with other African Americans, especially if the other was in a leadership position.

When this question was further explored from the aspect of Cohen's original definition of this factor – the challenge of experiencing self-doubt in their endeavors toward success—there was again a reiterative theme among the participants of a conscious aversion to expressing their actions as self-doubt. Many described it as "being comfortable" with where they were, so there was no need to jeopardize their current quality of life. Participant 01 stated:

> There have been opportunities presented to me, but I didn't act on them, because I'm comfortable, content and familiar – I know what I've got now, I don't know what that other things will get me. It's the element of the unknown that I don't want to deal with.

Other participants were in fact more forthcoming, and acknowledged their self-doubt. As P05 stated:

> In the back of my mind is the nagging fear of not having a degree, somebody is going to reject me, or I don't have this, I don't have that, etc. I hear it loud and clear, but I have to stuff it. My initial response to not being confident in certain situations is tied to my self-doubt – it's almost physical; I get a little nauseous. Then I ask myself, 'Why do you continue to have so much self-doubt.' I recognize it, I hear it, and I get frustrated about it – pretty much like self-abuse.

Many of the participants' responses exemplified what researchers of FOS recognize; those who fear success are driven by strong conflicting attitudes or cognitive

dissonance about success. They regard success as having a lot of positive qualities, while at the same time, being darkened by potentially costly and negative consequences (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983). While P16 scored below average on the FOSS survey, this contradictory attitudes or cognitive dissonance about success was revealed in P16's interview response:

> The biggest thing for me would be fear of success, and what that might entail; like, what success would mean to me. I don't know, but the real challenge is, am I willing to give up what I have now to find that out. I had a teacher tell me, 'You can get the six-figure job, but how will that affect the other areas of your life? While they may be paying you that big salary, they basically own you.' So the question is… do you want to give up everything else you've got going on for that?

Certainly many have received this same or similar cautionary dialog. However, this cognitive dissonance resolved this participant's internal conflict with success, which is an element of the success fearing personality. It was clear this participant was acutely aware of the African American struggles of achieving success in a discriminative society. It was also clear that he knew, and desired the benefits of achieving success. Unfortunately, what was of greater precedence with this participant, as well as others, was their strong contradictory feelings about success. According to Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, and Gumpert (1978), one's contradictory feelings about success consist of three factors:

1. Viewing success as filled with a lot of positive qualities and benefits
2. Overwhelmed with skepticism because of the potentially negative consequences
3. Threatened by the possibility of failure; if failure occurs, then judgment of incompetence is correct

The third element is most significant to the African American experience because it triggers the fear of perpetuating the social stereotype of being inferior. The possibility of failure as it related to being African American, followed by criticism and judgment was paramount to all of the participants in this study. This will be discussed later.

This FOS factor revealed another theme among participants in regards to acknowledging personal competence that did not occur in the workplace, as one would expect. There was a strong degree of reluctance that was manifested in the home, which made this a more blatant act of reluctance in acknowledging one's personal competence. For example, almost half of the participants' response was "At home" or "When dealing with family or friends." In fact, a few participants admitted that the discomfort at home could be viewed as a type of mental leftovers from their childhood conditioning.

As was expressed by P02, "It goes back to when I was a child, not wanting to make the people I cared most about uncomfortable about my achievements or intellect...because I'm like, espousing my achievements is not nearly as important as coming together." However, these participants also possessed enough personal insight to know that their needs were compromised during the process of what is, ultimately, an ingrained behavior of self-denial. Participant 25 stated, "But in making sure everyone

else feels good also compromises my sense of self." For this and other similar expressions of reluctance by other participants, a level of self-awareness is present but so deeply engrained as to represent an unconscious impetus toward a high ATS. It should be noted that mainly those who scored high on the FOSS survey held this perspective.

Similarly, several participants expressed another aspect of their reluctance to acknowledge personal competence. This aspect focuses on the subject's discomfort caused by telling someone in authority that they are entitled to getting a better deal. For example, P01, citing his career experience as a police officer stated, "There were many so-called opportunities I didn't take simply because I was told, 'You stand a good chance to get that position because they need some blacks in the Unit.'" Rather than express a need for respect based on his merits with those in authority for advancement, this participant externalized the responsibility by expecting others to readily acknowledge his work ethic, thereby rewarding him with earn advancements that he felt others received due to White entitlement.

Another person (non-African American) might argue that they would not care about the motivation behind the job offer as long as they got the opportunity. However, the American society cannot ignore the historical factors that could prompt this action; for instance, Affirmative Action laws and *Tokenism* (Hogg & Vaughan, 2008; Jackson, Thoits & Taylor, 1995). Since its inception in 1961, Affirmative Action has repeatedly come under attack as the debate continues to date that Affirmative Action laws unjustly provides opportunities for African Americans who are undeserving of such. Thus, the law is viewed as preferential treatment given to any individual or group based on race,

gender, skin tone, ethnicity, or national origin (Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, 2010). Tokenism refers to the practice of making shallow gestures toward the inclusion of minority groups. The effort of "tokenism" is merely to create the facade of inclusiveness as to divert claims of discrimination (Hogg & Vaughan, 2008; Jackson, Thoits & Taylor, 1995).

All participants expressed experiencing very similar situations where they clearly felt unable or extremely uncomfortable telling someone in authority they are entitled to getting or having a better deal. The overarching view related more to being viewed as aggressive or being confrontational. The predominant rationalization was based on how they were raised to not go against authority or an attitude that it was better to just move on rather than fight that particular system.

Regardless of the terms used to describe their self-doubt or reluctance in acknowledging their personal competence, every participant referred to there being a self-confidence piece to contend with in the African American community, which was attributed to historical social conditioning. The central remark was summed up by P11:

> "I'm in the field of psychology, and there is this horrible inequity in terms of making African Americans look bad, like a whole standard deviation worse than whites. This coupled with the general kind of stuff we hear about inferiority regarding traditional intelligence measure and standardize test – even though I know my abilities and competencies – this kind of stuff makes you sometimes second-guest yourself. As African Americans, we are constantly getting these subtle messages of inferiority or not being quite up to par."

Impaired Concentration and Distractibility

Due primarily to issues centered on dual identity and cognitive dissonance, all participants revealed a notable degree of impaired concentration and distractibility either at home, school, or the workplace. For example, when asked, "When working on your success goals, what situations do you find it hardest to concentrate or you're most distracted?" Participant 22 responded:

> In situations when I feel speaking my open honest thoughts may not be received well... I can't concentrate on the positive outcome that I want because I'm so busy focusing on whether my honest thoughts will be received in the intent, manner or spirit I'm trying to give it in.

The first aspect of impaired concentration and distractibility is a phenomenon that is referred to as *tuning out* in which students realize they haven't heard anything that was said during a conversation or meeting. While not an iterative theme, the phenomenon emerged as a subtext throughout the interviewing process that centered on the common phrase the *inability to stay focused*. The pieces of the mosaic again revealed a clear pattern of a sense of being overwhelmed that was quite discernible. As P09 said, "The price of success is so challenging at times. The earlier survey asked a question about the cost of success that caused me to pause. Success can be consuming; and I don't do a good job at prioritizing things." Indeed, a feeling of being overwhelmed can lead to inability to concentrate and distractibility. As P05 stated, "I felt that everything in my life was riding on this and I panicked. I was traumatized by the challenge because I went into the room and just couldn't focus a thought – it was absolute panic."

Another criterion for impaired concentration and distractibility is finding a lot of other things to do first before starting on a project. To this factor a P11 responded:

> I play the 'devil's advocate.' I get distracted by over analyzing things, instead of just pulling the trigger on a situation. Then there is a snowball effect and I pondering all the possible outcomes. Some things I ponder on don't really factor in to something that much, but I will still take a lot of time.

> Participant 21, again, keen to unconscious processes and motivations, said, "Sometimes it's paralyzing; I don't get near as much done because I'm trying to do things so perfect. Intellectually, I get that you can't be perfect and some things are not that deep – you just get it done, but sometimes I can't control it, or I'm unconsciously doing it."

Indecisiveness

There were two specific criteria utilized to determine participants' level of indecisiveness. Both criteria, the reluctance to make major decisions (such as purchasing costly items) without seeking someone else's advice first, and a sort of "safety net protocol" that is defined as the participant's feeling of safety when checking their ideas with other people before making a final decision, were clearly evident in the responses gathered (Cohen, 1974) .

For example, P22 revealed a level of indecisiveness by, in essence, "comparing notes" with others before committing to a decision. He stated, "I like to run my stuff by a couple of other people. Typically, I want feedback from people I trust, to see if I interpreted the situation correctly and my thoughts are in line with others," thus, an

unconsciousness to conform to others' expectations. Similar responses pertaining to these criteria yielded a more complete picture of the participants' indecisiveness.

Indecisiveness is a hallmark *survival skill* of those with high FOS. Hesitation and non-committal runs counter to healthy risk-taking – a trait that is often associated with those in highly successful positions and a low FOS. Participants that presented a lower degree of indecisiveness as gauged by their responses, made remarks similar to this participant, "I may consider someone else's input, but I'm very selective who I talk to about important decisions in my life, but while I may listen to feedback from others – ultimately I make the decisions for my life" (P30). These participants exhibited a very assertive demeanor, and came across as more self-regulating, demonstrating sharper decision-making skills and a clearer responsibility for decision-making.

However, these responses came from only five of the participants interviewed, and deviated from the consensus of the participants' feedback. Again, it is important to note that, while some participants' responses indicated a low FOS, there were unconscious motivations that were uncovered by a correlative analysis of all data collected. As P02 responded, "It depends on whose life it touches, so I've learned to run it by someone else first. I usually know what I want to do, but I feel the obligation to get that input." This obligation was based on their position in the family structure. While this participant showed more selectivity about who would be consulted during the decision-making process, there was still a feeling of being obligated to seek others' assistance, a powerful statement that encompassed both criteria for indecisiveness, exhibiting a high FOS as well as a high ATS.

Safety Valve Syndrome - Fear of Loss of Control

The safety valve syndrome is defined as occurring when (a) the subject feels it is important not to get too excited about things they really desire or want, and (b) when things are going well, they feel it will not last. Regardless of their FOSS score, participants exhibited some degree of the safety valve syndrome. Most viewed this as protecting or guarding themselves from disappointment, or as a coping mechanism for rejection. In this case, the phrase most commonly used was, "Well at least I didn't get my hopes up." For example, P04 stated:

> There were a few times during my school age years that I had several opportunities to advance myself and because of my mother's fears, I wasn't able to take advantage of them. Her position was, as blacks, we had our place and I was building my hopes up of having this educational opportunity only to be disappointed by the reality of it not making a difference. At every opportunity she would say, 'Don't get your hopes up.' So I feel it's better to keep most of my true desires to myself, rather than suffer the disappointment of blatant refusal from other people to help me meet those.

Another common theme was the feeling that their advancement was really controlled by the so-called "charity" of the powerful others who were forced to comply with the laws of affirmative action. For example, P26 said:

> The very clear message that came across was, you're a benefactor of affirmative action and not based on your merit. Any success you achieved was because you fell into a mandatory quota to fill. You didn't get this because you were the best

> qualified, but because they needed Blacks in that division. They needed a show of X number of blacks because of pressure from outside.
>
> P25 shared: There was a public outcry about the merger between these two big companies that spoke to the fact that African Americans felt like they would be robbed of opportunities if these companies merged. So they made a good show of having all these minorities in these leadership roles. Two weeks after the merger was signed, they started downsizing all the newly hired people in these VP roles, many being Black – including myself. Once the purchase was made and all the papers were signed there was no need for them to keep up the visible image of being a diverse organization.

Keeping emotions at bay emerged as a defense mechanism, which was another very clear and dominant theme during the interviewing process, and speaks to the core of the African Americans experiences in a predominantly White labor force. For example, P09 stated:

> Sometimes people want you to be emotional, but I don't see that they serve you well. I think people make too many irrational decisions guided by emotions. Emotions can sometimes overpower logic and rationality, and doesn't let you weigh the options in terms of the things you have to calculate, and you end up losing any chances you may have in achieving the goal.

Exploring this response further, the participants were asked what action or behavior automatically kicks in when there are feelings of losing control in a situation; P09's reply was, "I immediately go into making sure I cover my backside. And then I

start strategizing for a plan A, B and C; but I am always trying to make sure going into a situation that I cover myself." P20 gave a similar response, "I become defensive, and I start looking at what I need to do to protect myself from that person or situation and all future occurrences. I don't like the feeling of losing control of a situation."

Even though these participants' overall scores on the FOSS were below average this premeditated and immediate reactiveness suggests unconscious motivations that serve to protect the ego from feelings that may accompany failure or criticism. These feelings originate from the unconscious, and are culturally ingrained as well as being entrenched in the African Americans' respective experiences in a White-dominated society. Withholding emotions, or a flattening of emotional responses, can be seen as an unconsciously adopted survival strategy that protects the ego from rejection and disappointment, in other word, protecting the individual from the consequences of internalizing failure or rejection. Not only does this indicate a high ATS efforts, but it also plays a direct role in the hypersensitivity to events that trigger SPF-like behaviors. Not getting excited or enthusiastic about one's wants, goals, or desires – and keeping those wants and desires below the surface, indicates unconscious survival motivations and a high ATS.

> P06 stated: It's like this, the first 30-days we [African Americans] go in excited about a job or situation. It's the honeymoon period, but then when reality hits – they knock you down. Your inner thoughts are, 'Same as before… I tried before and this is what happened; now here I am again.' Here's a prime example; recently I needed a reference from my boss in order to move forward in obtaining

> my superintendent certification. When I asked him for a reference letter, he came up with all kinds of tasks he wanted me to do before giving me the letter. Long story, short – I never got the letter. In my mind I always knew, but I finally said, 'I didn't think he would give me a reference anyway, because he's not about to let me get up to his level.

Clearly, this is a method of emotional and mental self-preservation. More specifically, this rational can be seen as an unconscious survival strategy that protected this participant's ego from rejection and disappointment.

There may be a possibility that the manager's request for other tasks to be completed and the signing of the reference letter have no correlation to the other. However, the point here is the participant viewed these additional duties from the boss (manager) as a quid pro quo proposition that ultimately led to this participant justifying their method of emotional and mental self-preservation. Further, the participant viewed this interaction in the context of the historical occurrences of having to "jump through hoops" as an African American to get ahead.

Illegitimacy of Self-Promotive Behavior

Two aspects of illegitimacy of self-promotive behavior were found to be present uniformly throughout the participants' interviews. The first criterion is the belief that people who look out for themselves first are selfish. The constant and core value expressed was a strong connectedness to the value and benefits of community, or the mindset of collectiveness. This was an iterative motif throughout the study. The range of emotions that surfaced when having to recall experiences when this value was violated or

not adhered to was righteous indignation, frustration, confusion and disappointment. These emotions were magnified when the experiences involved other African Americans. I will discuss this further in a later section.

When this factor was presented to participants from the perspective of self-promotion, it stimulated a wave of passionate responses. P22 was especially adamant in her response stating that:

> I'm not a big fan of self-promotion; I like to live in an idealistic world where my products and abilities speak for themselves. But realizing we do have to promote ourselves, I feel like I do under sale myself. I personally don't care for braggers and I try not to be braggadocios. I don't brag because I don't want to feel like a hypocrite, I just feel kinda slimy when I'm bragging. It's more of an internal type of criticism.

This takes self-promotion to a level of self-deprecation. P04 passionately responded:

> Oh good lord!, is usually my first thoughts, because I'm so uncomfortable with that. My experiences along the way have been, 'Oh you're bragging' of 'You're self-involved, arrogant, etc.' And then, in the back of my mind I don't think I'm all that. I'm keenly aware that some people assign so much more to your station in life than necessary. I'm uncomfortable because the pedestal others put you on only has three legs and eventually I'm going to fall. The pedestal is unstable, it's not real. Then there's still that small thing in my head that says, 'You didn't make a 100% at everything, you're an 80 – 90 percenter, so eventually others are going

to find that out too.' It's like, if a 1,000 people clap for you and 3 people boo; those three are who you hear. That thing of not being good enough is still there.

While all people, of any race, would be challenged by this form of thinking, it is especially challenging when this thinking is bolstered by an awareness of the historical social tyranny that minimized and devalued your cultural identity and existence. In other words, this mindset becomes of greater concern when one bears the burden of being a member of a race of people historically viewed as insignificant, and thus invisible.

Researchers such as Fryberg and Townsend (2008), and Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach (2008) have studied the lingering effects of this invisibility. They suggests the dissimilar personification of Black women's race and gender brings about their "invisibility" (p. 36) in comparison to that of White women and to Black and White men. In an effort to study whether Black women were ignored, and their voices disregarded, Sesko and Biernat (2009) explored the recollection of White participants in relation to Black women's faces and speech contributions. Their findings revealed that photos of Black women were not often recognized, and in a group discussion, comments made by a Black woman seldom rightfully attributed to the Black woman in comparison to that of Black men, or White women and men – a symptom of invisibility (Sesko and Biernat, 2009)

Similar arguments of African Americans being invisible have been made throughout history and currently, by other authors and journalists such as Ralph Ellison in his book *Invisible Man* (1952); Gregory Ellison in his book *Cut Dead But Still Alive: Caring for African-American Young Men*; Eugene Robinson, Pulitzer Prize-winner and

writer for the Washington Post, and Leonard Pitts, Pulitzer Prize-winner and columnist for the Miami Herald. These authors and journalists argue that "invisibility" within the African American community is the result of millions of African Americans not being able to obtain the middle class status. Therefore, they are mired in poverty and dysfunction. Their substandard schools fail to prepare them for the social and economic demands of today, thus they find the paths others took are blocked for them. This, coupled with covert acts of discrimination, they remain invisible; thus left behind.

When one's culture has been forced to live in the shadows of society coming to the forefront or center stage can be emotionally traumatic. Much like the participant in this study, there is still that historical noise that says, "You are inferior" (P10); "You are never to be seen or heard (P05);" and "Stay in your place" (P13). Thus relegating African Americans to a consciousness that is hypersensitive to the three people who boo, rather than the 1,000 people who clap for their achievement. This may also make it more difficult for many African Americans to envision a reality beyond being stuck in survival mode.

This FOS factor struck a nerve with all of the participants at some level – from the more passionate response to a response of survival or purpose. For example P13 said, "I hate it! It's really hard for me to come out of the background to take certain stage on things. I will find anybody else to push out front as long as it's not me." Participant 09 stated:

> It's rare for me to minimize my contributions. I do know that sometimes I don't have to be the big person in every situation. Sometimes I have to learn to

> downplay my role in some things in order to achieve the greater good. Sometimes, I'm trying to get someone else to take the lead or responsibilities, so I will back away and decide not to weigh in on something.

The second criterion is related to image and its presentation, or persona, i.e. participants who fit this criterion have trouble acting like themselves when around people they don't know, and feel it's important to display a particular image. When asked "What are your first thoughts when you find yourself in a situation where you have to promote yourself?", P10 simply replied:

> When I have to promote myself, I try to put my best foot forward and will actually rehearse so I don't make any mistakes. But normally, my first reaction is I get real nervous, the next thing that comes to mind is, 'This is it! This is a one-time run – there no do overs.'

With a tone of deep sadness, P15 shared:

> I'm very light skin; for most of my life I've always had this thing about making people feel comfortable around me because of all the pre-conceived notions about who I was, which was mostly false. So I always felt an obligation to kind of dummy down to make other people feel good about who they were. I have lived a large portion of my life being extremely frustrated in having to do this, but I did it for other people.

Maintaining a particular persona or fearing exposure of incompetence or failure is equated in many respects with behaviors that mirror SFP. Participants were markedly similar in their responses with respect to the two aforementioned criteria for illegitimacy

of self-promotive behavior, a positive indicator for high FOS. Unfortunately, African Americans, like other racial minority groups, are confined to a *racial box*. This confinement is rationalized by what many would suggest is a conspiracy of messages, stories, and scripts that have imbedded deep-seated images of inferiority in the minds of not just mainstream society, but in the minds of African Americans themselves (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Blackmon, 2008; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Goffman, 1963; Osborne, 2007).

These findings mirror those of Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2004) and Livingston Pearce (2009) and regarding the shifting phenomenon among African Americans, which is referred to as a sort of ruse that African Americans as a whole have long practiced as survival skills in the United States. In the 21st Century, shifting has taking on more subtle and disingenuous forms that cause African Americans to be apprehensive about acting too eager or passionate in the workplace for fear that it may be interpreted as aggressiveness, thereby alienating White bosses or White co-workers.

The one omnipresent phrase used was, "The burden of upholding the entire race." Or as P21 put it, "Because there was a lot expectation from White society that a lot of African Americans weren't well-behaved. You always feel like you have to represent and uphold the entire race as an African American." It was extraordinarily clear that every interviewed participant was keenly aware of their individual responsibility, which was strongly instilled in them from childhood. Having such a responsibility may also hinder their ability to take risk, and to be innovative decision-makers – valued qualities for leadership roles in corporate America.

In her Entrepreneurial Thought Leaders Lecture at Stanford University (2011), Susan Desmond-Hellmann, former Chancellor of UC San Francisco, and current CEO of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, suggested that entrepreneurs and leaders must be willing to overcome the fear of embarrassment or possible scrutiny of their actions if they are to be successful. She notes, they must also have the quality of innovative risk-takers. However, the fear of perpetuating the negative social stereotypes, and the preoccupation with upholding a persona that would disprove these stereotypes, thus the image of the African American race as a whole, was an all-consuming task for all of the participants. Therefore, overcoming the fear of embarrassment or possible scrutiny was a luxury these participants found hard to consider.

Interesting to note, three of the participants in this sample group were African American immigrants from a third-world country who came to this country in their early teenage years with family members. These participants were between the ages of 50 – 64, with college degrees. While they said their families came to America for a better life and opportunities, they too acknowledge the learned conditioning of representing the African American cultural, the act of shifting, and being keenly aware of their persona when around people not of their culture. For example, one common dialog was shared by P13:

> Having a sense of deep-rooted pride as an African American became problematic for me moving through the social system of American. Because you move with such confidence, or some would say arrogance that it can get in the way. So you have to learn to soften yourself, to learn how to smile as you speak and not get too passionate in your conversations. I'm just very conscious that when you step

> outside your own race you have to be aware and not make people uncomfortable. I have actually been cautioned by Whites in the past to temper myself.
>
> Another common dialog participants shared was summarized by P08:
>
> We have to be – act professional at all times, and you have to watch what you say. Because they are looking for you to slip up so they can reprimand you or get rid of you. So we're always monitoring our actions and words, which is bothersome at times. Unfortunately, I don't think this is the same conversation White managers have with other Whites or their white subordinates. Nor are they concerned or under this kind of stress.

Anxiety over Being the Focus of Attention

Closely related to participants' tendency to feel it necessary to display a particular image, is their anxiety over being the focus of attention. This is distinguished by two somewhat-interwoven criteria: participants who do not like being fussed over or given a lot of attention, and participants who feel self-conscious or awkward when others who are considered *important* or *significant* give them a compliment. Some participants stated they found ways to divert attention away from them when they felt uncomfortable or put on the spot. Others had no problem with being in the spotlight or selling themselves, so their response was simply, "I'm very comfortable with it – I have no problems being in the spotlight" (P10)

This FOS factor draw a definite line between participates who scored as having high success fearing personality traits and those that scored as having average or below

personality traits. This is the only area where a polarized ideology was seen amongst participants' responses.

For example, P02 stated:

> My worries about how others perceive my success actually keeps me from achieving greater levels of success. I'm fully aware that it does because I think what is the need to achieve greater – what's the point and who is it impressing. It's not important to me, it's important to others. And if I assign a lot of weight to you praising me, then I also have to assign a lot of weight to your criticism. In this case, praise is synonymous with being fussed over.

Participant 29 shared:

> Sometimes I feel that I have fallen short, but others are impressed by it – and I'm saying to myself, 'It's not as good as it should be – but, okay if it works for you – so be it.' Even when I get the "wows" from others, I come back with, 'I appreciate that, but I was thinking maybe we could look at this from a different perspective.'

These participants' method of alleviating the awkward feelings associated with praise was to ascribe equal weight to both "being fussed over" and criticism, perhaps in an attempt to thwart feelings at either pole, satisfaction or frustration, and seemingly perceives criticism as threatening or as a type of rejection, signaling a hypersensitivity to events that trigger the behaviors that mirror the characteristics of SFP. On the other end of the spectrum the consensus was being center-stage was a part of game as P23 stated, "In my mind you always have to sell yourself; so it's second nature for me. I might have

this view because of my professional experiences, where I'm always selling my ideas, my proposed plans, myself as the right choice."

Preoccupation with Competition and Evaluation

Based on the FOSS survey results and interview responses, participants revealed a high preoccupation with competition an evaluation. Cohen (1974) defined this preoccupation by two distinct emotional responses. For example, preoccupation can be determined by a subject's response to success. When success is experienced, they may become fearful that they may not be able to do as well next time. In addition, a subject may usually feel that they have lost out in comparison when someone they know well succeeds at something.

The survey consisted of several statements that were to specifically measure the participants' attitudes and feelings toward competition. For example, the number of "yes" responses to the statements:

- It is more important to play the game than to win it (59% of participants said yes)
- When competing against another person, I sometimes feel better if I lose than if I win (38% of participants said yes)
- The rewards of a successful competition are greater than those received from cooperation (21% of participants said yes)
- In competition, I try to win no matter what (28% of participants said yes)

These responses indicated some opposition toward competition. However, the zeitgeist throughout the interviews pertaining to this factor provided greater insight into what drives this preoccupation, and their motivation when in competitive situations.

Begon, Harper and Townsend (1996) defines competition as a rivalry between two or more persons or groups for an object desired in common, to which the qualification of one is reduced by another being involved. Such occurrences are usually the result of a limited amount of at least one resource, such as food, water, or land. According to Sahney, Benton and Ferry (2010), competition is not always clear-cut, and can often occur in a direct and indirect way. While all participants view competition from this perspective as an inevitable and expected occurrence, the overall consensus about competition was less about winning "the prize," and more about proving a point, as illustrated by the following participants' comments:

Participant 13, "I instantly go to war when I'm in that situation. I get defensive and offended when I think they may be minimizing my intelligence and skills. I didn't grow up with the "stay in your place" mentality."

Participant 22, "If it's a situation that is important – I don't consider them [Whites] as much as strutting my stuff. So if there is some third party weighing both of us, I'm going to bring my "A" game."

> Participant 03: I got my first taste of competition when I was young. I was one of the last three constantans in a competitive event and we took a break before the final round. As I was walking out, this big White guy (one of the parents), grabbed me by the arm and said, 'You won't walk out of here alive if you win this

contest.' I was scared – but I kept walking. When I went back to take my place in the contest, every time it was my turn to respond I would stare at this guy as I was answering – and I won. This experience left an indelible mark in my memory that competition is scary but joyful.

Participant 30: I don't consider whites as a threat because of my experiences as a child. I've seen the performances of whites most of my life growing up, so I know they are no smarter or better than I am. This may sound strange, but when I know I'm being compared with another African American, I'm uncomfortable. I feel there is greater sense of competiveness with another African American. When I'm being compared to a white person I know there is a distinction to my skills, and it's all about strutting my stuff. But when I'm in competition with another African American, there's an apples to apples comparison and I handle it differently.

Participant 28: Sometimes I feel like I have to represent all African Americans and stemming from that I feel like I have to do very well or the best that I can. There is a sense of a desire to do my race proud.

Similar answers resonated throughout the participants' responses as the aforementioned examples, which do in fact underscore a preoccupation with competition and evaluation within the African American community. However, it could argued that the preoccupation is fueled by making a point of "flaunting" their intellectual prowess or competencies. There was also an overarching spirit of acting in defiance against the centuries of intellectual tyranny. It could also be argued that this revealed a negatively

charged perception or motivation with respect to competition, especially when it involves direct competition with Whites. However, it would depend on the point being made.

In this case, the point is whether African Americans are fearful of competitive situations. Based on the participants' responses, it might be concluded that the answer would be *No*, especially if measured by the definition of competition: contest of rivalry for supremacy, a prize, honor, or advantage. For the participants, proving their supremacy, fighting for cultural honor and recognition was paramount, as shown in their response to the FOSS statement, "It is extremely important for me to do well in all things that I undertake;" 100% of participants answered "Yes."

In response to Cohen's second identifier of being preoccupied with competition and evaluation (i.e., feeling that they have lost out in comparison when someone they know well succeeds at something), participants acknowledged when being compared to a white counterpart, the message in the back of their minds was always being viewed as inferior in comparison to even the least of the white dominate culture. This was evident in comments such as, "For African Americans, the barriers of getting into that clubhouse of upper whites are still there. Though subtle, and people try to act enlightened, it's still a challenge for Blacks to get into these cliques" (P19).

All of the participants saw this as, *Just the way it is*. There was a resolve that being African American in the United States meant accepting the fact that in most cases, if not all, you would not be the first, and sometimes not the second preferred choice. The three African immigrants made this assessment (stated in similar fashion) of the African Americans they know and their experiences, as stated by P08:

> I think there is still a lot of subtle discrimination. And in a way, African Americans don't want to deal with the rejection – the reward doesn't fit the constant challenges they have to face. And I also have to say, the system is not welcoming of African American of any descent. You can have all the qualifications for the job, but what they tend to do is pick their white friends or someone that was referred to them. Many of the African Americans I know won't even push back because they are tired.

The element of competition and evaluation proved to trigger the most passionate discussion during the interviews, especially as it related to being evaluated or judged. However, the preoccupation was an obsessive anxiety over possible propagating the negative social stereotypes, and feeling a personal obligation to disprove the negative labeling. There was also a high degree of frustration of, as P30 put it, "living under a cloud" of being judged at a deficient instead of having an equal opportunity to be judged on the merit of their individual performance. It was very clear that competition and doing well was strongly connected to their personal and cultural identities. The reluctance to engage in competitive situations was not driven by a fear of losing based on personal merit, but rather the frustration of recurring elements of inequality based on social stigmas.

Preoccupation with the Underplaying of Effectiveness

According the Cohen, preoccupation with the underplaying of effectiveness is demonstrated when an individual "plays-down" or minimizes their abilities and talents in front of others so they don't appear to be bragging.

This element was readily found throughout the interviewing process. For example, when asked, "What situations are you in when you minimize or down play your influence or contributions?", P04 replied, "Sometimes I feel that downplaying my abilities brings more or a greater amount of success than tooting my own horn. Sometimes I do it to placate the egos of others..." P16 replied to the same question, "When I'm in situations that I feel others are trying to test or judge me, or I can't figure out their motives. Because I don't know where things might be going, I'll pull back."

The recurring theme relating to this factor was one of self-preservation. In other words, participants found it difficult to gauge just how much of their skills and abilities to reveal. For example, P07 noted:

> When I'm working with my board of directors. I'm real careful in stating the facts without elaborating on how I got the opportunity to have my current position, how I might have been able to accomplish things in spite of their lack of involvement. I always try to make it more of a group effort regardless of their hindrances. Otherwise nothing gets done, and I'm faced with more road blocks.

It was clear that all of the participants reveled over their accomplishments, skills and abilities. However, there was a sense of frustration in realizing asserting their skills and abilities, in many instances, worked against them and they had to learn to minimize or disguise their knowledge, skills and abilities; or they had to bestow their efforts upon *the group*. All participants felt, in many instances, they had to sacrifice openly demonstrating their knowledge, skills and abilities for the sake of accomplishing the

greater goal or cause. It was also clear that they knew they had to be careful as to just when and how they exhibited those skills and abilities. As P18 stated:

> I don't think there is ever a time I'm reluctant to express or acknowledge my skills and abilities. However, I've learned you may have to wait for a particular time. I may have to gauge whatever dialogue I'm having – this is ongoing. So if you want to influence the process or succeed, often it's about timing, and when and how you pitch it.

The frustration experienced by participants was constantly having to monitor or modulate their vocal tone and body language when asserting their opinions and positions on an issue for fear of being seen as an angry. Participants expressed that when they are perceived as such, their White counterparts marginalize or dismiss their feedback or concerns. Again, the challenge was being able to navigate the social and racial waters to accomplish the greater good. Participants also noted that their egos, confidence and motivation is sometimes diminished when they finds themselves in these types of interplays. It should be noted that male participants expressed a greater sense of anxiety when experiencing this situation.

It should be noted when ask about minimizing and down-playing their influence or contributions, the African immigrants who participated in the researched stated this was something they had to learn to do. As P13, an African immigrant, put it, "I was raised to be very proud that I was African American, so I had to learn to temper that proud." The phase, "temper my proud or myself" referred to toning down their confidence. For example, P26, an African immigrant shared:

> Having a sense of deep-rooted pride as an African American became problematic for me moving through the social system of American. Because you move with such confidence – some would say arrogance – it got in the way. So you have to learn to soften yourself. I'm just very conscious that when you step outside your own race you have to be aware and not make people uncomfortable. I have actually been cautioned by Whites in the past to temper myself.

All participants revealed an unconscious responsibility or pressure to get along or make mainstream American feel comfortable. More importantly, they felt a great measure of stress in always being mindful to regulate their authentic selves for fear of alienating or turning others off who were not African American. There was a true level of cognitive dissonance revealed in the participants' responses to this FOS factor. While there was an underlying tone of resentment in having to placate the egos of the dominate culture, this tradeoff was rationalized as being for the greater good. As P26 stated:

> Coming from the post-civil rights era, you want to get along, so you make exception. And this has caused me to compromise my values in order to gain acceptance. You don't want to do that, but sometimes you have to learn to downplay your role in some things in order to achieve the greater good.

This supported Horney's (1992) view surrounding a cognitive dissonance referred to as "basic hostility" (p. 245). Having to compete in what is thought to be a biased system or to compete with a rival who is perceived to have greater privilege may negatively affect the efforts of some African Americans obtaining key leadership positions or cause them to sabotage their efforts. Others may unconsciously avoid these

positions altogether or never make any attempt to compete for premier positions. According to Horney (1992), these dynamics bring about the cognitive dissonance of basic conflict or basic hostility.

Horney asserted that every neurotic symptom suggests other unresolved core conflicts that trigger emotionally unhealthy or self-destructive states of being. While these conflicts play an infinitely greater role in human neurosis, unfortunately, these human conflicts are harder to detect because they are basically unconscious. More importantly, those affected by these unresolved conflicts will go to any length to deny their existence (Horney, 1992).

While the interviews revealed evidence of behaviors and attitudes that mirrored the characteristics of the success fearing personality, the motivation behind these behavior and attitudes cannot be ignored. The dominating drive and motivation revealed in some of the FOS factors, as defined by Cohen, were of survival and not of fear. It is also clear that African Americans may very well struggle with apprehensiveness toward success due to their inability to gauge or read the authenticity of a situation that would welcome and nurture their efforts toward achieving key leadership positions. Thus, supporting the first research question that historical conditioning and personal experiences of racial discrimination do created a pre-dispositioning of being hypersensitive to events that trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the SFP.

More importantly, the underlying factors of historical conditioning, personal experiences racial inequality and the motivation of self-preservation within these characteristics did lead to a spectrum of reluctance and doubt – ATS – more in some

participant than others – when seeking opportunities of leadership because of the expectation of discrimination. While some participants acknowledged their reluctance is clearly tied to their recurring experience of being viewed as second best, thereby being passed over, others assigned it to fearing success and being unjustly scrutinized. Still others described their behavior as being cautious and pragmatic in a system still filled with racial ills.

Cultural Self-sabotage: A Complex Issue

The impetus of this study was based on the fact that while there is a plethora of research regarding the systematic ills (slavery; stereotype threat; institutionalized racism, etc.) that serve to block the advancement of African Americans, very little research on whether the unconscious racial and cultural anxieties and hostilities harbored by African Americans may act as barriers toward their own advancement. As Austin (2000) suggests there are unconscious, self-imposed but powerful thoughts and feelings that can stand in the way of an individual's real achievement, and influence every decision made.

It is the position of this research that centuries of having their efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction of a more powerful social system, may still have a very strong adverse impact on African Americans attitudes regarding their own success. Whether this experience was direct, indirect, or vicarious, it may have created a mindset of multigenerational adaptive behaviors (specifically, ATS) that act as self-imposed barriers or self-sabotaging behaviors that thwart the very efforts African Americans engage in to achieve advancement in the social framework of the United States.

In this study, I also proposed that by exploring the thoughts of participants further, insight could be gained regarding the assertion, which I describes as *cultural self-sabotage*, made by researchers and activist (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007, Gregory, 2006; McWhorter, 2005; Reya, 2007). This assertion led to the exploration of secondary questions as it relates to the disparity of African Americans achievement: (a) potential origins and explanations involving whether African Americans may lack self-confidence, initiative, and commitment toward their own advancement; (b) potential impacts of changing the mindset of African Americans' underrepresentation in key leadership positions; and (c) the potential of this mental shift being an attainable goal or resolve

To provide a greater supporting foundation, participants were asked four direct questions:

1. Growing up, what were some of the messages you got about the opportunities for African Americans in the United States?
2. What are your thoughts about the assertion that the dilemmas facing African Americans are self-imposed, so they will forfeit their opportunity to obtain key leadership positions because they lack the self-confidence, initiative and commitment?
3. If there were a mindset that African Americans needed to change to close the gap that exist in leadership, what would it be?
4. Would it be fair to say that historical experiences will create a momentary expectation of discrimination when African Americans are in situations that compare them with other races?

The most riveting dialog from the participants came through an overwhelming consensus on the subject of *cultural self-sabotage*. Their shared experiences offered insight for the secondary research questions, as well as supported the thesis of this research. In the following section, I will discuss the responses of the participants from a historical perspective of family, community leadership, and community members.

Family: Propagating the Propaganda

"The environment people are nurtured in, educated in, the environment that conditions them emotionally affects them," was the words P22 used to describe the seemingly inescapable affects family conditioning has on an individual. Participant 22 went on to say:

> My mother's views and thought process had and has an impact on me even now – all the time. At almost 50 yrs. old the reel still plays in my mind that somehow you're not good enough and that others will find out you're a fake.

A critical aspect of Horner's theory (1969) that is relevant to the studied population of this research is her hypothesis that generations of cultural conditioning causes some individuals to repress and internalize their assertiveness for success. Thus, an individual's psyche and unconscious self are not primarily a result of familial upbringing, but rather socially determined by role conditioning. To explore this hypothesis, participants were asked to reflect on the first question, "Growing up, what were some of the messages you got about the opportunities for African Americans in the United States from (family, school, within your community)?"

One essential goal in all families is to help each member become an asset to society at large (Baron & Byrne, 2004; Thornton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Early childhood cultural influences, acting as cohorts (i.e., school, church, peers) also play a significant role in fashioning one's attitudes and beliefs (Horney, 1937). More importantly, these influences also shape one's adulthood experiences, as expressed by the aforementioned participant. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the responsibility which exist in the task of socialization and cultural influences carries an extra weight for African American families. They must simultaneously attempt to protect and prepare their children for the likelihood of discriminatory practices within the same society they must try to succeed in (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Hill, 2006; Steele, 1994; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Strmic-Pawl, 2011; Taylor, Jackson, & Chatters, 1997). As P21 shared:

> In my family, we were always told that opportunities were available, and you can achieve them, but there was also the reality that while you may have higher aspirations – there existed a system that would limit those aspirations. I came to understand, as great as America may be, there are some very ugly truths about it.

According to Horney (1937), to continually operate in a state of FOS requires a set of cultural philosophies and practices pertaining to competition, success, failure, winning, and losing. Because these cultural philosophies and practices are extremely important to the foundation of the family, they are customarily nurtured and strengthened within the family framework. These philosophies and practices are further supported by other institutionalized vehicles of socialization, which inevitably creates the conditions for intrapsychic contradictions about competition and success.

Once these beliefs and practices are integrated into the family structure, they foster a backdrop within the family structure that is often omnipresent and inescapable. Thus, the findings of this study suggests within the unconsciousness of African Americans is the age-old acceptance of being subjugated by the myth of inferiority. Many of the participants supported this argument by noting when growing up there was a common understanding and social expectation that African Americans were to "stay in their place," especially among participants who grew up during the 60s. For example, P07 shared, "During the 60s, you were constantly reminded not to step too far out of the boundaries meant for your color. That was the message. You knew once you went beyond the black community you had to 'stay in your place.'"

The phrase "stay in your place" was described by the participants as being submissive to the white culture, and to believe and act inferior to whites intellectually and socially. They also described this "place" as one of limits and strong barriers that you were never going to get out of. There was a common concern that some African Americans grew up hearing it [stay in your place] so much that they still, voluntarily, almost automatically, go to that place of inferiority and subservience mentally and physically. Participant 23 shared:

> Unfortunately, some believe what their families had to say, 'You have a place, and you're never going to get out of it,' and so their vision is very limited. My greatest anxiety came when discussing my plans of becoming a medical doctor with my mother, simply because of her mentality. Once I told her, at every opportunity she would say, 'Don't get your hopes up.' Her thoughts were, 'as an

> African American you're a peon, and you'll always be a peon;' and that was depression in a way.

The messages participants received from family and educators covered a wide range of beliefs and conditioning. From those of great despair, with opportunities being very limited and feelings of not being able to excel; to those of hopefulness, where education and striving to take the lead was the key to unlimited opportunities. Some participants spoke of getting very mixed messages. For example, P29 stated:

> In our house, the message was, 'opportunities are few and far between; just settle, don't push to achieve.' But then you were constantly criticized for not being determined, persistent, a hard worker, reliable, dependable. Funny thing is, the criticism was not for yourself, but when you weren't doing it for others.

This reveals another angle of the strong obligation within the African American community to be of value and to benefit the "community" or the commitment to uphold a mindset of collectiveness. Participant 24 shared:

> The message I got growing up was, 'Go to school get your high school diploma so you can get a good job with benefits.' In my family there was never much discussion about future – what you could be. Everything was geared toward the "right now" what was going on right now. It was more about survival, have a job and take care of your family.

Still other participants shared, while they were always told, "You can be anything you wanted to be," they never had a lot of examples of this. It should be noted that many

of the women participants shared that they were also told as an African American woman being ambitious and driven was perceived as very negative.

The participants' responses regarding their experiences growing up supports Horner's original line of thought, which argued that FOS origins start early in childhood. They also support other researchers such as Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, and Gumpert (1978), Fleming (1982), and Pappo (1972) who argued that the dominant factor contributing to the development of the SFP is the transmission of anxiety to a child by a parent when the child appears to be preforming with a greater measure of skills and independence, leading to a state of liberation from that parent. Therefore, the early anxieties learned in childhood is carried into adulthood, and is inclusive, far-reaching and recurrent (Atkinson, 1958 as cited in Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978, pp. 115-120).

There was a defining difference in participants who scored high on the FOSS and those who scored below average. While they were very aware of the adage, "You have to be twice as good as a white person," those who scored below average attributed their ability to not being devastated by the social ills of discrimination to having an extremely supportive family structure. For them, the predominate messages instilled were, "You can do anything you want if you work hard at it; be better than the best, and you're as good as anyone else." They also spoke very highly of a family structure that gave them a sense of emotional support and preparedness in regards to the racial discord they faced during childhood, which aided them greatly in later life experiences. Participant 14 summed it up as such:

> There were three main messages I got from my family; education was the key to advanced opportunities; your faith would help me maintain my integrity and morality, and hard work never killed anyone. In school, there were certain teacher or counselors conveyed the same kind messages, 'You need to achieve in order to be successful in this world. Higher education was a key component of that, and being proud of yourself because you're as good as anyone else.' This enhanced the messages I got from my family.

Regarding their early school experience, the predominate message all participants received, at some level, was "Education is important." However, there was not a real clear directive or message about achievement or how to acquire success. They felt it was not built into the school curriculum. There was a sense that you were expected to do well in school and a good factory job would be waiting for you. Most participants shared that even the African American teachers did not really push a message of success or leadership; and college was not really discussed. When it was, the aspirations were limited to community college. However, some participants noted they were influence or inspired by a certain teacher, counselor or a community center staff member who took it upon themselves to invest more effort and initiative in instilling a mindset of leadership and greatness. Participants who had this experience, praised the efforts of these influential authority figures and the positive impact it had on their lives as a whole.

Participants were also asked about their transition into adulthood and whether their experiences were different than the messages received growing up. Participants who shared that they were told opportunities were far and few between for African

Americans; that they had to be twice as good as a white person; and that at its core, America was a racist nation, said their experiences proved to be the same. However, those who shared that they were told America offered unlimited opportunities; that they could do anything if they work hard at it, shared having some form of an "awakening" experience when coming into adulthood. As expressed by P14:

> In early college, was when I found out that all of the emphases put on those messages by my family, school and community were not necessarily so. For instance, working hard and being twice as good as a White person didn't result in you reaping the rewards of your work. So coming from an African American community and school environment, it came as a shocking surprise to me that people of other ethnicities would, and could, hinder your ability to succeed.

Leadership: A Betrayal of Collectivism

Participants were asked the question, "With all the laws and regulations in place to support African American achievement, why are there still so few in executive leadership positions?" Taken at face value, the participants' responses to this question might seem as simply the unwillingness to be in a key leadership position. However, their attitude and responses to this question could be connected to two deeper issues. First, that the participants' responses mirror the cognitive dissonance that is associated with fearing success. Secondly, it also revealed an extremely important factor in the African American community – the orientation of collectivism and interdependence, which is believed by some (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Gushue & Constantine, 2003; Kambon, 1992; Toldson &

Toldson, 2001; Utsey et al., 2000) to have created a cultural burden within the African American community. These factors will be pointed out later in this section.

Initially, the consensus of the participants regurgitated the views of those found in literature reviews: profiling, social inequalities, hidden racism, an unjust social system, etc. However, without prompting, they seemed to naturally shift from the usual dialog of external social hindrances, and spoke very candidly, about an internal crisis within the African American community – the leadership crisis. Participants expressed a tone of distrust and skepticism when sharing their thoughts about leadership.

Most participants held a negative perspectives about obtaining a leadership role for themselves; not because of the demands or challenges of the position but because of what they viewed as the disloyalty or betrayal demonstrated through the behaviors of those they referred to as self-appointed or so-called African American leaders who consistently jeopardize the African American community for their own personal gain and popularity. In many respects, participants viewed them as out dated and self-serving; offering very little true, authentic guidance or direction to the community. Further, they felt while current African American leaders advocate advancement through collectivism, they provide no governing principles or a community-driven agenda to help advance others in the African American community. For instance, P14 said:

> There's nothing in our community except conversation, which happens after the fact. This brings the feeding frenzy of black and white broadcasters, news media and civil rights activists. But after the initial feeding frenzy subsides there's

nothing that advocates true resolve or the reduction of the occurrences of injustice within the community coming from our leaders.

Participant 12 shared:

The President and everybody knows – blacks, whites and others, know there have not been a concerted effort to address the multiple needs, hurts, and afflictions of being African Americans now. And as a community, we have not created a clear agenda because our spokespersons have been institutionalized.

Still P24 commented:

What's really troubling, not only do you see African Americans turning against each other in the streets, you now see it in the high offices of politics, where other high profile African American leaders and activist are attacking the President personally, instead of the policies they have a problem with. That's where you cross the line with hatred, you cross the line by trying to make a name for yourself by bashing other Black leaders. Instead of staying on topic, we spend so much time attacking one another that we never get around to addressing the issues that concern the African American community.

The participants' responses have value from a collective social perspective. For example, in an article that appeared in Leadership Excellence, Goffee and Jones (2009) suggests if people lose faith in their leaders, they stand to lose everything. A sense of loss was clearly the feeling expressed by participants. The echoing thoughts among all the participants when speaking about current African Americans leaders was the lack of a

strong unified voice, antiquated and in need of fresh perspectives, and a failure to create a true strategic plan and agenda that addresses current issues and challenges.

In 2013, BET founder and chairman of The RLJ Companies, Robert L. Johnson retained Zogby Analytics to conduct an online survey that asked 1,002 African-Americans which current African American leader spoke for them in representation of their well-being on a national level. The survey found that 40% of the responders said that there was no one who spoke for them. This was also reflected in the responses of the participants in this research. As P05 shared:

> When President Obama made a pitch after the incident of Trayvon Martin saying that there was still a difference, and there needed to be change. It was at that climactic turning point that the African American think-tank should have surfaced with a series of strategies or a strong agenda for change. Yet we were faced with the sad reality that maybe our leaders lack that degree growth to be able to answer the call before us.

A similar response was also shared by P14:

> There has been a deadening silence since the President came out and said we needed to have a concentrated effort and focus on the needs of the African American male. Our so-called leaders and think-tanks should have been on the forefront flooding him with agendas, models, and pilot programs that spoke to the very essence of this issue. This was the President's way of establishing an executive order to bring in solutions of change. Dead silence; but we're quick to criticize the President about what he's not doing for 'Us.'

On the surface, these statements could be overlooked and dismissed as merely discontentment within the African American community regarding their leaders. However, it could be argued that these statements hold a significant undertone of the fear of success construct. Being in a key leadership role might be perceived as achieving a greater level of success. According to several researchers of FOS (Bremer & Wittig, 1980; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983; Rabstejnek, 2009), the basic underlying dynamic in the SFP involves an ambitious desire to win, while also fearing that the success obtained will be darkened by potentially negative consequences, such as envy and rejection. Therefore, if they succeed (obtain a leadership position), there is the anticipation that others will become envious and hostile toward them; feelings that they themselves harbored toward others that are in key leadership positions.

Participants felt that even in the age of Obama, an African American President alone is not enough. They felt the African American community still needed leaders who will pressure the system, the president, and others to do the right thing – the role played by the leaders that emerged in the 60s. While participants felt that the African American community no longer had sufficient gatekeepers in the current leadership that represents the communities best interests, they also expressed that little incentive existed for them to consider being groomed for key leadership positions themselves. The lack of incentive may be the result of the lack of confidence in the current African American leadership, which is expressed in the following two participants' responses:

> These self-appointed or "so-called" African American leaders have the nerve to be naysayers when they have been at this for 35 – 50 years regurgitating the same rhetoric every year and I haven't seen any traction or real progress on their watch. Now that someone else is on the scene, they have their ass on their shoulders. I'm not sure what their true agenda is – maybe it's the old 'crabs in the bucket' mentality (P27).

> Let me just say, among the African American leaders there is not a unified voice. A prime example is the national black organization where I hold a leadership position. It divided into two governing bodies, and now we beat each other up in the press all the time. So, if you can't get two units that are supposed to be the economic brain power around black business to agree and work together on a path for African American achievement, who in the hell is going to work together? This is what I see happening in our ethnic group – that we have not developed a unified body of leaders who can sit at the table and agree to disagree, but still come up with a strategic plan that can be carried out and fought for regardless of who is in leadership (P19).

In essence, participants felt the quality and effectiveness of leadership within the African American community has diminished considerably since the late 60s, due to a lack of fresh blood and a platform receptive of innovative thinking and ideas. Many participants noted that not since Martin Luther King Jr. have African American leaders been able to bring that magnitude of unification to the community. They were all adamant in acknowledging that King's success was not due to his efforts alone, but that

there was a quality or collective mindset throughout the African American community during that time that ignited people to act. In other words, it was a collective agenda that the community as a whole was able to grasped and worked toward.

Participant 27 had this to say about the mindset of the current African American leaders:

> Prior to the civil right movement, our African American leaders made sure there was a kind of grapevine that rallied together to mentor, guide and support the community… The community leaders came together and took responsibility to straighten certain situation within the community out. Now, they march on Lincoln Memorial, make their speeches of rhetoric, and they go back home – and nothing is done. Where are the leaders? They've gone back to their cruise ship lifestyle. Have you ever seen a cruise ship go into dangerous waters – NO! Cruise ships avoid rough waters. Battleships will go where needed in order to defuse whatever is happen. Pre-civil rights era, you had African American leaders who had battleship character. We don't have that battleship mentality now. Our elected officials, civic leaders today have the cruise ship mentality, they want to be comfortable, be seen, and make money.

Similar statements revealed a second and extremely important factor that is worthy of great consider – the orientation of collectivism and interdependence. It could argued that the participants' strong feelings of being betrayed by African American leaders is rooted in the cultural conditioning whereby it is largely believed that African American families exemplify the values of collectivism and interdependence (Utsey,

Adams, & Bolden, 2000). While the general orientation of the African American community tends to be more collectivistic, several researchers assert that simply by living in the United States, most African Americans are, to some degree, bicultural (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Gushue & Constantine, 2003; Kambon, 1992; Toldson & Toldson, 2001; Utsey et al., 2000).

The social demands for African Americans to be bicultural dictate that they function as both individualistic and collectivistic beings, which is governed by the circumstances at hand. Even though it has been asserted that no major differences exist between African Americans' self-identity and group identity (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Kambon, 1992), research suggests (Gushue & Constantine, 2003) that African Americans (especially women) may develop both personal (individual) and group (collective) qualities, allows them to maintain their individualism while simultaneously, staying connected to important others. These findings are also supported in Jones & Shorter-Gooden (2004) study of African American women who have had to master the art of shifting, a sort of ruse that African Americans as a whole have long practiced as survival skills in the United States.

It is this mindset of collectivism and interdependence that African Americans may very well carry as a cultural burden that creates an internal conflict of unshackling themselves or others from the orientation of collectivism. This conflict is pointed out in Gushue & Constantine (2003), and Kenny and Perez's (1996) study involving African American students in predominantly White environments as it related to self-differentiation, collectivism, and individualism. In both studies, Gushue & Constantine

(2003) and Kenny and Perez (1996) found that there was the potential of cultural disconnect for minority students between their family lives and their social environments.

These researchers suggested that for some African American (especially women), the goal and the circumstances would dictate whether they would put their own goals first or sacrifice their goals for the well-being of their ethnic group. For example, within the home, women may occasionally be willing to abdicate their own needs for the needs of their families. However, when in an individualistic or more competitive culture (in this case, predominantly White institutions), it might be more beneficial for them to operate with a sense of self-preservation (Gushue & Constantine, 2003; Kenny & Perez, 1996).

It is interesting to note, this point was made when exploring the topic of preoccupation with competition and evaluation during the interviews. A common theme that resonated was, the feeling of having to bring their *A game* when in competition with white counterparts. This mentality was driven by the familial conditioning that African Americans had to be twice as good as Whites, and that every individual African American represented the entire race.

The Enemy on the Inside

An African Proverb says, "When there is no enemy on the inside the enemy on the outside can do you no harm." While the literature referenced in Chapter 2 seems to describe a kind of love-hate relationship between African and White Americans, the findings of this research suggests a more damning counterintuitive relationship exists within the African American culture itself. There was the consensus among the participants that a spirit of condescension exist within the African American community.

Most viewed this condescension as a *falling from grace* where the general population of African Americans were apathetic in regards to their sense of dignity and pride; conceding to characterization of being helpless, inferior or a perpetual victim of the United States' social system. However, some viewed this condescension as a sense of cultural disdain, self-destruction or contempt held by African Americans toward their own race.

Based on the participants' responses, it could argued that a sense of in-group self-sabotage existed within the African American community. Self-sabotaging behavior results from a misguided attempt of an individual to rescue themselves from their own negative feelings. These misguided attempts, while seemingly helpful in the moment, create problems and interferes with long-standing goals, ultimately undermining one's intentions, especially when the individual engages in this disruptive behaviors repeatedly (Selby, Pychyl, Marano, & Jaffe, 2014). Olsen (2013) suggests that self-sabotage happens when an individual's core belief interferes or is not in harmony with a goal or desire he or she has. For example, an African American wants to advance economically. However, he or she may have a hidden core belief that was learned earlier in life that money is the root of all evil. Not wanting to perceive themselves or to have others perceive them as evil, then that core belief will cause an individual to take actions that will undermine their ability to achieve earning more money.

Pulling from these definitions, and the inferences in the participants interviews, this research proposes that self-sabotage can occur within a community of people with the historical social conditionings that of African Americans. In essence, a group of

people can possess a set of core beliefs or perceptions deriving from social conditioning that interfere or is not in harmony with the very goals or desires held within the group. As it relates to African Americans community, the long held desires and goals would be economic and social advancement, respect and equality within the social system of the United States. Just as self-sabotage is believed to be a behavior that is conscious as well as unconscious (Olsen, 2013; Selby, Pychyl, Marano, & Jaffe, 2014), some participants believe that this in-group self-sabotage is intentional; others believe it to be unintentional. Whether this cultural self-sabotaging is intentional or unintentional, the findings of this research reveal that it is a very complex and multi-layered psychological and emotional obstacle.

The term most frequently used among participants that refers to cultural self-sabotage within the African American culture was *Crabs in a Barrel Mentality*. Participants' described this mentality as relating to an interesting phenomenon that occurs when harvesting live crabs. If one crab seems to be getting out of the bucket, rather than allow that crab to get out, the other crabs as a group will latch on to that crab, seeming to pull it back down. They noted that sometimes, the crabs seem to be almost malicious in their actions, by waiting until the crab's escape is probable before reaching out and pulling it back into the barrel.

They went on to note when a person has this mentality he or she is resentful of others' efforts to get out of a situation or to get ahead. For example when someone is attempting to better their quality of life, they may often find themselves hindered or ridiculed by friends and family members who attempt to make them feel guilty about

their efforts – accusing them of "thinking they are better" than the collective others. As P12 shared:

> It's the people we have around us. As long as you're just talking about achieving something or being successful everyone is cheering you on. But actually, they're just cheering you on so you can get it out of your system, they're not really meaning for you to go all the way. Family and friends… they are right there cheering you on when you start the journey. But the moment it looks like you're really going to do that thing, it becomes a whole other ball game, and your family and friends start throwing up all kinds of roadblocks and hindrances.

Other participants expressed if an African American values education, aims to speak proper English or in any way tries to better themselves in general, they are made to feel guilty by other African Americans who accuses the person of being a "sell out" (Participant 18) or "not keeping it real" (Participant 22, 2015). You can see this phenomena in the current urban school system where children experience bullying from their peers for valuing academic achievement.

While all participants said this mentality can be seen at all levels of life, some viewed the crab in the barrel mentality as the action of someone drowning and merely trying to save themselves by latching on the other about to get out. Others saw this as a mentality of a collective community that has become jealous, envious, or filled with a sense of self-loathing, so they initiate ways to keep others in the African American community from raising above a certain level of class or status. Those who were out of

reach (African American athletes, personalities, actors, etc.) were subject to denigration and character assassination.

When asked what mental shift needed to be made within the African American community to close the gap in key leadership positions, many of the participants had a nostalgic viewpoint of the 60s, believing this is where the African American Community both gained and lost its footing. For example, P17 stated:

> We have misinterpreted the accomplishments of the civil rights movement and what Martin Luther King wanted for us. And here we are trying to operate in this new era, but we have not moved on in our minds. So our slavery now is not what others are doing to use, but our internal mindset and what we are doing to ourselves, and we carry this to the job and other social interactions.

Participant 13 noted,

> I believe that African Americans, at one point, were so happy to have this so-called integrated system in place that we forgot about the strengths we had as a people, and that were in place in our community before we had integration. In all its good, the civil rights policies caused us to lose the essence of who we were as the black community, our strengths, our self-sufficiency, and ability to share and to support each other. It's as if we throw out the baby with the bath water in the transition of the civil rights era. People were so happy to get off the plantation that they forgot that the system was still in place – it just became more invisible.

The response to this question may be reflective of the age of the participants and warrants exploring from the perspective of those in their 20s.

The three main conversational themes related to changing the mindset in the African American community centered on education, cultural accountability, and the lack of trust within the black community when interacting with each other, especially in the areas of business, collaboration, and taking collective responsibility for the growth and well-being of the community. The following responses sum up the overall attitude and views of all the participants.

> Unfortunately, sometimes our communities are less receptive in supporting our own. And this is the whole "craps in the barrel" mentality. That has been something I've seen in our community since I was a young child. It's an unfortunate disgrace within our community that decades and centuries after slavery we still can't seem to get our act together to support each other (P15).

> The African American community suffers more because it is not willing to sacrifice itself for the inclusion of more, whether that sacrifice includes letting go of their selfish individuals needs for the collectiveness of seeing community grow as a whole. It's my experience that the interaction between African Americans when it comes to patronizing another African American business, is you owe them something. There's this mindset that they should not have to pay the price an item is marked for. It's not that way when they walk into a white store. The attitude of 'Give me a deal' or 'the hookup' is so prevalent within the African American community when dealing with other African Americans – it's literally frustrating (P17).

I have as a screensaver on my computer, a picture of the book Black Wall Street, the success this community had as a whole when it was a community of itself, it succeeded… Today, we have as many churches as anyone, but those churches don't deposit their money in a Black owned bank – so we become beholding to others as consumers. I can summarize by saying, it is still part of that old myth; 'The White man's ice is colder than the Black man's ice.' So we're not partnering with each other within the African American community because we don't come from a place of collaboration, but competition. In other words, I can't work with another African American business because you're my competition. There is that fear of one getting more than the other does. You will see this in the older generation business owners who have been in business for over 20 years and feel they made it by themselves, of course this is a lie. But let me say this, the younger African American entrepreneurs are beginning to understand the importance of our push for collaboration (P24).

I think the mindset that we need to change to close the gap that exist in leadership is come to the realization of being mediocre is not going to cut it. Getting by is not good enough. We have to hold ourselves to a higher standard and be accountable for the ills in our community, and be responsible for our own growth. Previous generations of African Americans did this. But it seems that once African Americans got what they were fighting for back in the 60s, there was the belief that we had made it. So now the mindset is, "We don't have to work as hard anymore." Then when things don't work in our favor it's easier to say, "It's the

> White man's fault we didn't get that job." When the reality is, in many instances you didn't apply yourself. We have to get beyond this notion that there is something wrong with excelling academically. We really have to get to the point of rewarding these efforts, instead of over emphasizing sports or entertainment – that includes video games (P16).

By the responses of the participants, clearly there is an internal enemy that is eating away at the core of this community, which makes them hypersensitive to the external elements of inequality.

Psychological Genocide: The Death of a Peoples' Spirit at Their Own Hands

Participants alluded to a more destructive form of cultural self-sabotage, which this researcher likens to a form of *Psychological Genocide.*

Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer and strong activist against genocide, first used the term "Genocide" in 1944. Lemkin defined the term as, the destruction of a people or ethnic group. In 1948, the term was redefined in Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG) as "Any of the following acts: (a) Murdering members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily injury or psychological harm to members of the group; (c) Intentionally causing physical destruction in whole or in part on the group conditions of life;(d) Enforcing measures meant to deter births within the group; or (e) Forcibly moving children of the group to another group, carried out with an intent to ruin, in whole or in part, a national, racial, ethnical, or religious group.

This definition can certainly describe the African American experience during slavery and the Jim Crow era, but how could such a contemptible term refer to the

interaction within the African American community today. No one can deny or ignore the alarming statistics of physical genocide (killing members of the group) occurring in African American communities, such as Chicago and Detroit, at the hands of other African Americans. However, based on the responses of the participants, it could be suggested that there is a more sinister form of destruction occurring as well, which little concern is given… a type of killing or extreme abuse of another's spirit. In other words, participants spoke, with great distress, about a behavior that was attacking and destroying the pride, dignity, identity and esteem of African Americans, at the hands of other African Americans.

Psychological Genocide, as proposed in this research, seeks to meticulously inflict extreme abuse by destroying another's mental, emotional and spiritual esteem at the hands of another within the member's own ethnic group.

Participants spoke of the constant discord among African Americans concerning skin color (light skin vs. dark skin); disparaging black beauty by prescribing to the standards of White Americans' mass media engine; the lack of concern in preserving the family structure; a scarcity mentality, and a community imprisoned within itself by the infestation of drug dealers, gangs, and gun violence. More importantly, they spoke with great passion about the disregard of the ancestral struggle to abolish the use of the condescending term "Nigga." The following is an example of this discord:

> I watched a program that came on the OWN network about African American girls who had all these issues about being dark skin and having kinky hair. Let me tell you something (said with great passion), this is an internally manufactured

> syndrome. I completely understand where it came from. You had the house N-word and the field N-word and you had the White masters making these cream color babies… I get it. But what I don't understand in this day and age with all the role models out there, with all the different shades of hues, why is this still a self-mutilating issue that WE continue to put on ourselves (P05).
>
> To be honest, it goes all the way back to slavery days – that mentality between those who worked in the house and those who worked in the field. Slave who worked in the house were generally treated a little bit better and they themselves thought they were better than those that worked in the field. Within our community, we have the light vs. dark skin division – so there has always been a division among our people. Rather than work to close that gap – we chisel away at it, and it's getting wider and more dense. It's as if we have to be taught to encourage, support and honor one another… it just baffles me (P12).

The light skin/dark skin war or the rivalry of good hair vs. bad hair are familiar conflicts in the African-American community. There is a plethora of literature that examines the dialog among African Americans that reflects the self-loathing validation of African Americans who are "fair skin" with "good hair" (Blackwelder, 2003; Brisbon, 2009; Byrd, 2001; Gaynor, 2013; Jones, 1994; Walker, 2007). In 2009 the film, *Good Hair*, produced and narrated by comedian Chris Rock appeared at movie theaters, and later on HBO, took a comedic, but very real look at the issues concerning the perception African-American women have historically had about their hair. The documentary also addressed the ideas of what were considered socially acceptable and/or desirable styles

for African-American women's hair in the United States. In 2013, Oprah Winfrey's OWN network also aired a documentary series called *Dark Girls* that addressed the social and psychological destructions brought on by "isms" that exist among Black women relating to skin color.

In an article that appeared in EBONY, an African American magazine, freelance writer Gerren Keith Gaynor (2013) noted, "In the discussion of 'colorism' (negative ideologies centered on skin tone), Black men, for the most part, are not a part of the equation – unless, the conversation turns to our unspoken reinforcement of White beauty as it relates to women. In other words, the men who only date light skin women." Gaynor further argues that African American men are equally active allies in the damaging the value and image of African American beauty, as well as obvious victims of colorism.

In addition, Gaynor suggests the difference between the two genders is the way African American men deal with their insecurities around physical attractiveness. For instance, instead of teaching a young African American men to despise their natural hair (although it could be said that urging them to keep their hair cut very low send a message of disdain), they are taught to emasculate each other by taking on certain attitudes based on fabricated ideas of masculinity. One such notion is that African American men who are light skin are referred to as soft. Another is referring to dark skin African American men as being in for the season (Gaynor, 2013). Participants went on to share:

> I think this is the result of the old Jim Crow era and ideology of what that Willie Lynch publication said, 'I'll show you how to make a slave, and it will ensure they will be a slave for the next 300 years.' The system has done just that, we still

> have a slave mentality – we don't trust each other. Prime example, we're still having a problem within our race about light skin/dark skin issues. We are still shackled by issues of color – we have barriers based on color within our own race. Add this issue with our lack of trust amongst ourselves. We don't even really like each other. Here we are 2013, and we're still tripping with stuff like this. But then we complain about what the 'system' is going to us (P17).
>
> It's the house niggas vs. the field niggas mentality. But in today's society, we have in our community, 'the ultra-rich,' the middle class, the working class, and then you have the poor. And what do you think is going on? One group of black folks thinking they're too good to deal with, work with, or support the other black folks that are less than they are… that's what's going on! So how can you get ahead when your own people are against you (P07)?

To further assert the existence of this psychological genocide, in the book *The Un-Civil War: BLACKS vs NIGGERS: Confronting the Subculture Within the African-American Community*, author Taleeb Starkes (2013) addresses an issue that exist within the African American community that he describes as the "NIGGER subculture." This subculture, according to Starkes, comprises of a dysfunctional and sociopathic group of African Americans that narcissistically inhabits the African American community and resist being eradicated. Starkes argues, while countless attempts of outreach and reformation have been made to address, guide, and reform this subculture, the attempts have been futile. Starkes suggests the reason efforts have been in vain is because the "NIGGER subculture" enjoys being "NIGGERS." Starkes, goes on to say, even the

historic and groundbreaking accomplishment of having an African American First Family has had minimal transformative effect on this subcultural within the African American communities. Starkes acknowledges the complexity of his bitterness toward this psychotic subculture is complex, particularly because he is an African American man, however he argues:

> Many people (from all races) have made sacrifices so that African-Americans could have equal footing in America; only to witness this subculture benefit from the rights obtained from the Civil Rights struggle, while not practicing the associated responsibilities that accompany those rights. The African-American populace is uniformly demonized because of the actions of this dysfunctional subculture. Essentially, they've hijacked the African-American image and revamped it into their image and likeness. Moreover, this parasitic subculture replicates these horrid conditions wherever it exists, which is usually inside predominately African-American cities, communities, schools, events, etc."

While the participants never mentioned a subculture of African Americans, their responses did echo Starkes' sentiments of the African American populace being uniformly demonized from within. The following statements reflect several participants' views.

> How are we [African Americans] going to change when we're living in neighborhoods that are infested with drugs and drug dealers, and you're scared to go outside your door? But we'll get mad at the police when they try to assist in getting rid of the drugs. On one hand, there is a perpetuation of the negative

messaging within media, but that negative messaging is also being propagated in our communities, in our music, our language. And unfortunately, that's what mainstream media picks up on; not the good that is occurring in our communities. So the negative is constantly regurgitated in news loops, YouTube, and radio sound bites. When do we take responsibility, individually and collectively, to stop this (P17)?

The reality I saw growing up was one of limitations because of the compact and concerted efforts of containment, which became a breeding ground for violence. Being relegated to certain city and geographical boundaries created a state or condition of lack. So in the condensed confinement, what you saw was a type of contained self- mutilation within our community – and these images stay with you. These types of images for the most part have completely absorbed and branded a generation's mindset (P14).

When we're victimized by other Blacks we're in shock because we're supposed to be about "more power to the people." But when we try to come together on any level our envy is there because we're all wearing titles now – we've made it. We've forgotten about when we were a community of people helping one another (P30).

We pay dues every year to Black fraternities and Sororities, yet we have this internal jealousy that will not allow us to support each other without envy and jealousy. If you've seen Django – the character [Stephen] played by Samuel Jackson is the kind of Blacks you see now in our community. They have

> significant decision making ability in corporations, yet you are dealing with the Stephen mentality – that's the kind of people I work with right now. We operate from a scarcity mentality, believing only one or two of us can have any measure of success because it not enough for many to accomplish (P27).
>
> Yes, I've always been told that the White man will keep you down. For the most part this has been true (said with passion) in terms of institutionalized racism. But the unexplained phenomenon (even now) within the African American community is this self-mutilation at the different levels of interaction. Whether you're low, middle or high level of income; whether you're a business professional or straight up street hustler. The thing about this internal hatred or spirit of holding each other down has resulted in the demises of us collectively as a people. It tends to deal with the foundation of general acceptance and aids those who have the strength to prosper in this dog-eat-dog world (P01).

During this discussion topic, there was a recurring undertone or theme in the participants' remarks that suggested feelings of grief as it relates to a loss sense of community support, collaboration, and camaraderie. This grief and sense of loss may also be at the root of the frustration and disillusionment with the current African American leaders, and the suggestions of their inability to galvanize the community. There was a greater tone of disappointment when they discussed the failure of African American leaders to foster, maintain and preserve the value of communal support and cultural pride throughout the African American community as other minority groups have been able to do.

It is clear from the responses of the participants this extreme in-group denigration, and the detachment of community support is taking a mental, emotional, and spiritual toll on the African American community. In many cases it may be more damning because participants felt it was self-inflicted, which forces the community to perpetually operate as a disjointed unit. Unfortunately, some participants believe there was little differentiation between the mindset of the community and much of the current African American leadership. As P27 noted:

> Willingly, almost dumbfoundedly, the African American leadership has participated in this mutilation, death and destruction of its own people – to say it bluntly. It's sad to say, but we are broken as a people. Too many of us have been submerge in a mindset of accepting less – an acceptance of powerlessness. However, no one can deny, we have this survival instinct in us that can be aroused to do differently – we just have to be reminded of that strength.

In his book, "The Wretched of the Earth," French psychiatrist Franz Fanon (1961) argued that the 'oppressed' after a period of time, will adopt the point of view of the oppressor. The participants acknowledge that throughout history, racism sent the specific message to members of the African American community (along with other communities of color) that their lives are worth less than that of Whites. Participants felt when African Americans act out against others in the African American community, whether it be physical or psychological, they were acting on the beliefs that have been drilled into the African American psyche that the life of an African American is not precious. A view

that is further endorsed by larger institutions and the governing principles in the United States by not taking crimes against African Americans seriously.

Noise of Our History

When participants were ask, "Would it be fair to say that historical experiences create the expectation of discrimination when African Americans are in situations that compare them with other races? This one question stirred the greatest instant, spontaneous responses such as, "Absolutely," "Oh Definitely," "You bet it does; anyone who says differently is lying;" and "We try hard to not let it factor in, but it's just there. If only for a moment, it creeps in." Participant 05 referred to this ever-present dialog as "Noise of Our History" (Participant 05, 2015). This question also revealed the most contradictory responses that reflected both distress and hope from all the participants.

A Matter of Distress: While all of the participants were well aware of the negative stereotypes held about African Americans, they also felt African Americans had a responsibility to themselves not to perpetuate the type of self-denigration occurring throughout the populace. In many regards, participants' felt that the culture itself willingly (maybe unconsciously) participates in a self-imposed re-victimization of the race through negative depictions of the African American community in songs, videos, and public behavior.

The participants were sympathetic about the historical experience and the psychological residue it has left behind. However, they adamantly felt the onus fell on the African American community to first change the internal dialog that seems to continuously undermine their best efforts. As expressed in the following responses.

So many African Americans have all these negative messages in the back of our minds about what we can't do, or what our history has been. We can't seem to drown out the noise of our history long enough to get passed it. When I say the noise of our history, I mean the slavery stuff is always in the back of our minds. It seems that assault continues to play itself out over and over within the psyche of our community. We have to figure out a way to get past it. I don't think anyone can do that for us. We have to do ourselves, first as individuals and then as a community (P15).

Our history plays a major part in our dealings. However, the reality is how we are choosing to engage the facts of our history. At the end of the day, it's up to the people themselves to determine how you are going to marshal that energy of oppression. I'm a black woman, and I'm completely sympathetic because I know what racism looks, acts, and feels like – I get it. But at the same time I'm saying, alright already – enough! But are we going to continue to internalize it? I get the whole internalizing thing… I think internalizing is cultural – because ancestrally we are a people who are spiritual and more inward. So we're internalizing and stuffing the history of our assault, instead of using it to not being re-victimized. I think to some degree on an ancestral level, that this may be the reason for some of our self-abuse (P05).

We've had so much taken from us as a people that subconsciously we naturally become defensive – so we have to break that curse of always being on the defense. It comes back to the individual mindset; we have to have a more invested

> interest within our community before we can ask – demand – other people to invest in us (P24).

Some participants felt it was just a matter of shutting out the noise by individually and collectively focusing on and being responsive to the "new" demands of our social system through education and mentoring. However, other participants felt addressing the noise meant having that critical conversation that most African Americans are not willing to have. As P06 noted, "As long as the conversation remains on the fringe you never get to the core of any issues stagnating our people. And that's where we as a people and our leaders like to stay in the conversation – on the fringes."

There was a consensus among the participants that for true change to occur, it meant, as described by P15, "Changing the Dinner Table Conversation in every African American home." For most participants, the critical conversation has to be one that starts at the root – disarming the racial shame held by the African American culture themselves, both individually and collectively. However, the challenge with a conversation of this magnitude is that it threatens the in-group defense mechanism that has historically allowed the African American community to abdicate certain responsibility to their own betterment. For example, as earlier literature pointed out, African Americans have historically espoused a government conspiracy (known as system blame), which allowed the community on many issues to externalize their problems, leaving them free of any responsibility to their own psychological well-being or introspection (Crocker & Major, 2003). Crocker & Major (2003) suggests that beliefs of system blame can act as a self-protective mechanism for the esteem and ego of African Americans especially in

competitive situations, while also deflecting personal responsibility to their own achievement. This type of conversation would also force African Americans to face their issues of learned helplessness (Alloy, Jacobson, & Acocella, 1999; Petersen, Maier & Seligman, 1995)

Other specific thoughts held by participants regarding the historical noise within the African American psyche were,

> Absolutely, historical experiences will create an expectation of discrimination. We are three-generations from having to sit at the back of the bus. Many African Americans still instinctively, using the metaphor, have the mentality of gravitating toward the back of the bus. There are many people who simply think, 'who cares, why bother, there's no real payoff for all the things I have to go through to simply get turned down.' This mindset is part historical and part peers that are negative (P01).
>
> Yes, because blacks don't celebrate their history. There used to be a time when blacks were proud and you could tell it by how they dressed and conducted themselves in public. Now we wallow in the shame of our history because so much damage was done to blacks. We shut it out through denial. It's a taboo subject, but the damage shows up in much of the negative issues we have in this society. Other cultures (Jews) brag about their ability to live through their tragic history. We suffer psychologically in the shame of it (P04).
>
> Yes, definitely. We are the victims of our past, most of us walk into every situation with the thought, "Here we go again – Whites thinking we're dumb and

lazy; and other African American are jealous." This is going to mess with your head and hinder you in doing a good job. We gotta throw all of that out and go in with a blank slate; but we don't because our history as African American and our experiences holds us there. It's the suffering in silence and then not knowing what to do to change the situation that does the most damage. This conditioning can taint you and your future experiences, and others (P06).

Absolutely, because the 'powers that be' (black and white alike) block the foundation of the creative means of rescuing our people. They would rather see our progress fail because the administrative need is greater than the needs of the community so we just survive on the ineffective use of government money as opposed to thinking about an entrepreneurial approach, which comes from the fresh perspective of the infusion of collective minds. But if you can't get pass [sic] the gatekeepers of the internal matters (self-concept) – as well as the oppressive attitudes of other African Americans, then changing the dynamics become insurmountable. The greatest thing that hinders us is, we don't trust each other and we don't think any of us can make a difference for each other or our community (P17).

Oh absolutely; as African Americans, we have all these negative thoughts about what's going to happen before we ever get there. And for many, this internal negative conversation shuts us down, and we won't move forward because we're exhausted by the thought of what we will have to go through. What justifies these internal negative conversations are what we experience or witness happening to

> other African Americans. I mean, just look at what President Obama is going through or recurring incidents like Trayvon Martin (P03).

A Matter of HOPE: Most participants believed everything they talked about reflected the obvious – African Americans are weighed down by a jaded history that has been a cross they did not deserve, but have had to bear. Yet, participants also believed only "they" [African American people] had the power to lift it off, and choose not to bear it any longer. As P09 said:

> It would nice to have a revisionist rewrite our history, but none of us can go back and undo anything. We're all affected by it and the beliefs, whether they are right or wrong, we are all in many respects, influenced by it.

Participant P30 noted,

> The mindset of victim entitlement, which started in the early 60s continues to mutate into strands of disorderly and disrespectful behavior. We will continue to have entrepreneurs, but we have to stay hopeful that we will be able to shed the general stereotype that make us the butt end of the human race, as oppose to the kings and queens; and a people you look up to like the Jewish community, the Chinese or the Italians, and other race of people.

While the current reality seemed bleak and disheartening, every participant had a strong undertone of hope. They echoed, as does this research proposes, the comment of P25:

> Yes, our historical conditioning is in fact a stumbling block, but I also think there is a significant opportunity, with some effort, to get beyond it. But there is not

> enough attention paid to pushing pass it. Yes, the conditioning is there, but just like our societal challenges, we're choosing not to really do anything about it. So, is our historical conditioning a stumbling block? Yes! Insurmountable, No! Is it an issue we should be dealing with? Absolutely!

Why Can't You Be More Like Them?

A very common, yet unsolicited response from participants had to do with suggesting a resolve for the African American community. It came in the form of modeling the Jewish community. As stated by P26, "You hear folks say African Americans should be more like Jews or like people who come from middle eastern cultures, but we're not willing, in general, to do the kind of collective work that would allow us to be successful." This request echoes a similar, and popular rhetorical question made by some in the United States in response to the continuous cries of equality from the African American community – "Why can't they just get over it?"

All of the participant expressed in some way that there is a common notion within the United States that the African Americans experience is like that of Jewish Americans, therefore they should be more like the Jewish community. In other words, stop looking for government handouts and pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. While this comparison and perspective alone speaks to a deeper issue, it is beyond the scope of this study. However, this researcher thought the participants responses were worthy of mention, especially as it relates to their thoughts of a possible solution. While all the participants strongly disagreed that the Jewish experience in American was like that of

the African experience in American, they did acknowledge there were certain similarities. Participant 03 said:

> Maybe the difference between the two experiences is the Jewish community didn't suffer it alone – they suffer the assault as a community. It's a constant source of motivation for them around the dinner table, when it comes time to decide what business you're going to patronize, they choose a Jewish counterpart. They make a conscious decision every day, and in every single interaction to overcome the abuse in every aspect of their engagement, business and education. More importantly, they (as well as other ethnic groups) don't listen to the criticism of this society about how they band together in strong support or each other.

Participants also expressed a sense of disdain regarding the myth that African Americans only wanted government handouts. However, they did have the opinion that the Jewish American community and other similar ethic groups' societal and economic success was based on the philosophy or formula of "separate, but equal." Participant 19's response sums up the overall views of all the participants:

> If you look at the Jewish community for example, you could say they wear the history of the holocaust like a badge, but their mentality is – it didn't stop them from driving, thriving, and striving to be the best that they can. They use the anger from that assault on their community as a springboard to constantly strive for better. It's like their cultural internal voice says, 'This is our history, it made us stronger, and we're all the better because of it.' When comparing the two assaults,

> African and Jewish Americans, it is evident that the way you react to tragedy makes a great difference. It's the difference between someone who may have a devastating experience and will use that experience to either be the reason why they will never be a victim again, or someone who becomes a perpetual victim – never rising above the tragedy. It makes me sad, but it's as if African Americans have chosen the route of the perpetual victim.

The Assertion

When asked about the assertion that the dilemmas facing African Americans are self-imposed, ultimately causing them to forfeit their opportunity to obtain key leadership positions because they lack the self-confidence, initiative and commitment, responses were mixed. Some participants totally rejected the notion that African American lacked initiative and commitment, viewing the assertion as P03 stated, "These kinds of comments are used to shift responsibility; but the political reality is policies that are in place, are written to be implemented, but often they are not." To this end, participants responded with the question, "Is it a lack of initiative and commitment, or discouragement?" As P26 noted:

> I don't think that statement is totally true. I can only speak from my experience. I've seen a lot of people push, push, and push to accomplish goals they set for themselves. I think people on a whole get exhausted, they get tried. Then your self-confidence is jarred. Every time you attempt to do something or go forward, you're pushed 10-steps backwards. After a while that takes a toll on your psyche. You start to self-doubt, you start to make excuses for yourself and you'll

> experience some anxieties. I thinks this is where the African American community it right now.

Most participants agree that based on their experiences, the assertion is true. However, it was followed by the caveat that this topic is complex and multi-factual. Therefore, it cannot be discussed without seriously considering the effects of historical conditioning. As P02 noted:

> You have to ask, how on earth can a person visualize something new or different, or not be capped by the ceiling that has always been present since they were a kid – when it's been introduced from your family or your neighborhood where you've never really seen anybody real do it. It takes a special commitment to be able to see beyond that. If there is no evidence in your mind or experience in your life that suggests there is more or better opposed to just someone saying it, then how do you reach for that? There are not a lot of people who can just go on faith. That's why it's so difficult. Having faith is hard whether you're talking about religion, in life, or anything.

Participant 08 presented a perspective of fear:

> I've also seen when African American get into leadership positions, it's as if they are afraid to mentor and promote another African American. Sometimes it's because they have that scarcity mentality of 'it's not enough for everybody.' But most of the time, it's a thought of self-preservation for African Americans in leadership positions. Here's what I mean. In my previous position as Dean in the IT division of the University, I had a staff of 315 people. One particular time I

needed to hire five people to fill some open positions. So based on their skills I hire five applicants and three of the five people were African Americans. One of the white women in my office said to me, 'Oh, I see you're trying to change the whole division black.' I hired them based on their skills, experience and potential; not because they were African Americans. So my response to her was, 'There are still 312 of you that are White, and will remain white. I can't see where hiring 'three' African Americans could be considered as changing the 'whole' unit. I hired them anyway, and for next two years the entire focus of the unit was always on those three Blacks and what they were doing – or not doing.

The three of them were smart, smart, smart – but to the others, they couldn't do anything right. After I hired them, you would have thought I was the scum of the earth – there was a blemish put on my record because I hired blacks. It got so bad after that that they had to create a VPs position for me so they could move me from that position as a Dean. All of my positive accomplishments as a Dean didn't matter, it all came down to I hired some black folks. So you're always damned if you do – damned if you don't.

Still P10 pointed out the aspect of one's internal dialog engrained by the African American historical experiences.

I would have to agree with this statement. I believe we hinder our own selves and a lot of it is the thought, "I'm black they're not going to accept me – I'm a really good enough. It's been engrained in blacks for so long about them being inferior (P10).

Participant 28 viewed the assertion from yet another aspect of the African American experience of injustice and inequality; suggesting that the ineptness within the leadership of the African American community was an element to consider. The thought was as such:

> I would give more weight to the last part of this statement, "We lack the commitment to meet the demands of the 21st Century." We have not been given the provisions to help us meet the demands of the 21st Century. If you want to strengthen a people then you have to give a type of confidence to those who have shown they have potential to pull themselves up. The long-standing African American leaders/think tanks have to also be willing to confront the everlasting stereotypes of us. In our case, the ugly stereotypes are more dominate than the good. There has never been a breaking of this cycle. When you look at the middle passage, it was a traumatic experience hell bent on breaking the spirit of a human being. When you use that antidote, whether it's in the 1400s or 2014 it is most affective in making an individual ineffective. And once set in motion it has been able to gain and sustain a momentum of its own within the African American community (P28).

Participant 11 viewed the assertion as flawed based on, again, the complex nature of the historical issues that African American have faced by saying:

> The commitment part makes me really angry because I don't know more committed people to their profession and advancing their career than African Americans. The self-confidence piece I think there could be some of that because

> of the negative stereotypical messages we constantly get bombarded with can make you question yourself, but ultimately I think the statement is flawed.

As seen in the participants' responses, there are varying views regarding the assertion among them. However, it would be safe to say that the assertion holds a level of validity. Whether the participants willingly acknowledge the legitimacy and weight of the assertion or not, all of their statements validated that the assertion should be taken into strong consideration. Not from an aspect of being flawed or broken as a race, but from the perspective of holistic growth. As P18 stated:

> Our own internal beliefs have a major impact on how we proceed in our careers or how we view success. Now, having said that, there are some externals that impact our efforts greatly as well. But then we have to find ways to balance that out. I also know that you can do everything you need to do, but there may be some external forces out there that are beyond your control.

Summary

Both the interviews and surveys tell a complete story that is confirmatory with respect to there being a high level of ATS in the diverse African American sample. It is important to note that, while some responses in the survey revealed a low FOS, the more-detailed interview results revealed evidence of a hypersensitivity to events that ultimately trigger behaviors that mirror the characteristics of the SFP. Therefore, suggesting unconscious forces are at work in the collective psyches of African Americans. These unconscious motivations hinder and sometimes block African Americans from a healthy sense of self-worth and prevent them from engaging with Whites as well as other African

American, and possible other ethnic groups, due to these characteristics, which then leads to mistrust, reluctance and self-doubt.

While there were differences of opinions among theorists as to the origination of fear of success or the success fearing personality, one major argument remained common, whether the fear of success originates primarily in the individual, or in real events (i.e., rejection and disapproval) experienced in the external social world, which then affects the individual internally. The participants' shared experiences support my position in this study that both perspectives are relevant factors; with each feeding off the other, one nurturing its existence, and the other maintaining or reinforcing its existence.

As noted by Tresemer (1977), both lines of thought are related to each other, even if they are not as systematically correlated as might be desired. In this case, one viewpoint proposes an internalized, learned reaction, while the other proposes a reaction to an externalized stimulus. Or as Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert (1978) argued, although one's fears toward success may have been acquired through earlier cultural conditioning, or under earlier social experiences of a particular nature, it reaches far beyond the original incident to affect new circumstances or situations, as well as people who may trigger those learned anxieties. Ultimately, sabotaging any possible desires for achieving success during adulthood.

The overall views of participants can be summed up as such, The African American community once steeped in cultural pride and determined to demonstrate their cultural value as scientist, poets, writers, politicians, artists, educators, inventors, musicians, athletes, inventors, business owners, financiers, actors, doctors, lawyers,

philanthropist, activists, etc. can now share the responsibility of their own hindrance. As a people (not all, but many) they have somehow descended to a mindset content with merely being a consumer and the victim of a tragic and dishonorable past.

Whether it be through the unconscious act of cultural self-sabotage or the more destructive sense of physical or psychological genocide, the participants' responses were clear, There is an "enemy on the inside" that has become the new, more ruthless slave master, and it will continue to plague this community if the African American culture remains in denial or closed minded and hypersensitive to a true conversation regarding its self-sabotaging path.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the views of participants through candid, intra-perspective interviews to clarify whether there are factors within the psyche of African Americans acting as conscious or unconscious self-imposed barriers. The study further sought to explore whether these characteristics were the results of historical social conditioning that ultimately perpetuates the underrepresentation of African Americans in key leadership positions within the framework of the United States, barriers that Harro (2000) referred to as internalized oppression, and mirror the characteristics of the SFP. I proposed that after centuries of having their efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by centuries of slavery followed by continuous systemic social and economic discrimination, such as Jim Crow and Debt Peonage, exerted by White Americans, African Americans may have acquired a hypersensitivity to events that trigger self-sabotaging behaviors. Whether the long historical experiences of African Americans in the United States are direct, indirect, or vicarious, it is the position of this research that these experiences may have created a mindset of multigenerational behaviors that act as self-imposed barriers or self-sabotaging behaviors that thwart the very efforts African Americans engage in to achieve advancement as an ethnic group.

The fundamental element contributing to the development of SFP is the experience of having one's efforts toward achievement adversely and repeatedly affected by the negative reaction from more powerful others or social system when an individual

appears to be gaining skills and independence (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan et al., 1989; Horner, 1968; Pappo, 1972). Using Cohen's 9 Factors of FOS, this element was explored with participants from the perspective of the historical relationship between African Americans and White Americans, and was found to have an acute effect on all research participants – some at greater levels than others did, but all spoke to the effects of it. This fundamental element was the impetus for their rationale to achieve, and their expectation of achievement or social advance. Positive and negative, it was the driving force for whether the research participants would approach or avoid an achievement-related situation. It strongly influenced the incentive value of achieving success – how they calculated the worth or value of their actions to obtain a desired goal, and their probability of success – subjective expectation of obtaining a desired goal; elements of the achievement motivation theory (Atkinson & Birch, 1978; McClelland, 1985).

While all research participants experienced some measure of anxiety in all nine FOS factors – some at deeper levels than others, the greatest point of contention was that of competition and evaluation. The element of competition and evaluation proved to offer the greatest insight, especially as it related to being evaluated or judged. The most poignant point was that the preoccupation with competition and evaluation related to an obsessive anxiety over possibly propagating the negative social stereotypes, and feeling a personal obligation, which was the result of early familial conditioning, to disprove the negative stereotypes.

There was also a high degree of frustration, as P03 put it, "living under a cloud," when being judged through a lens of predetermined deficiency, instead of having an

equal opportunity of being judged on the merit of one's individual performance. It was very clear that the need to perform well was a strong component in the shaping of the participants' personal and cultural identities. However, there was a stronger expectation that this quality was likely to be marginalized, ignored, criticized or stifled. It turns out that the reluctance to engage in situations of competition or achievement was not driven by a fear of losing based on competence, but rather the recurring attitudes based on long-held social stigmas. This fear of being the perpetual loser, based on the participants direct and indirect experiences of inequality served as evidence or rationale for their motivation to seek key leadership positions.

More importantly, this expectation, both conscious and unconscious, was the impetus to contain their optimism or enthusiasm even when they did seek out promotions. There was a collective undertone of skepticism expressed by participants as they shared their experiences that suggested an attitude of, I'll apply for this position or opportunity, but I know they already have a non-black candidate preferred for the position. Even participants whose scores indicated a low to average ATS on the FOSS acknowledged that in many cases – while it did not stop them – there was always a moment of substantial concern that they are never the first or preferred candidate of choice. Despite their drive, these participants did admit this was a disconcerting recurring reality that they just had to live with.

This illuminates one point of contention that presented a high degree of frustration – "tokenism" (Hogg & Vaughan, 2008; Jackson, Thoits & Taylor, 1995) – the feeling that their advancement was really controlled by the so-called charity of the powerful

others who were forced to comply with the laws of affirmative action, rather than achievement based on merit. This seemed to be a trigger of resentment, particularly among the male participants. In other words, when participants felt they were being given an opportunity for advancement and it was not based on their own merit, the male participants stated they refused the offering with indignation. Their interpretation of the offering was that of charity. They argued that receiving a promotion based on charity and not merit meant that others had control and it could always be rescinded. This mindset mirrors the element of FOS that pertained to an unconscious fear of loss of control over the providence of their lives. While the women participants shared similar experience and a high degree of resentment, they accepted the positions or opportunities; however, their motivation was based on the immediate needs of the family – therefore having no other options. Unfortunately when these positions were accepted, participants noted they were not empowered by upper management; and in many instances they felt they were in a constant loop of having to prove themselves, or their credibility was called into question. Which ultimately caused the participants to shut down psychologically, and in many instances, their efforts and performance waned.

In summary, this research reveals that there is a very real and ominous opposition at the root of the African American experience masked as survival skills or defense mechanism, yet acting as a silent unsuspecting saboteur within the African American psyche. For as much as the African American community desires to achieve social, political, and economic advancement and acceptance within the framework of the United States, the greater challenge is in raising to the challenge of acknowledging and then

managing their conscious or unconscious self-imposed barriers (internalized oppression) that mirrored the characteristics of the SFP individually and collectively.

Interpretation of the Findings

While the participants articulated their frustrations regarding past and current social challenges within the African American community in more tempered terminologies, their responses revealed evidence of a cognitive dissonance that Horney (1992) refers to as basic conflict or basic hostility. This basic conflict is the result of built-up, unresolved psychological residue within the African American community as it relates to the "powerful white others" (Karon, 1975 p. 89). According to Horney (1992), every neurotic symptom points to underlying unresolved conflicts, which play an infinitely greater role in human neurosis than many believe or want to admit. Oddly, these human conflicts are harder to detect because they are basically unconscious, and those affected by these unresolved conflicts will go to any length to deny any connection to their existence (Horney, 1992). This was especially evident when participants would make a clarification regarding their verbal tone or to restate a thought with more favorable words or less emotional emphasis.

This research clearly reveals there are definitely two-sides to this historical argument – with one side being a social system of contemporary discrimination – also referred to as "modern racism" (McConahay, 1986 p. 251); the other side, an unconscious psyche within African Americans that results in an internalized oppression, driven by unrecognized, yet deeply ingrained bigotry that prevents them from even considering the

counterarguments, which ultimately sabotages their many efforts toward achievement and success – individually and culturally.

In this research, I presented empirical qualitative evidence suggesting the presence of a pervasive, repetitive, and persistent imposition of self-barriers by African Americans on themselves. Such barriers were described by the research participants as skills for survival in the competitive and covertly discriminatory corporate environment within the United States. Such behaviors appeared to be based on the persistence of negative stereotypes associated with the African American culture. The participants emphasized the conflicting desires of African Americans to detach from the associations of these stereotypes, while at the same time, deal with the pressures of being obligated, as individuals, to disprove such stereotypes by exemplifying and upholding a positive image for the whole African American community when attempting to achieve profound professional success, or when under public scrutiny.

Such efforts of respondents are strongly associated with the opinions of Oswell (2005) and Pappo (1983) about the deeply embedded images of inferiority, negative social images of African Americans, statistics on crime rates and homicide, alcohol and substance abuse, etc. This conflict also supports Goffman's (1963) suggestions that the stigmatized has to be cognizant and perceptive about their conduct and the impression he or she has on others – a level of scrutiny the stigmatized assumes others are not held to. At the same time, to the stigmatized individual may interpret their minor failings or irregularities as an accurate representation of the differences that brand them. The stigmatized person may then be hesitant to engage in fervent exchange with others for

fear his or her actions and/or words may be misinterpreted or seen to justify the stigmatization.

Participants argued that African Americans working in the corporate American environment have the cards stacked against them because in many instances they are ensnared by their desire and obligation to improve the image of their community, while simultaneously trying to temporarily disassociate themselves from their community to avoid the risk of stereotype threat. All for the sake of attempting to gain some ration of personal success. Not only is this evidence of the cognitive dissonance that Jones & Shorter-Gooden (2004), and Livingston and Pearce (2009) refer to as shifting, it is also evidence of the strong contradictory attitude or cognitive dissonance about success; where many African Americans view success as having numerous positive virtues, while also being darkened by potentially costly and negative results (Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983). In this case the negative consequence is the threat of possible failure; if failure occurs, then judgment of incompetence is correct.

Therefore, the conflict is the inability to improve the image of the community, as well as validating the stereotyping. As a result of such emotional and mental fluctuating, African Americans commonly develop a dual consciousness relating to reconciling their own African American stigmatized and inferior image and their high-status image of a senior level executive. Such dual consciousness acts adversely on the African American psyche, causing and deepening the cognitive dissonance regarding success, which

ultimately creates strong psychological anxieties that intensifies their ATS. Thus, accepting a state of mediocrity becomes a safer, less stressful option.

There are two very disconcerting challenges presented in this dilemma for African Americans. First, is the extremely important factors of collectivism and interdependence, whereby it is largely believed that African American families exemplify the values of these states of being (Utsey, Adams, & Bolden, 2000). However, as several researchers have argued, while the general orientation of the African American community tends to be more collectivistic, most African Americans are, to some degree, bicultural merely because they live in the United States (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; Gushue & Constantine, 2003; Kambon, 1992; Toldson & Toldson, 2001; Utsey et al., 2000). These researchers also assert that it is this mindset of collectivism and interdependence that African Americans may very well carry as a cultural burden, which creates an internal conflict of unshackling themselves or others from the orientation of collectivism.

Secondly, is the need to disassociate themselves from the Africa American community in order to gain personal success, and to avoid the risk of stereotype threat. While this is associated with the internal conflict or perceived betrayal to their cultural orientation of collectivism, it also eludes to William E. Cross, Jr.'s Nigrescence theory (1995) and an attitude some African Americans adopt, which Cross describes as the pre-encounter stage. According to Cross' Black racial identity development model (Nigrescence theory), in the pre-encounter stage an individual African American absorbs various beliefs and values of the dominant culture, which includes the notion that "Black is wrong" while "White is right." According to Campbell & Fleming (2000) findings,

FOS is significantly related to the pre-encounter attitudes, and was the strongest of racial identity correlations.

Campbell & Fleming (2000) , Cross (1995), and Goffman (1963) also suggests that although the internalization of negative African American stereotypes may be outside of the individual's conscious awareness, he or she will attempt to assimilate in order to be accepted by the dominate European culture. To do so, the individual will actively or passively distance him/herself from other African American and the culture. Unfortunately, the results are often dismal, and fail to accomplish the intended outcome of obtaining a full "normal" status. Instead, the resulting outcome is the perception of a makeover of self—from the blemished self, to someone proven to have corrected the perceived flaw (Goffman, 1963). The Participants strongly concurred that such efforts of cultural disassociation has proven to be futile, especially as it relates to the motivation of some African Americans' to use it as a tool for advancement.

As aforementioned, analysis of the interviews has shown that African American's ATS is an unconscious, yet self-imposed conflict with a multi-layered psychological nature within the participants, caused by the conflicting social and familial conditioning regarding personal aspirations, competition and success in the African Americans community at large. At the conclusion of the interviews, participants were presented with the possibilities of self-sabotaging behavior in their experiences. The mere suggestion of the existence or possibility of the unconscious, yet actual actions of self-sabotaging behavior seemed to transform the participants' mindsets at the moment of this awareness during the interviews. This transcendence supports Bandura's (1986) social cognitive

theory. According to Bandura, a consciousness that fails to engage in the process of self-examination cannot possibly aspire to explain the complexities of human functioning. Bandura noted that by examining one's own conscious mind, a person can decipher their own psychological processes and activities.

This was an unexpected insight, but quite relevant to the African American community and a possible resolve. Specifically because the social cognitive theory typifies the belief that humans are proactive agents engaged in the intricate details of their own development. Therefore, they are more than capable of making things happen in their own time, and by their own volition. Bandura argued that in addition to other personal factors, the central element to self-intervention is the fact that humans have convictions that empowers them to practice governing their feelings, thoughts, and actions. In other words, an individual's actions and choices are motivated by what they think, feel and believe (Bandura, 1986). Bandura further noted that the elements of human functioning in social cognitive theory have a reciprocal nature that enables those involved in therapeutic and counseling endeavors to focus more specifically on personal, environmental, or behavioral factors. As a result, efforts aimed at improving emotional, cognitive, or motivational processes are more effective. Ultimately, increasing an individual's capabilities; and more importantly, altering the social conditions under which people live and work (Bandura, 1986).

To further support the relevance and value of transformation through self-reflection and awareness, if only momentary, is the theory of critical reflection

(Brookfield 1988; Murray & Kujundzic. 2005). According to Brookfield (1988), there are four pivotal undertakings involved in critical reflection:

1. Assumption analysis – in order to assess the impact on an individual's daily actions their beliefs, values, cultural practices, and social structures are challenged.
2. Contextual awareness – acknowledging that an individual's expectations are socially and personally are rooted in particular historical and cultural situations.
3. Imaginative speculation – Conceiving diverse ways of thinking about experiences in order to challenge the individual's habitual ways of perceiving and acting.
4. Reflective skepticism – the ability to temporarily reject or suspend the current recollection background the individual may have about a subject in order to establish the authenticity or usefulness of a proposition or action.

When reflecting on their interactions and interpretation of past and current work environments, the participants acknowledged that a deeper psychological motivation was at work within them, taking on some form of apprehensiveness, skepticism or ambivalence. Therefore, African Americans will be challenged with the need to reconcile their conscious selves with their own professional success experience and desires, and their unconscious, self-imposed but powerful thoughts related to their impediment of their own achievement (Austin, 2000). However, this may present a larger challenge within the African American community because in many instances, as argued by the

research participants, most African Americans have failed to fully quantify success for and within themselves. This in turn, will frustrate their ability to measure the outcome of a particular goal by their own standards, and further hinder their efforts toward achieving said goals.

Multiple studies have noted that FOS (in this research ATS) is manifested in a variety of ways in practical corporate situations (Bremer & Wittig, 1980; Campbell, 1996; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert et al., 1978; Horney, 1992; Pappo, 1983; Rabstejnek, 2009; Tresemer, 1977). For instance, many respondents of this study spoke about their anxiety related to decision-making in the periods of crisis and uncertainty, which obviously speaks to the elements of self-confidence and self-doubt. Additionally, self-doubt, an excessive internal obligations to be the best, and the deeply ingrained cultural responsibility to disprove negative stereotypes offered insight as to why the participants strongly protested against what they felt was the practice of unfair workloads and standards expected of African Americans in the workplace, but not of others, while at the same time, felt powerless to refuse these demands of additional work, or overexerting themselves in performing tasks.

In such situations, they naturally failed to prioritize their personal needs and preferences, which is closely related with the culture of collectivism and interdependence, non-typical for the mainstream American corporate environment. Presumably, it is this striving for achievement of better results and reliance on the culture of collectivism that makes African Americans somewhat psychologically off balanced in the highly competitive and individualistic corporate environment of the USA. This

ingrained instinct of collectivism and interdependence also caused many of the participants to be perplexed by the thought of it being counterintuitive to any other way of achieving a successful social system and society of equality.

Another factor related to collectivism and interdependence is the unspoken, yet willingly accepted, expectation of every individual African American to represent the entire race. Essentially, within the African American community, each individual is expected to demonstrate character that was above reproach when in public settings as a means of disproving negative depictions of the race. This was the most emotionally impactful discussion with participants, and was a point of contention because of its internal and external implications. The internal implications referred to personal competence, as it relates to stereotype threat – in this case, an anxiety of perpetuating the social stereotype of being inferior. It created a sense of emotional weight that led to one having to place more focus on disproving the stereotype and less on the situation or task at hand. The external implications create added pressure as mainstream society categorizes the entire African American culture on the actions of one individual – and these characterizations are commonly negative. A pressure, participants felt, other non-African Americans do not shoulder.

Participants expressed that this was an expectation that is just as strong today as 40 – 50 years ago. There was also a shared sense of frustration and awareness that white individuals did not have this responsibility or categorization, that they (Whites) had the luxury of being recognized as individuals – separate, yet of the same group. Some participants shared how extremely stressful and burdensome this reality is, especially

when the weight of that responsibility was put on them as a child. It is interesting to note, when exploring the topic of competition during the interviews, a common theme that resonated was, the feeling of having to bring their *A game* when in competition with white counterparts, which was driven by the conditioning that you had to be twice as good as Whites, and that every individual African American represented the entire race, and had an overwhelming obligation to represent well – increasing the stress and anxieties of any endeavor that might result in a win/lose outcome. From this perspective, it was thought to be safer to just live beneath the radar of life, not challenge the status quo, and accept one's station in life. Or accept that, as P19 put it, "There will never be equality. There will always be a 'master race.' If it wasn't race and money that classified us… something else would."

Further, it is notable that the constant ATS and the multi-layer cognitive dissonance causing it result in the impaired professional capabilities, more specifically, the lack of concentration and high distractibility from the intended goal or task at hand. The interviews revealed there remains a psychological residue that kept African Americans culturally bound to repressing their emotions, and to maintain constant vigilance over their tone, pitch, temperament and body language when interacting with other non-blacks for fear of validating the negative stereotypes about African Americans, which results in a great level of emotional and psychological exhaustion. According to the interviews, ATS also contributes to the occurrences of indecisiveness, which undermines the professional image of African Americans and contributes to their failure to reaffirm themselves as capable professionals deserving success and promotion.

Occurrences of indecisiveness are most common in situations that are highly stressful or demanding. During these times African Americans are not eager to make risky decisions because of a strong fear of failure or confirming the stereotype of being inferior. Unfortunately, these efforts of avoidance merely result in self-sabotage.

Another insightful finding that may weigh heavily on the disparity of African Americans in key executive position is the possibility that the cultural, social and familial conditioning of African Americans act as restrictive barriers for individual success, whereby self-promoting behavior is only tolerated to a certain degree before recompense is expected to be given to the community in some way. Many of the research participants expressed that they were conditioned to believe excessive bragging and self-promotion was shameful and disapproved of. They also acknowledged the fact that the phrase stay in your place concerning social stratification was emphasized during their early childhood to ensure the public safety and survival of African Americans well into the 60s. However, its psychological residue, while antiquated, still has a crippling, restricting nature for the African American collective identity, which remains jaded by centuries of social oppression.

The participants expressed knowing there has been a long history of the unspoken rule – opportunities were there, and a person could do what they wanted as long as they stayed in their specified appointed field, or socially assigned areas of occupation. A practice participants referred to as staying in your place. They noted that their academic achievements gained them little respect or true advantage over a white counterpart that was less qualified or educated. The common view of the participants was, it is not what

you know, but who you know that matters most. However, participants offered an addendum to this line of thinking, which suggested that the true irony in this dilemma is as African Americans, the list of influential contacts is, in most cases, nonexistent. So, if they were not invited into the White circles, their chances for substantial success were limited. While the participants stopped short of describing these experiences as discrimination, they did view it in terms of being a kind of social favoritism that did not include African Americans. Further, there was an expectation that this favoritism would continue.

Participants shared experiences of having a strong family philosophy that made it clear in order to be respected as an African American in White America's society you had to be the best, which meant being twice as good as the average White person, as was defined by the participants. However, most shared that often times demonstrating you are the best, or acting with confidence made the situation more challenging for them when interacting with white counterparts, so they had to temper their skills, knowledge and abilities. Further analysis of the interviews, revealed that even under the conditions of the absence of overt discrimination and blatant racism, African Americans are subliminally taught through stimuli (urban school system, religious affiliations, mass media, etc.) that is discrete, yet intense enough to influence the mental processes and behaviors of the individual that African Americans are predestined as unworthy of success, and they refuse themselves the right to achieving healthy means of success, which is a very negative phenomenon, both in cultural and in psychological terms.

Limitations of the Study

The anticipated limitation did not differ from those presented in Chapter 1. The greatest concern regarding limitations to trustworthiness within this study related to the participants' need and value of denying or minimizing the existence of fearing success—even among those who actually exhibit strong characteristics of the FOS (in this case ATS). Therefore, a major limitation was whether participants of the study would interpret or acknowledge the meanings, actions, and consequences of their everyday actions and behaviors as survival or defense mechanisms, or as traits of the success fearing personality and the hypersensitivity to situations that trigger this personality. This ultimately triggered the participants' self-serving bias (justifying or fabricating events to present a more favorable self-image), which might be contrary to their true thoughts and actions (Petri & Govern, 2004), or social desirability bias – the tendency for participants to respond to questions in a way that the researcher views them in a positive light, which may lead to over-reporting positive thoughts and experiences or under-reporting negative ones.

Another limitation was the lack of direct access to a person's earlier experiences and his/her interpretation of such events at the time of occurrence; thus, the purposed study is limited by the passing of time to achieve accuracy of historical accounts of an experience. Still, another limitation was the long-held hostilities relating to race relations and experience of social and judicial injustices, as well as current incidents of disparagement surrounding the election of the first African American president may also

affect the objectivity of participants. The study is also limited by the subjectivity on the part of both the researcher and the participants.

Recommendations

Taking into account the evidence presented in this dissertation, the business, academic, and psychological community should seriously explore the ATS phenomenon, as it relates to the ominous historical psychological residue and its crippling, degrading, and destructive impact on the consciousness and self-confidence of African Americans. There is a need to develop specific on-the-job training, academic strategies and psychological counseling techniques to help African Americans clarify these self-imposed barriers, and work to alleviate them for their own empowerment and achievement of professional success to which they are most capable of. Such training courses and empowerment sessions may become a truly vital step forward for many African Americans to realize their professional potential, to get rid of their persistent psychological residue that sabotages them in the workplace, and to explore new heights of their professional capabilities.

However, it should be noted that these programs must strongly heed Goffman's (1963) suggestions regarding the stigmatized; specifically, the cause and effects of stigma, which must be directly confronted by both sides. With that said, it is recommended that a similar study be conducted regarding the psychological residue White Americans may harbor concerning African Americans. There must also be strong deliberation given to managing the basic interactional problem and the tension that will occur – due to what the stigmatized group members (in this case African Americans) may

face when entering a mixed social situation, the members may respond in various ways – from defensive avoidance to vacillating between cowering and bravado (Goffman, 1963; Horney, 1992; Karon, 1975).

Another recommendation in this context appears to be highly topical for the cultural studies sector. African Americans have undoubtedly had a very long history of oppression, deprivation, and manipulation by a white dominate social system, but there is a Zeitgeist occurring within this system at the very writing of this dissertation. This changing spirit of the time, or the general trend of thought and feeling of the American social system to date, is presenting an enormous window of opportunity for the African American community to redefine their own cultural and racial definition. However, African Americans must realize that besides their own internal limits steeped in built-up historical psychological residue, nothing else keeps them from making a powerful political and social statement regarding the significance of their culture fiber, and the value it brings to the tapestry of the United States of America.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once noted:

> One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through great periods of social change. Every society has its protectors of status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. Today, our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change.

Old ways of thinking will not open new doors. Such self-imposed thoughts and opinions about inferiority indisputably contribute to the perpetuation of images of inferiority and inequality, maintaining achievement barriers for African Americans, and precluding their empowerment as a free community in a society of democracy. Hence, African Americans as a community should reconcile their concept of themselves, and alter their cultural education and representation approaches to rise to this occasion, and advance without limitations.

Finally, this research makes a strong recommendation that attention be given to further explore, from a qualitative perspective, the implications of collectivism and interdependence. The African American culture may be stuck in limbo between the instinctual cultural inbreeding of community and collectivism, while trying to tread the waters of a cultural ocean of individualism. Participants made it clear the African American community survival success as a whole through slavery, historical knowledge of slavery; Jim Crow; Debt Peonage was because of a mindset of community and helping one another – otherwise the culture would not have survived. The challenge is how to maintain that community without being strangled by the dynamics of an individualistic society. Therefore, one should examine whether bearing this responsibility as a cultural burden creates an internal conflict within African Americans as individuals. More importantly, what would be the ramifications of unshackling themselves or others from the orientation of collectivism? In this same vain, can a feasible resolve be modeled after other communities such as the Jewish or Asian communities?

Implications

The findings of this dissertation have far-reaching implications for overall social betterment for African American in several areas including but limited to: organizations that advocate for a more diverse workforce, and institutions (educational, chambers of commerce, and political/civic action groups) who advocate for the advancement of African American. These findings should strongly be consider when developing leadership development, mentoring or succession programs. In terms of management, the managerial implications of African Americans' ATS pervading all aspects of their professional functioning are vital for helping the African American community to deal with the self-sabotage and underestimation of their abilities, especially as it relates to executive development and succession programs. In line with the argument of Schorr (2008) and Wong (2008), the number of African Americans in the executive posts is very scarce nowadays, and increasing that number by empowering African Americans not only legally, but also psychologically and culturally is possible by means of considering and countering ATS symptoms and manifestations that frustrate and discourage their efforts toward advancement in the United States.

In addition, these findings can be used to begin an alternative conversation of personal and social reconciliation, emotional healing, and pride, which participants asserted was the cornerstone of African American progress in the 1960s. The crippling historical psychological residue that has fostered a mindset disabling African Americans, as discussed by Goffman (1963), Karon (1975) and McWhorter (2005) has been an integral part of the conscious and unconscious culture of this ethnic group for

generations. Thus, to suggest that it can be eliminated merely by uncovering the disabling impact of ATS would be a naïve. As proposed in the findings of McWhorter (2005), African Americans have as much answerability for their lack of success and scarce representation in the executive and leadership positions, as does the social system they deride. It is the findings of this research that even under the condition where there is an absence of overt barriers from White Americans, African Americans are unconsciously burdened with skepticism, hypersensitive of discrimination and stereotype threat, struggle with their cultural self-concept on a larger scale, and concede that the jaded historical legacy will always imprison their cultural legacy of success.

In the conditions where there is an absence of discrimination, and freedom of opportunity, to claim their merited place in the American society, African Americans must first make this proclamation at a heart, mind, and soul level. If not, the long-standing trauma of slavery and discrimination will continue to create invisible, but strong barriers that segregate them from experiencing a greater quality of life – personally and socially. Acknowledging the existence of these internal psychological barriers and working to alleviate them may help many African Americans occupying executive positions to feel more empowered for promotion and full revelation of their professional potential. Therefore, working on ATS explicitly and purposely may help many African Americans to make an objective, rational reassessment of their underlying self-imposed barriers, and to counter them at least to a certain extent.

Further research and practice on ATS may also become a very helpful aspect of practical psychology, with life-coaches, counselors and psychotherapists proposing viable

techniques for reducing ATS and helping African Americans advance in their careers. Moreover, since the present study uncovered the influence of the family, religious and education in perpetuating long-held stereotypes about inferiority of African Americans, it is vital to make education more specifically tailored for empowerment, and not toward deterring African Americans in their professional aspirations. Cultural studies may also advance significantly from working on the culture of inferiority to uncover its underlying structure as it relates to the African American community. This would help them to reassess and reconsider these long-held anxieties and stereotypes for the sake of building a more empowered society for their future, and that of the United States based on the considerations of equality of opportunity, rather than the unconscious expectation of oppression and discrimination.

Conclusion

An African proverb states, "When there is no enemy on the inside, the enemy on the outside can do you no harm." As argued by Harro (2000), human beings (in this case African Americans) are born into a specific set of social identities that make them susceptible to a system of oppression, subjugating them to roles of inequality. Harro further asserts that this practice is omnipresent, consistent, cyclical, self-perpetuating, and usually undetectable. The act of participating in the role of a target, the individual unwittingly reinforces stereotypes, colludes in their own demise, and perpetuates the very system they want to elude. Such is the case for African Americans whose history is inundated with experiences of being socialized by powerful oppositions within the United

States, to perform and portray the prescribed roles appointed them by a social system that has long grappled with its own inadequacies.

It is clear through literature reviews and the participants' responses that a form of internalized oppression is present within the African American community. While this act of self-imposed oppression may take on different expressions, as this study implies, if, the African American community ignores the fact that they too bear considerable responsibility to seriously consider what part conscious or unconscious fears, self-sabotaging behaviors, cynical expectations and veiled resentment and hostility plays in their advancement within the United States, the African American community and the United States' society as a whole will fail to reach its ultimate potential—nationally and globally.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2014, para. 2) definition of sabotage is, at a minimum, "An act or process tending to hinder an outcome" or at an extreme, "an act of destroying or damaging something deliberately so that it does not work correctly" the While all participants acknowledge the substantial progress and gain the African American community has experience in this society, they also acknowledge there is still constant evidence that little has changed because of the historic mental and emotional residue that exists in the United States, as well as the African American community. While veiled and sporadic, the continued lingering historical psychological residue between African Americans and those they consider the "White powerful others" can be seen as a page from Goffman's (1963) research on the stigmatized.

Goffman (1963) argued when the normal majority and the stigmatized enter one another's immediate presence, especially when there is an attempt to sustain a joint conversational encounter, the primal scenes of sociology occurs (a basic interactional problem to manage the tension). Therefore, the cause and effects of stigma, in many cases, must be directly confronted by both sides. However, due to what the stigmatized group members (in this case African Americans) may face when entering a mixed social situation, some members may respond, through expressed anticipation, with defensive avoidance or retreat. Other stigmatized members may attempt to approach mixed contacts with hostile bravado, which may provoke another set of problematic interchanges. Still others vacillate between cowering and bravado (Goffman, 1963; Horney, 1992; Karon, 1975).

The participants asserted that success is an internal pursuit that means many different things to all humans. However, the participants agreed that African Americans, in many instances, fail to fully quantify success within themselves. This in turn, tends to hinder their ability to define a significant meaning for their own success, or to measure the outcome by their own standards. As proposed by several researchers presented in this study (Aronson, 1999; Campbell & Fleming, 2000; Canavan-Gumpert, Garner, & Gumpert, 1978; DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Gregory, 2006; Hewlett, Luce & West, 2005; Karon, 1975; Oswell, 2005; Pappo, 1983; Rosenberg, 2007; Wise, 2006), for African Americans, conceiving the stress of changing, growing or making conscious choices toward the freedom of accomplishing success can be so terrifying that some deliberately inhibit their own efforts. Yet, without doubt, the African American community is at a

threshold in life that such an undertaking cannot be relegated to the control of others – they must confront the stresses of changing, growing or making conscious choices for their accomplishments.

R. Buckminster Fuller said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." As humans, for as much as we would like to change, know we should change, there is something deep within us that acts in resistance to change. There is still an unconscious sense of retribution if one, as an African American, attempts to achieve outside the assigned area of opportunity. Changing the landscape of this society, as it relates to the African American experience, will not come through inconsistent spasms of unbridled rage, which always misses its target – this tactic has, and will always backfire, creating a vicious cycle of injustice.

There is still great work to be done within the American society, which must start with the psychological healing of the African American community. But by no means does this negate or dismiss the responsibilities White Americans must confront as well. The acknowledgment of this fact is not to be considered as weakness of either race – but one of great strength. "When there is no enemy on the inside, the enemy on the outside can do no harm."

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Appendix A: Initial Invitation to Participate

All of us experienced the reality of the first African American being elected (and re-elected) to the highest leadership position in the United States. Can you imagine the competitive process President Obama went through? What things do you think he didn't consider as a minority competing for the office of President of the U.S.? Have you experienced similar situations when seeking to achieve a greater goal or position on the job?

You are invited to participate in a RESEARCH study on The Advancement of African Americans into Key Leadership Roles in the United States. For this study you are asked to complete a short questionnaire through email correspondence, and an in-depth interview conducted over the phone. I'm asking for a little over an hour of your time. Participation in this research has the potential of lessening the gap of African Americans being promoted and accepted into key leadership positions. Instead of using statistical counts (calculating numbers) to gain greater clarity on this issue, this study focuses on the actual voices of those who have experienced opposition when attempting to advance in the workplace. More importantly, your participation will start a truer conversation for future research on closing the gaps for African Americans in other areas of advancement.

Taking part in this study is strictly voluntary. All information is confidential and your identity and privacy is rigorously protected. To participate in the study you must be: 1) at least 34 years of age; 2) African American; 3) in the workforce (corporate professionals, business owners, civic leaders, etc.), and 4) have experienced or felt that others in power have hindered your efforts toward success.

If you are interested, please contact me at _____ to begin the qualification process. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to participate.

Pennie Murray

Pennie Murray
PhD Candidate, Walden University

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate Flyer

Assessing the Leadership Gap

Reviewing Leadership and the Elements Facing African Americans in the United States

For the first time, the United States is experiencing being under the leadership of its first African American President – the highest leadership position in the land. But has this historical event created new opportunities or new challenges for African Americans? What elements are being overlooked in the African American Community as it relates to obtaining and maintaining key executive leadership positions?

I'm asking for your participation in a RESEARCH study on *Leadership and the Elements Facing African Americans in the United States*. To participate, you will complete a short survey, and an in-depth interview conducted over the phone. I'm asking for 30 – 40 minutes of your time to help impact the conversation regarding the current and future successes of African Americans in key leadership positions. Instead of using statistical counts (calculating numbers) to gain greater clarity on this issue, this study wishes to hear from the actual voices of African Americans regarding their experiences. More importantly, participating in the study will provide you with first-hand insight on how to increase your success advantages.

Taking part in this study is strictly voluntary. All information is confidential and your identity and privacy is rigorously protected. To participate you must be: 1) at least 34 years of age and older; 2) African American; and 3) in the workforce (corporate professionals, business owners, civic leaders, etc.).

If you are interested, please contact me at _____ to begin the process. This ***research is time sensitive***, so your immediate response will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration to participate.

Pennie Murray
PhD Candidate, Walden University

Appendix C: Pre-Research Assessment Fear of Success Scale (FOSS)

Assessing the Success Gap of African Americans in the United States

INSTRUCTIONS: This questionnaire is to get your personal thoughts on achieving success or advancing in the workplace. For each statement, think about your overall experiences in the workplace; put an X in the YES box if you agree or an X in the NO box if you disagree. There is no right or wrong answers, so please answer each question based on what comes to mind first and your current beliefs. This assessment should take no more than 10 minutes; you must answer all 27 items for accuracy.

	KEY	YES	NO
1. I expect other people to fully appreciate my potential.	L		
2. Often the cost of success is greater than the reward.	H		
3. For every winner there are several rejected and unhappy losers.	H		
4. The only way I can prove my worth is by achieving something or doing well on a task.	L		
5. I enjoy telling my friends that I have done something especially well.	L		
6. It is more important to play the game than to win it.	H		
7. In my attempt to do better than others, I realize I may lose many of my friends.	H		
8. In competition, I try to win no matter what.	L		

9. A person who is at the top faces nothing but a constant struggle to stay there.	H		
10. I am happy only when I am doing better than others.	L		
11. I think "success" has been emphasized too much in our culture.	H		
12. In order to achieve one must give up the fun things in life.	H		
13. The cost of success is overwhelming responsibility.	H		
14. Achievement commands respect.	L		
15. I become embarrassed when others compliment me on mv work.	H		
16. A successful person is often considered by others to be both aloof and snobbish.	H		
17. When you're on top, everyone looks up to you.	L		
18. People's behavior change for the worst after they become successful.	H		
19. When competing against another person, I sometimes feel better if I lose than if I win.	H		
20. Once you're on top, everyone is your buddy and no one is your friend.	H		
21. When you're the best, all doors are open.	L		

22. Even when I do well on a task, I sometimes feel like a phony or a fraud.	H		
23. I believe that successful people are often sad and lonely.	H		
24. The rewards of a successful competition are greater than those received from cooperation.	L		
25. When I am on top the responsibility makes me feel uneasy.	H		
26. It is extremely important for me to do well in all things that I undertake.	L		
27. I believe I will be more successful than most of the people I know.	L		

Resource: Zuckerman, M. & Allison, S.N. (1976). An Objective Measure of Success: Construction and Validation. Journal of Personality Assessment

Appendix D: Research Interview Questions

Research Questions/Participant's Responses	Researcher's Comments
1. Growing up, what were some of the messages you got about the opportunities for African Americans from your… a. Family: b. School: c. Society:	
2. As an adult, how has your experiences regarding opportunities and achieving success been different than the message you received growing up?	
3. With all the laws and regulations in place to support African American achievement, why are there still so few in executive leadership positions?	
4. Tell me about a time when you experienced anxiety over expressing your needs and preferences regarding your success goals (1) a. Tell me about a time when you didn't feel that you were emotionally prepared to deal with an important situation?	
5. Some activist and researchers have written that the dilemmas facing African Americans are self-imposed, which will cause many to forfeit their opportunity to obtain key leadership positions because they lack the self-confidence, initiative and commitment.	
6. When are you most reluctant to express or openly acknowledge your skills and abilities (2)	
7. When working on your success goals, what situations do you find it hardest to concentrate or you're more easily distracted?" (3)	

8. As an African American, what mindset do you have that you want to change to help you achieve your goals?

9. When you lose control of a situation, what action or behavior automatically kicks in? (5)

10. What behaviors do you think you engage in to sabotage or hinder a goal(s) you have?

11. Would it be fair to say that historical experiences will create a momentary expectation of discrimination when African Americans are in situations that compare them with other races?

12. When making a critical decision in your life, are you pretty confident and just make the call or do you run it by someone else first? (4)

13. What are your first thoughts when you find yourself in a situation where you have to promote yourself or justify your skills and expertise? (6)

14. When you're in a competitive situation with someone who is not African American, what are your first momentary thoughts? (8)

15. What situations are you in when you minimize or down play your influence or contributions? (9)

Additional Comments:

Numbers in parenthesis represent Cohen's 9 Factors that are associated to the characteristics of FOS:

1. Anxiety over the Expression of Needs and Preferences
2. Reluctance to Acknowledge Personal Competence
3. Impaired Concentration and Distractibility
4. Indecisiveness
5. Safety Valve Syndrome—Fear of Loss of Control

6. Illegitimacy of Self-Promotive Behavior
7. Anxiety over Being the Focus of Attention
8. Preoccupation with Competition and Evaluation

Preoccupation with the Underplaying of Effectiveness