

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: “EXCEPTIONS OF THE EXCEPTIONS”<sup>1</sup>:  
SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS,  
WOMEN OF COLOR, AND THE  
COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

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The purpose of this small-scale study is to explore how women of color perceive that their participation in Summer Bridge programs helped them adjust to collegiate life at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). While recent studies have focused on challenges women of color encounter at PWIs, the literature on college integration is missing female students' voices. This study seeks to contribute to this line of research by exploring how women of color adapt to their new academic and social environment, and provide recommendations for the improved academic and social integration of women of color. There were two major themes that emerged in my findings that they perceived contributed to their integration at the institution: structure of the summer bridge program, and institutional fit.

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<sup>1</sup> This quote refers to Solomon's (1985) comment about African American women and their difficulty of gaining admission to colleges in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although this paper is not using this phrase in its original context, it is a powerful phrase that I believe captures some of the feelings that women of color have about their academic and social integration into post-secondary institutions.

“EXCEPTIONS OF THE EXCEPTIONS”: SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS,  
WOMEN OF COLOR, AND THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

By

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## Dedication

*“That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”*

*~ 1 Corinthians 2:9*

### *Jesus Christ*

Without you Lord, I would be absolutely nothing. Thank you for seeing the potential in me, and for opening my eyes so that I can see it too! I can only hope for the wonderful things you have in store for me and my growth! I love you!

### *Students at Cody and Osborn High Schools*

Thank you for helping me figure out my passion and love for supporting and working with young students of color. I love you!

### *Mommy, Daddy, and Chima*

Thank you for believing in me, and putting up with my late night phone calls ☺

### *To students attending public schools in the City of Detroit*

Don't EVER let anyone tell you that you can't or won't be successful... PROVE THEM WRONG! ♥

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# Chapter I

## Introduction

Being #BBUM [Being Black at the University of Michigan] meant sitting in about 98% of my engineering courses and being the ONLY black person. #BBUM means being afraid to speak in class b/c your opinion could be seen as representing the 'collective thought' of the black community.

--Michelle Udeli, Twitter contribution to #BBUM Social Media Movement, November 2013

### Introduction

Questions about differences in enrollment and retention rates of men versus women in postsecondary institutions have drawn the attention of researchers during the last few years. The proverbial “gender gap” in United States higher education has led several researchers to task themselves with learning more about the difficulties that students of color experience while attending colleges and universities. For some authors, the primary finding of their research is that men are faring far worse than women in both college matriculation and retention rates (Harper & Harris, 2012; Lewin, 2006). Recently, national organizations such as the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) have published reports focusing on increasing male participation in higher education (Harper & Harris, 2012). More broadly, media outlets like the *New York Times* have reported that female graduation rates in college are leaving men “in the dust” (Lewin, 2006). However, the increasing emphasis on improving male minority degree attainment over women could lead some to believe that the collective minority female completion rate for post-secondary degrees is satisfactory. This however, could not be further from the truth.

The notion that women of color are performing much better than their male counterparts is a bit misleading. Though women of color are faring better than their male

counterparts, there is still a larger gap in graduation rates and degree attainment between women of color and other White women. This leads to a very important question: why is there not more emphasis placed on research and supportive programming for women of color? In order to answer that question one must first address another essential question: how are women's voices being integrated into these crucial conversations about people of color in higher education? It is with these questions in mind, that this study will attempt to explain what women of color identify as elements that encouraged the college integration process.

### **Purpose of Study**

With the increasing focus on retaining men of color in higher education, fewer researchers and universities are prioritizing increasing retention rates for women of color. The larger number of reports that focus specifically on improving degree attainment rates for men of color over women could lead some to believe that the rates of completion of advanced educational degrees for women of color is satisfactory. However, the notion that women of color are performing much better than their male counterparts is a bit misleading. According to a recent finding by the American Council on Education (ACE), the gap between men and women may have stabilized for most racial groups, but still continues to grow for Latino students (King, 2010). Furthermore, the report explains that the gender gap “should not obscure the larger disparities that exist by income and race/ethnicity for students of both genders” (King, 2010, p. 22). This means that while there is still a “gender gap” present within higher education, it is also important for researchers to emphasize that there is also an educational attainment gap between races,



mainly between Whites, African Americans<sup>2</sup>, and Latinos<sup>3</sup>. For these reasons, this study will focus on learning more about the perceived factors that contributed to the success and retention of five women of color at a Mid-Atlantic PWI.

### **Importance of Study for Students of Color**

The conversation about the experiences of students of color enrolled at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) has been a politicized issue for several years—well before the beginning of the Civil Rights era. Students of color during the 1950s and 60s expressed their frustration with the lack of both diversity and racial tolerance at their institutions. Although the large-scale protests of the civil rights movement ended over five decades ago, students of color today are still encountering racism and a lack of diversity at their schools and are continuing to make their frustrations known. Most recently, minority students at renowned institutions have begun to publicize their encounters with micro-aggressions, stereotypes, and additional struggles using a powerful new outlet—social media.

A burgeoning movement began when student members of the Black Student Union at the University of Michigan began a social media campaign on the popular social media website, Twitter. Members of the Black Student Union encouraged both current Michigan students as well as other Black alumni to share their experiences as students of color at the institution. Participants were encouraged to share what they identified as

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<sup>2</sup> The terms Black and African American are used interchangeably thorough this text.

<sup>3</sup> The terms Latinos and Hispanics are used interchangeably throughout this text.

either annoying or frustrating experiences using the hashtag<sup>4</sup> #BBUM, which was an acronym for the phrase, “Being Black at the University of Michigan.” Students and alumni alike took to social media like wildfire and struggled to describe their experiences and remain under the 140-character limit that the website requires. Several students, including myself, tweeted about the following things: the assumption that their admission to the university was part of the school’s affirmative action requirements and initiatives; not being Black enough and sounding “White”; having to be a spokesperson in their predominately White classes, and subsequently, for their race; and being labeled as “too Black” by either their minority peers or White counterparts (Eromosele, 2014).

This campaign, which originated at the University of Michigan, was the first large-scale protest for racial equality in higher education since the 1960s civil rights movement (Eromosele, 2014). This new crusade showed movement sympathizers that there is a new tool of protestation that students of color can use to challenge the status quo at PWIs—social media. Soon Black students at others institutions began to follow suit and express their concerns and frustrations as people of color at PWIs. Students at other institutions both domestic and abroad viewed the success of the #BBUM movement and started to created new hashtags to include their experiences as students of color at their respective schools. African American students at Cornell University and Duke University joined the movement by utilizing their own hashtags to express their concern with micro-aggressions and prejudice on their campuses (#BBCU<sup>5</sup> and #BBDU<sup>6</sup>).

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<sup>4</sup> A hashtag is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet on the social media website Twitter. More specifically, it is used to categorize Tweets, allowing them to be searchable on the website. (Source: twitter.com)

<sup>5</sup> #BBCU means Being Black at Cornell University

<sup>6</sup> #BBDU means Being Black at Duke University

As the movement became stronger and more publicized, Black students at other institutions soon found the 140-character limit on Twitter to be restrictive and a detriment to the message that they were trying to portray about their difficulties as students of color at PWIs (Eromosele, 2014). African Americans at the prestigious Ivy League school Harvard University formulated their own movement modeled very closely after the students at the University of Michigan. Several students took photos of themselves holding signs that displayed statements or questions that they had either heard or had been posed by their White counterparts at the institution. Each individual picture bore the hashtag #itooamharvard<sup>7</sup>. The collection of their pictures was posted on the popular social blogging website, Tumblr, in attempts to highlight both the faces and voices of Black that would have otherwise been unheard and unnoticed on their campus (Harvard, 2014).

Students at Georgetown University also joined the social media movement by adopting a similar strategy to the Black Harvard University students. The African American students at Georgetown utilized Facebook, another popular social media website, in attempts to challenge the stereotypical perceptions of Blacks at their institution (Eromosele, 2014). Recalling the tragic deaths of young Black men like Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, the students posted pictures of Black Georgetown students next to listings of both their academic major(s) and accomplishments, in attempts to challenge stereotypical perceptions of African Americans (Eromosele, 2014). Using the hashtag #DBKGU which stands for Dangerous Black Kids of Georgetown

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<sup>7</sup> #itooamharvard is read "I too am Harvard"

University<sup>8</sup>, students posed the following question to readers of their Facebook page, “Are these ‘dangerous Black kids’ or ‘Black kids in danger’ because of laws like ‘Stand your Ground?’” (Dangerous Black Kids of Georgetown, 2014). The powerful #DBKGU movement also included the addition of allies, noted as #DBKGU Allies, which were non-Black supporters of the movement.

The addition of non-Black supporters signaled the beginning of a new shift in the social media demonstration, as the voices of the movement turned from focusing on the African American community and began to include students from other minority groups and countries. Minority students from the esteemed Oxford University, inspired by the “I, too, am Harvard” Black student initiative and armed with a dry erase board and marker, recalled and wrote stereotypes and racist comments they had heard from non-minority students, and posed for a photo and displaying their quotes. At the top of their website, the minority Oxford students expressed that they felt “othered,” or alienated from the general Oxford community (itooamoxford, 2014).

This large-scale social media movement reveals at least one important point—discussions about race and institutional change are not only essential for race relations on college campuses, but are necessary in order to provide a more inclusive environment for students of color at PWIs. As a result of this social media effort, students of color at several of the campuses, where able to begin fruitful conversations with college administrators regarding their concerns. For students at the University of Michigan, they were able to create a list of demands that requested for more funding for renovations to

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<sup>8</sup> The Dangerous Black Kids of Georgetown University movement was an extension of the #DangerousBlackKids movement that began on social media outlets, Facebook and Twitter. Parents of Black children posted pictures of their kids and highlighted their accomplishments and achievements as an effort to combat negative stereotypes about African American children.

the multicultural student center on campus, as well as more scholarship money for students from low-income neighborhoods. Many of these demands are currently being considered by their school administration. For this reason, it is important to integrate the voices of students into the discussion of race and tolerance at these schools. Like the very successful social media movement, this study also seeks to incorporate the voices of five female minority students, who were participants of a summer bridge program in attempts to learn more about what the women deemed to be factors that assisted their integration process into a Mid-Atlantic Predominately White Institution.

### **Personal Interest**

As an African American female who attended the University of Michigan for my undergraduate studies from 2005 to 2010, I know first-hand about the difficulties that many of the #BBUM participants discussed on Twitter. I had the fortunate opportunity to contribute to the movement by posting two tweets that expressed my feelings as a Black person at the University of Michigan<sup>9</sup>. I was originally reluctant to share this quote because it began to generate painful memories of my transition from high school to college at Michigan's campus. To start, like the participants in my study, I was a participant in an engineering-focused bridge program that summer before my freshman year. In addition, like most summer bridge participants, my full admission to the University of Michigan was contingent on my successful completion of the summer program. While the program helped teach me the basics of time management, note-taking and test-taking skills, in addition to introducing me to college classes and rigor, there is

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<sup>9</sup> See epigraph at the beginning of this chapter on page 1.

one particular thing that the program did not prepare me for—the effects that being a female of color would have on my studies and social integration into the school.

During my freshman year of college, I encountered discrimination, racism, and micro-aggressions from some of my White peers at the school. Furthermore, as a female student of color enrolled in the engineering school, I quickly began to feel isolated as I was typically the only minority female in most of my technical courses, and frequently had my ideas or contributions to groups challenged or ignored. These factors along with my lack of preparation for college-level courses eventually caused me to withdraw from friends and family and perform poorly in my courses. At the end of my first official semester at Michigan, I had a 1.833 grade point average, was on academic probation and was at risk of having to leave my dream school if I did not pull my overall grade point average above a 2.0. In my mind, I had confirmed my high school teachers and friends who doubted my ability to be successful at Michigan, to be correct. I felt that I was both alone and a failure.

After that semester, I began talking with a few of my peers from the bridge program, and quickly learned that my feelings of isolation and inferiority were not an anomaly. Some of my cohort-mates also struggled in their coursework their first semester and were also on academic probation. Others encountered unpleasant experiences with some of the non-minority students in the department. In order to combat some of the negativity that we were experiencing, we decided to form our own study and social groups, to make sure that we were encouraging one another. We ate dinner together, we hung out together, and we studied together. We pushed each other because we all wanted

to remain at Michigan. At the end of that second semester, I was off academic probation—we were all off academic probation.

My second semester experience revealed something to me that I did not recognize until my graduate school years. A supportive network of people was very important for our collective success. I felt isolated and just wanted to feel the University of Michigan loved me as much as I loved it. All of my cohort-mates wanted to feel like we mattered. We wanted to feel like we belonged at Michigan. Reflecting on that experience as a graduate student always brings me to tears. One of the major thoughts that continues to plague me is that many students of color encounter some of the same difficulties that I dealt with during my first year—alienation, constant questioning of their abilities, and doubt. While there are some students of color that are successful during their first year, there are also some that struggle. For this reason, I feel that it is important to learn more about what students of color encounter while integrating into the college environment, in their own words, so that we can begin to combat those negative experiences, provide support, and increase their chances of persistence.

### **Organization of Thesis**

This thesis is an attempt to learn more about the experiences that former female summer bridge program participants encountered while trying to adapt and integrate into a Predominately White Institution (PWI). The second chapter provides a brief review of the literature and begins with recap of the general history of higher education for women, and ends with a discussion of important information missing in the review in regards to women of color. The third chapter describes the methodology utilized to capture the

voices that the women of color shared about their college integration experience. The fourth chapter discusses the gathered qualitative responses of the study participants into distinct themes and patterns to gain a better understanding of their experiences. Finally, the fifth chapter offers conclusions that arise from the collected qualitative data, discusses limitations of the study, and offers suggestions for possible actions that university and diversity officials can use to help ease the college integration process for future female minority students.



## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter is divided into five sections and provides an overview of the pertinent historical context and contemporary literature informing this study. First, a general history of women in higher education will be reviewed to provide context to the obstacles women faced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Second, an overview of the history of women of color (mainly Blacks and Latinas) and what they encountered in the collegiate atmosphere will follow. Third, I will discuss how researchers have framed how students adapt both academically and socially to the collegiate environment, with a special focus on critiques of popular retention theorist Vincent Tinto. The hardships that students of color encounter while attending Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) will also be explored. Finally, this literature review will end with a conversation on the pertinent information that is missing from the review of the literature on women of color in higher education.

Although women of color are faring better than their male counterparts academically, there is still a larger gap in graduation rates and degree attainment between women of color and other White women, with women of color trailing behind White women. This leads to a very important question: why is not more emphasis placed upon research and supportive programming for women of color? In order to answer that question one must first address another question: how are women being integrated into these crucial conversations about people of color in higher education? It is with these questions in mind, that this literature review will examine how researchers have framed

the enrollment of women of color in four-year colleges and universities over the past few years.

## **History of Women in Higher Education**

### **General History of Women in Higher Education**

**Late Nineteenth Century (1860s to 1900s).** Women across the country were allowed more opportunities to pursue higher education in the 1860s than in previous decades. In the year 1862, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Land Grant Act which allowed states to use public lands to create colleges aimed at either instructing liberal arts or providing technical training for Americans (Solomon, 1985). The act created more interest in education and confirmed the importance of public higher education for U.S. citizens. With the passage of this act, women in the North found it easier to obtain both employment and educational opportunities, after the Civil War concluded in 1865. The perceived status of women as passive caretakers was challenged during this time when women in the North began enrolling in colleges, particularly to become teachers. In contrast, White women in the South encountered difficulty finding both employment and educational opportunities before and after the Civil War. According to McCandless (1999), women in the south were initially restricted from attending agricultural and industrial schools created with land grant funds, because only White men were allowed to attend those schools. White women and women of color were forced to attend separate normal institutes and agricultural and industrial schools (McCandless, 1999). Moreover, since the agrarian southern economy meant that there were few factory positions open for

women to pursue during wartime, the best option that women had to better themselves was to pursue an education (McCandless, 1999).

Commencing in the 1870s, many women's rights suffragist groups began lobbying in support for increased postsecondary options for women. Many of the supporters included post-Civil War suffrage organizations such as the Sorosis, the New England Women's Club, the Association for the Advancement of Women, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (Solomon, 1985). The efforts of these suffragist groups helped spark more interest for the creation of institutions that women could attend. Solomon (1985) posits that between the 1850s and 1870s several models of colleges emerged. These collegiate model institutions included: private women's colleges, religiously-oriented coeducational colleges, private coordinate women's colleges, secular coeducational institutions (both public and private), and public single-sex vocational institutions. Coeducational institutions became very popular in the north during the 1870s, whereas single-sex institutions were the norm in the south during that same time (McCandless, 1999; Solomon, 1985).

At the beginning of the 1870s, many institutions also began shifting their focus from liberal arts to research. A growing interest in revolutionary scientific knowledge caused many colleges to become more selective in their admission standards. Consequently, although women were gaining more access to coeducational institutions, the push for a research-based curriculum caused several colleges to restrict women's access; thus, once again limiting women from some higher educational opportunities (Solomon, 1985). A good example of this phenomenon was the selection of Cornell University's first incoming class after their chartering in 1865. The first president,

Andrew Dixon White, was open-minded in his views towards admission for both Blacks and women in his institution. However, White's interest in presiding over a research institution eventually led him to also hinder admission for women (Solomon, 1985). Solomon explains that the negative opinions of women in research institutions led Cornell to open in 1868 with an incoming class of 400 students, all of whom were male. In addition, publications such as Edward Clarke's (1873) book *Sex in Education: Or a Fair Chance for the Girls*, fueled the restriction of women in research institutions by stating that women could cause harm to their female "apparatus" (or reproductive organs) if they used too much of their energy to learn higher-level concepts. Several schools found Clarke's viewpoints to have merit and also followed the same exclusionary path and denied women admission into their research-focused institutions (Clarke, 1873; Solomon, 1985).

Over time, several of the institutions that attempted to restrict women from their schools realized that they could no longer delay the entrance of women into their establishment (Solomon, 1985). The Morrill Land Grant Act allowed for the opening of new institutions of higher learning and did not exclude women from attending the schools. According to Solomon (1985), this motivated women to demand for admission to schools that were funded by the state. Female activists argued that since those schools were publicly funded, women could not be restricted from admission to them. Consequently, in the next few years many prominent schools in the north became coeducational and began opening their doors to female applicants (Solomon, 1985). Opponents of coeducation in the south, however, made conscious efforts to continue to

prevent coeducation institutions by creating coordinate colleges<sup>10</sup> to legally restrict women from being educated with men.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, legislators made efforts to ensure that Blacks were able to receive equivalent higher educational opportunities as Whites. This led to the passing of the second Morrill Act in 1892 which provided funds for racially segregated Southern state schools, now called HBCUs. Although this act did not specifically refer to women, it did help open the door for Black women, pursuing more educational pursuits during the twentieth century.

**Early twentieth century (1900s to 1940s).** Attending college became an accepted practice for women within privileged groups between the 1860s to 1920s (Solomon, 1985). In the early 1900s, colleges and universities began placing more emphasis on developing a liberal arts curriculum for their students. More institutions started incorporating electives into their course offerings to allow students to take course work that would prepare them for their profession of interest (Solomon, 1985). This enticed more women to take advantage of higher educational opportunities that were available for them to pursue. The rates of women enrolled in a postsecondary institution increased drastically from eleven thousand to eighty-five thousand between the years 1870 and 1900 (Solomon, 1985). In a very short period of time, this rapidly increasing number of women in higher education caused some to fear that women would begin to dominate co-educational institutions and interfere with the academic performance of their male counterparts (Solomon, 1985). Solomon explains that many institutions sought to

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<sup>10</sup> Coordinate colleges are similar but separate schools that are connected to a major institution. These schools often share faculty members with the flagship institution, but allow for the education of a population that does not have access to the flagship school.

reverse this trend by attempting to stop the increase of women in their institutions by segregating sexes. Schools like the University of Chicago, Stanford University, and The University of California generated “junior colleges” to separate incoming freshmen and sophomore men and women at their schools. Schools like Boston University also attempted to thwart women from attending their school by offering “men only” scholarships to attract more men and discourage women from applying. Lastly, The University of Wisconsin enacted the most deliberate policy of restricting women by intentionally segregating men and women in their courses (Solomon, 1985). Most of these restrictions and junior colleges remained in effect until the late 1920s and 1930s, when either backlash from alumni or fiscal problems caused many of the schools to abort their efforts.

By the 1930s college women comprised 10.5 percent of college students ages eighteen to twenty-one and reached a proportion of 12.2 percent of students enrolled in college by the Great Depression (DeVane, 1965; Newcomer, 1959; Solomon, 1985). Within these increasing groups of women, there were larger rates of religious, ethnic, and racial minority women enrolling in public institutions; this was because a large number of female students lived in the community and thus could attend college while still living at home (Solomon, 1985).

In addition to facing admissions restrictions at co-educational institutions, women of color also found it difficult to enroll in women’s colleges. Solomon (1985) writes that in the year 1927, several women’s colleges such as Oberlin, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, and Barnard had very low rates of Black women attending their schools and some sought to keep it that way by intentionally trying to exclude them. African-American women found

it easier to attend segregated Black colleges. Many of the Black institutions were co-educational because the communities in which they were formed could not afford to create single-sex schools (Solomon, 1985). Before the civil war, most Black women attended teacher-training courses outside of the Black college setting resulting in fewer women attending coeducational Black colleges. However, after the war ended, the rates of women in Black institutions drastically increased and led to women becoming the majority in these schools (Noble, 1956; Jenkins, 1938; Badger, 1951; Solomon, 1985). Women of color also found it easier to find both employment and educational opportunities after the Second World War ended in 1945. Influenced by the “Rosie the Riveter” persona and working in positions that were traditionally labeled as men’s work, such as factory and military positions, women found it was easier to earn the income needed to attend and pay for postsecondary institutions, setting the stage for a large influx of women in colleges and universities in the postwar era (Solomon, 1985; Weatherford, 2010).

### **African American Women**

In the early twentieth century Black women only accounted for 0.3 percent of the postsecondary student population (Solomon, 1985). The percentage of Black women in college was low due to two major reasons: most Black parents were poor and could not afford to pay for tuition, and racial discrimination (Solomon, 1985). Even though White women were finding it easier to gain admission into both women’s colleges and coeducational institutions, Black women had difficulty gaining admission at both. For this reason, Solomon (1985) expressed that the Black women were “the exceptions of exceptions” (p. 76). By the year 1913, Black women who matriculated to college

typically had a very supportive family or teacher support to overcome the strong social prejudice that they would have to endure (Henle & Merrill, 1980; Solomon, 1985).

Black women had identity crises as they were subjected to different pressures than their White female counterparts. Solomon (1985) posits that Black women had conflicts over assimilating to White values so that they could be accepted. Assimilation meant that African American women would have to relinquish their culture in attempts to be accepted by the majority, with no guarantee that they would be accepted (Solomon, 1985). Black women also attempted to join sororities, but were often discouraged or turned away because of their skin color. For this reason, women at Howard University came together and founded the first African American Greek-letter organization, Alpha Kappa Alpha, in the year 1908 (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, n.d.). This organization in addition to three others that were founded later (Delta Sigma Theta in 1913, Zeta Phi Beta in 1920, and Sigma Gamma Rho in 1922) gained a national following because they promoted “finer womanhood”, scholarship, sisterhood, and community service (Solomon, 1985). Black sororities provided a supportive atmosphere and gave African American women solace at their institutions.

During the 1930s, many Black postsecondary institutions in the south were downgraded as “junior colleges” so that there would not be any established four-year colleges available for Blacks (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002). Privately established HBCUs from the Reconstruction Era such as Spelman College, Atlanta University, and Morehouse College offered superior academic instruction compared to many Southern state schools emphasizing industrial curricula (Anderson, 1988). Howard University, established in



Washington, D.C. in 1867 by the United States government, maintains a stellar reputation as alma mater to legions of outstanding Black alumni. During the 1930s and 1940s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) launched successful attacks against the exclusion of Blacks from law schools at the University of Maryland, the University of Texas at Austin, and other public White institutions (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002). Later on in the year 1944, the founding of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) allowed African Americans to secure more funding for private Black colleges that were previously dependent on extremely weak systems of public higher education (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002). UNCF also advocated for equality in higher education for African Americans (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002).

The *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision in 1954 set the foundation for allowing African Americans to begin seeking admission into all-White postsecondary institutions in the southern states (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002). However, despite the fact that the ruling gave Blacks the opportunity to pursue higher education with Whites, Blacks were largely discriminated against in both northern and southern institutions (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002). According to Anderson (2002), African American students primarily attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), with at least 80 percent of undergraduate students earning undergraduate degrees obtaining them from HBCUs.

During the late 1960s to 1970s, the numbers of Black students enrolled at northern colleges and universities increased and by the year 1968, almost half of the nation's postsecondary institutions were not only admitting Blacks, but they were also encouraging them to attend their schools by providing financial assistance (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002).

The civil rights movement of the 1960s forced colleges and universities that were resistant to admitting Blacks to enroll them or lose federal funding. The efforts and pressure from Blacks eventually paid off as virtually all of the nation's leading postsecondary institutions eventually initiated programs and policies that benefitted African Americans towards the end of the 1960s (Anderson, *Race in American higher education: Historical perspectives on current conditions*, 2002).

### **Latinas/Hispanic Women**

Latinos encountered a different experience from that of African Americans in their pursuit of higher education. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which occurred in 1848, allotted Mexicans in the United States several rights. According to MacDonald and García (2003), some of these rights included citizenship, preservation of former land grants, Spanish language rights, and also counted Mexicans as racially White. The right to be labeled as a citizen of the United States was not afforded to Blacks until much later. Postsecondary education during this time was very difficult to obtain for any person of color and the small number of Latinos that did attend colleges during the nineteenth century hailed from the privileged class in the new territories that were created after the Mexican-American war (MacDonald & García, 2003).

During this time frame, Catholic higher educational institutions provided Latinos with access to college (MacDonald & García, 2003). Unlike the Protestant schools that existed in the southern portion of the United States, Catholic schools were more accepting of Hispanic bilingual and Catholic traditions (MacDonald & García, 2003; San Miguel, Jr & Valencia, 1998). According to MacDonald and García (2003), the racial classification of White afforded Latinos the opportunity to attend postsecondary institutions without restriction, which was a very distinguishable difference between Blacks and Latinos. However, despite not being legally restricted from higher education, the numbers of Latinos decreased in the late nineteenth century as fewer of them were able to afford and attend college (MacDonald & García, 2003).

During the years 1920s to 1950s, the rates of Mexican Americans in the Southwest and Midwest and Puerto Ricans in the North started enrolling in colleges at much higher rates (MacDonald & García, 2003). According to MacDonald and García, the cause of the increase of Latinos enrolling in postsecondary institutions was due to both the GI Bill and the increasing number of middle-class Latinos. Latinos that were able to circumvent the barriers to high school entrance and graduation, were able to enroll in colleges due to the combination of four essential factors: community and charitable organization involvement; active support of teachers, clergy, or social workers that identified promise in students; the passage of the GI Bill which helped increase options for Latinos to pursue higher education; and supportive Latino communities themselves (MacDonald & García, 2003). Like African Americans, Latina/os were expected to assimilate into White culture to be accepted, however they began to push back from their idea in the late 1950s and 1960s. MacDonald and García posit that the early 1960s was a

period of identity development for many Mexican Americans as they sought to be identified by their heritage instead of the White assimilation that they were currently subjected to. Similar to African Americans during the civil rights movement, Latinos began evaluating their current enrollment numbers in postsecondary institutions and started fighting to increase their numbers in the academy (MacDonald & García, 2003).

### **Changing Demographic Profile**

Over the last few decades, the demographics of students enrolling and graduating from postsecondary schools has changed. Several reports have been published describing the ebb and flow of the enrollment of students in higher education. In this section, there will be discussion of the change that has occurred in the demographic profile of students in higher education. First a description of the shift in enrollment demographics of college students of color will be laid out. To round out this section, I will provide an overview of the current persistence and graduation rates of female minority students in comparison to other groups.

#### **Shifting Enrollment Demographics**

The rate of students enrolled in postsecondary degree-granting institutions increased by a total of 11 percent between 1990 and 2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Furthermore, enrollment also increased an additional 37 percent from 2000 to 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). These numbers show that there are more students enrolling in postsecondary institutions than ever before. With that, there are larger numbers of women enrolling in these institutions than men.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), during the period between 2000 and 2010, the enrollment rates of women surpassed that of men with women increasing their enrollment by 39 percent while men increased by 35 percent (2012). Despite the increase of women enrolling in higher education, there is still an enrollment gap between White students and students of color. NCES reports that the percentage of Hispanic students rose from 3 to 13 percent, and the percentage of African American students increased from 9 to 14 percent, while their White counterparts decreased in enrollment from 83 to 61 percent (2012).

Though these numbers show an increase in the percentage of students of color, there is still a large gap in enrollment between them and White students. According to another report by NCES published in 2012, of the class of 2004 high school graduates, 79 percent of the White females immediately enrolled into their first postsecondary institution whereas only 64 percent of African American women and 62 percent of Hispanic women enrolled (Ross, et al., 2012). Likewise, in that same incoming class, 49 percent of White women enrolled at a moderately or highly selective postsecondary institution, whereas both Black women and Latinas have much lower percentages (24 percent and 21 percent respectively) (Ross, et al., 2012). These numbers reveal a disturbing pattern; though women of color are increasing in postsecondary enrollment, they are still well behind their White female counterparts. In addition, minority women are also enrolling in moderately or highly selective institutions at lower rates. These numbers reveal that there are fewer women of color represented within classrooms at their institutions.

## **Persistence and Graduation Rates of Women of Color**

According to the 2012 report published by NCES, about 58 percent of all-first time students that started working towards a bachelor's degree in a four-year college in 2004, completed their degree within six years (Ross, et al., 2012). Out of the students that did complete their degrees within six years, 61 percent of women obtained degrees as opposed to only 56 percent of men (Ross, et al., 2012). In addition, women of color earned more degrees than men of color within the same six year span. Black women out-earned their male counterparts in degrees by nine percent (43 percent and 34 percent respectively), and Hispanic females completed seven percent more degrees than Hispanic males (53 percent and 46 percent respectively) (Ross, et al., 2012). It is important to note that although minority women have been earning more degrees than men of color, they are still lagging behind White women in degree attainment. On average, 64 percent of White women earned bachelor's degrees in six years while both African American women and Latinas earned on average 16 percent fewer degrees (43 percent and 53 percent respectively) (Ross, et al., 2012).

## **Adapting to College Environment**

Attending college is a big step for a student, especially if they are separated from family and loved ones. This transition can also be particularly difficult for students of color if they decide to attend a Predominately White Institution (PWI). This section of the literature review will focus on the integration of students into the collegiate atmosphere. In this section, there will be an explanation of what researchers have found to help students persist in college. The conversation will start with a discussion how other

researchers have described the factors that lead to successful college integration. These factors range from academic and social integration to the process of the transition into the collegiate atmosphere in the decision to remain at an institution. This section will end with a specific look on how students of color fare at PWIs and address challenges that they face as minority students on these campuses.

### **Factors that Lead to Collegiate Integration**

Researchers have developed several theories to describe how students are able to integrate into the collegiate atmosphere. Each theory focuses on an important component needed for the successful integration of students within their college of choice. In these next few sections, student development theories that were categorized as person-environment focused by Creamer (1980) will be laid out and explained. It is important to note that many of these theories were developed using populations of White males as their foci groups. Notwithstanding the fact that many of these theories were not developed with women of color in mind, it is still important to explore how these development theories are used to describe the general college-going population.

**Academic and Social Integration.** Integration is defined as the extent to which a student shares the normative values and attitudes of the institution that they are attending (Tinto, 1987, 1993). According to Astin (1985), students are said to be integrated at an institution if they are putting a considerable amount of effort towards both their school work and extracurricular activities. A very simple way of explaining Astin's theory of involvement is that "Students learn by becoming involved" (p. 133). Student integration is very important as it is strongly connected to other aspects of the student-college

experience. College integration is also important because it has a very strong correlation to student persistence; meaning that the more a student is actively involved in their college of choice, the more likely they are to persist to graduation (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992). In addition to these findings, other researchers have found that a student's intent to persist in school is directly related to their persistence behavior (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992). For these reasons, it is very important to understand what factors lead to a student being integrated into a collegiate atmosphere.

Academic integration can be defined as any activities or behaviors that can influence a student's academic involvement (Astin, 1985; Astin, 1970a; Astin, 1970b). For example, behaviors such as attending class or an instructor's office hours, using the library, talking with faculty and academic advisors, and utilizing tutoring services, can increase a student's academic involvement in college. Likewise, social integration can be defined as any activity or behavior that can influence a student's social involvement (Astin, 1985; Astin, 1970a; Astin, 1970b). Examples of social involvement are: participation in extracurricular clubs and student organizations, attending cultural campus events, and participating in intermural sports. Astin (1985) describes that the level of integration that a student experiences depends completely on the amount of energy that they devote to the integration process. In other words, students put more energy into activities that they deem to be important. For this reason, many researchers explain that it is important for students to have a sense of belonging at their institution, so that they are more likely to get involved.

Astin (1970a, 1970b, 1991) begins the conversation on collegiate integration with his I-E-O Model; which explains that college outcomes are a function of three elements:



input, environment, and outcomes. Astin defines inputs as demographic characteristics, family backgrounds, and the academic and social experiences that students bring with them to college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In other words, inputs are the capital that students bring with them to the college campus. Next, Astin (1970a, 1970b, 1991) defines environment as the people, cultures, programs, policies, and experiences that students encounter while on campus. Finally, both the inputs and environment influence the final function of the I-E-O model, outcomes. Outcomes refer to a student's knowledge, characteristics, skill set, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that exist after they exit the collegiate atmosphere. The inputs that the students bring with them to college and the environment that they are exposed are assumed to directly shape their outputs. Therefore, according to this model, if a student a minimal amount of inputs (i.e. single parent household, attended a low-income high school, etc.), they would need a more supportive environment in order to maximize their outcomes.

Tinto (1987, 1993) also developed two important person-environment focused student development theories that explain the connection between a student's beliefs and environment and their persistence behavior; the theory of student departure and theory of student integration. Tinto's (1987) theory of student departure explains that in order for students to be fully integrated into their college of choice, they must physically and emotionally disconnect themselves from their previous community. Tinto also explains that students are integrated if their attitudes and values line up with the normative values and attitudes of the institution that they are attending. He identified that there are several factors that can influence a student's decision to depart a collegiate institution. Tinto (1987, 1993) labels these factors as: pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments,

institutional experiences, and (academic and social) integration. Like Astin, Tinto (1993) also argues that increased positive experiences on campus, helps strengthen student commitment to both their own personal goals and that of the institution using a more detailed model. These theories serve as another avenue for researchers and colleges to better understand the factors that encourage student persistence.

*Integrating female students.* According to Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), several researchers have written that women studying at coeducational institutions have significantly different educational experiences and can encounter more potential obstacles to success compared to ladies attending women's colleges (Miller-Bernal, 1993; Smith, 1990; Smith, Morrison, & Wolf, 1994). In fact, some researchers have even found that women are more likely to be successful if they attend small, all women's postsecondary institutions that have the following characteristics: a broad selection of majors to choose from, a history of educating women, and a supportive environment that includes more women and fewer male students (Tidball, Smith, Tidball, & Wolf-Wendel, 1999). Although researchers find the above atmosphere to provide ideal conditions for female success in postsecondary institutions, the numbers of women's colleges continues to dwindle due to decreased enrollment. This means that when given the choice to attend either a women's college or a research university, many women choose to attend coeducational schools over women's colleges.

With large numbers of women's colleges either closing their doors or converting to coeducational campuses, more women are attending coeducational schools that are dominated with male faculty members. Tinto (1987) and Astin (1991) explained that students perform better in supportive environments and are more likely to persist in

school when they are able to interact with faculty members that share similar values and attitudes as them at the institution. Subsequently, female students tend to find themselves in classes mostly taught by male faculty members, and thus these classrooms lack the positive female role models needed to encourage academic integration (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Since it is also known that the rates of women in postsecondary institutions is increasing, it is very troubling that there is not a pool of female faculty members to match the female student increase in enrollment. This leaves female students with very minimal access to supportive female role models that share similar values. According Tinto (1987) this lack of female faculty members is dangerous as it decreases the level of interactions between female students and faculty and subsequently decreases the chance of success and persistence at these institutions.

*Integrating students of color.* Although both Astin (1970a, 1970b, 1991) and Tinto (1987, 1993) introduce some very important aspects of the student integration process, there are some researchers that argue that their theories do not fully capture the experiences of the student of color at higher education institutions. Tierney (1999) explains that Tinto's (1987) theory of student departure does not properly examine the experiences of minority students and thus raises both theoretical and practical concerns. To start, Tierney explains that Tinto's explanation that students have to abandon their past in order to fully integrate into the collegiate atmosphere essentially says that students of color need to abandon their own culture in order to adopt a new "foreign" culture.

In order to integrate themselves into the institution that they are attending, students would have to adopt the "middle and upper-class Eurocentric cultural framework upon which the U.S. postsecondary education is based" (Tierney, 1999, p. 82). According

to Tierney, Tinto's view of a student's integration into a postsecondary institution resembles either an "initiation" or a "rite of passage" events as the student would be required to assimilate into the dominant culture in order to succeed at the college. However, according to Spindler and Spindler (as cited in Tierney, 1999), rites of passage should always be successful because the entire process is supposed to be managed to produce success. Tierney argues that the same cannot be said for the student of color at a PWI as the "initiation" process often proves to be unsuccessful for students of color; thus Tinto's theory does not account for the integration of students of color.

On a practical level, Tierney (1999) offers critique of Tinto's (1987) usage of Durkheim's (1951) theory of suicide and explains that it introduces a very disturbing idea for students of color at PWI's. Tinto (1987) theory of student departure explains that a student must essentially commit cultural suicide and completely separate themselves from the community and culture that they grew up with. In addition, the student must also assimilate into the dominate culture of the institution in order to successfully integrate themselves (Tierney, 1999). Subsequently, Tinto's theory essentially forces students of color to forego their own identity and adopt the dominant ideology and behaviors to integrate themselves both academically and socially to be successful in the collegiate environment. He argues that Tinto's approach places the onus of collegiate integration on the student and not the institution; meaning that if a student of color does not abandon the culture and community with which they entered the institution, and is subsequently unable to integrate into the university, the blame falls on them and not the institution in which they are enrolled (Tierney, 1999). This can be very problematic for students of color as they expected to relinquish who they are to "fit in" with the dominate culture.

Finally, it is important to note that if attempted, students of color are able to abandon all but one facet of their culture that other groups find much easier to hide—their race.

### **Students of Color at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)**

The number of students of color that have enrolled in college has increased over the past few years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). With that increase, there have been larger rates of students of color attending PWIs. As was discussed earlier, Tinto (1987) describes that students must fully integrate into their institution of choice in order to increase their chances of persistence. However, Tierney (1999) argued that Tinto's theory of student departure was flawed and forces students of color to relinquish their culture in order to adopt the new culture presented by their institution. However, students of color are unable to do this because they cannot remove their racial attributes to "fit in" at their college. Since students are unable to completely sever themselves from their culture, they are subject to discriminatory practices and a potentially unsupportive climate. Environments like this, if left unchanged, can lead to increased attrition rates of minority students (Green, 2001). As discussed by several researchers, attrition of students of color from colleges or universities is one of the major obstacles to educational equity (Clewell & Ficklsen, 1986; Allen, 1992; Green, 2001). More importantly, Green (2001) posits that this educational inequity will lead to a widening of the degree completion gap between students of color and White students. In order to stem the increasing degree attainment gap, it is important to understand the factors that lead to decreased student involvement, and subsequently decreased persistence of minority students.

Green (2001) identifies that there are four factors that affect the attrition rates of students of color in PWIs. First Green (2001) explains that the preparedness of minority students for matriculation into college is typically less than that of White students. Second, there are psychosocial and intellectual factors that affect the performance and success of minority students. Green (2001) explains that the third factor that leads to attrition are institutional barriers to minority students that can lead to either success or failure. Lastly, the fourth factor are the intrinsic social, academic, and political problems that students of color face (Green, 2001). These factors, Green argues, are some of the most pertinent issues that students of color face in terms of retention and attrition. Although all of these issues are important, the one that is most pertinent for this discussion will be the psychosocial factors that affect the performance of minority students in postsecondary institutions.

**Stereotype threat.** Researchers have developed quite a few theories that highlight some of the psychosocial factors that minority students encounter while in college. One very important theory that explains that the social aspect of race is Steele and Aronson's (1995) stereotype threat theory. Steele and Aronson define stereotype threat as the uncomfortable feeling that arises when a marginalized population is at risk of confirming a negative stereotype in the eyes of others that are not members of that group. This theory, when tested, also included women, an important distinction because Steele and Aronson and Tinto's (1987) work. An example that the authors provide is the stereotype that Blacks are less intelligent than Whites; this example later became the primary test stereotype for their study (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

The researchers hypothesized that the uncomfortable feeling that one would get when fearing that they would uphold a stereotype adversely affects their academic performance. Steele and Aronson (1995) found that stereotype threat can weaken the intellectual performance of Black students. Black students that are subjected to the stereotype that they are less intelligent than White students will tend to perform worse than their White counterparts, confirming the stereotype. In addition, Steele and Aronson found that if students are aware of Black stereotypes, they exhibited more self-doubt. Lastly, they found that lifting the threat drastically improves the performance of Black students (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Although their research focused primarily on African American students, their findings still bring to light some serious implications for students of color at PWIs. First, since students are unable to relinquish their culture (and skin color) in order to fully integrate themselves into an institution (Tinto, 1987), students of color are always at risk of experiencing stereotype threat just based on their race. Furthermore, women of color can face double the stereotype threats if they are pursuing a degree in a STEM related field (unintelligent because they both a female and a minority), which could potentially lead to increased attrition rates of minority women from those fields.

**Transition theory.** Lastly, another theory that should be considered for the integration of students of color in PWIs is the transition theory (2006). Goodman, Schlossberg and Anderson define a transition as “any event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 33). The theory posits that there are two types of transitions that people can encounter: anticipated and unanticipated. Goodman et al. (2006) defines

anticipated transitions as a change that is predictable, such as graduation from college. Conversely, unanticipated transitions are events that are not scheduled or predictable. Unanticipated transitions can include several events such as a sudden death or failure of a task. In addition, Goodman et al. (2006) also defines the term non-event, which is a transition that is expected but does not occur. An example of a non-event would be failing to gain admission to a college or failing to graduate from college.

Goodman et al.'s (2006) theory can also be applied to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the integration process of minority students in higher education. For instance, students of color that enroll in PWIs and are not prepared for either the potential discrimination or stereotype threat that they may encounter can find it difficult to successfully transition into the collegiate atmosphere. This ties back to both Astin (1991) and Tinto (1987) in that students of color are not able to successfully transition if they do not find their environment to be supportive and conducive to success. Furthermore, the non-event of academic and social integration could decrease a student's chance of persistence, since persistence is directly tied to integration (Tinto, 1987; Astin, 1991). Connecting Goodman et al.'s (2006) transition theory to the Steele and Aronson's (1995) theory discussed earlier paints a very clear picture that describes what students of color endure while enrolled at PWIs. As long as students of color can be subjected to potential stereotypes threats while still being expected to fully transition and integrate into an institution without proper intervention, their rates of attrition will continue to increase.



## Discussion

Women of color have encountered several difficulties while attempting to obtain postsecondary degrees. To start, the history of both African American women and Latinas, details a story of struggle to obtain equal rights to men and eventually other White women. Although minority women have been able to persevere and obtain bachelor's degrees, it is important to understand that they are still facing difficulties in both internally and in the classroom. Women of color that pursue non-STEM degrees encounter discrimination and stereotype threat within their classrooms. However, the low enrollment rate of women of color in comparison to White women has resulted in there being courses where only one minority student is enrolled. This type of atmosphere can disrupt the transition process and make the process of integration into the college that much difficult and subsequently lead to attrition (Tinto, 1987).

Although there have been several theories designed to describe factors that lead to student persistence (Astin, 1970a; Astin, 1970b; Astin, 1985; Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Tinto, 1987; Tinto, 1993), none of them were developed to capture the unique experiences of women of color pursuing postsecondary degrees. Furthermore, since college administrators utilize these theories to assess student needs, there is a disconnect between these institutions and this population that they are supposed to be serving. With the exception of Title IX efforts, female students of color have not historically received much support to increase their persistence rates. Additionally, minority women are still encountering large attrition rates from traditionally male-dominated STEM majors. Although postsecondary institutions have made efforts to include the voices of minority students, it is equally as important to hear

from each group individually. How can one help increase the persistence rate of minority women at PWIs if one is not aware of what that population deems to be important? This study will attempt to give voice to a group that is often unheard and last thought of, the “exception of the exception” (Solomon, 1985)—women of color enrolled in predominately White institutions.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

The incorporation of ethnic and racial minority female students' voices into conversations about college integration is important for the continuing development of these programs. Few studies of postsecondary programs privilege first person voices of women of color (Alonso, Anderson, Su, & Theoharis, 2009). For this reason, this study's methodology seeks to learn of the first year experiences of female students of color emphasizing first person narratives. More specifically, this study focuses on the summer bridge program and first year experiences of five<sup>11</sup>, self-identified women of color at a Mid-Atlantic, Tier I research institution.

#### **Research Site**

All four participants attend a nationally accredited, public Mid-Atlantic institution that is ranked in the top 30 of public colleges by the *U.S. News and World Report*. This school, which I am calling "Flagship University," had a Fall 2014 undergraduate enrollment of over 26,000 students, 76% of whom are state residents. The average first-year student admitted to the school in 2014 had a GPA of a 3.98 and earned between a 1260 to 1410 on the SAT or a 28 to 32 on the ACT. Flagship's top three majors are business, engineering, and biological and biomedical sciences, and the average student to teacher ratio is 18 to 1 (NCES, 2014).

Flagship's 2012 undergraduate student body demographic was: 55% White, 15% Asian, 12% Black or African American, 8% Latino or Hispanic, 3% two or more races,

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<sup>11</sup> Five participants were interviewed but only four participants were included in this study due to time constraints.

3% race and ethnicity unknown, 3% non-resident alien, and 0% American Indian or Pacific Islander<sup>12</sup> (NCES, 2014). The graduation rate of students pursuing bachelor's degrees in 6 years (Fall 2006 cohort) was 82% (NCES, 2014). The average 6 year graduation rates by gender pursuant of a bachelor's degree at Flagship University (Fall 2006 cohort) was 85% female and 79% male (NCES, 2014). The average 6 year graduation rates by race and ethnicity pursuant of a bachelor's degree at Flagship University beginning in Fall 2006, was the following: 100% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander<sup>13</sup>, 88% for two or more races, 86% of American Indians, 86% of Asians, 84% of Whites, 79% for Latinos, 74% of Blacks, 74% race/ethnicity unknown, and 58% Non-resident Alien (NCES, 2014). In contrast to the demographic of Flagship listed above, the population of the summer bridge program is majority ethnic and minority students.

The Summer Bridge program that this study recruits participants from has been in existence since 1990 and is housed within what I will call the "Academic Support Department" at Flagship University. Invited student participants of this program are conditionally admitted to Flagship University and pending successful completion of the program, are fully admitted to the university. The program attempts to help students with their adjustment to college by introducing them to both academic and social resources to encourage successful college integration. The program is six weeks long and provides the following resources for student participants: skills enhancement in math, English, college study strategies and tutoring; participation in a three credit university core course; and weekly individual and/or group counseling sessions. Although it is common to evaluate the effectiveness of summer bridge programs in their attempts to prepare students for

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<sup>12</sup> NCES rounded all of the data of Flagship University to the nearest whole number.

<sup>13</sup> The small percentage of this population of students from the 2012 cohort, graduated within four years.

college, I want to assert that this study is not an attempt to evaluate the program. Instead, the focus of this study is to learn more about what perceived academic and social factors female students of color identified as helping their transition from high school to college at Flagship University.

### **Summer Bridge Programs**

Although this study focuses on the study participants' perceptions of their experience within the summer bridge program and its influence on their college integration, I think it is still important to talk briefly about the usage of summer bridge programs for the integration of students. To begin, there have been many studies that have focused on the evaluation of summer bridge programs that revealed that these programs help improve student self-efficacy, introduce students to skills needed for academic success, and increased confidence and comfort with college level coursework and classes (Suzuki, Amrein-Beardsley, & Perry, 2012; Strayhorn, 2010; Raines, 2012). The studies show that on average, incoming first-generation students tend to find summer bridge programs helpful in their accrual of collegiate skills.

The results of many of these studies have yielded mostly quantitative data, and focus more on program evaluation and less on student voice. However, Stolle-McAllister's (2011) study on the successful Meyerhoff summer bridge program is one of very few studies that incorporate student voice into the discussion of summer bridge programs. According to the study, the Meyerhoff program aided students in the attainment of both social and cultural capital. Much like the emphasis placed on the Meyerhoff program by McAllister in 2011, this study places emphasis on the voices of

the students and rather the success of the specific bridge program to which they were a part.

### **Introduction of Study Participants**

Before I present the findings of this study, I first want to introduce the participants. The individuals interviewed for this study were all current students at Flagship University. All of the participants are female students of color and were former participants of the summer bridge program, housed by the Academic Support Department. There were a total of four participants in this study.

The first participant, “Natalie,” was a 19 year old second year criminal justice major at Flagship University. She was a member of the 2012 bridge program cohort and is a mixed race female, identifying as both African American and Asian. Her mother has earned a Master’s degree; and, she was not able to provide any educational information about her father.

The second participant, “Mitu,” is an 18 year old second year, aspiring biological sciences major. She identifies as Black, and explained that her ethnicity is Ethiopian. She was also a member of the 2012 summer bridge cohort, and is a first-generation college student. She learned English as her second language, and is fluent in both English and Amharic.

The third participant, “Cassie,” is a 19 year old community health sophomore. She identifies as a Black Haitian woman. Like Mitu, Cassie was also a member of the 2012 summer bridge cohort and is a first-generation college student.

The fourth and final participant was “Gina,” a 21 year old graduating senior who was a member of the 2010 summer bridge cohort. She identifies as Asian, and although she is a

first generation college student, she has four other siblings who have either graduated from, or are currently attend college. All three of her older sisters graduated from Flagship University.

### **Research Questions**

This study is a qualitative case study that delves into the integration processes for four minority women of color at Flagship University, a PWI. Data for this case study include semi-structured interviews, a brief demographic questionnaire, and information gathered stated on federal government websites about the school and summer bridge program. I interviewed five<sup>14</sup> students that are currently enrolled in Flagship University, and were participants of the summer bridge program about their experiences as female students of color during both their summer program and their first year. The following were the research questions that guided this study:

1. What types of social and cultural capital do women of color perceive they acquire in bridge programs which appear to contribute to their academic and social integration?
2. How do women of color feel that their participation in bridge programs prepared them for the campus climate?

The emphasis on the accrual of social and cultural capital stems from the famous sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1986) explains that capital is continuously created based on a person's exposure to people, places, things, and ideas. More specifically, the introduction to capital can assist marginalized groups in learning about and navigating a dominate culture. He defines social capital as resources obtained through personal networks (Bourdieu, 1986). For this source of capital, the exposure to knowledgeable

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<sup>14</sup> Only four students were included in this study due to time constraints.

people within a network could provide a person with access to knowledge that they would not have had access to otherwise. For this study, the accrual of social capital for a summer bridge participant could be exposure to instructors, academic advisors, and even the summer bridge program itself. In essence, an increase in social capital is predicated by an increase in a student's social network. For this source of capital, it is more about who you know, rather than what you know.

Bourdieu (1985) also defines cultural capital as social assets that can promote mobility within the culture of power. More specifically, cultural capital is the knowledge of the codes, cultural cues, the rules of the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1986). For the purposes of this study the culture of power is the dominant White college culture. For example, if a bridge program participant hails from a low-income background, they may be unaware of the availability of academic resources and professorial assumptions of knowledge gained in high school that they are expected to have when beginning college (ability to write college-level papers, differential between primary and secondary sources, etcetera). The introduction to these forms of cultural capital could not only introduce students to resources that could aid their college integration process, they could also help them increase their chances of success at the college level. For this reason, the perception of the accrual of social and cultural capital by the study participants will help me better understand any difficulties or advantages they may have encountered during the college integration process.

Five study participants were interviewed and responded to twelve questions that were geared towards learning more about how their participation in a summer bridge program helped them with the integration process at Flagship University.



### **Methodology and Limitations**

The study utilizes a case study methodology through the usage of semi-structured, face-to-face oral interviews (Creswell, 2013). I utilized a snowball sampling technique by first identifying staff members that have worked with the summer bridge program housed within the Academic Support Department office at Flagship University. I asked the Academic Support Department staff to recommend former summer bridge program participants who identified as female students of color. The staff member emailed former participants asking for volunteers (See participant recruitment email in Appendix B). The desired outcome of the interviewee recruitment process was that the participants were a diverse group of students across race and ethnic origin so that I could capture a diverse perspective of experiences. The requirements for participation in the study were that participants were at least 18 years of age or older, identified as a woman of color, and were former participants in the summer bridge program. Study participants were emailed both the consent form and study questionnaire so that they could review it prior to the date of the interview.

The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without being penalized. All participants were given a consent form that was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (See Appendix A). The participants read, signed, and returned the forms to the researcher before the beginning of the study. Next, the participants were given a copy of the consent form to keep for their records. All interviews were conducted in the researcher's office with consent from each participant.

Each participant was asked to complete a brief diagnostic questionnaire prior to the beginning of the interview process (See Appendix C). The interviews were audio recorded (with permission from participants), and then transcribed by the researcher. Only the researcher had access both to the audio recordings and interview transcripts, and all files were saved on the researcher's computer and were password protected. The researcher also took written notes during each interview, and filed them in a locked cabinet in the office. Participants self-selected their own pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

The researcher conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews using questions to encourage conversation with participants. The average interview length was approximately 45 minutes. Participants were asked a series of twelve open-ended questions, four pertaining to the first research question, and the remaining pertaining to the second research question. Interview questions relating to the first research question included: "What skills did you learn during your participation in the summer bridge program?" and "were you introduced to any resources (academically or socially) on campus? Are you utilizing those resources now?" Questions related to the second research question included "what challenges have you faced as a woman of color at Flagship University?" and "what support systems do you feel like you gained after your participation in the summer bridge program?" (See Appendix D for full list of interview questions). Participants were told that the interviews were informal, and they could use any words or terminologies needed to express themselves in a manner that made them feel most comfortable. Interviewees were encouraged to ask clarifying questions, but

were told that I would not divulge information about my personal connection with the study until the completion of the interview process to prevent any bias.

Some limitations of the study are that student participants were at least one year removed from participation in the summer bridge program and could forget details of their participation in the program. A post-positivist critique of this case study approach is that the inclusion of only five participants leads a reduced ability to generalize the findings of the study to female students of color participating in other summer bridge programs (Creswell, 2013). Although four participants were interviewed, this study does not claim to capture all of the experiences that female students of color have during their collegiate integration process.

Each interview transcript provided valuable information that helped me begin to pick out themes that emerged from my conversation with each participant. Each interview was coded and general themes that were apparent throughout the data were collected. To start, I read each interview transcript at least two times, each time identifying reoccurring key words and phrases that were common amongst all four participants. Through this process, I started finding connections and commonalities between the narratives of the four interviewees that were important for identifying themes for their collective experiences.

There were a total of four categories that I identified and I began color coding using multiple highlighters: academic integration, social integration, stereotype threat, and institutional fit. Once the categorical information was color-coded, I wrote each category on a separate sheet of flip chart paper and posted each of them on a wall. Once the flip charts were filled with categories and corresponding quotes from the participants,

they were reviewed for analysis. I determined that the initial four categories could fall under two significant themes that are explained in further detail in the next chapter. These two main themes are: 1) the structural and administrative aspects of ASD and, 2) institutional fit. The first theme addresses the structure of both the summer bridge program and subsequent fall and spring semesters and how they influenced the participants' college integration. The second theme concerns the participants' academic and social integration as well as touches on stereotypes that the students encountered during their first year of college.

After the notes were used for the purpose of coding, those and the audio recordings were saved in a password protected file on the researcher's personal computer and will remain there for no less than five calendar years. All written and printed documents will also be locked in file cabinet in the researcher's personal office for five years. Once five years has passed, the audio recordings and electronic and written notes will be disposed of by deletion from the personal computer and shredding.

While conducting this research, I had to be cognizant of my own positionality as the researcher of the study. I believe I share very similar experiences with the female students of color interviewed. I was a participant in an engineering-focused summer bridge program in 2005 at a Midwestern PWI and encountered many of the same experiences that the students in this study reported. Using my previous experiences as a guide, I crafted interview questions that I hoped would illuminate the participants' lived experiences as female students of color. Although my experiences allowed me to develop some of the nuanced questions used during the interview process, I refrained from revealing to the participants that I am also an alumna of a summer bridge program, so

that I would not influence their responses. In addition, I am also racially congruent with all of the interviewees as a female ethnic minority. While I understand that I cannot hide my ethnicity or race, I do want to acknowledge that with my similar racial background, the rapport that I developed with my interviewees may have contributed to the safe and comfortable interview space environment that a researcher of another racial or ethnic persuasion may not have been able to create as fully. An example of this safe space that I am referring to is this: one of the interviewees, “Cassie” made comments about “going natural,” meaning that she was transitioning her hair from its current straightened state, to her natural kinky texture. While she felt comfortable sharing that information with me, another natural haired woman, I do understand that she may not have divulged that information to an interviewer that was not familiar with African American textured hair. I believe this type of camaraderie between researcher and interviewee may have helped elicit fuller responses. Lastly, as an academic advisor, I had to resist the urge to provide advice and address concerns that the female students raised about their transition experience. Although I did share with each student that I am an academic advisor and a master’s student, I refrained from correcting or addressing any comments or questions they made about their experiences in the program.

## Chapter IV

### Study Findings

“It was just—“I gotta pass this,” ‘cause they emphasized that you have to pass this transitional program to get into [Flagship] or else you won’t be accepted. So my expectations....get into [Flagship] and be like regular incoming students.

--“Gina”, Flagship University Graduating Senior

#### Prominent Themes from Study

There were a total of two salient themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes were: 1) structural and administrative aspects of both bridge program and Academic Support Department (ASD), and 2) Institutional fit. These two themes will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.

#### **I. Structural and Administrative Aspects of both Summer Bridge Program and ASD**

This first theme, the most prominent within the interviews, refers to the general structure of both the summer bridge program and the subsequent fall semester. All of the participants of the study expressed praise and critiques of structure of the programs that they attended. Before I discuss their viewpoints about the program, I will provide some context about the program in which they participated.

**Format of Summer Bridge Program.** ASD staff members work directly with Flagship University’s Office of Admissions to identify students that fit specific criteria to participate in their summer program. In particular, ASD provides low-income and first-generation college students opportunities to gain admission to Flagship’s campus on a conditional basis<sup>15</sup>. A cohort of 60 qualified students are sent a letter of conditional

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<sup>15</sup> The actual admissions decision making process is made internally and is not evident on the program’s website. Furthermore, the financial details of tuition costs are not available to the public.

admission and are invited to participate in ASD's six week summer bridge program. The prospective students are informed before the start of the program that their acceptance to Flagship is not guaranteed and is dependent upon their performance in the bridge program.

At the start of the program, students are given math and English diagnostics, to assess their preparation for college-level coursework. After their assessment, the participants were assigned a core class, which would count for college credit, as well as math, English, and study skills classes to supplement what they learned in high school. The students were also required to attend tutoring sessions for each class that they attended to get additional help with their writing and math skills. At the end of the day, after the completion of their classes and tutoring sessions, the students were required to participate in study hall sessions, which were large gatherings in a common room or auditorium, in which students would work on homework assignments or see one of their tutors. The average weekday for a participant spanned from 9am to 5pm of continuous block scheduling.

After successfully completing all requirements for the summer, students are fully admitted into Flagship University as full-time freshmen/women. Their first year fall and spring classes mimic the format of the summer. The students choose general education classes from an approved list provided by their advisors. The class selection process is restricted to ensure that students take classes for which tutors are provided for to increase their chances of satisfactory performance. As in the summer program, the students had a full day of classes (both credit-bearing and non-credit supplementary courses) that last from approximately 9am to 5pm on Monday through Thursday (See sample schedule in

Figure 1 below). Students were expected to attending tutoring classes that were placed into their schedule as well as enroll in a one-credit college orientation course that was designed to promote study skills and time management. These supports and class restrictions continue until the end of their first year within the ASD program. During their second and final year in the program, students were allowed more freedom to select their courses, and to start working towards their major of interest. The ASD participants were no longer required to attend tutoring sessions each day, however, they were still strongly encouraged to receive additional help if needed. Lastly, at the completion of 60 credits, or major declaration, the participants of the summer bridge program are said to have “graduated” from the Academic Support Department’s program and are majors in degree-granting majors.

#### SAMPLE FALL SCHEDULE

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 - 8:30					
8:30 - 9:00					
9:00 - 9:30	THEATER 110	ENGLISH	THEATER 110	ENGLISH	
9:30 - 10:00	SECTION 0105	LAB - EDCI ↓	SECTION 0105	LAB - EDCI ↓	
10:00 - 10:30			INDIV COUNSEL		PRE-MATH
10:30 - 11:00					115 LAB - EDCI
11:00 - 11:30	HISTORY 157	ENGL 101	HISTORY 157	ENGL 101	HISTORY 157
12:00 - 12:30	SECTION 0101	SECTION 0301	SECTION 0101	SECTION 0301	SECTION 0101
12:30 - 1:00					
1:00 - 1:30		EDCI COLLEGE		EDCI COLLEGE	
1:30 - 2:00		STUDY SKILLS		STUDY SKILLS	
2:00 - 2:30	HISTORY 157				
2:30 - 3:00	TUTORING				
3:00 - 3:30	PRE-MATH 115		PRE-MATH 115	LEADERSHIP	
3:30 - 4:00	LAB - EDCI		LAB - EDCI	SKILLS	
4:00 - 4:30					
4:30 - 5:00				THEATER 110	
5:00 - 5:30				TUTORING	

Figure 1-Sample Fall Schedule for First-Year ASD Students

With this established context about the summer bridge program that the four study participants will be referring to, I will now highlight some of their perceptions of the



benefits and critiques of the structural and administrative aspects of both the summer program and ASD.

**1. Conditional acceptance to Flagship University.** For three of the four study participants highlighted earlier, the decision to attend Flagship, by way of the summer bridge program, presented a large opportunity cost<sup>16</sup>. The three women were offered full admission to other prominent colleges nearby Flagship, and they had to choose between guaranteed admission at other institutions and the possibility of no admission to Flagship. For some, this decision caused much trepidation. For example, “Cassie” was offered admission to two other nationally recognized schools. She talked about the difficulty of choosing whether she wanted to risk attending the summer bridge program at Flagship, or to accept the guaranteed acceptance at another school. She stated:

I was just really, really, really nervous about like denying [another school] and going into the [summer bridge] program just in case I hadn't gotten in and then I wouldn't have a backup—and would have been stuck at community college. I mean, getting stuck, I guess, is relative but I like [see] my future in a four year college and if I hadn't gone through with this [bridge] program I don't know where I'd be right now.

Cassie went to talk about the difficult decision she had to make and her decision not to pay a non-refundable deposit to another university:

...Well, it was around this time in April/May when, like, the [college] deposits were due and I told my mom I really wanted her to put in the deposit from

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<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this study, opportunity cost refers to the risk taking process that students endure when choosing one college over another. In this specific case study, the term opportunity cost refers to the opportunities of full enrollment elsewhere that the students passed up to enroll in Flagship University on a conditional basis.

[another school]. I believe it was like a hundred something dollars, and she was really against it, like, “that’s my money I’ll never get back especially if it doesn’t work out with Flagship”.... then it just wasn’t meant to be. So I just kinda put all my eggs in [Flagship].

In this comment, Cassie explained her choice to attend the bridge program, which did not guarantee admission to Flagship, even if that meant she might end up at a community college the following year due to poor performance in the bridge program.

Another study participant, Mitu, expressed similar concerns about her conditional admission to Flagship. Like Cassie, she was also admitted to several nationally recognized schools, but she opted to try and gain full admission to Flagship University because it was both close to home and prestigious. Her explanation is below:

Well the first thing for me—[Flagship] is close to home. That was important to me, because my parents wanted me to be around.... it’s also prestigious. Yeah, and [it] is like, the most—the hardest college that I applied [to], so I did decide to come [here] if I did get in.

With her decision to attend Flagship after she was conditionally accepted, she explains that she understood the importance of the successful completion of the summer bridge program:

Yeah, it’s like you had to go through the program, finish it, and do well—‘cause usually people did well—it was kind of like, your last option, since it was the summer. If you wanted to go to [Flagship], you had to go through it.

Students like Mitu and Cassie struggled with the prospect of giving up guaranteed seats at other institutions and to risk attending what seemed like a “scary” program, in order to possibly gain admission to Flagship University. Mitu explained her fear of attending the bridge program after reading the website and learning more about the purpose of the program:

Um, like, after they told us, like, we can choose to do this program if we want to get into the university and we had to go through, like, workshops, kinda—and they made it really scary for some reason. They made it extremely harsh [sounding]. I was really scared because the lady said “you just have to do it” and it wasn’t—it was easier. It was just scary, how she said it was gonna be. Um, but once I was doing it didn’t seem hard. And now it definitely doesn’t seem as hard.

The study participants reported that the rigor of the program served as their motivation to do well in the program. Gina explains her feelings of motivation as follows: “It was just—“I gotta pass this,” ‘cause they emphasized that you have to pass this transitional program to get into [Flagship] or else you won’t be accepted. So my expectations....get into [Flagship] and be like regular incoming students.” The sentiment shared by Gina brings to light how their conditional acceptance influenced both their admission decision process and motivation to successfully complete the program.

**2. Schedule structure.** Another important subtheme which emerged from the interviews was the structure of the summer and fall schedules and its influence on their academic progress. Many of the interviewees critiqued the structure of the bridge program and expressed that some elements of the program were unnecessary. For example, Natalie explained that she did not like the required two hours study hall period

at the end of each day. She expressed that “study hall sucked” because she would complete her assignments at least a week in advance, so she spent most study hall sessions relaxing. Offering a slightly different critique, Mitu expressed that she was unable to complete her work because of all the distractions during the two hour period. She explains:

Um, maybe it was just me, but I just could not get work done because it was in a big auditorium, and everyone was there. And people would talk, my friends were there, so... I would just talk to them...yeah, there were a lot of distractions.

Both Mitu and Natalie found their required study hall hours to be a misuse of their time as they had either completed all of their assignments in advance, or were unable to focus and study within the large auditorium setting of the session.

While the women expressed their dislike of study hall sessions, one seemed to really appreciate the required tutoring classes placed into their summer schedules. Mitu explained that she “...felt like the tutoring...was really helpful” because the classes helped her with difficulties in her English class. In contrast, although the students were appreciative of the summer classes, some of them were not fond of having to take required classes during the fall semester. The continuation of the required 9 to 5 block schedule throughout her first year caused Cassie to decide not to attend the optional tutoring classes during her second semester. She explained that:

Last semester I didn't really go to them either just because they are very time consuming. The fact that they happen during the middle of the day, like around 5 or 6 o'clock they would start and after a long day—or even if you ended early the

thought that you, like, have to walk all the way back to [ASD] and go to class, it just—sometimes it can be beneficial, sometimes not.

Cassie's comment shows that although she found the tutoring classes beneficial, she opted not to attend the optional classes during her second year because of the inconvenience.

## **II. Institutional Fit**

This second theme focuses the elements that influenced the study participants' sense of belonging at Flagship University. Their sense of belonging stemmed from their ability to academically and socially integrate themselves into the institution. All four study participants talked about factors that they perceived had helped them to integrate into Flagship's campus. Each study participant expressed that they felt like they belonged as a student at Flagship University. Analyzing the participants' responses to learn more about what they perceived as contributing to their sense of belonging, identified two subthemes within the overarching institutional fit theme. These subthemes are 1) Academic integration and 2) Stereotype threat. Each of these subcategories affected the students' sense of belonging at Flagship. These themes will be discussed in detail below.

**1. Academic integration.** This subtheme is broken into three separate sections: i.) college preparation, ii.) introduction to resources, and iii.) skill development. Each one of these categories will be described below.

*i. College preparation.* When asked the question "Do you feel that participation in the summer bridge program helped prepare you for college? Why or why not?" each student answered with a resounding "yes". Students expressed that the supplementary

college level classes which they took in the summer helped them get a feel for the rigor of college-level courses. For example, Mitu shared that the English-prep class she took in the summer prepared her for the actual English course in the fall: “Um, like for our English class, what we did in the summer was kind of like what we did as we did in, like, English 101. Um, so I thought that was really helpful.” Gina, the only student from the 2010 bridge cohort in this study explained her experience with the supplementary English courses:

[T]hen I took, um, English and then—it was like a—it was similar to English 101, the supplementary one—but it’s not the same... It didn’t count as a credit. The only thing that counted as a credit was the core class.

Likewise, the participants collectively agreed that the opportunity to earn credit and establish a college GPA in the summer was a positive benefit to the program. Gina’s response pertaining to this topic was particularly poignant:

[Once] you get that ‘A’ [in your core course], you come in as a 4.0 student versus a 0.0 or no GPA. ‘Cause people that come straight from high school to college with no program, start off with no GPA and have to build up their GPA, versus me—I started with a 4.0....I felt very proud.

Gina’s comment illuminates that taking and performing well in her credit-bearing core course not only boosted her incoming GPA, but it also boosted her confidence—which likely contributed to her sense of belonging at Flagship while also introducing her to the rigor of college-level courses.

*ii. Exposure to campus resources.* Each study participant expressed that they learned about several of the academic resources designated to provide students with support during their first two years at Flagship University. More importantly, those resources were first introduced to them while they were enrolled in the bridge program. For example, Cassie explained that she was introduced to the Flagship’s library database and learned how to search for scholarly sources. In her words:

There were a lot of things that they taught me—for example the [Flagship] database online—the research database. And if it weren’t for the [bridge] program, I probably wouldn’t know how to write, like, a good research paper. Like, a lot of my general education [requirements] where they require you to write a long paper, they require you to use academic sources—and [a lot] of people don’t know how to find those.

Furthermore, Gina’s explained that being introduced to the writing help center in the bridge program, she expressed, helped her learn “how to write the college way.” In fact all of the study participants expressed that a major emphasis of the bridge program was writing and ensuring that students are able to write papers at the college level.

*iii. Skill development.* The final element of the academic integration subtheme is skill development. Most of the skills the students addressed were briefly discussed during their participation in their summer bridge program. For example, Cassie expressed that students in her cohort were required to complete a scheduling exercise in which they listed all of their assignments and due dates at least a month in advance. Although she

understood the significance of that assignment and its connection to time management, she explained:

[The bridge program] didn't stress time management a lot. But, there wasn't I don't feel like there was a lot expressed—I mean there was [discussion about time management], but I just feel it's the kind of thing you have to do on your own.

Natalie disagreed with the emphasis placed on learning time management in the program, but agreed with Cassie and expressed that time management is something that students can learn on their own:

The time management was a big [topic covered]—‘Cause I was, like, really bad in high school with time management. That was like a drastic change... but they didn't really teach me anything, I just—I don't know wha—what clicked with me. I just figured it out.

For the most part, students expressed that improving time management skills just came with time and experience and did not feel that the bridge program needed to .

Another important skill that was introduced by Mitu, were presentation skills. She explained that during the summer bridge program, the students were asked to present about themselves in their educational skills class. Mitu explains: “[In] one of the [educational skills] classes, um, we had to present and I felt like that was a good practice because I [didn't] really have to present in high school.” The assignments that she presented in that class provided her with valuable presentation experience that she did not have. However, later on in the interview, Mitu expressed that she was having difficulty



trying to express her ideas in her introductory level communications class as an English Second Language (ESL) learner. She said:

Because, like, English is not my first language, some classes where you have to, like, give a presentation, I found that difficult—just like—for example, [in my] Communications class they grade on public speaking skills, and I found that to be more difficult...But, I feel like, giving presentations and stuff—I did find that challenging.

Mitu's apprehension about being evaluated on her communication and presentation skills points to a need that some may have of bridge programs providing more support and practice for students to learn presentation skills.

**2. Stereotype threat.** This second subtheme was a sensitive topic for the students. Although two of the students exhibited characteristics of stereotype threat, there was one student that did not report any information that directly connected to stereotype threat. This subtheme is broken into two sections: i.) gender, ethnicity, and race, and ii.) stigma of participating in summer bridge program. Each one of these categories will be discussed in the following sections.

*i. Gender, ethnicity, and race.* The study participants were asked the question: "What challenges have you faced as a woman of color at Flagship University?" Of the four participants included in this paper, one expressed facing difficulties on campus as a woman of color, one expressed encountering stereotypes about her ethnicity, and two expressed that they had not encountered as difficulties on campus as a woman of color.

Cassie and Natalie said that they had not encountered discrimination on campus. While Natalie's response was brief, Cassie provided more explanation. She expressed her belief that Flagship fosters a diverse, saying:

I noticed, I know that one of the things [Flagship] likes to brag about it that [multicultural center] is right next to the [student union] and it's like a big deal because we've got [the multicultural center] on one side and on the other side is the [activities building] where the Muslim Student Association do their, like, prayers and their, like, Chapel thing. So I think it's a big deal for [Flagship] because they are trying to show that they embrace diversity.

Although neither of these two women said that they encountered any gendered, racial, or ethnic discrimination or stereotypes, they were still aware of the fact that they are minorities on Flagship's campus.

In slight contrast to both Natalie and Cassie, Gina said that she encountered ethnic-based stereotypes. Gina expressed that some of the challenges that she has encountered as a woman of color at Flagship were related to academic ability. She explained:

I guess, what people expect of you... what your friends or classmates expect from you, regarding, like—what courses you take. [People assume and say things like] “oh you're probably this major” or “if you're not this major, why are you taking this [class]”?

Gina believed that people assumed that since she was Asian, she should have been in either a scientific, mathematical, engineering based major, or in a major that holds a lot of

prestige on Flagship's campus such as business or architecture. Although she expressed that these assumptions were made because she was a woman of color enrolled at Flagship University, she stated that she is no longer affected by those comments. Specifically, she shared that "it doesn't really bother me, 'cause it's my education—not theirs."

Mitu had the most to share about the challenges that she encountered as a female student of color at Flagship University. She explained that in she is typically the only Black person in most of her courses. She expressed this in the following way:

Well the first thing is that it's majority White students. Like, some of my classes I would be the only, like, Black person. That also, uh...just like sometimes you feel different, which I felt in some of my classes.

When promoted to explain more about what she meant by "different", she offered this explanation: "Just like—it's like majority White, so I feel like I can't connect [with them] as much as I do my friends because they're minority." In addition to feeling like she could not connect with her White classmates, she also expressed that she felt a sense of inferiority in her math courses because of her lack of knowledge of the material being taught. In her words:

Ummm... Like, for math, I didn't feel like I belonged there. Maybe it was just because I didn't understand the material, and that's why it was harder for me.

Umm....but just, like, I feel like math 140 was just a bad experience for me.

Lastly, she also shared about her difficulties with comprehending readings in her women studies course:

[I]n women's studies we had to do a lot of readings. And some of the readings, you kind of had to think about it. And I just—it just didn't click for me. And for, like participation, we had to analyze what we read and participate [in discussion] and I just, like, couldn't because I didn't really understand what I was reading. And it was very confusing for me.

Her comments on both her math and women's studies course show that not only did her lack of understanding of the material in those courses affect her sense of belonging, they also affected her confidence. Mitu was aware of the fact that she was the only Black person in her class and so her difficulty with comprehending information in those classes eventually led to feelings of inadequacy.

*ii. Stigma of summer bridge program participation.* I must admit that this theme was not apparent when I first transcribed and coded the interviews, however, after multiple readings of each transcript, this trigger of stereotype threat—stigma of bridge program participation—became more salient. Although none of the students expressed any frustration with their participation in the program, there were subtle cues embedded within their responses which drew my attention to the fact that they were unknowingly using deficit language when referring to themselves. One statement that I found to be particularly profound is one that I shared earlier from Gina. When talking about her conditional acceptance, she made the following comment:

It was just—"I gotta pass this", 'cause they emphasized that you have to pass this transitional program to get into Flagship or else you won't be accepted. So my

expectations...get into Flagship and *be like regular incoming students* [italics added].

The phrase “be like regular incoming students” indicates that Gina felt as though she was less than other incoming students, because of her participation in the program. It is a strong possibility that the feelings of inferiority may stem from the language that the summer bridge program uses when expressing to students that they are conditional admits.

### **Discussion**

One theme that I was surprised was not prevalent was the introduction of social capital. Although the students acknowledged that they were provided social support in the program by way of both participation in the program and their ASD advisor, not much else was introduced as a direct connection to their participation in the summer bridge program. Students were able to connect with one another by nature of the program and having to attend classes together. However, the bulk of their social experiences occurred outside the influence of the bridge program. One of the students, Natalie, even shared that the bridge program students in her 2012 cohort were restricted from joining athletics teams and sororities/fraternities during their first year in order to promote better time management and increase study times. However, while this restriction was an attempt by the summer bridge program to get the students to focus on their studies during their first year, the restriction actually prevented them from engaging socially with other Flagship University students.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

The incorporation of the voices of ethnic minority females into discussions regarding supportive first year programming is crucial for understanding the difficulties that they encounter during their college integration process. This study highlighted some important themes that arose when female students of color shared their experiences in the summer bridge program and their first year at Flagship University. There were a total of two general themes that emerged from interviews: the influence that the structural and administrative aspects of both the bridge program and the Academic Service Department (ASD) had on the participants' confidence and academic schedule; and institutional fit and how the participants' academic and social experiences affected their college integration. This study provided some important insight into what these female students of color perceived as aiding with their persistence.

As connected to the first theme, study participants explained that the offer of conditional acceptance to attend Flagship's summer bridge program forced them to evaluate the opportunity cost of choosing conditional admission over guaranteed admission to other reputable institutions. Although all of the participants expressed that they were apprehensive about attending the program, since its description seemed to be strenuous and "scary," many of the participants used the challenge of conditional acceptance as motivation to perform well and secure their admission to Flagship University. Students also critiqued the block scheduling they were required to follow over the summer and during their first year as a student. In their opinion, while the

schedules helped them practice time management skills, they also found some of the elements, such as study hall, and mandatory tutoring classes unnecessary.

The second major theme—institutional fit—contained two major components. The first component was academic integration. Students shared that the bridge program introduced them to presentation and time management skills, but they expressed a desire to further strengthen those skills. While presentation skills are important and should be emphasized more in classes, the students mostly agreed that other skills, such as time management, do not need to be taught in as great detail because they can be learned from experience. The second component of institutional fit was stereotype threat. Although most of the students did not express major concerns about race and gender on campus, one student, “Mitu” expressed that she felt detached from her math class and women’s studies classes because she was having difficulty comprehending the material. All of the student participants in the study gave the impression of people who had labeled themselves as “other” because of their status as a former bridge program participant. I was able to detect this imbedded stigma through analyzing their word selection during their interview responses (though they were probably taught this word usage in the program). In summary, although the women did express that they feel like they belong at Flagship, they still indirectly deal with stereotype threats pertaining to their summer bridge involvement.

Though there was some important information disclosed by the students in this study, I could not help but notice that two specific topics had barely come up during the transcribing or coding process. First, social integration was not one of the primary foci of the ASD program. While the students were introduced to a few resources during the

program tenure, through mainly their academic advisors/counselors and fellow cohort-mates, they were not introduced to any additional resources to promote further social integration. All of the participants shared that they learned most of what they know socially through word-of-mouth from friends, sororities and fraternities, and getting involved with other campus organizations. This points to a potential problem with this particular bridge program. While it may be successful as introducing academic skills for students to utilize, study data suggest that it may not equip students with important social connections to get involved on campus. According to Astin (1985), social integration is a significant component of persistence, and so ASD administrators should address this aspect of the program in the future. I want to stress that this study is not an evaluation of ASD's summer bridge program, but rather this study provides us a much needed opportunity to learn more about the needs of a sometimes marginalized student population.

The results of this study provide an opportunity for college administrators to examine the college integration process of four women of color. While this is a small-scale study, I believe that administrators can use these findings to inform and implement policies which can help encourage college integration. Some of the major student critiques were that they wanted more presentation experience, major exploration, group-based work (to promote more interaction with different race and ethnic groups), and activities that can help them build their confidence. One recommendation which incorporates all of these suggestions is the implementation of a required first-year university course. Most students at Flagship University are not required to take university courses, and as such, they are missing crucial information about campus resources, major



exploration, and skill building activities. These courses should be taught by advisors or counselors on campus that would be willing to advise the students so that students can build a rapport with the instructor and increase their social network. In addition, instead of the standard course evaluation that is provided electronically, student panels should be formed to ensure ongoing conversation between students and school administrators.

As stated in Chapter II, there are several factors which contribute to student persistence—academic and social integration (Astin, 1985). Although these student integration studies are important to providing context about the factors that lead to a sense of belonging, and college persistence, I also want to stress the importance of including minority female student voices to understand more about their specific college integration process. It is my sincere hope that the results of this small-scale qualitative study will be considered by college administrators and instructors so that institutions such as Flagship University can provide a more comfortable environment for all female students of color—not just those that participate in summer bridge programs. It is imperative administrators to include young women of color in the discussion of supportive first-year programming so that they can provide valuable input to help develop resources catered to women of color at Predominately White Institutions.

## Appendix A –IRB Approved Consent Form

<b>Project Title</b>	"The Exception of Exceptions": Summer Bridge Programs, Women of Color, and the College Experience
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	<p>The purpose of this small-scale study is to explore how women of color perceive that their participation in Summer Bridge programs help them adjust to collegiate life at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). While recent studies have focused on difficulties women of color encounter at these schools, the literature on college integration is missing female students' voices. This study seeks to contribute to this line of research by exploring how women of color adapt to their surroundings in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and Non-STEM fields, and provide recommendations for the improved academic and social integration of women of color.</p> <p>I am reaching out to you because you were identified as both a woman of color and a former participant of the [summer bridge program] housed within the Academic Support Department. The information that you provide will be part of a research study currently conducted by me at [Flagship University].</p>
<b>Procedures</b>	<p>You will be given a brief, 5 minute questionnaire to complete if you agree to participate in this study (after you sign this consent form). Sample questions on the questionnaire include: "What is your age?" and "What year did you participate in the summer bridge program?". The completion of the questionnaire will take place right before the interview process begins. Just as a reminder, your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.</p> <p>Participation consists of responding to interview questions, which will take approximately 45 minutes. Example interview questions include: "What were your expectations of what the summer bridge program would be like?" and "What types of support systems do you feel that you gained after your participation in a summer bridge program?" You have the option to allow your interview to be recorded for purposes of accuracy. If you decline having your interview recorded, only notes will be taken. All participation will be voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. You will be asked to agree to participate in the study by signing a consent form.</p>

<p><b>Potential Risks and Discomforts</b></p>	<p>Because interview questions will concern the summer bridge and on-campus experiences for women of color, they may cause some discomfort if you have had negative experiences. However, it is not believed these would cause more than minimal discomfort and you will be told that your participation is voluntary and you can decline to answer specific questions or to end your participation at any time without penalty.</p> <p>To ensure anonymity, the Principal Investigator will ask you to choose your own pseudonym, but will keep the records of student participants for accuracy. Your affiliations will remain confidential unless you indicate otherwise. In addition, your identity will not be known to other participants. The potential risks and benefits will be explained to all potential interview participants before their participation begins.</p>
<p><b>Potential Benefits</b></p>	<p>There are no direct benefits to participants. However, possible benefits include that the knowledge you are contributing may improve future practices and policies of summer bridge programs. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the college integration process for female students of color.</p>
<p><b>Confidentiality</b></p>	<p>In order to protect privacy, your identity will remain confidential. The Principal Investigator will ask you to create a pseudonym. Actual names will not appear on the interview data. The key linking the real participants to the pseudonyms will be kept on a separate document only on the Principal Investigator's computer in a separate folder away from the folder with the interview data. Information identifying you will be disclosed only if you give your consent to provide such information. Data will be securely stored only on the Principal Investigator's computer and an external hard drives. Computers and hard-drives will be password-protected to protect participant data. Hard copies of consent forms and questionnaires will remain in the Principal Investigator's UMD office or advisor's UMD office in a locked file cabinet. Only the Principal Investigator will have access to the data collected during the interview process. All data will be destroyed (i.e., shredded or erased) when its use is no longer needed but not before a minimum of five years after data collection.</p> <p>If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be</p>

	<p>shared with representatives at [Flagship University], or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
<p><b>Compensation</b></p>	<p><i>You will receive a \$15 gift card as a token of my appreciation. You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check here if you expect to earn \$600 or more as a research participant in UMCP studies in this calendar year. You must provide your name, address and SSN to receive compensation.</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check here if you do not expect to earn \$600 or more as a research participant in UMCP studies in this calendar year. Your name, address, and SSN will not be collected to receive compensation.</i></p>
<p><b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b></p>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you are a student or employee, your employment status or academic standing at the university will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Michelle N. Udeli</b>  <b>1117 Hornbake Library</b>  <b>University of Maryland</b>  <b>College Park, Maryland, 20740</b>  <b>mudeli@umd.edu</b>  <b>301-314-8418</b></p>

<b>Participant Rights</b>	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>University of Maryland College Park</b>  <b>Institutional Review Board Office</b>  <b>1204 Marie Mount Hall</b>  <b>College Park, Maryland, 20742</b>  <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a></b>  <b>Telephone: 301-405-0678</b></p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<p><b>NAME OF PARTICIPANT</b></p> <p><b>[Please Print]</b></p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT</b>	
	<b>DATE</b>	

## Appendix B–Participant Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Michelle Udeli and I am a Master’s thesis student at the University of Maryland. I am conducting research to explore how women of color perceive that their participation in a summer bridge program helps them adjust to college life at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) like [Flagship University]. I am reaching out to you because you were identified as both a woman of color and a former participant of the [summer bridge program] housed within the [Academic Support Department]. The information that you provide will be part of a research study currently conducted by me at [Flagship University].

Would you be willing to participate in a brief 45 minute interview to discuss your experiences as a female of color at the university? If you agree to participate, you will be sent a brief questionnaire that will need to be completed and sent to me before the set date of an interview. Should you agree to participate, you will be provided a \$15.00 gift card as an expression of my appreciation. Please note that you will need to be 18 years or older to participate in this study.

Your information will be kept completely confidential. If you are a student or employee, your employment status or academic standing at the university will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.

If you would like to participate in this research study, please contact me via telephone or text message at 301-314-8418 (office phone), or via email at [mudeli@umd.edu](mailto:mudeli@umd.edu).

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Udeli

## Appendix C–Diagnostic Questionnaire

*“The Exception of Exceptions”: Summer Bridge Programs, Women of Color, and the College Experience*

### PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Pseudonym (First Name). Please choose a name by which you will be identified in this study. This should not be your actual first name.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Pseudonym
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you of Hispanic or of Latino origin?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ No
4. What is your race? (Please check all that apply)
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ White
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Black or African-American
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Asian
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_
5. Indicate your class standing
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ 1<sup>st</sup> Year (0-29 credits)
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> Year (30-59 credits)
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ 3<sup>rd</sup> Year (60-89 credits)
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ 4<sup>th</sup> Year (90-120 credits)
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ 5<sup>th</sup> Year or more (120+ credits)
6. What year did you participate in the summer bridge program?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_ 2008
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ 2009
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ 2010
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ 2011
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ 2012
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ 2013

7. Do you consider yourself to be the first in your family to graduate with a college degree?  
(If yes, please skip questions 8 and 9)
- a.  Yes
  - b.  No
8. What is the highest level of post-secondary education that your mother attained?
- a.  Associate's Degree
  - b.  Bachelor's Degree
  - c.  Master's Degree
  - d.  Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., J.D.)
9. What is the highest level of post-secondary education your father attained?
- a.  Associate's Degree
  - b.  Bachelor's Degree
  - c.  Master's Degree
  - d.  Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., J.D.)
10. What college are you planning to obtain your undergraduate degree from?
- a.  A. James Clark School of Engineering
  - b.  College of Agricultural and Natural Resources
  - c.  School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation
  - d.  College of Arts and Humanities
  - e.  College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
  - f.  College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences
  - g.  College of Education
  - h.  School of Public Health
  - i.  Philip Merrill College of Journalism
  - j.  Robert H. Smith School of Business
11. What is your intended major? (Please be as specific as possible)
-



## Appendix D—Interview Protocol

“Exceptions of the Exceptions”: Summer Bridge Programs, Women of Color, and the College Experience

### Interview Protocol

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study, which explores the integration of women of color into Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). As I mentioned, this interview is part of my Master’s thesis research project in Minority and Urban Education at The University of Maryland. I am interested in how women of color perceive that their participation in a summer bridge program helps them get academically and socially integrated into an institution. The project is conducted with the supervision of my advisor, Dr. Victoria-Maria MacDonald. There are no direct benefits to participants. However, possible benefits include that the knowledge you are contributing may improve future practices and policies of summer bridge programs. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the college integration process for female students of color. As an expression of appreciation, a \$15.00 gift card will be given to you upon completion of the questionnaire and interview. Your participation is voluntary and you can terminate your involvement at any time.

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will focus on how you as a female of color perceive that your participation in a summer bridge program helped you get academically and socially integrated into a university. For example, one question asks “What types of support systems do you feel that you gained after your participation in a summer bridge program?”

Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data in a secure location, i.e. investigator’s office computer. In addition, your name will not be identified or linked to the data at any time unless you give your express consent to reveal these identities. The data you provide through your responses will not be shared with the university officials. Only the principal investigator will have access to participants’ names. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the principal investigator, Michelle Udeli, by telephone (301-314-8418) or e-mail ([mudeli@umd.edu](mailto:mudeli@umd.edu)). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact the Institutional Review Board Office at the University of Maryland, by e-mail ([irb@umd.edu](mailto:irb@umd.edu)) or telephone (301-405-0678). This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

**Administer consent form. Do you agree to participate? [If yes, continue. If no, stop.]**

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes, and I would like your permission to record this interview for accuracy. The recording will be available only to me, and your identity will be kept confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any report. If your words are included in the results, any identifying information will be removed.

**Do you agree for me to record this interview? [If yes, turn on the recorder.]**

*Note: The participant will be emailed a demographic questionnaire prior to the beginning of this interview that will ask questions about the intricacies of the summer bridge program (e.g. how many weeks was the program? What year did you attend the program?)*

Let's start with the questions.

*[RQ1: WHAT TYPES OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL DO WOMEN OF COLOR ACQUIRE IN BRIDGE PROGRAMS WHICH APPEAR TO CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR SUCCESS?]*

1. What were your expectations of what the summer bridge program would be like?
2. Tell me about your experiences in the summer bridge program (e.g. classes, workshops, schedules, housing, etc.)
3. What skills do you believe you learned during your participation in the program (e.g. test taking strategies, time management, communication with instructors, etc.)? And which skills do you wish you had received but didn't? Are there any additional skills that you believe would have been helpful now that you are in college?
4. Were you introduced to any resources (academic or social) on campus? Are you utilizing those resources now? Why or why not?

*[RQ2: HOW DO WOMEN OF COLOR FEEL THAT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN BRIDGE PROGRAMS PREPARED THEM FOR THE CAMPUS CLIMATE?]*

1. Why did you choose to attend this university?

2. What types of support systems do you feel like you gained after your participation in the summer bridge program? By support systems, I mean people or programs support you and directly address the issues of race and ethnicity at the university.
3. Have you faced challenges as a woman of color at this institution? Would you be willing to share some of them with me?
  - a. *(If the participant is studying a male-dominated major)* What barriers have you encountered as a woman of color in classes that are traditionally male-dominated?
4. Have you taken any classes with female faculty members while enrolled at the institution? If yes, can you remember how many? Were any of those professors minority women? If yes, can you remember how many?
5. Thinking about your experiences at the institution thus far, and your preparation in the summer bridge program, was there anything that you wish that you learned while in the bridge program before starting school in the fall semester?
6. Do you feel that participation in the summer bridge program helped prepare you for college? Why or why not?
7. Do you feel like you *belong* at this institution? By belonging, I mean do you feel that you are accepted as part of the institution by your classmates, instructors, and administrators? Are their visible attempts by the university to create programs on campus that cater to you? Why or why not?
8. What advice would you give to future minority female bridge program participants to make their transition into their first year of college easier?

### *Conclusion*

1. These are all of my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add about your transition from the summer bridge program to your freshman year in college?
2. Lastly, if I have questions regarding your answers, could I contact you in the future?

Thank you very much for your time and for sharing you experiences, I very much appreciate it.

## Appendix E – IRB Approval Letter



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall  
College Park, MD 20742-5125  
TEL 301.405.4212  
FAX 301.314.1475  
irb@umd.edu  
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE: March 14, 2014

TO: Michelle Udelli  
FROM: University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [571807-1] "THE EXCEPTION OF EXCEPTIONS": SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS, WOMEN OF COLOR, AND THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

REFERENCE #:  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: March 14, 2014  
EXPIRATION DATE: March 13, 2015  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 6 & 7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure which are found on the IRBNet Forms and Templates Page.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of March 13, 2015.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

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