THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A MINORITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY EVALUATION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK MALES CAREER TRAJECTORY AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

Marla Bradford

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Submitted to the School of Education

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By
Marla Bradford

August 2023
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A MINORITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY EVALUATION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK MALES CAREER TRAJECTORY AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A MINORITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY EVALUATION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK MALES CAREER TRAJECTORY AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

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Marla Bradford

August 2023

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Rick McCown

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the significance of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) of higher learning in southwestern Pennsylvania. The program was developed because many PWIs struggle to attract, recruit, and retain African Americans/Black and historically marginalized community members to lead their institutions in curriculum development, mentoring, recruitment, and governance (Reyes & Rios, 2005). Other research studies on African American/Black administrators’ lack of representation at PWIs attributed systemic barriers impeding their recruitment and advancement (Jones, 2007; Perna et al., 2007). Furthermore, Levin et al. (2013) suggest minimal progress in hiring African American/Black male administrators at PWIs of higher learning has been
made, failing to keep pace with the increasing number of African American students matriculating at those institutions.

The study explored the five African American/Black men participants’ program and career experiences, including the systemic barriers they navigated to permanent employment at the university. The analysis of interview transcripts suggests that the university-sponsored and diversity-inspired initiative program’s goals and objectives were met, enabling the interns to obtain permanent employment. Each of the former interns offered recommendations for program improvement for future interns.

Keywords: Predominately White Institutions, Internship, Social Capital, Unemployment and Underemployment, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to God, who guided me through this journey. I want to thank my mom for her undying love and support. To my sister, aunts, uncle, and many friends, I thank you. To some, this journey may have seemed long, but the timing was perfect because it allowed me to grow and flourish in my next chapter of life.

I also want to take the time to thank my friend Dr. Valerie Harper. Dr. Val, as we call her, started this journey with me; although she finished the race ahead of me, she continued to cheer me on to the finish line. To Dr. Judith Griggs, thank you so much for the many.... many.... many discussions I’ve had in your office during my 17 years at the university. Your beautiful spirit of kindness and love kept me lifted high. I want to thank Charles Dougherty, former president of the university, and the leadership team in the human resources department for believing in me to create, implement and successfully manage the multiple award-winning Minority Professional Development Internship Program. Finally, I want to thank all the former interns I mentored and those who participated in this study. You allowed me to serve as your mentor, friend, and sometimes, mom throughout and beyond their time spent in the program. I’m so proud of you and genuinely grateful for that.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The United States Great Recession, December 2007 to July 2009, existed as one of the worst financial downturns for the United States and recent college graduates. Seefeldt & Graham (2013) define a recession as “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months” (p. 6.) Changes in the unemployment rates indicated where the economy was headed. Hardships induced by a recession, often measured by the amount and duration of unemployment, occur in the aftermath of the recession as well as during the official recessionary period (Seefeldt & Graham, 2013). During that time, African American/Black college graduates and other marginalized communities were twice as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts and three times as likely to be unemployed or underemployed (Carnevale et al., 2013).

In 2007 prior to the Great Recession, Southwestern University of Pennsylvania, a predominately white institution (PWI) designed and implemented the Minority Professional Development Internship Program as an employment pipeline for historically marginalized college graduates to “jump-start” their career path. The name, Southwestern University of Pennsylvania, serves as a pseudonym for this research site. Participating interns receive hands-on training in various occupations at the institution. For this diversity-inspired initiative, the goals and objectives aim interns to obtain permanent employment at the university upon completing their internship.

This study aims to investigate how effective such a program is at improving workforce diversity at a PWI through the lens of five African American/Black men who
formerly completed the internship program and obtained permanent employment that led to their career advancement into administrative positions at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania.

**Race Discrimination and Hiring Practices in America**

Race discrimination in employment decisions persists in America. Racial discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of persons or groups based on race or ethnicity (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 182). To put a finer point on it, some scholars and legal advisors utilize a two-part definition to distinguish between differential treatment and disparate impact. Differential treatment generally occurs when individuals are treated unequally because of their race. At the same time, disparate impacts arise when individuals are treated equally according to rules and procedures. The structure of the latter favors the members of one group over another (Edskin, 198, p. 32; National Research Council 2004, pp. 39-40, as cited in Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 182).

According to Pager and Shepherd (2008), the disparate impact definition broadens the scope of differential treatment to include decisions and processes that produce or reinforce racial disadvantages, e.g., recruitment and hiring outcomes.

**The Realities of 21st Century American Racism**

Discussing race and racism in the social sciences has a long tradition. For example, in his book, “The Souls of Black Folk,” W.E.B. DuBois (1903) asserts, “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line” (1989 [1903]: 29). American social scientist predicted that racism would continue to emerge as one of the country’s critical social problems. Although the civil rights movement significantly
changed the racial interactions in our society, racism continues to plague the United States (Thompson & Neville, 1999).

Researchers, practitioners, and students aim to find the necessary tools to efficiently analyze and navigate the challenges of the impact of race and racism in the United States. Bought to a flashpoint on May 25, 2020, the recognition and documentation of racial discrimination towards Blacks and systemic racism in America exploded. America witnessed the murder of George Floyd, who succumbed to his death at the hands of a White officer. This act of modern-day lynching in public is a national reckoning about systemic racism toward Blacks in America.

The term systemic racism relates to the institutional structures that lead to ongoing oppressive acts against African Americans/Blacks in the workplace, which results in unequal treatment and disparities for administrators, faculty, and staff in predominately white institutions. The importance signifies that this is not the same as overt, individually motivated behaviors by individuals or groups. Personal racism, however, refers to direct experiences of racism and discrimination at the individual level.

**African American/Black Employment Barriers**

“In America, education is still the great equalizer.”

*Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, 2011*

Many African American/Black college students believe that a college degree is a “must-have” to compete with Whites for a “good paying” job and to build a stable career path (DiTomaso, 2013). The term, “good jobs,” has been used throughout the literature and over the years to refer to a better hourly wage, healthcare benefits, and a retirement package (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999; DiTomaso, 2013). Many employers today require
higher-level credentials, such as bachelor’s or master’s degrees, to fill their entry-level professional openings.

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) (2020) reported that African Americans/Blacks with higher levels of education have better employment outcomes than those without a degree. Those economic outcomes include higher wages, paid time off, healthcare, and retirement benefits. However, a college degree does not guarantee or provide the promise it once had for African Americans/Blacks. According to a report from EPI, many African American/Black college graduates work jobs, i.e., service and retail stores, that do not require a college degree. The EPI analysis of the U.S. Census data also shows that more African American/Black college-degreed workers (39.4%) than White college-degree workers (30.9%) worked in jobs that did not require a college degree. This disparity underscores that African American/Black college graduates are much more likely to be underemployed regardless of their skills and advanced education attainment.

The disparate conditions are alarming for recent college graduates who believe their degree is the great equalizer for obtaining a full-time job with benefits upon graduation. Moreover, while the U.S. unemployment rate had dropped drastically between 2010 and 2019, Black unemployment rates remained twice as high as that of their White peers. For example, in December 2019, the unemployment rate for African American/Black citizens was 5.9% compared to 3.2% for Whites and 2.5% for Asians (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), meaning that it was almost double the rate of unemployment for Whites.
Why are African American/Black college graduates challenged and denied employment opportunities after completing their degree? Christian E. Weller (2019) explored why African Americans/Blacks face systematic obstacles in securing “good jobs” at the same rate as Whites. Weller reported that the U.S. labor market had grown steadily over the decades since the great recession, with the overall unemployment rate falling in 2019 to its lowest level in 50 years. Unfortunately, despite these substantial employment numbers, African Americans/Blacks still face higher unemployment rates. Within this study, additional sections will unpack some of the casual factors that contributed to the unemployment of African American college graduate during that period.

**Framing the Problem**

Attention and outrage over the lack of racial diversity in the 21st-century American workforce has grown in more recent years. For example, proponents highlight a lack of workforce diversity in national and local media/journalism platforms, political affiliations, organizations, Hollywood movies, law enforcement, U.S. current, Fortune 500 corporations, and our educational system, K-12, and higher education institutions. Over the past decades, many corporations have spent billions of dollars on diversity and inclusion training. For example, in 2014 and 2015, Google spent $264 million on its diversity programs. However, 2019, black employees comprised only 3.3 percent of the company’s workforce and 2.6 percent of its leadership (Newkirk, 2020). Furthermore, Newkirk (2020) asserts that most prestigious companies remain disproportionately white.

In the employment context, Leong (2013) contends that courts have also, in some instances, accepted diversity as a rationale for affirmative action programs voluntarily
undertaken by employers (p. 2164). Leong highlights the case the City of Richmond v. J.A. Carson Co. (1989) an Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena (1995) found that the racial preferences in governmental contacting may be justified by the goal of remedying past discrimination by the governmental entity but did not discuss the diversity rationale (p. 2164) The cases may have prohibited affirmative action programs, but the courts found that workplace diversity initiatives can provide a compelling interest (2013, p. 2164).

Marginalized job seekers from historically marginalized communities, i.e., people of color, search for organizations where they can see someone who looks like them working in positions they are pursuing (Singleton et al., 2021). In other words, they look for a diverse work setting inclusive of people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Thomas and Kaye (2022) contend that persons from marginalized groups who do not see employees who look like them in leadership roles begin to believe that an organization is not a place where they could be successful, leading to the disengagement that supports their claim. Therefore, Thomas and Kaye (2022) assert that a connection between engagement and ensuring a more diverse talent pipeline cannot be underestimated.

The need to create spaces that support employees from historically marginalized communities is increasing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2025, Millennials, individuals born between 1981 and 1996, will comprise 75 percent of the workforce. Dubey and Hirsch (2018) assert that many Millennials are foreign-born, biracial, and LGBTQ and define diversity differently from previous generations. As described by Dubey and Hirsch, millennials explain diversity as being inclusive and open to others' unique experiences, cultural identities, ideas, and opinions. Therefore,
universities should support diversity efforts through thoughtful strategic vision and planning for overall success, especially for PWIs to remain competitive, making a business case. Dover et al. (2020) assert that such organizational diversity initiatives are intended to increase the fairness of organizations and promote the inclusion, hiring, retention, and promotion of underrepresented groups are ubiquitous (p. 152).

According to Singleton (2021), a diversity-inspired initiative, trainee-driven mentoring, and internship programs for historically marginalized talent may help accelerate their career growth. However, Thomas and Kaye (2022) contend that the organization that offers this type of career program should appropriately examine the program goals and objectives using the diversity, equity, and inclusion lens (DEI); if not, programs like this could fail those the program was designed to serve. The DEI lens varies from one organization to another. To advance DEI, organizations must intentionally learn from and speak to audiences that reflect our increasing global communities and foster a culture where employees from different backgrounds and perspectives enjoy mutual respect, inclusivity, and collegiality (Schwabish et al., 2020). If these programs are not examined through a DEI lens while increasing diversity among the workforce in predominately White institutions (PWI), efforts could result in a negative outcome.

However, workforce diversity rhetoric found on job announcements, organization websites, and other media outlets may send a mixed or alarming message to historically marginalized communities. For job seeker’s point of view, research suggests that when company diversity statements emphasize the economic payoff, instead of people from historically marginalized groups start to question whether the organization is a place
where they belong, reducing their interest in joining it (Ely & Thomas, 2020). Furthermore, when the diversity initiatives fail to contribute to the business goals and objectives, staff members in the company are likely to abandon their support. Therefore, building a business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion must be genuine. This process involves setting a clear agenda and having the power to influence what and how the work is done by understating historically marginalized groups’ needs and interests. Furthermore, additional goals should ensure their contributions are recognized and rewarded with future opportunities to contribute and advance.

Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) of higher learning must employ knowledgeable and competent, and diverse administrators in the ever-evolving environment of higher education (Bisbee, 2007; Turner & Grauerholz, 2017). Levin et al. (2013) suggest that minimal progress in hiring African American administrators at PWIs of higher learning has been made. In the higher education sector, Marable (2003) asserts that there is a trend in academia where African American/Black are often undermined access to opportunities which is evidence in the continued low overall percentages employed in managerial and administrative positions, as cited in (Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). However, they fail to keep pace with the increasing number of African American/Black and other marginalized students matriculating at that institution. Furthermore, Singleton et al. (2021) emphasizes that “it is time for institutions, both federal and university-based, to support and ingrain DEI commitments into funding mechanisms to create actionable change and move beyond acknowledging the existence of DEI issues and shift to addressing these issues within academia,” (p. 3362).
The Minority Professional Development Internship Program

Outlined in Southwestern University of Pennsylvania, the research site for this study, the 2003-2008 university’s strategic goals were to increase the number of women and other historically marginalized communities, i.e., people of color, within its workforce. This strategic goal called explicitly for the university to respond to recent college graduates from historically marginalized communities who found themselves unemployed and underemployed upon graduation. In addition, the university committed to fostering its diversity initiative by creating the Minority Professional Development Internship Program.

In the Fall of 2007, before to the start of the Great Recession, the former campus President called upon the Office of Human Resource administrators to put together a plan to develop a program that would offer a one-year, full-time, compensated, on-the-job training for two recent historically marginalized college graduates. The President requested this plan as an intentional response to the high unemployment rate among college graduates from historically marginalized communities. Furthermore, the President’s Office would fully fund the proposed program. The Director of Human Resources assigned the task to me. Utilizing social capital networks, I called upon colleagues who worked in various companies and colleges in the local area. The goals and objectives for the program are outlined below:

- To offer basic managerial on-the-job training to recent historically marginalized communities, people of color, college graduates
- To identify campus departments that had short and long-term projects.
- To develop interns’ learning objectives with department supervisors/managers
• To set goals that would measure the intern’s performance.

• To place the interns for three to six months to rotate them through academic departments and business units once their assignment was completed.

• To provide opportunities for interns to build upon their knowledge, skills, and abilities to increase their chances of qualifying for permanent employment opportunities at Duquesne or other organizations after their internship.

• To provide interns with full-time benefits, including tuition assistance that would enable them to pursue a master’s degree.

In 2012, the President’s Office funded three additional internships for unemployed or underemployed persons from historically marginalized communities with two internships for the managerial track requiring college degrees and one for a support staff track that does not require a college degree. This program continues to provide access to recent college graduates and non-degreed members from historically marginalized communities. To this end, diversity initiatives like an internship program targeting historically marginalized communities offer opportunities for its members to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for occupations in the labor market that could ultimately enhance their social capital and social rewards.

**Social Justice Influence**

The economic inequality among African American workforce in the region, coupled with the high unemployment rates in 2007-2008 among African American college graduates, influenced the University’s decision to offer employment opportunities to these historically underserved college graduates. In addition, the University’s desire to increase diversity in its workforce significantly impacted its decision to attract and recruit
African Americans. In 2007, when the program was implemented, the University employed 1,109 full-time staff (non-faculty). In a review of the University’s demographic based on race, ethnicity, and gender, the University’s Factbook (2007) shows Whites represented the overwhelming majority (90.54%) of full-time staff at the University, followed by African Americans (7.16%). Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander at (0.82%), and Hispanics at (0.45%).

The Purpose of the Study and the Research Questions

The fall of 2007, Southwest University of Pennsylvania, a predominately white institution, developed and implemented the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP) as their inaugural diversity initiative to attract and recruit degree conferred members from historically marginalized groups. This program’s design addresses the university’s commitment to increase the number of historically marginalized groups within its workforce. More importantly, the program served as commitment as an institution to “give back” to the urban community. The overarching goal for the program included providing training and building leadership skills for all interns in preparation for them to obtain a permanent position within the institution upon completion of their internship. During that time, the university’s workforce comprised approximately 1,079 full-time faculty, professional administrators, and hourly staff members when MPDIP was implemented. African Americans/Blacks employed at the University represented a population of approximately seven percent. The university’s strategic plan, 2002 - 2008, set forth recruitment goals to increase the number of women and historically marginalized groups who completed their bachelor’s degrees. The former university president recognized the high unemployment and underemployment rates
among African Americans/Blacks in the community who completed their degree, which prompted his desire to support and fund a program that would attract diverse talent. The internship program offered employment opportunities for historically underserved college graduates. Therefore, this program serves as the impetus for this study to investigate the lived experiences and perceptions of the University’s diversity initiative that led to the professional success of former African American/Black males who participated in the program between the years of 2007 to 2015.

This study illuminates and amplifies the narratives of former African American/Black males who interned in the program and successfully advanced in their professional careers into senior-level administrator roles at the Southwest University of Pennsylvania. In addition, this study aims to emphasize the importance of internship programs, specifically those that serve as a pipeline to recruit and retain diverse talent. Furthermore, this study seeks to inquire about the overall program design and recommendations to improve the program’s effectiveness. Finally, the study attempts to answer the following essential questions:

1. What were the participant’s perceptions of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP)?

2. What elements of and experience in the MPDIP have helped participants navigate systemic barriers in predominately white institution?

**Significance of the Study**

This study addresses the importance of an internship program that served as a pipeline to diversify the workforce at a predominately White institution (PWI) in southwest Pennsylvania. Moreover, this study focuses on the program’s impact on
African American/Black males who formally completed the internship program, which led to their advancement in senior-leadership roles at the University.

The study serves three purposes. First, it contributes to the diversity, equity, and inclusion literature on how an internship program could serve as a pipeline to attract, recruit, and retain African American/Black males within PWIs. Second, to document the impact of a particular MPDIP and, therefore, determine if the program serves as a model for building equity and inclusion in predominately white institutions (PWI) and corporate industries. Third, and most importantly, it seeks to identify ways to improve the design and delivery of MPDIP to serve better interns and PWIs seeking to increase and retain the number of African American/Black male employees in all professional occupation within the institution. Furthermore, to provide opportunities for their career advancement, especially in “good jobs”. A report conducted by the College and University Professional Association (CUPA), asserts that the seniority gap is greater for people of color occupying the lowest-paid administrative positions and the least-senior administrative positions on college campuses, as cited in Inside Higher Ed, (April 2020). The data shows that 80 percent of administrators are white, and people of color make up only 13 percent of top executive officers. Another featured article ‘There Are So Few That Have Made Their Way’ captures the essence of the lack of African Americans/Blacks sharply underrepresented at the top ranks in academia, as cited in Higher Ed Jobs, (October 2020). The data reported from CUPA shows that African American/Black employees make up less than 10 percent of higher education professionals. This data includes demographic information for mid-level college employees in academic affairs, athletics, external affairs, facilities, information technology and other areas. One of the reasons for
this gap in professional mobilization is the lack of allyship and sponsorship within academia to support advancement among African American/Blacks and other historically marginalized groups.

**Organization of this Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, references, and appendices in the following manner. Chapter one highlights college graduates of color, specifically African American/Black, unemployment rates. Chapter two reviews the literature supporting this study, including the social capital theory, unemployment and underemployment during the Great Recession, the value of internship programs, the role of internship program in higher education institutions, leveraging the playing field for internships, and the social capital framework. Chapter three restates the purpose of the study and the research question, a positionality statement, a research design, a description of the research site, research participants, instruments used to collect data, and how the data was analyzed. Chapter four provides an analysis of the findings that arose from the study. Chapter five addresses the overall conclusion and recommendations to the field of higher education administrators seeking to improve the university-sponsored, Minority Professional Development Internship Program, as pipeline to attract, recruit, and retain people of color at the university. Finally, this dissertation concludes with references and appendices.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The literature review starts with Social Capital Theory that supports the inquiry for this qualitative research. In addition, this literature review investigates and examines unemployment and underemployment among African American/Black college graduates during the aftermath of the Great Recession, and internship programs serving as a pipeline to employment.

Social Capital Theory

To support the inquiry for the qualitative research, the study examines the scholarly social capital work of Bourdieu, Coleman, Brown & Davis, and Putnam, as well as others who offer various, distinct, and inclusive understanding. Furthermore, applying a holistic approach to the scholar’s conceptualization of social capital and their various schools of thought about their theoretical and empirical applications and how it supports the inquiry of this study is essential.

Bourdieu (1986) established social capital as a theoretically informed sociological concept. Two essential aspects of his view include capital and habitus. First, he references capital view as “social space,” and habitus links to “actions” or assimilation and generation of practices. By linking, both capital and habitus determine one’s social position. Therefore, his capital theory incorporates a class perspective of economics, social, and cultural capital. He asserts that the amount of social capital an individual possesses hinges on their network size and economic and cultural standing. More
importantly, Bourdieu views social capital as a method of control that the ruling classes use to maintain their dominant position over the general population (Lin, 2001). Garnering social capital becomes tools for historically marginalized groups, specifically African American/Blacks to gain power and social mobility. Linn (2000) suggests that people of color from spatially isolated communities “share relatively restricted variety of information and influence” (p. 787). Therefore, Stanton-Salazar (1997) suggests that colleges have the potential to serve as an alternate network of diversified adults who can share norms and resources with students of color. This type of social capital includes professors, career service center representatives and other staff members on campus.

Bourdieu’s social capital serves as a collection of actual or potential resources associated with belonging to an institutionalized group, such as having shared connections and endorsements (Bourdieu, 1986). His scholarly work on social capital illuminates the lens of social class and that the ruling class of people is maintained and regenerated through group cohesiveness and group supremacy through its mutual recognition. His articulation of social capital grounds the idea that some individuals are privileged because of their membership in society’s social networks. In addition, he believes engaging and building social relationships serve as the objectives of altering self-interests into superior utilitarian and legitimate ones (Bourdieu, 1984).

According to Coleman (1988), social capital consists of a variety of entities embedded in social structures, which make it possible for members to achieve specific goals that are not plausible in the absence of such social networks. More importantly, Coleman’s conceptualization of social capital represent the understanding the norms, trust, authority, and social control that an individual must learn to succeed. For example,
fraternities, a male students’ society in a university or college setting sharing common professional interests, can access its members/alum when seeking job opportunities upon graduation. Because of their member association, college graduates can call upon their members to assist with employment opportunities. Supporting Coleman’s assessment of social capital, Anheier et al. (1995) assert that social capital “is the sum of the actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through membership in a social network of actors and organization” (p. 862).

Brown and Davis (2001) contend that social capital “is a type of resource that is socially reproduced, such as the possession of knowledge, accomplishments, or formal and informal relations and network” (p. 41). For example, individuals obtaining a college degree or technical certificate compete for high-paying jobs. Moreover, using social capital, individuals may gain support from a social network, i.e., trade unions and professional organizations, which facilitates the awarding of “social rewards, such as status, privilege, and position in certain social circles, professions, or organizations” (p. 41).

Putnam’s (2000) scholarly work holds similarities but not equal to the work of Brown and Davis. Putnam (2000) defines social capital as a public good and virtue that promotes collective and public goals such as a functional democracy, economic prosperity, and societal cohesion (as cited in, Toyon, 2022). He states that to address the problem of collective action, it is essential to develop strong networks of citizen engagement that foster community confidence and facilitate democracy (Putnam, 1995, as cited in Toyon, 2022). This type of civic engagement exists as a proxy for community social capital (Putnam, 2000). However, his concept of social capital has its share of
boundaries as it ignores other forms of civic engagement (Fukuyama, 1999; 2001). In addition, his theory ignores class and cultural differences.

Diversity initiatives like the Minority Professional Development Internship program supporting historically marginalized groups offer opportunities for its members to possess the knowledge and skills required in the labor market to obtain social capital and social rewards. According to various scholars, social capital, i.e., social networks, memberships, and academic credentials, can be accessed and obtained by anyone who puts forth the effort to seek “action” and engage in social spaces to achieve capital.

**Unemployment and Underemployment During the Great Recession**

During the Great Recession that began in late 2007, the labor market severely impacted recent college graduates in the US, as noted by Abel et al. (2014). Unemployment rates hit African Americans/Blacks and other people of color even harder, with one-fifth of Blacks and Hispanics experiencing adverse effects from unemployment and underemployment, as described by Young (2012). Jones & Schmitt (2014) found that 45 percent of recent Black college graduates were underemployed. Young (2012) explained that underemployment also includes part-time workers searching for full-time work or those who involuntarily had their full-time job hours reduced. He emphasized the untapped economic potential of these workers, which prevents them from maximizing their skills.

Jones & Schmitt's (2014) study titled "A college degree is No Guarantee" examined the labor market during the Great Recession and its impact on recent Black college graduates. They revealed that although college graduates fared relatively better in the workforce during that period, Blacks experienced higher unemployment rates.
Between 2007 and 2013, the unemployment rate for recent Black college graduates nearly tripled from 7.8 percent to 12.4 percent. In 2013, their data showed that 55.9 percent of recent Black college graduates were unemployed and working in jobs that typically do not require a four-year college degree. The study suggested that ongoing racial discrimination in the labor market may have contributed to the disproportionately negative effects of unemployment and underemployment among Black college graduates.

Before the recession, marginalized communities of color were already struggling with rising unemployment rates. Logan and Weller's (2009) article "The State of Minorities: The Recession Issue" highlighted how minorities faced fewer job opportunities and lower wages compared to whites. The economic crisis in the US resulted from a weak labor market business cycle from March 2001 to December 2007. Cohen's (2014) article in the New York Times featured the story of an African American/Black male who, despite following the advice of his professors and network, struggled to find a full-time job after graduation. He eventually settled for a part-time job with minimum wage. This story reflects the challenges that college graduates from historically marginalized communities faced with high unemployment and underemployment rates during and after the Great Recession.

The Value of Internship Programs

Scholar have extensively studied the definition of “internship.” O'Neil (2010) discovered over fourteen million responses to her search for "internship definitions," with many coming from college campus websites. Many of these websites described internships as supervised work experiences that integrate career-related experiences into undergraduate education. Internships also involve intentional experiential learning
strategies, professional development, performance assessments, and reflection and acknowledgment (p. 6).

Taylor (1988) defined internship as “structured and career-relevant work experiences obtained by students before graduation from an academic program” (p. 393). Gault et al. (2000) stated that internships “generally refer to part-time field experiences and encompass a wide variety of academic disciplines and organizational settings” (as cited in Maerts, Stoeberl, and Marks, 2014). Tovey (2001) stated that “an intern is someone who is involved in part-time or full-time work experience that is related to the student’s career goal or major, who may be paid or unpaid, may or may not be receiving academic credit for the internship, but is a temporary employee.” (p.226). According to Zopiatis (2007), “in general terms, an internship is viewed as a short-term practical work experience in which students receive training and gain experience in a specific field or career area of their interest” (p.65[MOU2]).

Internship programs have existed for over 100 years, starting in 1906 at the University of Cincinnati (Weible, 2010). Many scholars believe that internships are an essential part of an undergraduate's education (Hiltebeitel et al., 2000; McCarthy & McCarthy, 2006; Divine et al., 2007; Rothman & Sisman, 2016). College students participate in internships to investigate jobs and fields of interest before graduation, regardless of whether they are sure or unsure about their primary and career interests (Rothman & Sisman, 2016). They generally choose internships based on their academic major and the industries that hire for specific occupations (O'Neill, 2010). Students may also participate in internships to gain work experience, expand their resumes, experience a large or small company environment, or earn money during the summer break.
(Rothman & Sisman, 2016). Overall, internships allow student interns to build professional experience to list on their resumes and gain exposure to different workplace cultures (Gault, 2010).

According to O’Neill (2010), three reasons why internships help students include: (a) building early professional experiences, (b) applying what they are learning in a real-world setting while gaining more extensive professional experience, and (c) developing and building a network of people working in their field of interest. During an internship, students can transfer what they learned in the classroom and apply their knowledge to their work assignments (O’Neill, 2010; Rothman and Sisman, 2016). Besides, students who undertake an internship may also develop skills not necessarily taught in the classroom, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Teichler, 2009). In addition, interns who are given the autonomy to make decisions in a realistic situation may accelerate their professional growth, along with teamwork ability, communication and interpersonal skills, and exposure to workplace culture (Wilton, 2012).

Busteed & Auter (2017), believe that colleges and universities should make internships a requirement for all college students to complete before graduation. Others believe that internships serve as a vehicle for blending the theoretical perspectives acquired in courses with real-world experiences (Gault & Schlager, 2000; Kim, 2012). The educational function of an internship program exposes students to real workplace problems that cannot be learned through textbooks and classroom learning. Carefully structured internship programs within an actual company or organization will allow interns to attend staff meetings, observe how to address and resolve problems, build their critical thinking skills, and be exposed to a workplace team environment. Lastly, interns
engage in workplace discussions and voice their opinions by offering a new and fresh perspective.

Rothman and Sisman (2016) assert that internships merit greater attention as they provide students with opportunities to learn about specific job functions and if and how a particular occupation aligns with their vision and career aspirations. More importantly, internships provide a practical way for college students to envision a future career with limited time and resources. Divine et al. (2008) and Gault (2002) state that work-related experiences are generally considered a win-win-win opportunity for students, employers, and higher education institutions.

From a diversity point of view, professional admissions organizations such as the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers and the National Association for College Admission Counseling have contributed to this discussion by filing an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court that prioritizes diversity in higher education as a national interest:

“The American workplace is diverse and global and becomes more so each year. Success depends upon an individual’s ability to engage with diversity of all kinds, be it diversity of ideas or cultures or diversity of race and ethnicity. Indeed, the nation’s future depends on ensuring pathways exhibit such diversity, with education settings among the most critical. Accounting or the reality of the current and evolving American workforce necessarily includes providing the learning experiences that will facilitate student success in a diverse world, which necessitates considerations of achieving diversity within educational institutions, including, but not limited to, racial and ethnic diversity” (Brief for the College

(Brief for the College Board et al. 2012,3)

(as cited in Horn, C.L & Marin, P. (2017), p. 19). Therefore, building pipelines for college graduates to access employment provides meaning for all students, specifically for African American/Black students to engage with prospective employers through internship programs.

Kelly (1986) asserts “To achieve goals outlined in an internship program design, the internship program must be adapted to its environment by maximizing its assets and limiting its liabilities in competitive and corporative relationship with other departments and organizations” (p. 236). Kelly (1986) asserts that the most effective way of employing this concept is by building internships around existing jobs.

The Role of Internships in Higher Education Institutions

Many corporate and higher education institutions have discussed the underrepresentation of historically marginalized, people of color, in the workforce. Could utilizing internship programs serve as a pipeline for employers and recent college graduates from historically marginalized communities? Can students afford to engage in an internship if it is unpaid?

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has committed to breaking down systemic barriers to improve employment outcomes for historically marginalized populations. NACE asserts that paid internship provides a wealth of advantages for students seeking their first post-graduate employment opportunity. In their article, ‘Paid Internships: Moving Toward Greater Equity, Setting Pay’ (2022) reported
that NACE’s Student Survey have consistently found that paid interns receive more job offers before graduation than unpaid interns, in addition to those who have not engaged in and internship. This survey revealed that 0.83 of the 2021 graduating seniors received job offers. Students who participated in paid internships received an average of 1.12 job offers. For students who participated in, and unpaid internship received 0.85 job offers upon graduations and those who did not take advantage of an internship received 0.64 job offers. Their survey also revealed that employment opportunities are disproportionately dispersed among historically marginalized groups are underrepresented in paid internships an overrepresented in unpaid internship or more than likely to have not participated in and internship at all. NACE recognize that paid internships offer the best outcomes for those who take advantage of an internship, i.e., white students, male students, a non-first-generation college student.

NACE survey data shows that racial/ethnic minorities, women, and first-generation students are all underrepresented in paid internships and for that reason their chances for gaining employment upon graduation is limited. Out of 4,000 students surveyed, 6.0 percent of paid internships went to African American/Black student. Furthermore, the data shows that other historically marginalized students, people of color, are overrepresented in unpaid internships. NACE believes that Career Service Centers on college campuses could help break down barriers for marginalized students to have opportunities to participate in internship programs throughout their academic journey.

**Career Service Centers Leveraging the Playing Field for Internships**

Colleges and universities have awareness of the challenges faced by students who may be from historically marginalized groups, low-income, or first-generation.
According to NACE’s survey data, African American/Black students utilize career centers more frequently than other ethnicities (NACE, 2019). While only 41% of white graduating seniors reported using career centers, 55% of African American/Black students did. To address the issue of unequal access to experiential learning opportunities, colleges have implemented measures to level the playing field for all students, regardless of their social, economic, or racial backgrounds. This approach has helped to provide equal opportunities for internships, which have traditionally been unavailable to low-income and marginalized communities. For instance, the University of Wisconsin at Madison received a $30,000 donation in 2006 to fund unpaid student internships. This phenomenon has now spread to other colleges across the U.S, including Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). In 2022, VCU joined other institutions in providing funding to students participating in underpaid or unpaid internships through a summer pilot program. The Internship Funding Program (IFP) reduced financial barriers to marginalized student populations from low-income families. The program utilized a blind review student application process, which helped eliminate bias. Out of the 147 student applications received, 51 students received funding between $600 to $5,000 based on their economic status. In spring 2023, 221 students applied to IFP, with a focus on underrepresented student populations.

Higher education institutions aim to ensure their students can secure employment upon graduation (Santiago, 2009). Business schools, recommended by The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), provide internships as a curriculum component (Maskooki, Rama, & Raghunanda, 1998; Rothman, 2007). Internships provide college students with practical work experience in fields that interest them. Many
academic programs require students to complete an internship as part of the curriculum requirements to complete their academic major. For example, students majoring in healthcare-related fields such as physicians, pharmacists, dentists, and occupational and physical therapists must complete a practicum to obtain their diplomas.

**Effectiveness of Internship Programs – Supporting Equity, Diversity & Inclusion**

For over a decade, predominantly white institutions have discussed targeted minority employment recruitment efforts. According to Asher and Alexander (2006), providing internships to students from historically marginalized communities and economically disadvantage backgrounds is a way for colleges and universities to address the lack of diversity. Their research demonstrates how minority recruitment programs can open doors and provide opportunities for historically underserved groups. For example, the American Library Association’s Spectrum Initiative, which provides scholarships to minority students pursuing a degree in library science, focuses on the individual experience by offering in-depth mentoring (Asher & Alexander, 2006, p. 17). Similarly, California State University in Bakersfield (CSUB) has developed an internship program that prepares interns for their pursuit of a profession in library and information science by providing academic and experiential learning, supervised training, and mentoring, and assigned professional projects. The U.S. Department of Education’s Title V grant for Hispanic-serving institutions funded both internship programs, which provide paid, competitive internships for one year that requires a commitment of up to twenty hours per week. The program consists of four components: training and study, professional development, mentoring, and evaluation.
Silva et al. (2016) conducted research that assessed the effectiveness of internships in reducing graduate unemployment rates and examined the role of work-based learning in higher education settings and its value to stakeholders. As previously stated, higher education institutions aim to help their college graduates transition from school to career. From an employer’s perspective, internship programs provide a win-win situation (Divine et al., 2008). Employers believe that college students lack practical skills like critical thinking and communication skills that are not taught in a classroom. An internship offers hands-on practice that provides real-world preparation experience (Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Kelly Bridges, 2005), enhancing the student’s knowledge in building their skills. Moreover, an internship enables an intern to evaluate the industry’s workplace culture as a potential fit as a permanent employee. Finally, students who participate in internships learn first-hand about an industry, saving themselves and potential employers the cost of job dissatisfaction and turnover (Rothman & Sisman, 2016).

Statistics show that many baby boomers, individuals born between 1946 and 1964, are retiring or planning to retire in the next few years. The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2003 that 82 percent of boomers were part of the labor force; a decade later, that number declined to 66 percent and will continue to fall (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This trend creates a gap in the workforce. As a result, employers turn to apprenticeship programs to fill vacated positions that require specialized skills, such as plumbers, electricians, welders, and mechanical engineers. Apprenticeships offer an acceptable route for achieving higher vocational skills by linking applied technology and knowledge
with practical skills and career development. However, it may not be the preferred route for managerial and other professional careers that require higher education attainment.

Business leaders prioritize a skilled workforce as their number one investment priority, and more employers are seeking ways to recruit and develop the skills of their existing and future workforce. Apprenticeships provide access to exciting new employment opportunities with excellent career progression options. For employers, apprenticeships will change the way they recruit new employees.

**Impact of Internship Programs**

Rothman and Sisman (2016) conducted a study on the impact of internship experience on business students' career intentions. The research aimed to analyze the correlation between the internship experience and students' desire to pursue a career in the same industry or job function as their internship. The study surveyed students who completed training in various industries to determine if their experience influenced their career aspirations in the same job function or industry as their internship. Additionally, the researchers evaluated if the internship experience confirmed or disconfirmed their expectations about future career interests, aspirations, and cultural fit within a particular organization.

Rothman and Sisman (2016) suggested that students can confirm or disconfirm their internship expectations in at least three ways. Firstly, students can discern possible job interests and career paths before seeking a job upon graduation. Secondly, interns can get a realistic view of the employer's expectations regarding their work performance. Lastly, students can assess if the profession they aspire to choose is a good fit regarding the organization's cultural environment. By utilizing Kolb's (1984) model, the researchers
could assess whether the interns' experiences met or exceeded their expectations. For this purpose, the student interns were required to reflect on their learning from the work products they completed throughout their internship assignment.

According to McCarthy & McCarthy (2006) and Moghaddam (2011), having an internship experience enables students to discern possible job interests and career paths before seeking employment upon graduation. Additionally, students can gain a realistic view of the employer's expectations, including work-life balance, which could play a vital role in their career choice, especially for Generations Y and Z. Lord et al. (2011) suggested that students could ascertain and reflect if the profession they aspire to choose is a good fit. Therefore, students' experience as an intern can steer them away from a profession or industry or validate their career direction.

Gay (2013) wrote an article titled 'How I Spent My Summer: Internships Offer Student Lessons Beyond the Classroom' where she shares the experiences of African American/Black engineering students from different universities. All of the students believe that internships are invaluable. One of the students in her article interned with the Department of Defense's Science Math and Research Transformation (SMART), which helps students with tuition, stipends, and guaranteed employment after graduation. The student interviewed in her article stated that internship programs challenge students in ways that extend their classroom learning to real-work experience, which is invaluable. A representative from SMART said that the internship program gives the Department of Defense a steady stream of field-tested engineers ready for employment. Another student in her article accepted an unpaid internship and stated that experience is something that cannot be valued in terms of money. This student advised college students to embrace
internships and go after any opportunity, no matter how big or small, as one never knows what might come out of it.

Other students in Gay's (2013) article shared the benefits of interning. One of the students commented that interning helped him/her narrow down what he/she wanted to do as a career path. Another student was described as an "over-achiever" in the article because he/she pursued three internships while pursuing an engineering degree. This student stated that he/she wants different types of experience to add to his/her skillset.

**Social Capital Theoretical Framework:**

In this section, a discussion of the social capital theoretical framework guides this study and informs the data analysis by applying on the social capital theorist scholarly work of Bourdieu (1984; 1986), Coleman (1986; 1988), Lin (2001), and Putnam (1995; 2000; 2002). This framework informs this case study designed to investigate the significance of the university-sponsored Minority Professional Development Internship Program at a predominately white institution in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Empirical studies on social capital come in two shapes (1) studies of a particular institution, i.e., a case study that relies on and enhances a powerful way to illuminate our understanding, and (2) to make use of statistical information, rather than spatial or temporal, to identify and make sense of the connections between key social characters, (Dasgupta & Serageldin, 2000). The conceptualization of social capital is complex and multidimensional, encompassing a repertoire of cultural and social value systems. Moreover, the scholars’ definitions of social capital theory and interpretation vary. Therefore, my approach to this theoretical framework is to identify the commonalities between Bourdieu (1984; 1986), Coleman (1986; 1988), Lin (2001), and Putnam (1995;
as well as others in the field focuses on the social structures that have productive benefits and outcomes.

The following section provides an overview of the scholars’ interpretations or perspectives of social capital theory. Key words from their interpretations are bolded to accompany the connections and commonalities for this theoretical framework that guides data analysis.

Bourdieu’s (1986) social capital provides a valuable theory that addresses collecting actual or potential resources associated with belonging to an institutionalized group. Individuals within this group setting have shared connections, endorsements, and resources. These resources could result in an individual’s ability to leverage social capital to access economic resources and relationships that will ultimately bridge or bond with institutionalized groups (Bourdieu, 1984).

Coleman’s (1986) theoretical framework asserts that social capital is defined by its function with various but similar characteristics that connect some aspects of social structure that are facilitated by certain actions of individuals within the structure. Coleman (1986) proposes that social capital is intangible and has three forms: (a) level of trust, as evidenced by obligations and expectations, (b) information channels, and (c) norms and sanctions that promote the common good over self-interest, (as cited in Dika & Singh, 2002, p. 33). Barber (1983) defines the term, trust, as “socially learned and socially confirmed expectations that people have of each other, or organizations and institutions in which they live, and of natural and moral social orders, that set the fundamental understanding of their lives (p. 165). In addition, Coleman (1988) also contrasts social
capital with financial and physical capital and human capital, e.g., education. Therefore, according to Coleman, the function that it performs determines the value of social capital.

Putnam (1995; 2000) defines social capital as a public good that promotes collective and public goals, i.e., democracy, economic prosperity, and societal cohesion. He argues that social capital refers to components of social institutions such as trust, norms of reciprocity, and networks that facilitate the coordination and action to improve social well-being.

Lin (2001) asserts from a social network perspective that people can acquire and use two types of resources. The first is the individual’s resources, i.e., occupational skills and academic acuity, and the second is social relations. Lin’s (2001) view of social capital consists of three components: structural, opportunity, and action-oriented. Therefore, his vision of social capital networks can be obtained as a resource to achieve one’s goals and purpose. Individuals who deliberately utilize available resources can determine the social network value. One example of summarizing Lin’s perspective on social networks could be an individual utilizing social networks like LinkedIn to connect with individuals or groups during their job search. This process demonstrates deliberate access and action by an individual.

Like Lin’s (2001) social capital conceptualization as it relates to networks, Burt’s (1992) view refers to the quality of such social networks that enable individuals to gain and access resources. According to Burt (1992), the quality of the network is critical. It should be analyzed based on its membership, the frequency of when members meet to exchange reliable resources, and how resources are maintained. Lack of membership
involvement among members could impede **resource sharing** and **mobilization of information**, which will ultimately disrupt and lessen the value of its membership.

This social capital framework examines the African American/Black men who formerly served as a Minority Professional Development intern at Southwestern University of Pennsylvania. Building from these multiple perspectives, social capital theory supports the notion that African American/Black college graduates benefited from the program.

Interns who participate in the program can place value on the benefits to access membership in an established institution. Their membership enables them to trust the process of knowing that the university is obligated to meet and exceed the expectations of ensuring members have access to resource sharing and ability to build internal networks to gain social and economic capital at the end of the program.

**Summary**

In this literature review, an examination of the challenges faced by people of color in their efforts to attain economic social capital found how systemic barriers to capital have emerged using the social capital framework. For instance, one issue found that higher unemployment rates exist among African Americans/Blacks compared to their white counterparts during the Great Recession. Unfortunately, unequal access to experiential learning opportunities continues to persist in the 21st century, as seen in that African Americans/Blacks and other people of color are overrepresented in unpaid internship programs. Furthermore, the social capital theoretical framework also sheds light on how institutionalized structures perpetuate systemic inequities, particularly in predominantly white institutions of higher learning.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The chapter begins with a reminder of the purpose of the study and the research questions that guided the study. The overall research design followed, in turn, by descriptions of the participants who provided data, the instruments, procedures by which the data was collected, and the data analysis steps. The chapter is supplemented by appendices that include instruments and procedures.

Purpose of the Study and the Research Questions

As described in Chapter 1, the goal of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP), a university-sponsored internship program for historically marginalized groups of recent college graduates, was and is to offer permanent employment upon completion of the one-to-two-year internship. The MPDIP was designed to develop program participants’ knowledge, skills, and ability to perform essential job functions in various occupations within the University. The study aimed to understand the lived experiences and career trajectory of one marginalized group and gender of African American/Black males who formally interned in the MPDIP at a Private, Liberal Arts Catholic College, and Predominately White Institution (PWI).

This study served three purposes. First, to contribute to the diversity, equity, and inclusion literature on how an internship program could serve as a pipeline to attract, recruit, and retain African American/Black males within PWIs. Second, to document the impact of a particular internship program, MPDIP, and therefore, determine if the program serves as a model for building equity and inclusion in higher education, predominately white institutions. Third, and most importantly, to seek and identify ways
to improve the design and delivery of MPDIP to serve better interns and PWIs seeking to increase the number of African American/Black male employees. The following two research questions guided this study:

1. What were the participant’s perceptions of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP)?

2. What elements of and experience in the MPDIP have helped participants navigate systemic barriers in predominately white institution?

The data to answer the research questions, the sources, and procedures by which the data was collected, and the data analysis are described following the positionality statement.

**Positionality Statement**

In the fall of 2007, the former campus president called upon the Office of Human Resource administrators to put together a plan to develop a program that would offer a one-year, full-time, compensated, on-the-job training for two African American/Black college degree-conferred graduates from the community. First, the president asked the Diversity Recruiter in the Office of Human Resources (also the researcher of this study) and the only African American/Black female working in the department, to solicit colleagues from the corporate arena to gain insight and knowledge about the structure of their internship programs. First, the researcher wrote a proposal for the post-graduate internship program for historically marginalized, e.g., people of color, to outline the goals and objectives. In addition, the researcher named the program to be called the Minority Professional Development Internship Program. Unlike my colleagues’ corporate arena internship program, my program was unique based on the duration of the program, 1 to 2 years, and the full-time salary and benefits, including tuition assistants, the program
offered. From its inception, the researcher provided ongoing support and mentorship to the inaugural interns. The researcher helped acculturate the student to the university by providing guidance, coaching, and counseling while they navigated “white spaces.” The white spaces refer to the departments where the interns were assigned that had no historically underrepresented employee representation. Moreover, the researcher has experience as minority working in my department and learning how to navigate those white spaces. As an African American/Black female with years of work experience, the researcher learned early in my career how to assimilate in predominately white institutions. Personal experience demonstrated that was mental drain dodging microaggressions and code-switching during interactions with white majority staff members.

As the program increased in the number of interns, the researcher encouraged them to engage with one another to share their experiences serving as interns with others in the program. As their manager, it was important to set aside time when we could all gather for monthly after-work happy hours. This time allowed the interns to unwind and enjoy sharing stories about their assigned departments, supervisors, and co-workers. In addition to the get-togethers, the interns developed bonds and kept each other focused and accountable as it related to work expectations.

The researcher has over 20 years of experience working as a Human Resource professional as well as serving as an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the research site, the researcher has experience as a qualified expert to serve as the head for this study. Because of the relationship with the former interns, the researcher has qualified experience to interpret participants’ responses and contribute to data collection,
analysis, and interpretation. As Lichtman (2013) notes, qualitative research acknowledges the human aspect of research and this researcher brings an experiential and contextual lens to the study that will provide a rich description of the data and findings.

Research Design

A qualitative exploratory case study strategy was employed to understand the social phenomenon from the perspectives of the study participants' experiences as former interns. Yin (2003) and Merriam & Tisdell (2016) recommend a single-case research design as the most appropriate for studying a single phenomenon.

Consistent with the purpose of the study, the research questions asked “what” elements of the program were most effective and “how” program improvements could enhance the effectiveness of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP) through an authentic lens of five African American/Black male participants who formerly interned in the program. In addition, the participants represent a specific sample of former interns. A qualitative exploratory case study allowed me as the researcher to pursue a holistic inquiry among the participants to capture and highlight their personal and unique experiences and perspectives.

The general design of this research study described more specifically about the practice context in which the internship program was implemented, the participants recruited for the study, the data collection instruments and procedures, and the data analysis procedures. The study addresses these elements in turn.

Site Context

Southwestern University, a predominately White institution, is a private, Catholic, mid-sized university located in the northeast region of the United States. The University
is recognized as a leader in the northeast region’s urban community. The founders emphasized serving the area’s historically marginalized populations and advocating for social justice in the community and worldwide. Former and current university Presidents have been very vocal in their goals for diversifying the institution’s workforce. Such efforts prompted the University to design a program to attract, recruit, and provide professional job training and permanent employment opportunities for historically marginalized groups. The Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP) resulted from their vision.

**Minority Professional Development Internship Program**

August 2007, a private, mid-size, four-year university located in the northeast region of the United States intentionally recruited historically underrepresented minority college graduates, specifically African Americans/Blacks, to participate in the university-sponsored internship program. African Americans/Blacks make up the largest minority racial group in the region where the University is located, followed by Asians and Hispanics (Center on Race and Social Problems, Pittsburgh’s Racial Demographics: Differences and Disparities, 2007, University of Pittsburgh). During this time in history, African Americans/Blacks and other historically underrepresented minority groups in the region were employed at much lower rates than, White non-Hispanic, especially in management and professional occupations. Because of this, the University designed a professional development internship program for historically underrepresented minority groups who were unemployed or underemployed upon graduation.

Southwestern University, Office of the President, financed the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP). It provides interns with one to
two-year full-time employment with a base salary, healthcare benefits, and access to tuition discounts for university graduate programs. The program’s primary goal is to offer permanent jobs after their internship assignment. Since its inception in 2007, the program has provided internships for 30 historically underserved groups. Of the 30 interns, 20 received permanent employment in various departments within the University; four left the University after their one-year internship; three resigned from the program mid-year of the one-year internship, and three are currently serving as interns. While these figures represent success, there has been no formal evaluation of the program’s effectiveness since its inception.

The Minority Professional Development Internship Program provides opportunities for interns to rotate between different departments within the university to gain various formative and instructional work experiences. The program uses a rotation process that allows interns to understand the overall operations of multiple departments within the University. Internship rotations in and out of functionally diverse departments assist with the intern’s acculturation of the organization and help the intern to see the interconnections among the departments to develop a holistic view of the organization. Some researchers believe that an experiential educational approach may make it difficult to measure learning outcomes. However, it is extremely valuable to acculturation (Rothman & Sisman, 2016).

The program launched in the fall of 2007 with the selection of two African American interns. The program design was to 1) offer basic managerial training to professionals; 2) identify and measure learning objectives and outcomes; 3) place interns in a department for a three-to-six-month period to rotate them through other academic
departments and business units once training was complete; and, 4) provide opportunities for interns to build upon their knowledge, skills, and abilities to increase their chances to qualify for permanent employment opportunities within the college.

Historically underrepresented minority college graduates, specifically African Americans/Blacks, are chosen for the program via a three-stage process: 1) evaluation of their employment application, including professional references and transcripts; 2) basic office skills test that includes: analytical evaluation, comparison skills evaluation, and the efficient use of the Microsoft Office Suite Package; 3) an interview with representatives from the university. During the selection process, the metrics used to evaluate the candidates include a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher, an average of 70 percent or higher for the primary office skills test, and a score of 4.0 or higher on the behavioral-based interview evaluation. The names of the best-qualified candidates are elevated to the final selection process and are presented to departments interested in hosting an intern.

Each intern is assigned to an experienced and highly competent administrative superior. Throughout the internship, interns work alongside the department’s administrative supervisor and other entry-level to mid-management level professionals to shadow, learn, and obtain knowledge and skills to approach and complete their assigned job duties. Interns are also encouraged to participate in campus-wide training workshops on time management, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. This process is accomplished by rotating the interns to work within different departments and schools across campus. The metrics used to measure key job performance outcomes for each intern’s rotation are supported by a combined 30-60-90-day rotation evaluation in the following areas:

- Ability to maintain a positive attitude.
• Ability to fit into the University and work in harmony with supervisor and fellow employees.
• Demonstrate dependability/flexibility.
• Ability to carry out all instructions in a timely fashion.
• Ability to meet changing conditions and learn duties.
• Ability to meet established and sustain quality standards.
• Quantity and output of satisfactory work.
• Ability to maintain attendance/punctuality.
• Ability to limit the number of days absent and several days tardy.

During the job performance evaluation meeting, the supervisor provides a summary review of performance strengths and weaknesses, identifies goals to be met for the next 30-days, and recommends improvements. In addition, all interns must self-evaluate their performance and comment on the quality and impact of the mentoring received from their host supervisor and the program manager. This unique approach and opportunity allow the program manager to identify gaps in the program assignments, learning objectives, and outcomes and to evaluate the host supervisor’s leadership/mentorship abilities.

This program has received local recognition from the regional chapter of the Society of Human Resource Professionals (SHRM) in the form of the “People Do Matter Award” (2013) and national recognition from the College of University Professional Association in the form of the “Human Resource Excellent Award (2019).
Participants

The study’s participants were identified and purposefully targeted based on my established criteria. The sample selection sought to identify African American/Black males who formerly participated in and completed the internship program, specifically those who obtained permanent employment and were promoted to mid-management and senior-level positions (see Appendix A). ‘Purposeful sampling’ is “selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth” (Patton, 1990) to discern something about the participants’ experiences and solicit recommendations for program improvement. Patton (1990) asserts that purposeful sampling increases the utility of information from small samples. Therefore, this sampling technique identified individuals with the specific characteristics under review.

Data Collection

A breakdown of the instruments and tools used to collect this qualitative study's data describes how the collection was administered. The instruments and procedures, semi-structured, individual, in-depth interviews, were used to collect data from African American/Black males who formerly interned in the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP). The procedures used to conduct the interviews are described below.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured, individual, in-depth interviews were essential for data collection (see Appendix C). This method relied on asking questions about the specific phenomenon being studied. In addition, the tool allowed the participants to express their narratives
fully by describing their lived and unique experiences as former participants in the program.

In order to invite former African American/Black male interns, who met the criteria for participation, I took the following steps. First, I prepared a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) that addressed the purpose of the study and the time and commitment for the one-on-one, semi-structured interview. The recruitment letter provided a statement about research confidentiality and a deadline to respond and submit the attached consent to participate in the study. The recruitment letter and attached consent form were sent to the participants via their work and personal email address.

A well-prepared and thoroughly developed interview schedule contributes to trustworthiness (Kallio, 2016). In preparation for the semi-structured interviews, I reviewed and confirmed the participants’ consent to participate in this study. Each participant was contacted by email and cell phone, with each participant to secure a suitable date and time and confirm the sufficient duration for the semi-structured interview. I created a secured and separate Zoom link for each participant that confirmed their date and time of the virtual interview meeting. A Zoom link was emailed to the participant’s email address along with a copy of the interview schedule, excluding the probing questions, to allow them an opportunity to prepare, make notes, and feel comfortable about their participation. Quinney et al. (2016) state that it is deemed appropriate to share the interview schedule with the participants as part of the participant’s preparation.

Each virtual interview began by thanking the participant for agreeing to meet. All interviews were recorded with the consent of participants. This process helped provide
another layer of accuracy while capturing their authentic responses. I used a semi-structured interview style, positioned between a structured and in-depth interview style using pre-set questions that provided the flexibility to converse about other related topics as they emerge (Bryman, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009). The probing questions were eliminated from the interview schedule to allow the researcher and the participants the opportunity to have an authentic in-depth conversation. The goal of the open-ended questions was to probe more into the “why” African American/Black males decided to participant in the MPDIP and recommendation for program improvements and “how” they were able to navigate systemic barriers throughout their internship.

At the completion of each virtual interview, I downloaded the recorded meeting immediately and securely stored it on a protected computer. In addition, personal field notes were taken during and immediately following each interview while thoughts were fresh. In addition, Corbin and Strauss (2014) and Saldañas (2015) suggest that researchers utilize extensive documentation throughout their studies. Therefore, I researcher recorded personal notes immediately following each interview.

**Data Analysis**

This section explains how the collected qualitative data were analyzed to synthesize responses leading to the conclusion supporting the research questions focused on this research.

All five participants responses from the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. This process helped with identifying common themes as they related to the research questions, by categorizing them related to their perception of the MPDIP and how they were able to navigate systemic barriers. The organization of data was achieved
using fishbone diagrams, Appendix E and F, to highlight emerging patterns and themes among the participants’ responses. Bryk et al. (2017), contend that the utilization of a fishbone diagram provides visibility into the key factors and their associated details that emerged from the conversation when analyzing a problem (pp. 68). The emerged patterns and social capital framework tools allowed for further analysis into how the MPDIP were perceived by former African American/Black males and how they were able to navigate systemic barriers throughout their internship. In this study, concepts shape the patterns identified in the literature. For example, the concepts to gain real-work experience and gaining access to a job opportunity show a connection between the pattern code and the social capital framework. The following Table 1 highlights connections between pattern codes and social capital frameworks.

**Table 1**

*Summary Table – Pattern and Sub-Patterns, Participant’s Responses that Support Each Pattern and Social Capital Framework*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Participant’s Responses that Support Each Pattern (P = Participants and they are numbered 1-5)</th>
<th>Social Capital Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Career Opportunity     | • gain real work experience (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)  
• foot in the door (P1, P2, P3) | gain access  
information channels; trust, norms of reciprocity; structure, opportunity; action oriented |
| Program Benefits       | • program goals/permanent employment (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)  
• full-time salary/benefits (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)  
• opportunity to gain the experience to put you in a position to succeed (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)  
• structure and support (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5) | social relations  
information channels |
<p>| Lack of Career Guidance| • lack of career preparation (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5) |                                                                                       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Navigating Barriers</th>
<th>Mentorship</th>
<th>Improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• helped assure that I belonged within the space (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)</td>
<td>• provided exposure, guidance, and accountability (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)</td>
<td>• educate the departments on what the true landscape of these professionals that are being placed in their area (P1, P3, P4, P5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• helped me navigate what I need to navigate within that space (P2, P3, P4, P5)</td>
<td>• support systems/mentor (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)</td>
<td>• change in the name of the program (P2, P4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social relations; ignores class; cultural differences</td>
<td>social well-being; trust, norms of reciprocity; structure, opportunity; action oriented</td>
<td>social relations; ignores class and cultural differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was important to understand and recognize the appropriate coding method(s) for this study. Trede and Higgs (2009) review how research question framing should harmonize with ontological, epistemological, and other stances: “Research questions embed the values, world view, and direction of an inquiry. They are also influential in determining what type of knowledge. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described methods as “a term that refers to the specific techniques you use, such as surveys, interviews, observations and the more technical aspect of the research” (p. 35). Bodgan and Biklen
(2007) also support Charmaz’s statement that an interview is a “purposeful conversation” (p. 103) allowing participants to describe their experiences in their own words.

The first iteration of the coding process identifies the essence of the text and code it accordingly. This allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding and categorize the data into pattern codes and emerging themes. The patterns that yielded the emerging themes enabled me as the researcher to begin to draw meaning from the data to produce the narratives. This fundamental approach to data analysis reviewed recorded interview transcripts, one-by-one, and line-by-line, (Saldaña, 2015). During this process, I labeled relevant words, phrases, and sentences that were repeated in each participant’s one-on-one, semi-structured interview. Next, I utilized an inductive coding approach (Saldana, 2015) that allowed data analysis without predetermined codes, by developing the codes based on what the researcher found within the data. This coding approach was achieved by identifying relevant, i.e., phases repeated in several responses, a context that surprised me as the researcher, and other codes that are most important to create categories (Saldaña, 2015). During this process, I kept the codes relevant to my research questions and grouped them.

Limitations to the Study

This study is limited to the experiences of African American/Black males who formerly participated in the MPDIP. Therefore, this population of participants did not represent other former interns based on all members from historically marginalized groups in addition to, gender, i.e., women and non-binary individuals. Additionally, I accept that this population may not represent other historically marginalized groups based on race and ethnicity.
Summary

The percentage of historically marginalized groups employed at Predominately White Institutions (PWI) continues to be relatively low in the 21-Century as compared to Whites. Scholarly evidence suggests that colleges and universities can confront the lack of diversity among their workforce by providing internship programs to serve as a pipeline, specifically for African Americans/Blacks, and employment opportunities in higher education institutions to advance their career trajectories. This study aimed to investigate the program’s impact on African American/Black males who formerly completed the internship program, which led to their advancement in senior-leadership roles at the University. Using a Social Capital framework for this qualitative research, the researcher employed a case study approach to understand the lived experiences of the former program participants. A thematic analysis of the data allowed me to examine former interns’ perspectives of the program’s offerings and how the program relates to their career trajectories at Southwestern University of Pennsylvania.
Chapter 4

Thematic Findings

This chapter provides an overview of the results of the research study. The analyzed data offers insight into the significance of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP) and experiences navigating systemic barriers. The purpose of this study was to improve the program from what I learned at the focus of this study and to provide future interns with equitable resources and acceptance at a predominately white institution. The participants in this study are five former African American/Black males who participated in the program.

This chapter will start with a reminder of the study’s purpose and the research questions, followed by a brief introduction of the participants. Next, this chapter will include quotes and narratives from the participants that explain the meaning of their perceptions of the overall program. Next, the responses from semi-structured interviews will be addressed by providing a detailed overview of the findings. Finally, this chapter will end with a statement about the significant and primary conclusion of the data analysis. The following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. What were the participant’s perceptions of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP)?

2. What elements of and experience in the MPDIP have helped participants navigate systemic barriers in the predominantly white institution?
Participants Profile

The study participants were identified and purposefully targeted based on the researcher’s established criteria. The participants are African American/Black males’ who interned in the Minority Professional Development Internship Program at Southwestern University of Pennsylvania. All five of the participants selected for this study completed the internship program and all five were promoted into mid to senior-level administrative positions. Other interns who participated in the program and obtained permanent employment are employed in para-professional positions at the university. Upon their completion, four of five obtained permanent employment at the university. One of the five was unable to secure permanent employment immediately after completing his internship due to the university’s hiring freeze. However, months later, that participant was able to secure employment at the university.

The participants in this study are identified by (P) = Participant followed by the corresponding numbers 1 through 5. The decision to code the participants in this manner is to ensure anonymity as well as their current position at the university. The following is a brief introduction of the five African American/Black males.

Participant 1

This participant completed his undergraduate degree in Media Arts at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania. Upon receiving his degree, he could not find a job in his field of study but was able to find employment at a local department making minimum wage. It was the participant’s desire to obtain a job at a college/university personal goal to complete a master’s degree. Upon completion of his internship, Participant 1 could not obtain permanent employment at the university due to the
University’s hiring freeze. Months later, Participant I was able to obtain full-time permanent employment at the university and was able to complete his master’s degree. Participant 1 is currently employed at the university serving as a mid-management administrator.

**Participant 2**

This African American/Black male completed his undergraduate degree in Business Management. Ultimately, this participant was unsure about the types of job he wanted to pursue. Approached by the Program Director at a local career fair, the participant was able to learn about the Minority Professional Development Internship Program and its goals and objectives. This participant obtained permanent employment at the completion of his internship and is currently working in a mid-to-senior level administrative appointment at the university.

**Participant 3**

This participant had recently completed his master’s degree in social work at a local university and was exploring ways in which he could obtain a job in a higher education setting. It was a current intern who shared information about the Minority Development Internship Program that prompted him to apply. This participant obtained permanent employment at the end of his internship. In addition, this participant obtained his doctorate at the university and was promoted to a senior-level administrative role. Unfortunately, this participant is no longer employed at the university but is employed at a local liberal arts university serving as senior-level administrator.
Participant 4

This participant found himself seeking employment at the completion of receiving his master’s degree in business administration at a local university. Frustrated with the job searching process, being overqualified for entry-level positions and underqualified for positions requiring a master’s degree, he learned about MPDIP through his mentor. This participant completed the MPDIP and successfully obtained a permanent position at the university that was created for him. In addition, this participant took advantage of the tuition assistance at the university and obtained his doctorate. Participant 4 is currently a senior-level administrator at the university.

Participant 5

Participant 5 was approached by the Program Director at a local career fair. Initially, this participant believed the program was a scam. After further consideration, the participant applied and was accepted in the program. Participant 5 obtained permanent employment at the end of his internship and is currently serving in a mid-level administrative role.

In summary, four African American/Black males who formerly participated in the MPDIP are currently employed at the university. One of the five is employed at a local college as a senior-level administrator. The following section will provide an overview of how the data was analyzed, and responses from the semi-structured interviews, beginning with the first iteration of data coding.

This first iteration in the review of the qualitative data searched for patterns in the data. This first iteration yielded patterns.
The First Iteration of Data Coding (Pattern)

This section describes the findings and analyzes the data to address the research questions at the center of this study. Five participants engaged in a 1:1 semi-structured interview and were asked the same open-ended questions. The opportunity to interview all five participants via Zoom meetings allowed for a general conclusion related to the research questions. Their responses allowed for a general conclusion as it relates to how they learned about the program, their decision to apply, their overall perception of the program while navigating systemic barriers, and recommendations for program improvements.

This first iteration in the review of the qualitative data sought for patterns in the data. This process identified similar relationships from the participants’ comments. These comments yielded the following patterns: career opportunities, program benefits, lack of career guidance, navigating barriers, mentorship, and improvements. Table 1 represents both the first and second iteration of coding. The first iteration is the bullets, participants comments, and the second iteration is the yielded patterns.

Table 2
Summary Table – Pattern and Sub-Patterns, Participant’s Responses that Support Each Pattern and Social Capital Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Participant’s Responses that Support Each Pattern (P = Participants and they are numbered 1-5)</th>
<th>Social Capital Framework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Opportunity</td>
<td>• gain real work experience (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)</td>
<td>gain access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• foot in the door (P1, P2, P3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Benefits</td>
<td>• program goals/permanent employment (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)</td>
<td>information channels; trust, norms of reciprocity; structure, opportunity; action oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• full-time salary/benefits (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each pattern in Table 1 above addressed briefly in turn. The pattern labels are justified in addition to its frequency. The final pattern, *improvement*, highlights each of
participant’s expressed recommendation to improve the Minority Professional
Development Internship Program for future interns.

Career Opportunities:

All the participants (5 of 5) wanted to gain real work experience or get their foot
in the door. Three of five (3 of 5) learned about the program from internal and external
referrals. Two of five (2 of 5) gained interest in the program by word of mouth and from
the program director’s targeted recruitment efforts. In addition, to their ability to achieve
personal and professional goals, and the opportunity to curtail their economic struggles.
One of five (1 of 5) viewed the design of the program as an opportunity explore their
career options based on the program’s reputation. In summary, all participants were
seeking an opportunity to secure a full-time job after completing their bachelor’s or
master’s degree. More importantly, all participants desired an opportunity to gain the
skills and experience in pursuit of their career trajectories.

Program Benefits:

For program benefits, the data pattern shows that all (5 of 5) participants placed
significant value in the program goals/permanent employment, full-time salary and
benefits, the opportunity to gain the experience to put them in positions where they can
succeed, the ability to gain real office work experience, and the structure and support the
program provided. Three of five (3 of 5) had a clear understanding of the program
objectives. Two of five (2 of 5) expressed their ability to achieve personal and
professional goals and to gain exposure, guidance, and accountability. For example,
Participant 3 expressed, “…Without a doubt, I would say it exceeded my expectations. I
still encourage people to apply and take advantage of the opportunity that exists there.”
In summary, the MPDIP benefits far exceeded the participants’ expectations knowing that at the end of their internship the probability of securing a permanent position would be achieved.

**Lack of Career Guidance:**

All (5 of 5) participants’ expression of lack of career guidance was based on their lack of career preparation, lack of guidance and support, and their unemployment and underemployment status. Four of five (4 of 5) stated that they lack professional occupation experience and were uncertain about their career path. Three of five (3 of 5) participants reported that they had a lack of experience. Two of five (2 of 5) experienced an undesired job choice. One of five (1 of 5) believe he was underqualified or overqualified for certain jobs. Overall, all five participants commented about their lack of career guidance supports my claim and the need for an MPDIP at a predominantly white institution seeking to increase their workforce diversity.

**Navigating Barriers:**

All (5 of 5) participants’ experience in navigating barriers is attributed to receiving assurance that they belong in the PWI space. Four of five (4 of 5) addressed the program director’s intentionality in making sure all interns had the opportunity to build a cohesive relationship. Two of five (2 of 5) had a fear of rejection prior to applying and participating in the program. One of five (1 of 5) reported navigating systemic barriers was at times a mental strain. In summary, all of the candidates believes that they belonged in the white spaces they were navigating, in addition to university’s staff, faculty, and program director who ensured that their individual participation in the
program was seen as a valued contributors in their assigned departments and to the university.

Mentorship:

All (5 of 5) participants perceived the mentorship they received as assurance that they belong at the PWI based on their exposure, guidance, and accountability. In addition, the participants approved of the program’s structure, support, and the mentorship they received. For example, Participant 4’s comments about the mentorship he received from his mentor stating, “…my mentor was able to see my capabilities, which helped increase my confidence and assured me that I belonged in this space.” Participant 1 gave great praise to the program director for her mentorship. He stated, “…you [Program Director] helped me develop who I was as a young Black man overall, not just in a white institution, but just in life.” In summary, all the participants identify at least one mentor throughout their internship that contributed to their success and career trajectories.

Improvements:

All five (5 of 5) participants shared various recommendations for program improvements. Four of the five suggested educating department administrators about the program goals and objectives. This recommendation highlighted the need for supervisors to have defined goals and outcomes for the intern working in their department. Three of five (3 of 5) recommend the continuation of the support system by intentionally bringing interns together to build and foster relationships among current and former interns. Two of five (2 of 5) would like to change the name from Minority Professional Development Internship Program to Minority Professional Development Apprentice Program. One of
five (1 of 5) recommend the program be extended from a one to two-year program to a three-year apprenticeship. This would allow the interns to take full advantage of the tuition assistance toward obtaining their master’s degree. One of the five (1 of 5) suggests a retention strategy to ensure that all interns progress successfully through the program. One of five (1 of 5) would like to see internal and external African American/Black professionals from both higher education and corporate serve as mentors for the interns. One of five (1 of 5) recommends administrative support for the Program Director. This would allow the Program Director to assist with community outreach and the marketing of MPDIP.

**Thematic Findings**

This section is the second iteration of the thematic findings that describes the qualitative data. The first iteration of the emerged patterns connects and identifies the overarching emerging themes. This process identified similar relationships from the participants’ narratives. As previously stated, all five participants were asked and answered the same semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, see Appendix C during the data collection process. These questions and prompts were to guide the participants to speak authentically about their experiences as an intern, and to capture the pure essence of how they navigated systemic barriers at a predominately white institution during their internship. The first iteration of analyzing the data by pattern codes used to elevate the emerging themes. The overarching emerged themes are Program Benefits, Acceptance, Career Opportunity, Advocacy, Support System, and Encouragement.

This section characterizes each of the five themes illustrated in Tables 2 to 7. The participants responses are presented in the format of a narrative and include the pattern
code from which the theme emerged. Please note, the narratives represent the raw and authentic responses of each participant.

Table 3

Characterization of Theme – Program Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Theme: Program Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1</strong></td>
<td>“…I was referred by my cousin who was and is currently employed at the university, who recommended and encouraged me to apply to the inaugural program designed specifically to attract historically underserved minority groups who completed their undergraduate degree. As an alum and African/American Black male, I was awarded the opportunity to participate in the Minority Professional Development Internship Program. It sounded like a great opportunity. I was underemployed at the time, a recent graduate working at a local department store and in between jobs, and not sure where I wanted to go, or my next steps. I was kind of struggling a bit to get on my own. I always knew I wanted to go back to school to get my master’s degree. This was a great opportunity that I could not pass up to achieve that goal of mine.” (Program Benefits, Career Opportunities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 2</strong></td>
<td>“…The program director pulled me from the crowd at a local college job fair and gave me the information about the program. The handout was very detailed, concise, and to the point. It made the choice to participate very, very, easy as compared to everybody else’s booth at that job fair. Nobody had detailed information about what the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
experience could be like. My understanding of the program was, that I will spend a couple of weeks in all different offices. It gives you more time to build rapport in an area that you may be able to get into. It was a foot in the door for me!” (Program Benefits, Career Opportunities)

| Participant 3 | “…I wanted to work in a college setting, but I did not know the steps necessary to get one. I didn’t really know what a career in higher education looked like. A good friend of mine, who was a current intern, recommended the program to me. He learned very early in his time at the University, how impactful the program could be but also how it opened doors and provided opportunities. Without a doubt, I would say it exceeded my expectations. I thought I would just figure out what higher education meant and how to be successful. I could never have imagined having the opportunity I have now or even having the impact on people as I had to be able to serve as a mentor. I still encourage people to apply and take advantage of the opportunity that exists there.” (Program Benefits, Career Opportunities, Mentorship) |
| Participant 4 | “…How I came to learn about the program, yes, one of my favorite stories. I was at a point in my college career, where I had just finished grad school and was actively looking for employment, and I really wasn't gaining any traction. That was mostly because I had a year gap between undergrad and grad school, and for everything I was applying for I was either overqualified or underqualified or because I did not have any direct experience. So, I was overqualified for an entry-level
position because I had an advanced degree, but I was underqualified for positions that essentially required a master's degree and 3 to 5 years of experience, which seemed to be the trend at that time. I had a mentor at my college who happened to be a close friend, and who had just established a relationship with the Program Director at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania. She said that she knows this lady who is looking for some people, especially black men who are underqualified or looking for work. When I reached out to the Program Director, she led me to the recruitment link. She was able to educate me on the program, and essentially what the goal of the program was, a permanent placement, which I was really hungry for. I kind of carried that ambition -- just get me in the door, no matter what it takes, and let it go from there. I just needed to get in because that seemed to be the challenge. One of the guarantees she told me was that I can get you in the door and will guide you along the way. So, I applied, and it was probably one of the most intense interview processes that I've been through. I was fortunate enough and was awarded to be one of the interns for that year, assigned to the finance and business department.”

| Participant 5 | “...I was starting to go out to some job career fairs, and I came across the Program Director for the Minority Professional Development Internship Program at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania. The Program Director approached me and told me about a possible |
opportunity she had for me. I reviewed the information and at first, it almost felt a little bit like [I’m going to sell knives or something]. I didn't think it was going to be a real opportunity. However, she quickly convinced me that this was a real opportunity and I needed to focus on it if I wanted to be a part of the program. So, what prompted me to apply at the time was, I was just applying for everything, even if it wasn’t or would have been a scam. During our conversation, I felt like it may be a way to get into the job that I really want. My approach was maybe this could develop into a career, or it could give me some job experience because I didn’t really have any actual office work experience. I was a little skeptical at first because the Program Director approached me versus like all the other recruiters, you are approaching them. Because the Program Director approached me, it gave me some comfort in the process, meaning somebody was coming to get me versus I’m always outreaching out to somebody for an opportunity.” (Program Benefits, Career Opportunities)

As illustrated in table, Table 2 narratives of the participant’s voices captured the emerging theme, program benefits. All five participants clearly expressed their reasons for participating in the program was based on the overall benefits, e.g., full-time pay/benefits, opportunity to gain real-time work experience, support and guidance, and an opportunity to secure permanent employment at a predominately white institution.
Table 4

Characterization of Theme – Acceptance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Theme: Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>“…One of the biggest things I was thinking about is the people just helping me along the way to become the best I can possibly be (Mentorship, Navigating Barriers). My colleagues whom I was working with were very helpful. They are the elements that really drive the program and make it what it is and make the people that are interns comfortable in that environment. (Mentorship, Navigating Barriers) They treated me like I was always there, like I belonged, and received support from my supervisors. (Navigating Barriers) I’ve never experienced racism at all, but it always starts with people and then it goes up to the institution.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>“…I’ve seen those barriers. (Navigating Barriers) We had other people within our offices that were helping steer us.” (Mentorship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>“… to be able to step into that space and know that I would be welcomed, but even more so the guidance that we were given and to become comfortable with whom I am as an individual without having to change my personality to fit in at predominately white spaces.” (Mentorship, Navigating Barriers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>“…I would say first and foremost would be the support I received from the Program Director. (Mentorship) She really helped lay the foundation for the dynamic and the environment that I was entering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and would be navigating. (Mentorship, Navigating Barriers) The Program Director was familiar, and regardless of titles, we shared one commonality in the sense of both being people of color in a predominantly white space.” (Mentorship, Navigating Barriers)

| Participant 5 | “…The first one obviously would be the entry barriers. (Navigating Barriers) It would probably be hard for me to get an opportunity to work at a predominately white institution. (Career Opportunities) I had the support of the Program Director and the person I was reporting to and that provided a level of comfort for me. (Mentorship) Sometimes it is difficult to work in a predominately white environment, we all have different experiences, it's not a true melting pot, because there are very few people like the Program Director. (Mentorship, Navigating Barriers) It's very, very difficult. (Navigating Barriers) But at the time you almost think you're just there because you're Black, or you're a minority. (Navigating Barriers) My supervisor and I actually spoke on that one time telling me I should take advantage of any opportunity that comes my way. (Career Opportunity, Mentorship) So, whether you are here because you are a minority you should never feel any type of way of taking advantage of any opportunity you’re presented with.” (Career Opportunity, Mentorship) |

As illustrated in Table 3, are the narrative responses of the five participants. The theme that emerged from this semi-structured question is acceptance at a predominately
white institution. The participants’ authentic voices shared how they were received as an intern at their assigned department(s) and by their immediate supervisors, and peers.

**Table 5**

*Characterization of Theme – Career Opportunities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Theme: Career Opportunities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1</strong></td>
<td>“…I think there's a lot of opportunity to grow as a person, especially if you have no experience at all. (Program Benefits, Career Opportunity) There are just so many things you could do at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania, especially if you're just trying to figure things out and if you're just looking for, [Hey, what am I good at? What am I not good at? What do I like? What don’t I like?] If you're not quite sure about that, Southwestern affords you the opportunity to prove yourself in a number of different ways.” (Program Benefits, Career Opportunities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 2</strong></td>
<td>“…This program provides a different set of leeway, and it awards you to get into rooms and offices that you may not have considered or are allowed to enter. (Program Benefits, Career Opportunity, Navigating Barriers) People realize and know when they see the talent to give you more challenging tasks and adaptable skills.” (Career Opportunity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Participant 3** | “…Specifically speaking to the PWI helped me learn how to navigate in that environment. (Navigating Barriers) Honestly, very early on, learning how to advocate for myself appropriately, learning how to engage in difficult conversations and negotiations with supervisors and peers to prove my worth, and proving a fundamental understanding of what is
necessary to be successful when I faced obstacles. (Navigating Barriers)

There are so many people still working there, and I think that’s why so many people still speak highly of the program. (Program Benefits)

Surprisingly, White administrators, staff, or faculty who had a weird connection or commitment to the program provided opportunities to me and other interns because we were a part of the program. (Program Benefits, Career Opportunity, Navigating Barriers, Mentorship) They had seen the program as a “discounted elite” special group, that if you went through that program and you survived then, you definitely had it! They would seek you out for certain leadership opportunities or committee roles, whereas you might not even be qualified on paper to be there, but because you were in this program a lot of allies showed their commitment to the program through the opportunities, they gave us. I benefitted from some of those directly. (Mentorship, Career Opportunity, Program Benefits, Navigating Barriers) Having the flexibility to make mistakes in the program where everyone understands that I’m still learning was huge. (Mentorship) “The assessment process of the program (30-60-90 days) helped me appreciate the value of assessment very early on because if I wasn’t doing something that I needed to be doing, I knew within 30 days; to be given that early feedback was huge.” (Mentorship)

Participant 4 “…I think that as much as you [Program Director] affirmed the end goal of permanent placement. (Career Opportunities, Mentorship) The level of accountability still was present, letting me know I still had to perform,
I still had to produce, that there was no guarantee, that essentially my performance had to speak for itself, and that you would advocate for me as best as you could. (Mentorship) But it was still up to me especially being a Black male at a predominantly white institution, just kind of coming in, and not really knowing what the expectation of me would be and getting a taste of what this professional world would be like in this fast-paced environment. (Career Opportunities) So, you [Program Director] kind of grooming me and kind of putting that in the back of my mind really kind of being there as support during the times where it was challenging. (Navigating Barriers, Mentorship) One of the supervisors challenged my skill set a lot, really helping me understand the magnitude of the work which she had me performing. I was able to identify some of my shortcomings or areas where I wasn't as strong, and she really kind of coached me up to help me understand why I needed to be sharp in a particular area. Another helped me understand more of the personalities and how to navigate them. I have been very fortunate in all the different areas that I rotated, and my managers were vested in my success. I call on at least one of them, and they continue to just coach me and mentor me because they're still senior in their roles. (Mentorship) Some, I'm a peer with now, which is very wild. You know that I was once, you know, working for them. Now, I’m working more collaboratively with them and sitting at the same table.”

(Oppportunities, Navigating Barriers, Mentorship)
As illustrated in Table 4, summarized the responses of the participants to capture the theme of recognizing the opportunities the Minority Professional Development Internship Programs offered in building their skills and taking on assigned tasks at a predominately white institution. From their perspectives, the emerging theme of “opportunities” highlights their authentic voice in sharing the various opportunities and experiences that lead to their professional progress in navigating systemic barriers.

**Table 6**

*Characterization of Theme - Allies*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Theme: Allies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1</strong></td>
<td>“…you [Program Director] were that mentor for me. (Mentorship) I was the first one through the program, and I wanted to make you proud as an individual for choosing me among all the applicants that you could have possibly chosen for a particular role. (Career Opportunities) You [Program Director] helped me develop who I was as a young Black man overall, not just in a white institution, but just in life.” (Mentorship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 2</strong></td>
<td>“…The Directors of Multicultural Affairs were super helpful! Always there when I had a problem or an issue. Black males who helped me navigate within a PWI system. (Mentorship, Navigating Barriers) I had an invaluable experience working in human resources, where I learned...”</td>
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**Participant 5**

“…Networking and knowing people are probably the easiest tool for working through different cultures and understanding my role there.”

(Opportunities, Navigating Barriers)
first-had insight about what not to do; to keep your head down and show improvements. (Career Opportunities) With that advice, I showed them I could take on more, taking on more tasks. (Career Opportunities) Taking on more jobs builds and builds, and you will get promoted over time. (Career Opportunity) Having my own internal drive, you can take the approach that I'm going to show them I can take on more, and through taking more, it’s the validation of everything I was seeing around me, to keep your nose to the grindstone and keep going until it all works out. (Career Opportunities) It was tough, and you had to have thick skin! (Navigating Barriers) If you can get through it, it will lead me to something amazing where you can take almost anything. (Navigating Barriers) There's no criticism that you can't handle or let you take it personally.”

Participant 3 “…I would have to say the Program Director. (Mentorship) There were no other mentors, and that’s probably a controversial take because sometimes people will label themselves as a mentor, but they don’t do mentorship, but the program director did that for me. (Mentorship) It wasn’t always structured, and sometimes it was just conversations that were “off-the-cuff,” and it really helped me understand what I needed to be or how I needed to soar as a mentor today. (Mentorship) To reiterate, I give a lot of credit for my success, whether it was professionally or even academically. I relied on the Program Director to help me navigate some of these challenges. (Navigating Barriers) When I
was getting my doctorate at the university, the quality of mentorship received would never compare to what we got during that program. 

I feel like every piece of advice has contributed to my success; in my internship process, the program director, my mentor, had encouraged me not to allow myself to get so consumed by what other people thought. It allowed me not to base my value in a workspace on how people acted toward me. (Mentorship) So, it is more on the impact of the influence and the results that I’ve been able to create. (Career Opportunity) That is probably the biggest piece for my biggest takeaway from the program. (Program Benefits) Learning that early in my career saved me from unnecessary pain and trauma.”

Participant 4

“…Yes, I feel like I could go through each one, like the rotations because I think a lot of it came from an influence standpoint. I think that all of them had my best interests at heart, which I greatly appreciate. (Mentorship) So, one of my mentors came with a fresh perspective compared to the previous bosses. We ended up having a more transparent relationship related to my career aspirations and goals. Some of our 1:1 we would have weekly always ended with "Okay, what can I do for you?" “Am I supporting you and giving you the right support?” That increased my confidence, it helped; helped me navigate what I needed to navigate within that space. (Navigating
More importantly, another mentor took it to another level in the sense that he helped me understand, helped assure me that I belonged within the space. He did that by empowering me in different ways. I would be asked to complete a certain task, and he would review it and make tweaks. He spent a lot of time coaching me and telling me that because he was the boss at the institution for the longest, he knew the personalities. With his influence, he started bringing me to the table with him. He was able to see my capabilities, which helped increase my confidence and assured me that I belonged in this space. It was a coachable moment for him to educate me on the fact that if I want to be at the next level, I have to always think like the next level. (Career Opportunities, Program Benefits, Mentorship) To think what the next step, you always have to anticipate the questions of the next level when you're going through and completing these assignments.”

Participant 5 “…I would say, my original supervisor, my mentor, was very pro in hiring minorities. (Mentorship) He was familiar with the program, and I think that probably helped with our connection because he was familiar with the program. He was also familiar with where I was from, so that was a common connection, as well as sports and things like that. He was very “pro-the-program.” He thought it was a great opportunity. He viewed it as a great opportunity for people like me struggling to get office experience. (Program Benefits, Opportunity, Mentorship) He was very instrumental and very helpful. Some people viewed it as
somebody’s starting point of getting somebody at the university; there were all different views.”

As illustrated in Table 5 narratives of the participants’ authentic voices, captured the emerged theme of advocacy. The participants expressed and characterized how advocacy in various forms of mentorship and guidance helped with their success throughout the program was evident. Their relationships formed through their immediate supervisors, peers, program director and other leaders and supporters at the university helped them build their confidence as young Black professionals.

Table 7
Characterization of Theme – Support Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Theme: Support System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1</strong></td>
<td>“...you helped me [Program Director] develop who I was as a young Black man overall, not just in a white institution, but just in life.” (Mentorship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 2</strong></td>
<td>“…Because the program is unique, it provides an opportunity to engage and rely on other interns. (Program Benefits, Opportunities) We had a good core group where we relied on each other and helped to navigate the system. We developed a support group among other active and inactive interns and kept the lines of communication open to ensure community among the group, and we held each other accountable, saying, &quot;I’m going to be at work tomorrow...are you going to be here? I’m going to be here on time...or you going to be here on time?”</td>
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The mentorship aspect from the program participants and alum has been huge for the program. We relied on and helped each other excel in our assigned prospective departments and different engagement opportunities within the university.”

Participant 3  “…Because we know many college leaders and college presidents are especially white men, we know that most staff and faculty are as well. So, I can’t run from what is inevitable, but I can figure out a way to exist without compromising who I am as a person. I needed to have enough experience being authentically me, and I think the program allowed me the opportunity to do that. The Program Director sponsored opportunities for us to get together for a “social hour” when I was in the program. A few years after completing the program, I would get together with the current and former interns, share our experiences, and talk about stuff that was serious or silly, or indifferent. We would kind of joke and say, “Okay, it’s not just me? It’s not just my boss? It’s not just my area?”, and it really helps you realize that some people are equal opportunity assholes, or they don’t understand how to work with people who are different from them. So, you stop compartmentalizing and taking things personally because it’s not you, it’s them, and that gives you more confidence when you come to work every day.”
“...The Program Director and I shared one commonality in the sense of both being people of color in a predominately white space. During the times when it was challenging, and not knowing how to deal with these people, she knew the people, coworkers, and just the folks across campus, really helped me. (Navigating Barriers, Mentorship) Her encouragement and intentionality in ensuring that all interns in the program knew one another and brought us together formed the level of continuity and support that I think was needed. Some of my good friends have come to know through the program. I think being able to have some relatability helped us coach each other; it still happens today. We may call and say, “Hey, bro, I'm dealing with, you know, this is what I'm dealing with at work. Have you dealt with this? How have you navigated it? Or no, you haven't.”, and we just kind of coach each other through it. It has helped with our sanity because, sometimes, navigating predominately white spaces, regardless of how long you've been doing it, can be exhausting. It’s a mental strain. Navigating it has helped me get to where I am today. I know the support was a really big element. We were naturally taught how to survive. So, survival is not really in question as much as the concern around the mental strain that it takes and navigating those environments. That is where the intangibles of the program really helped. Without the Program Director’s support, the intentionality of bringing all of us interns together and ensuring that we have some
cohesiveness and relationship really has helped with navigating this environment.” (Navigating Barriers, Mentorship)

| Participant 5 | “…One aspect or one tool would be the support system that helps you. (Program Benefits) To me, at least, whatever you need, there's somebody there to help you. It's hard to say this, every Black person is going to need one aspect of help. There's somebody there who could have helped you with it.” The networking part is always nice, and even just seeing somebody who’s gone through the program or like seeing you [Program Director] who was running the program. That aspect is always nice. So, when you have these types of programs, they're built on helping people. So, whenever an issue comes up, instead of your initial reaction, “I'm just going to quit and move away,” the Program Director’s initial reaction is always to help. So, these offered things in this program are built on helping people where you get the benefit because you have somebody to advocate for you. If somebody came up to me that was in the program, my initial reaction would be to try to help them in any could because I've been there.” (Program Benefits, Mentorship, Navigating Barriers) |

As illustrated in the above Table 6 narratives of the participants authentic voices, captured the emerging theme of their support systems they relied on throughout the program. The participants expressed their appreciation of fellow interns and the program director to provide a safe space to lean on one another for support during challenging times. Participant (3) and (4) collectively shared high praise to the Program Director who
was intentional in making sure all the interns had an opportunity to know and to engage with one another throughout their time in the program. This intentional approach forged and fostered relationships that still exist to this day.

Table 8

*Characterization Theme - Encouragement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Theme: Encouragement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 1</strong></td>
<td>“...People in my position and being a minority don't see themselves in these roles, particularly because they don't fit the paradigm of being White, or smart, or whatever that may be. Being in this program really helped! (Opportunity, Lack of Guidance, Navigating Barriers) Again because you're working with people who get a chance to see you, and you get a chance to prove who you are and put you in a position to succeed. (Opportunity) More importantly, because they want people who know how to work, it doesn't even matter what color you are at that point; it’s like you can do it! Those preconceived notions of stereotypes go out the window when work needs to get done, and if you can prove to yourself that you're a good worker and you're serious about your job, then it doesn't matter what color you are.” (Navigating Barriers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 2</strong></td>
<td>“…I would absolutely encourage young minorities to take advantage of the program. I think it would be foolish not to. If you get the opportunity, you have to take advantage of it. (Program Benefits, Opportunity) That’s where I think the mentorship comes in because it’s going to be difficult. (Navigating Barriers) I think that’s a part where there is a transition...”</td>
</tr>
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that most Black men don’t talk about where it’s the transition from high school to the workforce transition is hard. We don’t have somebody to help guide you through that or just someone to talk to as you struggle through some of this stuff. I can be overwhelming.” (Lack of Career Guidance)

**Participant 3**

“…We have to remove the stigma we have about working in spaces that might be dominated by people who don’t look like us. (Improvements) Unfortunately, there aren’t enough of us in leadership positions yet for us to seek out employment from people who look like us, and so the easiest way to adjust and adapt is to get experience in those spaces and understand that not every person is out to get you or to take opportunities away from you. (Lack of Guidance, Opportunity) I think the more people you have in a space, the more likely you are to change the narrative as it relates to those people. I think my being in the program changed how employees, administrators, and faculty saw Black men or people of color in that space and how students did.” (Program Benefits, Navigating Barriers, Improvements)

**Participant 4**

“…The assurance and affirmation that you [Program Director] provided, in a sense of everything, is essentially the opportunity to gain the experience to put you in a position to succeed. (Program Benefits, Opportunity, Mentorship) I strongly encourage anyone to do that because if the opportunity presents itself and you’re in a position to take it...take it! Continue the intentionality of bringing everyone together to let
them know that they’re not on an island; I think that has really helped for sure.” (Program Benefits, Improvements)

| Participant 5 | “…I believe you always have to question, especially now, when you have this whole diversity and inclusion thing going around. Sometimes the thought of it is a little false and fake to me. Even with this program, you [Program Director] are running and hitting the ground with it, so the program's benefits come directly from the program's director. So, was it true inclusion? Most jobs you get are going to be predominantly white, just because, you know, there are more white people in the country than black people. So, realistically if somebody is really promoting diversity and inclusion and saying, “I want you to go to a job interview where you can feel comfortable because there are other people of culture represented here you can identify with.” Speaking in general, sometimes I feel like diversity and inclusion initiatives are in name only and not fully supported by any institution. Sometimes it’s just used as a band-aid to say we have this at our institutions just in case there’s ever an issue with a minority on campus. Inclusion is what the world needs, and business needs it because, at the end of the day, people must give other people opportunities. So, was it a true program, or did somebody give you an opportunity to help others but didn’t expect you [Program Director] to succeed? Did the institution expect you [Program Director] to be able to help a group of people significantly? As the record shows, you |
[Program Director] were able to help a group of people significantly.

(Opportunity, Mentorship) But, again, what were their intentions? Was the thought of somebody saying, “we need to address the elephant in the room because we do not have a lot of minorities working here? And what are we doing to get more minority candidates? Or, oh wait, what we have is the Minority Professional Development Internship Program.”

As illustrated in table, Table 7 narratives of the participant’s voices captured the emerged theme, encouragement. Their experiences navigating systemic barriers build not only their character but their confidence in whom they are as African/American Black young male professionals.

This section concludes the data findings from the participant’s responses to the semi-structured interview question. The next chapter will provide a discussion of the findings and what the findings mean, and the implications of the finding are, and recommendations to improve the program. The following chapter will end with the researcher’s agenda for future research.
Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings, Implications, and Recommendations

This research study investigated the significance of Southwestern University of Pennsylvania’s Minority Professional Development Internship Program. More specifically, the study sought to investigate the experiences of five formerly African American/Black males who participated and completed the program. In this portion of analysis and the literature reviewed regarding each research question presents a summary of the study analysis and important conclusion drawn from the data presented in Chapter 4. A discussion of the findings, the theoretical framework, and research implications shaped the analysis. This chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research.

Discussions of Findings

For this study, the data collection tool used semi-structured interviews. This tool assisted with the analysis through an investigative scientific lens. The participants were interviewed via Zoom, a virtual platform. The interview questions were designed to organically gain insight from the participant’s internship experiences at Southwestern University of Pennsylvania, a predominately white institution. The interviews were analyzed in response to the semi-structured interview questions, see Appendix C, aimed to answer the two research questions.

For the first iteration of the coding process identified the essence of the text to code accordingly, by reading the recorded interview transcripts, one-by-one, and line-by-line. Next, I used a fishbone diagram, see Appendix E, to organize the participants responses. This fishbone diagram allowed me to identify patterns in the participants
responses. The identified pattern codes were career opportunities, program benefits, lack of career guidance, navigating barriers, mentorship, and improvements. In addition to the fishbone diagram, Table 1 and Table 2 highlight how the pattern codes connect to the social capital theoretical frameworks. The following section highlights the connection between the emerging themes and the social capital theoretical framework.

**Summary of Findings**

This section discusses the participants’ responses and how they relate to the social capital theoretical framework. Two main objectives of the study included addressing the research questions, better understanding the program’s goals and outcomes, and exploring how the responses to the research questions related to the social capital theory.

The pattern codes, career opportunities and program benefits provided insight into the participant’s reasons for applying for the program. Many, if not most, of the participants had never considered seeking employment opportunities in a higher education setting. Career opportunities and program benefits highlighted and captured the participants interest to apply for the internship program.

Some of the participants reference career opportunities as a means of getting their foot in the door and gaining real-work experience. For example, Participant 2 stated,

“...The program director pulled me from the crowd at a local college job fair and gave me information about the program. The handout was very detailed, concise, and to the point. I chose to participate very, very easy as compared to everybody else's booth at that job fair. Nobody had detailed information about what the experience could be like. My understanding of the program was that I will spend
a couple of weeks in all different offices. It gives you more time to build rapport in an area that you may be able to get into. It was a foot in the door for me!”

This comment connects to Bourdieu (1998) characterization of the social capital theoretical framework.

According to Bourdieu (1984; 1986), social activities occur within socially constructed fields of interactions. I had the pleasure of meeting Participant 2 at a local job fair, where I acted as a conduit and provided information about a program that required a recommendation or endorsement. This endorsement was necessary for Participant 2 to gain access to the capital that I had already acquired. Bourdieu's social capital conceptualization highlights the potential resources that are associated with being a member of an institutionalized group. As an African American/Black female representing a predominantly white institution, I had the power to endorse a person of color's "shared connection" and grant them access to an economic resource. All participants referred to "opportunities" as the ability to obtain a full-time salary with benefits during the internship and secure permanent employment upon completion, based on Bourdieu's social capital conceptualization.

The pattern codes, career opportunities and program benefits, yielded the emerging themes acceptance and opportunities. For the emerging theme acceptance, some of the participants had concerns about how the university would welcome and embrace their desires to learn and build skills required for the various occupations at the university. Participant 2 states,

“...The program director pulled me from the crowd at a local college job fair and gave me information about the program. The handout was very detailed, concise,
and to the point. I chose to participate very, very easy as compared to everybody else’s booth at that job fair. Nobody had detailed information about what the experience could be like. My understanding of the program was that I will spend a couple of weeks in all different offices. It gives you more time to build rapport in an area that you may be able to get into. It was a foot in the door for me!”

Participant 3’s initial assumption about the institution revealed he believed he would not be considered or welcomed to work at Southwestern University of Pennsylvania based on his race. As quoted by Participant 3, his response connects to Bourdieu (1986) characterization of acceptance,

“... to be able to step into that space and know that I would be welcomed, but even more so the guidance that we were given and to become comfortable with whom I am as an individual without having to change my personality to fit in at predominately white spaces.”

From his point of view, Southwestern University of Pennsylvania is known in the community as a private liberal arts school where the dominant race of students, faculty, and staff are white. In contrast to race, Participant 4 thought that his undergraduate and master’s degree could only be utilized in the corporate setting. Overall, all five participants saw the Minority Professional Development Internship Program as a unique opportunity to gain real-world experience where they could see themselves advancing their skills and becoming a viable candidate for permanent employment at the institution.

All the participants attributed their success for navigating systemic barriers from the pattern code yielded the emerging themes, allies, and support system. The participants revealed several allies and various support systems in which they relied throughout their
This emerging theme connects Coleman (1986) and Lin (2001) characterization of social capital. Two examples of how allies and support systems enable the interns to navigate systemic barriers were shared by Participant 4. He stated,

“…another mentor took it to another level in the sense that he helped me understand, helped assure me that I belonged within the space. He did that by empowering me in different ways. I would be asked to complete a certain task, and he would review it and make tweaks. He spent a lot of time coaching me and telling me that because he was the boss at the institution for the longest, he knew the personalities. With his influence, he started bringing me to the table with him. He was able to see my capabilities, which helped increase my confidence and assured me that I belonged in this space.”

Participant 2 shares his comment as it relates to support systems and how support systems connect to Lin (2001) social capital characterization,

“...Because the program is unique, it provides an opportunity to engage and rely on other interns.) We had a good core group where we relied on each other and helped to navigate the system. We developed a support group among other active and inactive interns and kept the lines of communication open to ensure community among the group, and we held each other accountable.”

Most participants referenced their immediate supervisor and the program director as their allies and attributed current and former interns as their support system.

Furthermore, all the participants shared that they received ongoing encouragement throughout their time in the program. Once again, I would like to mention Bourdieu (1984; 1986), Coleman (1986), and Putnam (1995; 2000) and Lin (2001) concept of
social capital, which refers to the shared connections, endorsements, and available resources that interns had access to during their internship. The following is the comment shared by Participant 2 in response to support systems,

“…Because the program is unique, it provides an opportunity to engage and rely on other interns.) We had a good core group where we relied on each other and helped to navigate the system. We developed a support group among other active and inactive interns and kept the lines of communication open to ensure community among the group, and we held each other accountable.”

The following is the comment shared by Participant 1 in response to emerging theme encouragement,

“…People in my position and being a minority don't see themselves in these roles, particularly because they don't fit the paradigm of being White, or smart, or whatever that may be. Being in this program really helped! Again because you're working with people who get a chance to see you, and you get a chance to prove who you are and put you in a position to succeed.”

In summary, every participant expressed gratitude for the unwavering support provided by the Program Director during their internship. They credit the Program Director’s genuine enthusiasm and honest feedback for equipping them to navigate unfamiliar territory and overcome obstacles that hinder African American/Black individuals’ employment prospect in predominantly white institutions.
Limitations and Recommendations

First, the interns gave several suggestions for enhancing the program in the future. These include changing the name of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program to the Minority Professional Development Apprenticeship and extending the program duration to three years. Next, they also recommended identifying external African American/Black professionals alum in the community to act as mentors for the interns. Lastly, they suggested collaborating with Southwestern University of Pennsylvania’s marketing and communication department to rebrand the program and appeal to more people of color who hold college degrees. The semi-structured interview approach used in this study proved to be valuable in eliciting responses from participants, and the data collected highlighted the importance of social capital in the experience of African American/Black men in predominately white institutions. Provided various recommendations for future improvement to the program, such as changing the name form Minority Professional Development Internship Program to the Minority Professional Development Apprenticeship, extending the program duration to three years. The second recommendation includes identifying external African American/Black professionals to serve as mentors for the interns. Lastly, working with the marketing and communication department at Southwestern University of Pennsylvania will aid in rebranding and attracting more college degree-conferred people of color to apply and participate in the program. Overall, the semi-structured interview tool used in this study provided significant in obtaining responses from the participants, and the data collected shed light on the significance of social capital in the experiences of African American/Black men in PWIs.
Leadership Influence

This study explored the significance of a university-sponsored diversity initiative, The Minority Professional Development Internship Program. Moreover, this program served as a pipeline for historically marginalized people of color to gain professional training for occupations in predominantly white institutions and access to permanent employment. Based on the participant’s responses, they confirmed that the program goals and objectives were met. However, Participant 5 expressed doubt about the institution’s true motives for supporting this diversity initiative. Did the institution genuinely want to increase the number of historically marginalized people of color in its workforce? Bourdieu (1989) social reproduction theory posits that a social structure of inequity results from an unequal distribution of resources. His framework both supports and contradicts my claim. To elaborate, Bourdieu’ (1984; 1986) social capital theory clearly favors an unequal distribution of resources for certain groups. As a result, the researcher linked this unequal distribution to the Minority Professional Development Internship Program, which was created specifically for historically marginalized people of color to gain access to resources for job training and permanent employment. However, Bourdieu’s (1989) social reproduction theory of social capital pertains to the perpetuation of goods and services that sustain and enhance the dominant group, thereby promoting inequality for other members and creating a closed system. This system does not benefit individuals who do not meet the criteria for membership. Therefore, Bourdieu’s social capital theory contradicts the researcher’s argument for the research inquiry.

Additionally, the social capital theoretical framework that guided the analysis of the study highlighted the connections between the pattern codes and emerging themes.
These connections revealed some participants’ concerns about applying for the program, such as that they were cautious due to their status as African American/Black male interns in a predominantly white environment. The Minority Professional Development Internship program served as a gateway for historically marginalized groups seeking opportunities. Many participants expressed a desire to get their foot in the door. From their comments, the researcher gathered that this marginalized population understood that gaining access to a white environment was a valuable opportunity. As Chapter 1 noted, the Minority Professional Development Internship Program was launched in 2007, a time when historically marginalized groups, people of color, graduating from college were twice as likely to be unemployed or underemployed.

**Researcher’s Statement**

In the fall of 2007, I created and implemented a program for historically marginalized people of color, specifically African American/Black individuals who had received their college degree. When I received this assignment, I immediately sought advice from corporate colleagues who had on-the-job training programs in their organizations. After receiving guidance from my colleagues, I wrote the proposal for the Minority Professional Development Internship program to share with my administrators and the campus president. Upon approval, I successfully recruited the first two interns to move forward with the proposed program. From its inception, the Minority Professional Development Internship program went through several iterations throughout the researcher’s tenure to be the success it is today. After mentoring, counseling, and nurturing the career trajectories of 30 interns, I am most proud of the African American/Black males who participated in this study. All five participants took
advantage of the program's benefits, including tuition assistance. Two of the five participants completed their doctoral degrees in education, and three received their master's degrees. I am pleased to witness the fruits of my labor as I watch the former interns advance into mid-to-senior level administrator roles at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania and at another higher education institution in the region. In 2023, the Minority Professional Development Internship program thrives under new leadership.

All five respondents desired to be accepted for their identity without changing who they were to fit into predominantly white spaces. They recognized the importance of being part of a group that could provide resources and connections, ultimately leading to gaining access to economic resources and relationships. The Program Director played a significant role in positively influencing the interns' development as African American/Black men, and their responses confirmed that race is a central aspect of their experiences at Southwestern University of Pennsylvania.

Despite facing systemic barriers, the interns had positive experiences in the predominantly white institution, due to having allies and a support system. As the Program Director, I intentionally encouraged this support system and helped enhance the interns’ confidence and determination to succeed. The interns also emphasized the importance of my encouragement and strongly recommend future young Black men to participate in the Minority Professional Development Internship Program.

Reflecting on my tenure, I realized that I utilized social capital conceptualization, giving interns access to economic resources at a predominantly white institution. The interns trusted me to ensure they received the support they needed to succeed and meet
their maximum potential. The bond I shared with each of the interns continues to strengthen to this day as lifelong friends. I recommend that additional research on the Minority Professional Development Internship Program to get the host supervisors perspectives on the significance of the overall program.

Advocating for social justice has always been my passion, and in my new role as Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Specialist at a southwestern regional food bank, I will continue to work and advocate for historically marginalized communities who suffer from food insecurities. Achieving equity requires passion and commitment, and I will share resources to support centering equity and social justice as an individual and a leader at this not-for-profit organization. In the new fiscal year, 2023-2024, the regional food bank is committed to providing employment opportunities for ex-offenders. As an expert in the field, I will assist the Office of Human Resources with the creation and development of the Re-Entry Apprenticeship Program for Ex-Offenders, offering them hands-on training to develop skills as warehouse workers and truck drivers, with the goal of developing a pipeline for permanent full-time position with re-entry members in our community.
References


Duquesne University Fact Book (2007) [Work Copy 2007 Fact Book.xls (duq.edu)]


Ross, J. (2014). African-Americans with college degrees are twice as likely to be unemployed as other graduates. *The Atlantic*.


Appendix A

Recruitment Letter

Date

Dear:

I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, and I am conducting a research study on “The Significance of The Minority Professional Development Internship Program: A Case Study Evaluation on African American/Black Males Career Trajectory at a Predominately White Institution.” I am specifically interested in learning how the internship program impacted your career trajectory within the research site and soliciting recommendations for program improvement.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

- You will be asked to allow me to interview you. There will be one (1) 60-minute virtual interview conducted on ZOOM. Each interview will be conducted individually between you and the principal investigator. The principal investigator will ask open-ended questions during the interview. Interviews will be recorded, and the audio will be transcribed to aid in analyzing the data collected.

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. Research information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office. I will be the only person with access to the data. The study’s results may be published or presented at professional meetings or conferences, but your identity and school will not be revealed.

Please keep in mind that you may withdraw participation at any time. There are no benefits of involvement in this study beyond the potential to connect and consult with other organizations about the program design. Furthermore, there will be no consequences for declining participation.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the attached consent forms, scan them, and send them as a reply to this email address listed below. If you prefer to complete the consent form in hard copy format, please let me know by emailing or calling me. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about my research study or your rights as a research participant.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of participating in my research study. Please contact me at 412.370.7945 or via email at bradfordm850@duq.edu. Should you have any questions or concerns.

With sincere thanks,

Marla D. Bradford
Appendix B

Consent to Participate

Duquesne University
600 Forbes Avenue ◆ Pittsburgh, PA 15282

TITLE: The Significance of a Minority Professional Development Internship Program: A Case Study Evaluation of African American/Black Males Career Trajectory at a Predominately White Institution

INVESTIGATOR:

Marla D. Bradford
Sr. Diversity Talent Acquisition Associate
Doctoral Student
School of Education
412.370.7945
Bradfordm850@duq.edu

ADVISOR:

Rick McCown
Professor, School of Education
412.225.0515 (Cell)
mccown@duq.edu

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in the School of Education at Duquesne University.

STUDY OVERVIEW:

The percentage of historically underrepresented groups employed at Predominately White Institutions (PWI) is relatively low in the 21st Century as compared to Whites. Scholarly evidence suggests that colleges and universities can confront the lack of diversity among their workforce by providing internship programs to serve as a pipeline, specifically for African Americans/Blacks, and employment opportunities in higher education institutions to advance their career trajectories. This study investigates the Minority Professional Development Internship Program’s impact on African American/Black males who formally completed the internship program, which led to their advancement in senior-leadership roles at the University. Using the theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory, in this qualitative research, I will employ a case study
approach to understand the lived experiences of the former program participants. Using thematic analysis of the multiple data sources will allow me to investigate and examine former interns’ perspectives of the program’s offerings and how it relates to their career trajectory at a PWI. This study aims to identify opportunities for program improvements. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be engaged in a 60-minute, one on one interview with the principal investigator. Questions asked during the interview will explore your perceptions about the program design and delivery and how it contributed to your career trajectory as a senior-level administrator at a PWI. The interview will be held virtually via ZOOM, and also recorded. There will be 3-5 participants for this research study.

**PURPOSE:**

You are being asked to participate in a research project investigating former African American/Black male interns who participated in the Minority Professional Development Internship Program.

In order to qualify for participation, you must:

- Participated in the Minority Professional Development Internship Program
- Completed the internship program
- Obtained permanent employment at the PWI
- Promoted to mid-management and senior-level positions

**PARTICIPANT PROCEDURES:**

If you provide your consent to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

- You will be asked to allow me to interview you. There will be one (1) 60-minute virtual interview conducted on ZOOM. Each interview will be conducted individually between you and the principal investigator. The principal investigator will ask open-ended questions during the interview. Interviews will be recorded, and the audio will be transcribed to aid in the analysis of the data collected.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, but no greater than those encountered in everyday life. There are no personal benefits or consequences for participating in this research study. However, your participation will benefit this study by helping the university improve the program’s design and delivery for future Minority Professional Development Interns, specifically African American/Black males.

**COMPENSATION:**

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.
There is no cost for you to participate in this research project.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your participation in this study, and any identifiable personal information you provide, will be kept confidential to every extent possible, and will be destroyed *at a minimum of 3 after the data collection is completed.* [Only include this if true: Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. The data collected from the one-on-one interviews will be tabulated with a unique participant identification number. All written and electronic forms and study materials will be kept secure. All materials, including recordings, will be kept confidential by being secured on a password-protected computer. The transcribed materials will also be secured on a password-protected computer, removing any of your identifying information. All handwritten notes will be typed and secured electronically on a password-protected computer. The hand-written notes will be shredded. Any printed versions of the de-identified transcriptions used to analyze data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. In addition, any publications or presentations about this research will only use data that is combined together with all subjects; therefore, no one will be able to determine how you responded.]

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**

You are under no obligation to start or continue this study. You can withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence by the day of your scheduled interview. If you decide you no longer want to participate in this research study, you will need to send an email to the principal investigator indicating your desire to no longer participate. Any data collected up to that time of withdrawal will be deleted from the password-protected computer.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

A summary of the results of this study will be provided at no cost. You may request this summary by contacting the principal investigatory requesting it. The information provided to you will not be your individual responses, but rather a summary of what was discovered during the research project as a whole.

**FUTURE USE OF DATA:**

Any information collected that can identify you will have the identifiers removed and be kept for use in the future related studies, and/or provided to other researchers. The information may be use in future publications, presented at conference and/or meetings, which under such circumstances your identity will not be revealed.

**COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS**
The procedures outlined in this form aligns with the University’s COVID-19 and IRB policy.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

I have read this informed consent form and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, for any reason without any consequences. Based on this, I certify I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any questions about my participation in this study, I may contact Marla D. Bradford; 412.370.7945; bradfordm850@duq.edu or Rick McCown; 412.225.0515; mccown@duq.edu. If I have any questions regarding my rights and protections as a subject in this study, I can contact Dr. David Delmonico, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 412.396.1886 or at irb@duq.edu.

___________________________________  _______________________
Participant’s Signature             Date

___________________________________  _______________________
Researcher’s Signature              Date
### Appendix C

**Semi-Structured Interview**

Table 9

*Semi-Structured Interview Protocol: Minority Professional Development Internship Program Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</th>
<th>Primary Research Questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What were the participant’s perceptions of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What elements of and experience in the MPDIP have helped participants navigate systemic barriers in predominately white institution?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introduction**

This section will explain the process for the 30-60 minutes with the participant.

- An overview of the research being conducted.
- An overview of the interview process.
- Confirm receipt of written and verbal permission to record the virtual interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question #1</th>
<th>Probe Questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could you please tell me how you came to learn about the Minority Professional Development Internship Program (MPDIP)?</td>
<td>What prompted you to apply for the internship program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were your initial vision and expectations of the program design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you share your thoughts about the significance of the MPDIP design as a pipeline to increase workforce diversity at a PWI?</td>
<td>What was your undergraduate major?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In examining all the labor industries that hire college graduates with your specific major, had you considered working at a higher education institution to jump-start your career path?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If yes, why, and if no, why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question #2</td>
<td>Probe Questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What elements of and experience in the MPDIP have helped you navigate systemic barriers in predominately white institution? | What tools did you rely on to help you navigate systems and cultures in the various departments in which you interned?  
How did these experiences as an intern shape your perception of working in a predominately white department? |
| Can you talk about a specific mentor within the institution who supported your social and professional needs throughout the program? | What was the specific role your mentor had in the institution?  
What was the most important advice you received from your mentor that contributed to your success in a PWI? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question #2</th>
<th>Probe Questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| As an alum of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program, what elements of the program could be improved for current and future African American/Black males to help them better navigate systemic barriers at a PWI? | Would you encourage other young African American/Black males to take advantage of internship programs? If yes, why? If not, why not?  
As a leader in a PWI, do you believe more programs like the MPDIP make a difference in how historically marginalized groups could see themselves working in a PWI? Please elaborate. |
| Closing the Interview Session: | Please share if there is anything else you would like to add that we have not discussed. |
Appendix D
Focus Group Agenda
Southwestern University of Pennsylvania

I. Welcome!
Thank you for taking time out of your day to participate in this 60-minute focus group meeting to share and discuss, from your perspective, the efficacy of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania.

II. Introduction of the Researcher and Focus Group Topic:
I am Marla D. Bradford, former creator and manager of the Minority Professional Development Internship Program at Southwestern University. Also, I am a doctoral candidate at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania School of Education. Today, I will engage you in conversation about the Minority Professional Development Internship Program at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania to elicit authentic recommendations for program improvements.

III. Ground Rules:
Establishing ground rules for this meeting is essential for a productive discussion. As the facilitator and researcher for this focus group meeting, I must set clear expectations for the participants. For the next 60-minutes, I want to encourage respectful listening; increase participation and the sharing of ideas and perspectives; promote openness and authentic points of view and improve learning; prevent conflict and misunderstandings, and, more importantly, build trust and a sense of safety among group participants.

IV. Opening and Conversational Prompt:
Can you believe that the Minority Professional Development Internship Program recently turned 15 years old? Since the program’s inception, do you think the percentage of the minority workforce has increased since the beginning of the program in 2007?

i. If yes, by what percentage? If not, why not?

ii. Probing Questions (as needed)

What marketing strategy would you use to promote the Minority Professional Development Internship Program to current seniors at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania?

i. What elements of the program do you perceive as most valuable for an African American/Black male?

ii. What elements of the program do you perceive would be a barrier or a challenge for African American/Black males?

Based on your shared experiences as former African American/Black male interns, what guidance would you offer to an African American/Black male entering the program?

V. Wrap-up Final Thoughts
This concludes the questions I have for this focus group meeting. I welcome you to share any final thoughts about the topic we discussed today.

VI. Thank the Focus Group
I want to thank everyone for taking time out of your day to discuss and share your recommendations to improve the Minority Professional Development Internship Program at the Southwestern University of Pennsylvania. Your participation during this focus group meeting is invaluable and, more importantly, appreciated.
Appendix E
Fishbone Diagram Emerging Themes
Semi-Structured Interview Questions

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MINORITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:
CASE STUDY EVALUATION ON AFRICAN/AMERICAN BLACK MALES’ CAREER TRAJECTORY AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

Fishbone Diagram

**Personal Career Aspirations Pattern Codes**
- Career Fairs
- Internal/External Referral
- Targeted Recruitment/Program Manager
- Program Reputation
- Word of Mouth
- Support System/Mentor

**Program Benefits Pattern Codes**
- Foot in the door
- Ability to achieve personal and professional goals
- Self-driven
- Exposure, guidance, and accountability
- Real work experience
- Structure and support

**Con Categories**
- Lack of guidance/support
- Uncertain career path
- Unemployed/Undeveloped
- Underqualified/Overqualified
- Lack of professional occupation experience

**Lack of Career Guidance Pattern Codes**
- Uncertain career path
- Economic struggle
- Lack of experience
- Lack of career preparation
- Undesired job choice

**Pattern Codes**

**Responses from Participants**
- A clear understanding of program design
- Program goals/permanent employment
- Full-time salary/benefits
- Exposure to career opportunities
- Scam
- Fear of rejection after the interview process
Appendix F

Emerging Themes

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MINORITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:
CASE STUDY EVALUATION ON AFRICAN/AMERICAN BLACK MALES CAREER TRAJECTORY AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

Support System

Acceptance

"... to be able to step into that space and know that I would be welcomed" (P1)

"... an institution to say this person wants to be here because we wanted them here" (P-5)

"... specifically speaking to the PWI helped me learn how to navigate in that environment" (P4)

Opportunities

"... awards you to get into a room and different offices that you may not have considered" (P2)

"... they see talent to give you more challenging tasks" (P2)

"... to prove your worth" (P3)

Advocacy

"... learning how to advocate for self" (P3)

"... fundamental understanding of what is necessary to be successful when faced with obstacles" (P3)

"... put my antenna up to be alert and to learn, and just watch how they navigate" (P4)

Support System

Encouragement

"... engaged and rely on other interns" (P2, P3, P4)

"... held each other accountable" (P and P3)

"... ensuring cohesiveness and relationships" (P4)

"... the design of it is adequate to achieve those objectives of increasing in diversity" (P2)

"... demonstrate that you are an equal in the same room" (P4)

"... to be comfortable with whom I am as an individual without having to change my personality to fit in at PWI" (P3)