

# Sincerely, My Son and Me: A Narrative Study Proposal on the Factors that Influence the Academic Success of Young Men of Color

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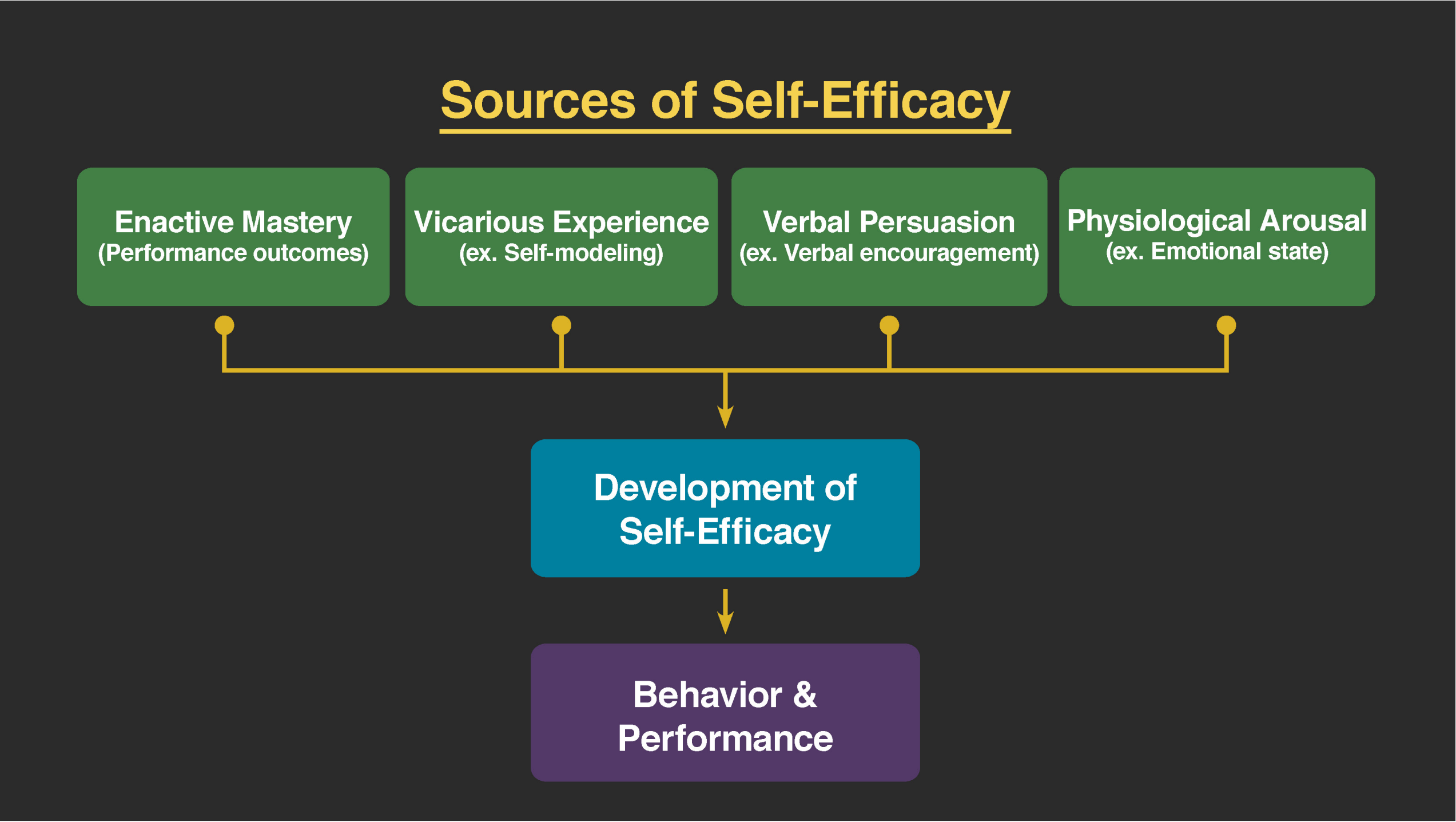


## Introduction

Before African-American males start school, they are already vulnerable for school failure, and by the time they reach high school, many feel academically inadequate or inferior (Caldwell et al, 2009; Kincaid & Yin, 2011). If and when African-American males advance to the college level, they have the lowest likelihood of college degree attainment than all other ethnic and gender groups (Keels, 2013; Hamlet, 2012). Too often African-American males are given the designation of “at risk” supported by the convergence of stereotypes of them as immigrants, fatherless, athletes, troublemakers, and underachievers, that place them at a considerable disadvantage in school and society generally (James, 2012). This narrative study will explore the lives of three young men of color who have advanced or are advancing to the college level as seen through the eyes and hearts of their mothers.

## Theoretical Perspective

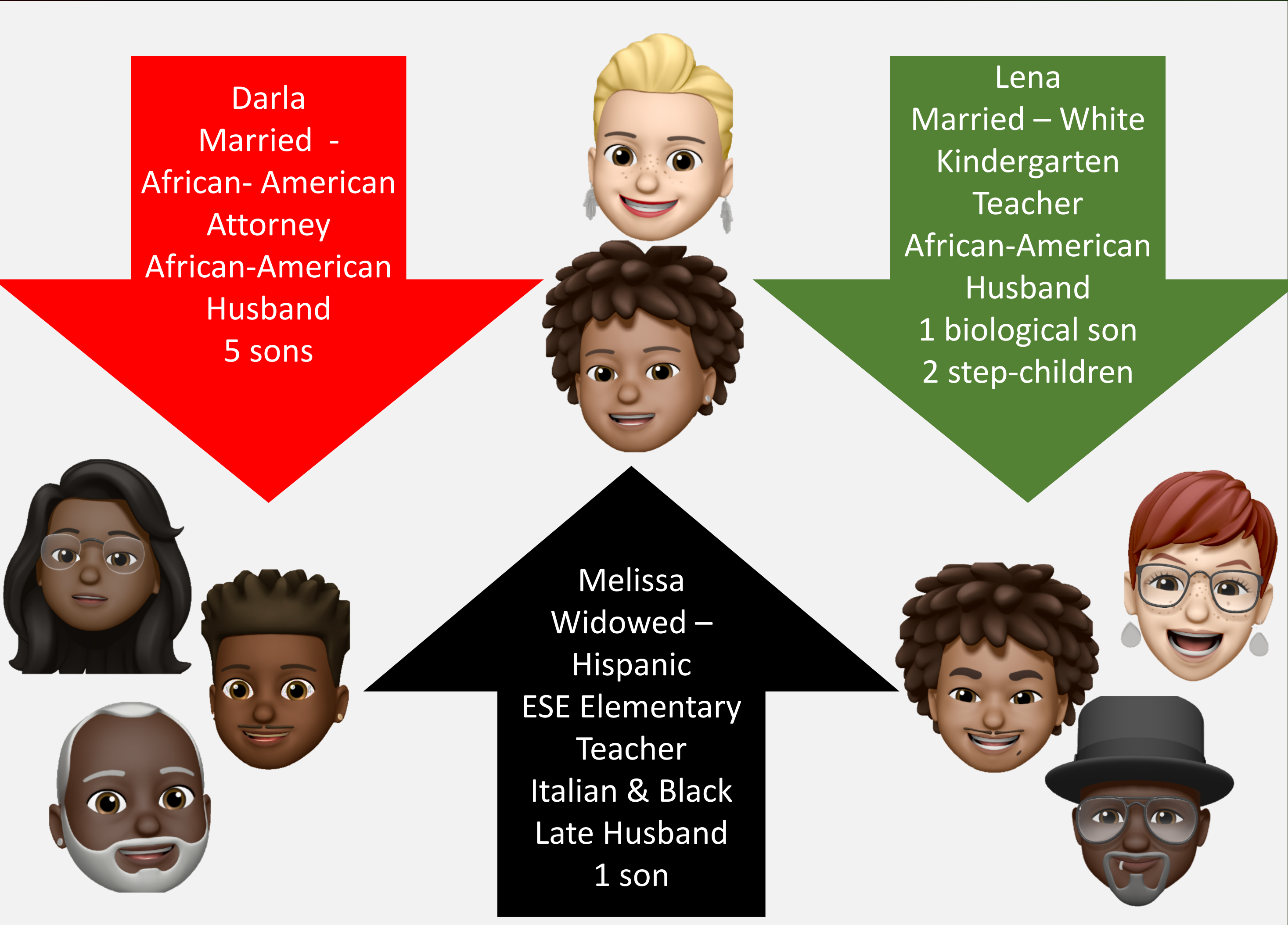
Albert Bandura is credited with the development of the self-efficacy theoretical framework. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as people’s belief in their own capabilities to exercise control over their own functioning and over events that affect their lives. One’s sense of self-efficacy is the foundation for motivation, human inspiration, personal accomplishment, and personal well-being. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to undertake activities or to persevere in times of difficulty. High self-efficacy has been linked with numerous benefits to daily life, such as resilience to adversity and stress, healthy lifestyle habits, improved employee performance, and educational achievement (Bandura, 1986).



People’s beliefs in their efficacy are developed by four main sources of influence, which include mastery of experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal/social persuasion, and emotional state (Bandura, 1986). People who do not have positive and successful experiences themselves, or who do not see instances of these types of experiences with people they interact with or know, may not be influenced to pursue anything beyond what they see. Similarly, if people do not have family, friends, mentors, teachers, and leaders to persuade them to believe that they have the skills and capabilities to overcome self-doubt and instead focus on giving their best effort, they may not reach their full potential (Bandura, 1986).

## Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study is to explore the self-efficacy from earliest recollections through high school or college for three young men of color who have succeeded academically as seen through the eyes and hearts of their mothers.



## Method

Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate that there are three considerations in the purposeful sampling approach to qualitative research:

- whom to select as participants
- specific type of sampling strategy
- size of the sample

My initial thought was to interview African-American males in college, then I thought about interviewing teachers and/or administrators in local high schools, and then I finally decided to interview mothers of young men of color. I will select three mothers with different family demographics. I changed from African-American males to young men of color because I realized that regardless of the “color” of the child or the race(s) of the parents, some mixed-race children do not identify as African-American. In selecting the participants, I targeted mothers approximately the same age, 49 to mid-50s, with sons of color in their late teens who have achieved academic success.

My sample will consist of three mothers:

- African-American mother with an African-American husband
- Hispanic mother whose late husband was Italian and Black
- White mother with an African-American husband

I think it will be interesting to hear the perspective of three women of different races who all are raising young men of color. All of the young men are between the ages of 17 and 19, with two in college and one a senior in high school.

## Research Questions

- What factors, positive or negative, influence the academic success of young men of color from first recollection through their senior year in high school or first year of college?
- What hindrances and/or obstacles have young men of color overcome to be successful academically?
- What tools have these young men of color used to succeed academically, and what advice would they give to other young men of color?

## Proposed First Interview Questions

- Please state your name, where you live, what kind of work you do, and anything else you want to tell me about yourself.
- Tell me your son’s name, the school he attends, and his grade.
- Describe your immediate and extended family structure.
- What do you consider to be an ideal family structure, and how does that compare to yours?
- Think back, and tell me about the first challenging moment at school for your son.
- What made it so challenging?
- Tell me about a positive and proud academic moment your son experienced in elementary or middle school.
- How did you and your son feel after this experience?
- Tell me about a negative or disappointing academic moment your son experienced in elementary or middle school.
- How did you and your son feel after this experience?
- Describe a memorable high school academic memory of your son.
- Please tell me about a teacher, counselor, coach, or administrator who has influenced your son’s academic career either positively or negatively.
- Why do you think they were influential to your son?
- Briefly tell me about your son and his academic experience in high school or college so far.
- What tools does your son use to improve or excel academically?

## References

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