


2018

# Factors Deterring Male Enrollment in Higher Education in Barbados

Debbie Samantha Bovell  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Debbie Bovell

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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2018

Abstract

Factors Deterring Male Enrollment in Higher Education in Barbados

by

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MEd, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus), 2011

BEd, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus), 2004

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2018

## Abstract

Barbados, a small island in the Caribbean, is experiencing the challenge of low male enrollment in higher education (HE). The research indicated that this problem, left unaddressed, could undermine the development of men, their families, and communities. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to provide insight into the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors deterring young men who acquired the requisite number of certificates for entry to HE but did not enroll. The theoretical frameworks used to ground this study were Cross's chain of response theory, Bourdieu's social capital theory, and Knowles' theory of andragogy. The research questions addressed the contributing factors to the disinclination of men from enrolling in higher education, suggestions for increasing enrollment in higher education from the perspectives of young men and educational leaders, and benefits of nonenrollment in higher education in Barbados. A purposeful sample of 7 men from the 2014 academic year cohort of 3 secondary schools participated in semistructured interviews. Five educational leaders from secondary, HEs, and the Ministry of Education (MoE) participated in a focus group. Data were transcribed, member checked, and then inductively coded for emergent themes using attribute, descriptive, versus, and axial coding. The major finding was that institutional factors accounted predominately in deterring young men from enrolling in HE in Barbados. This project study has strong implications for social change as it may be used to inform efforts by secondary school principals, higher education leaders, and administrators in the MoE to increase the number of young men enrolled in HE in Barbados.

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## Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to God in honour of Him who began a great work in me and finished it. He planted the seed for higher education in the garden of adversity. During this journey, my love for Him has deepened and my trust has been grounded. The Lord helped me to excel in ways that I never envisioned. When I hear someone call me 'Doctor Bovell', I shall always inwardly give him the praise for his leading. I will work for the good of others to honour Him.

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*I cannot consent to creep, when I feel the impulse to soar!*



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## Section 1: The Problem

### **The Local Problem**

At 166 square miles, Barbados is a tiny island in the Caribbean that is approximately the same size as a large school district in mainland United States. The population is estimated to be approximately 292,336 with Blacks being the predominate ethnic group at 92.4% (Index Mundi, 2018). Minorities include Whites (2.7%), mixed (3.1%), East Indian (1.3%), and other unspecified individuals (Index Mundi, 2018). The society is stratified by class: lower, middle class, and upper class. According to the World Bank (2018), Barbados spends approximately a fifth of its national budget on education. Of this, approximately 34% is spent on basic educational development, 27% on secondary, and 27% is spent on higher education (HE), (Government of Barbados, 2017–2018).

The education system has three tiers. In the public system, there are 70 primary schools, 24 secondary schools, and three main HEs in Barbados that offer associate degrees or degrees (Barbados Education Regulations, 1982). Each academic institution is led by a principal who is responsible for all aspects pertaining to the management of the institution and realisation of its mission (Barbados Education Regulations, 1982). Students can advance into HE by enrolling in a sixth form school, college, or university.

There are slight variations in the requirements for entry into HEs depending on the focus of the respective institution. The minimum entry requirements for the university is five subjects certified by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), including English language, mathematics, science, geography, or a foreign language (University of

the West Indies, 2004). Students can enroll in the Barbados Community College once they have four CXC subjects inclusive of English language (Barbados Community College, 2018). Entry requirements for Erdiston Teachers' College are five CXC subjects including English language, mathematics, science, and social studies, history, or geography (Erdiston Teachers' Training College, 2018). In order to be enrolled in a sixth form school, students must have at least five CXC subjects, inclusive of mathematics and English language (Queen's College, 2017). All subjects must be attained at the *General* level of the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate offered by the CXC.

Over the last decade, there has been a decline in the number of men who enrolled in a HE institution, which is particularly acute in some HEs. As of 2018, out of a total of 12,421 individuals, 69% of students in tertiary education in Barbados were women (Trading Economics, 2018). This is in a context where less than 15% of Caribbean nationals access HE (Johnson, 2017; Nation News, 2018). Statistics from one HE institution revealed a decline in the number of men enrolling in undergraduate programs which moved from 46.9% for the academic year 2008/2009 to 32% for the academic year 2016/2017 (University of the West Indies Statistics, 2009–2017). Lower enrollment percentages were also seen at one HE institution where there was a minimal falloff from 36.4% in 2007/2008 to 35.7% in 2017/2018. A steeper decline was observed at one college where male enrollment moved from 24 % to 16% for a Bachelor's degree over the period 2017 to 2018. Several newer sixth form schools also evidenced this trend for the 2017–2018 academic year with percentages of 18%, 39%, and 40% of men in each cohort.

However, there was one exception to the trend of low male enrollment in HE in sixth form schools. This was observed in one grammar or older secondary school that admits students with the highest marks from primary school after they have been allocated from primary school based on a local examination. At this school, the ratio of men to women was 1:1 ranging from 48% to 51% in some years for either gender.

One major development that possibly led to a change in the trajectory of male dominance in HE took place around the year 1976. The government made the decision to establish the Bureau of Women's Affairs in 1976 after consultation with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW; CEDAW, 1992).

Whether associated with this act or not, the introduction of coeducation commenced in 1976. Prior to 1976, only single sex schools existed. Several single sex schools were subsequently amalgamated or established as mixed schools (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 2000a). According to Hurley (2011), this represented Barbados' stance to empower women. But, Hurley (2011) contended that,

while the general position is that the increased educational opportunity for women introduced with the system of coeducation has been great for women's empowerment and social and economic advancement, the educational experience has been increasingly problematized regarding its effect on male social and economic development. (p. 87)

It is clear that the steady reduction in the number of young men enrolled in HE is perceived by some individuals as one negative outcome of this policy.

In more recent times, two significant changes occurred in the educational arena that negatively impacted the uptake of HE opportunities. In 2014, the government of Barbados introduced a policy requiring Barbadian students to pay tuition fees from the academic year 2014–2015 (Martindale, 2013). Prior to 2014, university education was completely free of cost to Barbadian students since the opening of the University in 1963 (University of the West Indies, 2017). Full-time students were expected to pay \$6645.00 annually for pursuing degrees in humanities, education, science, technology, and social sciences, \$9828.00 for law, and \$11020.00 for medicine (University of the West Indies, n.d.). The notice from the University of the West Indies (UWI) indicated that government would cover the economic cost, which was 80%, while students would pay tuition fees of 20% of the total cost (University of the West Indies, n.d.). The introduction of fees was not only limited to the university but included course fees that could range from approximately \$700.00 to \$2500.00 annually at one college (Barbados Community College, 2018). Persaud and Persaud (2016) indicated that prior to the introduction of the tuition fees, students surveyed from the social sciences department had “serious gaps in knowledge regarding their UWI education costs” (p. 1).

With the introduction of the fees, information was given in the local media regarding how students could fund their education. Access to loans was made available to students through the Student Revolving Loan Fund at the MoE, but, this was limited because of the poor economic conditions on the island and high levels of loan delinquency at the national facility (Student Revolving Loan Fund, 2018a). Students can receive financial assistance by applying to the Student Revolving Loan Fund (SRLF) for



loans up to a maximum of \$85,000.00 Barbados dollars (Student Revolving Loan Fund, 2018b). The MoE also offers access to a full yearly grant (100% of the annual cost of study) or partial grant (30%–50% of the annual cost of study) to nationals who are pursuing studies at the University of the West Indies (Ministry of Education, 2015). Borrowers from the SRLF are given up to 2 years after completion of a postsecondary certificate to commence repayment of the loan; however, interest is calculated from completion of studies until full repayment of the loan (Student Revolving Loan Fund, 2018). Students also have access to a national scholarship for academic excellence, national development scholarships for priority training, and commonwealth, as well as other external scholarships and awards.

Also, from the period of 2014 to 2017, the Barbados government created an aggressive policy to extend HE opportunities by expanding the number of sixth form schools from four to twelve. As a result of this action, some schools that were secondary schools previously were established as sixth form schools. This policy was initiated because the three main HEs and four original sixth form schools could not accommodate the large number of applicants (The Barbados Advocate, 2016). The programmes in sixth form schools lead to certification in the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) regulated by CXC, which is the regional examination body. Currently, there are only two single-sex public sixth form schools in Barbados.

While access was widened for postsecondary students to pursue HE, enrollment figures from the main tertiary institutions indicated that men were not generally predominant in the uptake of opportunities. According to one education officer in the

MoE, the low enrollment in HE by men in Barbados is reducing their capacity to contribute to the political, social, and economic development of self and community. Indeed, many stakeholders expressed concerns about the high percentage of young men who spend many hours on the streets in leisurely activities (Barbados Today, 2017), in gangs (Smith, 2017), and involved in crime and violence (The Inter-American Development Bank, 2016; Smith, 2017).

The issue of low male enrollment in HE has been widely discussed (Brown & Shen, 2017; Cobbett & Younger, 2012; Plummer, 2010; Smith, 2011); however, there is a lack of research on the underrepresentation of men in HE in the Caribbean, and specifically in Barbados. Only one mixed-methods study was conducted by Gift (2014), that focused on the problem of HE enrollment. Gift (2014) surveyed both male and female secondary school students to ascertain and understand the factors that would influence their uptake of HE in an attempt to explain the problem of male low enrollment levels in Barbados. However, no studies were conducted in Barbados that provided an opportunity for young men who had matriculated for entry into HE but had not enrolled, or leaders who had oversight for steering educational institutions to share the reasons for the low enrollment in HE under a qualitative paradigm. In light of this gap, it is imperative to give young men and educational leaders a voice in order to understand the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors that are inhibiting the educational purpose of men, in order to inform possible initiatives that seek to reverse the current trajectory.

## **The Broader Problem**

In the new global economy, HE is believed to play a key role in development (South-Otero & Whitworth, 2017). According to Marginson (2016), “the worldwide Gross Tertiary Enrollment Ratio (GTER) increased from 10% in 1972 to 32% in 2012 and is rising by 1% a year” (p. 243). While this is occurring in many countries of the world, a central issue that is emerging is the growing gender gap in HE, also known as the reverse gender gap (Conger & Dickson, 2017; Tienxhi, 2017). The statistics indicated a changing demographic in favour of women in colleges and universities that grant degrees (Doherty, Willoughby, & Wilde, 2016; Flashman, 2013; Garibaldi, 2014; Gasman, Abiola, & Freeman, 2014; Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, 2015; Kigotho, 2014; Morgan, 2016). The data from the United States showed that female enrollment overall moved gradually from 29% in 1947 to 57.9% in 2017 with a projection for the trajectory to continue up to 2023 (Silva, Lacierno-Paquet, & Stowe, 1998; Tienxhi, 2017). Similar trends in enrollment between 30–40% were also observed in Australia (Booth & Kee, 2011), Malaysia (Tienxhi, 2017), the Caribbean (Gift, 2014; Jamaica Observer, 2016), Iran (Safavi, 2014), United Kingdom (Adams, 2016; Weale, 2016), and United States (Marcus, 2017).

Several academics investigated the barriers to HE for men (Collins, 2014; Matsolo, Ningpuanyeh, & Susuman, 2016; McDonald, 2003; Salvant, 2016). Other authors explored the factors influencing participation for men (Allen, 2014; Burnell, 2015; Marginson, 2016; Richards, 2007). The research by academics on this perennial phenomenon spans several decades (Conger & Dickson, 2017; Malhotra & Shapero,

2007; McWhirter, 1997; Naylor et al., 2015; Schuller, 2007). According to a senior education officer in the MoE, little attention has been focused on the Caribbean even though there is evidence of a low enrollment rate by men in undergraduate programmes across the region which stood at 33% for the academic year 2016 (Jamaican Observer, 2016).

### **Rationale**

Research into the reasons for low enrollment by young men in HE in Barbados is justifiable. First, the presence of men in HE at a relatively comparable level to women is an imperative. It is needed to ensure that there is rich diversity in educational institutions (Cain, 2012; Gasman et al., 2014), improvement in the quality of social life (Cain & Trauth, 2015; Tienxhi, 2017), representation of men in bureaucracies (Naylor, Wyatt-Nichol, & Brown, 2015), and enhanced political and economic development in the respective countries (UNESCO, 2017; UNICEF, 2010).

Second, there is verifiable evidence of low enrollment rates by men in all of the HEs in Barbados. Several educators have stated that little attention has focused on the reasons that the male enrollment rates have declined over time. It is important at this time to provide a voice to young men who have not enrolled in order to gain their perspective.

Third, it is important for educational leaders to be able to identify the factors that presently deter young men from enrolling in HE in Barbados so that this information can inform their responses in putting policies and programmes in place to increase the number of young men enrolling in HE in Barbados. Indeed, Roosma and Saar (2017)

affirmed that “increasing knowledge about barriers to participation is essential in understanding the ways to overcome barriers to participation and to design the actions toward the pursuit of equity goals” (p. 255). This information can be used by educational leaders to create programmes or make recommendations for policy initiatives at the national level.

Fourth, men in Barbados need to be empowered to enhance their capacities so that they can make a greater contribution to the society. Indeed, the principal of the UWI (Cave Hill Campus) recognised that low male enrollment was a problem and encouraged men to invest in HE for their own well-being (Jamaica Observer, 2016). This study may serve as a catalyst for men to take hold of the opportunities in HE. Consequently, the purpose of this case study is to provide insights into the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors deterring young, qualified men from enrolling in HE in order to provide information that can inform a plan that might reduce the gender gap in HE in Barbados.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms used throughout this study were:

*Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)*: The regional examining body which certifies students in subjects at the high school level in the Caribbean (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2018).

*Grammar/Older Secondary School*: A secondary school that was established prior to 1950 (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 2000a). It caters

predominately to high performing students who were allocated based on the results of the Barbados Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (BSSEE).

*Higher Education:* Formal education in a recognised institution that leads to an advanced certificate, for example, associate degree or equivalent or degree (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, 2018).

*Newer Secondary School:* A secondary school that was established after 1949 (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 2000a). It caters predominately to lower performing students who were allocated based on the results of the Barbados Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (BSSEE).

*Secondary schools:* The equivalent of a high school education in the United States. Students attend from age 11 or 12 until age 16 or 17 (Education Regulations, 1982).

*Sixth form school:* A secondary school with a higher education department that offers places to students on completion of secondary school to pursue a HE programme because there are not enough places at the traditional HEs. Students who attend range from age 16-19 (The Barbados Advocate, 2016).

### **Significance of the Study**

Several authors provided insight into the factors that affect male participation in HE, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, in various parts of the world (Barnard, Hassan, Bagihole, & Dainty, 2012; Keane, 2012; Strayhorn, 2015; Voyer & Voyer, 2014; Wood, 2012). However, no studies were conducted in Barbados that provided an opportunity for young men, after they left secondary school, to share the

reasons for their lack of enrollment in HE institution. While there is some knowledge of the causes of nonenrollment in HE by men, deeper insight of the deterrents to enrollment in HE from the perspectives of young men, who qualify for entry into a HE institution, and educational leaders in Barbados, can only lead to a better understanding of the problem. Further, several authors highlighted the burgeoning gender gap in HE, in favour of women, as an area that warrants further research (Brown & Shen, 2017; Conger, 2015; Plummer, 2010). This study is therefore significant in that it will add to the body of knowledge on the reverse gender gap in HE in Barbados.

This research can also serve as a catalyst for the personal development of men and social change. The findings could inspire the young men who participated in and read the study to make the decision to enroll in a HE institution to enhance their capacities. The results of this study could also be used to inform the admission policies and initiatives of HEs (Weaver-Hightower, 2010). An uptake of opportunities in HEs in Barbados could enhance men's chances of self-actualisation and their ability to contribute to community and national development, inclusive of a healthy democracy (Varughese, 2017). Indeed, this study could be a catalyst for the increased enrollment of men in HE in Barbados, which could enhance the diversity in HE (Gasman et al., 2014), improve the quality of men's social relationships (Smith, 2011; Weaver-Hightower, 2010), increase their chances of securing meaningful employment (International Labour Organisation, 2014; Odhiambo, 2016; Weaver-Hightower, 2010), precipitate social mobility (Smith, 2011), reduce poverty (Smith, 2011), crime, and stagnation among men (Smith, 2017), and even reduce mortality rates (Kulhánová et al., 2014). The recommendation paper based on this

research could bring about positive social change in Barbados. According to one education official in the MoE, the support of men who wish to self-actualise and contribute to Barbados' development is therefore an imperative.

### **Research Questions**

There has been a decline in the uptake of opportunities by men in HE when compared with women in almost every HE institution in Barbados. It is important to know the reasons why this is occurring. The low enrollment levels by men can only be ameliorated when there is an understanding of the reasons for nonenrolment in HE and a suitable strategy identified within Barbados. To this end, I formulated the following research questions that informed this study in conjunction with my Walden research committee:

- Research Question 1 (RQ1) – Why are young men deterred from enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados even though they have the requisite certification to enroll in higher education?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2) – What do young men perceive to be the benefits of not enrolling in Higher Education?
- Research Question 3 (RQ3) – What are the perspectives of young men in Barbados, who are qualified to enter college or university, on how male participation in HE might be increased?
- Research Question 4 (RQ4) – What are the perspectives of educational leaders in Barbados on how male participation in HE might be increased?



## **Review of the Literature**

I divided the literature review into four segments. The first section is a summarized version of the conceptual framework I used for this study. The second section is a synthesis of the literature on the dispositional factors constraining men from enrolling in HE. In the third section, I highlight the composite of institutional factors that deter men from participating in HE. The fourth segment concludes with my integration of the body of the literature on situational factors that lead men to be disinclined to pursue HE.

I located literature regarding the reasons for participation and nonparticipation in HE, with specific attention to understanding the phenomenon of low male enrollment in HE. The reverse gender gap in HE enrollment was partly explained by several factors that were offered by researchers in the literature, but were not sufficient to explain the reasons for the problem from the perspectives of men and educational leaders. Several authors contended that the previous unsatisfactory academic performance of men in high school (Davis & Otto, 2016; Gasman et al., 2014; Fortin, Oreopoulos, & Phipps, 2014; Klevan, Weinburg, & Middleton, 2016; Scott, Taylor, & Palmer, 2013; Tienxhi, 2017) and use of their grades to determine college admission (Conger, 2015) had a role to play in the low enrollment by men in HE. Others asserted that the gender gap in HE was largely because women had taken hold of the opportunities to be educated in recent times given the cultural shift allowing women a role that extended beyond family life (Flashman, 2013; Fulge & Wise, 2015; Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, 2015; Safavi, 2014; Witenstein & Palmer, 2013). Flashman (2013), who specifically examined enrollment

levels in college attendance in three groups over a 30-year period in 1972, 1982, and 1992, explained that the gender gap in HE was due to a change in the culture of societies, (which gradually moved away from viewing women predominately as homemakers), the ease of access to expanded offerings at colleges and universities, and the rise in job prospects for women.

While these points of view cannot be discounted, they do not reveal the reasons why men, who performed equally as well as women and meet the requirements to pursue HE, have not done so. Indeed, the literature is inundated with concerns about the low enrollment levels of men in HE over the past decades (Naylor et al., 2015) and the need to understand the reasons for the present trajectory (Brown & Shen, 2017; Conger, 2015). Consequently, I focused on understanding the reasons for the low enrollment of men in HE from the point of view of men and education leaders.

I used a number of databases to find literature on my research topic. I used Academic Search Complete, Education Source, Emerald Insight, and Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) as the means to find relevant articles. I also used Google Search to locate reports and other relevant information on the phenomenon. I used the search terms *male/s*, *men*, *gender*, *gender gap*, *underparticipation*, *underrepresentation*, *enrollment*, *HE*, *university*, *college*, *post-secondary*, and *tertiary education*. Combinations of terms used included *male and college*, *male and post-secondary*, *male and tertiary education*, *male and university* with the use of synonyms like ‘young men’, ‘gender’, or ‘gender gap’. *Underparticipation*, *enrollment*, *participation*, *gap*, *gender gap*, and *underrepresentation* were also used with *higher*

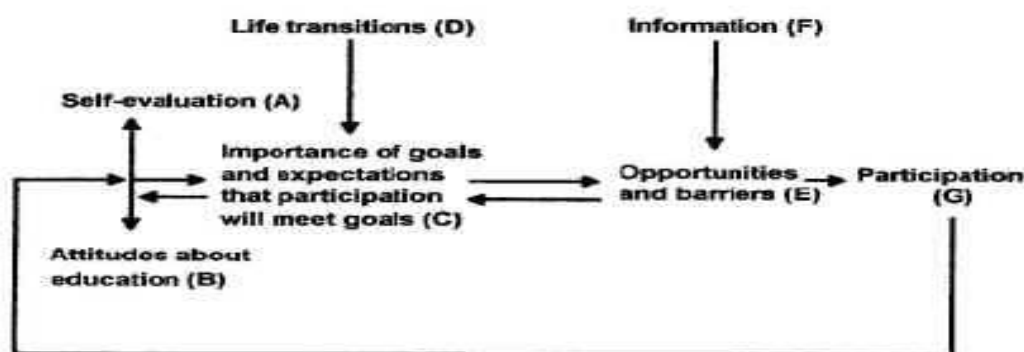
*education, university, college, post-secondary, or tertiary education.* These searches yielded a wealth of information on the problem of male low enrollment in HE.

### **Conceptual Framework**

I used the Chain of response model (Cross, 1981), Knowles' andragogical learning theory (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015), and Bourdieu's social capital theory (2014) to frame the study. I selected the Chain of response model by Cross (1981) to ground the study because of its comprehensiveness and because "it assumes that the components of participatory behavior can best be understood and articulated by the individual making the decision" (U. S. Department National Center for Education Statistics, 1998, p. 36). Cross (1981) posited a model with six elements that work together to either encourage or deter participation as individuals take stock of their place in the environment (See Figure 1).

Cross (1981) theorised that participation in HE was a result of a chain of responses that were interrelated ranging from internal to external factors. According to Cross (1981), social and environmental factors shape self-concept and attitudes about education. These, in turn, interact with and impact participatory expectations, which are also influenced by one's life transitions. Individuals respond to the barriers and opportunities for an educational experience based on their inner perception of these variables and the available information. Cross (1981) conceptualised three main barriers and opportunities that can inhibit or influence the uptake in adult education or HE: dispositional, situational, and institutional. Cross (1981) did not conceptualise these barriers in a vacuum or as a single action.

Cross (1981) defined the main terms used in the theory. Cross (1981) stated that dispositional factors are “those related to attitudes and self-perceptions about oneself as a learner,” situational factors are “those arising from one’s situation in life at a given time,” and institutional factors are “practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities” at the institutional level (p. 98). While Cross’s (1981) model is comprehensive, Roosma and Saar (2017) indicated there is some overlap in the categorisation of the factors. According to Roosma and Saar (2017), “some barriers, such as childcare, financial and transportation problems, could be classified as both situational and institutional depending on the source of the problem” (p. 264).



*Figure 1:* Chain of response (COR) model for understanding participation in adult learning. Reprinted from *Adults as learners: Increasing participation and facilitating learning* by K. P. Cross, 1981. p. 124. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 1992 by John Wiley and Sons. Reprinted with permission.

Social capital theory, which was advanced by early theorists, such as Bourdieu and Coleman, as cited in Rostiala (2011), can be subsumed under situational factors in Cross’s COR (1981) to assist in the explanation of the influences that cause men to be

disinclined to enroll in HE. According to Rostiala (2011), social capital is to be regarded as the resources which an individual has access to because of their place in a social network that allows them to achieve their goals. I used this definition for my study. According to Rostiala (2011, individuals may have access to “money, information, material resources, knowledge, favours etc.” that belong to another individual based on the “social relationship between these two” which may be used to advance to HE (p. 310). Plagens (2011) explained that the social capital one has is determined by the size and the available capital of the network. Consequently, social capital influences the responses and situations that are likely to occur and can thus be perceived as influencing the decision of men to enroll in HEs.

Knowles’ theory of andragogy completes the framework to be used for this study. According to Knowles et al. (2015), andragogy is a “set of core adult learning principles that apply to all adult learning situations” (p. 2). The core principles of andragogy are the “learner’s need to know, self-concept of the learner, prior experience of the learner, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn” (p. 2). Indeed, the authors acknowledged that the core principles were not enough to explain learning decisions because these focused exclusively on the learner. As a result, Knowles et al. (2015) subsequently produced a model that also identified individual and situational learner differences, institutional and societal growth, as well as the goals and purposes for learning as influencing the decision-making process to engage as a learner. These theories are used to understand the reasons for the low enrollment of men in HE.

## **Review of the Broader Problem**

### **Dispositional Factors Deterring Participation in HE**

It is generally accepted that there are inherent characteristics of men that may influence their disinclination to enroll in HE, but there is a dearth of current literature on these dispositional factors, even though research by Roosma and Saar (2017) in Europe revealed that men tended to experience more dispositional barriers to HE than women. Most of the current authors paid particular attention to how the experiences, understandings, orientations, beliefs, and feelings of men influenced their aspirations to become HE students (Chandler-Melton, 2016; Collins, 2014; Doherty et al., 2016; Etheridge, 2013; Marginson, 2016; Vaughan, 2016). This was consistent with older studies (Burke, 2011; Keane, 2012; Kleinfeld, 2009; McWhirter, 1997; Wells, Seifert, Padgett, Park, & Umbach, 2011).

**Negative Mindset to HE.** In my analysis of the literature, I was able to determine that irrespective of class, men generally exhibited a negative mindset to enrollment in HE when compared with women. Several authors reported that many men had a poor self-concept as learners resulting in a feeling that they were not intelligent enough to further their education (Collins, 2014; McWhirter, 1997; Nienhusser, 2017; Vaughan, 2016). Chandler-Melton (2016) and Marginson (2016) indicated that many of them expressed little motivation to learn. Some men highlighted their unfavourable high school experiences as reasons why they were disinterested (Collins, 2014; Scott et al., 2013). Vaughan (2016) indicated that there was a suggestion by a university admission official that many men were disinterested in HE because of the feminization of HE. This

point was advanced by Raven (2012) and Scott et al. (2013). Scott et al. (2013) found that the absence of skilled and culturally competent teachers, especially male teachers, contributed to men being disinclined to enroll in college. This kind of thinking is evidence of the discontent and bias to the predominance of female teachers, not only in HE, but in the education system as a whole. An analysis of these myriad reasons for men's disengagement in HE suggests that the genesis of these negative mindsets is often external.

### **Institutional Factors Deterring Participation in HE**

Cross (1981) also identified institutional factors as negatively impacting individual enrollment in HE and adult learning courses. According to Cross (1981), these deterrents are usually related to scheduling, transportation, access to information, procedural problems in the admissions process, and the relevance of the education to the lives of the learner. Several authors in a growing body of literature confirmed that these institutional factors often deter men from pursuing HE (Collins, 2014; Conger, 2015; Galliot, 2015; Grant, 2015; Hunter, Wilson, & McArthur, 2018; Malhotra & Shapero, 2007; Naylor et al., 2015; Nienhusser, 2017; Tienxhi, 2017).

**Lack of information.** According to Cross (1981), one reason for the disinclination of adults to pursue HE or adult learning prospects is the lack of information regarding what is available. Grant (2015) and Nienhusser (2017) indicated that some HEs do not provide sufficient information on programmes being offered. Hunter et al. (2018) found in their research that many lower-class youths were unfamiliar with course programmes in HE because of the lack of mentorship from individuals in professional

networks. At the high school or secondary level, research by Galliot (2015) showed that the situation was often exacerbated by the lack of guidance and counselling in career education. Indeed, Baber (2014) confirmed that the lack of information, especially for those students who come from homes where no one is a university graduate, causes hurt because of students' "inability to navigate pathways to postsecondary access" (p. 1107).

**Scheduling Issues.** Cross (1981) made the case that one reason why individuals would be deterred from pursuing educational opportunities after school might be due to how institutions timetable their programmes. Research by Collins (2014) revealed that the course schedules of HEs were sometimes perceived as deterrents to pursuing HE if the course did not fit in with the personal schedules of individuals. This was also confirmed by Saar, Täht, and Roosalu (2014), who found that this problem was experienced more often in countries such as Estonia, Slovenia, and Belgium.

**Irrelevance of Programmes.** The lack of relevant courses at HEs was identified by many authors in the literature as another reason why men were disinclined to enroll in a HE institution. Several authors argued that some men were not convinced that additional education would be beneficial to them in the future (Collins, 2014; Kleinfeld, 2009; Malhotra & Shapero, 2007; McWhirter, 1997). Tienxhi (2017) suggested that men were not necessarily deterred by HEs, but instead, were either more interested in technical-vocational courses, which are offered at other postsecondary institutions, such as polytechnics, or might be opting to access opportunities at overseas universities. This could indicate that courses in technical-vocational institutions are perceived to be more



interesting, practicable, or relevant, or regional and international HEs have more appeal to men than local ones.

**Cumbersome Admission Policies.** Finally, several authors supported Cross's position that the cumbersome admission policies of some HEs also played a role at times in deterring men from actually enrolling in a programme (Collins, 2014; Conger, 2015; Grant, 2015; Malhotra & Shapero, 2007; Nienhusser, 2017; Roosma & Saar, 2017). Naylor et al. (2015) identified institutional racism as one challenge in the admissions process. This review confirmed that there were several factors at the institutional level that caused men to be disinclined to enroll in HE.

### **Situational Factors Deterring Male Participation in HE**

According to research by Cross (1981), situational factors accounted primarily for the lack of participation in HE and lifelong learning. I was able to determine from the literature reviewed that several authors since Cross (1981) confirmed this finding (Bathmaker, Ingram, & Waller, 2013; Chandler-Melton, 2016; Klevan et al., 2016; Naylor et al., 2015; Souto-Otero & Whitworth, 2017; Tienxhi, 2017). I analysed these studies and was able to categorise situational factors into four groups: social capital variables, economic environment, familial influences, and government or private sector policies.

**Social capital factors.** Many authors advanced the view that social capital variables influenced enrollment in HE by both men and women (Bathmaker et al., 2013; Collins, 2014; Hunter et al., 2018; Orozco, 2017). Both Schuller (2007) and Klevan et al. (2016) specifically made the case that social capital substantially explained the lower

percentages of men in HE. Indeed, lower expectations of men, by their family and friends, was identified as one primary variable why many men did not continue on to HE. On the other hand, an examination of the literature by me revealed that financial constraints were not limited to men. The lack of funds and support within the context of one's social network only partly explained why young people of either sex do not enroll in a university or college after graduating from secondary school.

*Lower expectations for men to pursue HE.* When one is in a network that does not value HE, this often results in the disinclination to pursue it. According to Wells et al. (2011), “students receive information, values, norms, standards, and expectations for education through the interpersonal relationships ... they have with their parents, peers, and others” that inform decision making to enroll or not to enroll in HE (Wells et al., 2011, p. 3). Positive attitudes to HE by parents, teachers, and peers of men are usually influential in swaying individuals to enroll in HE. Studies conducted by Etheridge (2013) and Orozco (2017) substantiated this assertion. Conversely, negative attitudes by parents, teachers, and peers tend to result in a rejection of HE offerings by individuals. This tendency was explained by Fletcher (2011) as the need to fit in and be seen as part of the social group. While the study by Wells et al. (2011) found that women were more greatly encouraged by parents and peers, research by Davis and Otto (2016) challenged the finding with respect to peer support. Overall, the research analysed by me substantiated the view that the lack of expectations for men to go on to HE by family, teachers, and peers was significantly related to men's disenchantment with HE (Davis & Otto, 2016; Doherty et al., 2016; Etheridge, 2013; Fortin, Oreopoulos, & Phipps, 2014; Kester, 2017;

Klevan et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2013; Wilson & McArthur, 2018). According to Bathmaker et al. (2013), this is especially true in the case of individuals from the working or lower class.

***Financial challenges.*** The inability to personally finance or gain resources from one's network to pay for HE often stymies access to persons irregardless of gender. Indeed, several researchers reported that inaccessibility to money was identified as the leading reason for the lack of enrollment in HE by both men and women (Collins, 2014; Etheridge, 2013; Matsolo et al., 2016; McDonald, 2003; McWhirter, 1997; Naylor et al., 2015; Singai, 2010). Many authors found that where individuals were already employed or were not adequately financially supported by family members, there was a higher possibility that they would be disinclined to pursue HE (Collins, 2014; McWhirter, 1997; Scott et al., 2013). McDonald (2003) explained that many prospective students grappled with the high cost of tuition and books. Additionally, research by Callender and Mason (2017) revealed that students, particularly lower-class students, were averse to tuition debt which contributed to their disinclination to pursue HE. Naylor et al. (2015) and Saar, Täht, and Roosalu (2014) also identified college or university affordability as a key factor in the decision-making process that often led to a disengagement if it was perceived to be too expensive.

***Economic environment.*** The economic conditions in a country also have an influence on the enrollment levels by both men and women in HE (Fulge & Wise, 2015; Marginson, 2016; Owusu-Agyeman, 2016; Souto-Otero & Whitworth, 2017). Marginson (2016) contended that “state policies, economic development, aspirations for social

position, credentialism, global factors, and combinations of these”, worked in concert to provide a climate that influenced persons to be inclined or disinclined to pursue HE (p. 243). These authors explained that the progress a country makes technologically and the performance of the job market often informed individuals’ decisions to pursue or delay HE based on the individual’s cost-benefit analysis in their particular context and beyond. Collins (2014), Fulge and Wise (2015), Livingstone and Raykor (2016) and Souto-Otero and Whitworth (2017) supported this point made by Marginson (2016).

**Policy conditions.** The policy decisions taken by governments and those in positions of power may also influence enrollment in HE. This idea was supported by Fulge and Wise (2015) who attributed public policies for the rise in the gender gap in HE. A case in point was evidenced by research by Fulge and Wise (2015) who indicated that when provisions were made for childcare for women, female HE participation often increased. Notwithstanding, Souto-Otero and Whitworth (2017) did not find this to be the case in their study. Instead, these authors found that economic concerns were often of greater concern to women than the support offered by the state. The review showed divergent responses to HE where policy initiatives were introduced because ultimately the decision was and is a personal one.

**Familial factors.** I conducted a review of the literature on the influence of the family in affecting male enrollment in HE. This search yielded diverse views. Tienxhi (2017) identified the socialization of men in their families as a key factor in their decision to pursue HE. McWhirter (1997) indicated that the presence of deep family problems was often an indicator that some individuals would not pursue HE. This position was

partly supported by the work of Doherty, Willoughby, and Wilde (2016) who found in their longitudinal study that children born to unmarried parents where the father was subsequently absent was a contributor to the growing gender gap in HE. Last, Collins (2014) found that the familial responsibilities that individuals had were also a deterrent to their enrollment in a HE institution (Collins, 2014). These perspectives reveal the multifaceted and complex nature of familial factors as influences in the decision to pursue HE.

Currently, there is an extensive literature available that aids in understanding the deterrents for men to enrollment in HE. I categorised the literature that was located into three groups: dispositional, institutional, and situational factors. I was able to determine based on the review of literature that situational factors accounted as the main reason why men tended to be disinclined from enrolling in HE. In conducting an analysis of the literature reviewed, I found that situational factors more than men's dispositions or institutional factors led men to delay or not enroll in HE.

### **Implications**

The findings from this case study have many likely implications for a proposed project. Project options include a training programme or recommendation paper. A recommendation paper might be the best option in response to the study findings because it is important to create an initiative that is comprehensive and far reaching given the extent of the problem.

Since the problem of low male enrollment in HE is multifactorial, a recommendation paper is likely to address the three main facets that work in concert to

influence young men's disinclination to pursue HE after leaving high school. The recommendation paper focuses on setting expectations for leaders, teachers, non-teaching staff, peers, and family members on the type of experiences, interactions, support, and communications that men ought to be exposed to while in high school in order to build positive dispositions to HE. It addresses the role that high schools, HEs, and educational authorities should play in increasing the number of young men who choose to enroll in a HE institution. Last, a recommendation paper would outline financial, social, political, and familial responses, which have been used successfully in other parts of the world, to influence men's uptake of HE opportunities in Barbados.

### **Summary**

Section 1 described the local problem that prompted the study, outlined the rationale, presented the significance and usefulness of exploring the problem in Barbados, and provided a review of current literature. Prior research evidenced a widening gender gap in HE enrollment in favour of women in Barbados that was consistent with trends in several countries across the globe. It was argued that it is necessary to understand the factors that are currently influencing young men in Barbados to be disinclined to enroll in HE in order to inform measures that need to be implemented to increase enrollment in HE by men. This study was deemed significant in that it will fill a gap in the literature and serve as a catalyst for social change at the micro and macro level. This section concluded with a critical review of the literature using Cross's (1981) framework, including an integration of Knowles' and Bourdieu's theories, to outline the

dispositional, institutional, and situational factors that were found to deter male enrollment in HE.

In Section 2, I outline the methods used to conduct the research in Barbados and record the findings. The processes used to select the participants are delineated. The data collection instruments are described and the data analysis results are presented.

In Section 3, I provide a description of the proposed project that could serve to lessen the problem of male underenrollment in HE in Barbados. A rationale for the project is given. Relevant literature that supports the project is offered. An evaluation plan is outlined and the project implications are discussed.

In the last section, which is Section 4, the project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, project development, reflections, implications, applications, and directions for future research are outlined. It is critical to be aware of the extent of the utility of such a proposal and to consider other approaches that might also work. Engaging in the reflective process is always a necessary course of action, especially in qualitative research, to ensure that there is a full consideration of the implications and applications of one's actions as a researcher.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Research Design and Approach**

I used a case study design to gain insight into the reasons for the low enrollment of men in HE in Barbados. According to Schoch (2016), a case study is “a detailed and intensive analysis” of a “contemporary phenomenon” within “a defined space and time frame” (p. 227). Babbie (2017) stated that the case study can be designed to explore, describe, or explain the phenomenon. Schoch (2016) cited Miles, Huberman, and Saldana to posit that a case can be an individual, a group of persons, an organisation, a community, a role, or even a nation.

I focused the study from the perspectives of young men and key educational leaders to form a case for Barbados. For this study, the bounded unit chosen was seven young men and five HE leaders who composed a group which I hoped could explain the reasons for the underparticipation of men in HE in Barbados and recommend strategies to increase the number of men enrolled in HE. The same seven young men were also asked to indicate the benefits to them of not enrolling in HE.

Because there is a need to understand the perspectives of both men and educational leaders on the problem of male underparticipation in HE, a case study was the most appropriate design for this research. According to Shenton (2004), case study research allows “multiple voices, exhibiting characteristics of similarity, dissimilarity, redundancy and variety ... to gain greater knowledge of a wider group ... rather than simply the individual informants who are contributing data” (p. 65). Moreover, Butin



(2010) asserted that using case study methodology is especially appropriate when studying at-risk youth (p. 63).

I considered several research designs for this study. I initially explored two research designs: narrative inquiry and survey research. A narrative is a firsthand account of an experience by an individual and is known as a biography or an autobiography (Crawford, 2016). While narrative research could possibly allow participants to share their perspectives on the underparticipation of men in HE, it was not chosen for this research. According to Crawford (2016), narrative research does not provide the scope to explore the “collective experience” of participants because in this design, the “unit of analysis for narrative research is the individual” (Crawford, 2016, p.65). Crawford (2016) and Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that narrative research works well with a case study when the intent is to focus on one or two persons. However, I did not intend this study to be so limited.

I also contemplated conducting survey research. According to Babbie (2017), survey research involves the administration of a standardised questionnaire to a selected sample of a population. Cox (2016) stated that it is a “descriptive, nonexperimental method used to collect information, such as attitudes and behaviors,” using not only questionnaires but interviews (p. 214). While survey research is appropriate for the exploration, description, and explanation of a phenomenon using self-reporting methods, it is often used when there is a large number of participants available (Lambert, 2012). For the purposes of this study, it was not necessary to have a large number of participants. Cross (1981) indicated that it is often difficult to locate a large number of

respondents who would be willing to take part in a study that asked them to share on such a sensitive topic. Articulating the reasons for not enrolling in HE could be categorised as a sensitive area.

Given the above realities, I considered the case study the best fit, considering the need for insights into the problem of male underparticipation in HE in Barbados and suggestions to increase participation levels. I took this position because the case study method allows for the use of multiple data sources including interviews, focus groups, and documents which can inform the study, when compared with single sources of data in other research designs. Ravitch and Carl (2016) asserted that the case study method facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon using “multiple, situated truths and perspectives” (p. 5). Moreover, the case study design is best aligned to answer the research questions and to provide understanding of the study site characteristics that may negatively impact the participants. Baxter and Jack (2008) argued that a case study design is especially appropriate when the researcher wants to address “contextual conditions” believed to be “relevant to the phenomenon under study” (p. 545). This approach allowed me to understand the underparticipation of young men in HE in Barbados.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection of Participants**

I selected the participants for this study based on sound criteria. I purposefully selected young men who attained the requisite certifications for entry into HE from two public secondary schools and one private secondary school in 2014 using heterogeneity

sampling. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined heterogeneity or maximum variation sampling as a process of selecting participants to reflect diversity and identify common patterns in relation to a phenomenon. I chose seven adult men to reflect a wide range of demographics who:

- attended a grammar or newer secondary school;
- were currently employed or unemployed; and
- were from a single parent, nuclear, or extended family.

In addition, I chose men from the 2014 cohort primarily to avoid the challenges of conducting a study using minors. Also, these young men, who completed their education in 2014, would be classified as adults who could freely consent to participate in the research without needing permission from their parents. Last, men in this cohort are generally expected to be interested in HE.

I used *key informants*, *key knowledgeable*, and *key reputational sampling*.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that in this sampling method, individuals who are believed to have the best insight into a problem are purposefully targeted in order to gather data on the phenomenon. I chose five education leaders to inform this study because they could provide information on the reasons for the low enrollment rates by men in HE. These included leaders from HEs, secondary schools, and the MoE who were purposefully selected to comprehend the problem from different vantage points. These stakeholders provided diverse perspectives that were critical to understanding the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors deterring the enrollment of men in HE in Barbados. These outstanding persons had the requisite knowledge, having advanced

through the system and reached the pinnacle of their careers, to aid understanding of the phenomenon of low male enrollment in HE. To this end, their selection was justified.

### **Procedures for Recruitment**

I followed several procedures to recruit persons to participate in this study. The first step I took was to obtain permission from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The approval number I was assigned was 06-15-18-0669666. I sought an endorsement from the MoE to approach school leaders for contact information on young men who completed their secondary education in 2014 with four or more certificates. Subsequently, I telephoned, emailed, and visited principals of the three purposefully selected secondary schools to ask if they were willing to provide contact details on the prospective young male participants and participate in a focus group.

My goal was to select two or three men who had graduated from each of the schools that I visited who were interested in participating in the study. If there was difficulty reaching the target number for this case study, my intent was to use snowball sampling. This would have been done, if needed, by soliciting the help of male participants in sharing the letter of invitation to participate in the study and my contact details with other men.

I contacted potential focus group members (education leaders from HEs, secondary schools, and the MoE) directly by telephone and email to find out if they were willing to participate in a focus group interview. I explained the purpose of formulating a group of educational leaders to provide insight into the factors that cause qualifying men to be disinclined from enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados and recommending

solutions for increasing the number of men who enroll in HE in Barbados. Once they agreed, I scheduled an appropriate time that was mutually agreed to by all participants.

### **Justification of the Number of Participants**

There were good reasons for the selection of 12 participants in this qualitative study. There are 21 secondary schools on the island and three main HEs. The MoE has ultimate oversight through the Barbados Education Act (1997) and Education Regulations (1982) for the entire education system. Seven male adults are a manageable number of participants to interview given the comprehensive scope of Cross's (1981) framework being used in the study. With respect of the number of persons in the focus group, while seven persons consented, only five were able to attend. I only chose three principals from secondary schools on the island even though there are more secondary schools than HEs because of the need to include HEs, maintain parity, and manageability. I also tried to ensure that there was at least one educational leader from the MoE in the group. I interviewed these educational leaders as one focus group. Thomas (2013) indicated that focus groups tend to include about eight persons. Therefore, the number of participants was adequate.

### **Establishing Researcher-Participant Working Relationships**

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016) and Rubin and Rubin (2012), it is important for every researcher to establish and maintain a productive relationship with participants in a study, but this is even more critical in qualitative research because the researcher is the instrument of data collection. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that "the development of relationships is an incremental, complex, multifaceted, and vital process that is at the

heart of qualitative research” (p. 350). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), relationship building during the research process includes being respectful of procedures for gaining access to data sources, telling the truth about the parameters of the research, being thoughtful of participants, and answering questions from participants and other relevant persons about the study.

To this end, I ensured that I established a positive researcher-participant working relationship. I set up appointments to meet all participants at a time that was mutually convenient. I forged positive relationships with all participants in the study by being cordial as I initiated conversations and built a solid rapport consistent with best practice as advanced by Ravitch and Carl (2016). I shared the nature and purpose of the research with prospective participants. I expressed gratitude to all participants who consented to contribute to the study. I shared, discussed, and signed off on the consent forms with the participants as appropriate to them. In addition, I made participants aware of the estimated time of the interview which was about one hour. I also thoroughly explained the procedures for handling the information securely in order to gain participants’ trust that the information would remain confidential. I encouraged participants to ask questions based on the information given about the research. I also told participants that I would recontact them if needed to clarify their answers. Last, I informed participants that I would need them to check the interview transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the information that they provided. All participants verified that the information in the transcripts was accurate.

## **Ethical Considerations**

I addressed several ethical obligations in the study. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016) and Hicks (2017), care must be taken to ensure the protection of participants' rights, including confidentiality, permissions, boundaries, and protection from harm. Babbie (2017) stated that researchers have to "make concerted efforts to conceal identities" by using pseudonyms and suppressing details (p. 420). Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that participant permissions to participate in the study must be solicited. Further, consideration should be given to whether any harm is negligible or greater, or whether the benefits outweigh the risks, bearing in mind that some questions may be embarrassing or cause anxiety during the research particularly because they require "disclosure of sensitive aspects" of participants' "private lives" (Cox, 2016, p. 131). I addressed these requirements with tact and sensitivity.

I took several actions in this regard to ensure adherence to appropriate ethical behaviour. In this study, I expected to use snowball sampling if needed. In a few instances, I asked research participants to share my contact information and letters of invitation with men who might be interested in being involved in the study rather than asking for the contact details of the men. I instructed members of the group not to share the information with others outside of the group.

Further, I used the requisite documents to assure confidentiality. I provided all potential participants with consent forms by email prior to meeting in order to allow them to peruse the document. I asked the participants to consent to be participants in the study

by signing and dating the consent form. The consent form detailed the purpose of the study, procedures, risks and benefits, and an assurance of confidentiality.

I used other measures to make certain that I abided by the ethical rules for quality research. I obtained permissions from all participants prior to interview recordings. I took care to be respectful to all participants in my choice of language. I also ensured that interview locations were used that facilitated free expression. Further, I used pseudonyms for the institutions and participants involved in the study to ensure that they could not be identified in any way. In addition, I notified participants in advance that they could refuse to answer a question that made them uncomfortable and they could withdraw from the study while it was ongoing without being penalised. All data were kept in a personal computer and protected by a password known only to me.

Finally, I sought permission from several sources to ensure that the study abided by the ethical rules for good research. I sought permission to use Figure 1 from John Wiley and Sons. I also obtained permission to cite the work of Fulge and Wise (2015) in my research paper. In addition, I sought permission from the Institutional Review Board at Walden University to proceed with the study after fulfilling all the obligations, including providing a certificate as evidence of ethics training by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

### **Data Collection**

I used data from interviews and a focus group for the study in Barbados. I asked seven men via interviews to share the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors that caused them to be disinclined to enroll in a HE institution in Barbados, identify the



benefits of not enrolling, and offer strategies that might increase their uptake of current educational opportunities. I also sought the opinions of education leaders using a focus group to identify the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors that constrain the enrollment of men in a HE institution in Barbados and strategies that might increase the uptake of current educational opportunities by men. These data collection sources are justified in light of the research questions.

Initially, three schools agreed to cooperate but only two schools relayed contact data on students who graduated in 2014. I gathered contact data from only one grammar or high performing secondary school initially because either the telephone numbers of graduated students were obsolete or these former students had or were currently enrolled in a HE institution. After receiving permission from the IRB to contact additional schools, two other schools provided contact information for their 2014 cohorts. Subsequently, I identified two additional past students of these two schools who agreed to participate in the research.

### **Description and Justification of Data for Collection**

**Interview.** An interview is a social interaction in which information is solicited and interpreted (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). While interviews have demerits, they are the most appropriate means to collect data that is “deep, rich, individualized, and contextualized” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 146). Rubin and Rubin (2013) endorsed Ravitch and Carl’s (2016) views by concurring that interviews facilitate deep inquiry because they allow for probing and follow up questions that provide pertinent information on the phenomenon under study. To this end, I chose seven young men to be

interviewed in the study in order to gather information on the reasons for their lack of enrollment in a HE institution, the benefits of not enrolling, and how male enrollment in HE might possibly be increased. These men were in the 19–21 age range. It was critical to delve into the lives of participants using interview questions that allowed them to share their experiences freely so as to better understand their disinclination to pursue HE in Barbados.

**Focus group.** I used a focus group, comprised of education leaders, as the means to generate information on the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors deterring young men from enrolling in HEs in Barbados and identify recommendations that might work to increase male enrollment in HE in Barbados. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), focus groups are interviews that are conducted with a group of persons. A focus group is a justifiably good data source for this study, even though it is challenging to manage. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), a focus group facilitates the sharing of multiple perspectives and experiences on a particular topic or phenomenon.

I employed a semistructured format during the interview and focus group to ascertain the reasons for the generally low enrollment levels in HEs, identify the benefits of non-enrollment, and solicit suggestions on how men's enrollment in HE might be increased in Barbados. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), a semistructured interview is an interview that is structured, in that there are specific questions to be asked in a particular order, yet allowing for other questions to be asked as follow-ups or probes. These data collection methods enabled me to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1 – Why are young men deterred from enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados even though they have the requisite certification to enroll in higher education?
- RQ2 – What do young men perceive to be the benefits of not enrolling in Higher Education?
- RQ3 –What are the perspectives of young men in Barbados, who are qualified to enter college or university, on how male participation in HE might be increased?
- RQ4 – What are the perspectives of educational leaders in Barbados on how male participation in HE might be increased?

### **Instrumentation**

I created an interview protocol, with a total of 19 questions, for the young men in the study to answer the research questions. I created six questions that focused on dispositional factors, four on institutional, and five on situational factors that cause men to be disinclined from pursuing HE in Barbados. I created one question that asked men to share their perceptions of the benefits of not enrolling in HE. I formulated three questions to gain data on how male participation might be increased.

In addition, I created six questions for the focus group to address. The first three questions asked educational leaders to share their perspectives on the deterrents to HE for men. I structured the last three questions to gather the views of educational leaders on how male enrollment in HE might be increased. All the questions were formulated to solicit the views of educational leaders on the problem and its resolution in Barbados.

All of the questions for the young men and educational leaders were based on the theoretical framework used for this study. I prefaced the interview schedule with eight demographic questions for the men. I asked the educational leaders prior to the start of the focus group to provide a pseudonym. I labeled each institution by letter to protect against its identification.

**Interview questions for qualified men.** I created an interview protocol to be used for gathering information from seven men on the reasons why they did not enroll in a HE institution even though they obtained the requisite certificates for entry. In the interview protocol, I designed questions 1– 6 to focus on the dispositional factors, 7–10 on the institutional aspects, and 11–15 on the situational reasons deterring their participation in HE in Barbados consistent with those outlined by Cross (1981). I based the questions from the work of Carp, Peterson, and Roelfs (1974) and Cross (1981 p. 99). I excluded three questions from their work because they were irrelevant to the study, namely:

1. I do not meet the requirements to begin a programme.
2. There is no opportunity to get credit or a degree.
3. I am too old to begin.

Questions from Cross' (1981) model about the dispositions of men inherently address Knowles' adult learning principles, so I did not repeat questions. Questions based on social capital theory as posited by Rostiala (2011), which explore the size of participants' networks and the available capital in the networks, were also subsumed under situational factors. I concluded the interview with three questions (16–18) on how male enrollment

in a HE institution in Barbados might be increased. I asked the men in the study to answer a total of 15 questions that directly corresponded with the tenets of each theory used in the study. Even though each interview lasted approximately twenty minutes, the young men provided relevant data to answer the research questions. My chair and second member reviewed and approved the entire interview schedule to ensure clarity and coherence to the conceptual framework being used for the study.

**Focus group questions for educational leaders.** I held one focus group with educational leaders to solicit their perspectives on the reasons why men who qualified in 2014 to enter HE had not done so to date and identify possible strategies to increase male enrollment in HE in Barbados. The focus group identified the deterrents to HE enrollment in Barbados by answering three basic questions and advised on recommendations that would be most practicable and effective in the local context to increase the number of qualified men enrolling in HE. These questions were formulated by me and were answered in about one and a half hours.

### **Processes for Data Generation, Gathering, and Recording**

I put several processes in place to generate, gather, and record data. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that there must be sound reasons in deciding what to transcribe. For the purposes of this research, I recorded the conversations using a voice recorder. Based on best practices advanced by Ravitch and Carl (2016), I generated transcripts from the audio recordings from the interviews and focus group that reflected exactly what was said by the participants and me during the process of gathering the data. I took personal responsibility for transcribing the data.

### **System for Keeping Track of Data and Emerging Understandings**

I established several systems to ensure that the data were organised and retrievable so that it could be meaningfully analysed. I kept a research journal and log, developed contact summary forms after interviews, and created fieldwork and data collection memos consistent with the prescription for good qualitative research practice advanced by Ravitch and Carl (2016). I was already using a small note book for my research journal to chronicle and reflect upon my research journey. I kept track of data and emergent understandings by making notes in a research log on the various revisions of instruments and methodologies as advised by Ravitch and Carl (2016). This was easy because the electronic version of my study was saved by a different name every time a change was made. I used these systems to facilitate self-reflection, critical thinking, and emergent understandings as the research progressed and concluded.

### **Role of the researcher**

The role of the researcher is a critical consideration during every phase of the research process within a qualitative design (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), it is important to know the position and social location of the researcher in relation to the participants in a study because these can affect the quality of a study. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined positionality as “the multitude of roles and relationships that exist between the researcher and the participants within and in relation to the research setting, topic, and broader contexts that shape it” (p. 10).

When the study was conducted, I was an Education Officer in the MoE, Barbados with responsibility for Theatre Arts. By virtue of that position, I came into contact with

principals of secondary schools several times during the year. Contact with principals was primarily made when I visited classes to monitor instruction in Theatre Arts. Outside of these visits, I had very little contact with secondary school principals. Consequently, these contacts did not negatively affect data collection. In the position of Education Officer, I did not have any reason to interface with education leaders in HE and there was little opportunity to do so. In addition, I had no supervisory capacity over HE leaders so there was no possibility of the abuse of power during data collection because of my placement in the hierarchy. Last, I did not know any men who left secondary school in 2014 so those men who were selected for the study were unfamiliar to me. As a result, there were no known biases with respect to any participants in this study.

Notwithstanding, I was more familiar with other education officials who worked in the same building as I did. While this was the case, I only had a collegial relationship with one of the proposed participants in the focus group and this individual did not consent. For the purposes of this research, an unfamiliar MoE official was the data source in the focus group. It must be noted that none of the participants had a role to play in any aspect of the research besides participation in the focus group.

I am mindful of the fact that given these parameters and my strong interest in educational matters at all levels that it was not possible to be totally objective during every phase in the study. However, every attempt was made to mediate any challenges. I used the expertise of my Walden research committee who supported me during the process. In addition, I engaged in reflection during the several stages of the journey.

## Data Analysis

I made data analysis decisions based on the goals of the study and the need to ensure that the research questions were aligned with the research paradigm. This was consistent with best practice as advocated by Saldaña (2016). The questions *Why* and *What* suggested “the exploration of participant ... perceptions” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 71). To this end, I analysed data in four stages: precoding, 1<sup>st</sup> cycle coding, 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle coding, and themeing the data.

Initially, I precoded the data. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), “precoding is a process of reading, questioning, and engaging with your data ... before you formally begin the process of coding the data” (p. 243). I engaged in unstructured and structured readings of the transcripts over a period of time in order to gain a sense of the data, develop preliminary codes by colour coding, wrote comments and questions, and reflected using memos (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During preliminary coding, I made certain to define the codes using one short phrase or word that was consistent with the theoretical framework used for the study.

I used attribute, descriptive, In Vivo, values, and structural coding next in first cycle coding. I detailed participants’ demographic information and their contexts. I also placed key statements by participants that epitomized dispositional elements on sticky notes to identify attitudes toward HE. Saldaña (2016) indicated that it is appropriate to use coding methods that document features of the context and participant demographic information, allow one to get a general sense of the factors constraining male participation in HE, reveal rich data from participants’ own language that bring



understanding and support conclusions, and categorise the data to answer the research questions based on the framework of the study. I used code landscaping (using Word It Out) and code charting to transition from first cycle coding. I also used analytic memos to complement these steps in order to explore emergent patterns, categories, and themes.

Given that this study used several data sources (interview transcripts, focus group transcripts), I used pattern, focused, and versus coding by employing tabletop categorisation during the second cycle. Tabletop categorisation is the act of meaningful organising codes into groups on a table based on a structure or process (Saldaña, 2016). These coding strategies were well-suited for this analysis because they facilitated the formulation of categories from the data and provided an understanding of the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors that deter male enrollment in HE in Barbados from the perspectives of men and school leaders.

Last, I used axial or pattern coding to generate themes or important concepts. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), axial coding is a process of determining the relationship between and among coding categories in order to arrive at a finding or conclusion. In this coding method, several categories could be combined into one or vice versa, or a new category may be created (Crawford, 2016). This is a time-consuming process that requires much critical thinking and reflective thought.

Based on best practice and consistent with the advice of Ravitch and Carl (2016) and Saldaña (2016), I repeated these processes several times to ensure consistency and validity. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), it is critical to document “repetition in and across data items”, agreement or disagreement between individuals or groups, and

“strong or emotive language” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 250). I was able to do this. I also gave transcripts and analyses to participants to verify the accuracy of facts and interpretation of the data in order to ensure valid data. I also evidenced these analytic processes in the Appendices using memos and photos.

### **Ensuring Quality and Trustworthiness**

I took great care to ensure a trustworthy study by taking considerations of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability into account. According to Stewart and Hitchcock (2016), trustworthiness is concerned with the extent to which the findings of a study can be believed based on the sources of data and the appropriateness of the qualitative design used to answer the research questions. I was able to influence genuine individuals to become participants who were happy to share their point of view.

**Credibility.** In this study, I established credibility. According to Crawford (2016), credibility in qualitative research is concerned with ensuring the validity of the research. In other words, the data collected can answer the research question (Crawford, 2016). I assured credibility by ensuring that the interview questions were consistent with the conceptual frameworks that grounded the study, namely, Cross’s COR (Cross, 1981), social capital theory (1986), and Knowles’ andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Also, I provided a trail of evidence that demonstrated reflexivity, namely, memos that I wrote at every stage of the process. Further, I allowed participants to check their individual transcripts and the final interpretations I made to confirm the data offered. Finally, I triangulated the data sources by using only young men who qualified to enter HE and the educational leaders as participants in the study.

**Transferability.** This study reflects transferability. Crawford (2016) defined transferability as the extent to which the findings of one study can be applicable to the population of interest for the study in another context. Crawford (2016) indicated that transferability can be achieved by *thick description* and *maximum variation*. I accomplished this by providing a rich description of the study setting, inclusive of any peculiarities and nuances, to allow for comparison with other sites. Second, I made every attempt to ensure maximum variation in the selection of participants by choosing individuals with different employment and marital status who lived in different locations, had different family structures, and attended different schools, among other characteristics.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability was another feature of this study to ensure that it is deemed trustworthy. Lincoln and Guba were cited by Crawford (2016), who stated that “confirmability requires that other informed researchers would arrive at essentially the same conclusions when examining the same qualitative data” (p. 75). I achieved this requirement by providing substantial evidence that every attempt was made to be objective and to reduce researcher bias. I explained my position in relation to my role as researcher within the study context.

**Dependability.** Dependability is a critical component of trustworthiness. According to Crawford (2016), dependability in qualitative research is comparable with reliability in quantitative research. Indeed, there is agreement that dependability means that irrespective of who the researcher is or when the data are collected, the instruments used and the analysis of information will yield consistent results (Crawford, 2016). In

order to ensure dependability in the proposed research, I thoroughly explained the data collection and analysis processes and triangulated the data. In addition, my Capstone Committee reviewed and suggested adjustments, which I made, to the interview questions.

### **Dealing with Discrepant Cases**

It is a norm in research that discrepant cases or data that is nonconforming to the expected information may emerge during data analysis. According to Butin (2010), and Ravitch and Carl (2016), though this might be the case, it is important to be conscious and attentive to this data that are different. Saldaña (2016) explained that paying attention to discrepant cases can yield major learning. To this end, I did not omit discrepant cases and I made no attempt to manipulate the responses of participants in any way. Instead, all data were captured in the results and fully discussed.

### **Data Analysis Results**

Many men, who have attained the requisite number of certificates at secondary schools in Barbados, have simply chosen not to enroll in a HE institution on the island. I gathered the data in this study that informed an understanding and possible amelioration of the problem from seven men using interviews and five educational leaders in a focus group. I interviewed the men in several public locations, namely parks and restaurants, while I conducted the focus group in the board room of one of the secondary schools on offer from one of the principals.

## **Demographics of Participants**

**Male participants.** Seven men participated in the study drawn from three secondary schools in Barbados. The participants were diverse. The seven men who agreed to participate in the study were former students from three newer secondary schools in rural and urban parts of the island. No former students from the grammar or older secondary school originally selected could be located who had not enrolled in a HE institution. The majority of the students in the older secondary schools usually perform exceptionally well, are expected to go to sixth form, college, or university, and do enroll in HE on graduating from secondary school. This was clearly evidenced by one principal during the focus group who said, “One of our performance indicators here is that 98% of all of our students go on to a higher institution of learning. That’s something that I say to them morning, noon and night. I expect every one of you to go on to university”. This appeared to be the case for the 2014 cohort from the older secondary or grammar school which was originally selected, but which produced no participants for this study. Participants’ ages ranged from 19 to 21 years. All were Black, single men who had no dependents. Two came from an extended family, two from a nuclear family, and three were from single-parent households. Six of the seven men were employed and the seventh while currently unemployed had engaged in previous employment. Table 1 shows a comparative breakdown of the demographics of these participants:

Table 1

*Demographics for Men*

Pseudonym	Age	Marital Status	School Code	School Type	Employment Status	No. of Dependents	Race	Family Type
George	19	S	A	Newer	Employed	0	Black	Nuclear
Calid	21	S	A	Newer	Employed	0	Black	Extended
John	20	S	A	Newer	Employed	0	Black	Extended
Charles	20	S	A	Newer	Not Employed but was Employed	0	Black	Single-parent
Tyler	20	S	A	Newer	Employed	0	Black	Nuclear
Ricardo	21	S	B	Newer	Employed	0	Black	Single-parent
Jonathan	20	S	C	Newer	Employed	0	Black	Single-parent

**Educational Leaders.** With regard to the educational leaders, though seven indicated their willingness to participate, only five educational leaders were actually present for the focus group because two had extenuating circumstances that negatively impacted their ability to attend. Out of the five participants, four were men. These leaders represented the MoE, one higher education institution, and three secondary schools. Two secondary principals were from the newer secondary schools and the other was from a grammar or older secondary school. Newer secondary schools were established after 1949 and cater mainly to lower-performing students. Grammar or older secondary

schools were established prior to 1950 and cater predominately to high performing students. The three secondary schools are situated in urban, rural, and suburban parts of the island. Table 2 shows the demographic breakdown for the educational leaders:

Table 2

*Demographic Breakdown for Educational Leaders*

Pseudonym	Sex	Institution/ School Code	Type of Institution	Location of Institution
Ben	Male	E	Grammar/Older Secondary School	Suburban
Glen	Male	F	Newer Secondary School	Urban
Sam	Male	G	Higher Education	Urban
Bob	Male	D	Ministry of Education	Urban
Kate	Female	A	Newer Secondary School	Rural

### **Review of Process of Data Generation, Gathering, and Recording**

Several processes were used to generate, gather, and record data. I recorded the interviews and focus group using a voice recorder on my mobile phone. I saved the voice recordings as audio files. I emailed these files to myself and downloaded them into a folder on my personal computer. I saved the files in the same media format as they were created. I generated transcripts from the audio recordings that captured exactly what was said by the participants and me during the process of gathering the data. I took personal responsibility for transcribing the data that were saved as Microsoft Word documents.

The participants confirmed that the transcripts and comments were correct through member checking.

### **Findings**

In Barbados, seven men and five educational leaders participated in interviews and a focus group respectively in a study to identify the factors deterring male enrollment in HE. Four research questions were answered in this case study and were used to structure the data analysis results:

#### **Research Question 1 - Why are young men deterred from enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados even though they have the requisite certification to enroll in higher education?**

In order to ascertain the deterrents to enrollment in HE in Barbados, I held separate interviews with seven men who each gained four or more CXC's, graduated from secondary school in 2014, and were not currently enrolled in HE. There were no discrepant cases. The men are identified with the following pseudonym names: Ricardo, John, Jonathan, Charles, George, Calid, and Tyler. A brief description of each interviewee and the major deterrents to the uptake of HE opportunities for each of them as individuals is detailed:

***Ricardo.*** Ricardo is a 21-year-old man from a single-parent household who is a former student of School B. Though Ricardo had a positive disposition to higher education and qualities that would help him to succeed, his belief that it was not necessary to his current career goals, evidenced by his stating that “It plays an important role but I believe I can get as far as I want without formal education from university”



caused him to be disinclined from enrolling. The only institutional deterrent for him was the length of time it takes to complete the programmes at the HE level. The lack of transportation was expressed as the sole situational deterrent in a context where Ricardo felt encouraged and supported in myriad ways by his family and friends to take up HE opportunities.

**John.** John is 20 years old and had attended School A for his secondary education. He comes from an extended family. John, who described himself as “patient” and “focused,” had mixed views on enrolling in HE primarily because of his indecisiveness with respect to a job. As he best stated it, “I guess I would have to see where life takes me on that part. So, I guess it is just the wait game and continue to grind as hard as I can.” Consequently, he was not deterred by any institutional factors and only one situational factor was a concern for him. John reported that he was not interested in enrolling in a HE institution because the timing of the classes would prove difficult to maneuver around given his work schedule.

**Jonathan.** Jonathan is a 20-year-old, coming from a single-parent household, who previously attended school C. Jonathan, who had a positive disposition to higher education, was deterred from enrolling in a HE institution because of the unavailability of an automotive engineering programme to pursue in Barbados. While he acknowledged some interest in pursuing management as a subject at university, he shared that he was disinclined from doing so because of the timing of the classes, given that he was working, and the cost. Jonathan shared

The timing is not good for me. From hearing my peers talking, they have some pretty late classes - nine o'clock and ten o'clock and all sorts of hours which would not be good for me at all at all and it is really, really expensive, really, really expensive.

**Charles.** Charles is 20 years old and a former student of School A who is the only participant who is presently unemployed. Though Charles is keen on enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados to pursue electronics or information technology he is still undecided. No institutional factors were a deterrent to enrollment in HE for him. However, the cost of HE and the absence of a friend to accompany him on this educational journey contributed to his disinclination to enroll in any programme. He indicated that he made a decision based on the financial limitations of his single-parent household when he shared "My mother really does not work for much so I try not to over- expense her." Charles further stated "I don't like studying by myself."

**George.** George was the youngest participant at 19 years old who was from a nuclear family. He had previously attended School A and articulated little interest in attending a HE institution even though he had all the encouragement and support needed because as he explained, "In my case, my family members were able to teach me certain things that I needed to get along in the businesses I have so I didn't see the need to go to college or university". George's only interest in pursuing HE, if he had the time, would be to enroll to do accounts in order to ensure that no one was stealing his money. However, given that George was a businessman who already had a "clothing line and an entertainment business", he indicated that the length of HE programmes in Barbados

would not suit him because spending “two years or four years in school would take away the focus from the business.”

**Calid.** Calid is a 21-year-old former student of School A who comes from an extended family. Calid failed to pursue HE even though he “had no problem with that”. Despite the fact that he had a positive disposition to HE, he struggled to articulate and identify the necessary qualities to be successful in HE. His career interest was in selling “anything that would sell”. While Calid expressed that he was internally motivated and was encouraged and supported by his family and friends to enroll in HE institution, he took the position that he “wasn’t ready yet.”

**Tyler.** Tyler is a 20-year-old former student of School A who comes from a nuclear family. He appears to have a healthy self-concept and is strongly motivated to attend HE to pursue Information Technology. He is disinclined from enrolling for several reasons which are a combination of institutional and situational factors. Based on the reports of his friends, who have attended, about the lack of student-centred teaching, he is convinced that the teaching “methods are flawed” since there is a culture “where teachers are not going to come back to things for you”. He is further deterred by the lack of practical subjects in the areas in which he is interested at those institutions that offer associate and bachelor degrees, evidenced by this statement: Institution H “was just theory on to top of theory”. This means that the courses were theoretical or based on reading books. Last, Tyler identified cost as a deterrent for him “because, honestly, I am not that fortunate to be able to afford” university.

I analysed the data from all the men who were interviewed and found interesting insights about men's disposition to HE. While the data showed that men were self-confident, valued higher education, and had a strong motivation to learn, evidenced by their positive attitudes and beliefs, I found that that they placed a greater value on earning an income partly substantiated by the fact that all the participants were employed or in the case of one, recently employed. Table 3 delineates several codes using values coding that illuminate men's collated dispositions to HE and work that provides insight into their values. The statement by Tyler that "if I could find a job to be making money instead of being in school" best sums up their dispositions. This led, in many cases, to indecisiveness and delay in the selection of a programme. Almost all of the men believed that HE did not necessarily result in gaining meaningful employment or was irrelevant to their needs. Higher education, though important, was secondary to gaining meaningful employment.

Table 3

*Structural Code/Category: Disposition to Higher Education*

Factor	Values	Attitudes	Beliefs
Disposition	money	disinterest in HE	HE is not necessary to make it in life
	education	interest in HE	not good with books
		hardworking	takes too long
		passionate	HE does not guarantee work
		ambitious	
		patient	
		focused	
		optimistic	
		quick thinking	
		dedicated	
		ambitious	
		motivated to learn	
		readiness to learn	
		committed to succeeding in life	

Table 4, which used In Vivo codes to capture men's exact speech, provides rich insight into their decision-making predicament. Its title MIXED EMOTIONS was chosen to reflect the juxtaposition between wanting to get the degree "I should go and get the paper" and making the decision not to enroll "don't see the need".

Table 4

*Disposition to Higher Education MIXED EMOTIONS using In Vivo Coding*

Dispositions	“I Should Go and Get the Paper”	“Don’t See the Need”
Positive Disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “NO PROBLEM”</li> <li>○ “THAT WOULD BE GREAT”</li> <li>○ “I COULD GO AND GET IT”</li> <li>○ “NORMAL”</li> <li>○ “I WILL DO IT”</li> <li>○ “I COULD PROBABLY GO COLLEGE”</li> </ul>	
Negative Disposition		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “DOES NOT MAKE ANY SENSE GOING TO UNIVERSITY”</li> <li>○ “A MORE HANDS ON PERSON”</li> <li>○ “GOOD WITH MY HANDS”</li> <li>○ “NOT PRACTICAL”</li> <li>○ “MOSTLY THEORY”</li> </ul>

Surprisingly, men were not largely deterred due to situational factors from pursuing HE in Barbados. In the literature reviewed, social capital factors, financial challenges, the economic environment, policy conditions, familial factors, and lower expectations for men were often delineated as the major category of deterrents to the

uptake of HE. However, the majority of men in this study shared that their families and friends had the social capital to support them in enrolling in HE. Further, they stated that family and friends had high expectations for them to pursue HE even while they supported their decision to defer enrollment in a HE institution. Indeed, literature from the U.S. Library of Congress (n.d.) posited that Barbados has a “longstanding emphasis on education” that is “evident in the values and goals of contemporary society” (para. 2). Of note was the fact that only two men identified cost as a deterrent to them to pursue HE in Barbados even though all students were expected to partially pay for the cost of education. Further, there was no mention of familial factors, policy conditions, or the economic environment as negatively impacting on the uptake of HE. While not explicitly stated by the men, it can be deduced that the poor economic environment of the country, evidenced by the weak performance of the job market, also informed men’s decision-making to delay HE based on their cost-benefit analysis of the situation. John’s response in answer to the question about how he felt about going to college or university in Barbados to enable him to achieve the job he desired best sums up this assertion:

“I have mixed emotions about it from what I have seen in my life and my family’s life and people around me. It is one thing to go to University and do a degree and to study very hard and spend the money to do it but to me in Barbados right now you are not guaranteed a job in that field you study. I have many people around me who did their Masters and Bachelors etc. and they have pretty average jobs that they have no right working. To give you a short example, have a friend of

mine who went to UWI and spent a lot of money and did his Masters and he currently repairs and fixes shoes”.

Despite the fact that situational factors were advanced by Cross (1981) and contemporary researchers as accounting primarily for the lack of participation in HE and lifelong learning, institutional factors emerged as the major reason why men in Barbados were deterred from enrolling in HE. While men were generally satisfied with the information provided on programmes and procedures for enrolling, the traditional methodology, timing or scheduling of classes, length of the programme, the lack of a practical or hands-on component in the available programmes of interest to them, and the irrelevance of the programmes currently being offered at the degree level to their lives emerged as the major deterrents to pursuing HE. John’s further elaboration on how he felt about going to college or university captured the essence of the thinking of two men in the study who viewed HE as irrelevant to their needs in a modern world:

“The methods that worked for our parents in this world and this generation right now can’t work for us. We just going to school get a degree get a good job. That way of thinking and that way of living life has gone almost extinct right now because the average job isn’t cutting it anymore. Salaries aren’t cutting it so you have to be creative and you have to have some type of entrepreneurial mindset because you going to school to get a good job. It is not really doing it anymore that method has gone. I wouldn’t say a good job doesn’t exist anymore but now we have to adapt in the world’s changes with technology growing and stuff. ...Certain jobs in the near future will become almost non-existent. ... That



method of go to school, to get a good degree to get a job is completely incorrect right now. It is completely incorrect”.

Further, several interviewees had attended technical-vocational institutions and had job attachments that led to the uptake of work opportunities in Barbados. In addition, one had an interest in furthering his studies abroad in a field of study that was not offered locally. These findings were congruent with previous research by Tienxhi (2017) that suggested that men were not necessarily disinclined from pursuing HE, but instead, were either more interested in technical-vocational courses, which are offered at other postsecondary institutions, such as polytechnics, or might actually be opting to access opportunities at overseas universities to pursue other offerings.

#### **Factors Identified by Focus Group for the Disinclination of Men to Pursue HE**

Five educational leaders in a focus group sought to identify and explain the reasons why men generally were deterred from enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados. Descriptive coding was used during the first cycle to produce a summary of the results in tabular form consistent with that advocated by Saldaña (2016). These reasons, which spanned dispositional, institutional, and situational factors, addressed areas of deficiency, need, and interest.

Table 5.  
*Educational Leaders' Perception on the Factors Deterring Men from Pursuing Higher Education in Barbados*

RQ1 – Why are men deterred from enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados even though they have the requisite certification to enroll in higher education?	Dispositional factors	Institutional factors	Situational factors
	Lack of self-confidence, interest, commitment/discipline/patience for the rigour required in HE, interest in books and reading	The lack of a sufficiently diversified programme	Different socialization of men to women in the home
	Greater interest in practical/technical/vocational subjects	Traditional approaches to teaching methodologies	Different expectations for men at school from peers and teachers
	Greater value on enjoying their friends and social life	Length of the programmes	Changes in societal views of the role of education as a means to move up the ladder
	Contentment/satisfaction with their position in life	Low numbers of male faculty members	Changes in societal views of the role of education as a means to move up the ladder
	The belief that real men work; Study is unmasculine	The inability of secondary schools to get male students to see the connection between their current studies and future opportunities	The aggressive uptake of education by women
	Less valuing of the role that education can play in their lives		Early fatherhood
	The love of money and what it can buy		Pressure from girlfriends or dates to provide money for support
	The disinclination to delay gratification		Poverty - The need to earn money to support themselves and their families
			Low employment by persons with degrees and vice versa

As expected, the focus group provided a more comprehensive view of the deterrents to men's enrollment in HE in the Barbados context when versus coding was employed to analyse the data. An examination showed that there was congruence between the men and the focus group on the lack of interest in books, the disinclination to delay gratification, greater interest in practical, technical or vocational subjects, and the desire to earn money with respect to the dispositional factors. While the other factors posited by the focus group on deterrents to HE for men were not reflective of the men in the study, they could be applicable to other men not studied. These included men having a greater value for enjoying their social life with friends and the belief that study is unmasculine.

In relation to the institutional factors, there was agreement and disagreement between the men and focus group members on the factors deterring male enrollment in HE in Barbados. There was consensus that the lack of a sufficiently diversified programme to cater to the unique interests of some men and the use of traditional teaching methodologies were deterrents to some men. Notwithstanding, while educational leaders advanced the view that the guidance counsellors in the system were hardworking, the fact that many men were undecided four years after leaving school about their job aspirations and HE studies could suggest that career guidance is an area that could merit some attention. One surprising factor identified by educational leaders was the lack of sufficient male faculty in HE - a factor that could extend Cross's (1981) model by going beyond the practices and procedures of institutions as a deterrent to exploring the demographics of HE institution constituents as a possible constraint.

There was little unanimity between the men and the focus group members with respect to the situational factors that deter men from enrolling in HE in Barbados. Agreement was only evidenced with respect to the inability of some men to pay tuition cost due to poverty being a factor and the conclusions by some men on whether enrolling in HE was wise when they observed what was happening to those who enrolled in HEs and those who pursued technical-vocational subjects. Focus group members posited deterrents such as difference in socialization as well as peer and teacher expectations, changes in societal views on the role of education, the aggressive uptake of education by women, the presence of the underground economy that men can participate in, early fatherhood, and pressure from girlfriends or dates to provide financial support. Table 6 shows a brief synopsis of all the deterrents gleaned from both men and educational leaders in tabular format:

Table 6.

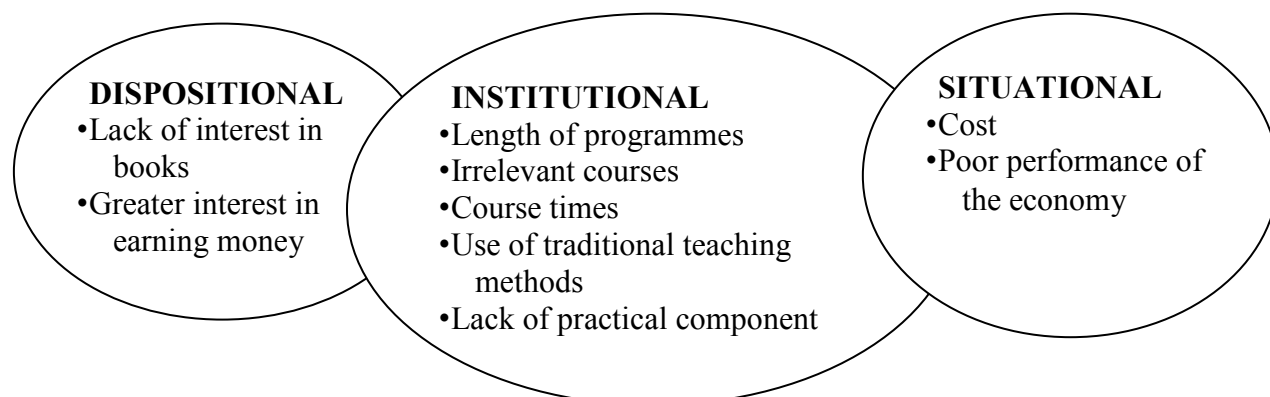
*Collated Factors Deterring Men from Enrolling in HE in Barbados from Both Groups*

Type of Deterrents	Factors Deterring Young Men from Enrolling in HE in Barbados from Both Groups
Dispositional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of self-confidence, interest, commitment/discipline/patience for the rigour required in HE</li> <li>• Lack of interest in books and academics</li> <li>• Lack of commitment to rigour required in HE</li> <li>• Less valuing of the role that education can play in their lives</li> <li>• The disinclination to delay gratification</li> <li>• The love of money and what it can buy</li> <li>• Greater interest in socialising with friends</li> <li>• Contentment/satisfaction with their position in life</li> <li>• Greater interest in earning money</li> <li>• Greater interest in practical/technical/vocational subjects</li> <li>• The belief that real men work; Study is unmasculine.</li> </ul>
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of programmes in HE</li> <li>• Use of traditional teaching methods in HE</li> <li>• Too much theory in HE</li> <li>• Irrelevant courses in HE/ The lack of a sufficiently diversified programme</li> <li>• Scheduling of Courses in HE</li> <li>• The inability of secondary schools to get male students to see the connection between their current studies and future opportunities</li> <li>• The observance of the low numbers of male faculty members</li> </ul>
Situational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty – The cost of HE deemed too high and the need to support themselves and their families</li> <li>• Cost-benefit analysis of studying in present economic environment</li> <li>• Presence of an underground economy</li> <li>• Need to support girlfriends and dates</li> <li>• Different socialisation of &amp; expectation for men</li> <li>• The lack of transportation</li> <li>• Changes in societal views of the role of education as a means to move up the ladder</li> <li>• The aggressive uptake of education by women</li> <li>• The presence of the underground economy – drugs, ...</li> <li>• Early fatherhood</li> </ul>

## **Emerging Themes on Major Deterrents to Enrollment in HE by Men in Barbados**

### **Based on Consensus from Both Young Men and Educational Leaders**

When I juxtaposed the data from both men and educational leaders, I made several observations. Young men in Barbados who have acquired the requisite certificates to enter HE are generally deterred from enrolling in HE, even though they are ambitious and have an interest in HE, for varying reasons. They are less interested in books and more interested in working and earning a living after they leave secondary school than enrolling in a HE institution in Barbados. For them, there is no need to pursue HE if they can find meaningful work. The educational leaders offered several reasons for this high interest in work, including, the need to support their family, and, or their girlfriends or dates, the lack of discipline, and the inability to defer gratification. Institutional factors are the primary deterrents to the uptake of HE in Barbados by men. Specifically, cost, the lack of a sufficiently diversified programme that includes a practical component in the subject offerings, length of degree programmes, and timing of the classes were identified as major deterrents to the uptake of HE opportunities in Barbados by men, especially working men. This was explained by some educational leaders as being the case partially due to inflexibility in some programmes. Young men are further deterred from enrolling in HE when they conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the rewards of studying in the present economic environment in Barbados when compared with the investments of time and money they are expected to make to do so. Figure 2 shows these factors at a glance:



*Figure 2.* Major Factors from Both Groups – Factors Deterring Men Enrollment in HE in Barbados

**Research Question 2 - What do young men perceive to be the benefits of not enrolling in Higher Education?**

The young men were asked to answer the research question: What do you think are the benefits of not enrolling in college or university to pursue an associate degree or degree? Surprisingly, two men indicated that there were no benefits to absenting themselves from HE. Charles said, “I don’t think there is” while Jonathan shared, “I don’t, can’t see there being any benefits. I guess you need to be in school or whatever to get the knowledge, in order to get the degrees”. This evidenced the premium placed on the value of an education in Barbados, in my view. Conversely, three men indicated that the main benefit was to earn money from a job. Other benefits mentioned by men in the study were time, freedom, gaining work experience, and opportunities to travel. The main point by men on the benefit of not enrolling in HE was that it affords them the opportunity to make money. John’s comment that “You can have work opportunities” encapsulated this point.

**Research Question 3 - What are the perspectives of young men in Barbados, who are qualified to enter college or university, on how male participation in HE might be increased?**

I asked seven young men to share their perceptions on how male participation in HE might be increased in Barbados. Two men could not articulate any position on how this might be accomplished. One man advanced that schools needed to ascertain what men were interested in learning. Another asserted that this could be accomplished by surveying men. Yet another advanced that men needed encouragement. Some of the participants suggested coaching, a buddy system, and mentorship as ways that men might be encouraged to participate in HE. One young man recommended that men needed to be properly advised by guidance counsellors at workshops at the secondary school level. Two men shared that there needed to be more practical classes in HE. Tyler specifically stated that he needed, “either more practical classes or subjects or practical methods.” Last, the suggestion was made that there be a guaranteed job in the area of study after completion of the degree. All these recommendations indicate that a multiplicity of approaches should be used to increase the number of men enrolled in HE in Barbados.

**Research Question 4 - What are the perspectives of educational leaders in Barbados on how male participation in HE might be increased?**

I conducted a focus group in which I asked five educational leaders to share their perceptions on how male participation in HE might be increased in Barbados. Using versus coding, a method where the codes from men and educational leaders were placed beside each other and compared to determine similarities and differences in perspectives



(Saldaña, 2016), I was able to determine that the educational leaders concurred with the men that a forum should be provided to men to share their educational needs and interests and a diverse programme needed to be built out to attract more men in HE. The list that follows shows the additional recommendations given by the education leaders that were not articulated by the men who were interviewed in this study:

- Create greater linkages between HE and the job market so that men can earn money while studying. Men would be more interested if there was an increased likelihood of being employed.
- Create cross-faculty programmes/Interdepartmental studies
- Marry academic and technical subjects – There is no need for programmes which have all theory in this age.
- Build flexibility into programmes of study in a way that allows men to enter and exit as they see fit until completion. This can be accomplished by providing certification for the completion of each module or course along the way.
- Share information on the job market to assist men in understanding local and global demands
- Develop more courses that would interest men that have greater relevance to the changing global economy
- Create policies that are conducive to the enrollment of both genders in HE
- Create more industry-ready programmes where men have greater opportunities for employment
- Expand the National Youth Service to help in creating more disciplined men

The main point arising out of the analysis of the data on increasing participation in HE was that there needed to be a comprehensive approach to HE in Barbados. All sectors and stakeholders should be involved in unique ways to be a catalyst for the growth in numbers of men in HEs in Barbados. Various suggestions will need to be implemented to improve the numbers of men enrolled in HE. These suggestions for increasing the number of men enrolled in HE must include changes that take the needs of men for practical activity and non-traditional subjects into account. Indeed, Cross (1974) was right in opining over fifty years ago that “to interest people in formal learning is not our major problem . . . . If the price and program are right, the attitude is quite positive” (p. 9). Flexibility and responsiveness, then, must be ‘watchwords’ in HE in Barbados if there is to be an increase in the participation levels of men in HE.

### **Evidence of Quality**

This study followed appropriate procedures to ensure the accuracy of the data. I used more than one method of data collection in this case study which allowed for the triangulation of the data. I conducted member checks that allowed each participant to check the transcript and final interpretations written after data collection and analysis to confirm either by texting or email that they were correct. In addition, similar conclusions could be reached by other researchers in coding the data and analysing the data. Further, I wrote memos to demonstrate reflexivity during the research process.

### **The Project Deliverable**

A policy recommendation or position paper is the most appropriate project based on the results of the research and need to increase the number of men who are enrolled in HE in Barbados. The findings indicated that there is no singular factor that deters men in Barbados from pursuing HE. In fact, the data from both men and educational leaders indicate that there are numerous factors arising from several parts of the educational system that combine to contribute to the disinclination of men to enrollment in HE in Barbados – some in greater measure than others. Consequently, in an effort to increase the number of men enrolled in HE, I thought it best to select a project that was comprehensive enough to ameliorate the problem. A recommendation paper is the best option for tackling this multifaceted problem because it can provide guidance to stakeholders that is directly based upon the available evidence from the participants in the case study in Barbados.

### **Summary**

Section 2 focused on the research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and data analysis results. The choice of design was qualitative and justified primarily on the fact that there is little insight into the reasons for low male enrollment levels in HE in Barbados. Criteria and justification for the selection of participants and the procedures for gaining access to them were outlined. Care was taken to describe the protection of the rights of the participants in the study. The data collection process was described, justified, and evidenced by instruments and protocols in order to ensure

transparency. Last, the resulting data was analysed using standard procedures that are consistent with a qualitative paradigm to ensure the validity of the study.

The data from Barbados showed that men were deterred from enrollment in HE for a number of interrelated reasons spanning dispositional, institutional and situational factors. A greater interest in earning money than studying emerged as the major dispositional deterrent. A consideration of the cost versus the benefit in the current economic climate in Barbados influenced men not to enroll. However, more reasons were identified for men disinclination to pursue HE within the realm of institutional factors. These were length of programmes, irrelevant courses, use of traditional teaching methods, and lack of practical components in courses.

## **Section 3: The Project**

### **Introduction**

In this Section, I advance a recommendation paper as a strategy to ameliorate the problem of male underenrollment in HE in Barbados. I provide a rationale for the selection of the project genre. I review and share pertinent literature on widening participation in HE. I explain the appropriateness of a recommendation paper to address the problem using the literature to support my point. I fully describe the proposed project, discuss the project implications, and detail a project evaluation plan to ensure that the project is executed effectively.

### **Project Description**

I identified the decline of male enrollment in HE over the last 10 years and the lack of understanding of the deterrents in this regard as a problem in Barbados. While the Literature Review in Section 1 revealed that situational factors are predominate deterrents to men's uptake of HE opportunities, the study that I conducted in Barbados found otherwise. The research study results showed that men had positive dispositions to enrolling in HE to obtain an associate or bachelor's degree in Barbados, but they had a greater interest in securing employment. The consensus from both the men and educational leaders was that degree length, use of traditional teaching methods, the lack of a practical or hands-on component in the available programmes of interest to them, and the irrelevance to their lives of the programmes currently being offered at the degree level were the major deterrents to pursuing HE. Men did not identify situational barriers as a major deterrent to HE although it can be deduced that the poor economic

performance of Barbados with the attendant inability to find jobs also informed men's decision-making processes. The educational leaders advanced several additional reasons that could be reflective of the thinking of other men who were not included in the study including the perspective that study is unmasculine (See Table 5).

This recommendation paper is a natural consequence of the study results. I divided the paper into three sections. I prefaced the recommendation paper with a background of the existing problem and summary of the major findings. In the main body, I presented major evidence, based on the literature and research conducted in Barbados, to support the suggestions for increasing the number of men who enroll in HE, not only locally but globally. I concluded the recommendation paper with suggestions for increasing enrollment of all students, with a specific focus on men in Barbados, based on the evidence that was provided from the field research, literature, and research committee members who supervised the study.

### **Goals of the Proposed Project**

The goals of the project are four-fold. The primary goal of this project is to make practical recommendations that could engender an increase in the number of men who enroll in a HE institution in Barbados in the next decade, if applied. Second, the goal of this project is to raise the aspirations of men in Barbados so that they value HE more highly than other interests. To this end, this project will be shared with the young men who participated in the study, educational leaders in both secondary and HEs, and the MoE. Third, I will use this project to identify the role of specific entities and individuals in the educational system who should work in concert to increase the number of men who

enroll in HE in Barbados. This is important because it means that each entity or individual can commence actions toward goal attainment immediately. Fourth, I created this recommendation paper to be the catalyst for a comprehensive education policy at all levels of the education system in Barbados. According to the Ministry of Education (2005), it is important to ensure that *Each One Matters* so that the issues of low academic achievement and the absence of certification among young people, identified in Curriculum 2000 Barbados (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, 2000b) are addressed. One man who does not participate in HE in Barbados when he can do so is one too many.

### **Rationale**

As a result of the findings from this research and the literature, a recommendation paper is most appropriate. Vincent (2014) asserted that while it is important to identify the reasons for the low representation of men in HE, it is even more critical to work towards solutions based on research. Loots and Walker (2015) and Mabokela and Mlambo (2017) advanced the usefulness of policy initiatives in bringing about meaningful social change.

There are practices that can be employed by school leaders and teachers to shape the value system of men and assist them in gaining a better sense of how deferring employment could positively impact their personal lives and possibly reshape the economic conditions in their communities on a small or large level. Loots and Walker (2015) indicated that the strategy of using policy initiatives could possibly work well for the “expansion of opportunities” and “development and empowerment” of men (p. 362).

The disposition to value early employment over HE needs to be addressed especially at the secondary school level. Further, it is important to tackle the institutional factors given by both men and educational leaders in the study by the implementation of procedures, best practices in teaching methodologies and academic advising, programme changes, faculty recruitment policy, and the creation of programmes designed to support men in making the decision to enroll in HE in Barbados. Consequently, a recommendation paper is a most appropriate fit for increasing male enrollment in HE in Barbados.

### **Review of the Literature**

I formulated the literature review to summarise the research conducted on widening participation (WP) policies, either targeted to or inclusive of men, to determine the usefulness of such policies in guiding the development of the recommendation project for this study. In this review, I examined the factors that inform policy, the need for WP policies in HE that are inclusive of men's unique characteristics and perspectives, policies at government and institutional levels designed to increase male enrollment, and the appropriateness of the WP policy advanced to ameliorate the problem of male underenrollment in HE in Barbados. I used Google Scholar and the Walden University Library to survey an adequate number of peer-reviewed journals using the key following words in Boolean and advanced searches: *policy, recommendation, policy recommendation, men/boys/men, higher education/post-secondary/tertiary/college, higher education policy, widening participation, and increasing college enrollment*. I surveyed several databases including Education Database, Education Source, Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, and Education Research Complete. I also accessed



several online data sources using Google in order to source pertinent reports and unpublished articles of policy initiatives used around the world with respect to WP for men as an underrepresented group in HE.

### **Appropriateness of Recommendation Paper to Address the Problem**

I proposed a recommendation paper to address the problem of the underrepresentation of men in HE in Barbados. A recommendation paper is applicable because the use of it allows for a start to addressing the problem of male underenrollment in HE in the Barbados context by institutional entities. The recommendation paper can also be used to inform possible legislative responses going forward and pinpoint the critical stakeholders who will be responsible for mobilizing change. Broek and Hake (2012) supported the use of a recommendation paper when dealing with issues of a wide scale. According to Wisker and Massika (2017), it is important to create “a positive environment for widening participation” (p. 56). In this regard, redistributive strategies could serve to change the current demographic of HEs and produce a proportional representation of men to women (Pitman, 2017).

Gibson et al. (2016) stated that the focus of any paper should include all groups; therefore, I formulated the recommendation paper to feed into a more over-arching policy in Barbados that addresses all groups who are desirous of pursuing HE in Barbados. Chanana (2017) confirmed that an “investment in the education of both” sexes “with a focus on equity is consistently the most powerful and important indicator of national development, as well as being a vehicle for the advancement of the present and future generations of children” (p. 117). Barbados is in urgent need of recommendations to

inform an educational policy so that the underenrollment of men in HE can be ameliorated.

### **Theory Used to Guide the Development of the Project**

The main theoretical framework that I used in this study was Cross's chain of response theory (Cross, 1981). Cross (1981) theorised that people make the decision to participate in HE based on a number of interrelated factors. These range from internal to external factors, namely, dispositional, institutional, and situational factors. Because the barriers to the uptake of HE encompass all of these three interconnected aspects, it was critical that I structure the recommendation paper similarly to ensure congruence. Consequently, I divided the recommendations into three groups with the caveat that some recommendations may fit into either one or more category.

### **Review of Policies Used in HE**

Odhiambo (2016), Pitman (2017), Zein (2016) and several other authors indicate that there are many policies introduced across the world to create an environment that supports the participation of underrepresented groups in HE. According to Pitman (2017), policies have been formulated in an attempt to ensure social equity for at least a century. Policies are often proposed by governments and institutions at all levels, but, where government policies exist, educational institutions are usually expected to operate within the parameters of government policy (Greenbank, 2006). These policies are usually formulated with the input of all stakeholders, including, educational leaders, administrators, faculty, community members, and students. Policy initiatives may

include student loans, mentorship programmes, sensitisation to HE, and guidelines in HE (Silveira, 2018) or a combination of all of these.

### **Necessity of WP Policies**

WP policy initiatives are critical as a strategy to address the low levels of various sections of the population in HE. According to the University of Edinburgh (2018), *widening participation* is an approach used to enhance prospective students' current academic performance, raise students' aspiration for HE, and prepare them for HE. Pitman (2007) further explained that policies that create a more diversified student body that is representative of the population ensure equity in HE. Indeed, Odhiambo (2016) posited that having a comprehensive policy framework from which to set targets for addressing inequity in HE is critical to improving access to disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

In the past, there were policies to target or increase underrepresented groups, particularly women (Odhiambo, 2016), indigenous groups, and individuals with disabilities (Gibson et al., 2016). However, from the current literature that I reviewed, the vast majority of work done to widen the participation of persons in HE appeared to have been concerned with persons from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Blackmore, Hutchison, & Keary, 2017; Gale, 2015; Rissman, Carrington, & Bland, 2013; Zein, 2016). This is now changing. In fact, Hillman and Robinson (2016) contended that in more recent times, there has been a focus on men as an underrepresented group in HE. These authors asserted that based “on current trends, the gap between rich and poor will

be eclipsed by the gap between men and women within a decade” in HE (p. 1). The need for WP policies in HE is therefore inescapable.

### **Factors that Influence Policy**

In my review of the literature (Broek & Hake, 2012; Greenbank, 2006; Hoskins, 2013; Odhiambo, 2016), I determined that policy decisions are often primarily influenced by an interplay between economic and political factors. According to Greenbank (2006), many HEs formulate policies that seek to increase the number of students who enroll because of the “economic returns accruing to such activities” (p. 2003). Broek and Hake (2012) stated that when there is a reduction or cessation of government subventions or grants to HEs that historically received them, new policies may emerge in response to the changing economic realities. Policy changes often come into being also because of the need to reposition the economy. According to Hoskins (2013), this was the case in England, where opportunities were extended for individuals to participate in HE in order to meet the challenges of the changing global economic landscape in its attempt to maintain competitiveness. Hoskins (2013) contended that the policy in England came about because the government wanted to ensure that there was a labour force that was responsive to the emerging knowledge economy. Political will is often a critical force in responding to economic issues through changes in policy in education.

Policy guidelines are also influenced by social research. In the case of Barbados, there is now valuable evidence to inform action in an education or HE policy from the perspective of men and educational leaders on the island. The collated data from the participants showed that there are several concerning dispositional factors that often deter

men from enrolling in HE in Barbados. These included lack of self-confidence, interest, and discipline for the rigour required in HE; lack of interest in books and academics, less valuing of the role that education can play in their lives; the disinclination to delay financial gratification; and greater interest in socialising with friends. These dispositions did not emerge in a vacuum. They have their genesis in a social context.

Because some institutional and situational factors may have a negative impact on the dispositions of men, responsibility needs to be taken by the relevant parties to ameliorate these consequences as appropriate. Decreasing the number of men who do not enroll might include ensuring that there is support for all students in the provision of a sufficiently high quality of pertinent information that will serve to assist them in making sound choices during their decision-making process. Research by DiPrete and Buchmann (2013) showed that “boys have less understanding than girls about how their future success in college and work is directly linked to their academic effort in middle and high school” (p. 5). Other issues relating to men’s dispositions will also need to be addressed.

The research that I conducted in Barbados revealed a number of situational factors at the local level that could have accounted for the decline in enrollment in HE. While Barbadians generally enjoy a relatively high standard of living, there were still several factors that were not explicitly mentioned by the young men and educational leaders in the study that I conducted on the reasons for the disinclination of men to pursue HE on the island. These include poverty, the cultural norm for men to feel the need to financially support girlfriends and dates, early fatherhood, the poor performance of the local economy, and different socialisation of and expectations for men to enrol in HE.

With respect to the latter, Bob (pseudonym), one educational leader in the focus group in this study stated

Today, the average student is in a middle-class house and the need to strive for certain things are not as obvious, I think as it was before. And, I don't think that parents are emphasising it with the level of ... push. There was an expectation that you could better yourself through education. Now, I don't think that expectation is pushed as strong. And, it has created a particular attitude for boys, that I think is different from girls in that women are viewing education almost as a natural continuum to be a part of their life where boys are seeing it as if I do it, I do it. If I don't, it doesn't seem to be a big deal.

This quote speaks to the interrelatedness of the deterrents and specifically, the negative impact of an expectation on the dispositions of men and women either by family members or teachers. In light of the aforementioned factors, it is important for the relevant stakeholders to respond. It is important that stakeholders work together to reeducate both teachers and parents so that the outcomes for men are more positive.

Last, I identified several institutional factors in the case study conducted in Barbados that either deterred, or could deter, men from enrolling in HE. These encompassed programme length, the use of traditional teaching methods in HE, the overemphasis on theory, the lack of a sufficiently diversified programme, the observance of the low numbers of male faculty members, incongruence of course scheduling with their lives, and the inability of secondary schools to get male students to see the connection between the benefits of current studies and future opportunities. Expectation

by educators could also be subsumed here. DiPrete and Buchmann (2013) asserted that the expectation directed to men within the school's culture is "the most important predictor of boys' achievement" (p. 5). This stance by DiPrete and Buchmann (2013) was borne out by Ben (pseudonym), an educational leader, who participated in the focus group in this study:

One of our performance indicators here is that 98% of all our students go on to a higher institution of learning. ... We collect the data by their feeding it back to us .... We achieved the target in that 98% over the last 5 or 6 years have gone on to university.

This excerpt demonstrates that greater attention needs to be paid to expressing high expectations for all students in all learning institutions to access HE. Consequently, policies need to be formulated with the input of all stakeholders, including educational leaders, teachers, students, and officials from the MoE to address the multiple deterrents for men and women in the education system using strategies that have worked.

### **WP Policy Strategies**

In the literature reviewed, I noted that there were four strategies that were usually employed to WP in HE, namely, changes in admission policies, greater student support, change in how HE is organised and delivered, and the provision of loans, scholarships, grants, or an adjustment to tuition. I observed that some policies in the literature addressed the underrepresentation of groups through admissions by allowing all persons who matriculated for entry to be admitted, thereby reducing discriminatory practices (Louie, 2007; Wardrop et al., 2016). I noted also that other WP strategies in the literature

focused largely on supporting students through mentorship programmes and college preparation including the provision of information on available programmes and procedures for enrollment (Doyle & Griffin, 2012; Lewis, 2017; Rissman et al., 2013; The White House, 2014). I observed that some WP initiatives in the literature focused on the organisation of HE to reduce the barriers to enrollment, such as having shorter courses and flexible course delivery systems (Casson, 2006), diversification of subject offerings (Blackmore, Hutchinson, & Keary, 2017), and changes to the learning environment such as the interactions and relations between teachers and students and the content (Kolster & Kaiser, 2015). Further, I noticed as I examined the literature that some countries focused on strategies to reduce (Wardrop et al., 2016) or eliminate tuition fees (Mounsey, 2018), provide loans (Odhiambo, 2016), scholarships (Varughese, 2017), and grants (Gale, 2015). Barbados was no exception with respect to the latter when unexpectedly, the newly installed government reinstated the full payment of university fees for students enrolling from September 2018 after four years of not paying students' tuition fees (Mounsey, 2018). All these strategies may be used in concert or in isolation depending on the contextual needs and capacity of the country to deliver them. However, I noted that there was no literature that highlighted changes in teaching methodologies at the HE level as a strategy to induce greater enrollment.

### **Effectiveness of WP Policies**

As I analysed the growing body of literature, I determined that WP policies are largely effective (Doyle & Griffin, 2012; Lewis, 2017; The White House, 2014) but this is disputed by some authors (Kolster & Kaiser, 2015). While it is an imperative to utilise



policy initiatives as one means to increase the number of men in HE, it is also critical to concede, based on the evidence from the literature, that some WP policy initiatives do not work or some do not work as well as intended. Emmerson, Frayne, McNally, and Silva (2005) were of the latter view. According to Greenbank (2006), this is sometimes the case because of the complexity of policy making. Indeed, Gibson et al. (2016) stated that there is evidence to indicate that policies are less effective when they focus exclusively on the underrepresented group. Welikala and Watkins as cited in Gibson et al. (2016) explained that this is often the case because of the “negative perceptions and stigma” on the underrepresented group (p. 11). Notably, the majority of government and institutional policies that I unearthed in the literature did not focus on men specifically. According to Blackmore, Hutchison, and Keary (2017), the effectiveness of a policy is also hampered by the lack of continuity in government when there are changes as a result of elections, resignations, and deaths. I explored some WP policies to determine their effectiveness.

### **Government Policies Targeted to or Inclusive of Men in HE and Their Effectiveness in WP**

In a search of the literature, I found a few WP that came about because of government initiatives. In the United States, President Obama introduced *My Brother's Keeper* (MBK) – a coordinated six-prong government initiative to assist young Black boys and men to reach their potential from preschool to college (The White House, 2014). One critical prong of this programme was to ensure that more men were made

ready to enter college. According to the White House (2016), MBK is reaping some successes but I was not able to locate any empirical studies that evaluated its impact.

In England, there were *Aimhigher* and *Higher Education Field Academy* (HEFA). *Aimhigher* was a multi-stage initiative by the government that commenced in 2004 which was designed to increase the number of persons in HE. According to Doyle and Griffin (2012), several means were employed including sharing information with young people about HE, assisting them to become more confident, and raising their aspirations to enroll in HE. These were operationalised through activities, such as summer school, conferences, mentoring, and visits to universities (Doyle & Griffin, 2012). Several authors indicated that *Aimhigher* was effective not only at raising the academic performance but the aspirations to HE of secondary school students (Doyle & Griffin, 2012; Emmerson, Frayne, McNally, & Silva, 2005). According to Emmerson, Frayne, McNally, and Silva (2005) and Doyle and Griffin (2012), the programme was stymied partly by financial challenges.

HEFA was also targeted to all secondary school students under 16 (Lewis, 2017). It was an initiative where students engaged in group inquiry for a few days at the secondary level and spent a *taster day* in university learning about the application process and then analysing the data they collected (Lewis, 2017). According to Lewis (2017), the use of HEFA resulted in the raising of the aspirations and attitudes of students toward HE. However, no other information was located in the literature that could confirm an actual increase in admissions as a direct result of the programme.

## **Institutional Policies Targeted to or Inclusive of Men in HE and Their Effectiveness in WP**

Policies at the institutional level may or may not have had their genesis in government policy. Irrespective of the source, the action or actions taken by HEs are the result of the decisions taken by educational leaders either to follow government policy or create policy at the institutional level. Policies may or may not bring about the intended changes.

Three policies were located in the literature that were gender-neutral and deemed effective by the originators and stakeholders. Specifically, arising out of the financial support by the Australian government, universities were encouraged to develop a synergistic relationship with high schools since HE aspirations should be cultivated in high school (Rissman et al., 2013). According to Rissman et al. (2013), “an essential aspect of this partnership would be to support these students in continuing their education to gain entry to university” (p. 4). This was accomplished through programmes, such as START QUT and QUTeach@Redcliffe. Research by Rissman et al. (2013) on the latter programme showed that QUTeach@Redcliffe was perceived by staff, parents, and students to be beneficial in increasing enrollment in HE. I noted in the research by Rissman et al. (2013) that interviews with students revealed that they would not have considered university or even applied to do a preliminary programme at the university had there not been a QUTeach@Redcliffe programme which exposed and oriented them to university life. According to Rissman et al. (2013), HE enrollment increased from 21% to 31% from 2009 to 2010 as students understood the long-term benefits of HE,

became more familiar with the expectations in HE, and were supported both financially and emotionally in transitioning to HE (Rissman et al., 2013).

I noted in the literature that another unique strategy was tried successfully in Australia (Rissman et al., 2013). This policy focused in WP on HE with persons from low socioeconomic background. The programme offered was one where students in high school had the opportunity to experience a few university courses in education. This initiative was a joint one between the university and the Queensland Department of Education and Training. According to Rissman et al. (2013), the consensus by all the stakeholders was that the strategy served to raise HE aspirations because it allowed prospective students to get *a feel* for university programmes so that they could make a more informed decision about whether to enroll or not.

Further, Dalarna University in Sweden, was another HE institution that experienced much success in WP as indicated in the literature review. According to Casson (2006), Dalarna University was able to go beyond raising aspirations for HE to actually doubling the numbers of students who enrolled from 2002 to 2006 who were over the age of 25. This was accomplished in the area of education and nursing (two traditional areas) using the methodology of having shorter courses and more flexible programmes but was probably successful because of the related job attachments. HE and workplace partnerships can prove advantageous to all concerned if the programmes offered are diverse.

## **Project Description**

I created this policy recommendation paper to offer suggestions to all educational stakeholders to reduce the deterrents to enrollment in HE for potential students. In order for the project to be successfully implemented, I envisioned a need for many resources. I fully explored the implementation process to identify existing supports, potential barriers and potential solutions to the barriers. I also delineated the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and an implementation timeline.

### **Necessary Resources**

Many resources will be needed in order for the recommendations contained in this paper to be fully implemented in Barbados given the number, type, and magnitude of many of them. The majority of the human resources will need to come from the educational arena given that institutional factors were found to be the primary deterrents to enrollment in HE in Barbados. Considerable financial resources will have to be obtained from grant funding institutions, such as, The Caribbean Development Bank, international grant-funding institutions, or wealthy philanthropists who have an interest in Barbados. Officials of the MoE, the teacher's college, educational leaders, teachers, and guidance counsellors will need to work in concert with each other, students, and employers in Barbados, and other countries who have successfully navigated the journey before.

The work needed to increase the number of men enrolled in HE in Barbados is great. There will be a need to retool teachers, at all levels of the system, to enable them to be more gender-sensitive, positive about students' ability to perform, and flexible in

the use of diverse methodologies that extend beyond the lecture style and include applied learning modalities. A revolution will be needed to bring more degree programmes under the domain of competency-based education. This would create more industry-ready individuals who are qualified at higher levels. Beyond increasing the number of guidance counsellors in secondary schools, guidance counsellors' programmes will also need to be strengthened. Educational institutions will need to be supported in the correct facilitation of mentorship programmes, particularly for men who need it. This discrimination is supported partly by Masters (2018) who indicated that previous research showed that "people consider unequal distribution fair when it is based on differences in merit or need" (para. 5). Consultations will need to be had with all stakeholders on further diversification of degree programmes to make them more relevant in order to generate greater interest by all, but men in particular. Finally, relationships will need to be forged among funding agencies, educational institutions, and industry to leverage the necessary support for students in Barbados.

### **Existing Supports**

There exists a number of supports that might be used to assist in the transformative process of redesigning HE in Barbados. The country has had a long history of financial support to its education system for transformative projects by several regional and international loan funding agencies. These include entities such as the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank (IADB/IDB) (Government Information Service, 2012; Inter-American Development Bank, 2018). The government also offers full or partial scholarships to

Barbadian students based on excellent performance to study for bachelor degrees abroad or locally, inclusive of the cost of books among other things. It also reintroduced full tuition payment for degrees in 2018 in local HEs (Mounsey, 2018). Students can also access loan and or grant funding from the local SRLF or from financial institutions on the island. While these largely represent financing, there exist organisations and entities, such as the Guidance Counsellors' Association, teacher training colleges, and teachers' unions that offer support and training to educators to enhance their professional competencies.

### **Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers**

There are several barriers and potential solutions to the barriers to the full implementation of this policy recommendation paper. These barriers are primarily related to cost, teacher training, and the ability to create fruitful synergies between education and industry in Barbados. Creative solutions will be needed to circumvent existing obstacles.

**Potential Barrier 1.** The cost of teacher training, HE programme diversification and, or competency-based programmes is high and will require investments in HE. In the past, Barbados received loan funding to build schools, introduce technology (Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, 2001), and develop students' core and life skills (Government of Barbados, n.d.). Given the poor state of the economy and inability to access loans at reasonable financial terms from other lending agencies (International Monetary Fund, 2018), Barbados will need to explore grant funding and philanthropy as a solution to this problem.

**Potential Barrier 2.** Teacher retraining is also a high cost given the fact that there are over 3000 teachers in Barbados. The problem where some teachers hold low expectations for student performance especially in low performing schools is concerning. Also, the fact that the Global Center for School Counseling Outcome Research Evaluation and Development (2014) substantiated that there is a “lack of awareness, understanding and programming concerning the socio-emotional and career development needs of students” (p. 5) by some guidance counsellors in the educational system shows that there is some retooling that is necessary. These obstacles can be surmounted if schools evolve into learning communities. Indeed, Hui-Ling (2017) asserted that learning communities can be used to leverage change in professional behaviour in the school context (Pan, 2017).

**Potential Barrier 3.** If some recommendations are to work successfully, synergies will need to be created to ensure full implementation. However, Barbados has a reputation for being a place where the pace is slow and there is much talk and little action (Barbados Today, 2017; Jessop, 2017). It will be necessary to do more than have consultations with the stakeholders in the systems. One potential solution to avoid stagnation during the change process is that I will have to agitate by publishing my research, presenting at conferences, working closely with stakeholders during implementation, monitoring progress with stakeholder support, and evaluating the impact of the changes made in the system through surveys.



## Implementation & Timeline

I formulated this recommendation paper to be a catalyst for social change to the problem of low enrollment in HE by men in Barbados. Male enrollment in HE has declined generally over the last decade and therefore, it will take time for a reversal to be seen. Notwithstanding, I will make every attempt to publish and share the results with Barbadian stakeholders and start the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation process. Consequently, the following timeline in Figure 3 captures how I will execute the plan:

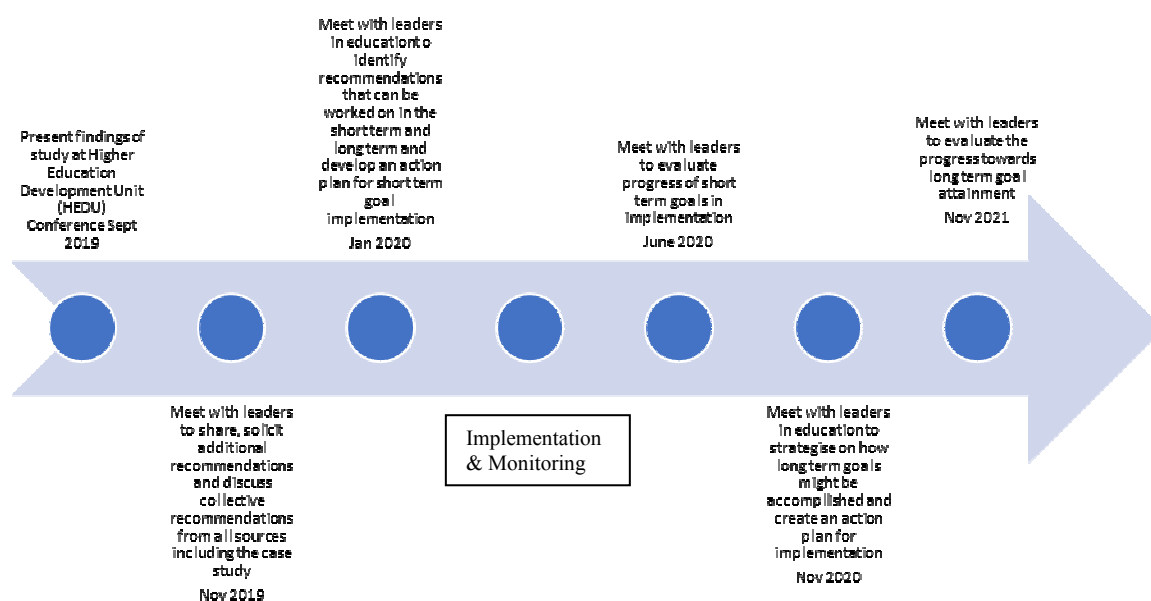


Figure 3. Implementation Timeline for Project

The first step I will take is to present the findings at the International Conference on Higher Education (ICHE) which is usually held biennially in Barbados in October 2018. Many stakeholders will be present at this conference including students from secondary schools and HEs. There is always a question and answer segment where the presenter fields questions from the audience for full engagement. These acts will

generate interest in the resolution of the problem of low male enrollment levels in HE in Barbados.

The second step will be to meet with leaders at all tiers in the education system to discuss the recommendations posited in the research and to discover if they have any other suggestions to add. It is important that persons be given a voice who were not involved in the case study on how the problem of low male enrollment might be ameliorated. This engagement of others is advantageous and allows them to buy-in to being a part of the solution of reducing the problem. These meetings could take up to six months to complete.

The next action taken will be for the MoE to identify short and long-term recommendations in collaboration with the stakeholders in meetings during the next six months. It is critical not to be overly ambitious but to identify recommendations that are easily implementable that could ameliorate the problem of low male enrollment in HE in Barbados. It is also critical at this point to agree on the roles and responsibilities of each entity or individual in increasing male enrollment in HE. Focusing on tasks that require *big steps* or an evolution in practices in the system will only result in frustration and little progress. An old Chinese proverb states that it is better to make many small steps in the right direction than to make a great leap forward only to stumble backward (Buddha, n.d.).

As small steps are taken toward the implementation of some of the recommendations that are easily put in place over the course of the next year, monitoring and evaluation will be completed by the MoE, and secondary, HE school leaders, and me.

There will be meetings, interviews, surveys, and perusal of statistics on male enrollment figures at HEs in Barbados over a two to five-year period initially to ascertain the status of progress and strategise on the way forward on an annual basis. These are important exercises. Without these actions, there will be no way of knowing if the implemented recommendations are effectively resulting in the decline of low male enrollment in HE in Barbados.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Persons Involved**

In order to ensure that the recommendations are implemented in a timely, efficient, and effective manner, I will identify the stakeholders, and delineate their roles and responsibilities. These include the MoE, educational leaders in HEs, secondary, and primary schools, guidance counsellors, parents and or parents' organisations, the business community, and students. The roles and responsibilities are varied but complementary. I will take the lead by presenting a copy of the study to the MoE and disseminating study findings to HEs and secondary schools. This will be followed by a discussion between the MoE and myself to start the process of engagement with all stakeholders with the intent to halt the slide in male enrollment in HE in Barbados.

**The MoE.** The MoE in Barbados has overarching responsibility for every educational institution in Barbados. It creates policies that guide every sector in the education system. Consequently, the MoE has the responsibility to: (a) invite stakeholders to discuss the way forward after receipt of a copy of the study, (b) work with educational leaders to formulate a draft policy based on the recommendations within the study among other recommendations, (c) monitor and evaluate the implementation of

workable recommendations that seek to increase the number of students in HE in barbados with particular attention to the men, and (d) increase the number of guidance counselors in secondary schools.

**Teachers' Training Colleges.** The colleges that train teachers have the responsibility to: (a) expose trainee teachers to student-centred methodologies that use practical applications, (b) sensitise trainee teachers or teachers on the importance of being gender-sensitive in classrooms so they use teaching methodologies that increase achievement for all students, and (c) encourage research to determine the effectiveness of the use of recommendations which were implemented.

**Primary School Principals.** Principals of primary schools have the responsibility to: (a) ensure that students attain to the highest standard of literacy and numeracy, (b) nurture well-disciplined students whose behaviour is exemplary, (c) teach students the skills needed to learn independently, and (d) educate parents and guardians on the value of HE to the lives of their children.

**Secondary school principals.** Principals of secondary schools have the responsibility to: (a) encourage parents and teachers to have and express high expectations for students to enroll in HE, (b) inform students of course offerings at the HE level using every medium to reach them, (c) develop linkages between the school and HEs that bolster greater interest in HE, (d) implement strategies that promote a positive learning environment for all students, (e) utilise physical and human resources during lesson delivery to foster an understanding of the importance of the value of HE to their

lives, (f) promote the reading of books that explore educational options in traditional and nontraditional areas, (g) educate parents and guardians on the value of HE, and organise structures for student shadowing and mentorship within their schools, between secondary schools, between their schools and HEs, and between their schools and the private sector.

**Higher education leaders.** Principals of HEs have the responsibility to: (a) inform students of course offerings at the HE level throughout the academic year and not only right before advertisement for entrance, (b) include course descriptions, methodologies used, and list job opportunities for each programme offered, (c) develop more diverse programmes that are attractive to all genders, (d) create more programmes that can be offered in several modes, including, blended and online learning, (e) develop linkages between their organisation and secondary schools that could bolster a greater interest in HE, (f) create competency-based degree programmes that certify learning in traditional and nontraditional disciplines, such as, sound engineering and construction, and (g) encourage ongoing research to better understand what prospective students are thinking about HE in Barbados.

**Guidance Counsellors.** Guidance counsellors in secondary schools have the responsibility to: (a) assist students in identifying their strengths and weaknesses so that they can be exposed to careers that are aligned to their peculiar talents so that students achieve their potential, (b) work with students to explore a diversity of career options on an ongoing basis not only as a whole group but on an individual level, (c) nurture interest in varied HE programmes by making certain to also highlight the nontraditional career

options, and (d) liaise closely with parents and guardians to assist in creating a well-disciplined child.

**The Business Sector.** The business sector has the responsibility to: (a) provide opportunities for employees to access HE offerings by providing flexibility in working hours, (b) create linkages and partnerships with secondary schools and HEs so that work attachments can be offered, and (c) enter into discussions with educational leaders to deliberate on the creation of synergies between the two sectors so that students' aspiration for work experience can be met in a legitimate context.

**Parents and Guardians.** Parents and guardians have the responsibility to: (a) hold and express high expectations for their child or ward to enroll in HE, (b) communicate any peculiarities about their child or ward with the school that would negatively impact student learning, (c) create a home environment in which further education is promoted and valued, and (d) encourage their children who are *at-risk* for deviant behaviour to join the Barbados Youth Service so that they may be trained to be more disciplined and focused on preparing for their work lives.

**Students.** Students have the responsibility to: (a) apply themselves to their current studies in a manner that allows them to excel academically, (b) show interest in HE offerings (c) explore avenues for scholarships and grants, and (d) engage in personal learning that assists them in understanding the relevance and value of HE to their lives.

### **Project Evaluation Plan**

Evaluation is a critical aspect of project implementation. Unless it is undertaken, there can be no clarity about whether a project has achieved the intended goals. While the recommendation paper is not a policy, the suggestions submitted can still be evaluated as if they were approved to be used as elements in a national or institutional policy.

The evaluation plan for the project is goal-based. According to Root III (2018), “goals-based evaluation is a method used to determine the actual outcome of a project when compared to the goals of the original plan” (para. 1). Another term used in the literature is *impact assessment* (Drinking and driving: A road safety manual, n.d.). Impact assessment or goal-based assessment “refers to a change in the target population that has been brought about by the programme” or intervention (Drinking and driving: A road safety manual, n.d., p. 123). A goal-based evaluation is beneficial because it allows stakeholders to “determine whether the programme has brought about a change” (Drinking and driving: A road safety manual, n.d., p. 123).

The project deliverable has three goals. The first is to make practical recommendations that could engender an increase in the number of men who enroll in a HE institution in Barbados in the next decade, if applied informally at various levels. The second is to identify the roles of specific entities and individuals in the educational system who should work in concert to increase the number of men who enroll in HE in Barbados. Third, the project serves to inform a comprehensive education policy in Barbados that better serves the interest of students and meets national requirements for

development. These goals are important given that they are the first steps toward the formulation of a national education policy in Barbados. Notwithstanding, “each project ... must decide what to monitor or evaluate” (Chevalier & Buckles, 2015, p. 62).

Consequently, the project evaluation plan is concerned with the evaluation of the first goal if the recommendations are converted to smaller goals and implemented.

Several evaluation strategies will be used to determine if there is an increase in the number of men who enroll in a HE institution in Barbados over the next few years as a result of the implementation of the recommendations contained in this project study. First, surveys will be conducted annually with men as the respondents to ascertain if men’s attitudes to HE have changed. Second, leaders at every level of the education system will be interviewed to determine if they perceive that there are changes in the attitudes of men on a yearly basis. Third, an analysis of existing and yearly statistics from HEs will be analysed to determine if there is an increase of men in HEs in Barbados. According to Babbie (2017), this “method is particularly significant because existing statistics should always be considered as at least a supplemental source of data” (p. 332). This information can be used as the basis for adjustments as needed so that the desired goal is reached and the trajectory in male enrollment in HE changes for the better.

### **Project Implications**

I designed this project with the intent to share many strategies with the stakeholders that might increase male enrollment in HE both nationally and internationally. However, it will be important for all stakeholders to be intentional in the use of the recommendations going forward. One ramification is that the recommendation



paper will warrant an inward look at institutional norms and practices. According to Baber (2014), the examination of educational cultures is critical. While student loans are no longer necessary to facilitate entry into HE in Barbados, the use of the other recommendations by stakeholders will require dialogue and action at different levels of the education system in Barbados to determine which, if any, can be implemented in the short, medium, or long term to ameliorate the current problem of low male enrollment in HE.

Two implications are that the implementation of the project by stakeholders will bring them together and facilitate greater synergies among them. Further, there is a strong indication that this recommendation paper can be used to revolutionise the education system from a set of compartmentalised institutions to one seamless entity that works for the benefit of all. This important work, which is so necessary at this juncture, will provide the impetus for stakeholders to operationalise a plan based on empirical research and the literature.

If the recommendations are implemented by the stakeholders in education at the government and institutional level, their use can bring about much needed social change. There could be greater diversity in HE than what presently exists (Gasman et al., 2014). An increase in male enrollment and graduation rates could see a greater number of men who possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for them to function in a 21<sup>st</sup> century environment as husbands, fathers, civic-minded persons, and workers. There could be an improvement in the quality of men's social relationships (Smith, 2011; Weaver-Hightower, 2010) and access to higher-paying jobs (International Labour

Organisation, 2014; Odhiambo, 2016; Weaver-Hightower, 2010). Also, the uptake of HE could lead to greater social mobility (Smith, 2011), a reduction in mortality rates (Kulhánová et al., 2014), poverty (Smith, 2011), crime, and stagnation among men (Smith, 2017).

### **Summary**

I described the project to ameliorate the problem of the underenrollment of men in HE in Section 3. I delineated four goals of the project and advanced a rationale for undertaking a recommendation paper. I examined the literature supporting a recommendation paper that focused on widening participation policy to determine the effectiveness of policies at both the institutional and national levels. I identified potential barriers in conjunction with the opportunities to make certain that all aspects of the project were explored to determine the likely impacts on HE that could influence the effectiveness of the project. I proposed a two-year implementation timeline. I paid careful attention to indicating the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders within whose ambit project implementation lies.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

In this section, I discuss the project strengths and limitations. I propose recommendations for alternative research approaches and solutions to the local problem. I share reflections on my scholarship, project development, and leadership and change. In addition, I explain the project strengths and limitations. Last, I discuss the project implications, applications, and directions for future research.

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

#### **Strengths**

There are several advantages to the use of a recommendation paper. First, I identified each stakeholder's role and responsibilities in ameliorating the problem of low male enrollment in HE in Barbados. This is consistent with the position of Varughese (2017) who asserted that it is often critical to redefine the roles of the stakeholders in policy initiatives. Second, I advanced short, medium, and long-term goals. This means that stakeholders can commence actions immediately to start the process and implement strategies at varying stages toward a resolution to the problem. Deakin University (2017) suggested that the act of goal setting of this kind offers "a series of milestones – a step-by-step system that paves a path toward your long-term goal ... that give you a clear plan to grasp what may otherwise seem impossible" (para.2). Last, because of the complexity of the genesis and interrelatedness of the factors advanced by Cross (1981), one strategy in an area could positively affect and bring about change in another area. For example,

parent education at the institutional level may result in dispositional change in individual men.

### **Limitations**

While this project has many strengths that would commend it to the stakeholders, it also has limitations. Some aspects of the project such as competency-based HE may not be easily implemented in Barbados because of the current dire economic predicament of the country (International Monetary Fund, 2018), although competency-based HE may be easily implementable elsewhere (Lindsay, 2018). This project will demand a cadre of professionals who have the requisite skills to diversify programme offerings but may be hampered by the lack of human resources to build out new programmes, such as, sound engineering or robotics, or augment existing ones. Finally, there is a high probability that HEs lack the money at this time to include or increase the materials, technology, and equipment that educators would need to provide more practical or hands-on learning experiences.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

I chose to use a recommendation paper as the approach to solve the local problem of low enrollment levels by men in HE in Barbados. I selected the recommendation paper because it represented the most comprehensive manner in which to address the problem in the shortest time period. In addition, I chose the recommendation paper because it facilitated the inclusion of every stakeholder in assuming responsibility to make changes at their level.

I also considered the use of a mentorship programme to increase the number of men enrolling in HE as a stand-alone initiative. Several authors including McBride (2017), Raven (2012), The White House (2014) and Vincent (2014) posited that a mentorship programme is a critical strategy to ameliorate the problem. Raven (2012) asserted this primarily because the lack of male role models in education appears to be part of the problem (Raven, 2012). These include initiatives, such as, *Project MALES*, which provide mentorship to men in the United States, not only in transitioning to college but throughout college (Vincent, 2014). While a mentorship programme can be very beneficial, I did not consider it because it did not naturally follow from the research questions in my study in Barbados and could be subsumed in an aspect of an overarching recommendation paper.

I also contemplated creating a training programme or curriculum to work with selected men to better prepare them for HE and increase their understanding of the role that HE can play in their lives. The Virginia Department of Education (2018) advanced the perspective that students needed to be prepared “for the challenges, demands, and rigor of higher education” given that “we want our students to graduate from these institutions, not just be accepted” (para. 2). However, I did not select this strategy for my project study because it could only impact a few students at a time at best. The problem of low enrollment in HE by men in Barbados is too severe to use a limited approach such as a training programme for a few men.

## **Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change**

### **Scholarship**

As a result of conducting this research and creating a project to increase the number of men enrolled in HE in Barbados, I am satisfied that I have made a valuable contribution to HE locally, regionally, and internationally as a scholar. Prior to starting this doctoral programme, I knew little about higher education. During this journey, I had to continually contend with the issues in HE, such as the cost of HE and the gender gap in HE. This led me to peruse, review, and analyse pertinent literature in HE but specifically on the phenomenon of male underparticipation in HE. Now, I believe that I have distinguished myself as an academic who has specialised knowledge about HE with the assistance of my doctoral research committee who supervised the study. I have been able to produce a recommendation paper that has the ability to transform the current demographic of HEs from one where men are noticeably absent to one where they are visibly present.

### **Project Development**

The capstone for the Ed.D. programme required that I choose either to write a dissertation or a project study. The problem of the underrepresentation of men in HE in Barbados that I identified early in my research process demanded urgent attention at the local level. The processes with which I engaged provided myriad opportunities for me to grow as an academic. I learnt the importance of discarding biases about the data and allowing the information to tell the story. The project was relatively easy to develop because of the conceptual framework that the study was framed on. I recognised that it

was key to ensure that there was congruence and alignment in every aspect of the research study and between the study and the project.

### **Leadership and Change**

This doctoral journey facilitated my growth as an educational leader by providing me the opportunity to engage in a project study that has the capacity to bring about meaningful change in Barbados. According to Žydžiūnaitė (2018), “leadership is about creating a vision of what might be” (p. 34). It allowed me to project the vision that it is possible to ameliorate the decline in male enrollment in HE in Barbados. I demonstrated leadership by producing a recommendation paper with the input from young men, educational leaders, and my Walden research committee who supervised the study. As a result of the collaboration effort of all the stakeholders under my leadership, the project provided scope for me to make an original contribution to better understanding one of the HE issues in Barbados. By so doing, I am in a better position to lead the way in advancing recommendations that have the capacity to increase the number of men in HE in Barbados over the short, medium, and long term.

### **Reflection on the Importance of the Work**

This study is a significant one for Barbados to assist in understanding the gender gap in HE from the perspectives of men and educational leaders in Barbados. It was the first research study in Barbados that asked nonparticipants in HE between the ages of 19–21 to explain the reasons why they had not enrolled. One previous study in Barbados that laid the groundwork for my study was conducted by Gift (2014). Gift (2014) focused on identifying the psychosocial and cognitive variables (individual factors) deterring

participation in HE from the views of both boys and girls (minors) who were still in secondary school in her study. However, I conducted a study, using a framework that took account of institutional, situational factors, and individual factors, that explored the phenomenon of male underenrollment in HE in Barbados by focusing primarily on young men who did not enroll even though they were qualified to do so.

The study was a project study and not a dissertation. This means I was concerned with not only adding to the body of knowledge on the problem but putting a plan in place to reduce the problem in the local context. In this regard, the inclusion of a recommendation paper has the potential to be a catalyst for changes at all levels of the education sector but particularly at the HE level. This recommendation paper can serve to guide practice and institutional arrangements, especially at the secondary and HE level, in a way that results in the increased enrollment of men in HE in Barbados.

While I framed this study from a deficit perspective, the findings of the study were particularly insightful because they dispelled the myth that many persons had that men were uninterested in HE largely because of dispositional and situational factors. The research showed that young men are interested in HE but more of them are not making the decision to enroll because they are not convinced that HE is a worthwhile exercise for them at this time in their lives. These findings are important because they undermine previous negative perspectives of men's interest in HE and show instead that men are deliberately and strategically making informed choices about enrolling in HE.



### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

This study has many applications, implications, and directions for future research. The work has the potential to assist men in reaching their fullest potential academically and bring greater gender parity in HE and the workplace. The findings of this study suggest that educational entities will have to be intentional about reengaging men especially those in the postsecondary population. It is my view that the recommendations in this research study ought to be considered and worked upon collaboratively by all stakeholders in the educational system, as appropriate, to bring about meaningful social change.

The problem of the underrepresentation of men in HE is prevalent in a large number of countries across the world. Much of the future research will need to focus on current practices, procedures, and conditions of secondary schools and HEs locally, regionally, and internationally to better understand weak HE aspirations and influences. Concomitantly, there should be some focus on identifying the dispositional, institutional, and situational factors influencing male enrollment in HE in Barbados by targeting men who are either current students or alumni. These could entail the conduct of quantitative, mixed-method, or qualitative studies.

### **Conclusion**

The decline in male enrollment in HE in Barbados is concerning and the situation demands urgent attention to reverse the current trend. I did not do this research to suggest that all men must or should enroll in HE although HE “is undoubtedly essential to the social and economic prosperity of individuals and society” (McLendon & Perna,

2014, p. 6). I did not undertake this research to undermine the achievements of women and their needs in HE. According to Harper (2013), women too “have gender-specific needs and challenges, and therefore deserve institutional attention and resources” (p. 4). While the influence of other factors cannot be discounted, the data from my research in Barbados showed unequivocally that institutional barriers accounted as the major reason for the disinclination of men to enroll in HE on the island. These findings merit a definitive response particularly at the institutional level, but also from all relevant stakeholders whose work can make a positive difference as the problem is tackled holistically. No less than a collective effort to accomplish this task will change the current trajectory in male enrollment levels in Barbados.

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