LIVING TWO LIVES: THE ABILITY OF LOW INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES IN THEIR QUEST TO BREAK THE GLASS CEILING OF EDUCATION THROUGH THE ELLISON MODEL (TEM) MENTORING APPROACH

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of DAVINA J. HOYT finds it satisfactory and recommends that it be accepted.

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LIVING TWO LIVES: THE ABILITY OF LOW INCOME AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES IN THEIR QUEST TO BREAK THE GLASS CEILING OF EDUCATION THROUGH THE ELLISON MODEL (TEM)

MENTORING APPROACH

Abstract

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Chair: Michael T. Hayes

It is often that during their academic pursuits, to become successful, low-income African American women must learn to navigate an upstream current through higher education, where the established order in the academy is based on Western European values that often conflict with African American values (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009; Phinney, Ong & Madden, 2000). Because many lack preparation and tools for success in higher education, without immediate intervention, low-income college students tend to experience academic failure during their first semester at the university level (Acevedo & Herrera, 2002).

The present study analyzed eight interview transcripts of African American women, all of whom had been mentored through Hunt’s Executive Inclusive Community Building Ellison Model (The Ellison Model) (Hunt, 1994). The data described the participants’ experiences in higher education and their perceptions of The Ellison Model and its role in assisting them to overcome the “glass ceiling” in higher education. Analysis of the transcripts involved: (a)
emergent coding wherein a preliminary review of the data revealed themes, including (a) mentoring/support, (b) dialogue between mentor and mentee, (c) conflict resolution, (d) The Ellison Model values, and (e) living two lives. Further, categories were created to examine the data more closely.

Findings of the data showed a consensus among the perceptions of these women from low-income background of the existence of a glass ceiling as they pursued higher education. This glass ceiling was perceived variously: (a) an external glass ceiling, (b) a self-imposed glass ceiling, and (c) a lowered glass ceiling. Moreover, the study showed that the women perceived mentoring as an effective means for assisting low-income African American navigate between home and university space, “living two lives” (Hoyt, 2003). Finally, the study showed the profundity of The Ellison Mentoring Model, specifically, as a viable approach to helping low-income African American women overcome the “glass ceiling” as they pursue higher education. This study has implications for higher education institutions in their efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate more ethnic and gendered minority students, and confirms the benefit of a mentoring component as a major part of student service programs at higher education institutions.
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Akili
(By Dr. Deryl G. Hunt)

Akili, Akili, where are you? Akili, my clever one, where are you?
Akili, Akili, where are you? Akili, my intellect, where are you?
Akili, Akili, where are you? Akili, my wise one, where are you?
I’ve come to celebrate knowledge. Akili, Akili, where are you?

My love, my friend, my protégée, look no longer for I am here.
I am present my love and my friend.
Look no longer my protégée. Look all around and tell me what you see.
Look all around now and tell me what you see.

I see a brighter day just ahead of me. I see the future tall as a tree.
I see promises, made and broken.
I see some toil and tears before me.
I see most of all hope for humanity.
I see Akili in my time of need.

I know Akili and Akili knows me.
I know Akili and Akili knows me.
I see a brighter day just ahead of me.
I see the future tall as a tree.

I know Akili and Akili knows me.
I know Akili and Akili knows me.
I see most of all hope for humanity.
I see Akili in my time of need.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One ever feels his twoness, an American: Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (W.E.B DuBois, 1989, p.3).

Many years ago, W.E.B. DuBois (1903) claimed that African Americans experienced what he called “two souls.” These two souls also had “two thoughts,” and both the souls and the thoughts were contained in “one dark body.” It appears that this dualism spoken of by DuBois (1903) remains true and relevant in present-day society in the lives of African Americans living in the United States. This “double consciousness,” as DuBois (1903) named it, allows one to be able to participate, think, and live as an “American” while understanding that the rights and privileges one has as a “negro” are quite different from their non-negro American peers. This warrants that they also have to simultaneously live and think another way, thus having duality, “twoness,” or “…two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body…” as quoted in the reprint of DuBois original works (DuBois, 1989, p. 3).

Hunt (2005) reflects upon DuBois’ (1903) “double consciousness,” naming it “life of inner consciousness,” the state of internal conflict within blacks and within whites. In essence, it is this internal conflict within the “life of inner consciousness” which produced outward behaviors between whites and blacks resulting in what Hunt (2005) labeled as “life of outer consciousness.” It is in Hunt’s (2005) conceptualization of “life of inner consciousness,” and “life of outer consciousness” that a distinction is made apart from DuBois’ (1903) “double consciousness.” Hunt (2005) illustrates the inward behavior as well as the outward behavior of this duality of which one is faced. In fact, in this distinction, Hunt (2005) argues that this duality or “double consciousness” that DuBois (1903) speaks about is not only limited to the African
American and/or Blacks, but rather it is a phenomenon that transverses racial lines. According to Hunt (2005), Dubois’ (1903) “double consciousness” actually is an internal conflict and inward strife that is experienced by both blacks and whites. Hunt wrote,

> What DuBois referred to as ‘double consciousness,’ I call the life of inner consciousness, where both blacks and whites were beset with inward strife. The life of inner consciousness is contrasted with the outward behavior or the life of outer consciousness, which was driven by the inner consciousness state. Conflict in outward manifestation could be seen in how blacks and whites treated each other in both the U.S. and in The Bahamas. Whites, being the dominate group in both nations, marginalized blacks resulting in enslavement, racial segregation, bigotry and economic and social discrimination. Blacks responded to their marginalized status by acquiescing, protesting or rebelling. Inward conflict was manifested in guilt feelings, anxiety, sorrow and bitterness by both the dominant and subordinate groups (Hunt, 2005, p. 1-2).

Arguably, this life of inner consciousness and life of outer consciousness that Hunt (2005) identified can also be identifiable to any group of persons, regardless of race, that have a dominant/subordinate relationship where there is subjugation of another group. Both ideologies presented by both DuBois (1903) and Hunt (2005) point to the potential for long-term damaging impact on those groups to whom their comments are directed.

A common feature found in the analysis of both scholars’ is the presence of inner strife and conflict that is at work in the lives of those affected by the “double consciousness” or the life of inner consciousness / life of outer consciousness. Important to note is that in the case of both scholars’ work, there is opportunity to extend their concepts by addressing “how to” solve the conflict that is being experienced. As shown further in the present research study, the “double
consciousness” and the life of inner consciousness / life of outer consciousness, as well as the resulting conflict can be addressed by way of the concept of “living two lives” (Hoyt, 2003).

“Living two lives” allows those that are traversing between two spaces to move between both worlds successfully, not being trapped in a liminal stage, or in “limbo” but rather first fully resolving the conflict internally, thus allowing them to be conflict-free as they deal with the other world, whether “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings” described by DuBois (1903) or the life of inner consciousness / life of outer consciousness as described by Hunt (2005). Those who are able to “live two lives” have learned the traditions and politics of both spaces; therefore, they have gained acceptance in both spaces and are able to navigate between both worlds with ease. Expectedly, those who learn to “live two lives” successfully, especially from an early age, are able to become successful in many aspects of their lives, particularly in trying to break the “glass ceiling” of education.

The Researcher’s Background

Growing up as an African American female in the United States, I agree with the statement made by Dubois (1903) so many years ago, as well as Hunt’s (2005) statement regarding the life of inner consciousness / life of outer consciousness. My experiences have taught me that I am an American citizen on the one hand, but a lower class citizen on the other hand, due to my race. My low-income background, coupled with being an African American female, have not afforded me the same privileges that were afforded to my non-African American and non low-income peers, whom I would argue have had better opportunities than I did while growing up. I learned at an early age that I was different and that there were different rules in place for me if I was to achieve what my society deemed as success (educational success, which leads to economic success, which ultimately leads to power and privilege in the American
society). To some degree, I functioned out of a “double consciousness,” though I lacked the academic vocabulary to describe how I felt or how I functioned in my two environments.

Hunt’s (2005) redefinition and expansion of DuBois’ (1903) “double consciousness” provided a theoretical explanation of how I was able to successfully navigate both the worlds of which I strived to be a part. Unlike what DuBois (1903) shared about “the two warring ideas in one dark body” (DuBois, 1989, p.3), I was confident in my skin and perceived that I could navigate the different worlds successfully, both the white world as well as the black world. I realized that I was different from many of my African American female peers. The phenomenon that seemed best suited to describe this process for me is what I coined as “living two lives” (Hoyt, 2003).

The journey of my academic pursuit and achievement, as well as those of other African American females who have come from low-income backgrounds sparked my interest in my research topic for this dissertation. I saw similarities in my own experience to that of having a “double consciousness.” In my case, this might be called a dual life, acting and thinking one way in my low-income home environment and shifting effortlessly to act and think another way in my middle to upper income Caucasian environment. What I have termed “living two lives” can perhaps be viewed as akin to what researcher’s term “shifting” (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

This “dualism” as DuBois (1903) referenced or “shifting” as defined by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) or this life of inner consciousness / life of outer consciousness as coined by Hunt (2005) is a phenomenon that is not only plaguing African American youth from low-income backgrounds, but permeates impoverished communities throughout the world regardless of their racial and ethnic demographics. As an example, low-income first generation college
students must contend with this issue if they choose to break the stereotype and cross over from having the title of “low-income,” whether African American or not, to having the title of “Doctor,” a title that few from low-income backgrounds experience, a title that mainstream America respects.

As a youth, I did not understand the nature of my distinct behavior between home and school space, nor did I realize that this was a coping mechanism that I created in order to be accepted, to fit in, and not be ostracized by my friends in my low-income neighborhood and by my middle to upper income Caucasian peers in my school environment. According to Mehan, Hubbard and Villanueva (1994), this type of behavior was coined in 1988 by Gibson as “accommodation without assimilation.” In their study, they discovered “The African American and Latino students in the untracking program formed academically oriented peer groups and developed strategies for managing an academic identity at school and a neighborhood identity among friends at home” (Mehan, Hubbard & Villanueva, 1994, p.2).

In light of Hunt’s (2005) research, I have since come to understand that the life of inner consciousness / life of outer consciousness were an obstacle that I had learned to overcome, allowing me to shift effortlessly between “two worlds” or “two lives,” feeling comfortable in both spaces. Having resolved internal state of conflict before moving into and between what I deemed “the other world.” That in fact, “living two lives” was a state of conflict resolution whereby I was able to negotiate both worlds successfully.

Focus of the Research

A research project that focuses on the lived experiences of those from similar low-income backgrounds who have achieved academic success, and who have been mentored through a particular mentoring program would be very beneficial to the following groups: others from
similar backgrounds, higher education institutions, programs and departments focused on retention and academic success of African American students, educators, and policy makers, hence the entire reason for this project. In order to increase the number of low-income African American females who are accepted into and obtain higher educational degrees, it is imperative to provide them with a blue print for academic success. It is my hope that this project will be able to add to the existing body of literature regarding successful attempts to mentor low-income African American females throughout their post-secondary academic pursuits; in essence guiding them to successfully “live two lives.”

The coping strategy by which the women in this study developed the capacity to “live two lives” is a mentoring model, known as The Ellison Executive Mentoring Inclusive Community Building Model (The Ellison Model, TEM or The Model). The Ellison Model was developed by Dr. Deryl G. Hunt of Miami, Florida, in the late 1990s. The Model, useful in primary, secondary, and post-secondary settings, was named after Dr. Helen Ellison, who at the time was Associate Vice President of Student Affairs at Florida International University, in Miami, Florida. The Model was developed to honor Dr. Helen Ellison as one who exemplified a caring, sharing and loving attitude towards her students and all she encountered. In fact, Dr. Helen Ellison was known to have a “student centered” approach to relationship building. The values of trust, honor and respect that were evident as part of her interactions between herself, the students, the faculty and the staff, helped to lay the groundwork for the values that were to be inherent in the theoretical underpinnings of The Ellison Model. The Ellison Model is discussed in greater detail in Chapter two as part of the Literature Review but specifically among the mentoring models.
Statement of the Problem

The basic premise of the research is that in order for low-income, African American women to become successful in their academic pursuits, they must learn to navigate an upstream current through mentoring, where the established order in the academy is based on Western European values (Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009) that often conflict with African American values, such as the individualism that is espoused in Western European culture and collectivism that is espoused in the African American culture (Phinney, Ong & Madden, 2000). Equally true, low-income African American women must navigate a downstream current of negative feelings among blacks in their own community toward anyone who is perceived to strive for academic success and to “crossover to the white side,” and/or is “acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986), a label that is reserved for those African Americans who strive to and achieve academic success and who utilize standard English vernacular. Those African Americans who have been successful in navigating both landscapes, both worlds, that of the white world and that of the black world, moving effectively between the two worlds, building alliances and relationships between both, a notion referred to in this work as “living two lives.”

Arguably, in many low-income African American communities across the country, such as the one that I grew up in, a young African American female must choose, at an early age, between being accepted by her peers in her neighborhood (which means not trying to break the cycle of poverty), or by choosing to estrange herself from her peers and her community in the hope for a better education, for knowledge, and greater opportunities “outside” her low-income neighborhood. If one is thought to “crossover to the white side,” she fears a great possibility of being rejected (openly and outwardly) not only by her low-income peers, but also by her low-income family members who have always provided a support system for her, and ultimately by
many in her low-income black community - she is commonly seen as a traitor - or accused of being someone who “thinks they are better” (Piper, 2001; Spring 2001; Spring, 2004). She is now faced with a dilemma that her middle to upper income Caucasian colleagues might not be faced with. This dilemma involves choosing to cross over to an unknown world, to that of middle to upper income white America, where the educational systems are highly supported by higher incomes (Spring 2012; Spring 2013), and the language, culture and mannerisms of home life for her middle to upper income white peers are in alignment with those of their school life - not necessitating a shift in mannerism and cultural codes - allowing her white peers to shift back and forth effortlessly, and many times unknowingly.

On the other hand, the low-income African American female must be conscious of her mannerisms so as not to offend her low-income peers, many times changing her language, clothing, etc., in order to fit in and be accepted by the members of her neighborhood. If she is wise and can negotiate the task of “living two lives” somewhat effectively, she will also be cognizant of doing the same (shifting) when she is in the company of her middle to upper income peers from her middle to upper income school, in hopes that she is not offending for being considered an “other” or “outsider.”

Roots of the Problem

Although the expressed goals of the Common School Movement of the 19th Century, was to provide expansive and equitable education for all students regardless of socio-economic background (Spring, 2006; Spring 2012; Spring 2013), the disparity in public schools continues and is widely prevalent across the country (Kozol, 1991 as cited in Dixon & Rousseau, 2006, p.18). This disparity hits urban school districts harder because school excellence is also a function of how much money is allocated to educate students. School districts are funded, in
large part, by the property taxes collected within those respective districts. Urban schools tend to have less financial resources than schools in the more affluent surrounding areas; fewer funds are available to meet their needs (Kozol, 1991).

Not having an excellent education has much to do with where people live and attend public school in the United States. Research has shown that the inequitable education of public school children is related to their socio-economic status (Kozol, 1991; Spring, 2002; Spring, 2003; Spring 2012; Spring 2013). As Spring (2012) stated,

Ask any real estate agent in your area to name the best local school district. Most likely the real estate agent will name a school district with either wealthy households or with households with a high percentage of college graduates. Often the housing in these districts, which may vary in large cities, is beyond the purchasing power of low-income families. This is a form of economic segregation in schooling, which contributes to inequalities in educational outcome...According to Horace Mann’s dream, all school districts should be equal. But this is not the case when you consider expenditures per child, test scores, and college attendance. Communities in the United States are not equal in wealth and educational attainment of their students. Many of the wealthy districts are located in suburbs near major cities (p.70-71).

In this regard, the aspiring African American female from a low socio-economic background understands the disparity between the quality of the education in her own low-income neighborhood and the higher quality of the education that exists in more affluent neighborhoods. Possessing this understanding causes a dilemma; should she choose the schools in her neighborhood that are often ill-equipped in their ability to provide an adequate education or should she reject them? If she chooses to reject these schools, she is most likely, by default,
choosing to be transported out of her neighborhood to attend school in a more affluent neighborhood, in hopes of acquiring a better education.

“There is a direct relationship between the cost of housing in a school district and the amount of money that school districts spend per student (Spring, 2006, p.47).” According to Kozol (1991) as cited in Dixson & Rosseau (2006), the mean outlay per New York student in 1987, was $5,500 but in the suburbs of New York (e.g., Great Neck or Long Island, the funding for those school districts exceeded $11,000.00). More recently, according to the Federal Education Budget Project’s article *School Finance: Federal, State, and Local k-12 School Finance Overview*,

…in the 2008-09 school year, New Jersey spent $16,271 per student while Utah spent only $6,356 per student…in Illinois, the New Trier Township High School District spent $19,927 per student in 2008-09 while the Farmington Central Community Unit School District spent only $6,548 per student. When school districts rely on the local property tax as their primary source of funding, schools located in wealthier districts have more resources to draw from than schools in low-income communities (Federal Education Budget Project, 2012, p.1).

In wealthier neighborhoods, property taxes are higher because the value of the homes is higher. In lower income neighborhoods, property taxes are lower which means that fewer funds will be allocated to the schools in those neighborhoods. According to Spring (2006), 44-47% of the revenues that schools receive come from local sources and the primary funding source of school districts comes from property taxes in the district. Further exacerbating the problems, urban schools also receive a high number of students whose native language is not English,
necessitating that these districts expend even more of their limited resources to educate their student population.

The 2004 Republican Platform makes known that a nation’s economic success is contingent upon its citizenry receiving a top-notch education (Spring, 2004). Its stance calls attention to one of the vexing questions facing an urban community; namely, “How can a country as wealthy as the United States provide a quality education to all of its citizens?” It states,

We believe there is an inseparable link between a vibrant economy and a high-quality educational system….Strong schools will…produce a workforce with the skills to compete in the 21st Century economy…Education is the key to prosperity and fulfillment—the foundations on which all other success is built (Spring, 2004, p. 3).

If an excellent education is the key to economic success, one can make a cogent argument then when any subgroup of society receives a less than stellar education, it diminishes the economic growth for the entire society.

The inequality in educational opportunities for low-income students in the primary grades affects their ability to succeed in secondary school, and ultimately impedes their ability to succeed in their post-secondary education; creating what I call a “glass ceiling” in education. If low-income students manage to enroll into higher education institutions, they are still faced with an uphill battle, which includes encountering obstacles such as the ability to pay for their education, and varying outcomes in terms of the quality of the secondary education due to their social environment (Davis, 1994). In addition to these challenges, these students also encounter culture shock when adapting to the new world of academia.
“Despite the changing trends in higher education, women and people of color are faced with the burden of forging academic spaces that were not created with their specific needs in mind” (Patterson, 2006, p.16). Indeed, many first generation college students from minority groups do not attain academic success at predominantly white universities because they do not have a support system in place that is tailored to their needs (Allen 1992; Davis 1994; Hoyt 2003) and because they are unfamiliar with what it takes to get admitted to and be successful at the university level. Unfamiliar with the institutional procedures for college entrance (and the support needed while there), some students simply give up trying.

These students who come from low-income families are usually the first in their family to go to college, and as a result, they normally do not have parents or mentors who have experienced the university environment and can assist them with the process. Those who have attained a university degree, more often than not, have moved outside the neighborhood in search of a better life, leaving those behind without role models. Davis (1994) argues that “the view that campus environments influence the educational experiences of college students is a consistent thread throughout research on African Americans in higher education” (p. 620). Developing an intervention program on school and college campuses, such as a mentoring program for these disadvantaged students, specifically African American students, would assist them in their quest to achieve academic success, despite the educational and social-economic disadvantages they’ve had growing up. The goal of such a mentoring program would be to prepare them for success in post-secondary education.

Addressing the Problem

Lacking the advantage of having a role model in that particular area, many low-income college students must “feel their way through” their first year at the university alone and without
guidance. Because they lack the knowledge of how to be successful in the academic setting and without immediate intervention, low-income college students tend to experience academic failure during their first semester at the university level (Ellison, 2002). Acevedo and Herrera (2002) have written:

Due to environmental, economic, and access factors, many of these students often lack the preparation awareness of the higher education culture. These and other challenges are reflected in the over-representation of multicultural students in the student attrition statistics of colleges and universities across the country (p.v.).

In order for these disadvantaged and low-income minority students to master the artistry of attaining academic and social success in primary and secondary school, and conceivably at a predominantly white university, or at any university for that matter, it is imperative that they have a support system in place tailored to meet their individual needs. Not only do these students have to understand what it takes to be successful in primary and secondary education, and ultimately at the university level, they must also be familiar with the resources that are readily available to them and all students. Ultimately, success at the lower level of these students’ academic pursuits will inherently increase their opportunities to acquire a post-secondary education, and ultimately contribute to building and maintaining an inclusive community of learners where all are valued, and diverse ideas are welcomed.

Some might argue that it is best to send these students to more academically challenging schools outside their low-income communities so that they can learn the social codes and language of the dominant culture. Others will suggest that these students should go to charter schools in their neighborhoods so that they will learn a history in a more holistic context; one that is inclusive of the contributions of African Americans. There are others who believe that
bussing these students outside the neighborhood does not help them but rather hinder them. Those who feel this way would rather the students go to schools in their neighborhoods, in hopes that additional funding will be poured into these poor school districts.

It would seem fair that each student, no matter which option they choose, have the same academically challenging classes, caring and supportive teachers, who practice “culturally responsive teaching” (Gay, 2010) and mentors who have experienced the university culture and who are encouraging the students to achieve academic success. If these conditions are met, perhaps first generation African American college bound students will be aptly prepared for future collegiate studies as well as successful matriculation and graduation from these universities. Connecting these students with mentors will likely equip them with necessary tools in which to be successful in their pre-collegiate academic pursuits as well as their academic pursuits at the university level.

**Purpose of the Research**

This research examined the experiences of eight African American women from low-income backgrounds who have participated in The Ellison Model Mentoring Program and how they negotiated “living two lives” and achieved academic success at the post secondary level. Additionally, this study seeks to understand the perspectives of the participants in regard to their participation in The Ellison Model Mentoring Program and their perceptions of the impact of The Ellison Model Mentoring Program on their academic success at the university level.

I have chosen to focus attention on African American women from low-income because of my own experience as an African American woman who grew up in a low-income household and was the only one in my family to attend college. Interviewing women from this target population who were mentored by The Ellison Model Mentoring Program has provided useful
data that proved the success of The Ellison Model Mentoring Program in their higher educational pursuits. The stories of these women will likely encourage and assist other low-income African American females who may have aspirations to attend and achieve academic success in higher educational institutions across the country and around the world.

All participants in this study have been selected as they meet the criteria of being African American females who have grown up in low-income families. Moreover, they have been mentored by precepts of The Ellison Model; these women are currently in graduate programs or have already completed their graduate/doctoral studies.

Previous doctoral research on The Ellison Model (Rice 2001, Ellison 2002) has proven the success of the mentoring model in various academic settings. In fact, more recent research on The Ellison Model by Ritchey (2012) shows that components of The Model can be utilized in order to create a character education curriculum to provide professional development on how to create more academically enriching classrooms where the students’ backgrounds and ideas are valued and welcomed. In particular, her research demonstrated the efficacy of The Model in creating a classroom culture by which to improve academic learning and character enrichment for both the teachers and the students. The present study provides an extension of the prior research on the impact of The Ellison Model on the academic and professional achievement of African American females from low-income communities. Furthermore, the present study will provide scholars in the field with much needed data on improving the academic, personal and socio-economic conditions of African Americans, and non African Americans, alike, from low-income communities across the country and around the world.
The Significance of the Study

As an educator and a first generation college student growing up in a low-income African American community, I am a testament to the unlimited possibilities available to a low-income child eager to learn and that has been provided the right support system. As a result of my mother’s intuition and vision, my primary school years were spent at middle to upper income schools outside of my low-income neighborhood. Fortunate to attend well-equipped schools with teachers who cared about teaching and whether or not their students learned, regardless of their race and socio-economic background, I was inspired by my parents and many of my teachers to achieve academic greatness as that was expected. This inspiration at school, from my family, and many in my community gave me the tools that I needed to be a success inside the classroom and outside of it. It prepared me for developing a strategy to cross into two different worlds-conflict-free, building relationships in both, moving back and forth effortlessly and seamlessly-one that I am living, teaching others to live and now researching, the phenomenon of “living two lives.”

Clearly, I believe the interjection of mentors throughout various points of my life, coupled with my ability to “live two lives,” has been the blueprint for my academic success, which has ultimately led me to work on my Doctorate in Education researching this topic. Growing up, I always felt that I was living dual lives as I would act and speak a certain way in my low-income community but then act and speak a completely different way at my middle to upper income white schools, constantly switching back and forth, sometimes forgetting which mannerisms to use. It is my hope that through my research I will be able to use both my experiences growing up as well as the stories and experiences of these academically successful
African American women who came from low-income communities in figuring out how to assist others from similar backgrounds in breaking the “glass ceiling” of higher education.

Although this research is geared to assist this population first and foremost, it can also be used to assist any person from any race and/or socio-economic status who would like to build solid higher educational programs founded on “inclusivity and community building.” It will help organizations, schools, businesses, higher educational institutions, corporations and ultimately communities both nationally and internationally, more specifically those concerned with improving the academic achievement of low-income African American females.

The need for this research will become more evident as data from the research participant’s stories, as well as, information on the plight of low-income minorities in education, and more specifically, low-income African American women, is shared. Interviewing African American women from low-income backgrounds who participated in The Ellison Model Mentoring Program provides answers as to whether this unique mentoring approach was a viable intervention. In addition, it furthers understanding regarding the ability of these women’s success to “live two lives” as they navigated the higher educational system. Lastly, the research helps to identify the “keys to success” for low-income African American women with coping strategies to overcome past discrimination based on sexist and racist notions held largely by white men in the academy and outside of it who serve as their teachers, supervisors and ultimately their colleagues (Paterson, 2006; Burnley, 2009; Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009; Meyers, 2002).

By providing low-income African American women with this timely research, and ultimately a support system such as The Ellison Model which is based on inclusivity, these women will be equipped with the necessary tools to be successful personally, academically, and
professionally, hence equipping them to break the “glass ceiling” of education. In turn, they will then be able to guide, mentor, and motivate others to be successful and assist in espousing the values that are inherent in The Ellison Model-trust, honor, respect, loving, caring and sharing.

**Research Questions**

The present study is guided by the following questions:

1) What are some of the narratives from the college lives of African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds, if any, that reflect “glass ceiling” experiences?

2) What perceptions do African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds have of the role and influence of mentoring in breaking the “glass ceiling” during their higher educational pursuits?

3) What behaviors described by African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds, if any, can be described as “living double lives’ as they navigate home and university space?

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout this study. They are listed to enable the reader to better understand the research ideas presented in this manuscript. A number of these terms are presented as they are defined within The Ellison Model framework (Hunt, 1999). Other definitions are stated as defined by other researchers.

**Attitude.** The Ellison Model defines “Attitude” as having the right attitude is one of honor, which is reserved for those who are truly honorable

**Community.** The Ellison Model defines a people with a shared vision and who have things in common that works towards inclusivity
**Dis-community.** The Ellison Model defines where diversity is divisive, those who do not belong to a particular group are seen negatively

**Disunity.** The Ellison Model defines the result that occurs when a particular group works singularly and is motivated by hate

**Diversity.** The Ellison Model defines groups or individuals are seen as different and negatively when it occurs on the outer circle of the Ellison Model, whereas groups or individuals are seen as providing a variety, and their ideas are valued, when this occurs in the inner circle of the Ellison Model

**Glass ceiling.** The “glass ceiling” is defined as barriers that stops one from achieving something that cannot necessarily be seen by the eye

**Goal.** The Ellison Model defines the process of building a community of people with a shared vision who have things in common

**Honor.** Honor is one of the values of The Ellison Model – being receptive to the ideas of others

**Inclusive Community Building.** The Ellison Model defines building a community that works together with a shared vision that have attained community

**Inner circle/ Outer circle.** The Ellison Model defines inner circle / outer circle as a framework for viewing two divergent approaches to community building. Both circles represent spaces from which individuals view and understand the world.

**Living Two Lives.** (Hoyt, 2003) Hoyt defines “Living two Lives” as is the ability, at any given moment, to effectively and fluidly move between two distinctly different cultures, two distinctly different worlds for that matter, and to be able to maintain successful working relationships in both. Successfully done, one is able to move people from the outer circle to the inner circle of The Ellison Model.
**Mentor.** The Ellison Model defines the traditional definition of a mentor is one who is a wise and trusted teacher or counselor

**Method.** The Ellison Model defines the ideology of having respect unto all right ways

**Objective.** The Ellison Model defines the ability of one to attain unity

**Respect.** Respect is one of the values of The Ellison Model. Acknowledgement of the contributions of others.

**Trust.** Trust is one of the values of The Ellison Model. Believing in one’s ability

**Unity.** The Ellison Model defines this denotes oneness, like-mindedness but not in a narrow sense of the word
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The African American Challenge

In today’s world, it is not uncommon to see African American men and women from various socio-economic backgrounds engaged in the academic rigor of higher education. However, the historical roots of the educational system, traces of patriarchal and racist attitudes may still exist in the higher educational system and other societal institutions (Patterson, 2006; Meyers, 2002), even though advances are evident. While looking at the increased numbers of African Americans accessing higher education, it would seem that the problem of access has been resolved; however, a closer look at the numbers reveals a different story.

Despite the fact that the number of African Americans entering institutions of higher learning has been on an incline, research shows that African Americans have continued to lag behind both their Caucasian as well as their non-Caucasian peers, in the areas of high school preparation, academic access, and graduation rates (Cauce, Friedman, Gonzales, & Mason, 1996). Based on these statistics, one can see why the number of African Americans who have attained post-secondary degrees is significantly lower than those representing their Caucasian counterparts. In fact, African Americans are among the lowest in ranking compared to their peers with regard to graduation rates from high school, entrance into the university as undergraduates, as well as completion of undergraduate degrees and graduate degrees (Journal of Higher Education, 2003). According to Ensminger & Slasarciski, 1992; Mikelson, 1990) as cited by Cauce, Friedman, Gonzales, & Mason (1996), “At all levels of schooling and at comparable levels of ability, African American students earn substantially lower grades and attain less education than non-Hispanic white students…placing limits on economic and
occupational attainment…” (p. 366). In fact, Spring (2013) argues that there is a direct correlation between the level of educational attainment and future earning potential. This paints a bleak economic picture for those low-income African Americans who do not attain higher educational degrees as compared to their counterparts, in the same regards, who matriculate and attain college degrees.

Not only do academic indicators for African American students of low socio-economic backgrounds show that they lag behind their Caucasian peers, but that they also lag behind middle to upper income African Americans on other indices. In addition, low-income African Americans are faced with social barriers which are related to their unique cultural experiences relative to their racial and economic status. As a result, they face additional disadvantages such as “…unemployment, lack of recreational facilities, teen pregnancy involvement in the criminal justice system, adolescent-violence, and over identification with special services” (Taylor, 2000, p. 101), issues that their middle to upper income peers are spared.

Due to their low-income status, many African American students are forced to become the primary, if not sole economic and emotional providers for their families in addition to attending school. Those in this situation must not only focus on their studies at school but they must focus on maintaining steady employment to contribute to their household. Without constant guidance at home on how to achieve academic success, they must choose between either focusing on struggling through classes at what is often, ill-equipped schools or focusing on their economic survival. Whether working a part time job after school or babysitting their younger sibling(s) while their parent(s) are at work, the added roles of bread winner or caretaker interfere with school success.
The Double Black Tax

As shown by the alarming rates of ninth graders that do not graduate in four years, the percentage of Black students with high self-esteem by their senior year in high school and the high number of women living in poverty, it is clear that African American students are in dire need of intervention programs that will assist them to advance academically and to prepare them for academic opportunities. According to Robert Harper (1975), Blacks (African Americans) are faced with a “Black Tax”; they are penalized both for their social standing in an organization as well as penalized for their race. According to Harper (1975), the “Black Tax” is an added stressor that is experienced by Black executives on top of the regular stress that is inevitable with the job. Harper (1975) states, it is “…a set of personalized social strains, which grow out of their ‘blackness’ in a white administrative environment” (p. 207). Not only are African American girls faced with what Harper (1975) terms as a “Black Tax”, but as a result of their gender, they are faced with an added burden, that of being female, which could be coined as a “Double Black Tax.”

Although Harper (1975) discusses the “Black Tax” in light of Black executives in the federal government who are in administrative positions, this notion is also present in the higher educational arena. In the field of higher education, this “Black Tax” syndrome speaks to the black faculty members who must deal with being assigned additional committee work and assignments pertaining to diversity, because of their racial status. Since black faculty are confronted with this increase work load, they inevitably find themselves conducting a balancing act; if they take on the role of mentoring in addition to those other duties, they may be too overburden and thus, jeopardize their tenure track (Reddick, 2011). This dilemma could
conceivably make it more difficult for black faculty to provide African American college students with the mentoring they need.

**Official vs. Folk History**

“Although the past is a powerful determinant of culture, human societies selectively add to the past, subtract from it, and mold it in their own images by what they choose to remember and choose not to remember” (Baraza, 2011, p. 199). In light of this fact, one can clearly understand the importance of official history vs fold history. The “folk history” of African Americans, passed down orally from generation to generation by the elders is usually in direct conflict with “official history” in describing past discriminations against African Americans in the United States (Spring, 2000). However, the “official history” is well represented in textbooks, utilized to teach students in classrooms across the country. If this “official history” is drenched in negative associations in the examination of the African American experience one can argue it perpetuates the negative stereotypes of African Americans as being inferior, while at the same time, damages the identity, self-esteem and self-worth of African American students. Adding to this negative form of historiography, many of the positive contributions made by African Americans throughout the history of the United Stated have been neglected and/or omitted (Burnley, 2008). In his book, *The Cost of Unity: African American Agency and Education in the Christian Church, 1865-1914*, Lawrence Burnley writes,

Other than a few noted exceptions, agency on the part of African Americans in education reform movements in the postbellum period of United States History was largely ignored or inadequately examined by professional historians during the first three quarters of the twentieth century. It would not be until the publication of James D. Anderson’s seminal book, *The Education of Blacks in the South: 1860-1935* in 1988 that students of the
history of American education would be provided with an in-depth and extended inquiry into educational initiatives for black people generated by black people during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras. Numerous scholars have acknowledged various aspects of African American agency in the provision of formal and informal education for their communities, but none have offered an extensive treatment of this critical and neglected aspect of American education history (p. 8).

Burnley’s (2008) study showed that despite much of what is depicted in “official history” in regards to African Americans being portrayed as “passive” in regards to the founding of institutions of learning for African Americans connected with the Christian Church, but that in fact,

these men and women-‘unknown prophets’- not only made great sacrifices to provide formal schooling for their communities in hopes of securing a better future, but their efforts also paved the way for the establishment of state-funded, universal, and compulsory common schools systems throughout the South (p.6).

According to Carter G. Woodson (1933), “for centuries such literature has been circulated among the children of the modern world; and they have, therefore, come to regard the Negro as inferior” (p. 142). It should amaze and shame us that this attitude that Woodson wrote about in 1933 is still present in today’s society some seventy plus years later.

Some argue that many African Americans have built up a resistance to education due to the past injustices of African Americans in public schools coupled with the negative, stereotypical images and teachings they have been forced to learn as a part of “official history.” They are keenly aware of the importance of education, but at the same time, they are suspicious of educational institutions (Spring, 2000; Ogbu, 1985; Silberman, 1971). As cited by Spring,
John Ogbu (1985) argues that “there is a broader clash between the culture of dominated groups and the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant and corporate values embedded in the structure of schooling which results in the creation of a resistance culture” (Spring, 2000, p.115). More specifically, as cited by Spring (2000), Jawanza Kunjufu (1986) “…argues that many African American students believe that school achievement depends on ‘acting white’. Consequently…many African American students reject the culture of schools and accept failure in school studies” (Spring, 2000, p. 116).

Although these findings are bleak, there appears to be hope in educating low-income minority students. More specifically, African American girls like others in mainstream society, should be able to experience an increase in their academic achievement and ability to advance to higher educational degrees given the provision of a “toolbox” that has “mentoring” and the techniques of “living two lives” stored in it. In other words, with early interventions such as the mentoring model described in the present study, low-income minority students, more specifically, African American females, would likely be able to advance academically, effectively “living two lives”, while at the same time preserving their dignity and maintaining pride in their heritage without being accused of “acting white” or “passing.” These preconceived notions were experienced by Adrian Piper (2001) when she was told at the first welcome reception which was held for new graduate students in her college, “Miss Piper, you're about as black as I am” (Piper, 2001, p. 1), (she was told this when her true racial identity was revealed).

The Glass Ceiling

Even if the African American female from a low-income background is able to successfully navigate conflicting demands and breaks the “glass ceiling” by enrollment in an institution of higher learning, there are additional “glass ceilings” that must be overcome. As
cited by Spring (2000), Cindy Skrzycki talks about the “glass ceiling” as it is described in the area of business. She stated, “women seem to encounter an invisible barrier, a glass ceiling that keeps them from reaching the top” (Spring, 2000, p.154). The “glass ceiling” is defined as invisible barrier(s) that stop one from achieving his/her goal(s). Additionally, this term refers to barriers that often confront African American females in trying to reach the upper echelons of the institutions of higher learning. Spring (2000) also spoke of the deleterious effects of the “glass ceiling.” He argued that it is one of the reasons for massive decline of self-esteem in girls as compared to boys. Other scholars such as David and Myra Sadker have also acknowledged the presence of a “glass ceiling” within the educational environment (Spring, 2000), suggesting that this ceiling may be experienced by those from the low socio-economic status and may not be experienced by those from upper to middle class families.

There are both subtle and obvious obstacles that stand in the way of many low-income African Americans as they aspire to obtain a high school diploma, and/or other academic accolades. One may even argue that there is a “perceived glass ceiling” (M. T. Hayes, personal communication, February 1, 2003) based on the historical experiences of racism and discrimination against African Americans, in general, and African American women in particular. Some scholars have noted an “in the hood attitude” within the culture of low-income people, which is counter-productive to their socio-economic progress. According to scholars, any racial minority’s ability to achieve to their fullest potential is muffled by the “glass ceiling.” In this case, one’s mindset may present itself as a potential self-imposed “glass ceiling” because it casts a shadow of exclusion upon those who seek to maneuver outside of their current boundaries. To the extent individuals internalize this view, they impede their own educational progress. Without the aid of a higher education, one can’t obtain economic mobility. It is not
surprising that there were approximately nineteen percent of African Americans in the United States earning less than $10,000 a year (Bethel, 1999).

**Chipping Away at the “Glass Ceiling”**

There are a number of measures that can be taken in order to ameliorate the current state of affairs as it relates to African American women breaking the “glass ceiling” in higher education. “Based on Sadker’s findings, breaking through the “glass ceiling” of the classroom requires changing patterns of interaction in the classroom, building female self-esteem, and portraying more women in a greater variety of activities in textbooks and other educational materials” (Spring, 2000, p.157). These actions can be extended to include how African American women are portrayed throughout the higher educational space, both in books and other educational materials, as well as in the positions they hold, their acceptance into academic programs, and their completion of higher educational degrees (Woolfolk, 2001).

In order for low-income minority college students, in particular, to begin to chip away and ultimately break the “glass ceiling” in education, it is imperative that society first acknowledges that there is a social problem that exists in regard to educating low-income minority students. Secondly, low-income minority students must be given equal opportunities so that they can truly grasp America’s idea of meritocracy, “that hard work will pay off” (Kozol, 1991); that is, they must be provided with the same educational opportunities and schooling in their low-income schools as their privileged counterparts. A privileged up-bringing carries with it the advantages of being inculcated from infancy regarding the “how tos” of being a leader (Anyon, 1996). The person is groomed, and it is presumed, that they will ultimately advance to leadership positions once s/he has matured. This presumption does not exist for the low-income minority student.
One can argue that African American females have been successful in breaking the “glass ceiling” in education at the undergraduate and graduate levels with the use of numerous support systems. Whether it was through the support system found in mentoring programs as an undergraduate or at the graduate student level or in their professional lives, mentoring programs have served as a nexus—bridging the gap between a disadvantaged upbringing and the advantages that a college degree has to offer. These women have, at their disposal, the camaraderie and counsel of other black scholars who gather at such meetings as the Black Women and Work Research Seminar—a gathering which brings black women together on a monthly basis to talk about issues which relate to black educators (Frazier, 1996). No matter what, African American females who have been successful in academic institutions have done so with the assistance of numerous support systems such as mentoring programs (Hoyt, 2003).

In the quest for academic success, individuals must learn to unlock the embroidered “toolbox”, decode the “coveted map” which will navigate the individual along the roads which lead to academic success, based on the standards of the academy. Having their “toolbox” in tote from an early age, low-income African American women, in particular, would possess the “hows” which are necessary to successfully advance from primary through secondary school. They would be better prepared to advance to higher educational institutions, and better prepared to break the “glass ceiling” in education and in the workplace, and thus, to become prominent leaders in their communities.

The Origins of Mentoring

The concept of a mentor is not something that is new to society. Since the word was defined in the 17th Century (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1992), mentors have been used in a variety of different venues. The process of mentoring takes the mentor, a more experienced
and seasoned individual and connects, him or her a protégé or mentee who is generally younger and thus, less experienced. Traditionally, the relationship between these two is often one that allows the mentee to be on the receiving end of knowledge and mentor to be the dispenser. From the time human beings set out to nurture the potential of others, mentoring has been practiced to the benefit of mankind. When the goal moved to maximizing the potential in both the novice and the more experienced learners in society, a hierarchical mentoring model was created.

Over time, mentoring developed into a business strategy to help junior men to advance in their careers (Allied Academies International Conference, 2008). During the middle ages, the concept of mentoring was applied to apprenticeships (Murray & Owens, 1991 as cited in Allied Academies International Conference, 2008). According to Freeman (1999) as cited in Allied Academies International Conference, (2008) mentoring programs developed in the United States in three time frames. With the social reform of the late 19th century, the Big Brothers program was founded in New York. Eventually, other complimentary programs emerged to mentor young women. The second wave (occurring in the 1970’s) of the mentoring initiatives were spawned to assist women to break the “glass ceiling” in the business arena. Again, the programs eventually expanded to include other subgroups; in this instance, minorities. The third wave occurred in the 1980’s and was encouraged by President Reagan’s emphasis on volunteerism. Emerging from this thrust, middle class Americans were solicited to mentor the disadvantaged and at-risk youth.

Traditionally, mentors have come from the pool of the more elder, seasoned individual while the mentee has been the younger individual who is the recipient of the knowledge or counsel the mentor possesses. However, there has been a paradigm shift as the demand for mentoring has increased. The advent of peer mentoring, tiered mentoring as well as cross-age
peer mentoring has added more depth to the mentoring process. Increasingly, individuals who are close in age to the mentee have been solicited to take on the task of mentoring others. Research has shown that this change in mentor type may warrant a change in the mentor’s scope in order to account for the difference in the level of maturity of these new mentors (Karcher, 2007).

**Mentoring Definitions**

The classic definition of the mentoring principle is seen in Homer’s Odyssey. The wise Mentor was a guide or tutor to young Telemachus who was being groomed to take his father’s place as a leader of the people. Telemachus’ father, Odysseus, was a soldier during the Trojan War who hired Mentor to serve as a guide, counselor and teacher to his son. As it turned out, the Mentor exhibited wisdom from above all the wise ones in the society. The Mentor was actually Athena, the goddess of wisdom, in disguise. From this, we can see that the Greeks looked at mentoring as a display of wisdom. In the Greek culture, the young Telemachus was a receptacle receiving from Mentor that he might be in touch with that which was real. He remained in the receptacle role until his father returned, a period of about 10 years.

Healy (1997) offers the following definition of mentoring as “a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protégé) aimed at promoting the career development of both” (p. 10). Healy’s definition is more closely aligned to The Ellison Model’s approach to mentoring because it notes the reciprocal relationship between mentor and mentee; although one is in a higher position, the two learn from one another and therefore, aid in each other’s growth (Hunt & Rice, 2004). Take note of the distinction between The Ellison Model approach and that of the traditional mentoring
model that calls for the mentor to make deposits and the mentee to receive without making deposits until sometime many years later, when he or she becomes a mentor to another.

Blackwell (1989) defines mentoring more conventionally as “a process by which persons of superior rank, special achievements and prestige, instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as program participants” (p. 9). This definition assumes older, wiser persons know best how to socialize the junior members into the work culture. It is not quite the same as the classic top town model where junior ones are to remain silent unless spoken to by their seniors. Blackwell does allow for a partnership where the junior ones have some input in fashioning the direction of the organization.

The Mentor’s Function

Mentors help their protégés with social development, goal setting, and future career plans (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Roberts, 2000; Miller, 2002 as cited in Pathways to College, 2011). Mentors can also provide students with valuable information regarding college preparatory courses, financial assistance, and the admission process (Gandara & Mejorado, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2001 as cited in Pathways to College, 2011). Mentors are expected to be visible; in the sense that, they are accessible to their mentee and they are in a leadership position which allows them to better create opportunities for their mentees (Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007). Mentors are role models (Files, Blair, Mayer, & Ko, 2008; Fuller, Maniscalco-Feichtl, & Droge, 2008). The role modeling aspect of mentoring allows the mentees to observe how their mentors react to difficult situations and how they balance professional and personal demands (Fuller et al., 2008). Mentors can also help mentees to become familiar with a world outside of their immediate environment (Rauner, 2000 as cited in Pathways to College, 2011).
Within the higher education milieu, the goal of mentoring is to help students become engaged with college life so that academic outcomes would improve (Pascarella, 1980; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2009 as cited in Pathways to College, 2011). The mentor’s role is to provide their protégés with the knowledge that will help them advance in their careers and the emotional support the mentees need as they experience obstacles to goal attainment.

**Establishing a Functioning Mentoring Relationship**

Many researchers agree that mentoring has obvious benefits for students from low-income and/or considered those “at-risk” (Flaxman, 1992; Reglin, 1995; Hunt, 1999; Hunt, 2000). Arnold (1999) argues that mentoring programs “promote an environment that allows people to perform at their peak; however, the correct programmatic elements must be in place. Mentors and developers of programs must build trust; help youths develop new patterns and new peer groups in order to achieve program success” (p.12). The idea of building trust in the mentoring relationship is essential to the effective functioning of the relationship. One African American mentor underscored the importance of building trust when interacting with his mentee, making reference to the importance of trust as providing validity to the advice from the mentor (Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007). In one study of pre-service teachers, mentors built trust by serving as “sounding boards” so that the mentee might be able to express his/her concerns in a confidential manner (Peterson, Valk, Baker, Brugger, & Hightower, 2010).

**Mentoring Research**

Brown (1996) is one among many scholars who bemoan the fact that there are few empirical studies on mentoring. Of the research that exists, it relies too heavily on face validity and anecdotal evidence to support claims of success. Cave and Quint’s (1990) study of high
school mentees is an exception. So too is McPartland and Nettles’ (1991) study. The former study found that high school students with mentors were more likely to attend college than those without. The latter found middle school mentees more likely to improve attendance and their English grades than non-mentees. Anderson, Pringle, Rubenstein & Russo (1993) did an extensive study of mentoring in over 30 federally funded projects. Their work showed a correlation between mentoring and a number of other variables including attendance, grades, graduation rates, standardize test scores, lower teenage pregnancy rates as well as reduced gang involvement.

In one empirical study, the researchers examined the effects of a mentoring program on students’ performance and graduation rates (Allied Academies International Conference, 2008). The freshmen participated in a one-year mentoring program while the sophomores served as the control group, and did not participate in a mentoring program. The results were statistically significant at the P < .05 confidence interval. A t test of the student GPAs showed that the mentored students obtained higher GPAs, and higher scores on a social development measure. Additionally, a chi-square test of association between the mentoring and graduation rate showed that the graduation rates for mentored students were higher that the graduation rates for non-mentored students. Again, the results were statistically significant at the P < .05 confidence interval.

Another study showed similar findings as it relates to mentoring and its impact on GPA. High school students in a Sponsor-a-Scholar Mentoring Program in Philadelphia showed an improvement in their grades more than those students who were not a part of the program (Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, 2009 as cited in Pathways to College, 2011). Additionally, when mentees discussed the idea of college with their mentor (particularly a
mentor who have also attended college), the discussion generated an interest in attending college among students whose parent(s) had not attended college themselves (DuBois et al., 2002 as cited in Pathways to College, 2011). Not only has mentoring shown to have positive impact on college entrance, but it also had a positive impact on the persistence of college students while they were attending college (Pathways to College, 2011). Mentoring initiatives have been positively correlated with higher grades, goal attainment, and enhanced self-esteem for middle school students (Clasen & Clasen, 1997; Flaxman, 1998; Johnson, 2006; Smink, 2000 as cited in Lampley & Johnson, 2010).

Another study discussed the efficacy of a mentoring/tutoring program in retaining undergraduate nursing students (Robinson & Niemer, 2010). Students who had failed at least one science class were recruited to participate in the program as mentees while students who excelled in their science coursework were recruited to participate as mentors. A collaborative group approach was used as a part of the process. The experimental group earned higher test scores throughout the year more than the control group (83.4%, 80% respectively). The mentored group scored lower than the other control group in their pharmacological exams but the authors noted that nursing students, in general, have struggled with that particular subject. The mentored group performed slightly better than the control group in the area of psychiatric nursing. However, the authors again noted that students in general typically didn’t have the experience in psychiatry, so the lack of experience may account for the marginal difference in the performance of the two groups. The mentored group’s GPA was slightly higher than the control group. It is noteworthy that the nursing school’s attrition rate remained the same, but the mentored group made up less than 1% of the attrition percentage.
Mentoring Models/Programs

The Health Sciences Multicultural and Community Affairs (HS-MACA) Office at Creighton University has developed a hierarchical mentoring model which is organized into four levels. It denotes the mentee that exists at each level (Kosoko-Lasaki, Sonnino, & Voyflo, 2006). Services are provided to students who are considered disadvantaged either economically or academically. Each mentee is mentored by someone who is at a higher stage of maturation in the educational process. At the top of the pyramid, ten faculty and four staff members mentor the health professional students. The health professional students mentor the medical post-baccalaureate students (and some undergraduates). The seniors mentor the college freshmen; who in turn, mentor the high school students. The less experienced student is paired with the more experienced student, in a dyadic mentoring match. The mentors assist their mentees based on their developmental levels; faculty members provide guidance with the choice of a residency program while undergraduate students help their mentees fill out applications to the health professional schools. The objective of the program is to provide each student with mentoring, counseling, study/test-taking skills, and peer-group support.

Another mentoring program is found at The Creighton School of Medicine (CU SOM). (CU SOM has established a mentoring program for women and minority faculty (Kosoko-Lasaki, Sonnino, & Voyflo, 2006). The primary purpose of the program is to provide junior faculty of under-represented groups with one-to-one mentoring to help the faculty to learn the customs of the learning environment, provide them with the connections and support necessary to succeed in their chosen fields. The faculty development program is one of the program’s main components. Faculty members attend professional development seminars and the expenses are
fully covered. Previous anecdotal evidence revealed that the mentees had increased their scholarly productivity as well as campus visibility.

In terms of effective mentoring models, Fuller, Maniscalco & Droege (2008) suggests that a triad model of mentoring would be more effective than the traditional dyadic model because the triad model would involve not just the mentor and the protégé, but the organization itself, in the mentoring process. They argue that adding the organizational dimension to the equation encourages an environment where “people are continuously learning how to learn together”, and the collective learning process is more productive in encouraging retention than the traditional one-on-one mentoring relationship. Effective mentoring encourages a positive feedback loop whereby the mentee will become the mentor and will be able to positively contribute to the process that made his/her career successful (Fuller et. al, 2008).

The Ellison Executive Mentoring Inclusive Community Building Model

The Ellison Model presents a systematic approach to mentoring in which each person in the hierarchy takes the place of the person above by learning what he or she has to teach in an open and discursive environment (Hunt, Howard & Rice, 1998). Hunt & Rice (2004) have written about Hunt’s mentoring model in connection with managing relationships. The Ellison Model’s (mentoring) management approach is an out-of-the box technique toward managing relationships. It takes into consideration the complex nature of management given increased diversity within local, national, and global communities where managers operate. The focus is on managing relationships. As such, the approach is without limit as to the clientele it serves, because each person, whether doctor, lawyer, teacher, farmer, government official, businessperson, carpenter, preacher, housewife or
professional athlete, has day-to-day management decisions to make (Hunt & Rice, 2004, pp. ix-x).

The Ellison Model Mentoring is a unique approach to mentoring that defies the traditional hierarchical mentoring approach, where the mentors are seen as all-knowing. In traditional mentoring programs, the mentor is the disseminator of information and the mentee is the receiver of it. These mentoring programs, whether in sciences, education, business, religion or whether community student-centered mentoring programs, typically focuses on the mentee as one that has less knowledge and one who brings little, if anything, to the mentoring relationship. Unlike traditional paradigms, The Ellison Model, which promotes the teaching and learning and which tells the mentee that they are just as valuable as the mentor, traditional mentoring programs primary focus has been on one way mentoring, where the mentor’s role is to disseminate information to the mentee.

**Living Two Lives (L2L)**

As stated earlier, “living two lives” (L2L) is the ability, at any moment, to effectively and fluidly move between two distinctly different cultures, two distinctly different worlds for that matter, and to be able to maintain successful working relationships in both. The ability to “live two lives” is not limited to low-income minorities but is applicable across lines including, race, gender, class, etc. It is possible, however, for a person to “live two lives” and not be true to him or herself. This conflict occurs as a result of entrapment between the two worlds; s/he has not fully adopted a true identity in either space. The individual may be described as “passing” in both worlds, not finding true satisfaction or fulfillment, but maintaining safety and security. Scholars have referred to this concept as shifting (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Others have referred to it as code-switching (Weinreich, 1953), and as mentioned earlier, “double
consciousness” (DuBois, 1903). According to Joel Spring (2000) “…a person growing up in a multicultural society might learn to live in two different cultures” (p.82). This he referred to as “biculturalism.” About this phenomenon, James Banks (2001) stated,

…the individual in this state has a healthy sense of cultural identity and that (the person possesses) psychological characteristics and skills needed to participate successfully in his or her own cultural community as well as in another cultural community…The individual also has a strong desire to function effectively in two cultures (p. 136). Banks’ commentary reveals no evidence of conflict within the individual. Instead, he only described the individual’s dual existence within two spaces in terms of a psychological and social skill set. Like Weinrich (1953), as cited by Bethel (1999), Professor Elijah Anderson from the University of Pennsylvania terms “living two lives” as “code-switching” and the ability to act according to each set of rules in each of the varying realms; that of lower middle class and that of middle class (Bethel, 1999). Interestingly, DuBois’ (1903) discussion centers more around the distinction of race: the Negro and his White counterpart. For example, he wrote, “One ever feels his twoness, -an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (DuBois, 1989, p. 3). DuBois (1903) further contended that the “Negro” dealt with internal conflict (“double consciousness”) between his African Ancestry and that of Anglo culture, which were in stark competition with one another (Spring, 2000). More recently, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) extended this discussion beyond class and race to include gender. They argued that:

…Black women are relentlessly pushed to serve and satisfy others and made to hide their true selves to placate white colleagues, Black men, and other segments of the community.
They shift to accommodate differences in class as well as gender and ethnicity. From one moment to the next, they change their outward behavior, attitude, tone, shifting ‘White,’ then shifting ‘Black’ again, shifting ‘corporate,’ shifting ‘cool’ (p7).

In any case, whether in relation to race, class, or gender, in actuality, “living two lives” would allow the “passer” to move between these two worlds while at the same time maintaining their true identity, whether racial, cultural, ethnic, etc…, and exposing others to this “true identity” with them as they pass/transcend to the other world that is perhaps vastly different from their own. They are typically confident in who they are and are open to sharing their ideas, experiences, and aspects of their culture with others. Simultaneously, they are able to receive aspects of the secondary culture, as well. As a result, individuals might well acknowledge, understand, validate, and appreciate the ideas and possibly the different ways of life found within the other world. Additionally, they may incorporate these elements as part of their own identity, and then be able to move towards helping the others to become open to doing the same.

Successfully “living two lives” buttressed by mentoring programs founded on the tenants of The Ellison Executive Mentoring Inclusive Community Building Model (The Ellison Model/TEM) (Hunt, 1999) will allow African American female students to bridge the cultural appreciation divide between members of diverse communities who are from distinctly different cultural, ethnic and or socio-economic backgrounds. According to Hunt (1999) the traditional definition of “diversity” focuses on separation and differences. To the contrary, his definition of diversity focuses on variety and inclusion. Moreover, Hunt (1999) makes a distinction between defining diversity as “different and separate” and diversity as “variety”, which is a more positive term.
The Model is represented via two concentric circles. Relationships built on the tenants of the “outer circle” associate “diversity” with “different” which leads to “disunity” and “discommunity.” Relationships built on the tenants of the “inner circle” show “diversity” as “variety” and this leads to “unity” and ultimately toward achieving “community” (Hunt, 1999). In essence, by successfully “living two lives,” one would be able to move others towards building inclusive communities, which The Ellison Model purports to do (when put into practice); allowing him/her to successfully maneuver through primary, secondary and post-secondary education.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

This research examined the experiences of eight African American women from low-income backgrounds who have participated in The Ellison Model Mentoring Program and how they negotiated “living two lives” and achieved academic success at the post secondary level. Additionally, this study seeks to understand the perspectives of the participants in regard to their participation in The Ellison Model mentoring program their perceptions of the impact of The Ellison Model Mentoring Program on their academic success at the university level.

Research Questions

The research questions this study sought to answer are the following:

1) What are some of the narratives from the college lives of African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds, if any, that reflect ‘glass ceiling’ experiences?

2) What perceptions do African America women from low socio-economic backgrounds have of the role and influence of mentoring in breaking the “glass ceiling” during their higher education pursuits?

3) What behaviors described by African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds, if any, can be described as ‘living double lives’ as they navigate home and university space?

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is widely used in the field of social sciences and is a respected method of inquiry. According to Strauss & Corbin (1998), the use of qualitative research is successful in gathering knowledge of the world and people’s perception of it without the
quantification that would occur with the use of quantitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research seeks to gather details about one’s thoughts, feelings, emotions, and perspectives, which are not easy to uncover through quantitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research also seeks to find out the meaning people have of their lives (Spradley, 1979), as well as to find out issues in detail and in depth by facilitating openness (Patton, 2002).

Researchers have various perspectives when defining and/or describing qualitative research. As stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), qualitative research is defined as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). Glesne (2011) contends that qualitative research is a means for “qualitative researchers…(to) seek to make sense of actions, narratives, and the ways in which they intersect” (p. 1).

According to Opie (2004), researchers seeking to explore feelings, values, and attitudes should elicit the qualitative research approach. Generett and Jeffries (2003) argue that qualitative research is an avenue for black female researchers to understand how their gender and race affects both how they see the world they live in, as well as how they approach their research. With qualitative research, researchers are investigating how regular people view and describe their life (Payne & Payne, 2004) and the meanings that people have constructed (Merriam, 1998). Although there are varying perspectives and definitions of qualitative research, what is agreeable among qualitative researchers is that qualitative research is an effective way to gather understanding and capture rich and detailed experiences.

As it relates to my own research, Qualitative methods allowed me to answer the research questions in this study and permitted me to be able to probe into the personal lives and investigate the lived experiences of the African American female participants in the study. This
seemed to be the best research approach for this study as it allowed me to gather rich data from the eight participants and to understand the role of The Ellison Model Mentoring (TEM) in helping these African American women from low-income backgrounds cope and overcome the “glass ceiling” in education.

Qualitative research’s purpose is to find answers. The use of qualitative research methods, in-depth face-to-face semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and in-depth analysis of multiple case studies provided me with a platform to ask questions, as well as to answer them as a result of the analysis of the data from my participant’s responses. Understanding the major components of qualitative research as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Bogdan and Biklen (1992) validated my reasoning for choosing to use qualitative research as the approach for this study. This information, coupled with the facts that I was able to explore and gather rich descriptive data through the voices of my participants through in-depth personal interviews and focus group interviews (Patton, 1980, p. 75) provided me with the knowledge and assurance that I needed to conclude that qualitative research methods was truly the best-suited approach for this study.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Research**

As with the quantitative approach, there are strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research. Several strengths of utilizing qualitative research include: (a) the researcher can use open-ended questions to probe for more in-depth during an interview of the participants and during focus groups, (b) information is solicited directly from participants in their own words, which offers credibility, (c) utility of a small sample size, and (d) qualitative research allows for greater flexibility and spontaneity as well as the ability to use a case study
The use of interviews provides the researcher with a higher yield of return from participants (Payne & Payne, 2004). According to Opie (2004), interviews “allow for a depth of feeling to be ascertained by providing opportunities to probe and expand the interviewee’s responses” (p. 118). The use of focus groups is one interviewing strategy that gives voice to others, empowering participants to share their story. First used by Merton (Payne & Payne, 2004), focus groups are a type of group discussion that allows the researcher to “focus on particular issues that are introduced in a predetermined order as carefully worded, open-ended questions or topics” (Payne & Payne, 2004, p. 105) in a group setting. This approach is very effective in providing rich information when used on minority groups because it allows the participants to discuss issues in a communal manner, as a group. In focus groups, the researcher focuses the discussion on gathering information about something that they want to add to their study. Additionally, focus groups shift the power relationship from researcher to participants. My study utilized both individual interviews to elicit individual perspectives and experiences as well as focus groups, which provided group thoughts and experiences and that elicited additional data not collected during the individual interviews.

Furthermore, through the qualitative research approach come rich data from the participants. Information is solicited directly from participants in their own words, which offers credibility. With qualitative research, the researcher is provided an opportunity to delve into the lives of the participants. Through this research approach, the researcher empowers the participants (Spradley, 1979) by giving them a voice, especially if they are underrepresented minorities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a platform to be heard as well as validated. The results of this qualitative research project are significant to at least three constituents: practitioners, methodologists, and theorists. Additionally, African American women from low-income
backgrounds will also be interested in the results as they investigate whether they will pursue higher education and/or as they are experiencing the higher educational landscape and seeking how to successfully navigate it. This study’s results will be able to change policies, procedures, culture and worldview of higher educational experiences of African American women from low-income backgrounds. Additionally, the results from this study will provide a successful “road map” for attaining academic success and breaking the “glass ceiling” of education for African American females from low-income backgrounds. It is my hope that the outcome of this study will be a vehicle to facilitate such changes as well as encourage others from low-income backgrounds to challenge themselves in breaking the “glass ceiling” of education.

An additional strength of qualitative research is the ability to utilize a small sample size and still gather rich results as well as the utilization of interviews as a method to gather data (Spradley, 1979; Wenger, 2001). Qualitative research allows for greater flexibility and spontaneity as well as the ability to use a case study (Patton, 2002). The use of a case study in qualitative research allows the researcher to look intensely and closely at the case. “A case study is a very detailed research enquiry into a single example (of a social process, organization or collectivity) seen as a social unit in its own right and as a holistic entity” (Payne & Payne, 2004). Case studies are utilized to assist with an in-depth examination of a phenomenon and explore a process (Creswell, 2003). According to Opie (2004):

A case study can be viewed as an in-depth study of interactions of a single instance in an enclosed system. The issue of numbers for a case study is therefore meaningless. It could involve a single person, a group of people in a setting, a whole class, a department within a school, a school (p. 74).
My study focused on “unique case” and the “revelatory case,” as it not only investigated the uniqueness of the cases, but it also generated new ideas as a result of analyzing the multiple case studies (Yin (1991) as cited in Payne & Payne (2004), p. 33).

Equally important to note are the weaknesses of qualitative research. Although subjectivity is a major strength of qualitative research, it is also one of its weaknesses. Subjectivity leads to procedural problems. Replicability, the ability to replicate the study and findings is very difficult in qualitative research. Unlike quantitative research, researcher bias is built in and unavoidable in qualitative research. The goal of the researcher should be to try and eliminate bias, when possible, or minimize all forms of bias in the study.

In-depth data gathering in qualitative research is another weakness of qualitative research. In-depth data gathering not only limits the scope, but it is also labor intensive, can be expensive, and is not understood by classical researchers. Qualitative research is a long process and can be complicated. Excessive data from interviews and transcriptions and analyzing data can become overwhelming, especially if the researcher is working on the project alone. With qualitative research, the researcher can only use a small population, and they are not able to generalize to a larger population. The data in qualitative research is not as clean as the data in quantitative research. Researchers can misinterpret data while listening, transcribing, etc., as well as researcher bias can bias the design of the study and research bias can enter into data collection (Payne & Payne, 2004).

In the utilization of qualitative research, sources or subjects may not all be equally credible. Some subjects may be previously influenced and affect the outcome of the study. Analysis of observation can be biased and background information of the participants might be missing. An additional weakness of qualitative research is that it is difficult to aggregate data
and make comparisons that are systematic; the research is dependent upon the skills and personal attributes of the researcher; it takes time to build trust with participants, making it more difficult to gather data if trust is not established first. Participation of the researcher in a setting can change the social situation, especially if the researcher utilizes participant observations as one of the qualitative methods.

Although there are many weaknesses of qualitative research, in my opinion, the strengths far outweighed the weaknesses, and for the purpose of this research, qualitative was the best research approach for this study as it allowed me to explore the lives of others, my research participants and gather rich data from them as a result of this approach. As cited by Denzin & Lincoln (2000) Gergen & Gergen (2000), state that “the domain of qualitative inquiry offers some of the richest and most rewarding explorations available in contemporary social science” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 1025).

**Risks of Doing Research**

With research come risks. It is imperative that the researcher is aware of the various risks that result from doing research, whether qualitative or quantitative. Once the researcher is aware of the possible risks, he or she will be able to position themselves to be sensitive to these risks and ultimately try to eliminate or minimize them. Several risks that researchers should be aware of is physical danger, emotional danger, ethical danger, and professional danger (Lee-Treweek & Linkogle, 2000). Physical danger can result when conducting research or ethnographic studies that require researchers to go into environments with which they are not familiar, or environments that may be hostile. Emotional danger is a risk that a researcher might not be able to easily distinguish, when compared to physical danger. According to Lee-Treweek & Linkogle (2000), “Serious threats to a researcher’s emotional stability and sense of self are often involved
when undertaking qualitative research with participants undergoing stressful life events” (p.13). Ethical dangers are important to understand when doing qualitative research. Research ethics focuses on the protection of the research participants. Unethical research practices are condemned in research (Lee-Treweek & Linkogle, 2000). Finally, professional danger is defined as “a serious risk associated with the consequences of challenging or deviating from existing occupational dynamics and collegial preoccupations (Lee-Treweek & Linkogle, 2000, p.20). Researchers must be cautious in the methodology they choose to utilize for their research.

In evaluating the dangers involved in doing research, I understood that it was imperative that I was mindful in regards to emotional danger, as I dealt with subjects who came from low-income backgrounds similar to my own, who had the same goals of attaining doctoral degrees. In addition, I had to be extra cautious, as I sensed my participants in instances defending their past, which could be seen a coping strategy to get through the interview. During my study, I did not have to contend with physical, ethical or professional dangers, although I was very much aware of the possibility of them. Knowing the dangers that come with research, while conducting my research was very beneficial.

Ethics, Codes and Consent

There is much research in the field of qualitative research that espouses the highly debatable term “ethics” of research (Lee-Treweek & Linkogle, 2000). In order to pursue research in which human participants are involved, it is imperative that researchers understand the ethics of research as well as the steps necessary to pursue their project both legally and ethically. Punch (1994), as stated in Denzin & Lincoln (1994) believes that in dealing with ethics in research, one must be aware of “codes and consent,” “deception,” “privacy, harm, identification and confidentiality,” and “trust and betrayal.” Codes and consent are those rules
that now guide many research projects across the country. These codes are rules that specify that the research participants consent to participating in a research project and that they are aware of what the research involves as well as the fact that they are being studied (Punch, 1994 as cited by Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). My research study was first approved by OGRD at my university; once approval was received, all participants in my study signed an informed consent form that told them that they were agreeing to be participants in a research study and that at any time during the study they could request to no longer participate in the study. “Getting an informed consent is just what it sounds like: providing information to potential respondents about the nature of the Survey Project an asking that the person agree to participate” (Thomas, 1999, p. 53). Thomas also stated that “the person must also know that once he or she has started completing the survey, he or she can stop at any time, without penalty” (p. 53). Once my participants read and signed the informed consent form, they had a clear understanding that they were free to stop participating in the study at any time, as it was clearly stated in the informed consent form as well as I reiterated this fact to them verbally before they signed the form.

**Phenomenology and Case Study**

This research study was conducted through the lens of two research approaches: phenomenological and case study.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenological, according to Creswell (2003) “describes an experience” (p.107) and focuses on multiple case studies. A case study, which Creswell (2003) argues “explore(s) a process” (p. 106). This study is a phenomenological case study. “Researchers have also creatively combined two or more research approaches in a single study” (Lichtman, 2011, p.
and I believe combining these two approaches provided me to with the opportunity to produce a more data rich set to answer the research questions posed in this study.

Phenomenology allows the researcher to capture the “lived experiences” of participants, and the phenomenon that is occurring is allowing the researcher to seek the meaning (Creswell, 2003). As stated by Lichtman (2011),

Phenomenology emphasizes the subjective lived experiences of individuals. It has its roots in the philosophical writings of Edmund Hursserl, Martin Heidegger, and more recently, Clark Moustakas… It is important to understand that a good phenomenological study moves beyond just a description of the experience: it strives to arrive at the essence of the experience (p. 77).

Hence the importance of gathering rich data and making sure the researcher situates themselves in the worlds of the participants.

One of the aims of phenomenology is to describe, in detail, an experience and derive what the meaning means to the participant who experiences it (Moustakas, 1994). It was the goal of this study to do just that, describe experiences of the participants in detail and uncover the phenomenon, hence my reasoning for claiming that phenomenology would be the best approach for my study. This research study was designed to purport the characteristics and key elements of phenomenology as outlined by Lichtman (2013). Additionally, the goal of this study closely aligns with Broussard (2006) as cited by Litchman (2013) who states that: The goal of phenomenology is to achieve a deeper understanding of the nature and meanings of everyday experiences. Its central focus is the lived experiences of the world in everyday life. The lived experiences presents to the
individual what is true or real in his or her life, and gives meaning to the individual’s perception of a particular phenomenon (Carpenter, 1999, p. 242).

The use of a phenomenological approach allowed me to see the phenomenon that emerges through the data collection and analyses. This approach focuses on the lived experience, which is what I sought to understand. Since phenomenology focuses on lived experiences and is used to gain access into the world of the subjects, this approach allowed me to investigate the phenomenon, “living two lives” and the participants perspectives on their participation in The Ellison Model and attaining post secondary academic success from the participant’s point of view through the use of individual face to face semi structured in-depth interviews and focus groups.

**Case Study**

By interviewing the African American female participants and focusing on multiple case studies, this study strived to accomplish the elements of what both Litchman (2011) and Broussard (2006) described in regards to phenomenology, as well as what Lichtman (2011) states in regards to case studies. According to Glesne (2011), a case study in qualitative research means to study a case intensely. By focusing on multiple case studies, “unique case” and the “revelatory case,” the individual and collective experiences of my study participants were not lost. The use of case studies in this project allowed me to learn about the experiences of my participants and view individualized outcomes in great depth, which is one of the advantages of case studies (Patton, 1987).

In regards to the use of multiple case studies, this approach provided an avenue for me to focus on the individual experiences of each participant separately. Analyzing each case individually gave me the opportunity to identify the experiences that are unique to each
participant in the way they did or didn’t “live two lives” and how they experienced The Ellison Model Mentoring Program. I also performed a cross analysis, allowing the development of themes and categories that were more general, which was found by shifting back and forth between the data that each case provides. The use of case study has drawbacks such as the difficulty to cross check information by researchers, the value of the study of single occurrences can be questioned, and it is not always possible to generalize. There can be a threat of distortion of reporting, and there are dangers of reporting selectively (Bell, 2005).

Participants

The participants in this study included eight African American females from low-income backgrounds all of whom have participated in The Ellison Model Mentoring Program. The participants in this study all share the following characteristics (a) African American female, (b) they are all graduates of higher educational institutions, and (c) were born and raised in low-income families, (d) were participants and products of The Ellison Model Mentoring Program, (e) and are currently enrolled in or have completed post secondary education. Consequently, as a result of the listed parameters, these women were selected to participate in this study.

Data Collection – Purposeful Sampling

In order to design an effective research project, it is imperative that the researcher takes into account the setting of the research and the target population. The setting should allow easy accessibility at the research site, and more importantly, with the target population (Berg, 2001). For example, it would not be wise for a researcher of African American descent to do research where they would have to interview members of the Ku Klutz Kan (Berg, 2001).

There are different sampling strategies for targeting a subject population including: probability sampling, accidental or availability sampling, purposive sampling, snowball
sampling, and finally quota samples (Berg, 2001). Purposive sampling, the sampling strategy of choice for the present study, is when subjects are purposively selected because they obtain the specific characteristics or qualities of a population that the researcher seeks to investigate. My study involved eight African American females all of whom were participants of The Ellison Executive Mentoring Program Inclusive Community Building Model (The Ellison Model) who grew up as low-income and who have been successful living two lives—breaking the “glass ceiling” in education to achieve academic success and ultimately get accepted into and/or who have attained post graduate degrees. With this said, it was imperative that the techniques of purposive sampling be utilized in this study in order to gather the subjects who fit this target population. “The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 1987, p. 51-52), hence my target population, which will allow me to report in greater details their experiences through individual cases.

Although there are limitations, such as not being able generalize to a larger population that result with the use of purposive sampling, (Berg, 2001; Patton, 1987), “purposive sampling increases the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon will be represented in the data” (Mayakut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 45). Since Patton (1987) argues that “there are no guidelines for determining the size of purposeful sample samples” (p. 58), the sampling procedure I chose to use is appropriate to address a particular limitation of the research study which results from the location of the participants. The unique mentoring approach, The Ellison Model was created in the Southeastern part of the United States, and as a result, all the participants who fit the qualifications of the study are from that geographical area.

There are strengths and weaknesses to utilizing purposeful sampling. The strengths of purposive sampling are that the researcher can quickly eliminate people who do not fit the
characteristics and requirements as well as the sample that is selected for the study is accurate or closely accurate to the population represented. By selecting participants with particular characteristics, it is expected that the results of the study will be a more accurate narration and analyses. Additionally, purposeful sampling is less costly and less time consuming than other type of searches.

A weakness of purposeful sampling is that potential subjectivity of the researcher makes it harder to prove that the samples are representative of populations. Secondly, the researcher might know the participants, causing threats to data trustworthiness. Thirdly, participants might know each other. Lastly, there is an inherent bias of the researcher as a result of personally hand selecting the participants through purposeful sampling. Patton (1987) sums it up best in regards to purposive sampling and the number of participants that were chosen for this study when it was stated:

For example, if the purpose of the [research] is to increase the effectiveness of a program in reaching lower socio-economic groups, one may learn a great deal more by focusing in depth on understanding the needs, interests, and incentives of a small number of carefully selected poor families then gathering a little information from a large, statistically significant sample (p. 52).

By purposively selecting the small number of women for this study, I was able to gather rich and in-depth data from this target population. By selecting my participants purposively, it “permit[ed] inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 46), allowing me to answer the questions that were posed in my study.

After purposefully selecting participants for the study, participants were contacted by both email and phone asking them to be participants in the study. All participants were provided with an
informed consent form that was approved by OGRD through the Institutional Review Board at my university requesting the participant’s review and signatures. The informed consent provided the participants with the option to provide verbal consent. All participants in the study elected to provide written consent. The forms were secured in a locked cabinet once signatures were attained in order to assure confidentiality of the participants. As outlined in the informed consent, participants were advised that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time during the study without ramifications and that they will be given access to the final report of the study, per their request.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected for this study by utilizing open-ended in-depth face-to-face interviews of each participant separately. I also took into account the use of focus groups to gather additional data or to follow up on the information gathered from the initial interviews. “More generally, face-to-face interviewing has become the most common type of qualitative research method used in order to find out about people’s experiences in context, and the meanings these hold” (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, p.10).

**Data Collection -Open-Ended In-Depth Face-to-Face Interviews**

Although there are three kinds of qualitative data: (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) documents (Patton, 2002), due to the richness that results through interviewing, and the questions for which I sought answers, a primary approach used for this study were interviews. Interviews are widely used in qualitative research and they allow you to gather data directly from the participants through individual interviews and/or focus groups (Spradley, 1979; Patton, 2002). Interviews in qualitative research are questions that researchers ask participants in order to find out things that we are unable to know by mere observation (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) stated
that “we interview people to find out from them those things that we cannot directly observe (such as) feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time” (p. 340-341).

Utilization of interviews for this study allowed me to be aligned with the purpose of interviews as outlined by Patton (2002), as it “allow(ed) (me) to enter into the other person’s perspective” (p. 341), providing them a platform to finally have a voice. It was my goal to do exactly that in this study, to interpret, make sense, and document the meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) of the data from the participants, study the phenomenon, and paint an exemplary picture of each of the participant’s “lived experiences,” which is outlined in chapter four, ultimately giving them what Lincoln & Guba calls “voice” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

It is my hope as well as belief that the end result of my study has indeed added to the body of literature, but more importantly, gave much needed voice to my research participants, eight African American women from low-income backgrounds. Since the group selected for this study shared personal experiences of what they believe allowed them to attain post graduate education, I felt it necessary to conduct interviews in order to gather the data first hand. In addition, Holloway and Jefferson (2000) argue that “the idea that an interviewee can ‘tell it like it is’ still remains the unchallenged starting-point for most of this qualitative, interview-based research” (p.10). According to Rubin & Rubin (1995), interviewing is a tool utilized in qualitative research in order to find people’s experiences, thoughts, and feelings. It is a way to try and understand how one thinks and feels about the world. Since the goal of this study is to share the “lived experiences” of the participants in their own words, it was imperative that I conduct in-depth interviews with the participants. Patton (1987) stated that “depth interviewing
involves asking open-ended questions, listening to and recording answers, and then following up with additional relevant questions” (p. 108).

Participants in this study were interviewed utilizing skills that Glesne (2011) provided such as listening, truly listening during the interviews such as “listening with [my] research purposes and eventual write-up fully in mind, so that [I am] attuned to whether [my] questions are delivering on [my] intentions for them…” (Glesne, 2011, p. 118). In addition to the initial interviews, participants engaged in a follow up interview, by way of focus group interviews.

**Data Collection – Focus Groups**

In addition to individual interviews, I also used focus groups for data collection. One of the primary reasons for utilizing focus groups is that “focus groups along with a few other techniques such as unstructured individual depth interviews-provide data that are closer to the emic side of the continuum because they allow individuals to respond in their own words, using their own categorizations and perceived associations” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 13). Given that the participants were all both of ethnic minority and female gender, deemed as an “other” by many, the use of focus groups seemed appropriate since “focus groups opens possibilities of listening to the plural voices of others ‘as constructor and agents of knowledge’” (Fine, 1994, p. 75; Madriz, 2000, p. 841). It was imperative to capture the “plural voices of others” from the participants themselves in hopes of not only validating their individual and collective experiences, but producing it as “their knowledge” and as “scholarly knowledge” to the academic world.

Focus groups are used for many purposes in research, such as obtaining background information on a specific topic, or more importantly, for this research, “learning how respondents talk about a phenomenon of interest” (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, p. 14). Additionally, focus
groups allow participants to have a collective voice and gives empowerment to women of color (Madriz, 2000), especially those from a low socio-economic background, who are the focus of my study. Madriz (2000) quotes “As Rina Banmayor (1991) has stated that collective testimonies have the potential for ‘impacting directly on individual and collective empowerment’ (p. 159)” (p. 847). Madriz continues making a case to the strength and empowerment that these women receive in addition to the bonding that occurs as a result of focus groups as well as the overall strength of focus groups. Research shows that there are numerous strengths of utilizing focus groups in qualitative studies for women of color, such as providing an avenue to uncover these women’s feelings, hopes, dreams, attitudes and their daily existence (Madriz, 2000).

Additionally, focus groups provide these participants with a safe environment in the company of others from the same background as them (Madriz, 2000). In this study, participants were of the same gender (females) and were all from the same low socio-economic, racial and ethnic background.

Although “focus groups, or group interviews […] are ‘a way of listening to people and learning from them’ (Morgan, 1998, p. 9; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 835), there are some drawbacks to utilizing focus groups as a means of collecting data from research participants. Such drawbacks include, and are not limited to: (a) the interview taking place outside the actual setting where interactions would occur naturally, (b) the possibility of not being able to control the group during discussion, (c) not being able to document what each participant says due to multiple persons speaking at one time, and (d) non participation from all participants (Madriz, 2000). Additionally, according to Madriz (2000) focus groups or group interviews have a stark disadvantage when the participants are from low socio-economic backgrounds.
Even with the disadvantages outlined, strengths of focus groups allowed me to accurately gather the necessary data to tell the stories of my participants. The participants were interviewed individually and were asked semi-structured interview questions from the approved interview protocol (see Appendix). One technique that was utilized during the interview is probing, an intervention method used to get additional information from the participant (Payne & Payne, 2004). Probing allowed me to gather additional information from the participants in an effort to urge them to go into greater detail and elaborate when necessary.

Once the data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed, participants were contacted to member check, which allowed the participants to review and comment on the data, making sure their responses were correctly interpreted. “Member checks (participant feedback) ask the essential question ‘Do the people that were studied agree with what you have said about them?’” (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002, p. 453). Member checking also helps enhance credibility of the study. Once the data were transcribed, I contacted the participants individually and provided them with a copy of their interview in order to solicit their feedback for accuracy, making sure the participants’ stories were correct.

**Data Collection Implications**

There are implications as a result of the chosen data collection method. The use of in-person face-to-face individual semi-structured interviews and focus groups may not work to my advantage if participants do not trust me or if they are not completely honest during the personal interview. Cognizant of this fact, I felt it important to immediately build a rapport with my participants at the inception of the interview. The use of in-person interviews allowed the gathering of information quickly and directly from the participants in the participant’s own words. The in-person interviews also provided me an opportunity to witness body language and
the mannerisms as participants answered questions during the interview. Face-to-face interviews also made it easier to ask participants follow up questions or to allow them to explain themselves in greater detail.

The use of focus groups has implications of its own. Focus groups could decrease the researcher’s influence on the process of the interview as well as decrease interaction between members of the group and the researcher. By shifting the power differential from the researcher to the participants, participants in this study were empowered during focus groups, thus allowing them to guide the discussion. Additionally, the focus groups validated the voices and experiences of the participants, further empowering them. Focus group assists the researcher by allowing them to merely observe the interactions between participants and is consistent in its methodology with the everyday experiences and particularities of women of color, which is the population for this study.

During focus groups, some women might be intimidated to speak in front of others, especially if they are timid or think that they might be speaking out against the group. This was not the case in this study. At the same time, if there are members of the group that have strong personalities, they can “hijack” the conversation or persuade other members of the group (Bell, 2005) to answer or not answer questions truthfully, or not answer at all. This is an area where the researcher can interject in order to provide a safe space to encourage the participation of more timid participants, but this approach was not necessary during the focus groups of this study.

Data Analyses

The data were collected via tape recorded interviews and focus groups, the data were transcribed word for word. Once the data were transcribed verbatim, the data were reviewed and
coded to search for categories and themes pertinent to answering my research questions. Once coding and analysis was completed, the participants were asked to participate in a follow-up interview. “Multiple interviews allow participants to reflect on their experiences and to add to what they said in an earlier interview” (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006, p. 271).

My hopes was that through this process my research could accomplish what Herr and Anderson (2005) outline, “demand public knowledge that is transferable to other settings and written up in such a way that others can see its application to their settings” (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. xv). One way to try to achieve this goal was to make sure I establish validity and trustworthiness in the study. There are many ways to establish validity; first and foremost I acknowledged my biases and minimized them.

Since I am an African American female from a low-income background, I come with experiences similar to those of the research participants. It was imperative that I utilized reflexivity to ensure that I did not bring my assumptions and biases into the research study, rather, allowed the participants and their data to tell the story. “Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the ‘human as instrument’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 183). Additionally, reflexivity demands that the researcher reflects on the participants, the researcher’s own personal identities and how they relate to the research.

As the researcher, I first acknowledged my role and why I decided to conduct this study. Additionally, I took extra precautionary measures not to bias the data and to be sure to prove validity. I accomplished this through various methods, most importantly by member checking. “If you ask open-ended questions, follow up particular topics with a second interview, and give the interviewee the opportunity to comment on your interpretation of the answers, you are likely
to obtain some rich, original data” (Travers, 2001, p. 3). This process assisted in helping to ensure validity and trustworthiness.

Additionally, the process of journaling and “memoing” allowed me to reflect on my own personal thoughts as well as the data during the entire research process. The theoretical memos that were made included, but were not limited to: (a) the researcher’s perceptions and biases, (b) what the researcher was feeling during the interview, and (c) the researcher’s perceptions. The short notes were made in the margin while reviewing transcriptions. Memo writing allowed me to document any biases, reactions to the data and/or interviews, as well as allowed me a place to conceptualize what the data meant to me, which will help with validity. I labeled the coded material and developed themes from the data. Once the themes were created, another copy of the coded data was made. The sections of the transcript that were labeled were cut out of sections and then sorted into piles according to the various topics. Labels with the same themes or closely related were placed in the same pile. Each pile was labeled with a word or phrase in order to describe them. I reviewed the piles to see if consolidation could occur and/or whether the piles with little information, or that did not address the research questions, may be eliminated.

The next process of the analyses of the data was to construct a conceptual schema, looking for major and minor components. I defined what a conceptual schema was. The piles were then organized in order of the various topics I wished to discuss. Taking each pile in order of topic, they were organized then divided using strips of paper wherein I was able to plug into charts and then write up my results. By doing it this way, the data were in a more orderly fashion, allowing me to interject my thoughts and analysis of the data, adding literature to support my ideas.
Strengths and Weaknesses of Data Analysis

Inherent with any data analysis technique are strengths and weaknesses. The strength and weaknesses of my data analysis technique is that it was a long process due to the extensive data that was gathered via interviews and focus groups. Transcriptions took a long time, normally several hours for each hour of tape, which became very time consuming. Some researchers pay transcriptionists but this can be very costly and the researcher might not know the data as well. After initial transcriptions, the decision was made to elicit a professional transcription agency, but this came with great cost. To ensure the validity of the transcribed interview transcripts, I listened to each interview tape recording while reviewing the type transcription. This allowed me to become more familiar with the data as well as to make sure transcriptions were typed word for word.

If one transcribes the data him or herself, he or she will be entrenched in the information. Self transcription is more economical and also allows for more familiarity with the data because of the time spent listening and transcribing the tapes. There are numerous computer programs available that will transcribe the data, which are costly. Although it is quicker with computer programs, errors might occur. The decision to solicit a professional transcription agency was decided as the cost-benefit analysis showed this as the best option.

Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

As expected with qualitative research, there are issues of reliability, validity and trustworthiness. Writing memos and notes during the entire process assisted with validity and trustworthiness. The fact that I am an African American female from a low-income background can be seen as introducing bias, as well as providing reliability. As a researcher, I tried intently to keep all my personal biases from entering the research project.
There are varying definitions of validity in qualitative research. “Validity in qualitative research concerns the accuracy or truthfulness of the findings. The term most frequently used by qualitative researchers to refer to this characteristic is credibility” (Avry, Jacobs, Razavieh, 2002, p.251). Payne and Payne (2004) state that validity “refers to the capacity of research techniques to encapsulate the characteristics of the concepts being studied” (p.233). In order to insure validity, one question that will have to be answered throughout the study is whether the participants agree with it and if checking to see if what they said was accurately depicted. This was done throughout the study through member checking. Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview transcript to make comments and/or corrections to ensure they were quoted accurately. Additionally, memo writing assisted in assuring validity of the study.

The issue of credibility of the researcher and participants can become an issue in any research project. Are the researcher and the participants credible? The fact that I completed a pilot study similar to this study brings in some credibility. Also, the fact that I am African American female and from a low-income background provided a level of credibility, but could also pose the question of whether I am too close to the research topic. As a PhD Candidate with many years of academic and professional training, I was prepared to successfully undertake this study. To some degree, my training also added to the credibility of this research undertaking.

To increase credibility it was imperative that the participants in the study had the characteristics that will allow them to provide the data needed to answer the questions of the study. For example, the participants in my study shared the following characteristics: (a) all are African American women, (b) all are from low-income backgrounds, (c) all have participated in The Ellison Model Mentoring Program, and (d) all have achieved academic success at the
university level. Purposefully sampling the participants can prove credibility as well as work against establishing credibility. As the researcher, there must be accurate reflections of the situation as well as accurate reflections of the participant’s perception, minimizing researcher’s bias as much as possible. If multiple approaches lead to the same or similar results and if various researchers are able to garner similar interpretations then this will increase credibility. Lastly, peer reviews and participant review through member checking will increase credibility.

Qualitative research methods to address the issues in this study allowed me to authenticate the experiences of women who I believe were successful in breaking the “glass ceiling” in education. It is my hopes that additional research will be done to see if there are similarities with other minority groups, non-minorities from low-income backgrounds, as well as men as these ideas and recommendations will be outlined in chapter five.
CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

The data examined in this study included eight transcripts of interviews of eight African American women, all of whom resided in South Florida at the time of which the interviews were conducted. The transcripts are the reflections and perceptions the eight participants had about their experiences in higher education. These experiences are specifically about (a) how they met with the “glass ceiling,” (b) the role of mentoring in helping them to overcome the “glass-ceiling,” and (c) their ability to “live two lives,” or successfully navigate between home and university space. While the responses are presented as simple narratives, they provide clear snapshots of the participants’ lived and historical experiences in relation to their experiences in higher education. Moreover, found in their responses were a plethora of descriptions of obstacles that, without the aid of an effective mentor, may have halted their successful completion of higher education degrees.

In the next section of this chapter, a rich discussion persists with an analysis of the participants’ responses found in the transcripts. The chapter is organized into three sections. Each section begins with one of the specific research questions that guide this study. Also within the sections are discussions that surround the related interview responses of the participants that address the particular research question. The participants’ responses are discussed based on the themes and categories to which they are related.
RESEARCH QUESTION #1

What are some of the narratives from the college lives of African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds, if any, that reflect “glass ceiling” experiences?

The narratives found in this section relate to experiences of the participants who described instances where they met with the “glass ceiling” during their higher education pursuits. Based on their responses, the “glass ceiling” is an often unseen barrier between the participants and the accomplishment of higher education degrees, both under-graduate and graduate. Interestingly, this barrier is akin to how Hunt (2000) describes conflict as the distance between the conscience and the emotions. In another instance, he refers to conflict as the distance between where one is and where he or she desires to be, which is described in great detail in this chapter.

Within the context of this study, conflict and the “glass ceiling” can be used interchangeably in that they represent a gulf between two points of existence: the point where the participants stand and the point of completion of higher education. Close examination of their responses indicated that the “glass ceiling” did not represent itself equally in the comments of the participants. Moreover, they suggest that the “glass ceiling” or conflict might be from different origins, whether from the institution, from the individuals themselves, or from the larger society. Their various reported encounters with the “glass ceiling” provide categories of how this phenomenon is expressed throughout the study. In actuality, the data analysis can only deal with perceptions of a “glass ceiling” since I did not conduct any observations or surveys, neither did I gather other information in which I, as the researcher, could actually see these things taking place. The following categories serve as the basis for themes that are derived from the participants’ reported experiences, including:
Perceptions of an Externally Imposed Glass Ceiling

In some cases, the participants’ experiences fell within the category of perceptions of an “externally imposed glass ceiling” where practices of the university carried out by the faculty and staff presented deliberate attempts to maintain certain rights and privileges for a select few. Daisy described her experiences in college sharing how she believed that there was a “glass ceiling” in education. Daisy stated,

But I would say that the ‘glass ceiling’ exists. I think that goes without saying, which is why it explains why we have higher, disproportionate numbers of whites in high level positions with fewer blacks, with, more blacks in lower paying jobs. So yes, the ‘glass ceiling’ does exist. Do I think it’s been met? Uh, do, do I think I’ve met it? Uh, yeah, I think I’ve been met with a ‘glass ceiling’ in ways that I am concerned that I shouldn’t share at this time.

According to Daisy, the effect of the “glass ceiling” is the disproportionate number of whites in higher level-higher paid positions and more blacks in lower paying jobs. Interesting to note is that Daisy, when she referenced the higher paid whites, noted that they were in “high level positions,” whereas when she spoke of the blacks, she stated that they were “in lower paying jobs.” Daisy placed emphasis on positions vs. jobs, where blacks had “jobs,” but whites had “positions.”

On a number of occasions, Daisy shared her own “glass ceiling” experiences while she was in college. For example, based on her comments, Daisy was more of a kinesthetic tactile
learner, who needed interactive activity as part of the learning process. However, the university seemed to provide academic experiences that were more aligned with a traditional style of teaching, primarily a lecture-style format. In one instance, she commented,

One of the challenges I had, I didn’t find out about it until I was maybe just a few years ago, when I was diagnosed with severe sleep apnea…I found it very difficult to sit through classes. Because of the style of teaching then, it wasn’t interactive, very much lecture, I would fall asleep in my classes. I had a problem remembering details. I would read and have to read two and three times. It was a challenge, especially with the more complex material. Reading, I had to walk up and down the street just to read. I had to study by music. Being in a large family worked for me because there was always interaction; there was always what other people might call distractions.

The traditional lecture-style format common in the university presented academic difficulties that could also be said to help create a “glass ceiling” for Daisy. In this instance, we get to see the dynamics of formal education that often represent a set of barriers for certain students (e.g., complex material, loads of reading, lecture-style teaching).

In another instance, Daisy reflected on the fact that she was diagnosed with hirsutism, which gave her extra facial hair, and the impact it had on her during her educational pursuits. She stated,

I remember being in college. My minor was public relations. I wrote extremely well. But I remember my black female professor telling me, ‘you’ll never get a job in public relations until you remove that hair on your face.’ It meant something, so I started removing the hair on my face.
Daisy understood the conflict that was being caused by way of her condition and as spoken by way of her professor, she would not be able to get a job in public relations if she did not remove the excess hair. In this case, the “glass ceiling” might be imposed by the ideas presented by her professor. The “glass ceiling” could have impact during her time at the University, but it could also affect her beyond her time at the University, as well.

For Zia, the “glass ceiling” experiences she faced occurred mostly in the classroom with a certain professor, who seemed to have little regard for certain students. She mentioned issues with the professor and stated,

But I promise you, if I could just go back and be a fly on the wall and prove that the professor was racist because he did not pass anybody in that classroom of color. ‘This is the outline; this is what you're supposed to do.’ I think he just assumed we were supposed to know that. And I'm like, we're freshmen coming in—we were freshmen and he just assumed that they are supposed to know how to handle situations and [we weren’t] prepared.

According to Zia, the professor was racist, and displayed inequitable treatment toward students. Additionally, the expectations of the professor appeared to be unreasonable. Even when Zia made attempts to reach the professor, her efforts seemed to no avail. She mused,

When you try to call, when you try to go back to him, you know there's no consideration, there was no nothing, it's just, he's not available, will not return the call, out of the office, even when he's supposed to be there. And no matter what I did, I never got a passing grade.

On another note, Zia spoke of another student that shared the class with her. The young lady happened to be White. Despite the similarities in the quality of their work, and the fact that
they would do things in a similar fashion, Zia’s described how her grade was always less favorable than her White peer. She commented, “So you know that hurt my GPA. At that time, FIU was changing their curriculum. I was trying to get into the college of education but wasn't officially accepted.” Needless to say, Zia felt as though it was the professor who was hindering her from moving forward.

Interestingly, Tatiana spoke along the same lines as Zia in relation to the treatment of certain professors toward her as a black student. She expressed how she had a different set of experiences depending on the race of her professors. If the professors were African American, they seemed to express greater interest in her succeeding academically. However, in the instances where the professors were White, they seemed to give more advantages to the White students-advantages that she was not afforded leaving her without the same opportunities as her White counterparts. She stated,

Sometimes it depends on the teacher. If the teacher was African American, the teacher paid more attention to me wanting to make sure that as an African American, I was taking advantage of everything that the college had to offer. If it was a Caucasian teacher, then I found that that Caucasian teacher paid more attention to the Caucasian students in the class so at some points, I felt disadvantaged because I wasn’t given the same opportunity or if you wanted extra grades or something, the teacher wasn’t there to do that for you.

**Perceptions of a Self-imposed Glass Ceiling**

Another type of “glass ceiling” evident in the responses of the participants was that of a “self-imposed” or “perceived glass ceiling.” These were experiences that relate to the sense of efficacy the participants had to be successful in higher education. Additionally, “self-imposed”
or “perceived glass ceiling” related to perceptions or pre-conceived notions the participants had of the institution and how they might be viewed by those in power within the institution (e.g., the administration, teaching faculty, and staff). For example, Denai’s response pointed toward a “glass ceiling” experience that was more internal based on her perception of her own ability. She talked about an experience that she had with a professor when she was taking some math and science classes. She commented,

…but in college, I did face a challenge. I had sought to do pharmacy and taking these math classes and these science classes. I had one professor that would give us a science problem, equation, balancing it and it would be on one chalkboard and he’d go over to the other chalkboard, and I’m sitting there and I’m thinking math. So my solution was to change my major.

It was obvious that Denai found difficulties in her college math class. However, it did not appear as though her difficulties stemmed from the University or from some unfair practices of the professor. Instead this seemed to relate to her own perceptions of her ability to do well in the class. Consequently, she thought it would be best if she changed her major.

Likewise, Sarafin indicated that she erected then shattered the “self-imposed glass ceiling” when she came to the realization of her goal of being a good student and graduating with a higher education degree. She stated “I had the regular problems in college and high school, I mean, in graduate school and college. You know, just not studying perhaps, but after my freshman year I buckled down.” It appears that Sarafin erected a “self-imposed glass ceiling” during her freshman year by choosing to “goof off” and not take studies seriously. It does not appear, however, that this behavior was the rule for Sarafin, rather the exception but it suggests the presence of conflict between her goal of being a “good student” and having fun. “I had to be
a good role model and a mentor to them as well,” this spoken in reference to eight younger siblings for which she had to set a positive example.

**Perceptions of a Lowered Glass Ceiling**

The idea of a “lowered glass ceiling” was a term that seemed to be coined by one of the participants, Daisy Bowens. While it was never mentioned by the other participants, it was alluded to in their responses, as well. A “lowered glass ceiling” related to experiences where the participants met divides that stemmed from the larger mainstream society, in terms of its view and its responses toward the ‘other.’ These divides generally surrounded issues of race, class, and gender (Hall, 2009). Daisy, for example, in one of her responses made reference to who she was as an African American female operating in a space traditionally held by her white counterparts. She reported,

…I might be regarded as Afro-centric, and yet I was seeking to operate within a very Euro-centric space…and so this being understood, the diversity was going to be a very real issue for me simply because those with whom I would engage might understand who I was bodily and use that as a point to create an early experience with the ‘glass ceiling.’

And so given who I was bodily, the ‘glass ceiling’ would be lowered.

In her general description of the “glass ceiling,” Daisy defined it as “the cap that would determine how far you could go.” Speaking of African American women in particular, Daisy explained that some meet the “glass ceiling” at different points during their university experiences, and she stated,

Some people meet the ‘glass ceiling’ in their graduate years. Others meet the ‘glass ceiling’…later on in their experience of matriculation or career advancement. For me, given who I was as an Afro-centric self, it could mean that I could meet the ‘glass
ceiling’ at the point of entry. And so that’s what I mean by the concept of the ‘lowered glass ceiling.’

What Daisy described in terms of a “lowered glass ceiling” was not specific to the institution of higher education, but these were realities based on constructs of the larger society that would determine how certain cultural groups were valued and treated (Hall, 2009). Daisy’s understandings of these issues put her on guard for what experiences she could be facing within the Academy.

In another instance, Daisy described an experience she had early in her doctoral studies program. She stated,

Graduate school…I remember like yesterday. It was my first curriculum class. I sat in there, and I heard those students talking about post-modernism and modernism and conservativism. And I said, what the heck are they talking about? And I realized that my experiences were miles apart from theirs, behind theirs. I remember that night, the first time in my life where I was met with a very real situation. And I walked out of that room, that classroom, to the elevator, and I said, my God, I was born black! It was the first time in my life. It was my first class in the doctoral program that I knew, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that my mother was African American, and so was my dad, and that we had some experiences, [and] that the white folk had some experiences that I never had. That wasn’t just stuff they were reading out of a book. They weren’t just exposed to knowledge out of a book. They had some lived and cultural and historical experiences that were miles apart from what I knew and understood of the world.

While this experience occurred in the University, the awakening to which came had to do with a broader issue of “what it meant to be born black.” In this case, being “born black,” a
matter of race, might likely pose a given set of challenges seen in the University, but actually represent the dictates of the larger society (Hall, 2009).

Tatiana spoke of an experience that might fit well within the category of “lowered glass ceiling.” Her experience surrounded socio-economic or class issues, and the opportunities that are typically reserved for those in certain socio-economic groups (Anyon, 1996; Hall, 2009). For example, she mentioned that she had an issue with finding the monetary resources to pay for her education. This experience is typical of students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Hall, 2009). In this regards, the lack of available resources can be seen as a barrier or “glass ceiling” to Tatiana’s obtaining a higher education degree. She stated, “I was comfortable in my abilities to go to college, succeed in college. The only hesitation I had was really how to get there, how to pay for it.” This would be a second attempt to complete her studies after having discontinued her education at earlier stage in her life. Having to go to work and attend school at the same time would pose a “glass ceiling” for Tatiana. She reported,

It became very difficult so I stopped and after that, I relocated to Florida and when I came to Florida…I was kind of like in a state of indecision as to where my professional life [was] going.

Again this “glass ceiling” was not necessarily ascribed to the University, but perhaps a reflection of structures that are put in place within the larger society, in which case, equal access to higher education was largely due to the socio-economic status of those in pursuit of higher education (Hall, 2009).

**Summary**

In summary, the responses of the participants in Research Question #1 indicated a “glass ceiling” presence within the university, evident during their pursuits of higher education. These
“glass ceiling” experiences were described in ways that reflect an “actual,” “self-imposed,” or “lowered” phenomenon. In the next section, Research Question #2, the participants described what were their perceptions of the role and influence of mentoring in breaking the “glass ceiling” during their higher education pursuits.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2

What perceptions do African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds have of the role and influence of mentoring in breaking the “glass ceiling” during their higher education pursuits?

The narratives found in this section relate to the perceptions shared by the eight African American women regarding the role and influence of mentoring in breaking the “glass ceiling” during their higher education pursuits. The section begins as the narratives of the eight women are presented as extensive discussions that are centered around mentoring based on the individual needs of the participants (i.e., academic, emotional, and social). In the next section, the participants’ responses indicate engagement in meaningful dialogue between themselves and their mentors. Through their reflections, the participants reveal the impact of their direct conversations with their mentors where the participants are (a) encouraged to persevere through personal hardships, (b) guided to paths of least resistance, and (c) taught the politics of academia. Finally, the section concludes with an in-depth review of The Ellison Model based on the views of the participants. In this section, the participants’ comments point directly toward The Ellison Model as the named impetus through which they were able to break the “glass ceiling” and achieve their higher education degrees.
In this section, the participants described various types of support from their mentors, including academic, emotional, and social. In general, Daisy had much to say that pointed to the impact of mentoring and its role in breaking the “glass ceiling” during her higher educational pursuits. She spoke quite extensively of her mentors and seemed to have found memories of particular mentors, including: her Dad and a university professor, Gene. In one instance, she stated,

Well, I have to say that I have had a number of ideal mentors one being my dad. And I can remember him mentoring for several, for different reasons. I can remember in my early years of college, for example, my dad, who was a frequent, bar attendant, would come home from the bar, just a bit ‘lit,’ okay? But he would have the most interesting stories that I could always use for my writing assignments. And it didn’t matter what the topic was. He could always tell me some story to incorporate in my writing assignment. As I would submit the writing assignments, the professor would find them, just so very interesting. What she didn’t know was that she was reading the tales of a man who had just come from the bar. Nonetheless, he was a mentor because every night he would come in, just ready to work with me on the assignment. I could sit at his feet. I could tell him what the topic was. He’d ‘roll’ with me, just kind of go over the stories. So in that regard he was a mentor. Then there was another gentleman, Gene is his name. He’s also, he was actually a, a university professor, Gene. And he was…interestingly, he would, I had difficulty in writing, getting started. The first line of the assignment would be a challenge for me. And so as I continued through my university matriculation, he was one who would get me started. He was actually a university professor, Gene. And he was,
interestingly, I had difficulty in writing, getting started. The first line of the assignment would be a challenge for me. And so as I continued through university matriculation, he was one who would get me started. But he was just kind of…what makes him ideal is again his patience, and I guess that, that’s kind of a common thread amongst those that I would consider my mentor, patience. They didn’t forget their own struggles. And so they would just kind of, in, in the reflection of what had been their own struggles, would be willing to work with me and assist me through, uh, what might be a struggle in a particular situation, um, so the patience, the memory of their own struggles, their commitment to see me through to the end, and, um, their sustained encouragement through the process.

It is interesting how Denai had not attributed even experiencing a “glass ceiling” based on the encounters she had with her mentor who espoused the values of The Ellison Model. For one who is familiar with The Ellison Model, that individual would know that it produces quite an effective mentor and a relatively effective model. Denai stated,

I knew of and let me say the ‘glass ceiling’, but I can’t say that I experienced the ‘glass ceiling’ because of the mentorship that I received and my mentor showed me how to operate under a different premise of being successful even as I followed my mentor. So the status quo did not, I didn’t operate under that status quo and under that because being African American female, that ‘glass ceiling’ would exist. So I didn’t conform to the status quo and, therefore, I was not a partaker. I didn’t experience that.

**Mentoring-Academic Support**

Academic support was one of the major categories of mentoring found in the responses of the participants. For example, Tatiana spoke about how her mentor was able to impart valuable knowledge to her, and to help get her through the assignments she needed to get through for
school. She commented on the fact that her mentor provided her with guidance and wisdom regarding the utilizations of her papers and writing assignments for more than one assignment. That she should use a paper and build upon the paper for future assignments, which assisted her in her academic endeavors. She also shared that her mentor was able to help her with issues that arose in her personal life as well requiring that she analyzed the situation herself. Tatiana stated,

I would say yes, I shared learning experiences with my mentor and one in particular I remember going through college, starting college and one of the things that my mentor had said is when you begin writing papers, don’t just write thinking it’s just for this paper, but always think ahead. I may have one paper to do today and the next two weeks, three weeks have another paper I can build on this one paper so I wouldn’t have to start the whole process all over again and that has helped in doing the different projects I have for school or when I had to do the final project, I didn’t have to start from scratch because I have the groundwork already laid.

Because of her mentor’s advice, she understood how to become more successful in her educational pursuits and did not allow “glass ceilings” to stifle her efforts.

Tatiana’s mentor encouraged her to continue to pursue her bachelor’s degree, after having discontinued her education at an earlier stage in her life. She experienced a “glass ceiling” or barrier when presented with the daunting challenge of continuing her schooling despite needing to work. Her mentor also gave her insight into her career choice and how to overcome the “glass ceiling.” She stated,

It became very difficult so I stopped and after that, I relocated to Florida and when I came to Florida and I met my mentor, he was very big into education and after that, I really saw the need for my education and I continued to do my bachelor’s.
Her previous comments indicate how her mentor helped to keep her on track and focused on her educational goals: to persevere.

Daisy clearly shows how her mentor assisted her in breaking that “glass ceiling” during her educational pursuits because her father, whom she saw as her mentor, as well as Gene, a university professor, would assist her with her writing assignments. She could sit at her father’s feet. She would tell him the topic and he would be able to tell her stories even though he had just come home from the bar, and was a little “lit.” She stated that, even in this state, he would still be able to provide her with colorful stories that she was able to use for her writing assignments that her other professors thought were quite interesting. Another challenge that Daisy shared is that she had problems getting started on her writing assignments. She reflected on the fact that her university professor, who she considered her mentor, Gene, was able to assist her with the first line of the assignment and then she was able to progress from there.

Denai described the influence of a collegiate professor who serves as a mentor to her as follows,

As I began my college career, I met my mentor and I attribute my success in getting my undergraduate degree as well as my master’s degree to my mentor, just attending different workshops or auditing particular classes that my professor would teach or present, it gave me insight and helped me to focus and to actually address the issue that needed to be addressed, staying within certain boundaries that I needed to stay within as opposed to the one outside of the boundaries and just one thing building upon another. So instead of working toward a right-now goal, I was working toward a goal down the road and so I was able to combine and use different things for different assignments.
Through the efforts of her mentor, she was able to realize the difference between objectives (which she references as “right-now” goals) and bigger picture goal (referenced as “the goal down the road”). This distinction is found in The Ellison Model which requires one to set out a goal which is positive, inclusive, and communal in nature. The Ellison Model views objectives as discrete and measurable milestones and desired outcomes that stress unity of intent, execution, and outcome and that move toward the realization of the goal. Therefore, Denai’s mentor was teaching her the basic approach of GOMABCD, a 7-step process for overcoming conflicts (Ritchey, 2012), in this case, the “glass ceiling.” The GOMABCD 7-step process is a concept derived from The Ellison Model. The acronym GOMABCD stands for Goals, Objectives, Method, Attitude, Behavior, Communication and Discipline. Through the 7-Step process, individuals are able to learn to experience a renewed sense of purpose to one that is inclusive in both outlook and practice. In Denai’s case, her mentor seemed to keep her in tune with the elements of the 7-Step process in such a way that by her own testament, “it gave me insight and helped me to focus.”

Denai further stated,

Coming to meeting my mentor and I don’t know that I had intended to pursue a graduate degree, but coming into certain knowledge and information, I decided that it would, I saw the benefits of pursuing a graduate degree and how it would help to propel me in my area or my field.

Her comment evidence that she did not “know that [she] had intended to pursue a graduate degree …” until being convinced by her mentor indicates the possibility that Denai had a perception that discounted the value of higher education. In so doing, her perception can be described as a “self-imposed glass ceiling” that her mentor helped her to overcome.
On another occasion, Denai talked about how learning about The Ellison Model was able to help her in her school work because she learned that her work could become easier, that she could have others involved in the process and therefore, she would be less burdened down in her pursuits. So, The Ellison Model was instrumental in removing the “glass ceiling” of being overwhelmed with too much work. She stated,

As I said, my mentor helped a lot because there was a gap. I took some time off in undergraduate school and so when I went back, I had already met my mentor and so the process I could see the ease in the process and even being mentored in The Ellison Model. So just being able to operate from a different standpoint as not doing all the work myself, but employing others helped to keep me in graduate school.

Denai benefitted from her mentor’s expertise in terms of The Ellison Model approach to her studies. She found that it helped her to progress in her studies easier than if she had not had that mentor who was grounded in The Ellison Model.

Patty’s responses indicated that she, like several others interviewees, went back to school upon the advice of her mentor. That gave her the basis for a foundation for success and the confidence to persevere despite apparent adversity. If there were “glass ceilings” or obstacles that she erected or if the educational institution that she attended erected obstacles, it appears that they were overcome by way of her belief in the counsel of the mentors around her.

Patty recognized and experienced the caring, sharing, loving, trust, honor, and respectful nature of mentors who wanted to see her succeed, and not have to endure the stress of the educational system. Patty recalled the words of her mentor,

They’re going to tell you buy two books. Study five chapters a week. And then here you are. You’re trying to do that, but it’s like it’s stressing because it’s too much. But that’s
part, their part of the system. And so, that’s what they’re supposed to do they feel. But it
takes someone outside of that system or somebody who has come from that system to
then step back and say no, I want to be responsible for teaching a better way of going
forward and achieving the same end product.

Patty also recognized that educational instruction focused on the foundation of inclusive
community was beginning to catch on with other professors. These professors deviated from the
traditional route of making college more rigorous than what is necessary. She said “some of the
things that I see the teachers doing now at the schools. I am convinced that that was by way of
[her mentor’s] spirit, going forward as he did.”

Patty also mentioned she learned from her mentor that studying can be done in an
alternative way. Just because you’re told to read all these chapters doesn’t mean it’s at the heart
of what she needs to know. So she was taught to look at her studies in the manner in which she
saw things so she can focus on what’s important and not on the fluff.

Patty also described the influence her cousin had upon serving as a mentor to her. The
cousin’s mentorship can be described as “meaningful mentorship.” People can have influence
over other people who are close to them – but that doesn’t necessarily make mentorship
meaningful. Meaningful mentorship is demonstrated by individuals who care, share, and love
the other person and is willing to be patient and kind toward the end of ensuring the mentees goal
is met. Her cousin demonstrated this.

Mentoring-Emotional Support

Another theme within the category of mentoring was emotional support. For instance,
Kim described how she had a “really strong support system and that’s what really got [her]
through schooling.” She referenced her father who she did not want to face. He wanted her to
succeed, so she strived to ensure she did well for herself and for those who were supporting her. It appears that Kim’s father served to proactively push her beyond barriers to see the importance of higher education.

Along the same lines, Zia stated “…and then getting husband on board, you know, to be that support mechanism I need him to be during that, you know, that about two year span.” In the foregoing, Zia was speaking about her having to stop attending school after the birth of her first child. With the support of her husband she was able to get back into the program in order to finish her schooling. In another instance, Zia spoke about the support she received as an undergraduate. She commented,

Successful in undergraduate? The moral support that I had from family, friends, and even my mentors. And I think too, by working in the university system, and having the understanding of how it works, you know, once I continued with my college degree that helped, even internally.

The foregoing indicates that her family, friends and mentors or support system were instrumental in her success. In some cases, Zia spoke about the influence of her mentor and the fact receiving low and non-passing grades was unacceptable, and commented “and he said that was unacceptable. And that changed me right then. From that point on, I loved math. I passed math. You know, and I felt like, okay, I can conquer anything, then.” In this instance, her issues with mathematics were addressed by her mentor very directly. Her mentor’s bluntness effected a change in disposition within her and showed her that what she had been doing in the past was unacceptable. As a result of the mentor’s influence, she developed a love for math and felt that she was able to conquer anything. So, she directly attributed the mentor as the catalyst toward adopting a new perspective. She went on to say,
Because I got to a point in college, where I just felt like I just wanted… I knew if I had stopped college, I wasn't going to finish it no time soon, because of the negative experience I had been having.

It was apparent that she was moving along the path where she had considered not finishing her education, but the mentoring, more specifically, the emotional support that she received, allowed her to break through those issues.

**Mentoring-Social Support**

Beyond the academic and emotional support, social support was a category that emerged during further analysis of the data. The participants reflected on the importance of receiving social support by way of their mentoring relationships. They perceived The Ellison Model Mentoring as playing a great role in providing them with the social support needed during their academic pursuits.

In one instance, Tatiana stated,

I was kind of like in a state of indecision as to where my professional life is going and he basically shared with me what I was doing. I was nowhere close to any of that kind of stuff and just that word from him, that encouragement, gave me what I needed to, it kind of like opened when you say you have an epiphany, just like something opened and then you realized okay, I can do this and from that point, I was able to experience successes in this particular field and not feeling that I am less than the people I’m around, but knowing and having that level of comfort and that level of assurance. It’s not pride. It’s not anything. It’s just a settled assurance that this is where I’m supposed to be. This is what I’m supposed to be doing.
What she experienced was significant in the sense that she had a mentor who was equipped and capable of guiding her in the right direction. Having that kind of support is an extra added benefit for any individual. Tatiana noted that her physical contact with her mentor was not as frequent as it once was. Even though her discussions with him had been diminished, she felt that she established a relationship that was firmly intact.

Kim described her behaviors in terms of what was expected of her “…because they expected it of me, I expected it of myself.” She felt the need to be successful because her mentors had modeled success. “I came from a group of people or a lot of people that were, that went to school and did well and it was just something that was expected of me.” She further mentioned that her “mentor expected it of me and honestly, I just didn’t want to let them down.” In following the footsteps of her peers who did well, and as her mentor who had high expectations of her, those things trickled down. It is apparent that the influence of her mentor through support and social interaction was critical to her success.

Kim’s mentor also allowed her to see from a new perspective. She said “I used to see a lot of things unaware as just being meaning good or bad and looking at some things as being different, that just equated to bad.” But her mentor helped her realize that “different” is not necessarily bad. The Ellison Model teaches that “different” can be seen as just variety and need not be viewed negatively. So it is not necessarily that there is a “right” or “wrong” in a particular situation. It is just something a person is not accustomed to. Her mentor was able to help her see that and this assisted her in dealing with and building relationships with her colleagues, professors and others during her academic pursuit. Kim shared that she believed that her social interaction with her mentor assisted her in removing “self-imposed” barriers from her path to success in higher education.
Tatiana talked about how The Ellison Model aided her to develop a disciplined character. She stated,

I think the discipline that The Ellison Model brings with it and it’s so multifaceted.

There is a particular [something] and I’m not sure what it’s called, but there’s this concept called content, process and product and I remember specifically having to use that in projects I had. So there were so many different things that The Ellison Model had that you could take and use. There was a portion of coaching that I had to use in a project.

She continued to speak about the loving, caring, sharing values which are espoused in the Ellison Model. She stated, “…I think when you look at the core values of The Model, there’s really no way you can improve caring, sharing, loving, respecting, honoring and what those mean.” She viewed The Model as life-changing and has been able to see the impact it has had in her own life and in the lives of others. She stated,

…when you look at even the person that developed The Model and like the first partakers of The Model that you’ve seen in action, you can really see life-changing instances or incidents with those people and even in my own life.

Dialogue between Mentor and Mentee: Conversations of Advice and Modeling

Evident in the narratives of the participants was the importance of the dialogue and between themselves and their mentors. The women shared that not only was the mentoring relationship important to them in assisting them to be successful during their academic pursuits, but more importantly, it was the dialogue and conversation that they had with their mentors. They reflected that equally important was the advice /modeling that was exhibited by way of the mentoring relationship. Not only were they able to draw upon the conversations and dialogues
that they had with their mentors as they traversed the academic landscape, but they were also able to utilize the experiences of the mentors to assist them as well. They all stated that their mentors modeled the inclusive behaviors of The Ellison Model as they were able to draw from their mentors examples.

Daisy, for example, described numerous dialogic encounters with her mentors. In these instances, she gained vast knowledge for which she could use in her educational pursuits. For example, she shared how her mentors helped her to expand her outlook on the world. She said,

I would say how the stories, their personal stories…So in essence what I took away from the experience of my interaction with the mentor was their expanded view of the world. And therefore, I sort of lived vicariously through their experiences. And as I would apply, or, you know, as I find myself in situations, I would have their experience upon which to reflect. And therefore my broadened sense of understanding where I was in the moment, how I might approach the situation, how to deal with other people, so I would say, yeah, it did expand my world view because of the stories that they shared. Their experiences were now my experience as I began the process of my own metamorphosis into adulthood or into maturity through a particular situation.

Daisy talked about how she was able to find understanding by way of the stories of her mentors. In essence, she didn’t have to experience certain things because of the interactions of her mentors and the fact that they shared their stories with her. She was able to take their stories and make them her own. In this case, the mentor is sharing situations and mentoring the mentee and the mentee is receiving that information in order to be able to synthesize the information and utilize it as an aid in overcoming the “glass ceiling” of higher education.
In another instance, Daisy described a conversation she had with her Dad, whom she regarded as one of her mentors. This particular recollection was a time when her Dad had been rushed to the hospital just hours prior to his passing. Daisy reported,

Seven years ago, March 25th, [my Dad] was in the last hours of his physical life on earth… I went to see my dad, and I knew it was the end for him… And that night… I went to class… After class I got the call that he had been rushed to the hospital, and there at the hospital, he was in such excruciating pain, and they were doing a procedure… And I said, Daddy, you are in charge of your own body. I’m here to see to it that your wishes are carried out. Do you want this procedure? And I’m thinking, and he knew, he was dying. So technically he didn’t have to have the procedure. And he looked at me, and he said, ‘I have to.’ What he meant was he could not let us see him give up. And so when somebody asked me, what keeps me going, what motivates me, and in moments when it seems most convenient to just give up, I think about my dad being in that hospital bed, you know, in the face of looking death in the face, saying, I have to, and I think to myself, I have to.

Daisy also shared that one of her mentors taught her the importance of dialect and about learning the dominant language in the academy. He shared with her his experiences growing up as a child as he learned a childhood rhyme according to the southern dialect. It was not until he was an adult in college that he realized that the way he learned the rhyme was not the correct way. She said,

I can recall one of my mentors explaining how when he was a child growing up in south, [and] because of their dialect, the southern dialect, he always thought the fairy or the rhyme or something went, ‘row, row, row your bow gently down the stream.’ And he
said he didn’t know that they were trying to say, ‘row, row, row your boat gently down the stream.’ And, and I think it was not until he became an adult that he heard somebody else saying the same rhyme or whatever and realized that it was ‘row your boat.’ And so I think and he was saying to me, then it made him think, well, just what else did I miss? You know, I missed the boat trying to row the bow. So what, what else did I miss? It was by way of this example that Daisy learned from her mentor the importance of learning how to communicate in the manner that is expected in academia.

Naomi, while in communication with the mentor, expressed how it was not always clear what the mentor was trying to convey, yet she indicated that she wanted more advice from her mentor. She understood that she was receiving valuable advice and she stressed, “What’s more, what’s next. I want more.” Based on the response, one can see Naomi recognized the importance of the mentor-having a desire to want to seek them out to get clarification and to further expand her understanding and knowledge of whatever the topic is. It might be that many people are faced with such “glass ceilings” based on a lack of communication.

As the participant shared their stories, it was evident that of great importance to all of the women during their academic pursuits was the relationship that they had with their mentor. More specifically, they reflected upon the dialogue/conversations that they had with their mentor and the importance of these dialogues/conversations with their mentors, which they stated assisted them in breaking the “glass ceiling” of education. The women reflected on the stories and conversations with their mentors and the roles that their mentors played in assisting them academically as a result of those conversations.

In a number of instances, Sarafin described instances where she engaged in dialogue with her mentors toward the end of her being encouraged to get back on the path of achievement. She
spoke particularly of dialogue with teachers, who positively influenced her and helped to prepare her for her collegiate experience. For example, her high school English teacher helped her to establish an expectation of success and in so doing, to position her to break through any “glass ceilings” that she might encounter along the way. She described his influence and encouragement as “instrumental” to her success. In another instance, Sarafin was encouraged by her mentor to understand the importance of timing and the necessity to self-assess her attitude towards her matriculation in the doctoral program. His comment to her, "There is a window of opportunity," clearly struck a chord with her. She admitted that she was not serious about her studies but at the beck and call of her mentor, her attitude changed. Barriers or “glass ceilings” no longer were relevant. Her responses showed that a mentor can function as a change agent revealing unto a mentee possibilities and challenges not readily seen.

**The Ellison Model: Breaking the “Glass Ceiling”**

Sarafin attributes her success in the academic sphere to her embrace of The Ellison Model and its tenants by saying, “I think it definitely contributes to all aspects of a person's life, whether it's academic or not academic.” Her positive attitude seems to be the key factor that she points to as paving the way for her success. The Ellison Model teaches that attitude in the GOMA/ABCD process is the pivotal point that leads to success or failure in any endeavor.

Kim reflected on The Ellison Model usefulness as she stated,

Well, I can think about The Model and how it’s helped in terms of also the mentoring aspect. I’m just trying to think about one story in particular. Don’t know that I can put my finger on one story. Without this model, one can be lost.

Kim reflected and realized that she had many experiences with The Ellison Model but during the time of the interview she was unable to recall one experience in particular. The fact
that she noted that one could be lost without The Model reveals her importance of The Model during her academic career. Kim continued as she discussed the timeframe of when she was exposed to The Ellison Model. She stated, “The Ellison Model right around that time, like I said when I was leaving high school, going into college.” She had a basis for understanding The Ellison Model. Kim commented that The Ellison Model was a model that worked if it was really taken to heart.

Tatiana argued that The Ellison Model provided a variety of components that allowed her to apply it in her academic career. She noted that she did not have to “go scrambling to the library looking” and that “it [The Ellison Model] made projects a lot easier” for her that had to be completed in college. She mentioned things such as the techniques of The Ellison Model, the idea of coaching, and the discipline that The Model taught her helped her to accomplish tasks.

In examination of the participants’ responses, not only did they reference The Ellison Model framework, but the specific values of the framework were frequently noted, namely, respect and honor. Ritchey (2012) defines the values of The Ellison Model framework within the context of her research on the efficacy of Goma curriculum and its impact on teachers’ and their instructional practices. In her examination of teachers’ roles as character educators, she makes reference to The Ellison Model framework in defining honor as on-par positioning meaning that one is receptive to the ideas of others since the roles of teacher and learner can be interchangeable at any given moment. Closely aligned to honor is her definition of respect which she defined as “the acknowledgement the presence others-seeing the talents and ideas that others are able to add value and contribute to the group (Ritchey, 2012).
The Ellison Model Values-Respect

Tatiana described her mentor as inclusive. He regularly incorporated her ideas in the mutual works that they were involved in and she noted this is not characteristic of most mentoring relationships.

Tatiana talked about how her mentor views diversity in the sense of variety which she likened to spices when one is cooking. Each spice adds a different flavor to the dish. She stated, My mentor sees diversity as I guess something that adds value when you have different spices, say, for instance, when you’re cooking, it adds value. So my mentor doesn’t look at diversity as something negative. As a matter of fact, he teaches me that if you start looking at it as negative, I’ve already lost.

Based on this view, diversity is seen in a more positive light than the traditional sense of diversity as fundamentally different and therefore, fundamentally flawed. Tatiana talked about how she attended several workshops about The Ellison Model and how her mentor demonstrated inclusion. Inclusion is a component of The Ellison Model. She stated,

I believe that my mentor does model how to address and deal with diversity and I guess I see it very evidently when you’re at the workshops and, there’s always an opportunity or always that outlook to find people of different cultures brought together, having conversation together. It’s never merely a simple matter of wanting all that comes from this background or that background, but the presenter is always looking at what is the business sector, the education sector, the religious community and bringing all those bearings, factions of society together and finding common agreement with all in order to bring about a successful project.
This notion of bringing varying factions together that Tatiana spoke of deals directly with bringing people to the inner circle, finding common ground so that they can move from diversity, to unity, to community (Hunt, 1993). Therefore, the diversity that is spoken of is diversity defined as variety (Hunt, 1993). It is interesting to note that in her statement, the mentor’s behavior is so intertwined with the tenets of The Ellison Model where she is able to speak of The Model and the mentor interchangeably. In essence, the mentor demonstrated the very values of The Ellison Model that they taught.

One response that Daisy shared in regards to her belief of whether The Ellison Model Mentoring Program was successful is that she stated,

I do. I do. Explain? Did I feel like the Ellison Model said that it would do what it, do what it said it would do? Yes…The Ellison Model is a promise of inclusive community building, and it provides that. Now it does require that I assess my own understanding of the world. It requires that I put down some old assumptions about people, and particularly those who are in, in particular those who are in the least empowered seat. Um, it does, uh, speak to how I would, uh, engage those who are least empowered in the process, in, in, in the, uh, problem-solving, decision-making process. And so I would say that the, the promises of The Ellison Model are fulfilled.

Here Daisy speaks clearly about The Ellison Model values and the category is respect. Daisy shows that she had to learn how to shed some of her own assumptions about how she felt about people. In this instance she was able to move from diversity, to unity, to community (Hunt, 1993). It is clearly seen that Daisy was initially on the “outer circle” in regards to her thinking and assumptions about others but that she was able to move to the “inner circle” of The Ellison Model when she shed those assumptions about others (Hunt, 1993). The category of
respect is most applicable in this instance as Daisy had to learn how to respect those who were
different then her, who she previously had assumptions about.

In Kim’s response, she stated that her mentor taught her to not look at herself as an elitist.
She admitted that her perspective was “… elitist like I’m better than, which is what I actually
though at one point up until I met [my mentor].” She had to explore her attitude (which The
Ellison Model defines as a disposition of heart) and came to the realization that she was
operating out of belief system founded upon disrespect. From an elitist perspective, she could
not understand respect. Such an attitude could serve as a barrier or “glass ceiling” in that her
failure to recognize the perspective of others could serve as a limiting factor to her own
development and cause others to shun assisting her.

She also mentioned “I guess they say look at the glass half full instead of half empty.”
Kim was making reference to her mentors, in terms of instilling those things that positively
influenced her. It is apparent that Kim learned the true nature of respect from her mentor. She
said,

My mentor definitely helped me to reflect on different issues because being in the travel
and tourism industry especially in South Florida…this big melting pot is really important
that I got an understanding of seeing diversity as variety instead of different because it’s
something that could affect my industry.

Kim’s newfound embrace of the value of respect proved essential for success on her job. She
stated,

It’s something that could affect entrepreneurs and owners of businesses and
establishments because if you only want to let’s say sell your product and your wear to a
certain group of people, well then you just probably closed yourself out, shut your own
business down and you’re able to see that there’s worth maybe even hiring people to work for you. There’s worth in others. So my mentor was able to help me see it in my industry of travel and tourism especially going internationally that it’s really important to be open to all things as opposed to just shutting down something because of your not being comfortable with it.

Kim reemphasized the importance of respecting all ways of life and cultures. She said regarding her mentor, “It wasn’t do as I say and not as I do, but he knew how to work with me in a way that allowed me to be able to understand.” Her mentor adapted to her learning style. He was reaching her at her level. She understood that her mentor understood her perspective. Kim stated,

So you sit down at a table and he would maybe pull out something like a bag full of pieces of crafts and he would use those to show me that one is not better than the other, but once you put all the pieces together, it’s going to make a nice project or a product. This is another form of dialogue-another form of communication used to reach Kim.

Naomi’s comments also reflected The Ellison Model value of respect as she spoke fondly of her mentor. Naomi shared that in regards to her mentor, she looked at the disposition of the heart of the mentor. She stated,

And as long as that same thing is there, the caring, sharing, loving, core values are, that’s what’s driving it, then it really doesn’t matter, because you know that they have their, yes, they have your best interest in mind.

Naomi is describing that the influence of a mentor not focusing on the way that the mentor delivers the message, but rather what is the intent of the deliverer of the message. In essence, Naomi is expressing respect for what the mentor says regardless of the way that it is
delivered because she knows that it is for her benefit and she knows it is for her good. This is a component of The Ellison Model as The Model teaches that one should not focus on the “delivery” of the message, but rather focus on the “understanding” of the message. In other words, if one looks at the actual message that is being presented, then there is great benefit.

Also The Model shows that the mentee can be used in this instance in order to assist the mentor in more effectively delivery of future messages. In this regards, both the mentor respects the mentee to be opened to receiving from the mentee as well as the mentee respects the mentor and is open to provide constructive criticism during the mentoring process. As shown by way of Naomi’s response, she is describing a situation where she learned the fundamental message as she has been taught that it is not always about the method of delivery, it’s about the content of what is said and the intent behind the content.

As The Ellison Model shows forth in terms of the value of respect, it is important that the focus is internally, meaning one must look at the disposition of the heart, which now becomes the focus. The Ellison Model shows respect as giving a presence to the individual, acknowledging others-saying this person does exist.

Naomi shared comments that spoke to inclusion. The practicality of the Ellison Model is that it highlights the different talents and the variety of skills and gifts that others can bring to the table. This is a more communal approach and a collective way of reaching a goal. One of The Ellison Model focuses is on inclusion, which can only occur by way of acknowledging the other.

**The Ellison Model Values-Honor**

Tatiana’s mentor was also open to critique, and she felt that this was a crucial aspect of The Ellison Model, where the concept of reciprocity was a visible reflection of mentor as both the dispenser as well as the recipient of knowledge. She stated,
I would say yes, there has been opportunities, opportunities for critique with the mentor and one of the ways I think that he does it. Say, for instance, he’s done something. He will give it someone and say look at it, take it higher, embellish it, add to it. So he’s never at the point that it’s only him, but he always looked for opportunities for me to grow and in passing things on to me and then that’s also an opportunity for me to grow and it’s not that there’s anything wrong with what he’s done, but it’s just that he realizes that there may be something in me that can add to what he has.

Zia’s response conveys a similar message of honor, as part of The Ellison Model value system. She stated,

It’s like, I’m that little child that watches your every move [and] your every behavior. So as a mentee of…you want to teach me this so I can teach others. Well, I need to see how this thing is working in you, you know?

As she was introduced to The Ellison Model, Zia was able to see that as The Ellison Model is eternalized by the mentor, the mentor actually lives The Ellison Model. This is opposed to just teaching some sorts of values, one must live it. Zia was very critical of her mentors and she made mention that she wanted to see how and if The Ellison Model was in practice by way of her mentor; she looked at their modeling so see if the mentor was actually living The Ellison Model. Her observation of her mentor showed her that her mentor was operating with honor which made her respect both her mentor and The Model. She shared that there were life changing moments or community moments that occurred in her and that she was able to honor The Ellison Model, which was able to provide her with support. Zia also referenced the notion of honor as she described how during her mentoring experiences, she felt on-par with her superiors in that she was allowed to make contributions and offer critique. She
stated, “I can actually say no. I felt equal, if that's, you know, the appropriate word. While they taught me things, there were things that I brought to the table too. So the learning cycle was, like, reciprocal.”

Here, using The Ellison Model value system she was able to honor her mentors because of what they were demonstrating in terms of their behaviors. She also spoke of reciprocity in terms of the learning and sharing which also demonstrates that Zia’s mentor also honored her.

Honor was also evident in Daisy’s comments as she spoke in great length comparing The Ellison Model Mentoring Component to other mentoring programs. She shared,

The Ellison Model is different from a traditional mentoring process. Within the traditional mentoring process, there’s the assumption of knowledge and wisdom, based on the older, the more affluent, the more assumed resourceful. I would say that the knowledge, the wisdom, the potential to serve as a guide, is couched within the space of those who are more, who are older, who have more means, more resourceful, and who have more influence. And so when you think about mentoring then within that framework, you see it as a top down approach. The Ellison Model, however, mentors without regard, understand mentoring without regard to age, influence, or affluence. The Ellison Model said, as a matter of fact, you are both mentor and mentee at once. You are both a dispenser and recipient of knowledge at once. As a matter of fact, I’m an educator, right? As an educator, I understand that in order to teach my student population effectively, I must know their interests and their needs. Who best but the students to be able to share that information with me? So before I can teach them, they must first teach me. And so this ebb and flow between dispenser and recipient of knowledge occurs between the both of us. And so they are mentoring me on effective teaching strategies to
reach them. And I’m mentoring them on new concepts and new information. Well, that happens within the framework of the Ellison Model. Framework of The Ellison Model says you are both mentor and mentee. The traditional model says you are always, you are at a stagnant position, a mentor, as well as mentee and that these positions are held by different persons, never to be confused for one and the same.

Tatiana spoke about the reciprocity of the Ellison Model, as well which showed the importance of that component of The Model. She stated,

The mentoring process in The Ellison Model, I think the piece of it that I appreciate is not, you recognize that you don’t have to be limited in that mentoring process because the mentor that teaches you is also open to receive from you and when you have that kind of outlook that it gives you an opportunity to also desire to mentor someone else. So it’s a process that doesn’t stop at one level and you’re able also to use it in so many different arenas because sometimes you look at some models or some process and you’re so limited in where you can use it. But I have found that using The Ellison Model, even in my home, when I’m at work, in terms of the whole mentoring process, I am open when I’m in meetings to hear what someone has to say and that process is reciprocal. When I exhibit love and that caring and want to share with others, then it’s reciprocated to me also. So instead of me dictating when I’m on my job, it’s a posture of more humility that I can sit and I can listen if they’re subordinates that’s talking to me and when I’m also in the company of my manager or my boss, then I don’t feel like I’m less than because I’ve already, those principles have already been instilled in me that I can teach and I have something to contribute and to offer.
According to Tatiana, The Ellison Model posits that the mentee has something to input or bring to the table as it relates to whatever task that is being done. That is what makes The Ellison Model different from traditional models. It is usually presumed that the one who is the mentor is the only one who has knowledge or insight in a particular area and will be bringing all of the teaching to the mentee.

It is important to note another aspect of The Ellison Model. It is very important to state this because The Ellison Model calls for mentors to deal with mentees in a loving, caring, and sharing way (Hunt, 1993). Tatiana talks about these characteristics in relation to her mentor. Additionally, she speaks of the role of empowerment the mentee holds seeing his or her value to the mentor. She stated,

I have not been a part of another formal mentor/mentee type of program. Just apart from growing up, you had people in the community or in college, you had professors that you looked up to and you would kind of try to model after them. So I’ve not had any other formal experiences, but I think from The Ellison Model is really that your success…you really validate the mentor and if you’re really truly a mentor, then the success of your mentee really speaks a lot about you and I take that even at work if I am showing someone something. Normally in Corporate America, the boss sometimes will hold information close to their chest because they don’t want their subordinates to know too much, but for me, it’s always been since I’ve learned The Ellison Model as much as I can give to the people under me when they start shining, that means I’m shining. So I don’t have any reason to feel that they are going to come and take my position because if I’m really giving from me what I have, then no one can really take that away from me.
RESEARCH QUESTION #3

What behaviors described by African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds if any can be described as living double lives as they navigate home and university space?

This section highlights discussions of the participants in relation to “living two lives” (Hoyt, 2003). Interesting to note, the majority of the participants described an ability to live a double life in order to successfully negotiate between their home and university space. Moreover, their comments point to various components of The Ellison Model as the means by which they learned such navigation skills. The particular responses of the participant’s evidence that they were able to (a) understand the conflict resolution component of The Ellison Model and how to resolve conflict, thus (b) “live two lives.”

Conflict Resolution – A Unitary Process

The Ellison Model maintains five major areas of focus: (a) inclusion, (b) multicultural appreciation, (c) conflict resolution, (d) mentoring, and (e) relationship building. Among these foci, conflict resolution was most salient found in the participants’ comments that addressed the research question of this section. The Ellison Model views and encourages a unitary process in order that the conflict can be said to be resolved (Hunt, 1999). In this case, an inward reflection of one’s role in the conflict is the first step in resolving it. According to The Ellison Model, this introspection allows the individual to bridge the gap between his or her conscience and his or her emotions. In this way, external conflicts are minimized and treated as nominal.

In the case of this study, many of the participants described conflicts in the way of a “glass ceiling.” Likewise, they acknowledged that after engaging with a mentor, one who espoused The Ellison Model values of trust, honor, and respect, the external conflicts of the Institution nor the society were no longer of great significance. Therefore, the nature of
participants’ comments in this section shift from a discussion of the “glass ceiling” as a barrier to a discussion of their efficacy to overcome the “glass ceiling” seeing how the internal conflict had been resolved; therefore the external conflict was of no consequence. In this section, the participants shared stories about understanding the importance of The Ellison Model in the conflict resolution process. It seemed clear that understanding how to resolve conflict assisted them in navigating both their home space as well as the university space.

Tatiana comments showed that she once faced a self-imposed “glass ceiling” as a result of her own conflict. She found that as she negotiated the university space, she had to move from her comfort level of working independently to the point where she would learn to work with collaboratively with others. Her academic environment required that she participate in group projects. She realized that she had an internal conflict that needed to be resolved if she wanted to be successful at the university. By way of The Ellison Model, Tatiana was able to adjust to the differences people have in terms of getting tasks accomplished (i.e. the ebb and flow of group dynamics such as dealing with different personalities, differences in the pace of the work, etc.) and this assisted her at the university. She stated,

But when I went to college, I realized that there had to be a change and I had to learn to work with people because there are multiple team assignments that are required in order to meet success. Although I preferred doing things on my own up to this point, I figure okay, I’ll just get it done. I didn’t have to rely on other people. They take so long to do things. So I had to adjust how I thought about people and working with them, realizing that it’s not really just about me, but it’s really about coming together as a group and working toward a common goal. So I
think from the standpoint of being quiet and shy in some respects, I had to learn to work with people and get along with them.

Tatiana shared another instance where her mentor was able to teach her about conflict resolution. This time, she described how she learned to deal with the root causes of conflicts and how to look inwardly to examine her personal disposition in every situation. Also, she learned how to trust that a resolution would come even though it might not be the resolution she had initially desired. She commented,

I think my mentor helped me to understand what conflict is in the first place because sometimes previously things happen, I would just go through the experiences not realizing that they’re actually conflicts and things that will affect me later on if they’re not dealt with at the time and sometimes for me what it has caused me to do is not rush to judgment when something happens, but really look at me and say okay, what have I done. What have I contributed to what has happened and what needs to change to bring a proper resolution to it? Sometimes the resolution is not necessarily what I think it should be, but it’s something that sometime comes out of it and it makes me a whole, a better person and the other individual also.

Tatiana was able to resolve the conflict internally with the help of her mentor. This was evidence of The Ellison Model’s view of conflict resolution as a unitary process; the idea that a conflict is internal, and in the same way, the conflict must be resolved-internally first before it can be resolved externally (Hunt, 1993).

Daisy also recounted that her mentors taught her valuable lessons related to The Ellison Model’s conflict resolution process. She shared that her mentors taught her the dynamics of the power structure in the university and that she could either include herself or be self-exclusive.
By way of the experiences with her father and Gene, as well as other mentors, Daisy shared that the way they operated, through their use of The Ellison Model techniques that she was able to resolve conflicts. Daisy reported,

And all of these things were factored into how I would present myself. And all these things I got out of the Ellison Model. And while I wasn’t within the power structure to exclude others, I was in the sense that I had power over my own situation, and I was then causing the exclusion at a personal level.

Having the power over her own situation meant that Daisy could either choose to the way in which she would be recognized by the power structure, the institution, whether to continue to not participating in the process nor be recognized, thereby excluding herself.

In her further discussions, she spoke of what she had learned from her mentor, who made a distinction between conflict resolution, where conflict is addressed internally and behavioral management, where conflict is addressed merely externally. She commented,

Then we talked about conflict resolution where The Ellison Model view is conflict resolution as the first phase of it, being a unitary process where the unit looks from within to understand its role in the conflict, versus a traditional model, where conflict is never resolved, but at best managed, because within the traditional framework, they deal with, ‘I’m sorry’, [where] conflict is viewed as part of an external process. But what is external are the resulting behaviors. And so they never really get to the root of the problem to begin to address it.

It appeared that Daisy understood, by way of her mentor’s teaching about The Ellison Model, that she was either a part of the problem or she could be a part of the solution, realizing
that she had to first address and resolve the conflict internally before she would be able to resolve the conflict externally.

Along the same lines of being a part of the problem or the solution, Naomi seemed to arrive at understanding that the “glass ceiling” could be a barrier installed by someone else or it could be put in place by the individual. In fact, unresolved conflict within an individual could act as a “glass ceiling,” whereby they are able to see what the goal is, but something internally does not allow them to breakthrough, causing a “self-imposed glass ceiling.” Naomi referenced that strategies are needed in order to breakthrough that particular “glass ceiling” and that The Ellison Model was that strategy for her. Additionally she shared that The Ellison Model taught her how to resolve internal conflict first, which will then expectedly allow her to break that “self-imposed glass ceiling” by way of the unitary process of resolving conflict. It was through her mentor’s enactment of The Ellison Model that she learned to examine herself first prior to looking outwardly. She stated,

Okay. I feel that my mentor’s really instrumental in, um, just teaching, breaking down what conflict resolution is. Um, and the thing that I take away from it first, it, it’s a, um, it’s really a thing about you have to look at yourself first. You have to work at it at an individual level before you can approach it from any other level. And I keep coming back to that.

In the same way, The Ellison Model helped Kim cope with the issues of the “glass ceiling.” She stated, “So The Ellison Model helped me to understand let’s say different issues that I go through because it allows me to, first of all, to see myself with the situation.” She also commented on how learning how to solve conflict internally first prepared her for helping, encouraging and teaching others how to resolve conflict themselves.
She began to understand the importance of resolving conflict in order to overcome the “glass ceiling,” as there seems to be a recognition that those things that she perceive to be roadblocks, how she was admitted to the college, what other people may think, the lack of support that she may have from parents, that no matter what those situations may be, she has come full circle to realize that she have to resolve that conflict within herself first.

“Living two Lives” (Inner Circle/Outer Circle)

One of the goals of The Ellison Model circular diagram, is to learn to successfully travel on the “inner circle” from diversity, to unity, to community and in the process navigate from the “inner circle” to the “outer circle” of disharmony to validate the values one brings from the “inner circle” (Hunt, 1999). Additionally, one must be able to move back to the “inner circle,” or the permanent residence. In the “inner circle,” diversity is simply defined as understanding and appreciating variety. In regard to this whole notion of “living two lives,” moving from the “inner” and to “outer circle” and back successfully, it is for the explicit intent to bring someone, an institution, or even communities to an understanding and an appreciation of diversity as variety.

Additionally, The Ellison Model deals not only with the individual at the micro level, or individual, but also at the macro level with communities. As communities begin to understand the notion of true inclusion, the possibility of someone experiencing feeling as if she was growing up in an inferior or inadequate community would diminish greatly. Having an inclusive attitude or approach to living, would alleviate a person’s feelings of inadequacy for one of acceptance and competence.

In this section, the women’s narratives point to evidence of being able to “live two lives” and successfully negotiate between their home and university space in order to attain their higher
educational degrees. Important to note is that the participants utilized components of The Ellison Model in order navigate between the two worlds. They learned how to resolve conflict according to The Ellison Model which views conflict as a unitary process. Clearly seen in the narratives is that the women overcame all obstacles that they faced during their academic pursuits by way of knowing how to effectively live a double life, even if that meant not switching their mannerisms in both worlds. In order to “live two lives” successfully, it was imperative for the participants to solve their internal conflict first in order to solve the external conflicts that might have been placed on them by way of their low-income status.

Daisy commented extensively about various components of The Ellison Model that she utilized in order to assist her in navigating between her home space and the university space. She highlighted in great detail other components of The Ellison Model that she believed assisted her in her higher education pursuits. She explained one component of The Ellison Model, multicultural appreciation, which she believed impacted her greatly during her time at the university. She commented,

A third element of The Ellison Model is multicultural appreciation, where I talked about moving from the self to the agency. And the individual doesn’t view aspects of identity as reasons for distancing oneself, but really as a means for understanding the other to appreciate the perspective of the other, you see? So within other frameworks, multicultural appreciation is about appreciating the differences. Well, that poses a danger because the emphasis is on the difference, in which case, you run the risk of division because when the emphasis is on the difference then such lines as insider/outsider are created. Another line of division is created between the have and the have-nots. Another line of division is created between the inferior and superior. So while the
attempt is toward multicultural appreciation, because the emphasis is on the difference, you run the potential risk of getting stuck at the understanding of the difference, making it very difficult to, to build an inclusive community. Well, within The Ellison Model framework, the recognition of the difference is a necessary start. However, it is with understanding the difference and using that understanding as a first step in community building. Do you, you see the difference? So then multicultural appreciation becomes a part of the process and not an end-product. Another full side or area of focus within The Ellison Model is inclusion. Within traditional framework, inclusion usually happens between or among subgroups where everyone in the group looks like the other. Within The Ellison Model, inclusion is going to necessitate strategies that will enable those who have been excluded to be valued, as well those who have participated in the exclusion, to see the benefit of inclusion and then be amenable to inclusion as part of their own way of being. And so you couch what is the end product of an inclusive community within the interest of those who [exclude and] are excluded, [so they are able] to see how [being] inclusive is going to benefit all. And the final full side is relationship building. Within other traditional frameworks, relationship building is the pursuit of individuals who see how they can benefit from other individuals. Within The Ellison Model, relationship building is not the pursuit. It is the by-product. It is what happens when you mentor, when you’re inclusive, when you resolve conflict effectively, when there’s multicultural appreciation. So it is, it is the outcome of these other areas of full side. It is not a separate and distinct pursuit of the individual toward a relationship with other, others or other groups of individuals.
Daisy’s comments offer great insight regarding what she learned of the various aspects of The Ellison Model. Her thick description of The Model also points to what she likely used to navigate between the two spaces of the university and home. It would seem that the lessons embedded in her comments provide a summary of what the participants of this study drew from their engagement in The Ellison Model, and the expectations of what should follow. Daisy is among the participants who appear not only to have been a mentee of The Ellison Model process, but she seemed to have been catapulted into the role of mentor, as well. I might add that this is what The Ellison Model promotes.

Found in the reports of other participants are clear indicators of having “lived two lives,” based on comments regarding language, cultural, and social differences between home and the university space. Denai, for example, expressed that there were differences in the way that she spoke in her home environment as opposed to her college environment, resulting in a double life. In her home life, she felt comfortable speaking slang and Ebonics, but sensed she would not be successful in her college life if she spoke her “home” language. Denai seemed to be able to successfully make a shift from the world of her home life and the world that she strived to be involved in, the college life. She stated,

And really thinking about the culture of the neighborhood I grew up in…it wasn’t necessarily a culture that would be seen as college bound. So, of course, I had to kind of move in and out of two different worlds or two different places when I was growing up, when I was at home in the neighborhood, then I could talk the talk of the neighborhood or community and the slang and the Ebonics or whatever, whereas when I went to college, I had to be more professional to demonstrate that I was worthy of the degree that they were going to give me.
Although Denai mentioned that her neighborhood, in general, was not one that was viewed as college bound, she knew that she was college bound, and therefore, needed to operate in such a way that she would be acceptable in the world of academia. In this case, “living two lives” relates to a particular technique of The Ellison Model, wherein an entity or individual moves from diversity, to unity, to community. As such, the individual would be operating in the “inner circle,” and would share values of trust, honor, respect, loving, caring, and sharing; and people are respecting one another regardless of their background differences. In the “outer circle,” one moves from a posture of diversity that views differences in a negative light. From this notion of “outer circle” diversity, individuals progress toward disunity and ultimately find themselves in a state of dis-community.

Like Denai, Daisy faced issues of language diversity, where there were notable differences in the expectation of English vernacular were different between home and the university space. In some instances, Daisy’s described this as an internal conflict or a perceived “internal glass ceiling.” Her decision not to speak may be viewed as a choice to just be silent and to not move between the two worlds. However, Daisy shared that she wanted to be a team player as she knew that those that sat at the table were unlike her. Daisy’s coping strategy in this instance was being able to move between the “inner circle” and “outer circle” of The Ellison Model. She took those values of The Ellison Model and incorporated them in her mannerisms while she sat at the table because she knew that she had to honor those who she sat at the table with. Daisy was able to take that which she learned from The Ellison Model, internalize it and make sure that she was able to be called to the table. As she stated, “I knew then that in order to be called to the table, I had to be--I had to prove myself worthy.” Understanding this, Daisy
learned that she had to learn how to utilize self agency, where she was seen as valuable, in order to be called to the table while at the university.

Kim commented that she felt she had to live a double life by understanding that she had to operate in two different cultures during her academic pursuit, the culture of her home life and the culture of academia. She commented that The Ellison Model taught her how to operate in two different cultures. She stated,

I realized through The Ellison Model, and sometimes other people not fully understanding it or those who may have just begun to understand it, that there are times where we’re really operating in two different cultures, and I don’t necessarily mean an outward culture.

Naomi’s narrative showed that she had to live a double life as her parents did not understand that her education did not make her better than them. She commented on the fact that as a result of her educational pursuits, her family saw her as different. Interestingly, Naomi spoke in regards to being teased by other Black students because of her high academic achievement as they accused her of thinking that she was better than them. Naomi had to learn how to operate in her home space in order to not be ostracized while at the same time achieving academic success in the university space in order to matriculate. She stated,

My home life…I think when I went away to college and came back, um, I think there was this notion with my parents, particularly my father at the time, thinking, well, sometimes too much education is, can be bad, ‘cause you come back as a know-it-all and sometimes know-it-alls can’t be told anything. I think that’s, that was his impression of me, but I think he realized, too, that it wasn’t me trying to, um, you know, exert my influence over anybody. It was just, really just trying to share the knowledge that I gained to help them,
uh, not to beat over their head and rub in their face, so. Yes, because, um, again, it was the question, partic-, particularly with the black students. You think you're better than us. When you start making Honor Roll every, you know, every quarter or what-have-you, they start thinking, oh, you smart. So they start looking at you like answer questions, sometimes try to get you to do their homework. But, didn’t do that. I didn’t do anyone’s homework. And I didn’t give any answers on tests or things like that. It was just… it’s just like, I don’t think I’m better. It’s just I can’t…I think at the time, when I was younger, I think I impressed. My parents don’t want me bringing home grades lower than a C, you know, ‘cause I will get into big trouble. And I really to this day never knew how much trouble I’d really get into, ‘cause I didn’t bring home grades that were really low.

This is an instance of “living two lives” where the issue of “living two lives” emanates from the father’s expectation to conceal Naomi’s education. Naomi shared that she believed her father had an expectation that he reared her in a particular way and that he expected her to act in accordance with that training, in which case, “living two lives” would become a coping mechanism to minimize friction between her Dad and herself.

Tatiana comments, regarding what she has learned through continual engagement with The Ellison Model, do not necessarily speak explicitly of “living two lives.” However, they do help to shed light on how one might understand another from a different space. This is important if one is going to successfully navigate between two worlds where ways of knowing and understanding differ among the members of each space. She stated,

One of the things I believe The Ellison Model has helped me is not looking at the outward actions of people and judging what they do, realizing that there is, if you want to
call it for lack of a better term, a person inside and a person that you’re seeing their behavior--the circle. Someone may be in the inner circle moving clockwise, but sometimes behavior maybe it looks like the outward circle and in the Bible, I will go back to the Bible. It says the reason the tares grow together because when time of harvesting, it’s really God that does his own harvesting. So if you consider it that way, you may be looking at somebody’s outward behavior and making judgments and not really knowing what’s the true intent of that person and I think that’s where The Ellison Model teaches us that you don’t really look at so much the behavior, the outward demonstration. Sometimes you have to really take everything internally first and then you can get back to change from there.

In Tatiana’s comments of the “inner” and the “outer circle,” she is actually referencing the inclusive community as part of The Ellison Model. On the “outer circle,” the guiding principles are fear, dishonor and disrespect, where one is motivated by hate or apathy (Hunt, 1999). In the “inner circle,” the movement is clockwise where diversity is defined as variety, and the individual is moving from diversity, to unity, to community. The community, as defined by The Ellison Model, is one of a shared vision. The guiding values are trust, honor, and respect, where the individual is motivated by love or harmony (Hunt, 1999).

Interestingly, Sarafin described the concept of “living two lives” in terms of her spirituality where her faith taught her that she should not take on a different characterization at home and at work. One well-versed in The Ellison Model values is able to fluidly move between the “inner” and “outer circles,” but their method of reaching individuals remains the same despite numerous strategies employed. Consistency and alignment of thoughts, actions, and deeds is critical in modeling positive behavior to others. In her case, Sarafin moved fluidly
between both worlds without changing her essence. Sarafin felt that she did not have to do a “cultural switch.” She stated that she was the same at home as well as at the university. She credited her spirituality as the reason for this.

Clearly evident in the participant’s responses was their ability to successfully negotiate both spaces, that of their home and the university space. The Ellison Model assisted the women in negotiating both spaces as it taught them techniques and coping strategies that became evident by way of their narratives. What is important to note, is that while the women learned how to “live double lives,” moving from the “inner circle” to the “outer circle” and back, in order to do so successfully, it was imperative that by way of their use of The Ellison Model conflict resolution paradigm, they first learned to resolve conflict, which is synonymous to overcoming the “glass ceiling” of higher education.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides a summary of experiences shared by eight African American women seeking to overcome the “glass ceiling” during their higher education pursuits. The findings of the data include: (a) specific experiences that relate to the participants’ encounters with the “glass ceiling,” (b) the participants’ perceptions of the role of mentoring in assisting them overcome the “glass ceiling,” and (c) their ability to “live two lives,” that is to successfully navigate through the university space despite their low-income backgrounds. Within the summary of findings, the chapter discusses The Ellison Model as a mentoring framework and its impact on the participants of the present study. The chapter concludes with implications for administrators in higher education; and then recommendations for further research are presented.

Findings

Research Question #1: What are some of the narratives from the college lives of African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds, if any, that reflect glass ceiling experiences?

Finding. Based on the reports of the eight African American women in this study, these women came with various challenges in regards to their academic journey at their institutions. In some cases, it was a result of their financial situation, having the status of low-income which meant they had to depend largely on financial assistance, as well as maintain employment. The responses of the women participants indicated a clear evidence of a “glass ceiling” in higher education for African American from low socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, this “glass ceiling” appeared on many levels. For example, in some cases, their responses pointed to (a) perceptions of an “imposed external glass ceiling,” (b) a “perceived” or “self-imposed glass
ceiling,” and as one of the participants coined in her response, a “lower glass ceiling.” The majority of the responses related to this research question, overwhelmingly pointed to them having to face some degree of conflict. Ironically, it was this conflict that posed a glass ceiling. Further, it was within this context that the notion of conflict as synonymous for a glass ceiling was derived.

In some instances, the conflict seemed to be inherent within the culture of the institution, as the women shared numerous encounters where the conflict was a result of the policies and procedures of the university. Other instances showed the conflict to be brought by the African American women, themselves, in which case, the “glass ceiling” was self-imposed or perceived. A final type of conflict or glass ceiling experiences noted by the participants had to do with societal factors that might be said to create lines of division whereas certain socio-economic groups are restricted in their sense of agency, power, and access within certain mainstream environments (i.e., higher education settings). In all cases, the narratives of the African American women in this study described glass ceiling experiences that impacted their academics as well as how they viewed themselves during the process.

**Research Question #2:** What perceptions do African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds have of the role and influence of mentoring in breaking the “glass ceiling” during their higher education pursuits?

**Finding #1.** The data related to this question showed that mentoring was useful in assisting these participants, eight African American women of low-income backgrounds, to navigate through the university space. Findings of the data showed that all of the women in the study had mentors. Some found their mentors in the academic space. Whether it was their supervisors or faculty members, they commented that the mentors exemplified the loving, caring
and sharing values of The Ellison Model mentoring approach. Another observation is that all of the women made mentioned of some professor that took them under their wing while at the university.

Interestingly, some of the women described spiritual mentorship. In some cases, the spiritual mentor was an individual who provided them with spiritual guidance. Others described a non-physical Mentor—a one-on-one relationship with God. In this regard, the women described God as their mentor; they made claims of knowing that God was guiding them and assisting them in their times of need during their academic journey. In light of this relationship, the women suggested having taken on the consciousness of their mentor, God. Furthermore, they utilized that mentoring relationship as a way to deal with many of the challenges that they were faced with during their academic journey.

Another indication of mentoring by the participants was the case where they had family members as their mentors. Whether it was immediate family members or extended family, the women made references to family members who had mentored them and supported them during their education process. Additionally, the women also mentioned friends as their mentors including, childhood friends, as well as those who later became their friends and ultimately their mentors.

**Finding #2.** The data further showed that The Ellison Executive Inclusive Community Building Mentoring Model (The Ellison Model) was the specific approach that assisted these African American women break the “glass ceiling” in higher education. Simply stated, the findings of this study offer evidence that by way of The Ellison Model, African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds are able to break the “glass ceiling” found in higher education. Interestingly, The Ellison Model was described by the participants as having

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significance to help break the “glass ceiling” on any level, whether (a) “actual,” (b) “self-imposed” or “perceived,” and/or (c) “lowered.”

Research Question #3: What behaviors described by African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds, if any, can be described as living double lives as they navigate home and university space?

Finding. The data in this study revealed that the women in this study were able to successfully navigate between two distinct spaces, two distinct worlds for that matter, their academic and home spaces. Despite their lived experiences in a low socio-economic status, with the aid of a mentor who espoused The Ellison Model values, thus inclusive community building practices, these same women found that they could be successful within the mainstream of higher education.

The Ellison Model Revisited

The present study revealed that all the participants utilized The Ellison Model Mentoring (The Model) as a means to successfully navigate the higher educational landscape and successfully move between the spaces of academia and their homes. With the valid claims of The Ellison Model, based on the perceptions of the participants, this research study allowed for expansion of The Model. As part of this expansion, I have theorized new concepts that result in opportunities for further research, as well. The additions I offer to The Model include (a) the concepts of Inner Circle/Outer Circle Consciousness and (b) the concept of “Living Two Lives” (L2L) as discussed in chapter two.

Among the most noted graphics of The Ellison Model is the inner circle / outer circle diagram (see Figure 1 on page 125). This graphic captures Hunt’s depiction of two approaches to community building (Hunt, 1999). The “outer circle” he coined as a dis-community building
approach and the “inner circle” represents what he refers to as a process or approach toward inclusive community building. The diagram is used primarily to discuss what opposing features, values, motivations, and definitions characterize each approach (see Figure 1 on page 125). For example, the values of the “inner circle” include: trust, honor, and respect. Contrarily, the values of the “outer circle” are dishonor, distrust, and disrespect. Further, the “inner circle” is motivated attempts toward harmony while the “outer circle” is motivated by fear and animosity. Other differences between the two approaches include definitions of diversity, as well as movement. Hunt discussed these characteristics, saying,

The two approaches share distinct outcomes that are a result of the intention of each approach to unify the parts of the whole. In the case of the inner circle, there is a clockwise or forward progression toward unity, where the diverse parts are acknowledged each for its unique potential to add to the value of the whole community. Therefore, this clockwise motion is actually a movement from diversity to unity to a whole unified community. The counter clockwise motion, a feature of the outer circle, or discommunity building approach, is actually progression away from the whole, where diversity becomes a reason for which dominant groups have chosen to separate itself and marginalize those not like themselves. Therefore possibilities to unite the whole are not likely (personal communication, Hunt, D., August 10, 2011).

Hunt’s conceptualization of both approaches also lends understanding for what is shown in the results of the present study. Based on the reports of the eight African American women, the mentors bore similar traits to those that characterize the “inner circle:” (a) they practiced values of respect, honor, and trust and (b) they demonstrated clear attempts to unify the women with others who had successfully matriculated through the system of higher education and
attained college degrees. Logically, the “inner circle:” represents a pathway to escape obstacles such as the “glass ceiling;” through mentorship, one is led to this pathway. I have extended the concept of the “inner circle /outer circle” by a close examination and presentation of the “conscience of both circles.”

What is revealed by the “inner circle/outer circle” concept is an “outer circle consciousness” that delineates insider/outsider identities, separating “us” from “them.” These identities are based on perspectives informed by certain vectors of conflict (e.g., class, gender, and race). By “outer circle consciousness,” expectedly, certain rights and privileges (seen at the core of the circle; see Figure 2 on page 139) would be granted to and maintained only by those in the mainstream. Consequently, a faux “inner circle” is created since only a select few have access to the rights and privileges found inside the circle.

Ironically, the gulf between “inner circle” membership and “outer circle” membership is widened by a “glass ceiling” which has a seeming purpose of ensuring that all others are marginalized and denied the same access. In reality, faux “inner circle,” based on The Ellison Model, is still considered as part of the “outer circle” because its definitions, values and motivations operate outside the inclusive community building framework. In other words, members of this community, perhaps unbeknownst to themselves, subscribe to a divisive exclusive hegemonic culture that is represented in their outlook and practice.

To the contrary of the “outer circle conscience,” the “inner circle” seems to have its own conscience. The separateness of insider/outsider identities that are apparent on the “outer circle” seem to diminish in this conscience. Driven by a motive of harmony, and no evidence of a “glass ceiling,” the “inner circle” appears committed to enlarging itself by seeking to bring others inside the circle (as shown by the arrows in the inner circle graphic on page 138).
Members on the “inner circle” appear willing to acknowledge the valued contributions of others outside the mainstream, share resources, and mentor others into the community of achievement as it relates to the community goals.

**Implications**

The implications of this research are useful to those seeking to diversify their workforce. As African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds are seeking employment in all sectors after completion of their degrees, the importance of this research is extended to all sectors of society (e.g., government, business, religion and education). However, because the study related directed to experiences of African American women during their higher education pursuits, the stated implications are directed to the setting of higher education only.

The diverse populations found at institutions of higher learning, including community colleges and four year universities are growing at a rapid speed. Those institutions are called upon to provide services to their minority students by way of cultural centers and multicultural programs. Thus, it would be helpful to install a mentoring component as a major part of their programming efforts. Therefore, this study has definite implications on higher education institutions, for example, in their efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate more minorities.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study was designed to examine the lived experiences of eight African American women from low socio-economic backgrounds who experienced a unique mentoring program, The Ellison Model, as a coping mechanism to breaking the “glass ceiling” of higher education. As the study was purposefully limited in scope, to include only this group of women, further research can be explored in order to cast a wider net regarding the functionality of The Ellison
Model in regards to varied populations. The following recommendations are made to extend the further research:

Further inquiry might examine whether the experiences noted in this study is a phenomenon that is spread across the African American community or one in which only African American women are impacted. Therefore, future research might consider what discrepancies, if any, exist between the experiences of African American women and African American men pursuing higher education, and how might these discrepancies be addressed by way of the participation of both groups in The Ellison Model.

Additionally, future research can focus on quantitative methods which would include test groups, utilizing quantitative logistics and a larger sample size. Expanding this study in any number of these ways would allow The Ellison Model to be expanded over a greater population of users, as well as allow it to be tested against diverse populations. This would enable a broader view of the functionality of The Ellison Model across various racial/ethnic and gendered groups. In this way, use of The Ellison Model as an intervention outside the southwestern part of the United States is more likely.

Additionally, the utilization of quantitative logistics and a larger sample size would help to make a stronger case for the transferability of the findings of this study. Researchers (Avry, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002) define transferability as “...the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study can be applied or generalized to other contexts or to other groups” (p. 454). While transferability is said to be the responsibility of the reader and not the researcher, it is indeed their responsibility to provide data that is descriptive, rich, and detailed (Avry, Jacobs, Razavieh, 2002). Since this research study offers the data in such light, data that is quantitative in nature can only add to the value of this research.
Figure 1: The Inner Circle / Outer Circle Discommunity/Community Building Diagram
Figure 2: Inner Circle Conscience vs. Outer Circle Conscience
REFERENCES


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Publications.


*Nursing Education Perspectives.*


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: Verbal Consent Form
Hello, my name is DaVina J. Hoyt, and I am a PhD Candidate with Washington State University’s College of Education, Department of Teaching and Learning. I am collecting data for my research project which is a qualitative study of African American women from low-income communities and the educational success as a low-income African American female that has been mentored by a particular mentoring model, The Ellison Model. I'd like to ask you for your help by answering a few questions for me. I am also requesting that you give me the opportunity to do a follow up interview (45 min to 1 hour) and possibly a focus group (1 hour to 1 hour 30 mins) with you as well.

The data will be strictly confidential and I will not record your name. Also, your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions you may find objectionable, and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, just by letting me know you would not like to continue any further. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at WSU. If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, you can contact the WSU IRB at (509) 335-9661 or Dr. Mike Hayes at (509) 335-2157.

Are there any questions about my study that I can answer for you at this time? Would you like to participate in my study?
APPENDIX B: Written Consent Form
This study is being conducted by DaVina J. Hoyt, a PhD Candidate in the College of Education’s Teaching and Learning Department at Washington State University. I am collecting data for my research project which is a qualitative study of African American women from low-income communities and the educational success as a low-income African American female that has been mentored by a particular mentoring model.

Your participation in this survey should take about 45 minutes to 1 hour. I am also requesting that you give me the opportunity to do a follow up interview (45 min to 1 hour) and possibly a focus group (1 hour to 1 hour 30 mins) with you as well. The information in this consent form is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in this study. It is important that you understand that your participation is completely voluntary. This means that even if you agree to participate you are free to withdraw from the experiment at any time, or decline to participate in any portion of the study, without penalty.

The subjects will be asked to complete a survey and/or asked questions via one of the following: focus group, personal interview, email, and/or phone. This experiment poses no known risks to your health and your name will not be associated with the findings. Your participation will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour each session and approximately 1 hour 30 minutes for the focus group. If requested in advance, upon completion of your participation in this study you will be provided with a brief explanation of the question this study addresses. If you have any questions not addressed by this consent form, please do not hesitate to ask. You will receive a copy of this form, which you should keep for your records.

Thank you for your time.

______________________________
Researcher’s Signature
DaVina J. Hoyt (509) 768-7590

CONSENT STATEMENT:
I have read the above comments and agree to participate in this experiment. I give my permission for my information to be used by the investigator for any thesis, dissertation, conference, journal or other publications. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns regarding this project I can contact the investigator at the above location or the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-9661 or Dr. Mike Hayes at (509) 335-2157.

__________________________
(Participant’s Signature)   _______________________
(Date)
APPENDIX C: Participant Questionnaire
**Participant’s Questionnaire:**

**Mentoring Interview Schedule**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between coping skills utilized by African American women and Higher Education Success. Your responses will be used as a part of the research and will be kept anonymous.

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The questions below seek to understand the nature of the relationship between you and your mentor as well as your perception as to the ideal type of mentor. Many of you might have had numerous mentors throughout your life. When answering these questions please think about all your mentors that you have had growing up.
General Mentoring

1. Who is an example of your ideal mentor when you were a child? Tell me that person’s name, when they mentored you and what you like about his or her mentoring approach. What about when you were in secondary school? College? Graduate School?

2. Which of the two statement best characterize your ideal mentor:
   - Tough, control oriented, must have his or her personal stamp, perfectionist.
   - More idea driven – a caring, sharing person, doing right even if it hurts
   - Hands off, want you to come to them when you need them

3. How did your relationship with your(s) Mentor expand your outlook of the world?
4. Inclusive approach to community building is an approach that appreciates the diversity of ideas and a shared vision. Whereas an exclusive approach deals with singularity of one group and sees diversity of ideas as negative. Did your Mentor value more an inclusive or exclusive approach to community building?

Relationship Building
1. How often did you engage in dialogue with your Mentor?
2. During these moments of dialogue, what was your comfort level?
   - □ Very Comfortable
   - □ Somewhat Comfortable
   - □ Comfortable
   - □ Somewhat Uncomfortable
   - □ Very Uncomfortable
3. What contributed to your feelings of comfort or discomfort?
4. Sometimes the mentor/mentee relationship is one way. Where there is only a flow of information from the mentor to the mentee. Some mentors also utilize their seniority in the mentoring relationship as though they are the authority on a subject or in the mentoring relationship. Did you ever feel a sense of inferiority while interacting with your Mentor?

Conflict Resolution
1. How instrumental do you feel your Mentor was in helping you resolve personal conflicts in life? Interpersonal disputes with other graduate students? With faculty members? With administration? With family? What about assisting you with navigating the system of higher education?
2. After your experience with your Mentor, did you feel better equipped to successfully manage conflicts?
3. Did your Mentor encourage opportunities for self and critical reflection about himself as well as you?

Multicultural Appreciation
1. How would you say your Mentor responds to diversity?
2. Did you and your Mentor exchange learning experiences?
3. Did you and your Mentor establish shared learning goals for both of you?
4. In what ways did you feel empowered as a decision maker with your Mentor?
APPENDIX D: Interview Protocol I
Interview Protocol I

(Introduction/Background)

Tell me about your family’s educational background. Did they go to college? Describe the level of schooling that your parents, grandparents attained and siblings.

(Educational Experiences)

Please explain what type of schools you attended growing up (k-12). What type of neighborhood were they located in? Did you attend school in your neighborhood or outside of it?

Growing up how did your school environment affect your educational experience?

How do you feel that your economic background impeded or helped your educational achievements?

Explain to me the type of support or non support that you received from your teachers growing up?

What challenges did you have in primary and secondary school? College? Graduate School? How did you cope with these challenges in primary and secondary school? College? Graduate School?

As an African American what were some of the challenges you felt you had while attending primary and secondary school? What about in college? Graduate School?

Can you tell me what motivated you to get a bachelor’s degree? A master’s degree? A doctorate degree?

What made you successful in your undergraduate program? Master’s program?

What made you successful in attaining your doctorate?

(Living Two Lives)

At any point in your academic career did you feel like your home life was in conflict with your school life? If yes, in what ways?

Growing up, how do you feel your home life supported your school life? What about your school life supporting your home life?

Explain to me how you juggled family life and academic life growing up? What about in college? Did that change when you went to college? If yes, in what ways?
In relation to school life and home life, how did you find you had to change your culture or mannerism?

(TEM)
You have been exposed to The Ellison Model and the mentoring process. How did that effect you?

Explain the type of mentors and/or role models you had growing up. How do you feel they helped you?

What was your learning experience as a mentee with The Ellison Model and how was it different then previous experiences as a mentee?

Have you served as an Ellison Model Mentor? If so, how did you view your role as a mentor?

What type of Ellison Model Programs have you participated in?

How successful do you think the programs have been? What areas do you feel need to be improved?

(Glass Ceiling)
As an African American female, did you feel at some point in your matriculation that you faced a glass ceiling in your academic career in higher education? If yes, please explain.
APPENDIX E: Interview Protocol II
Interview Protocol II

1. Please state your name, birth date and place of birth.

2. How much formal education did your grandparents have? – your parents?

3. How much formal education does each of your siblings have?

4. What other people were important to you while you were growing up and why?

5. What was your family like while you were growing up?

6. Tell me about your preschool years. Did you go to daycare? – pre-school? How did your family prepare you for elementary school?

7. Tell me about your first memories of school.

8. Tell me about the schools you went to from elementary school through high school. What was the atmosphere like? Were they in your neighborhood? What population like? Were they in your neighborhood? What population of children did they serve?

9. How do you think your education through high school prepared you or did not prepare you for undergraduate and graduate work?

10. In what ways, if at all, do you feel your home life and your school life were in conflict with each other?

11. In what ways, if at all, do you feel your home life and your school life were in support of each other?

12. What made you think you could pursue college after high school graduation?

13. How did you figure out the application process? What keeps/kept you in graduate school?

14. What helped you get to the graduate level of education? What keeps/kept you in graduate school?

15. Describe the role your family played in your education?

16. Why do you think you have been so successful in college?

17. What advice would you give other low-income students about pursuing higher education?