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Understanding the Role of Home Community Environments in Shaping First-Generation Jamaican University Students' Access and Persistence in Higher Education: Using Liming and Photovoice Methodologies

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Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory through a (post)colonial lens, this study provided an in-depth understanding of the role of home community environments in shaping first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence. Specifically, through liming and photovoice methodologies, a total of ten participants shared how their rural and urban inner-city communities shaped their university journey and experiences. The study's four findings revealed that first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence were motivated by their home community environments, pre-university experiences within primary and high schools, levels of engagement at university, and the recognition of their true potential. The findings were used to develop the H.O.P.E. (Home, Opportunity, Persistence, Elevation) model for first-generation Jamaican university students to understand the role of home community environments in their higher education access and persistence. The study outlines implications for policy and practice emphasizing the need to understand first-generation university students' home community environments through the H.O.P.E. model. The study further presents recommendations for policymakers, government leaders, educators, higher education leaders, and administrators.

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schools, levels of engagement at university, and the recognition of their true potential. The findings were used to develop the H.O.P.E. (Home, Opportunity, Persistence, Elevation) model for first-generation Jamaican university students to understand the role of home community environments in their higher education access and persistence. The study outlines implications for policy and practice emphasizing the need to understand first-generation university students' home community environments through the H.O.P.E. model. The study further presents recommendations for policymakers, government leaders, educators, higher education leaders, and administrators.

Keywords: access, community violence, first-generation students, higher education, home community environment, persistence, rural, socio-economic status, urban inner-city.

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Chapter One: Introduction

What made this tree super special is that it bore no coconuts initially, and my family

insisted on getting rid of it. I always told them to leave it to time and let it grow because

we will drink a jelly coconut from it one day. Years passed by, and zilch. Suddenly, the

tree started to blossom. Since then, my family has cooked their rice and peas with

coconut from this tree. So, I use this tree as motivation to press on and be gentle with

*myself and appreciate the pace of my growth***.**

- *Ashley's Coconut Tree*

The ackee tree was used to feed my family in time of need.

- *Big Mama*

The Seed: Insights into the Why

Education has been my metaphorical permission slip to access opportunities. I

was raised on the streets of August Town, Jamaica, a community with low socio-

economic background, ranked on the nation's high gang violence and murder rate list.

Education was my escape from poverty, high gun violence, police brutality, and corrupt

politicians. As a child, I played pretend school with plants and trees at the age of four.

The trees brought me tranquility as I taught them what I learned daily at school. I could

not anticipate mentioning anything about trees in my final dissertation. However, I found

that trees were a common thread in some of the participants' conversations for this

dissertation.

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For me, trees were an escape from the gun violence as seeing my community on the nation's news channels became normalized. For my community, death was not new. However, reality hit when violence came to my family's doors, and we had to strip ourselves of our last name during gang warfare. My community conjured bittersweet moments, fond memories of teaching trees, tutoring children in various subjects, and volunteering, and then there were the murders of my family members and friends. Even amid the turmoil, I turned to education. I had to "fit in" to the education system to make it through the various levels of education so I could access university, my escape.

As a first-generation student, I was focused on surviving university without any clear direction other than, "I must make it out of here." If I could "survive," this would take me one step closer to upward social mobility and further away from rolling under my bed whenever bullets were flying in the valley. To persist in university also meant surviving the harsh realities within my immediate environment. I met other first-generation students who had similar experiences, not necessarily with violence, but experiencing hardships and navigating university. Some of us completed university, and others did not. Maybe our experiences would have been different if higher education institutions (HEIs) paid closer attention to understanding students' home community environments that accounted for their identities and experiences, especially understanding the role these environments play in their education journey. HEIs need to reflect on their policies and practices to make the university environment actively supportive of first-generation students' access and persistence in higher education, specifically students experiencing poverty and community violence.

This dissertation focused on understanding the role of home community environments on first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. This chapter includes definitions of key terminology used throughout the study, an overview of the context and problem statement, the purpose of the study and research questions, the study's significance, the study's theoretical framework, and a summary of the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

Definition of Key Terms

To understand the context of this research, I define a few key terms used consistently throughout the study. These include access, community violence, first-generation university student, higher education, home community environment, liming, persistence, rural, urban inner-city, and socio-economic status.

Access is defined as institutions and policies that govern the education system in Jamaica, providing equitable opportunities for students who experience poverty and community violence. Specifically, institutions and government agencies implement equitable policies to eliminate barriers to students' educational attainment and transition from high school to higher education. *Community violence* is defined as "deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against persons in the community. Violent situations include being chased or threatened, beaten up, robbed or mugged, shot, stabbed, or killed" (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009, p. 128). I am aware that there are conflicting definitions of first-generation within higher education literature. However, for this study, the term *first-generation student* refers to Jamaican university students (including their siblings, if any) who are currently attending university or have completed their first degrees, and their parent(s) or guardian(s) have never attended university or obtained any

higher education credentials. Therefore, no parent or guardian has completed a bachelor's degree. I intentionally did not lean on the "first in family" definition as, during the latter part of my doctoral journey, my older sibling began his studies at university, and we are both first-generation students.

Higher education is the third level or stage after completing secondary education/high school (UCJ, 2020). This term is used synonymously for university and tertiary education. The *home community environment* refers to the physical spaces that the participants of the study grew up in and the individuals they interact with within these spaces. I acknowledge that the concept of community constitutes varied definitions and is not limited to geographical location. However, I deliberately focused on geographical location as my interest was to understand the influence of the immediate environment that participants came from. Also, within the cultural context of Jamaica, when someone asks, "Which community are you from?" This response is met with the neighborhood where an individual was born or raised. Hence, the use of the term *home community.* The use of the term environment also connects with the theoretical framework for the study. The environment includes the home, school, and neighborhood/community. *Liming* refers to "the act of participating in a lime. Liming is a core feature of life in many Caribbean countries. It constitutes a rich cultural practice that can be used for relaxation, but also for sense-making and networking" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 12).

Persistence within the study refers to students accessing higher education and completing their course of study through to graduation in their three-year or four-year degree programs. For students who were still enrolled in university in Jamaica at the time of the study, their persistence focused on their transition to each academic year, for

example, persisting through the first year to second and third year of undergrad studies. *Rural,* for this study, refers to communities in Jamaica where agriculture is the primary source of employment. These communities experience high poverty rates and low educational attainment, with few persons obtaining tertiary/university education (Rajack-Talley, 2016).

Socio-economic status refers to participants' and their families' position within the Jamaican hierarchical social structure. This structure is based on access to resources such as wealth and social and cultural capital (Eriksson et al., 2021). *Urban inner-city* is a term used by participants of the study. The study is set in Jamaica, and within this context, urban inner-cities refer to communities that experience poverty and low socio-economic status. These communities may border the urban center or are located on the city's periphery. Also, these communities experience violence, low levels of education, high population densities, poor service provision, and high unemployment (Altink, 2022).

Background and Context: The Big Picture

The United Nations created 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to address the world's socio-economic, political, and environmental challenges (United Nations Development Program, 2017). Accordingly, Jamaica created Vision 2030, aligning with the SDGs to make Jamaica "the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business" (Vision 2030 Jamaica, 2010, p. 2). However, this concept of development is strictly based on North American and Eurocentric definitions of what constitutes a developed or "first" world country. This is seemingly disregarded when championing the SDGs. On this premise, Jamaica's Vision 2030 refers to the country's strategic goals for development over 21 years, 2009 – 2030 (Vision 2030 Jamaica, 2010). Among the

strategic goals include ending crime and violence, poverty, and providing access to education for all Jamaicans. In 2018, the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) published the medium-term socio-economic framework for 2018-2021 for Jamaica's Vision 2030. The framework stated that the government is committed to providing multiple pathways for transition to higher education and ensuring that everyone has access to education up to the highest level by 2030 (Vision 2030 Jamaica, 2018). Despite these goals, serious crimes continue to increase, and over 40 percent of the population experiences food insecurity in Jamaica (Vision 2030 Jamaica, 2018).

By 2021, Dr. Wayne Henry, director-general at the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), reported that Jamaica had achieved 36 percent of its targets under Vision 2030 (Jamaica Information Service, 2021). Dr. Henry mentioned economic growth in tourism and human capital development. There were no specifics regarding improving access to higher education or reducing crime, violence, and poverty. Moreover, the Minister of Education, Youth, and Information, Fayval Williams, stated that the Jamaican government was committed to increasing access to higher education from 60 percent to 80 percent (Spence, 2021). Williams articulated that this commitment would align with Vision 2030 to provide higher education and training opportunities to secure a prosperous future for all citizens (Spence, 2021).

Furthermore, Jamaica's national goals also declare that the government will provide holistic development for the most volatile and "at-risk" communities and protect some of society's most vulnerable groups (Vision 2030 Jamaica, 2018). The PIOJ conducted a strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis. The analysis highlighted the high crime rate, high unemployment, high levels of poverty, the disparity

in incomes, and low government investment in education, research, health, and social protection as weaknesses (Vision 2030 Jamaica, 2018). Threats included transnational criminal networks, guns and drug trade, and food security. The strengths and opportunities primarily focused on tourism, sports, and culture (Vision 2030 Jamaica, 2018). Additionally, there are 15 national outcomes as part of these strategic goals for Vision 2030. The second outcome focuses on world-class education and training, the fifth looks at security and safety, and the fifteenth addresses sustainable urban and rural development (Vision 2030, 2018).

First-generation Jamaican students represent a fraction of this discussion around increasing access to higher education, eliminating crime and violence, poverty, and creating safe community environments. The term first-generation has entered the English-speaking Caribbean higher education literature in recent times. Accordingly, many first-generation students attend universities in Jamaica, however, local studies examining first-generation students are rare (Paterson & Hutchinson, 2019). Specifically, local Jamaican studies on first-generation university students and the influence of their home community environments on their access and persistence in higher education are even rarer. By the English-speaking Caribbean, I am referring to the (post)colonial countries formerly colonized by Britain.

As stated in this overview, there are continuous discussions and national plans around increasing access to higher education and stemming the root of violence and poverty. Based on the Vision 2030 Jamaica (2018) report, the country is behind in achieving its national targets for higher education, crime and violence, and poverty, all central elements for this study. Since universities are a microcosm of society, making

slow progress with national targets begs a few questions; how do universities support first-generation students who experience community violence and poverty, among other challenges within their home community environments? And how do universities actively support first-generation university students' persistence to completion? After all, universities need to adapt if they genuinely want to support first-generation Jamaican university students who experience a multiplicity of challenges while persisting to completion. Vision 2030 will continue to be a dream, not a reality if we fail to actively support first-generation students who contribute to Jamaica's knowledge economy.

Jamaica's Education: The Cultural Baggage of British and European Thought

Vision 2030 sounds good, right? However, Jamaica, a former colony of Britain, once again followed the agenda of the United Nations, of which Britain is a member. Moreover, with more than 300-year history, Jamaica's education system is embedded in colonialism (Miller & Munroe, 2014). Part of this colonial legacy is the standardized tests required for students to access higher education. We have had changes regarding the names of the examinations and structures, arguably the same approach in a different package. For example, at the primary school level, the United Kingdom Common Entrance examinations were replaced by the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) in 1999, and the GSAT has been replaced by the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) for the academic year 2018-2019 (Davis, 2018). My argument here is that the exit examination determines the type of school where a child is placed, which ultimately determines access to higher education. For example, "those who pass the exit examination go to the socially esteemed traditional high schools and pursue academic curricula which prepare them for tertiary education and ultimately for the more prestigious jobs in the economy" (Jennings,

2017, p. 13). Students who 'fail or are failed proceed to the non-selective secondary schools which offer a more practical and vocationally oriented curriculum which is purported to prepare them for the job market" (Jennings, 2017, p. 13).

The next layer is that once students get to high school, they are required to take another series of exit examinations that are conduits for access to higher education. For example, in Jamaica, the national exams at the end of high school (Grade 11) are called the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). Some universities in Jamaica accept CSEC for admission requirements, and students must pass at least five CSEC subjects. Notably, students once had the option of attending 6th form (Grades 12 & 13) after passing their CSEC exams, and in 2021 6th form became mandatory (Adams& Hayle, 2021). In 6th form, students complete two levels of the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). Universities such as the University of the West Indies (UWI) also require CAPE as part of their admissions requirements. Although there have been a few changes within the primary and secondary school systems, university admission requirements such as UWI's are still modeled on the British system (Adams & Hayle, 2021).

First-generation Jamaican university students and their educational experiences are included among the student population who complete these various standardized tests to matriculate to university and other higher education institutions in Jamaica. First-generation Jamaican university students who experience community violence and poverty are also part of Jamaica's primary and high school system. However, what happens when these students get to university? How are they adequately supported to not only survive and struggle through to completion but intentionally supported to flourish in higher

education? How do we ensure that first-generation students are not left behind to navigate the university environment on their own? In our drive to become a 'developed' country, we continue to model foreign approaches for the education system, which inevitably impacts first-generation Jamaican university students.

Some of these challenges include students conforming to the colonial structure of Jamaica's education system, such as mastering the English language and fitting into the requirements, such as passing the standardized tests at the pre-university level, to determine their future educational pursuits. Moreover, first-generation Jamaican university students attend universities with admission policies modeled and aligned with the British system. Yet when they access university, adequate support systems are not in place across the institution to help them navigate their university experience. It should not be a case where some students access support services, and some do not. Instead, the provision of support services should be equitable across the institution, with faculty and administrative staff on board to support first-generation Jamaican university students.

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Problem Statement

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Due to a lack of understanding of first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments, higher education institutions struggle to adequately support these students' access and persistence. It is crucial to address the influence of home community environments on first-generation Jamaican students' higher education (HE) journeys. The University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) states that higher education is essential to Jamaica's socio-economic and cultural health (UCJ, 2020). Firstly, "it has been recognized in Jamaica that HE can break the poverty cycle and, at the same time, reduce the levels of crime and violence" (Adams & Hayle, 2021, p. 15). Secondly, first-

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generation students face varied challenges, including applying to university and trying to succeed by completing their degrees (Haney, 2020). Thirdly, first-generation commuting university students with multiple responsibilities, including at home, work, balancing school and family, and seeking faculty support, can be challenging (Ma & Shea, 2021).

Fourthly, like first-generation university students, young adolescents exposed to community violence can impact their daily activities and engagement with the school environment (Borofsky et al., 2013). Lastly, research on Jamaican children's exposure to community violence has found a negative emotional impact (Samms-Vaughn et al., 2005). Jamaican research shows that children who experience low socio-economic status are two to three times more likely to witness violent events (Samms-Vaughn et al., 2005; Baker-Henningham et al., 2009; Bailey & Coore-Desai, 2011). These studies (Samms-Vaughn et al., 2005; Baker-Henningham et al., 2009; Bailey & Coore-Desai, 2011) focus on children. However, some of these children would be among the data set of first-generation university students who accessed higher education in Jamaica.

All five statements provide insights into the problem, advocating for more targeted attention and support for first-generation Jamaican university students who are more likely to experience low-SES, poverty, community violence, and challenges to accessing and persisting in higher education. Although first-generation university students face challenges, it is also critical to recognize the hidden assets that they have utilized to persist in higher education (Minicozzi & Roda, 2020). Moreover, only focusing on the challenges compounds the problem of supporting these students at universities in Jamaica, as an intersectional lens is not applied. Besides, Jamaica aims to improve its knowledge economy through education and meet its Vision 2030 objectives.

Therefore, we must consider first-generation Jamaican university students and their unique backgrounds, including their home community environments. By being intentional about understanding first-generation Jamaican university students and their home community environments, provides the opportunity for these students to not only access and struggle to graduation. Instead, institutions should tap into the skill sets of first-generation students and assist with possible challenges so that they too can complete their university degrees on time and contribute to the "knowledge economy" of Jamaica.

There is no denying that we have made some progress in Jamaica's educational system. I have mentioned the changes to the exit examinations as examples; the structures are not perfect but still a "change." While Jamaica continues to grapple with chronic issues of crime, violence, and poverty, our higher education institutions can also play their part in supporting first-generation university students. After all, the role of higher education in the Caribbean is critical to economic growth, sustainability, and societal resilience (Stewart et al., 2017). To develop a nation, a country must develop its people through a knowledge economy. Therefore, access, persistence, and graduation of students in higher education are of national concern. Again, intentionally creating support services for first-generation Jamaican university students who experience multiple challenges in their home community environments is essential in getting Jamaica one step closer to its Vision 2030.

Purpose and Research Questions

The overarching purpose of the study is to understand the role of home community environments on first-generation Jamaican students' access and persistence in higher education. Accordingly, the main research questions ask, "How do first-generation

Jamaican university students describe their home community environments?" and "How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their access and persistence in higher education?" Two sub-questions further supported the focus of the research:

1. How do home community environments shape first-generation students' higher education journey?
2. How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their higher education experiences?

To explore these questions and the purpose of the study, I engaged with participants utilizing a Caribbean research methodology called Liming and the use of the Photovoice methodology. Liming refers to "the act of participating in a lime. Liming is a core feature of life in many Caribbean countries. It constitutes a rich cultural practice that can be used for relaxation, but also for sense-making and networking" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 12).

Liming has been developed as a Caribbean research methodology that provided a culturally affirming approach to the study, which involved Jamaican nationals who identified as first-generation students. Additionally, I used a visual research methodology, Photovoice. Through photographs submitted by participants, I gained insights into first-generation Jamaican university students' experiences within their home community and higher education environments. Liming and Photovoice provided the opportunity to engage with first-generation university students in Jamaica in an attempt to learn more and understand this population who experience community violence and poverty. By embarking on this journey, I identified challenges of first-generation Jamaican university students and opportunities for higher education institutions to

revamp, create and re-create and re-imagine the ways in which they support first-generation Jamaican university students not just via one social services department but across the entire campus community.

Significance of the Study

There is a wealth of research on first-generation university students outside of the English-speaking Caribbean context (Kim & Sax, 2009; Garriott et al., 2017; Bell & Santamaría, 2018; Haney, 2020). Typically, these studies focus on literature regarding first-generation students' faculty interactions (Kim & Sax, 2009), unique mental health needs (Garriott et al., 2017), and distinctive challenges ranging from their socio-economic background to persistence in college (Bell & Santamaría, 2018) and engagement in college (Haney, 2020). Firstly, this study is significant because local studies on first-generation students in Jamaica, for example, are rare. I found only Paterson and Hutchinson (2019) and Roofe et al. (2022) as Jamaican studies that mentioned first-generation university students. Moreover, considering Jamaica's socio-economic and political dynamics, more studies are needed to understand the multiple experiences of first-generation university students. Secondly, while the literature is clear that first-generation students inevitably face challenges, including socio-economic status (Carlton, 2015; Canning et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2020; Motsabi et al., 2020), it does not explicitly point to first-generation university students' experiences within their home community environments, specifically those who experience community violence. There is also an underlying assumption within the literature that first-generation students are from nuclear families where both parents are actively involved in students' upbringing.

Patfield et al. (2021) use the "concept of familial habitus to examine how access to higher education is facilitated in, and by, the home" (p. 610). Patfield et al. (2021) utilize Bourdieu's concept of habitus to examine individuals' socialized disposition. However, the concept is ambiguous and can be misconstrued when understanding how individuals navigate these spaces and changing systems. Nevertheless, Patfield et al. (2021) *familial habitus* focus on the collective role of the family in shaping first-generation students' aspirations and trajectory for higher education. Patfield et al. (2021) argument around family and home shaping first-generation students' higher education aspirations comes close to the purpose of this dissertation. Studies like Patfield et al. (2021) examined the home and family, while I wanted to understand the role of the home and community, that is, the immediate environment where the home is geographically located. The immediate environment also includes individuals whom first-generation Jamaican university students interact with at home, with friends in the community, at school, at church, and so forth.

Thirdly, this dissertation is significant because it highlights the experiences of first-generation Jamaican university students within their home community environments and how these experiences shape their higher education journey. By exploring this understanding of first-generation Jamaican students, higher education institutions, including faculty, administrative staff, student services, development managers, and academic advisors, among others in the campus community, can begin to collaborate with these students to better prepare them for university and support them through to the completion of their studies. Therefore, this study fills a huge gap in the literature as I had to lean on mainly non-Caribbean research when discussing first-generation students. The

study also develops knowledge of how home community environments in Jamaica influence first-generation students' access and persistence in higher education. Lastly, this study is significant because it opens avenues for Caribbean research using Liming methodology. By using a Caribbean methodology, this dissertation also engages in different presentations of stories and experiences. I present personal narratives in the form of poetry and include narratives from the participants of the study in the framing of each chapter.

Theoretical Framework

It was the night of August 2, 1990, a Thursday,

that my mother gave birth to me.

Blossoming from the seed

to spreading my wings in my community environment.

Mom said I talked too much, so I was sent early to basic school.

I remember my great-grandmother picking me up each day

while my mom was at work.

Mama was not from my household but lived in my community.

One big village.

- Shen

My interactions within my community, at home, and with my extended family were all part of this "big" village I refer to in the poem above. To understand first-generation Jamaican university students' experiences within their home community environments and their higher education journey, I utilized Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) through a (post)colonial lens. Bronfenbrenner is a well-known

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psychologist for his work on systems theory. The ecological systems theory examined human development and their interactions within the natural setting of their environments, where they actually live and develop as individuals. The ecological environment is defined as a set of nested structures, with each layer inside the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For a visual representation of this nesting, Bronfenbrenner gave the example of a set of Russian dolls. However, for the adaptation of the model, I chose to create a circular image of a never-ending cycle where all layers are connected, as depicted in Figure 1. The EST consists of five layers, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

The *microsystem* is the first layer, which refers to the immediate environment where an individual begins their stages of development. For example, the home, school, church, family, and friends (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). The second layer is the *mesosystem* which examines individuals and their interactions between the microsystem and the mesosystem, such as the connection between school and home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). For example, the relationships formed within first-generation Jamaican university students' home and school environments. For this study, all students attended primary schools within their home community environment or in close proximity to home. Furthermore, the mesosystem comes into play when individuals enter a new setting. For example, Bronfenbrenner refers to the ecological transition, which is a transition from one setting to the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, first-generation Jamaican university students transition from high school to university. The communication and messages interpreted between the microsystem and mesosystem also shape individual development

and interactions within their environment. For example, interaction with others in their community, knowledge gained from books they read at school or home, and so forth.

The third layer is the *exosystem* which focuses on the formal and informal structures that indirectly influence individuals through the microsystem. For example, the education system and policies, the role of the mass media, the economy, and the government. At some point in time, individuals are impacted by these indirect environments. I mapped the exosystem to students' home community environments and access to higher education for the study. The fourth layer is the *macrosystem* which constitutes the norms and values of the culture. For example, "the identification of class, ethnic, and cultural differences in socialization practices and outcomes" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 258). For this study, the macrosystem layer is mapped to first-generation students' experiences with colonial norms, the stigma attached to their home community environments, and classism, among other elements of (post)colonial Jamaica. The fifth layer, *the chronosystem,* encompasses the changes that occur over time, for example, the individual's lifetime, various transitions, and the influence of historical events (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Jamaican authors Cook and Jennings (2016), for their study on the value of education regarding the perspectives of parents on their children, stated that the chronosystem setting "encompasses the dimension of time about the child's [individual] development" (Cook & Jennings, 2016, p. 90). For this study, the chronosystem represented the milestones for first-generation students over time, for example, their educational achievements and the impact of changes in their home community environments on their higher education journey.

Figure 1

EST and First-Gen Jamaican University Students

Setting 1 - Microsystem

Setting 2 - Mesosystem

Setting 3 - Exosystem

Setting 4 - Macrosystem

Setting 5 - Chronosystem

Church
Friends & Family
Urban inner-city
Rural farming
School
Parents' Work

Jamaican First-Gen students Relationships between Setting 1

Poverty - SES & School

First-Generation Jamaican University Students

Ja First-Gen Milestones

Elevation via Education

Impact of changes in environments

Scholarships or Student loans

Home community environment

University
Persistence
University Admin

Access to higher education

Wider societal interactions & issues within society's culture

Colonial Norms
Classism Poverty
Community stigma

Note. Figure 1 depicts the connected layers of the Ecological System Theory and their relationship to first-generation Jamaican University students' educational experiences and their home community environments.

(Post)Colonial Lens: Education and Environment

The study aims to understand the role of first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments. Specifically, how these environments influence their access and persistence in higher education. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is suitable for the study as it confirms that, yes, individuals are shaped by their lived experiences and interactions within their immediate environments. While this seems like the perfect theory, I would be doing a disservice to this study, set in Jamaica

with participants who are Jamaicans who have endured the remnants of colonialism, as highlighted in Chapter Four. As I stated earlier, Jamaica is a former colony of Britain, and our education system is rooted in our colonial legacy. I have layered Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory with a (post)colonial lens relevant to Jamaica.

(Post)colonialism is a critical academic theory that examines the effects of colonization on cultures and societies and how empires such as Britain shape the knowledge and power of marginalized former colonies such as Jamaica. Historians originally used the term after the Second World War, being referred to as the "post-colonial state [and] 'post-colonial' had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period" (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 168). The use of the word 'post' does not indicate that these effects of colonization have disappeared. Instead, it refers to the period from gaining independence to the present state of Jamaica. To honor and acknowledge those remnants of colonization impacting former colonies such as Jamaica today, I employ (post)colonialism referring to the event after colonialism (Bailey, 2011). Notably, this term will be used interchangeably with post-independence as a reminder that colonialism arguably has not left. However, historical literature and published narratives along these lines give the impression that the Jamaican society has entirely erased the remnants of colonialism. Of course, based on my example of the standardized examinations and mastering the English language, we are yet to get to the ultimate (post)colonial state.

(Post)colonial theories are a combination of varied critical theories that examine the socio-economic, political, and cultural effects of colonialism and imperialism on the

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indigenous population (Fanon, 1961; Said, 1978; Smith, 2012). For example, colonialism led to the erasure and annihilation/genocide of the indigenous Taíno population in Jamaica with the development of Spanish settlements by Christopher Columbus in the late 15th and early 16th centuries (Henry et al., 2012). Additionally, (post)colonial theories analyze multiple experiences connected to slavery and colonialism, such as "suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, and social class" (Bailey, 2011, p. 24). Moreover, "within these broader themes, specific issues such as the primacy of the colonizer's language, religion, cultural histories, knowledge and other element[s] of identity over that of the local people" are part of the (post)colonial conversations (Bailey, 2011, p. 24).

Fanon's (1961) *The Wretched of the Earth* examines the colonial world and describes it as being divided into two and that the line of division is bolstered by the barracks and police station (Fanon, 1961/1963). The police officers, and soldiers, are the go-between the settlers and their ruler of oppression in the colonies (Fanon, 1961/1963). Arguably in (post)colonial Jamaica, the police and soldiers are still the go-betweens for the government (the puppet oppressor) for those who are marginalized and residing in underserved and under-resourced communities. For this study, these communities include first-generation Jamaican students and their home community environments, the urban inner-cities, and rural farming communities. Accordingly, capitalist societies and their education system are passed down from "father" to "son" (Fanon, 1961/1963). This directly connects to Jamaica's education system which is modeled based on the British curriculum.

Notably, in the post(colonial) Caribbean, "the middle class came to assume the expectations of colonial patriarchy, of the family and the role of men. Those that remained poor, however, rarely lived up to these expectations" (Thame, 2011, p. 78). Accordingly, "the Black poor maintained non-bourgeois, non-European traditions of family and African cultural behaviors thought to typify them as uncivilized" (Thame, 2011, p. 78). Furthermore, a disempowering social order was constructed to demean the Black population and those experiencing poverty (Thame, 2011). For those at the lowest end of society, "humanity and citizenship remained in a tenuous state" (Thame, 2011, p. 78). For example, this abuse of rights is sometimes manifested "in the state's use of violence against the Black poor" (Thame, 2011, p. 78).

Additionally, colonialism was an act of violence that came with *isms* such as racism and classism continued in the (post)colonial state (Thame, 2011). For example, those who experience poverty in Jamaica are stigmatized because of their poverty levels and color (Thame, 2011). Notably, the physical environments in Jamaica also depict this violence. In Thame's words, "Jamaica's inner-city slums, which house the poor in crammed, unsanitary conditions, are a reminder to all that those people are not worthy of minimum standards of decency" (2011, p. 79). Earlier, I mentioned Fanon's point that the world is divided into two compartments. For (post)colonial Jamaica, this divide has the "planters, settlers, Browns and the middle class live on hilltops and in gated communities where they may watch or hide from the slaves, natives, Blacks and the poor who are bundled together in huts, in tenement yards and ghettoes" (Thame, 2011, p. 79). Sadly, it is recognized that latter spaces are characterized by violence and are always on the brink of explosion (Thame, 2011). Additionally, Jamaica's education system is shaped by a

process of cultural domination and replicates colonial issues of inequality (Bailey, 2011; Stewart, 2015). Therefore, the legacy of colonialism is not only evident in the features of Jamaican communities and culture but also within the education system. Inevitably some Jamaican first-generation university students interact with these systems.

Finally, in applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to the study, I utilize a (post)colonial lens to analyze first-generation Jamaican university students' experiences within their home community environments. I use this lens to purposefully understand these students' educational experiences within an education system that is embedded with colonial practices. In Chapter Two, the literature provides insights into Jamaica's education and higher education system and community environments through a (post)colonial lens. In utilizing a Caribbean methodology, I intentionally cite Caribbean authors where possible. This section mentioned Bailey's, Thame's, and Stewart's work with research on Jamaica in its (post)colonial state.

Organization of the Dissertation Chapters

Chapter One is dedicated to introducing the study to the readers. Here I offer operational definitions of key terminologies used throughout the study, context on the topic, and the big picture behind the dissertation. This chapter presented the purpose and research question, an overview of the methodology and the theoretical framework for the study. In Chapter Two, I review the literature on the role of community environments and education in shaping individuals' lived experiences, types of community environments in Jamaica, and the relationship between colonialism, violence, and community violence. Additionally, I provide a history of access to education in Jamaica before and after emancipation and the impetus for higher education. I also examine the literature on first-

generation students' access and persistence in higher education. Chapter Three is dedicated to the thoughtful process of conducting the study. Here I present the research questions, rationale for using a qualitative approach, and Liming and Photovoice methodologies. I explain the details of advertising the study, engaging participants, obtaining consent, and analyzing and writing up the data. Chapter Four is dedicated to the findings emerging from participants' responses to the guiding prompts for the study. I share the findings of first-generation Jamaican university students and their experiences within their home community environments. I explain how first-generation students' educational and pre-university experiences shape their access and persistence in higher education. I highlighted elements needed to create support programs that will contribute to first-generation Jamaican university students thriving to complete their degrees. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I discuss the significance of the findings, implications, recommendations, and areas for future research.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Yeah, I mean, just one final thing, I mean, I feel like your community can be such a motivation towards your higher education journey. Because when you see, like some of the struggles and if you're very ambitious and want to come out of that struggle, especially as a first-gen student.

- *Star*

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section One examines the existing literature on home community environments in Jamaica. The literature also explores the relationship between violence and colonialism in Jamaica. The intention is to provide a background on the different types of communities and how the legacy of colonialism continues to permeate Jamaican society. Specifically, how this legacy of colonialism is one of the root causes of community violence affecting some of our most vulnerable communities and students who matriculate to higher education. Section Two provides an overview of Jamaica's education system. The literature in Section Two looks at the colonial features of Jamaica's community environments, education system, and development of higher education institutions. The contextualization of coloniality in Jamaica's schooling better explains some of the features of imperialism that have shaped the Jamaican education system. Even with Vision 2030 Jamaica in sight, these oppressive colonial features continue to impact students' experiences at different stages of the

education system. Section Three discusses first-generation students in higher education with an overview of access to higher education. Section Three explores scholarship on first-generation students' access and persistence in higher education to provide an overview of the general literature on this group of students to foreground an understanding of who these students are and their challenges regarding access to higher education, and the ways in which they persist through to completion. In Section Three, I leaned on mainly non-Caribbean literature on first-generation students in higher education due to a paucity of the English-speaking Caribbean literature on these students.

With regards to the organization of the literature review, I have intentionally used my lived experiences as a first-generation Jamaican university student raised in a single-parent home with my mother and older brother in a highly volatile urban inner-city community to contextualize the review of the literature. In using a culturally affirming Caribbean research methodology, Liming and the Ecological Systems Theory, my identity as a first-generation Jamaican university student and experiences within my home community environment are not divorced from the research process. As a Caribbean researcher, the "quest for decolonizing qualitative research in the Caribbean is deeply rooted in the researchers' experiences and the social constructs that will define their values and researcher practices" (Ferguson, 2019, p. ix). Notably, to encourage different ways of conducting research for and by the Caribbean using our own ways of knowing, we need to advocate for instilling "a sense of pride in Caribbean researchers to emancipate their minds and expand and deepen their philosophical beliefs that transcend into researchers feeling empowered to use their own emotions, spiritual and cultural being to influence" qualitative research approaches (Ferguson, 2019, p. viii). Moreover,

having been taught that my personal experiences and knowledge are not valuable has led to this intention, which supports "Caribbean pedagogy for liberating and authentic approach for qualitative research" (Ferguson, 2019, p. x). Therefore, I intentionally mapped my experiences to support the framing of the literature review.

Section One: The Root - Home Community Environments in Jamaica

In Chapter One, I opened with the seed of being born in my home community. For this section, I want to take readers on a view of the roots, where individuals grow and develop in their respective home community environments. I discuss the structure of communities in Jamaica and research regarding community environments' influence on individuals' development. I also explore the relationship between colonialism, violence, and community environments in Jamaica.

Communities in Jamaica

The concept "community" has multiple definitions. Jamaican social anthropologist M.G. Smith defines community as "a field of social relations based on regular face-to-face associate between persons" (1956, p. 295). In these associations, some form of co-existence exists within a defined area (Smith, 1956). Smith's definition aligns with the study as I explore first-generation Jamaican university students' interactions within their defined home community environments. Additionally, a community is "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings" (Macqueen et al., 2001, p. 1936). A study on the relationship between neighborhood SES characteristics and blood pressure in Jamaican youths defined a neighborhood as the community in which the participants lived (Ferguson et al., 2020). In

Jamaica, communities or neighborhoods are demarcated based on socio-economic characteristics, for example, poverty, income, unemployment, levels of tertiary education, population density, and perceived crime (Ferguson et al., 2020).

Additionally, community boundaries are defined by the Social Development Commission (SDC), an agency of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development in Jamaica. The SDC groups people based on their geographic areas, sharing of social, economic, or cultural facilities, or common ownership of resources (Ferguson et al., 2020). For this study, home community environments reflect the SDC's characteristics and the different communities in Jamaica's 2.9 million population. It is important to note that the SDC has the power to define community boundaries based on the characteristics and statistically imposed boundaries, as highlighted in the STATIN and PIOJ (2019) report. For example, in (post)colonial Jamaica, within the Kingston Metropolitan Areas, there is a mixture of urban settlements with high SES and urban inner-cities. For instance, to get to a recognized upscale neighborhood like Cherry Gardens, one has to drive through urban inner-cities in St. Andrew, Jamaica.

Types of settlements in Jamaica

In the 20th century, urban communities, country towns, fishing villages, isolated settlements, and rural communities represented Jamaica's different types of settlement (Smith, 1956). By the 21st century, the Social Development Commission describes Jamaica as divided into parishes, development areas, communities, and districts. Jamaica has 14 parishes, and the Social Development Commission's most recent annual report stated that 775 communities are in Jamaica (Social Development Commission, 2020). However, the SDC's website community governance section reported 785 communities

in Jamaica. Nevertheless, it is safe to say we have several communities across the 14 parishes. Lastly, when I explored the different types of settlements in Jamaica, the research highlighted that the population resides across rural and urban communities.

Rural communities. Rural areas are usually located in hilly terrain where most of the population engages in small farming. After emancipation in Jamaica, large masses of people dispersed from the sugar plantations to areas between the hills and plains (Smith, 1956). A joint report by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) mapping poverty in Jamaica defined rural areas as all other areas not included in the Kingston Metropolitan Areas and other urban towns. Rural Areas are predominantly agricultural areas where government institutions rarely exist or are non-existence, such as post offices and police stations (STATIN & PIOJ, 2019). Senior Lecturer at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Tindigarukayo (2014), states that approximately 60% of the Jamaican population resides in rural areas below the national poverty line.

Urban communities. Urban settlements are built-up areas or those which are densely populated and consist of suburbs, city proper with continuously settled commuted areas (United Nations, 2011). In Jamaica, the urban areas are classified into two groups. The first is the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) which includes Kingston, St. Andrew, Spanish Town, and Portmore (STATIN & PIOJ, 2019). The second classification is "other towns," which are major urban areas with social amenities such as electricity and government agencies such as post offices and police stations (STATIN & PIOJ, 2019). In 2014, approximately 52% of Jamaica's population lived in urban communities, with an estimated 17% living below the poverty line in the urban

inner-city communities (World Bank, 2021). Within the inner-city areas, issues such as poor drainage, waste collection, crime, and violence are some of the major problems experienced by the residents (Altink, 2022).

For the next sub-heading, I used "community" and "neighborhood" terminology when searching for literature across various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and anthropology.

Influence of Community Environments

There is no denying that individuals are influenced by the environments they live and interact with and the people and resources within these spaces. Numerous studies confirm the influence of community environments on one's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Mayers & Jencks, 1989; Sampson et al., 1997; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Lowe et al., 2014; Chung et al., 2020). The "contagion model" contends that if individuals grow up seeing particular practices around them, they are likely to follow suit whether these practices are deemed positive or negative (Mayer & Jencks, 1989). Specific examples, in Mayer and Jencks (1989), were related to "neighbors commit crimes, have children out of wedlock, or drink too much, the children will be more likely to do these things themselves" (p. 1441). The authors also stated that the opposite was true "if the children grow up in a neighborhood where most others "set a good example," the children will tend to follow that example" (Mayer & Jencks, 1989, p. 1441). While the contagion model has a valid point, there are numerous stories of individuals who have done the opposite of society's projections based on the type of community environment they are from. I intentionally focused on the positive example from Mayer and Jencks (1989), where individuals grew up and were exposed to gang

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violence in their community and chose not to join the gang despite temptations. Therefore, more positive examples need to be presented in research studies, which is the hope of my dissertation to highlight first-generation Jamaican university students' persistence in higher education despite the challenges.

Child and adolescent outcomes are also impacted by neighborhoods when examining socio-economic status, poverty levels, race/ethnicity, number of residents with a degree, and the number of professionals within the community, among other factors (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Living conditions can also impact individuals' mental health (Schneiderman et al., 2005). Neighborhoods perceived as less privileged can impact stress, emotions, and physical and mental health (Hackman et al., 2019). Hackman et al. (2019) used the example of neighborhood environments with higher levels of education are usually affluent compared to communities with lower levels of education.

English-speaking Caribbean Context

I also found studies that focused specifically on the Caribbean as North American and European literature does not account for the unique socio-economic structures in the region. A study examining neighborhoods and depression in four Caribbean countries, including Jamaica, stated that the proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" holds as the social norms, social networks, and resources of a neighborhood can significantly impact human behavior and development (Lowe et al., 2014). Another study examined Jamaica elementary school children's social class and neighborhood factors and found that these were associated with symptoms of depression (Chung et al., 2020). Overall, both Caribbean studies agreed with the non-Caribbean literature on communities influencing

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an individual's decision. However, Lowe et al. (2014) and Chung et al. (2020) noted that countries like Jamaica are highly stratified and classist. Also, socio-economic background, skin color, and social class determine where one falls on the social hierarchy ladder (Nettleford, 2003). This complex system of stratification also determines the type of schools Jamaicans attend, public vs. private, which can indicate the type of community an individual is from. The type of school also influences one's educational experience, for example, non-traditional vs. traditional high schools.

The Influence of Community Environments on Education

In alignment with Vision 2030, developing Jamaica's knowledge economy is critical to the country's growth. We need to "impact education in under-resourced communities in such a way that persons can enjoy wholesome and productive lives which, by extension, significantly helps in the process of national transformation" (Fletcher, 2016, p. 3). It is no surprise that all the research I have engaged with to support this dissertation, from North America, Canada, Europe, and the Caribbean, use different terminologies to highlight how children/students from under-resourced communities have a multiplicity of experiences within their community environments. Examples of the languages are at-risk, disadvantaged, and less privileged.

Notably, extensive research examines community influence on individuals' educational achievements (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Ceballo et al., 2004; Lee & Madyun, 2009; Owens, 2010). A study conducted by Lane and Kelly (1981) found that environments such as the school, community, home, and the larger sociocultural context influenced students' learning. Lane and Kelly (1981) lean on Bronfenbrenner's work and agree that research must be conducted in natural educational settings and not just in

laboratories to understand environmental systems. Also, Owen's (2010) study on neighborhoods and schools reinforcing educational attainment suggested that mixing students from different socio-economic backgrounds puts those who are less affluent also poses an obstacle. Also, Owen (2010) argued that this outcome is dependent on the type of schools. I equate this to students' experiences from rural and urban inner-city communities transitioning from primary school to high school in Jamaica. For example, generally, you attend the kindergarten (basic) and primary schools in your community as a child in Jamaica. However, high schools are located outside of one's community environment; hence, growing up, I met people outside of my home community environment. This transition to high school comes with culture shock as you interact with peers from different socio-cultural backgrounds. To Owen's point regarding the type of high school, I attended an elitist high school, and my experiences may have been different in another high school setting, such as a non-traditional institution.

In another study, Khan et al. (2019) examined the relationship between students' home and their academic achievement at the secondary level in Pakistan. The findings stated that besides family interactions being significant, the physical facilities at home also impacted students' achievement in school, such as having a study room. Within the Jamaican context, depending on the type of infrastructure in one's household, having a study room is a privilege not afforded to the masses. Here I reflect on tenement yards in Jamaica, where an extended family or a group of people reside in shared facilities, including a bathroom and kitchen with multiple persons sleeping on the same bed. Therefore, no independent study room in this case. Khan et al. (2019) suggested that students should be provided with a serene home environment, and parents should provide

the necessary resources for students' academic success. Of course, based on the overview of communities in Jamaica at the beginning of this chapter, all of Khan et al. (2019) recommendations might not apply to Jamaica until we can improve housing and eradicate poverty, reduce unemployment, and many other socio-economic issues.

Research on community environments at the higher education level and not just at the early childhood, primary and secondary education is missing from the literature. Most studies focus on pre-university education and the impact of community environments. Additionally, the literature from the Caribbean focuses on community environments and health topics as opposed to first-generation students in higher education.

Colonialism and Community Environments in Jamaica: An Unfiltered Conversation with My Dad

I opened this chapter with general information on communities in Jamaica and highlighted research that supports the argument that environments influence individuals' development and educational pursuits. The final layer of the root is to discuss the community environments through a colonial and (post)colonial lens. The environment is not divorced from the colonial entity, that is, Jamaica's colonial legacy. I contextualize the community within the *isms* and discuss Jamaica's colonial education system in Section Two. Here I begin by sharing an unfiltered conversation with my dad, which I will then refer to as necessary, regarding colonialism and community environments in Jamaica. My dad called to check in on me, knowing I had been writing and submitting chapters for my dissertation. I told him I was writing and wanted to talk about colonialism and communities in Jamaica. My dad does not have a university degree. He

is not a research book or journal article but a vessel of knowledge for me with more than

half a decade on this earth. I have included my dad's response to the topic. He said:

> Communities in Jamaica were formed out of colonization, and most of the culture
> came out of colonialism. In fact, British principles and morals were used to
> indoctrinate the people from the days of slavery to when we became free. In
> Jamaica, people are from different cultures. We have the Africans, Indians,
> Chinese, Syrians, Germans, and more. Hence our motto, *out of many one people*.
> Jamaica is culturalized out of many different nations. Over time we have different
> ethnic groups – hair texture, the pigment of the skin – rank us in society. (D.
> Ferguson, Snr, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

At the beginning of our conversation, my dad expressed that the Jamaican culture is a

direct result of colonialism. We have a diverse population due to the Trans-Atlantic Slave

Trade (Lemonius, 2017). By naming some of the different ethnic groups during and after

slavery, my dad emphasized what accounted for the Jamaican motto *out of many one*

people. As for being indoctrinated by British principles, he gave two examples of social

ranking being judged by the texture of one's hair and the color of your skin. This alluded

to the highly stratified social system in Jamaica.

My dad continued the conversation and expressed that:

> We were indoctrinated by Western culture in the 1970s. It wasn't about the
> development of the people of the country. It was about the political power which
> brought about political divisions, far left and far right, between the People's
> National Party and the Jamaica Labor Party. It is so messed up that our country

was destroyed by politics. D. Ferguson, Snr, personal communication, June 9,

2022).

As a lover of politics, my dad, having witnessed what took place in Jamaica in the

1970s, stated that along with colonialism, Jamaica has also been influenced by Western

culture. By this, he is referring to the influence of the United States of America.

Moreover, Jamaica received independence in 1962, which also played a role in the

country's governance and differences between the two political parties. My dad

opinionated that politics is one of the main reasons why Jamaica was "messed up."

Jamaica's colonial legacy has impacted the country's political patterns as well as its

current socio-economic challenges, including crime and violence, poverty, and access to

higher education.

My dad's closing thoughts were:

> Yes, we have benefitted from colonialism in that our industries have changed, our
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> infrastructures have grown, and modernization has taken place. However, our
>
> children live what they were taught. They were taught that if you're Black, you
>
> stay at the back of the pack; if you're Brown, you stick around; if you're White,
>
> you get through. White people needed no gate to be opened; they were entitled.
>
> The only thing that the poor Black people have to strive for is education. The
>
> education system is formed out of colonialism which is formed out of a preferred
>
> few. Brilliant young men with brilliant minds were destroyed by violence. (D.
>
> Ferguson, Snr, personal communication, June 9, 2022).

In the latter part of my dad's conversation, he admitted that there was some "benefit"

from colonialism. For example, Jamaica has developed its physical spaces by

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modernizing different sectors across the country based on colonial standards. For example, technology and communication systems, roadways and highways, and housing infrastructures, among other areas. This ties perfectly with the narrative around becoming a "developed" country as envisioned by Vision 2030. Arguably, the guise of the United Nations encouraging countries like Jamaica to strive to become "developed" is another language of colonialism. As Smith (2012) puts it, "while the language of imperialism and colonialism has changed, the sites of struggle remain" (p. 108). The fact that this dissertation was conducted speaks to the struggle remaining where we have to advocate for first-generation university students to access and persist in higher education in Jamaica. Notably, my dad recognized that colonialism came with division. In the case of Jamaica, this divide and rule approach was evident based on ethnicity, class, and race. All these elements have impacted Jamaica's social system to date. As my dad mentioned, if you are Black, you stay at the back, and if you are Brown, you might have a chance, but if you are White, no questions asked, the gate is opened. In other words, access to opportunities within the Jamaican society is also determined by the color of one's skin. Lastly, my dad believed that colonialism also impacted how Jamaicans are taught within the education system and is responsible for the violence plaguing communities in Jamaica.

This unfiltered conversation with my dad connects with the colonialism, education, and violence discussion in Chapter Two. Firstly, as a Jamaican national living within the system, my dad gave first-hand experience and observations of the dual role of colonialism. Frankly put, "come, let us modernize you," and while we "help" you, "let us cause some bloodshed and division." The "us" refers to the United States of America,

Britain, and Europe. The following section provides scholarly examples of colonialism and violence and connects to how both have impacted community environments in Jamaica.

Colonialism in Jamaica

"Deviously ingenious" perfectly describes British colonialism in Jamaica (Lemonius, 2017, p. 79). This description is brilliant and appropriate as colonialism in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean came with systematic dehumanization and exploitation, perpetual violence which continues today, the genocide of the Indigenous population, the enslavement of Africans from various tribes, and a divisive social system of hierarchy among other horrendous characteristics. Colonialism left a legacy of trauma, yet Jamaica hopes to achieve Vision 2030 with measures stipulated by the United Nations, where Britain is a central member, the oppressor. Colonialism is defined as "a powerful psychological tool that was created by British economic and political elites who knew that sustaining their power into the future meant fragmented bodies and minds in Jamaica" (Lemonius, 2017, p. 79). Notably, the British cemented its coercive control by institutionalizing patriarchal, political, cultural, and economic structures and forced the Taíno (Taino)[1] population to convert to Christianity (Lemonius, 2017). Before the British colonized Jamaica in 1655, the erasure and annihilation/genocide of the indigenous Taíno population led to the development of Spanish settlements by Christopher Columbus in the late 15th and early 16th centuries (Henry et al., 2012). The Spanish and the Portuguese forcibly brought enslaved Black people to the island beginning in 1513, and by 1655 the

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[1]Taíno or Taino, both versions are used in the Jamaican literature and culture.

British defeated the Spanish and became Jamaica's new colonial master (Henry et al., 2012). Jamaica was conquered solely based on its potential economic benefits to Britain (Lemonius, 2017).

Violence and Colonialism

I have never gone a year in Jamaica without the annual reports of high crime rates across the island, usually in impoverished and under-resourced communities. I vividly remember growing up being reminded that I came from a 'bad' place and that nothing good comes out of the 'ghetto.' In 2006, the BBC Caribbean reported that (post)colonial Jamaica was dubbed the murder capital of the world and is described as having one of the highest homicide rates per square mile (Henry et al., 2012). However, crime and violence specifically occur within communities with deplorable conditions and lacking access to basic resources, including education, proper housing and living conditions, transportation among other social services.

Britain exploited and devastated Jamaica with oppressive measures to maintain control and extract its wealth. Ultimately, the colonial system left Jamaica highly divided via class, sex, race, and gender differences "so deeply entrenched that it ensures that violence in Jamaica is an everyday norm" (Lemonius, 2017, p. 80). This violence includes sexual or gender-based violence, crime, and domestic abuse, all the types of violence one could think of are connected to Jamaica's colonial history. Violence was sometimes used to justify the oppression, simply put, colonialism was pure evil. In Jamaica, violence exists at all levels of society, sometimes hidden. For example, structural violence comes in the form of colonialism, poverty, racism, sexism, and I would also add classism (Lemonius, 2017). Structural violence is deeply embedded in the

systems of power maintained by the elite groups such as the government and its agencies, including the army and police, and affluent people whom I refer to as the "wealthy 7%". For me, the violence I have been exposed to growing up in my home community environment has become so normalized, with politics at the root of the manipulation of gang members in my environment.

Britain's devious plan to colonize Jamaica "guaranteed domination, control, and subjugation of the labor force using all forms of violence" (Lemonius, 2017, p. 93). These murderers and land grabbers not only controlled the land but their divide and conquer approach impacted the Indigenous population and the many generations that followed during slavery and after the abolition of slavery, including my millennial generation. Also, colonialism led to the cultural identities of anything White seen as superior and anything associated with Black seen as inferior. This concept and understanding of identity connect with my Dad's conversation earlier in Section One, as in the 21st century, we are still socialized with this narrative even with more mainstream media pushing "I am Black, and I am proud." For example, I was not allowed to wear an afro at my elitist high school, which I attended in the 21st century. I was more accepted when my hair was straightened.

Arguably, it is challenging to offer a single description of the Black population in Jamaica based on the wide range of ethnic and racial and ethnic mix (Henry et al., 2012). Notably, some Caribbean scholars describe the population with three groups, "White" (receding group) at the top, "Brown" in the middle, and "Black" at the bottom, and their SES respectively, high, middle, and low-income (Alleyne, 2002; Henry et al., 2012). The authors refer to the White group as receding as they were the minority but the most

powerful group in Jamaica during the period of colonization, which is the opposite in North America, where the White population represents a larger percentage of the population. Additionally, the "stratified repercussions of colonialism maintained and reinforced a social dichotomy between White elites and laboring Blacks [and other ethnic groups], which continues to divide the country by class and race" (Stewart, 2013, p. 1). This divide has also contributed to Jamaica's historical legacy of violence.

My ancestors and the generations that follow have only known violence after all from the days of the Maroons and periods of enslavement; my people have been fighting tirelessly for their freedom. Today, Jamaica struggles with racism, poverty, sexism and gendering, violence, and trauma (Lemonius, 2017). Colonialism created a country, Jamaica, with extreme wealth and poverty and a country that is dubbed one of the most volatile countries in the world (Harriott & Jones, 2016; Lemonius, 2017). The first-generation Jamaican university student is expected to access and persist in higher education within these systems of trauma and inequity created by colonialism.

(Post)Colonial Jamaica and Violence

There is a paucity of literature examining the criminal justice system in Jamaica. My dad briefly mentioned that the minds of brilliant young men in Jamaica had been destroyed by violence. He was referring to young men in inner-city communities like the one we were raised in. Again, colonialism under the guise of different narratives is still present and has not ended even in Jamaica's perceived (post)colonial state. Harriott and Jones (2016) argue that the country's problems today originated during the colonial era, but colonialism is not necessarily the root of the continuation of some of these issues. The structure of the Jamaica Constabulary Force is compared to a paramilitary watchman

model where people are treated like "subjects" instead of citizens (Harriott, 2000; Harriott & Jones, 2016). This inhumane policing style influences the fear and distrust of the police and disrespect for the law within the low SES communities, which further impacts the relationship between citizens and law enforcement (Harriott 2000; Harriott & Jones, 2016). Several initiatives and crime intervention programs have been introduced in Jamaica to alleviate crime, mainly in volatile urban communities (Harriott & Jones, 2016). These agencies include faith-based organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs), non-profit organizations (international and national), academia, civilians, and government (Harriott & Jones, 2016). The hypocrisy among these stakeholders is that some of these initiatives are funded through international partners, including Britain, the culprit of Jamaica's initial problems stemming from colonization. I can't entirely agree with Harriott and Jones (2016) that colonialism is not necessarily the reason for the continuity of crime and violence, as colonization has not ended in reality. Whether we say (post)colonial or post-independence, globalization, Jamaica and its socio-cultural environment cannot be divorced from its colonial past.

Post-independence, Jamaica is characterized by high rates of violent crimes, which inevitably impacts the educational experiences of first-generation students exposed to violence within their home community environments. For Jamaica to reduce crime and violence, the criminal justice system needs a total overhaul as it is highly ineffective in its present state (Harriott & Jones, 2016). The justice system's inefficiencies include poor infrastructure, unequal treatment, delays, underfunding, and outdated procedures (Harriott & Jones, 2016). Additionally, gangs with young males between the ages of 15-25 are said to be responsible for the majority of crime and violence in Jamaica (Harriott

& Jones, 2016). These males are from communities labeled as inner cities or informal settlements which are prone to high levels of crime and violence.

In closing, Jamaica's (post)colonial state faces multiple pandemics, and violence has been a never-ending disease and dis-ease. Some of our most vulnerable are affected by community violence, including our children and first-generation Jamaican university students. A recent mixed-method study on children exposed to violence in urban schools in Jamaica found that urban community violence impacts children's academic performance in schools and horrific psychological stress due to the social climate of the communities (Bourne & McLymont, 2020). With that said, I transition Section Two to discuss education in Jamaica with a focus on higher education.

Section Two: The Trunk - Overview of Jamaica's Education System

As we grow, our roots are planted in our home community environments, where we play in and around the yaad[2], go to church and school, sing the grocery list while hopping to the corner shop. School being the focal point was not always a constitutional right afforded to many Jamaicans. Today, education is valuable for individuals who see it as the only way to elevate themselves from the bondage of oppression, discrimination, poverty, and community violence. In this section, I discuss access to education before and after emancipation in Jamaica.

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[2] A few Jamaican Creole words will be used throughout the study to honor and maintain the authenticity of the language and culture. I have intentionally not translated these words.

Access to Education

In general, educational and pre-university experiences in Jamaica consist of early childhood (also called basic or kindergarten) and primary and secondary education. In Chapter One, I mentioned that students have to complete specific standardized examinations at different stages, the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) in Grade 6, Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) in Grade 11, and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) in Grades 12 and 13. All of these exams are necessary for students to access university. Education in colonial and (post)colonial Jamaica was not always accessible as there were limitations on who could access this privilege.

Education and Pre-Emancipation (1655 – 1834)

The earliest evidence of some form of education during the 17th century was that a schoolmaster and five ministers of religion received £500 in 1663 for schooling in the new British colony, Jamaica (Stewart, 2013). Education was less formal for enslaved Black people during enslavement (Howe, 2003). Of course, the White population had access to formal education, specifically those who could financially afford it (Howe, 2003). In 1729, a goldsmith, John Wolmer, willed a sum of £2360 for the establishment of a free school (The Wolmer's Trust, 2021; Gleaner Archives,1930). By 1736, the Wolmer's Free School was established with the endowment from John Wolmer and benefitted poor Whites in Jamaica (Stewart, 2013; Schneider, 2018). Wolmer's is described as an elitist traditional high school in Jamaica today.

Additionally, "White families educated their children at home until they were old enough to be sent to Britain – if the family could afford it" (Schneider, 2018, p. 53). Interestingly, boys were first enrolled at Wolmer's, and girls were not introduced until

1782 (Schneider, 2018). The fact that boys were enrolled first supports Lemonius's (2017) argument that colonialism was a deciding factor for who could access education and determined gender roles in a highly stratified Jamaican society. At this time, schools provided instruction in basic arithmetic, the three Rs – reading, writing, and arithmetic (Schneider, 2018). Free people of color were not admitted to Wolmer's until 1815 (Schneider, 2018).

Prior to the British defeating the Spanish in 1655, policies were always in place to indoctrinate and colonize the Indigenous population (Bacchus, 2006; Stewart, 2013; Picking & Vandebroek, 2019). The Taíno population was estimated at 60,000 and was significantly decimated by the time of European contact between 1494-1550 (Picking & Vandebroek, 2019). During the time of Spanish colonization, the Europeans had to learn how to communicate with the Indigenous people; as such, there was some level of knowledge exchange so that they could exploit and annihilate the population (Bacchus, 2006). Colonialism led to the resocialization of the Indigenous people to assimilate them into the Europeans' culture (Bacchus, 2006). Therefore, some form of knowledge production existed before colonization based on the premise of "civilizing" the Indigenous people.

Missionary Education and Oppressive Language Policy. The inflow of enslaved Africans via the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as early as the 16th century meant that various languages were being blended due to the different tribes laboring on the plantations (Campbell, 2006; Stewart, 2013). The Europeans whitewashed the enslaved population and engaged in schooling with this multiplicity of languages from the tribes. Also, education instruction was provided mainly by the religious denominations who

desired to convert the Africans to Christianity (Evans & Burke, 2006). For example, this was done through missionaries, including Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and Moravian, who oversaw formal instruction for people of color and the enslaved (London, 2003; Evans & Burke, 2006; Schneider, 2018). Also, the British initially opposed the idea of any form of education due to fear of the enslaved engaging in rebellions (Bacchus, 2006; Stewart, 2013). This type of education was aimed at assimilating the enslaved and freed persons of color into the Western normative cultures in the name of "civilization" (Stewart, 2013; Schneider, 2018).

Moreover, this assimilation meant that the missionaries oversaw knowledge production to "deliver moral and religious education to civilize the Negro population" (Stewart, 2013, p. 2). Education for the masses was never a priority to those that managed the system of plantocracy but more so to assimilate and, for example, impose the English language on the population, which today is the language of the Jamaican curriculum (Stewart, 2013). Also, forbidding the Africans from speaking their native language enabled the British to lessen "the occurrence of rebellions and forced alliances between warring tribes" (Stewart, 2013, p. 28). I reflect on how my educational experiences have also been centered around language and how it was taboo to speak Jamaican Creole in schools. Specifically, while growing up, there was an expectation of being polished and learning the English Language to associate with the educated few. So much so that the most I have ever written and researched Jamaican Creole is on my doctoral journey of completing this dissertation. I can speak the Jamaican Creole language fluently. However, my challenge is writing the language as I was not taught how to. I purchased a book titled Writing Jamaican the Jamaican Way – Ou Fi Rait Jamiekan, learned how to

write a few Jamaican Creole terminologies, and utilized the Dictionary of Jamaican English recommended by my grandaunt Sandy. Even with these two Jamaican texts, visits to the Jamaica Language Unit website and conversations with Jamaican Creole experts, confirmed that there was no codified standard for Creole.

Post-Emancipation and Access to Education (1834-1962)

Slavery was abolished in 1834 in the British colonies, including Jamaica (Howe, 2003; London, 2003; Stewart, 2013; Schneider, 2018). By the time of emancipation, approximately 5% of the West Indian enslaved population had some form of literacy (Howe, 2003). The British government provided funds through the Negro Education Act (1835 – 1845) to establish elementary education for the formerly enslaved population (Keith, 1978; Howe, 2003; Coates, 2012; Stewart, 2013). For example, in 1836, "four teaching training institutions and hundreds of elementary schools in the British Colonies, in the West Indies" were established by the Lady Mico Charity under a grant (The Mico University College, 2021, para. 1). Under the elementary/all-age system, the instructors encouraged the free Blacks to continue toiling on the sugar plantations so that the plantations would continue to flourish (Bacchus, 2006). In other words, we will provide you with access to rudimentary knowledge while you keep working for the white man. The Negro Education Grant was short-lived as it lasted ten years (Howe, 2003; Stewart, 2013).

Apprenticeship and Access to Education. Between 1834-1838, was a period of transition called apprenticeship (Hall, 1953). The newly emancipated population was forced to labor without compensation (Hall, 1953). Furthermore, during this period, the plantation owners were "innately resistant to the thought of an emerging educated class

of slaves" (Stewart, 2013, p. 29). One year into the apprenticeship period, the Negro Education Grant was established in 1835. Schools during this time focused on practical training and comprehensive agricultural education and aimed to increase labor on the local farms (Bacchus, 2006). This type of colonial education was to suppress the opposition of the lower classes to the elite ruling class (Bacchus, 2006). Therefore, these all-age schools (also called elementary) and the curriculum were structured to maintain the hierarchal structures in Jamaica (Evans, 2001).

The focus of education was not book learning but rather discipline and rote learning (Evans, 2001). Interestingly, this is how I was taught through memorization at my basic and primary schools. In Jamaica, we call it "swotting." Also, critical thinking was not a popular concept, nor would it be advocated for since fewer challenges from the oppressed provided a greater advantage for the upper class to maintain social control. Students in my class who failed to memorize the mathematics timetable or the class content would be punished and beaten or labeled with negative words such as "dunce." Being fearful of not wanting to be labeled or beaten, I memorized, including repeating my lessons to the trees in my yaad. Memorization, for me, brought about much anxiety and my phobia of examinations.

Eventually, the curriculum expanded from the basic arithmetic and practical training to include "English, civics, geography, and history, and taught in a manner that would lead students to see the colonizers as agents of civilization and enlightenment" (Bacchus, 2006, p. 263). Simply put, the oppressed were not seen as intellectuals. Moreover, the few whites who governed the population sent their children to be educated in England, usually from an early age and definitely for higher education (Brathwaite,

1958). Therefore, there were not many attempts to develop higher education for the people of the British West Indies, and during this time, higher education was mainly about religion. Hence schooling was led by missionaries. Like many high schools in Jamaica, including mine, various Christian denominations are the founders of these institutions.

Developing Higher Education in Jamaica

By 1945 the Asquith Report was the blueprint for creating university colleges in the West Indies and Africa (Stewart, 2013). The Irvine Commission was sent to investigate the need for higher education in the British colonies in 1945 (The University of the West Indies, 2021). By 1948, the University College of the West Indies (UCWI), renamed the University of the West Indies (UWI), opened its doors with 23 men and 10 women as its first set of students under the faculty of medicine. The UCWI's first campus, Mona, is located in Jamaica, the site of two former sugar plantations, the Papine and Mona Estates. As expected, the university's curriculum was modeled based on the British education system, specifically the University of London (Bacchus, 2006). As to how much of the university's curriculum has changed since then, is uncertain as it is common for students to complain about the outdated courses and approaches to teaching. With the formation of the UWI, the thrust of changes to the education system did not occur until post-independence.

Education and Post-Independence (1962-2022)

Following the Second World War, the desire for self-governing and independence increased (Howe, 2003; Bacchus, 2006). This desire led to an additional transformation in the educational system as many countries in the region were granted independence

between the 1940s and 1960s (Stewart, 2013). The nationalist movements of the 1930s also propelled the desire for education and by the earlier 1980s, many Caribbean countries had achieved independence, including Jamaica in 1962 (Howe, 2003). Between 1962 and 1973, the number of students enrolled between primary and post-secondary levels increased. Therefore, Jamaica made some progress with providing access to education. Up until 1986, the University of the West Indies (UWI) was the only regional higher education institution in the Caribbean (Coates, 2012).

The Impetus for Higher Education. There were three main reasons behind establishing institutions for higher education in Jamaica. The first impetus was the need for some form of schooling following emancipation in 1834 and "full" freedom in 1838. The need for education came with the establishment of several short-lived missionary schools due to financing and debates on the content of the curriculum (Evans & Burke, 2006). For example, in 1832, the Moravians established an institution, followed by the Anglicans, Baptists, Church Missionary Society, Presbyterians, and Wesleyans (Evans & Burke, 2006). These religious institutions were ephemeral as there were not able to provide adequate teacher training as the need for more teachers increased. With the Mico College being established in 1835, as highlighted in the historical timeline above, other teachers' colleges were introduced in the 19th century and are active in Jamaica today. These include the "Bethlehem Moravian Teachers College (1861), Shortwood Teachers College (1885), and St. Josephs Teachers College (1897)" (Evans & Burke, 2006, p. 6). In 1907, the West Indian Training School was established and renamed the Northern Caribbean University (Barret Adams & Hayle, 2021).

The second impetus for higher education was converting and indoctrinating the enslaved population to the religious beliefs of the colonizers. Therefore, both the colonizers, Britain, and the Church played a role in the formation of educational institutions in Jamaica, including the curriculum. The objective of the second impetus was to train religious ministers to lead the local churches (Evans & Burke, 2006). Arguably, the development vision for Jamaica has always resulted in some form of interest convergence where the wealthiest and more powerful countries have more input on what is accepted, valid, and recognized in "underdeveloped," "developing" and "Third world" countries. Education and the players involved were no different. The debate at this time in the English-speaking Caribbean was about what should be emphasized in the curriculum, and precisely what should be offered at the university level to gain recognition among the classification/ranking of institutions (Evans & Burke, 2006).

The third and final reason for the call to establish higher education in Jamaica was catalyzed by creating a system that would support and train students for the world of work more efficiently than institutions abroad (Evans & Burke, 2006). Therefore, the dilemma was the expectation that students should take regional exams and apply to regional institutions like UWI since access to universities abroad was next to impossible unless you could afford it. This impetus was pressing as the region sought to move away from traditional higher education that only served a small elitist group of the population (Evans & Burke, 2006). Therefore, access to education was limited to a few.

Nationalism and Demands for Higher Education. Before the UWI (formerly UCWI) was established in 1948, there were several discussions regarding some semblance of higher education in the West Indies (Caribbean). By the 18th century,

Bishop Berkley and later missionary James Phillipo proposed the idea of higher education to shape the minds of aspiring youths (Evans & Burke, 2006). It is believed that these discussions influenced the formation of a short-lived college in Spanish Town, St. Catherine, Jamaica, in 1873, modeled based on the University College in London with four students (Evans & Burke, 2006). Between 1834 and the 1930s, numerous reports were commissioned by local and British officials to assess the state of education in the Caribbean (Howe, 2003). These reports included Keenan (1869), Mitchinson (1875), Lumb Commission (1898), Marriott-Mayhew (1931-2), Kandel (1943), and finally, the Irvine Report in 1945 (Howe, 2003).

The Keenan and Marriott-Mayhew reports assessed the state of education and secondary education, respectively, in Jamaica (Evans & Burke, 2006). The former recommended a University College that would focus on examinations, and the latter suggested a university to train teachers for the high school system (Evans & Burke, 2006). It was evident that these reports collectively led to a series of institutional and curricula development across the region (Howe, 2003). By the 1930s World War II, political and national movements, the call for education expansion increased (Howe. 2003). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, several "newspapers and [B]lack radicals sought to educate the masses about the need for an education more rooted in the Caribbean experience" (Howe, 2003, p. 37). Therefore, advocating for education that Caribbean people could relate to and not one that was modeled on the British system.

This era of nationalism inevitably contributed to the discussions around establishing the UWI in 1948. As to whether Jamaica's nationalism is at the forefront of the nation today, I say that on one hand, we are aspiring to become a republic like

Barbados, and on the next, we are paying millions for Prince William and Catherine to visit Jamaica on their royal tour in March 2022. Nevertheless, there is no denying that Jamaica has made progress in establishing higher education institutions.

Features of Higher Education in Jamaica

The University of the West Indies was established in 1948 and was the only regional university in the Caribbean until 1986 (Coates, 2012). Since numerous educational institutions with various programs have been established. There are 287 accredited programs and only three accredited institutions (Adams & Hayle, 2021). Jamaica's national accreditation body is the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), an agency of the Ministry of Education and Youth and Information which was established in 1987. The structure of higher education in Jamaica is complex. Higher education has been adopted to include post-secondary education and training and tertiary education. Post-secondary education and training consist of certifications from vocational/agricultural and technical high schools or skills training programs (Adams & Hayle, 2021). For example, the Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL) merged with the HEART Trust/NTA in 2018. Grades 12 and 13 are also considered post-secondary education levels, with the hopes of providing students with pre-university experience before transitioning to higher education.

Tertiary education is defined as "educational activities of both public and private institutions and the contribution of programs to developing the skills and intellectual capacity of professionals, senior officials and technicians for the…labor force" (Adams & Hayle, 2021, p. 34). The admission requirements for tertiary education consist of passes at CSEC, Grade 11, and/or CAPE, Grades 12 and 13, depending on the institution

students are applying to. Tertiary education includes two-year associate, three-year, and four-year bachelor's degree programs at universities, community colleges, and teachers' colleges. Students with six passes at CAPE complete a three-year bachelor's degree program. Jamaica has 18 tertiary public institutions and 26 private institutions.

With all these different features of higher education in Jamaica, private and public policies for access looks different for students depending on the institution's admission requirements. However, some forms of standardized tests are certainly used to determine if students are eligible to access the institution of their choice. This emphasis on standardized tests places Black and minoritized youth at a further disadvantage when examining neoliberalism and education (Rich, 1986; Baldridge, 2014). Caribbean scholar Nigel Brissett (2010) argues that "Jamaica is actively reforming its educational policies in order to reap the benefits of the new "knowledge economy." However, significant policy approaches…have the unintended consequence of perpetuating disempowerment of low income Jamaicans" (p. 197). Brissett (2010) argues that traditionally marginalized Jamaicans' access to education has increased, but globalization has elevated neo-liberalism. In an effort to respond to the demands of globalization and neo-liberal educational principles regarding education as a private investment, Jamaica weakens the advocacy for social justice in educational policy (Brissett, 2010). These policies include the requirements for standardized tests and the financing of higher education by students in Jamaica, which fundamentally decreases the goal of empowerment through education for the majority. In the end, these practices in a (post)colonial state limit the educational reach of some of our most vulnerable populations in Jamaica.

In other words, while there have been efforts to reduce the social disparities caused by centuries of colonialism in the name of "globalization" Jamaica is doing more harm than good to students seeking access to higher education. First-generation students are among these students seeking access to their university of choice. The next sub-heading examines the broad literature on first-generation students, including access, persistence, challenges and hidden assets.

Section Three: The Branch – First-Generation Students in Higher Education

Branches represent different educational pathways for students after completing high school. My final years in 6th form (Grades 12 and 13) caused much anxiety as I thought about my future and was unsure of the possibilities due to financial challenges. In this section, I review the literature on factors that influence access in higher education and examine research on first-generation students' access and persistence. I intentionally presented narratives highlighting first-generation students' challenges and strengths as studies on this group in Jamaica are rare. Providing insights into the challenges and strengths of first-generation students can hopefully encourage educators, administrators, and higher education institutions in Jamaica to engage and support their persistence to the completion of their undergraduate degrees. Both Caribbean and non-Caribbean studies were reviewed.

Caribbean Research on Access in Higher Education

Access to higher education in the Commonwealth Caribbean became a critical discussion in the 1990s as the need for specialized knowledge and credentials where individuals are taught beyond the fundamentals was essential to obtain through access to tertiary education. Caribbean scholar Errol Miller expressed that historically the approach

to schooling was top-down and not from the bottom up (Miller, 2000). Through a

historical lens, schooling did not begin at the basic and primary levels (Miller, 2000).

Notably, Miller (2000) stated that ancient schools in Mesopotamia around 2500 BCE

existed to train scribes to meet bureaucratic and administrative needs. Miller (2000) noted

that this type of scribal schooling was not just basic instructions but included mastering

specific techniques and terminology that helped scribes to understand the language of the

priests, master shippers, smiths, and jewelers, among others. Therefore, lessons around

teaching and writing were high level, and as discussed by Miller (2000) secondary and

intermediate levels of schooling were only introduced within the last three hundred plus

years.

Access to education was a privilege instead of a universal right for the elite

scribes in ancient Mesopotamia and as such the masses of the population did not access

schooling (Miller, 2000). Within the Commonwealth Caribbean, access to education was

also limited and not extended to the masses as discussed in the literature review for this

dissertation. Notably, Miller (2000) noted that access to tertiary education in the 1990s

was targeted toward enrolling students within the 18 to 24 age group, which does not

include adult learners or non-traditional university students who accessed university

many years after leaving high school. During the 1990s university education enrolment in

Jamaica was between 4.9 and 6.6 percent for national and regional institutions for

students ages 20 to 24. In 2018, the Planning Institute of Jamaica Economic Social

Survey reported that gross enrolment at the tertiary level was 32.9 percent (PIOJ, 2018).

By 2020 the PIOJ reported that enrolment in tertiary institutions was 38.7 percent (PIOJ,

2020). With these statistics, it is evident that there has been an increase in access to

higher education, however, we are still lagging behind in meeting the Vision 2030 goals for everyone to access some form of higher education after completing secondary education.

Noteworthy is the creation of policies for access to higher education, such as the National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF-J). The NQF-J was created by the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission (J-TEC) (The Jamaica Gleaner, 2016) and officially launched by the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOE&Y) in February 2017 (MOE&Y, 2017). The NQF-J is aligned with Jamaica's Vision 2030 and provides opportunities for lifelong learning and access to higher education and employment. The policy framework is also seen as a second chance for individuals without formal qualifications to access the various pathways, including vocational training and higher education (MOE&Y, 2017). The intention is to create a standardized set of qualifications that are recognized across Jamaica as well as internationally (MOE&Y, 2017). The NQF-J policy establishes a framework for learning achievements; provides access to career, training, and education paths; monitors the quality of education and training in Jamaica to ensure that a world-class standard of education is provided to all (The Jamaica Gleaner, 2016; MOE&Y, 2017).

In essence, the NQF-J policy provides a register for all education and training systems and classifies the different types of qualifications to determine how individuals can improve their mobility through higher education and employment. The NQF-J also provides a system for organizations to understand the various competencies and requirements for particular positions for prospective employees. The NQF-J policy recognizes prior learning for individuals who would like to continue their education but

may not have all the requirements or some of their training and certifications may not be recognized by some institutions. The NQF-J policy ensures that these individuals can still access lifelong learning by recognizing their existing skills and allowing those with informal training to hone their skills and pursue higher learning and qualifications level whether it is vocational or academic.

As it relates to a practical understanding of how many Jamaican students access higher education after high school, a study examined the causes of Jamaican dropouts from a high school program learned from a senior officer at the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOE&Y) in Jamaica in 2018 that out of the approximately 42,000 students who enter grade 11 in high school, only 22,000, that is, 52.4%, pursue further studies or employment after completing their high school regional examinations (McLean, 2020). Furthermore, "the remaining 20,000 students either drop out or leave the system with no high school qualifications" (McLean, 2020, p. 2). Within McLean's data set, crime was identified as one of the reasons for students dropping out of high school. Moreover, McLean (2020) stated that most of the students were from communities traditionally known for crime and violence. This supports the narrative that community violence can impact students' access to university in Jamaica.

Even with the National Qualifications Framework for Jamaica, students still face challenges to accessing higher education. A recent report on Jamaica's higher education revealed that some students could not access educational opportunities beyond high school due to transportation costs, uniforms, and meals/lunch, among other resources (Adams & Hayle, 2021). There is advocacy for Jamaica to address issues of poverty and equity to improve access to higher education and training (Adams & Hayle, 2021). Other

obstacles include elitism and the desire to control the higher education landscape, limiting access to individuals and institutions, and the need for more flexible pathways for students after high school (Adams & Hayle, 2021).

A report from UNESCO on Latin America and the Caribbean discussed international trends toward universal access to higher education. Firstly, in higher education, worldwide gross enrollment increased from 19%-38% between 2000 and 2018 (Vieira et al., 2020). Although there was a global increase, the report stated that there continues to be a gap between enrolment and graduation. The report recommended that countries focus on high enrollment and graduation rates (Vieira et al., 2020). Secondly, for Latin America and the Caribbean, there was a 30-point gross enrolment rate increase (Vieira et al., 2020). While acknowledging the growth within the region, the report stated that the numbers are still insufficient to match the demands for access at the primary and secondary levels (Vieira et al., 2020). Thirdly, with regard to gender enrollment between 2000 and 2018, there was an increase from 19%-36% and 19%-41% for men and women, respectively (Vieira et al., 2020). Fourthly, the UNESCO report stated that income level was another factor in enrollment rates and confirmed that populations that experience low-income and high-income levels increased by 10% and 77%, respectively (Vieira et al., 2020). Therefore, significant differences in income levels and access to higher education account for the disparity. Lastly, the report stated that barriers to universal access to higher education include poverty, war and conflict cause, systemic impact, institutional barriers such as tuition costs and exclusive entrance examinations, geographic mobility, and discrimination (Vieira et al., 2020).

The 2020 UNESCO report was informative; however, it provided no details of specific breakdown by Latin America and the Caribbean countries. Therefore, only a broad overview of understanding access to higher education within the region was provided. Also, the report focused on the dominant narrative regarding gender and excluded all other identities. There was no evidence that UNESCO examined an intersectional lens on gender and gender identities of students within the region.

Access to higher education is also discussed through a social justice lens as a fundamental right that should be afforded to everyone. In reflecting on (post)colonial Jamaica, I was intrigued by this recent 2022 UNESCO report on Latin America and the Caribbean focusing on the right to education. Caribbean authors Burke and Weekes (2020) stated that in colonial and (post)colonial Jamaica, "higher education was only for the privileged few. Advancement was limited and focused on preparing the population to accept their status in the social system based on race and color" (p. 1). The UNESCO report is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Jamaica's Vision 2030 and signals that more persons are accessing higher education. The UNESCO report stated that education should be free and accessible to support the "full participation of children and adults in the life of communities" (Sabzalieva et al., 2022, p. 7). A common trend across the reports and policy frameworks is the narrative that education should be accessible to all. While this basic human right is not a debate, it is clear that the Latin America and Caribbean countries are lagging behind.

Arguably, higher education has evolved from only for the elite groups to being accessed by more than half of the world's population (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). While it is true that more persons are accessing higher education, the report does not explicitly

highlight specific populations benefitting from this access. For example, Prodan et al. (2015) defined and explained the layers of access before and after students enter higher education. Moreover, accessing higher education institutions via admissions is just as critical as persisting through graduation. Nevertheless, the UNESCO report acknowledged that colonial domination impacted access to higher education. Also, numerous systemic and structural barriers exist, including racism, meritocratic process, standardized testing, and inequities in admission processes (Sabzalieva et al., 2022).

Additionally, the UNESCO report describes the right to higher education as a necessity for education and lifelong learning and should be guaranteed to everyone (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). Subsequently, social justice in education consists of advocating against social, cultural, and economic inequalities imposed by unequal distribution of power, resources, and privileges (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). Specifically, where education should be compulsory for primary and secondary levels, a social justice lens is more visible as students are typically expected to access these stages of education. However, based on the Vieira et al. (2020) UNESCO report, there are still disparities regarding education in the Sub-Saharan African, Latin America, and Caribbean regions despite improvements.

Another argument from the social justice UNESCO report stated that higher education systems should cater to the diverse needs of students and their backgrounds and move away from trying to fit students in the dominant or typical Eurocentric concepts of higher education (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). Compared to the 2020 UNESCO report, the 2022 UNESCO conceptual paper acknowledged the Indigenous and LGBTQ+ population, racialized groups, and persons with disabilities. Some of the same authors on

the 2020 UNESCO report who neglected to address these populations are also authors of the 2022 UNESCO report. The 2022 UNESCO conceptual paper mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic but did not mention social justice protests in 2020, starting with the murder of George Floyd. Based on the social justice language used in the 2022 UNESCO report around inclusive excellence and intersectionality, I assumed that the 2020 social justice protests in the United States might have inspired aspects of this conceptual paper.

Finally, the social justice framework advocates for student success by encouraging higher education institutions and governments to use a 5As framework: "available, accessible, acceptable, adaptable and accountable" to ensure that students complete their studies and have a good university experience (Sabzalieva et al., 2022, pp. 14-15). Availability refers to educational institutions providing infrastructure, trained teachers, and teaching materials, and institutions must be appropriately funded and affordable for everyone (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). Accessibility includes access for everyone and evidence of affirmative efforts to support marginalized groups (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). Acceptability focuses on institutions offering acceptable, non-discriminatory, high-quality, and culturally appropriate education (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). Adaptability refers to institutional flexibility and response to students' needs (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). The framework utilizes the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) inclusive excellence model regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (Sabzalieva et al., 2022).

The 5As framework presented critical points on intersectionality and reducing the barriers to access. However, I questioned whether Latin America and the Caribbean are involved at the country and higher education institutional levels. Adams and Hayle's

(2021) report on Jamaica, funded by UNESCO, was published a year before the 2022 UNESCO conceptual paper, including the 5As framework. Additionally, there are no specific details about how the Caribbean region, for example, supports the lens of inclusive excellence and intersectionality. Nevertheless, all UNESCO studies have a clear argument for a commitment to increasing access to higher education across Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Browne and Shen's (2017) study investigated challenges and solutions to higher education within the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). These countries are "Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, St. Christopher-Nevis, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, and Martinique" (Browne & Shen, 2017, p. 169). The study analyzed 37 tertiary institutions in the Eastern Caribbean and found that accessibility, location, quality of education, institutional costs, and unemployment of graduates" (Browne & Shen, 2017, p. 169). Additionally, the authors reported that technological access, globalization, integration-networking, and travel costs had increased access to higher education in the Eastern Caribbean (Browne & Shen, 2017). The findings on the OECS are similar to Adams and Hayle's (2021), the Planning Institute of Jamaica Economic Social Survey (2018 & 2020) reports, along with the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission National Qualifications Framework for Jamaica regarding access to higher education in Jamaica.

Noteworthy is the finding on unemployment of graduates as the University of the West Indies tracer survey indicated that most graduates find employment at least one year after graduation. However, "there are still large numbers of unemployed graduates. Time series data suggest that there is a trend of decreasing employment rates moving from an

overall rate of 87% in 2009 to 78% in 2013" (University Office of Planning and Development, 2016, p. xv). Jamaican scholars Paterson and Hutchinson (2019) confirmed that first-generation students are part of the dataset from their Caribbean study on mentorship. As such first-generation students are among the unemployed graduates from the UWI tracer survey. A common expectation from a first degree is socio-economic benefit once you graduate. How do we support first-generation students to ensure they not only access university but persist to graduation and are equipped with the necessary tools to reap opportunities in the world of work? For example, higher education institutions can better plan for these students by understanding their home community environments, and their unique backgrounds and challenges.

Access Models and Critiques

There are numerous conceptual frameworks for transitioning from high school to higher education. Understanding these frameworks can help institutions proactively identify how to best support first-generation students in higher education. In the context of this dissertation, higher education institutions in Jamaica and secondary schools could examine this body of literature to gain insights into access frameworks that have been used in different higher education spaces.

Numerous factors shape individuals' decisions to attend college or their university of choice. As a first-generation student, I was not cognizant of all the elements regarding the college-going process. However, I knew I needed to submit an application with my CSEC and CAPE results completed in Grades 11, 12, and 13. However, information regarding access to financial aid and selection of courses came after applying to university. A conceptual model of student success was developed by Perna (2006). This

model consists of four layers "the individual's habitus; school and community context; the higher education context; and the broader social, economic, and policy context" (Perna, 2006; Perna & Thomas, 2008). The first layer, individual habitus, includes characteristics such as demographic (race/ethnicity, gender), cultural capital (cultural knowledge, value of college), and social capital (information about college and assistance with the process) (Perna, 2006). Other characteristics in this layer include academic preparation and achievement, and resources include family income and financial aid (Perna, 2006).

The second layer, the school and community context, considers the structural supports, barriers, and types of available resources. For example, college counselors and peers provide information about the process. In Jamaica, this would be high school at the Grades 11, 12, and 13 stages, where these conversations around going to university usually occur. The third layer of Perna's model, the higher education context, highlights the role of institutions in influencing college choice via marketing and recruitment efforts, based on their reputations and location, among other features. For the third layer, I think of the popularity status of a university influencing one's decision as there are stereotypes attached to different institutions in Jamaica. The fourth layer focuses on the socio-economic and policy context. Within this layer, Perna argues that policies and socio-economic conditions influence the decision to access college. I incorporated Perna's model in the literature review as I could map my experiences as a first-generation Jamaican university student to some of the layers of this model. My socio-economic status influenced my decision to attend college as well as selecting an institution where a scholarship would be possible to receive. Also, based on the theoretical framework for

the dissertation, Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory, Perna's model acknowledged some aspects of the immediate environment (family and school community) within the individual habitus layer. The family and school community are among the features of first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments.

Another conceptual framework is sensemaking, which can be utilized as a part of the college preparation process (Mokher, 2021). Sensemaking refers to students seeking information from others and interpreting and taking action based on their shared understanding of the information (Bess & Dee, 2012; Mokher, 2021). Students' interpretation of the information takes into consideration their prior knowledge and social context (Mokher, 2021). Additionally, college preparation suggestions included having students take courses on college readiness and providing additional resources for students to prepare for the standardized tests (Mokher, 2021). Within the context of Jamaica, some parents have taken on the additional costs of extra lessons for their children to gain further support to prepare for standardized tests by attending specialized classes outside of their high school contact hours. Therefore, leaving some children behind whose parent(s) may not be able to afford external resources than what is provided by the child's high school.

Another lens on college access is McLewis's (2021) critique of college "choice." Institutional policies and practices harm Black progress, and systemic forms of oppression and the possession of power shape student pathways, particularly the college decision-making process (McLewis, 2021). The advocacy of access is contradictory. First, there is a push to increase access by increasing funds, making the admission

process efficient and equitable. Secondly, there is the issue of the lack of commitment to provide this access (McLewis, 2021). For example, at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic Serving Institutions (McLewis, 2021). Simply put, policymakers and those in power fail to fulfill their commitment with action and not just words. Furthermore, there is a reduction in how much funding is allocated to state schools in the U.S. context (McLewis, 2021).

For Jamaica, the UWI predicted they would continue to function with reduced government funding, increasing student demands, structural deficits, rapidly changing technologies, higher expectations from stakeholders, and increased government accountability measures (University Office of Planning and Development, 2016). Again, the contradiction between working toward Vision 2030 yet a lack of commitment to provide access as with tuition costs increasing in Jamaica, the barriers to access continue to increase.

Why First-Generation Students?

Now that there is some understanding of what factors might influence individuals' access to university in the literature review, I transition to first-generation students. I intentionally focused on first-generation university students because I had to reflect on my journey during post-graduate studies in Jamaica. I had never taken a moment to process my experience or what it meant to be a first-generation Jamaican university student. Yes, I was cognizant that I was the first to access and graduate from a university in my family, and to me, this meant that we were one step closer to "a better life." By the time I enrolled in my master's, I was also aware that studies in Jamaica on first-generation students were rare. My home community environment has always influenced

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my life's journey, and now this dissertation. For this section, I used the strategy of comparing my "first-gen" journey with recent research on first-generation students' access and persistence in higher education. I present challenges and strengths influencing first-generation students' access and persistence in higher education.

In the United States, first-generation is defined as "the share of students enrolled in postsecondary education whose parents had not attended college" (Cataldi et al., 2018, p. 1). Here there is an underlying assumption that all first-generation students are raised within a nuclear family with both parents. There are numerous studies that found that first-generation students face significant challenges in accessing college, academic success, and degree completion (Terenzini et al., 1996; Ishitani, 2006; Pascarella et al., 2004; Cataldi et al., 2018, Chang et al., 2020; Motsabi et al., 2020). First-generation students within the literature are usually discussed compared to other college students based on their demographic characteristics, high school preparation, expectations of college, and personal college choice process (Pascarella et al., 2004). Examples of students' demographics include their gender, race, and high school academic achievement (Ishitani, 2006). However, there is a lack of emphasis on students' home community environments shaping their college choice process and preparation.

Also, first-generation students face challenges that place them at a disadvantage when we consider their perceived knowledge about postsecondary education, finances, the detailed steps of the application process, financial support from family (income level), expectations, and academic preparation (Pascarella et al., 2004). Another challenge for first-generation students is their experiences transitioning from high school to postsecondary education. Depending on first-generation students' experiences during the

transition stage, they may struggle with navigating academics, culture at college, and anxiety (Pascarella et al., 2004). Additionally, when first-generation students are compared to non-first-generation students, Padgett et al. (2012) reported that they are less likely to participate in co-curricular activities. This also connects to Wilbur and Roscigno's (2016) emphasis that students feeling a sense of belonging on campus can influence their participation in campus engagements which inevitably can encourage them to persist to completion.

Social and Cultural Capital

Naturally, if my parents attended university in Jamaica, I would have a greater chance of not being misinformed when I applied to university to do Actuarial Science, started as a Mathematics major, and graduated as a History major. However, I was raised in a single-parent household led by my mother who did not complete high school. My father finished high school. However, my father did not attend college/university to obtain a first degree. I did not know how I would afford university; I just knew that it was my only option to bring my family one step closer out of our volatile community with high-powered weapons that wreak havoc without warning. Students with parents who attended college can lean in on this valuable source of knowledge and cultural capital that helps them navigate college (Cataldi et al., 2018). Examples of navigating college for first-generation students include checking your transcript at the end of each semester and understanding the expectations of the university regarding assignments, course work and exams, office hours, and academic advisors. I learned about some of these skills and tools either at orientation, by word-of-mouth, or when I had an issue, stumbled upon the administrative service, and was left frustrated in many cases.

Therefore, cultural capital can influence the decision to access higher education (Bourdieu, 1977; Perna, 2006). Cultural capital refers to the "unique knowledge imparted to a student by parents and community and includes language, customs, shared experience, and social norms" (Perna, 2006, p. 6). Also, first-generation students are usually associated with low SES and at a higher risk of dropping out of college (Cataldi et al., 2018). When we consider first-generation students and low SES, home community environments should enter the conversation as low SES is associated with the geographical location and social conditions within the communities in which these students are raised.

Sense of Belonging

First-generation students can feel out of place trying to navigate a large campus environment, especially if it is their first time visiting the institution. A study on the disadvantage and college enrollment/completion for first-generation students argued that students might be overwhelmed by the college application process and the emotional and financial stress of tuition taking care of themselves and their families (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). Additionally, stressors could include adjusting to a new campus environment and the demands of college without having all the resources. Another study focusing on first-generation students' experience in public research universities found that first-generation students reported that not many utilized services on campus, lower rates of belonging, and higher levels of stress and depression (Stebleton et al., 2014). Institutions are encouraged to participate in high-impact educational practices to alleviate some of this stress and make first-generation students feel like they matter (Kuh, 2008; Stebleton et al., 2014). For example, support students by improving social and academic

engagement programs, creating first-year seminars, and introducing students to study abroad programs, service-learning opportunities, and learning communities (Kuh, 2008; Stebleton et al., 2014). During my undergraduate program, I participated in first-year experience (FYE), which provided the space to meet students from different faculties and gain insights into university life. I appreciated having peers who shared similar experiences during the FYE program. At our scheduled meetings led by a faculty facilitator, we had specific events, including volunteering and community service.

Another recommendation to support first-generation students' sense of belonging is through the use of college counselors. In Jamaica, we use the term academic advisors instead of college counselors. Stebleton et al. (2014) found that college counselors could strategically advise students, refer students to opportunities on campus, share information regarding mental health services, and encourage students to participate in high-impact educational practices.

Persistence and First-Generation Students in Higher Education

Accessing higher education is one factor but also matriculating to the next semester, the next academic year, and finally, graduation is a critical accomplishment and necessary step for first-generation students. First-generation students are predicted to leave after the first year or stay enrolled at a four-year institution through to their bachelor's degree (Pascarella et al., 2004). A study examining attrition and degree completion found that first-generation students were exposed to higher risks of leaving college and were less likely to complete their degrees on time (Ishitani, 2006). A recommendation from Ishitani (2006) stated that graduation rates and students; persistence could improve depending on pre-college characteristics such as students' high

school academic attributes. While I understand Ishitani's point regarding an emphasis on academic attributes, I also think about the balance of whether we are creating sustainable pathways for students to access higher education if academically they are successful in their standardized tests such as the SATs, LSAT, or in the case of Jamaica, CSEC, and CAPE.

In Jamaica, pathways are created for students, such as the Career Advancement Program (CAP) in non-traditional high schools introduced in 2010. CAP provides the opportunity for students to re-do CSEC subjects or sit CAPE subjects while learning skills training (Adams & Hayle, 2021). Non-traditional high schools are secondary schools that were upgraded to high schools (Adams & Hayle, 2021). Although CAP is one of the pathways introduced for Jamaican high school students to access higher education, it connotes a negative perception. The Ministry of Education and Youth, administrators, and educators have labeled CAP a "second chance" program. As such, it is treated as an "add-on," and students are treated as failures along with the narrative that CAP's quality is inferior to the elitist programs. Adams and Hayle (2021) agree that the perpetual negative language fosters elitism in higher education which then becomes a barrier for students who experience low confidence or are not knowledgeable about HE programs.

This narrative of "second chance" referring to the Jamaican CAP students also connects to UNESCO 2022 conceptual paper on the need to rethink merit. For example, changing the narrative of winners and losers and failed students. For instance, students are perpetually graded on their academic performance to determine their high school placement. When students do not meet the requirements of what is classified as the

expected average score for an exam, this creates a long-lasting effect of the "winners and losers" narrative based on a meritocratic process (Soares, 2017; Sabzalieva et al., 2022). I agree with Soares (2017) that standardized tests such as the ACT/SAT are biased and stigmatize minoritized groups. In Jamaica, as discussed by Adams and Hayle (2021), the standardized tests and university requirements for admission are also factors affecting access to higher education.

Another study emphasized that approximately "60 percent of first-generation students are less likely to graduate with their peers" (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016, p. 9). While research studies focus on SES, Wilbur and Roscigno (2016) found that first-generation students can still experience challenges; even when SES increases, the challenges are not eradicated. I appreciate this narrative as even with a tuition-based scholarship, students like me still had challenges navigating other aspects of the campus environment. Challenges for me included deciding how involved I wanted to be on the university's campus while maintaining my GPA to keep the scholarship and not knowing who my academic advisor was during my first semester or what this even meant.

Additionally, faculty-student interactions and involvement in extracurricular activities influenced the likelihood of first-generation students graduating. For example, while first-generation students were working and studying or living at home, experiencing stressful family or personal events negatively affected completing their degrees (Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016). For me, these stressful events were being exposed to crime and violence and, losing friends and family to gun violence, fear of being prevented from entering the exam room in the second semester of my first year due to tuition, maintaining the required GPA to secure the scholarship, going many days without

lunch, inability to go home during sporadic gunfire among other challenges. Therefore, I had numerous stressful events that played a role in how I persisted at university to meet my ultimately goal of completing my undergraduate degree.

In general, I observed that the research on first-generation students consistently referred to family and the use of the word parents or nuclear family. Interestingly, studies specifying single-parent, multigenerational households and first-generation students were not explicitly stated. Secondly, I noted that the literature mentioned family and home, that is, first-generation students' households. However, the other factors within first-generation students' environments outside their homes were not emphasized except Perna's model highlighting some aspects of the environment regarding family and school community.

First-Generation Students: Hidden Assets

I intentionally structured the literature review to end with research on first-generation students' through an assets-based lens. By assets-based, I focus on the strengths and hidden skills, and socio-cultural capital of first-generation students that will help them thrive in higher education. There is a "need for a pedagogical shift from "problems" to "possibilities" which will help ease the transition of students into higher education, especially those coming from under-represented and under-privileged backgrounds" (Krutkowski, 2017, p. 227). Winkle-Wagner et al. (2020) stated that several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) recognized the need to utilize an assets-based approach for students by embracing and celebrating their backgrounds.

I found that while there were valuable recommendations and insightful analyses on first-generation students, the focus was on socio-economic status and an overuse of the word "disadvantaged" so much that I utilized synonyms in some cases. As Baldridge (2014) puts it, "this deficit framing disregards the assets that Black and minoritized youth bring to educational spaces, thus ignoring their agency - and thereby limiting the ways they are imagined, engaged, and educated" (p. 440). Reviewing deficit and non-deficit narratives was necessary for this dissertation. The literature on first-generation university students is rare in Jamaica, and studies on first-generation university students and their community environments are even rarer. The studies reviewed can provide a basic understanding of first-generation students and encourage more research in this area in the Caribbean. Additionally, by looking at the hidden assets of first-generation students, higher education institutions can adequately support those from underserved and under-resourced communities in Jamaica, not just mere survival but ensuring that these students thrive to the end of their degree completion. Moreover, numerous deficit-lens studies, some of which I have included in this review, have stated the problems but fail to provide sufficient information on what strategies to implement to support first-generation students holistically.

In (post)colonial Jamaica, challenges faced by first-generation students are compounded; as such, some students are internally driven to complete higher education (Roofe et al., 2022). Also, first-generation students have hidden assets that they bring to higher education. Minicozzi and Roda's (2020) study on first-generation students' hidden assets found that students who are taught to be independent and completed prior work experience during high school workers are better prepared for the transition to higher

education. I can attest that this is where some of my higher education knowledge came from, picking up bits and pieces of information on my summer jobs. These same students with independency and work experience have a "go it alone" mentality and are unsure how to advocate for themselves (Minicozzi & Roda, 2020). While non-first-generation students may not be as independent due to being spoon-fed by their teachers and parents, they have self-advocacy experiences as they are taught how to build networks and seek help from faculty (Minicozzi & Roda, 2020).

The Critical Race Theory community cultural wealth model also recognizes the various forms of capital that students of color bring from their homes and communities to higher education (Yosso, 2005). The types of capital include aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant, and social (Yosso, 2005). Aspirational focuses on students' hopes and dreams despite the barriers to higher education. Familial capital is nurtured within students' families and extended families. Within this setting, students gain insights into their cultural knowledge, learn lessons, understand the resources within their communities, and build connections with their environments. For example, through school, social community settings, sports, or religious gatherings (Yosso, 2005). Communication experiences with more than one language account for linguistic capital and intellectual and social skills (Yosso, 2005).

Students of color also have their navigational capital. These are skills that assist them in navigating the university campus and leaning on their individual agency despite the barriers (Yosso, 2005). Another asset is resistant capital, skills utilized by students of color to challenge the inequities of oppressive systems such as higher education. Finally, social capital refers to students' networks and community resources which are critical to

supporting their persistence. For example, leaning on their emotional support systems to remind them that they are not alone in their higher education pursuits (Yosso, 2005). Yosso's community cultural wealth model provides insights into the unrecognized skills that students of color possess and have utilized to support their navigation of higher education. This research supports the dissertation's research question regarding the influence of home community environments on first-generation Jamaican university students, also a predominantly Black population (Stewart et al., 2017).

Furthermore, a study examining first-generation students' assets during transition times found that reflexivity, academic resilience, goal-orientation, optimism, civic-mindedness, and proactivity are skills students utilize to enhance their higher educational experiences (Hands, 2020). Hands (2020) targeted librarians and educators to support online learning for first-generation students and also leaned on Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity for higher education institutions to better serve first-generation students, for example, in a virtual learning environment (Hands, 2020). Additionally, Garrison and Gardner (2012) study revealed 13 strengths that support the development of first-generation students' assets. These are "resourcefulness, strategic thinking, self-reliance, practical realism, flexibility, persistence, positivity, hopefulness, self-confidence, insightfulness, compassion, gratitude, and balance" (Garrison & Gardner, 2012, p. 2).

Moreover, Winkle-Wagner et al. (2020) examined an assets-based approach program at Spelman College on Black alumnae women's experiences. This study discussed creating a culture of success and analyzed research that focused on how creating a positive campus environment supports African American/Black students'

academic, social, and emotional outcomes (Winkle-Wagner et al., 2020). Similar to

Yosso (2005), Winkler-Wagner et al. (2020) focused on the social capital aspect of

students to understand how Spelman College deliberately created programs for Black

women to thrive in college and beyond. Examples of these programs at Spelman College

included hosting a parting ceremony and new orientation for the women when their

parents dropped them off to begin their first year on campus. This ceremony was for the

students to say goodbye to their parents/caregivers. I found this interesting as it speaks to

the connection the institution is building with students' parents/caregivers and assuring

them that the institution was committed to supporting their children who are now

university students. While this study was not specific to first-generation students, it

focused on an HBCU institution in which the institutions in Jamaica would be classified

as if they were being defined in a U.S. context. I acknowledge the contexts might vary;

however, I found Winkle-Wagner et al. (2020) helpful when looking at the literature on

the assets-based approach for Black students.

Summary

The literature offers an overview of community environments in Jamaica, access

to higher education, and first-generation students. The literature on community

environments clearly finds that Jamaica's colonial past is not a separate entity from the

country's (post)colonial experiences. The poison of colonialism is not only evident in the

high crime and violence rates across Jamaica but also embedded in the education system.

The literature provided insights to access to education in Jamaica before and after

emancipation as well as post-independence in 1962. The evidence here confirmed that

access to higher education was intended for any other social group except those at the top of society in Jamaica.

The access literature intentionally sought to highlight literature on the Caribbean through the UNESCO reports, among other non-Caribbean literature. The literature on access supported the general higher education global and international debates regarding increasing access for all. I connected this goal to the broader picture as discussed in Chapter One, Jamaica's national plan of reaching the objectives of Vision 2030, inclusive of a reduction of crime and violence, eliminating poverty, and access to education and higher education. The access literature also stated numerous challenges that prevent or make it difficult for students in Jamaica to access higher education. Similar barriers were also presented from non-Caribbean literature. Additionally, the access literature includes models/frameworks such as Perna's student success model or the sensemaking framework that educators and institutions could review to see what elements could support their high school to university access transition programs.

I close the literature review by bringing back the focus on first-generation students, highlighting literature examining the challenges and hidden assets of first-generation students. The literature review clearly finds that the definition of first-generation students is limited to nuclear families and does not account for first-generation students from different types of family settings. The literature also highlights the need for targeted support for first-generation students to persist in higher education. There is also a need for these students to have insights on how to tap into their social and cultural capitals to lean in on their hidden skills. From the review, it is also clear that within the Jamaican context, there is a need for more research at the higher education level that

examines home community environments' influence on first-generation university students' access and persistence in higher education. Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, my study seeks to understand how home community environments shape first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education through a (post)colonial lens.

Chapter Three: Methodology

I am not eminent by western normative academic standards,
but I am the personification and embodiment of decolonization.
I am the descendant of slave quarters
And represent the dispossessed communities of Indigenous people who
for generations…have been treated as disposable.

(Ferguson, 2019, p. viii)

I open this chapter with words written by me in the foreword of *Decolonizing*

Qualitative Research Approaches: For and by the Caribbean by Stewart (2019). In

conducting this study, I reflected on these words and my position as a Caribbean

researcher. As a Caribbean national, I wanted to ensure that developing this study would

include pieces of who I am, what I represent, and how I engaged with participants.

Through this positionality, the study is grounded in and informed by a Caribbean research

methodology, Liming along with Photovoice. In Chapters One and Two, I introduced the

metaphor of the tree. I explained the connection to the dissertation and its relationship to

the study and literature review. When I think of the layers of the tree, I think of how

leaves on the same tree can tell a different story. Like fruits growing from the same tree,

sizes and shapes may vary, and individuals from similar community environments might

have different experiences that shape their university journey. This grounds my approach

to reshaping how this study engaged with participants centering on their knowledge and

lived experiences as they reflect on their educational growth. Finally, the use of the tree

metaphor is weaved into the shape of the narratives embedded throughout the

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dissertation, shaping like the crown of a tree if one were to connect the end of each sentence by drawing lines.

This chapter includes the research question, the researcher's positionality, a rationale for utilizing a qualitative approach, details on the Caribbean research methodology, Liming, and the use of Photovoice methodology. The chapter describes the details of conducting the study and how the data was analyzed. Additionally, the chapter provides insights into how the theoretical framework informs the analytical process and ethical considerations. Like Chapters One and Two, I layer my voice through the use of poems and personal narratives embedded throughout the chapter.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

This study aims to understand the role of home community environments in shaping first-generation Jamaican students' access and persistence in higher education. The study is guided by the key following main research questions and sub-questions:

1. How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their home community environments?
   a. How do home community environments shape first-generation students' higher education journey?
2. How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their access and persistence in higher education?
   a. How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their higher educational experiences?

For this study, first-generation refers to Jamaican university students (including their siblings, if any) who are currently attending university or have completed their first degrees. Still, their parent(s) or guardian(s) have never attended university or obtained any higher education credentials. Therefore, no parent or guardian has completed a bachelor's degree. As discussed in Chapter One, the researcher intentionally focused on this definition of first-generation students. She and her older brother fall within this group, with both parents having no bachelor's degree. I deliberately used the terms parent(s) or guardian(s) to acknowledge that not all first-generation students come from families with both parents. For this study, participants were from different types of families, including cases where both parents were present and others where only their maternal parent raised them sometimes with the help of external families such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and by extension, other members of the community. Therefore, this study challenges the normative characteristic of first-generation students being defined as having both parents present in the household.

The literature review in Chapter Two shows that students' home community environments contribute to their lived experiences, including their higher education journey. By including community environments as a focus of the study, the researcher refers to the home community environment or neighborhood that first-generation Jamaican university students grew up in or were raised in. By understanding the role of home community environments, the study contributes to the literature on how higher education institutions can better appreciate first-generation Jamaican university students' backgrounds and how to support these students' access and persistence in higher education. The literature demonstrates that universities often focus on the campus

community and what support is needed within the campus environment for university students. I agree with ensuring that the campus environment is equipped with the resources to aid the student population. However, a more wholesome approach is understanding where university students are coming from including the various types of home community environments. When considering students' access and persistence in higher education in Jamaica, we cannot ignore their experiences growing up within their home community environments and how this shapes their on-campus experiences while studying. Specifically, the literature concludes that students who identify as first-generation students tend to experience some challenges in transitioning from high school to university. This supports the need to look at first-generation Jamaican university students' experiences within their home community environments and in higher education.

Positionality

Prior to my master's degree, I would have never thought that my positionality was relevant. This mindset is connected to how I was taught within a British education system from kindergarten to higher education. I vividly remember classes where I was taught that using personal pronouns, reflections, and poetry was not acceptable for assignments. However, this changed by the time I transitioned to my master's degree. I now had a professor who required reflections as part of course assignments and the frequent phrase "layer the paper with your voice." Who would have thought that my social orientation and perspectives would be valuable to my learning and research processes? Thus, it is important to explicitly locate my positionality within this study as

my identity and social orientation inevitably influence the entire process of this dissertation journey.

My positionality is shaped by my lived experiences and influences my professional relationships with the participants of the study. As a Jamaican studying in the United States, I play both roles of an insider/outsider. To reflect on these layers, I explored the work of Collins (1986; 1999; 2016), Ganga and Scott (2006), and McNess et al. (2015). Being an insider, I come with shared common history and experiences (Collins, 1986). As an insider-outsider, I reflect on the complexities of the relationship between the researcher and participants by critically examining the ethical, methodological, and epistemological issues with this dynamic (Ganga & Scott, 2006). As an insider, Jamaican conducting research with other Jamaicans from similar backgrounds affords me a certain level of social proximity that increases awareness between myself and the participants of the study (Ganga & Scott, 2006). This insider role influenced my objectivity and choice of utilizing a Caribbean research methodology, Liming, to interact with participants. This insider role also led me to think of how I could pair the use of photographs by using Photovoice to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences as well as to create collaboratively recommendations that could inform policies within the Jamaican higher education context. Both Liming and Photovoice are explained in the section describing the methodologies utilized for the study.

Notably, being an insider comes with a level of comfort and a sense of belonging (McNess et al., 2015). This sense of belonging supported the research process of engaging participants who also identified as Jamaican nationals. As an insider, I created a sense of trust between the researcher and participants as well as created a space where

Jamaican Creole was freely used with humor, lots of teasing, and casual banter. This sense of trust also led to moments of vulnerability between the researcher and participants of the study. These moments included stories that participants revealed they were sharing for the first time outside of their families. There were also moments when I could be viewed as an outsider by some of the participants. I was interested in liming with participants who had completed their undergraduate degrees or are currently in their second year or above at the university level. With this in mind, I am categorically differentiated as an intellectual elite (Stewart, 2013). For example, I attended a traditional elitist high school and obtained both bachelor's and master's at an institution known as the leading university in the region. While writing this dissertation, I am an international student who is also seen as a "Jamaican in foreign." Therefore, I approach this study with an insider/outsider lens.

The "outsider within status is bound to generate tension, for people who become outsiders within are forever changed by their new status" (Collins, 1986, s. 29). With these layers in mind, I was hyperaware of the power dynamics and tensions that may arise and the level of familiarity in some cases, based on the universities participants attended and the communities they were from. Additionally, one participant I was meeting for the first time and my role as an insider supported our connections built through liming together. Having completed the study, I can confidently say that I observed moments of trust and pauses regarding participants' sharing specific details about their families for the first time. As an insider, I could listen keenly and create a space of trust, so much so that some participants verbally declared that they were sharing because they trusted me as a researcher and the connection we made. To this end,

authenticity and transparency were critical elements for conducting the study, writing up the data, analyzing with care, and being open to responding to anyone who had an interest in the study, even if they could not participate.

Initially, Collins' use of the term outsider-within "described how a social group's placement in the specific, historical context of race, gender and class inequality might influence its point of view on the world" (Collins, 1999, p. 85). Upon reflection, Collins defined outsider-within as "social locations or border spaces occupied by groups of unequal power. Individuals claim identities as "outsiders within" by their placement in these social locations" (Collins, 1999, p. 88). With regards to my dissertation, as the outsider, I have the privilege as a researcher and Caribbean scholar to not only communicate with participants from various backgrounds but also to occupy various spaces in order to obtain insider knowledge from those who have volunteered to participate in the study. In full transparency, I originally started out with two research questions, then led with one and it was through an "outsider within" lens that I was able to restructure the research questions with the final study having four questions that were better aligned with the purpose of the study.

If you asked me at the beginning of this journey what I was disrupting with my research,

I would not have an in-depth response.

Not that I did not value my work or knew that I was contributing to some form of change.

But I was not able to see holistically that this research was acting as some form of transformative praxis.

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One that had the potential to encourage others to conduct research outside of

mainstream oppressive practices.

An approach that honors Caribbean ways of knowing.

An approach where deconstruction and decolonization were involved in the

process.

- Shen

Collins' (2016) publication in Departures in Critical Qualitative Research on

Black Feminist Thoughts as Oppositional Knowledge added another layer to my

positionality. Collins (2016) stated that "oppositional means doing serious, diligent, and

thoughtful intellectual work that aims to dismantle unjust intellectual and political

structures" (p. 134). Additionally, Black feminist thought as an oppositional

knowledge…aims to build new knowledge about the social world in order to stimulate

new practices" (Collins, 2016, p. 135). My socio-cultural orientation as a Black woman

with African ancestors and from a family of strong Black women influences my research

practices and my intention to engage in scholarship that values who I am as a researcher,

the participants that I engage with, and most of all the understanding that my experiences

are valid and embedded within my approach in resisting anti-oppressive practices to

research.

Contextualizing the Epistemology, Ontology, and Axiology of the Study

Throughout my graduate studies journey (master's and doctoral), I have been

challenged to think about the why, what, and how I have been taught, the systems I have

been educated in, and what research means to me. Even as I finalized my thesis, I continuously asked these questions about research and my experiences. I am sure these feelings and questions will continue beyond my doctoral journey. Research that is undertaken by the Caribbean and for the Caribbean shapes the approach of the theoretical frameworks, epistemology, axiology, ontology, methodology, and ethics of research (Smith, 2012; Nakhid et al., 2018; Stewart, 2019). This position, as a Caribbean national, has led to an analysis of *self* and continuous reflection of my identity and my purpose within research. I lean on Caribbean scholars Lewis Gordon and Sylvia Wynter's work to further conceptualize my worldview. Gordon (2008; 2014; 2020) discusses African philosophy, and the works of Wynter (1995; 2003) challenges Eurocentric epistemologies. I also use the work of Hyacinth Evans on Caribbean qualitative research and reflect on the legacy of colonialism. Both Gordon and Evans are Jamaican-born, and Wynter was born in Cuba and raised in Jamaica.

As a Caribbean national, I sought to create a culturally affirming research setting knowing that I wanted to interact with my People, Jamaicans. Caribbean ways of knowing have not always been honored. In fact, we still struggle to conduct research using our own knowledge systems. This study set out to do just that, using cultural affirming ways to engage with participants, and it was challenging yet rewarding. Also, there are challenges when it comes to questioning who we are. Wynter (2003) discusses coloniality, truth, power, and freedom and the philosophies of the "Western bourgeois." Wynter's (2003) work advocates for decolonial thinking and critiques knowledge as humans have come to know it, that which has been shaped by the European and Western "Man." As I read Wynter's (1995) chapter *1492: A New World View*, all I could think of

was what was taught about the year 1492. Wynter (1995) shares that the dispute over 1492 between the celebrants and the dissidents continues. "The celebrants are intellectuals of Western European and Euroamerican descent, and the dissidents are intellectuals mainly of indigenous or Native American descent…" (Wynter, 1995, p. 5).

An example of this New World debate, regarding the1492 (in Jamaica's case 1494), in primary school in Jamaica, I was taught that Christopher Columbus (Mr. C) "discovered" Jamaica. This knowledge and "fact" were written in our social studies and history books. I received graded assignments and had to practice reciting this information for quizzes. Once I transitioned to the latter part of high school, my history teacher, Mrs. Nelson, taught us that Jamaica was not "discovered" by Mr. C, and the narrative regarding the indigenous Taíno population began to shift in the schools. This is just one of many memorable British educational experiences that had me second-guessing some of what I was taught and the books I had to read. These same questions led me to reflect on what kind of research I would like to conduct and the connections I would form for this dissertation study and beyond.

So as to not replicate the "one-way" approach or use of any anti-oppressive methods to conducting research, I was committed to bringing in as much Caribbean knowledge and culture for this study. In examining the axiology, ontology, and epistemology of Caribbean research, "one has to pay careful attention to the social location, status, and perspective of the researcher and the informant, and the context in which the study was done" (Evans, 2009, p. 15). As discussed by Evans (2009), all these elements influenced what I value and my perceptions of reality. I believe that each participant comes with unique experiences and perspectives, even if there are similar

circumstances. This study sought to honor the participants' knowledge, their multiple realities and lived experiences within their home community environments, and how they blossomed like a tree at university. My role as an insider/outsider comes with biases and presents the opportunity to utilize a Caribbean research methodology.

In thinking about the pandemic and having to consider how to create a space on the Zoom Conference Platform, I was introduced to the Caribbean research methodology, Liming. Wynter (1995) proposes that we (the Caribbean) develop our own culturally affirming ways of knowing as well as leaning on our Indigenous roots, which have been erased by the Europeans. For example, Jamaica's Indigenous population, the Taíno, was estimated to be 60,000 in 1509, and by 1611 74 persons were reported (Picking & Vandebroek, 2019). The mass destruction of the Taíno (Taino) meant that their culture and knowledge systems were erased, which has resulted in multiple changes in the historical narratives when combing through the history books, Jamaican archives, Jamaica National Heritage Trust, and National Library. Some of these narratives include questioning whether the Taínan name for Jamaica was Xaymaca or Yamaye. Traditionally we have been taught that Xaymaca was the Taíno name for the island, which meant "land abounding with springs" Jamaica was called the land of wood and water (Atkinson, 2006, p. 1). However, there have been other arguments that Yamaye was the Taíno name for the island (Atkinson, 2006). Even the debate around whether the term Arawaks or Taínos should be used took a while to confirm that the terms were being used and taught in schools incorrectly. A separate study is needed for a deeper dive into the Taíno, the indigenous population of Jamaica. However, I mentioned the Indigenous people of Jamaica to highlight that there have always been questions about the

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construction of knowledge and whose historical lens is seen as a point of reference for the Caribbean.

Therefore, my positionality made me cognizant of the communities and participants I engaged with and served in my professional and personal experiences. How do I honor and legitimize other forms of knowledge? I believe that knowledge can be shared through multiple sets of relationships that have been developed between humans and their environments. Moreover, there is no one set of knowledge that is the only truth as perpetuated by Eurocentric and Western thinking. Jamaican-born philosopher, Lewis Gordon, refers to the "decolonisation of knowledge [and] norms" and states that the fact that "knowledge has been *colonised* raises the question of whether it was ever free" (Gordon, 2014, p. 81). In the findings of the study, I discussed how participants spoke about the role of the English Language and other colonial norms that they had to assimilate to in and outside of their home community environments.

Additionally, there is a need to center African philosophy in reference to the "exploration of modern life as understood through contradictions raised by the lived reality of African Diasporic people" (Gordon, 2014, p. 87). A total of 12 to 15 million enslaved Africans were forcibly brought to the West (Picking & Vandebroek, 2019). Arguably, Jamaica's culture has been influenced by the Indigenous and African people, and today the island is a predominantly Black population. Moreover, as an Afro-Caribbean scholar, I set out to engage in a process that helps me as a researcher to "appreciate the social worlds, collectively imagined forms of social life, and modes of communication of our African and Caribbean diasporas to affirm their way of knowing"

(Nakhid & Farrugia, 2021, p. 189). I was able to achieve this goal through the Liming and Photovoice methodologies.

In the next section, I look at the rationale for employing qualitative research and discuss the two-fold methodological approach for the study, Liming Methodology and Photovoice. This section also describes the study's methods of data collection and analysis.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach

As I write this chapter, I reflect upon that moment during my doctoral journey when I once submitted to a journal. Two of the reviewers commented that narratives and poetry were not qualitative research. I must admit I was shattered as I have always appreciated the elements of qualitative research that allows a researcher to study various topics. In resisting this stance, this dissertation is layered with poetic narratives as a reflection of how I choose to communicate with the audience, giving insights into my positionality and quoting from the participants of the study. I grew up with Jamaican folklore, proverbs, and read local poems in school by Jamaican poets such as Louise Bennett. I grew up dancing, having fun with my family, and always serving my community. I hope this study will be a small contribution to a more significant transformation and reconstruction of how to include Caribbean ways of knowing and embrace the use of Caribbean approaches to qualitative research.

For this study, I hoped to understand the role of home community environments on first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. Therefore, to dive deeper into this purpose, I chose qualitative research based on the nature of the study and research questions. This research approach aligns with

Caribbean scholar and qualitative researcher Hyacinth Evans' (2009) characteristics of qualitative research. There are six characteristics of qualitative research in the Caribbean (Evans, 2009). The first characteristic is "face to face dialogue between the researcher and the person who provides the information" (Evans, 2009, p. 14). The second is the "establishment of a relationship of trust and confidence between the researcher and the researched" (Evans, 2009, p. 14). The third characteristic states that the person providing the information to the researcher describes their experiences, "perspectives, feelings, emotions, and reactions to related events or to some reality are an important part of the data" (Evans, 2009, p. 14). Another feature of the third characteristic stipulates that the participants' lived experiences or inner life is the focus of the research. The fourth characteristic stipulates that the information gathered by the research is interpreted (Evans, 2009). The fifth indicates that data collection methods include interviewing, participant observation, autobiographical sketches, or diary writing (Evans, 2009). The sixth and final characteristic states that the information gathered is informed by thick description (Evans, 2009).

This dissertation embodied Evans' (2009) description of qualitative research, with the exception of face-to-face interactions. The data collection section within this chapter discusses how the Zoom Video Conferencing platform was used as a space to interact with participants for the study. Through a qualitative approach, I am able to understand the research problem or topic from the lens of the local population (first-generation Jamaican university students) and effectively obtain culturally specific social contexts of the participants of the study (Mack et al., 2005). Qualitative research is about "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds,

and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6).

My dissertation aimed to highlight and emphasize students' home community

environment as playing an integral role in their access and persistence in higher education

while also capturing their university experiences as first-generation Jamaican university

students.

Additionally, qualitative research can account for using non-numerical data such

as pictures and valuing the natural flow and uniqueness of the findings among

participants (Brodsky et al., 2016). In utilizing non-numerical data, using qualitative

research facilitated the use of photographs for this study through Photovoice. Participants

were able to engage in the process of reflection regarding their education journey

discussed in detail in the data collection section. Also, the type of guided prompts created

for the study was open-ended. In this case, a qualitative approach supported fluid and

informal interactions that aided the construction of knowledge. As the researcher, I

wanted participants to be free to engage in the conversation, and a qualitative approach

offered room for more flexibility and greater spontaneity for interacting with the

participants (Mack et al., 2005).

Finally, using Photovoice and the Caribbean methodology called Liming also

informs qualitative research (Nakhid-Chatoor, Nakhid, Wilson & Fernández Santana,

2018). As a Jamaican and Caribbean scholar, I wanted to explore a Caribbean

methodology to gather information from the participants along with using Photovoice. A

qualitative approach presented the opportunity for the researcher to tap into both

methodologies to understand first-generation Jamaican university students' interpretation

of their experiences within their home community environments and how these

experiences connected to their higher education journey. Additionally, utilizing a qualitative approach provided greater room for the researcher to uncover "the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 5-6). This phenomenon is related explicitly to the first-generation Jamaican students' community environments shaping their university education. Based on the purpose of the study, a quantitative approach was not applicable hence the selection of a qualitative study.

This study used a two-fold methodological approach for data collection. The first was through the Liming methodology by hosting liming sessions online (onlimes), and the second was through the use of Photovoice. The following section is divided into two parts. The first section details the Liming methodology, and the second discusses Photovoice. For the section on Liming methodology, I leaned on the work of scholars advocating for Caribbean Research Methodologies and published research within this area. Specifically, I acknowledge the foundational work of Liming methodology by Camille Nakhid, Anabel Fernández Santana, Josh Mosca, Margaret Nakhid-Chatoor, and Shakeisha Wilson-Scott. I am happy that I was introduced to this team of scholars during my doctoral journey and I was both nervous and excited to learn about using Liming for research. Following the section on Liming methodology, I describe the Photovoice methodology and utilized non-Caribbean research studies (Wang & Burris, 1997; Sutton-Brown, 2014; Liebenberg, 2018; Wass et al., 2020) along with a recent study coming out of the Caribbean by Carmel Roofe, Therese Ferguson, Saran Stewart and Neveta Roberts (2022).

Come Lime Wid Mi – Caribbean Research Methodology, Liming

Mi born a yaad, mi come from yaad.

De a foreign a study BUT

Yaad is Jamaica. I am Jamaican.

Knowing that I was interested in interacting with current first-generation Jamaican university students and graduates, I was excited to hear about an emerging Caribbean research methodology, Liming. Liming (sometimes spelled Lyming) is defined as a "scheduled or non-scheduled event where a group of people (friends, family, acquaintances, etc.) takes time to "hang out"" (Maharajh & Ali, 2006, p. 4). When I heard that the practice of liming was an emerging methodology, I thought of when planting a new seed and anticipating how it would bloom and how far the branches would grow. Along with this excitement came bouts of nervousness because I was really diving into the unknown. After all, liming was only familiar to me in a casual setting, growing up liming in my yaad, community, at work, and other social events but not as a research methodology.

As I thought about citation politics and access to Caribbean research, this uncertainty came with questions. For example, was there enough research accessible and available to support this study? Was it worth the risk to learn a new methodology and cross unfamiliar territory? Finally, would this choice methodology be supported by my committee and other Caribbean scholars? I concluded that what was the point of going on a doctoral journey if not to contribute to the existing knowledge and learn about new areas, such as a new methodology that was aligned with my Caribbean culture? These questions and more led me to engaging with liming.

Liming as a Methodology

The methodology of a study focuses on the approach of the study. This describes the "strategy that guides the actual research plan" and indicates how the study should be conducted (Jones et al., 2014, p. 75). Also, the specific philosophy that the study is situated informs the type of methodology that indicates the methods for collecting data as well as the direction of the research (Jones et al., 2014). In other words, the methodology is the design of the study. In advocating for Caribbean research methodologies, Caribbean scholars encourage the exploration of "various worldviews including those of Caribbean people" (Nakhid et al., 2019, p. 1).

Figure 2: Types of Qualitative Methodological Approaches
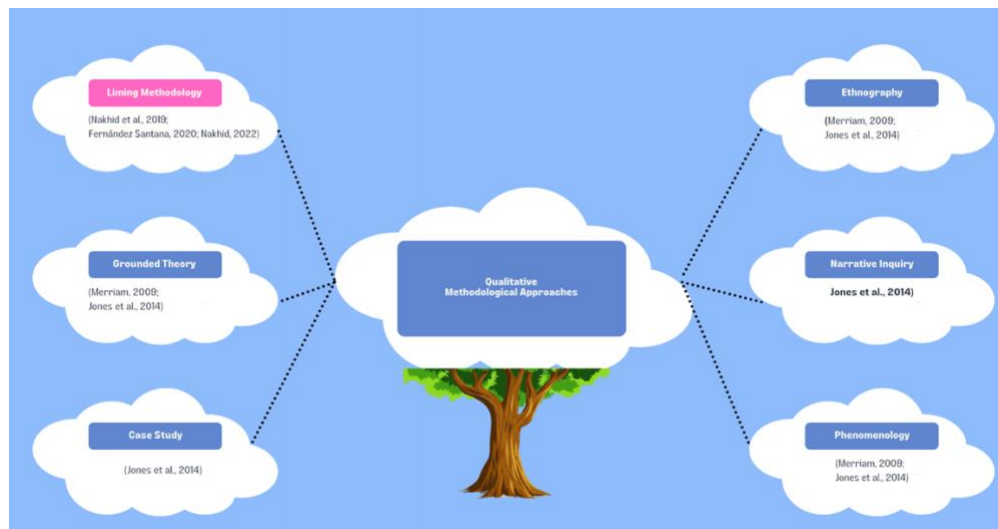
Note. This figure depicts Liming, a Caribbean research methodology, among other types of qualitative methodological approaches.

In utilizing the Liming methodology, Figure 2 represents my attempt at visualizing Liming among other qualitative research approaches. Figure 2 highlights some of the popular types of qualitative research discussed when perusing qualitative

research books that are widely used in academia. I join the Caribbean Research Network scholars in positioning Liming methodology as another approach to conducting research specifically for the populations who can relate to the cultural practice of liming. This is not to say that no other type of qualitative research approach could not have been used to support the objectives of this study. I acknowledge that I could have selected groundings by Walter Rodney, a Guyanese scholar, as a method to interact with the Jamaican participants. I could have utilized a narrative approach, among other qualitative methods. However, liming is what I grew up doing with family, friends, strangers, and colleagues at my yaad, in my community, at work, at social events, and conference calls with friends, just to name a few. The decision to learn more about the Liming methodology and apply it to the study was based on the researcher's identity as a Caribbean scholar and an advocate for engaging in research for and by the Caribbean.

I took a risk to learn something new.

But guess what, I've been taking risks all my life.

"Lights out!" – Mom said. Gangsters with rifles were in our yaad.

I had a history test to study for, so I lit a candle and got my book.

I sat on the toilet with my legs curled and the candle as I tried to study without making a sound. Since education was my passport away from rifles and bloodshed, I took the risk so that I could pass the history test.

- Shen

Liming and Ole talk, as a qualitative research methodology and method, respectively, challenges Eurocentric structures that function as *"othering* systems that

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devalue the potential of our own cultural practices" in the Caribbean (Fernández Santana et al. 2019, p. 101). In thinking about my tensions with unlearning and re-learning how to conduct research, I was eager to learn more about Caribbean research strategies, having worked on a decolonizing Caribbean qualitative research project (Stewart, 2019). My reflective journey had me thinking about all the limes I have engaged in during my lifetime, and I never once thought about equating liming to academic research. Also, the process of reflecting and acting on ways to decolonize research is rooted in resisting the colonial gaze (Yancy, 2008; Stewart, 2019). This colonial gaze refers to the "broadly construed epistemic perspective, a process of seeing without being seen, that constructs the Black body into its own colonial imaginary (Yancy, 2008, p. 6). Therefore, how could I use aspects of my identity as a Caribbean national using a Caribbean approach to research?

Yancy's (2008) article triggered many emotions as I reflected on my personal learning within a British education system in Jamaica (a former colony of Britain). Notably, "[the] idea is to get the colonized to accept the colonialist point of reference as the only point of reference" (Yancy, 2008, p. 6). Towards this end, using a Caribbean methodology that is relatable to the participants of the study supported this stance of resisting leaning on just the works of Creswell and other White male researchers in academia, for example. This stance meant that, yes, I read qualitative books, including Creswell's, but I also had several conversations with Caribbean researchers to locate the work of Caribbean scholars who have contributed to the field of qualitative research. As a Caribbean national, I can attest to the fact that "Caribbean research is a mirrored image of

colonial epistemology" (Stewart, 2019, p. 4). Therefore, this study sought to approach

data collection in a manner that was relational to the Jamaican nationals I engaged with.

What is Liming?

Liming is a "culturally affirming methodology that [utilizes] Caribbean modes of

constructing knowledge as a research approach" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 24). While

liming is defined as a scheduled or non-scheduled event for people to hang out (Maharajh

& Ali, 2006), it can also be a "spontaneous, informal gathering of people to talk and to

perhaps eat and drink, or an arranged get together with food and drink…" (Nakhid, 2022,

p. 91). Therefore, people get together to share something. Liming can involve sharing

information, laughter, food, new ideas, entertainment, or playing games, among other

things. The act of liming is referred to as *lime,* and those who participate in a lime are

called *limers*. A lime can take place with at least two or more persons. For this study,

liming was done between the researcher and another participant as the researcher was one

of the limers, further explained in the data collection section of the study.

Liming "is an activity focused on relaxation where limers can speak freely about

their experiences or where they might renew relationships" (Nakhid, 2022, p. 91). For the

purpose of the study, a liming approach was used to interact with participants on Zoom as

they shared their lived experiences within their home community environments and their

university journey. Notably, the Liming taxonomy originated in Trinidad and Tobago and

has been adapted across the Dutch, French, Spanish and English-speaking Caribbean

(Nakhid, 2022). With this in mind, I am not saying that the Caribbean is monolithic.

Instead, the process of liming, where people get together to lime, is a common practice

within the Caribbean diaspora. When I conducted a random Google search on liming, it

populated countries such as Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, and Guyana. The process of liming is adaptable and transferable, and liming has been adapted to fit within specific cultural mores within the Caribbean diaspora (Nakhid, 2022). Growing up in Jamaica, I witnessed and participated in the practice of liming. These discussions could be over sports, political or social commentary, disputing and negotiating an issue in the community, venting about a recent happening within our community or the wider society, or liming at Christmas time with family as we cook and play music in the yaad, among other practices.

As for using the practice of liming in academic research, this is relatively new. For example, I was taught to lean on the knowledge of the colonizers whose research books I have been educated from and sometimes have to comb through archives to find Caribbean scholars on specific topics. Moreover, in some instances of academic research, "we are expected to step out of our reality to observe as outsiders, taking on the task of dismantling it to fit foreign frameworks" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 52). Since the term framework is mentioned here, I acknowledge that I utilized a foreign framework for this study, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory. Additionally, Caribbean scholars explore the same framework to examine children and their environments in Jamaica (Cook & Jennings, 2016). Sadly, this is no surprise as from the standardized examinations I completed in Jamaica, some of our country's policies and practices are all influenced by foreigners and foreign and colonial frameworks. With this in mind, I was cognizant that I could not use a non-Caribbean framework alone based on the intentions of the study. Instead, I sought to include other (post) colonial theories along with

Bronfenbrenner's model which aligned with the Caribbean context for the study and the use of a culturally affirming methodology, Liming to engage with the participants.

I used Liming to locate myself as the researcher with other Jamaicans who self-selected to participate in the study. As I reflected on my educational experiences in Jamaica, I also thought about the fact that "Caribbean people have been re-writing history and restoring [an] indigenous understanding of knowledge for years" (Stewart, 2019, p. 21). However, "these are not popular movements in the academic as the old domination of plantation politics still runs deep throughout the halls of higher education institutions throughout the Caribbean" (Stewart, 2019, p. 21). In embarking on this journey of advocacy for Liming methodology, I too encountered some of this politics with Caribbean scholars suggesting that I rely on the work of non-Caribbean qualitative researchers. I understood the hesitancy and the suggestion of sticking to what I was taught. For example, Kovach (2010), in discussing the conversational method, states that Indigenous methodologies might be frowned upon by some scholars because of the bias towards the relational aspect. For scholars who utilize Indigenous methodologies, relational is seen as part of the process, which can also be viewed as a bias by other scholars (Kovach, 2010).

Despite the pushback, I opted to embrace learning about liming and using it for my research as it supports the call for conducting culturally relevant and affirming approaches to research for and by the Caribbean. When we plant seeds, they blossom into various shapes and sizes. This is how I think of research when I reflect on the various editions of research books published annually, and now liming is blossoming into its own for and by the Caribbean. Stewart (2022) writes about "performing goodness in

qualitative research methods" (p. 58). In reflecting on this goodness, I thought about the best ways to engage with this study using "anti-oppressive qualitative methods that reduce harm to… participants and their communities" (Stewart, 2022, p. 67). For me, this meant intentionally prioritizing the participants and their stories, highlighting how they flourished despite their challenges within their home community environments and along their education journey. For this to happen, a relational space had to be created. This intention led to inviting persons to *come lime wid mi* as part of the liming research process.

Figure 3 highlights the stages of the Liming methodology tailored to the study. The original graphic for liming was published by Fernández Santana et al. (2019), and in 2020 Fernández Santana created another version related to her dissertation (see Appendix G – permission to adapt the image). Figure 3 is a product of these publications where I used features specifically for my study to recreate the image. The top of Figure 3 is shaped like the crown of a tree with a faded green which aligns with the tree metaphor used throughout the study and connects with my childhood encounters with teaching trees. Chapter Four highlights participants connections with trees as many also spoke about the vegetation within their environment supplementing their meals for their families. The top layer also has the image of a cellular phone indicating how I connected with participants through the use of technology using my social media pages for the onlime sessions. The middle stage is a circle representing coming together to lime and share. This sharing entails laughter, humor, information, music, dance, food among other elements. Finally, the bottom layer is depicted in blue, representing participants looking towards the sky at the end of their educational journey and the emerging findings.

Figure 3: The Stages of Liming Methodology

1. **Building Connections**
   Invite participants

   Invitation sent via social media (WhatsApp and Instagram)

   Sharing dance
   Sharing music
   Sharing space on zoom
   Sharing enables

2. **Onlime (Liming online)**
   Data Collection

   Humor, teasing, laughter
   Ole Talk
   Sharing stories and experiences; limers share on their own terms
   Sharing photographs
   Iterative listening
   Overlapping interruption

3. **Liming Analysis and Writing**
   Write up Findings and Discussions

   Identifying Emerging Topics and Themes from Ole Talk
   Stay true to Limers' narratives
   Organize the information from ole talk

Note. Adapted from Liming and ole talk: Foundations for and characteristics of a culturally relevant Caribbean methodology, by A. Fernández Santana, C. Nakhid, M. Y. Nakhid-Chatoor and S. Wilson-Scott, 2019, *Caribbean Studies, 47*(1), p. 112 and Sharing our way: A study of Caribbean identity using liming as culturally affirming research methodology, by A. Fernández Santana, 2020, [Doctoral thesis, Auckland University of Technology], p. 266. Please see approval to adapt liming diagram in Appendix G.

Stages of Liming

There are three stages to Liming, (a) building connections, (b) liming, and (c) analysis and writing (Fernández Santana, 2020). The first stage, building connections, involves the researcher carrying out their recruitment strategies for their study. At this stage, the researcher invites persons to participate in the lime and asks those persons to share about the lime with others who might be interested in joining the liming sessions. At this stage, the researcher can utilize their network, for example, reaching out to community members, persons you have worked with, professionals from the community, universities, agencies, and other networking partners. Liming does not have to focus on one specific group or class of people. For example, persons from various socio-economic backgrounds can lime together. Therefore, a diverse group of people can participate in a lime. However, this might be specific when conducting research targeting a group of people. For example, this study targeted first-generation Jamaican university students and graduates.

At the building connections stage, the researcher also invites limers through 'word of mouth,' which is similar to snowballing technique, where other limers or members within the researcher's network refer potential participants or share the recruitment flier about the lime. Depending on the type of connections created with the participants, it supports the facilitation of ole talk to occur during the lime. Ole Talk, a feature of liming, consists of ongoing questions and answers between limers, engaging in sensemaking, and the ability to understand the experiences of each other (Nakhid-Chatoor et al., 2018). In other words, ole talk is the conversational component of liming and the method for

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collecting the data. The researcher presents examples of how ole talk occurred organically in the study in the liming analysis section and findings chapter of the study.

The second stage is the liming. This stage details where the lime takes place, where the researcher sets the scene for the conversation topic, and where the negotiation and interruption occur while limers are liming. This is the stage where limers and the researcher have a conversation and critical dialogue around the research questions. At this stage, the researcher is not neutral as they are also fully active in the process of knowledge construction. This includes sharing their experiences with the limers and also an active limer in the lime. At the liming stage, during the actual lime, certain characteristics become pronounced in what Fernández Santana et al. (2019) referred to as communicative competencies. For example, where limers are gesticulating, laughing, nodding in agreement, and talking over each other. In Fernández Santana's (2020) dissertation, she states that in liming methodology, positioning the researcher as a limer in the process creates space for the researcher to not only share their experiences but also to learn from others (the participants) during this process. Therefore, during the lime, the researcher has to shift away from being "neutral" but also creating a "relationship of intersubjectivity" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 63). Notably, intersubjectivity emerges through the active engagement of individuals who mutually construct actions, interactions and meanings together" (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller (2014 (p. 459).

Also, "those who draw on the concept of intersubjectivity to describe social phenomena understand that the sense of 'self' cannot be extracted from the rule-bound contexts that shape human interaction" (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014, p. 459). I would also add that the researcher's relationship with the participants comes into focus at

the building connections and liming stages. For example, the relationship with those

sharing the knowledge is a characteristic of indigenous methodology (Nakhid et al.,

2019). Furthermore, in using a Caribbean methodology, this relationship does not stop at

the research but goes beyond the study as the researcher sustains and continues the

relationships created before and after the study (Nakhid et al., 2019). Therefore, based on

my positionality and connection with the participants, as a Jamaican and with similar

lived experiences, it would have been challenging to remain neutral in all limes.

Additionally, at the liming stage, the physical lime can be face-to-face at a park,

someone's house (the host), the researcher's house, on the beach, among other physical

spaces, or like this study, liming can take place online. Online liming sessions are called

onlime sessions. There are no publications describing onlime sessions; however, the term

is used among the Caribbean Research Network members (C. Nakhid, personal

communication, April 5, 2022). This study contributes to the literature for liming online

and describes how the onlime space was created on Zoom for the study in the data

collection section.

Figure 3 (stages of Liming methodology) shows ole talk occurring during the

lime. The process of ole talk consists of ongoing questions and answers between limers,

engaging in sensemaking, and the ability to understand the experiences of each other

(Nakhid-Chatoor et al., 2018). For example, as Caribbean Islanders, when we engage in

ole talk, "knowledge is shared in ways that we understand and can make better meaning

of, using contexts and situations that will be familiar, and in a delivery with which we are

more comfortable" (Nakhid & Farrugia, 2021, p. 180). Ole talk can be used to understand

the lives of the participants in relation to the phenomenon being discussed (Nakhid,

Mosca & Nakhid-Schuster, 2020). Liming and ole talk are popular cultural practices in the Caribbean of "sharing and engaging…across…diverse ethnic, linguistic, and social contexts of the region" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 3). Ole talk occurred naturally during the onlime sessions as the conversation flowed in and out of the research topic (further discussed in the liming analysis).

Ole talk is defined as a "conversational method of knowledge construction, which responds to Caribbean ways of interaction" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 273). Ole talk is an integral component of liming and can occur outside of the lime. However, it can take place in any setting and is not bounded by strict rules of engagement. Ole talk is grounded in transcending from 'idle' conversations to popular topics in politics, fashion, and other trends (Nakhid, Mosca & Nakhid-Schuster, 2020). Fourthly, ole talk also addresses issues of who owns the narrative, the researcher, or those being researched. As ole talk takes place, the researcher is not detached from the conversation; instead plays an active role in sharing with limers and as a limer to engage in the process collectively (Fernández Santana, 2020). Additionally, "storytelling through ole talk is not owned by one person but has many narrators who pick up pieces of the story and fill it with their own version and interpretation, that is, their retelling of the story" (Nakhid & Farrugia, 2021, p. 180). Storytelling and oral traditions are popular cultural practices in the Caribbean, highlighting who we are and how we see and interpret the world (Nakhid, Mosca & Nakhid-Schuster, 2020).

Moreover, the custom of storytelling is exemplified through ole talk and is unique to the ways in which knowledge is shared in the Caribbean (Nakhid, Mosca & Nakhid-Schuster, 2020). For example, in the Caribbean culture, it is not "uncommon for a story

shared by someone to be owned by the listener as they recount the story in another lime"

(Nakhid & Farrugia, 2021, p. 180). Through liming and ole talk, stories are shared among

community members. For some scholars, the liming methodology is seen as emerging.

However, the practice of liming is embedded in the Caribbean culture of oral traditions

(Nakhid & Farrugia, 2021). For example, liming is practiced in Jamaica, Trinidad, and

Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados, to name a few countries.

Another feature embedded within the ole talk phase of liming is humor. Humor

occurs naturally as the lime is a space for relaxation. However, humor is not to be seen as

a weakness of the Liming methodology. Instead, humor is a critical practice in liming

where "humor and laughter are core resources with which we [Caribbean folks] make

sense of our experiences and have historically enabled extraordinary feats of resilience"

(Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 97). The research study might be focused on events and

experiences that presented obstacles or evoked unpleasant memories for participants,

where humor occurs to make the experience more palatable. For example, there is a

common saying among Caribbean people that we 'take bad something make laugh,' and

this practice is also connected to the Caribbean's colonial history (Vásquez, 2012). By

laughter, the issue being discussed is not taken lightly, but "humor allows the unpalatable

to be evoked and easily digested and, more, dislodges repressed thoughts and images that

influence conscious interaction" (Mohammed, 2003, p. 134). For example, for this study,

humor took the form of laughing about hard times now that we surpassed the challenges,

or humor took the form of mocking others when discussing high school experiences and

classism.

The third and final stage of the Liming methodology is the analysis and writing of the information gathered. This is where the liming analysis takes place, as developed by Fernández Santana (2020). The liming data refers to examining the data gathered from the limes. Liming is "multi-layered, discontinuous, iterative, full of ideas that are articulated, questioned and re-articulated" (Fernández Santana, 2020, p. 98). All these elements must be considered when writing up the data. Because liming can be so multi-layered, it can be challenging for the researcher who plays a dual role of the limer and researcher to decide how to negotiate between these spaces. I share more on this dual role in the data collection and liming analysis sections of the study. When analyzing the limes, the researcher needs to organize the liming data based on the purpose and objective of the research study. The liming analysis located the humor, ole talk, shared stories, moments of going off on a tangent, and most importantly, ensured that limers' narratives stayed connected.

Liming analysis has similar features to thematic analysis, with a slight distinction of the role of the researcher and approach to identifying themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p. 79). In thematic analysis, when writing up the data, "the researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96). For the thematic approach, the researcher plays an active role in reporting which themes/patterns are relevant and of interest for reporting to the readers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Also, thematic analysis utilizes a step-by-step strategy where the researcher

familiarizes themselves with the data, generates codes, searches for themes, reviews themes, defines and names themes, and writes up the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In a recent publication, Nikki Hayfield, in conversation with Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, discussed thematic analysis as a starting point for the researcher's journey and not to be taken as a rigid map or a step-by-step process (Braun et al., 2022). In this conversational publication, the authors encourage researchers to actively think about how they are approaching the steps of thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2022). As I read this conversation, I noted where Braun et al. (2022) stated that they were wrong on some of their explanations in thematic analysis and would conceptualize their current work differently in bringing this across to readers.

With this in mind, I thought about how liming methodology will continue to evolve, and maybe liming analysis will not be compared closely with thematic analysis in the near future. As for conducting the liming analysis, it is not recommended to decontextualize the themes (Fernández Santana, 2020). Notably, when analyzing ole talk, the researcher should avoid focusing on the linguistic patterns of the conversation and analyze the content of the conversations and what they mean to each limer (Fernández Santana, 2020). The researcher should observe prosodic features of the conversation, noting the gestures and stress patterns when the conversations are interrupted, the humor, and laughter (Fernández Santana, 2020). All of these elements are not analyzed individually. Therefore, the researcher must pay attention to all these features of ole talk to make meaning of what is shared in the conversation. For liming analysis, the researcher, who is also a limer, should maintain what was said by each limer to ensure that the shared knowledge is not fragmented. Another distinction between liming and

thematic analysis is the fact that for thematic analysis, the researcher defines the themes, which creates room for the knowledge to be decontextualized (Fernández Santana, 2020). The section on data analysis describes additional features of the liming analysis.

Liming Evolving from "the art of doing nothing"

The practice of liming is usually seen as 'idle talk' or 'hanging out' without expecting anything of substance, just a casual vibing with people. For example, outsider researchers such as Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Eriksen describes liming as the art of doing nothing. Eriksen (1990) research shed some light on liming practices in Trinidad and Tobago. However, as an outsider, the author's definition further perpetuated Westernized colonial ways of understanding Caribbean culture and how this can be misrepresented and misinterpreted. Notably, Eriksen (1990) relegates liming activity to people who are unemployed or irregular wage workers, engaging in 'idle talk' on the streets. As a Caribbean national, I find Eriksen's Eurocentric tone on liming to be very racist and classist and embedded in whiteness. As a Jamaican who engaged in the practice of liming without even thinking it applied to qualitative research, I can now say to outsiders that liming might be labeled as the art of doing nothing but to insiders, liming can be fulfilling and wholesome, and applicable to conducting research in the Caribbean.

In contrast to Eriksen (1990), other researchers challenged the negative assumptions of liming as the art of idling to argue that it is the art of doing something (McClish, 2016). Liming goes across all socio-economic classes and can be experienced in a public or private space (McClish, 2016). Some of these spaces include beaches, private homes, street corners, and clubs (McClish, 2016). Eriksen as a foreigner and outsider to the Caribbean, published their research and presented useful data about

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liming. However, not being from the culture, some aspects of Eriksen's research were not truly representative of the Caribbean. For example, labeling limers and liming as idle talk on the streets. The use of the words 'idle' and 'streets' arguably connotes that only a particular group of persons engage in liming. However, new research disputes Eriksen's colonized perspective to highlight how liming is more than idle talk, and anyone, regardless of their class, level of education, and employment status, can engage in a lime (McClish, 2016). I advocate for using a Caribbean research methodology, such as liming, which is reflective of inclusive research, one that is emancipatory and empowering (Nind, 2014).

Trees are nothing without their roots. In advocating for liming as a methodology and ole talk as a research method, it took dedication and commitment to going back to Caribbean roots, which is a melting pot of diverse experiences of formerly colonized countries. Liming's methodology evolution was a result of a few Caribbean scholars' continued advocacies for conducting research using Caribbean ways of knowing and grounded in Caribbean people's worldviews. Leading this charge are the founding members of the Liming and Ole Talk methodology, Professor Dr. Camille Nakhid, Dr. Anabel Fernández Santana, Dr. Shakeisha Wilson-Scott- and Dr. Margaret Nakhid-Chatoor. These scholars are from New Zealand, Cuba, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. In the founding members' first publication, the authors established the need for an indigenous Caribbean research approach (Wilson, Nakhid, Fernández Santana & Nakhid-Chatoor, 2018)[3]. The authors reviewed research by postgraduate scholars who

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[3] All Caribbean authors associated with developing the Liming Methodology are cited in full intentionally within this section.

were looking at issues related to the Caribbean. This led Wilson et al. (2018) to advocate for research strategies for and by the Caribbean that which is culturally affirming.

The second publication focused on liming and ole talk as a culturally relevant methodology for Caribbean research (Nakhid-Chatoor, Nakhid, Wilson & Fernández Santana, 2018). In this article, liming was described as a space created for the 'limers' (persons who lime) to speak openly and freely as they recount their experiences, whether that was "an event, debate, political matters, or simply renew old acquaintances" (Nakhid-Chatoor et al., 2018, p. 2). Additionally, a liming space is where "language gives voice to their many stories as they simultaneously eat and drink as, within the Caribbean, it is inconceivable to "bus a lime" (get together) without the presence of food" (Nakhid-Chatoor et al., 2018, p. 2). The third publication from the group focused on the foundations and characteristics of liming and ole talk, examining how Caribbean practices for Caribbean research will yield more accuracy in knowledge construction (Fernández Santana, Nakhid, Nakhid-Chatoor & Wilson-Scott, 2019).

Also, in 2019, another publication was completed, advocating for liming as a methodology and ole talk as a research method (Nakhid, Mosca & Nakhid-Schuster, 2019). By 2020, Dr. Anabel Fernández Santana's thesis using Liming methodology further solidified the advocacy of distinguishing the features of liming among other intricacies of the methodology. I have utilized Fernández Santana (2020) and all the publications by the founding members to gain a deeper understanding of liming methodology and analysis. The latest publication at the time of this dissertation was by Nakhid (2022) on discussing liming and ole talk as space for relationships, negotiation, and contestation. All of these publications have been referenced in the study. By

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highlighting the evolution of the liming methodology and referencing key publications on this body of work, others who are interested can gain a deeper understanding of liming and add their own perspectives on Caribbean research methodologies.

Photovoice Methodology

Growing up in my community, any mention of a learning (dis)ability

or being a slow processor or in need of "special ed" as we call it in Jamaica

is labeled as -

"so, you think my child has no sense."

I am dyslexic and a visual learner.

Photographs can be a source of inspiration and a reason to advocate for change.

- Shen

Another layer of the study, along with liming, was to incorporate some aspects of visual images in the study. This led me to pull on aspects of photovoice, a visual methodology. Usually, interviews are the dominant method for collecting data for qualitative research, whether structured or semi-structured (Wass et al., 2020). For this study, the interviews were in the form of liming sessions online (onlimes). Similar to liming, researchers also advocate for other visual methodologies as part of qualitative research, such as photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997; Sutton-Brown, 2014; Liebenberg, 2018; Wass et al., 2020; Roofe et al., 2022). Photovoice "is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369).

Notably, photovoice "entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts of change, in their own communities" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). Photovoice is grounded in three theoretical frameworks. These are documentary photography, feminist theory, and empowerment education for critical consciousness (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Additionally, photovoice can be altered in various ways to best suit the needs and adapt to the specific group of individuals and/or community for which the research is being conducted (Sutton-Brown, 2014). For this study, photovoice played the role of empowerment and engaging in critical dialogue with the participants regarding the prompts for the photographs. The prompts for the photographs asked participants about their motivation and inspiration during their higher education journey (access and persistence) and how their community environments shaped their higher education journey.

Photovoice's primary objectives focus on 1) participants being able to reflect on their communities, 2) promoting critical dialogue in small or large groups, and 3) reaching policymakers to enact social change in the community (Wang & Burris, 1997; Sutton-Brown, 2014).). In mapping these goals to the study, the researcher sought to understand participants' lived experiences within their home community environments and have them reflect on the role of their communities in their higher education journey. The process of photovoice involves 1) selecting and recruiting the targeted group for the study, 2) discussing the photovoice process with participants and answering any questions, 3) obtaining consent, 4) discussing the theme for taking photographs, 5) providing participants with time to take the photographs and 5) discuss the photographs with the participants (Wang, 2006; Sutton-Brown, 2014).

Finally, photovoice analysis utilizes the technique and acronym SHOWeD. This acronym focuses on questions that ask participants what they <u>S</u>ee, what is <u>H</u>appening in the photographs, how it relates to <u>O</u>ur lives, <u>Wh</u>y this situation exists, and what can we <u>D</u>o about it? (Wang, 2006: Sutton-Brown, 2014). The study used a similar technique when analyzing the photographs. The data collection section details the photovoice process for the study.

<div align="center">**Onlime and Photovoice Sessions in Action**</div>

In this section, I present the details of collecting information for the study using liming and photovoice. I present the advertising for the study, the strategy for inviting participants to the limes, obtaining consent, details about the participants, and the liming space on Zoom.

Liming and Photovoice Data collection

The data collection process is "accomplished through observations and interviews but could also involve photographs, video, personal or public historical records and other extant data, or data created with participants" (Jason & Glenwick, 2016, p. 15). The primary method for collecting data for this study was through liming sessions online (onlimes) and photographs. This study was designed to engage with first-generation Jamaican university current students and graduates to understand their lived experiences within their home community environments and their persistence in higher education. Therefore, the information gathered from the study would be used to inform higher educational institutions' understanding of the value of students' home environment in their persistence and completion at university. Consistent with the liming methodology, the primary source of data collection for this study was hosting onlime sessions (liming

online) as well as incorporating the use of photographs. Following the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from the University of Denver (Appendix A), I embarked on the following recruiting strategies to invite potential participants of the study to lime with me. Below is a detailed description of the liming and photovoice data collection process.

Recruitment Strategies

The first step in liming is building connections. For example, this connection can be forming new relationships or reigniting old relationships. Simply put, liming embraces relationships. I created a recruitment flyer inviting participants to come and lime *wid* me (see Appendix B). In designing the flyer, the aim was to keep it as simple and authentic as possible and friendly. The recruitment flyer was posted on my social media pages (WhatsApp and Instagram). At the time of the study, my Instagram page had 226 followers and over 1000 WhatsApp contacts, including Jamaicans. I leaned on my personal and professional networks in Jamaica using the technique of "word-of-mouth" and shared the flyer. I shared the flyer with colleagues who worked at universities in Jamaica, and they shared the fliers with students. Those who viewed the social media pages had the ability to repost the flier on their social media pages ~ *tangk yu*! For example, on Instagram, followers on my account saw the flyer and reposted it in their Instagram stories. While for WhatsApp, persons who could see the WhatsApp status either took a screenshot or directly reached out to me by responding to the WhatsApp status post, requesting the original flyer, and asking if they could share it on their social media feed.

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Some persons who reposted the recruitment flyer commented on the fact that they were attracted to the flyer because of the colors and the language. For example, "…I just read this. I love it. I like the change in English and patois" (S. Harris, personal communication, February 9, 2022). I also created videos and reels with the flyer, added music in the background, and posted them on social media. I also created gifs of myself and short videos doing a recruiting dance and posted them on Instagram and WhatsApp to indicate that the study was still recruiting or to keep social media informed that the study was making progress. A total of 12 posts were created and posted on my social media pages.

Research on social media and ethics stated that social media creates the opportunity for reaching a wider audience and is becoming a popular recruitment tool (Gelinas et al., 2017). Additionally, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions at the time of the data collection for the study, I was conscious of the regulations in Jamaica around traveling, curfews within communities, and public gatherings, and as such, I found social media to be helpful for advertising the study.

Liming Criteria

This study targeted first-generation Jamaican university current students and graduates. Therefore, the flyer advertised a pool of questions as part of the criteria for volunteering to join the lime based on participants' interest and connection to the study. In other words, participants joined based on whether or not they identified with the study. This element was important for the study given the medium in which the study was being advertised. The flyer asked the following questions (a) are you the first in your family to

attend university? This question targeted first-generation university students in Jamaica. During the recruitment stages of the study, two potential participants responded to the advertisement and asked if they could participate in the study even though their siblings attended university. I consulted with one of my committee members and posed the question. This conversation led to the inclusion of these potential limers in the study since they confirmed that their parent(s) did not obtain a university degree and, in some cases, did not go beyond primary or high school. As the researcher, I reflected more on my experiences as a first-generation student and that of my older sibling, who recently enrolled in university (proud a yu mi breda) and the fact that I was from a single-parent household as a first-generation student. This query from potential participants contributed to the final definition of Jamaican first-generation university students. For the study, first-generation focused on university students (current or graduates) whose parent(s) did not have a university degree, where students and their siblings (if any) were the first within their immediate families to attend university and/or graduate. First-generation students are not limited to nuclear families; instead, the definition for this study includes students who are from various types of family units.

The next question on the flyer asked (b) are you from an underserved or under-resourced community in Jamaica? The study intentionally targeted participants from underserved communities, which supports the argument regarding higher education institutions making an effort to understand students' and their home community environments to create sustainable support services for Jamaican first-generation university students to persist through to graduation. Another criterion was (c) do you have access to a smartphone to take digital photographs? This would aid the process of

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photovoice for the study. The flyer also asked (d) are you a current university student or graduated with your degree? My social media pages included followers who were not only university students. Therefore, stating the target group clearly would make it easy for persons on social media to decide if the flyer was relevant to them. The final question was (e) do you identify as a Jamaican national? My social media (Instagram and WhatsApp) included persons from other nationalities outside Jamaica. Therefore, clearly stating the targeted population also helped those who viewed the social media posts to know whether or not the study would interest them.

Participants

A total of 15 potential participants responded to the flyer on social media within less than two weeks of advertising and sharing the study. Only 11 of the 15 potential participants emailed me, indicating they would like to participate in the study. These responses took place within the first three weeks of advertising the study. I thanked potential participants for their interests and shared the recruitment letter with the study's criteria via email (see Appendix D). In the end, the study engaged 10 participants as one of the 11 did not identify as a first-generation student. The remaining four persons of the 15 who initially responded, sent emails or communication after data collection was completed, missed a follow-up email from me, or replied late to a WhatsApp or Instagram message due to their busy schedules. I thanked everyone who shared an interest in the study, even if they could not participate. Also, I created a recruitment tracking guide (see Appendix C) to keep track of the responses to the recruitment flyer invitation and the recruitment letter.

Obtaining Consent and Schedules

Following participants' responses to the recruitment letter, they were provided with an informed consent sheet (see Appendix E). The informed consent sheet provided details of the study and made participants aware of the number of liming sessions, use of photographs, benefits, and risks associated with the study. Participants were informed that taking part in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Participants acknowledged the receipt of the informed consent form via email and indicated that they would like to move forward with participating in the liming sessions. Participants had no questions regarding the informed consent sheet and were made aware that their verbal consent would be recorded at the first liming session. Therefore, no need to print and sign anything or use an electronic signature. Following participants' confirmation to proceed, they were invited to share their available dates and times for the researcher to schedule the first one-on-one liming session. The researcher noted all times and was flexible in working around participants' schedules, whether the need was for liming in the morning, lunchtime, late afternoon, or during the night. It was important that I fit within participants' schedules. As the researcher, I did not want participants' to be inconvenienced. Where necessary, I canceled meetings and calendared events where possible. Therefore, the commitment to participating in the study was flexible.

I researcher created a Zoom meeting link with a password for participants to access the onlime session. Also, I created calendar invites to make it easy for the participants to remember the onlime session and I would also send a notification asking them to accept the calendar invite. I was able to track who accepted the invite and sent reminders as needed. Participants communicated via WhatsApp or email if they had any

delays or issues accessing the Zoom link. Those who participate in liming are referred to as limers. This term will be used for the remaining sections of the chapters as participants became limers upon consenting to the study and participating the first onlime session.

Limers' Demographics

Among the 10 limers, four were from rural subsistence farming communities, and six were from urban inner-city communities in Jamaica. Regarding gender identity, five limers identified as women and five as men. Limers shared how they identified during the liming sessions and their age ranges. This open sharing speaks to the nature of the limes, the connections between the researcher and the limers, and the level of trust created. Many limers expected the researcher to assume how they identified. This expectation occurred during ole talk accompanied by moments of laughter and humor. Table 1 provides a visual description of all limers for the study. Limers represented four universities in Jamaica and originated from four parishes in Jamaica. Limers came from various disciplines, including Banking, Business, Education, Engineering, English Literature, Linguistics, Journalism, Law, Nursing, and Tourism. Additional details on limers are provided in the description of insights on limers and the liming setting.

Table 1: Limers' Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Community	Parish	Student Status	Degree/ Major
Ashley	Woman	20-25	Urban Inner-City	St. Andrew	Graduated, 2022	BSc. Tourism Management
Baller	Man	35-40	Rural Farming	St. Thomas	Graduated, 2021	BSc. Business Administration
Big Mama	Woman	25-30	Urban Inner-City	St. Andrew	Graduated, 2015	BSc. Banking & Finance
Canary	Woman	18-25	Urban Inner-City	St. Andrew	2nd Year	Nursing
Gratitude	Man	25-30	Urban Inner-City	St. Andrew	Graduated, 2017 (BSc.)	BSc. Banking & Finance; MSc. Computer Based Management Information Systems
Hertzfries	Man	20-25	Urban Inner-City	St. Andrew	3rd Year	Engineering
Jason	Man	35-40	Urban Inner-City	St. Andrew	Graduated, 2010 (B.A.)	B.A. Linguistics; M.A. Higher Education Management
Mens Rea	Man	30-35	Rural Farming	St. Mary	Graduated, 2011	B.A. Linguistics; LL.B; LL.M. & J.D. Law
Phoenix	Woman	30-35	Rural Farming	St. Thomas	Graduated, 2014 (B.A.)	B.A. English Literature; M.Ed. Curriculum & Instruction; Ed.D Education
Star	Woman	25-30	Rural Farming	Clarendon	Graduated, 2015 (B.A.)	B.A. Journalism; M.A. Higher Education Management

Note. Table 1 provides a visual description of the limers, types of community,

student status, the year they graduated with their first degrees and levels of education.

Insights on Limers

I had a unique group of limers for this study. In Table 1, I shared the demographics for all limers, but all the beautiful details could not be replicated in a table. All limers represented four different universities in Jamaica. This brought a unique lens to the study as they all shared their experiences within these higher educational institutions. I found that three limers started university as part-time students, Baller, Jason, and Ashley. For some, part-time status was due to work obligations and financial challenges, and for others, it was solely based on affordability. Baller was an adult learner, and it took him 12 years to complete his first degree.

Notably, Ashley eventually transitioned from part-time to full-time status upon receiving a scholarship in her second year. Jason eventually transitioned to full-time, taking five years to complete his first degree. Phoenix became pregnant at 16 and had to delay her university aspirations but not for too long. Additionally, Canary and Hertzfries were current students at two different universities in their second year and third year, respectively. Hertzfries and Gratitude both had an older sibling who attended university, and they too were able to share their unique experiences as first-generation students.

Additionally, Ashley, Big Mama, Gratitude, and Canary received some form of scholarship for their university education. Big Mama, Gratitude, Mens Rea, Phoenix, and Star all graduated within the stipulated period for undergraduate degrees at their respective universities. Finally, five limers completed post-graduate studies, including the doctorate level. The unique characteristics of all limers presented multiple lenses to understanding the first-generation Jamaican student and what type of support is needed within the university environment. Limers unique characteristics also supported the call

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for literature on first-generation students at all levels including the different types of families these students came from. Within limers home community environments, some came from multigenerational households where they lived with extended family including their grandparent(s), aunt(s), uncle(s), cousin(s) among others. Also, some limers were from single-parent families, for those who participated in the study, this household was led by their mother. There were also limers who from nuclear families, with both parents present in the household. These students came from different home community environments and family structures with a common goal of achieving upward social mobility through education so that they could not only improve their individual lives but also that of their family.

Liming setting

All onlime sessions were conducted on Zoom. Nine limers joined the one-on-one limes from Jamaica located in Jamaica, and one limer joined from the United States. Limers were provided with the Zoom link to join the lime and had the option of going on video, audio, or calling in from their phone, depending on their location. Two limers utilized audio-only based on their location at the time of the lime. Zoom as the research setting was not only convenient for me being outside of Jamaica but also for the limers as they joined the session from work, at home, or in their car. Zoom was easy to use and provided unique features such as screen sharing, which came in handy when discussing the photographs. For example, Archibald et al. (2019) conducted a study examining the use of Zoom for qualitative data collection. The authors found that 56% of their participants found Zoom to be simple and user-friendly and flexible in terms of being on video or audio (Archibald et al., 2019).

Also, at the time of the data collection for the study, Jamaica had COVID-19 restrictions, and liming on Zoom was suitable and provided the opportunity for limers to lime from anywhere. Based on the nature of liming, the researcher did not have to "create" a designated liming setting. By this, I mean that if I played music for one session, that did not mean that I played music for all sessions. As we say in Jamaica, go with the vibes, mon. Therefore, no two liming sessions were the same. Limers were greeted with a colorful virtual background depicting a boombox. Some limes started with music in the background where the researcher played from a reggae or dancehall mix, and some limes began with giving thanks for being alive. Some limes began with teasing limers about cooking and limers describing what they cooked for dinner. Other limes started with just talking and catching up and no music. Some limes started with venting about a recent happening. Another included the researcher and limer dancing to Ding Dong's, a Jamaican artist, song called Stir Fry. I share these examples hoping that anyone reading this chapter could get a feel of how vibrant and friendly the liming space was on Zoom.

Additionally, imposing too much structure by dictating that each lime must be the same would defeat the purpose of how Caribbean people interact. For example, Fernández Santana (2020) shared that when the researcher tries to have too much control over the dynamics of the limes, it affects the liming environment. Therefore, limers decided how much they wanted to share; some limes went beyond an hour some limes were less than an hour. Notably, limes were also unfiltered on Zoom. Some days I was in my gym attire, yaad clothes, or work clothes, depending on where I was joining the lime from. Limers (researcher included) joined on Zoom from their car, from their couch

while watching sports, from their bedroom, from their desk at home or work, and in their kitchen. Some limes had family members or children passing through in the background and saying random hellos to me, and we had a quick talk, usually about school and their progress in school, while others had limers' pets such as their dogs barking in the background. There were also limes where limers interacted with other persons within their locations while online. Being familiar with the Jamaican cultural context and organic component of liming, I knew when to pause and flex within these moments, which were not seen as interruptions but just part of the liming experience. Liming features include accommodating spontaneous conversations within the limes. Therefore, limers were in the space where they felt free to ease in and out of the lime by responding to their children or family members.

As part of the liming setting, limers represented four different universities in Jamaica, located between Kingston and St. Andrew. Three universities are public institutions, and one is private. All universities represent predominantly Black students as Jamaica is a majority Black population. The four universities are degree-granting institutions with three granted institutional accreditations from the local accreditation body, the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), within the last five years. The universities have been assigned pseudonyms: Premier University, Teaching University, Estate University, and New University (private). Premier University has a population of over 19,000 students, Teaching University enrolls over 2000 students, Estate University has over 10,000, and New University enrolls over 3000. All universities except New University offer students accommodation via the halls of residences.

Liming and Photovoice Sessions

Whether structured or semi-structured, interviews are traditionally common for qualitative research (Evans, 2009; Jones et al., 2014). Like interviews, liming is a Caribbean way of interacting and engaging with each other. Participants were invited to two one-on-one online liming sessions (onlimes). The onlimes were guided by a pool of questions related to the purpose of the research and to get the limes going (see Appendix F). The guiding questions were used for the researcher to take notes during the lime and have follow-up questions readily available if needed. During a lime, ole talk, as discussed in the methodology section of this chapter, occurs organically. Therefore, I did not "plan" ole talks or knew what limers would say randomly outside of their responses to the research questions and prompts. There are no protocols for ole talk during a lime. Notably, ole talk is a feature of liming that is unprescribed (Fernández Santana, 2020). Chapter Four provides examples of ole talk occurring during the limes. Notably, all onlimes were one-on-one, and the researcher was also one of the limers.

In using the Liming methodology, I was mindful that "although there are no formal or written rules around how a lime should be conducted, there is an expected observance of the protocols and [behaviors] that we inherently know 'when we come to lime'" (Nakhid, 2022, p. 91). With this in mind, the study as part of a doctoral dissertation had a research topic and purpose. My role was to ensure that liming is not reduced to simply having idle talk as well as integrating myself in the lime as one of the limers. Therefore, it was important to avoid the narrative that liming is the art of doing nothing and having confidence in Caribbean knowledge construction being just as rigorous with in-depth, rich information similar to other research methodologies.

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Lime Session One

At the beginning of the first onlime session with each limer, verbal consent was recorded to confirm limers' agreement to participate in two liming sessions. We reviewed the informed consent sheet and answered any questions posed by the limers. There were also several moments of interacting with limers prior to recording. Following the recording of the verbal consent, I checked in with limers, catching up on the latest happenings in Jamaica or their latest project and discussing any issue that is of concern to them, such as an increase in food and gas prices. Moreover, having not traveled to Jamaica since the COVID-19 pandemic, I was excited to hear limers sharing the latest events in the country. For example, I heard about the latest Jamaican politics, what is going on in my home community, the latest student issues at the universities, good news, bad news, and the in-between. Some limers shared random stories or a recent joke from their day.

The first session focused on three main questions for the discussion. These questions asked limers to describe their home community environments and family, their high school and university experiences, and their persistence in university. The liming sessions for round one ranged from limes as short as 45 minutes and as long as 1 hour and 30 minutes on average. Therefore, limers shared as much as they chose to and could go as deep based on their terms. There was no strict structure around timing as limers responded to all questions posed during the conversations. At the end of each onlime, I thanked limers for coming to lime with me and asked if they had any questions. This was also an opportunity for limers to share any additional thoughts about the topic or anything else. I also discussed the second onlime session and explained the process of taking the

photographs for the second and final onlime. I told limers not to worry as I would repeat everything in an email with the prompts for taking the photographs and request their available dates to schedule the final session. Limers were also advised that they could reach out and ask any clarifying questions at any stage of the liming and photovoice process.

Lime Session Two

The second and last liming session focused on the photovoice process of the study. By using the photovoice process, the researcher invited the participants to take photographs of their daily lives to capture their thoughts and emotions about a specific phenomenon (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006; Wass et al., 2020). In preparation for the second lime, limers used their smartphones to take six photographs based on two prompts and selected three photographs to write a short description or narrative. Limers emailed all six photographs to me and indicated the three that they chose to write narratives on. Limers were asked to submit their photographs at least one week before the final liming session. In full transparency, I was flexible with this process and understanding. In most cases, limers shared their photographs the day before their next session, a few hours or minutes before the session. These moments also brought laughter as I would tease limers for the last minute, which some argued was a cultural thing for some Jamaicans.

The first prompt that guided the photographs asked, what inspired or motivated you on your higher education journey? The second prompt asked, how do you see your home community influencing your educational journey? Both prompts were connected to the research topic and purpose. Firstly, the study looked at access and persistence.

Therefore, it was appropriate to see what inspired students and motivated them on their educational journey. Secondly, understanding how limers' home community environments influenced their educational experiences would add to my argument on the role of home community environments and why universities should make an active effort to tailor resources for students from different types of communities and not just focus on the campus community. The photographs were used to get the limes going for round two. The researcher utilized Zoom's screen sharing feature for some limes to show the images on the screen for limers using video recording. Some limers described the photographs from memory, or the researcher would have the document with the photographs opened on her laptop, and as such, screen sharing was not used for all limes. Both the researcher and limers analyzed the photographs together in some cases, and in other cases, limers provided an in-depth analysis and reasoning behind the photographs that the researcher just asked questions where necessary for clarity. On average, the final limes ranged from 45 minutes to over an hour. I used the final limes as an opportunity to ask limers any follow-up questions based on her notes from the first limes as well as the transcriptions from the first liming sessions.

Limers were also asked to share their recommendations and anything that they would change regarding university policies supporting first-generation students and students in general. Limers also shared their experiences as first-generation students and what this meant for them and their families. Additionally, limers shared how they defined community and some of the changes they wanted to see in their community. At the end of the session, I thanked limers for participating in one-on-one sessions with me and shared that I would be completing the transcriptions and send via email for their feedback and

comments. I also encouraged limers to reach out if they had any questions or remembered something they would like to share. For the photovoice process, a total of 60 photographs were submitted, 30 of which had written narratives across the 10 limers. Lastly, I asked limers to share which photograph meant the most if they were to just choose one. I asked this question, knowing that the final dissertation would not include all 60 or 30 photographs and being mindful of the many pictures with faces of persons. As such it was important to me to understand which photograph meant the most to limers.

Reflexive Journaling

In the positionality section of this chapter, I discussed my role as an insider-outsider. As an insider, I was aware that there would be shared understandings and a common language between myself and the limers (Watts, 2006). With this in mind, I kept a research journal to take notes on the limes and to reflect on my role as the researcher and a limer. This dual role was challenging yet fulfilling. I share some of these moments in the dissertation. Journaling is a research technique in Liming methodology utilized as a critical reflexive practice (Fernández Santana, 2020). As I made notes from each lime, I reflected on how I felt after the lime and highlighted unexpected stories that were revealed or just had a shocked reaction. As I completed the transcriptions for each audio, I also noted the fact that if an upper class, "well-spoken" Jamaican reviewed the transcripts, they would possibly frown upon the "broken English" layered within the scripts by both the researcher and the limers. However, I noted that some things only resonated when we spoke our Jamaican language. In other words, it made no sense to "pretty" up the conversation when certain topics were discussed.

Additionally, as part of the journaling process, I would document comments on the side of the transcripts as I transcribed, highlighting sections and noting questions or thoughts to revisit them when analyzing the limes and the photographs. The act of journaling and jotting down anything that came to mind during this dissertation process helped develop my thoughts as I combed through the limes and photographs. I was able to make meaning from the experiences of the limers and even noted observations about the liming setting on Zoom. Finally, it was during aspects of reflecting of the session that I was able to observe Caribbean cultural practices such as ole talk and other features of liming.

Analysis of the Limes and Photographs

In this section of the research design, I explain how the data analysis process. Analysis for both the limes and photovoice process occurred simultaneously with the data collection process. This meant that after each lime, the researcher began transcribing and analyzing the information based on the conversation. Notably, data analysis and writing the thesis also occurred simultaneously. As I transcribed the lime recordings and shifted through the photographs submitted, I made notes of the various contexts, reactions of the limers, highlighted moments of ole talk taking place, and humor usually depicted by [laughs] and exclamation marks signaling reactions, among other features of liming. With the magnitude of the information collected from a two-fold methodological approach, liming and photovoice, I developed strategies to best organize and present the information. The sub-sections below detail the analysis for the study.

Organizing the liming data. I utilized various methods to keep all materials related to the study organized throughout the limes. The recruitment tracking guide was created in Excel (see Appendix C). Recorded liming sessions were organized using participants' self-selected pseudonyms, and this was also part of the research confidentiality. At the end of the first lime, I asked limers to choose a pseudonym. Not only did limers choose their pseudonyms, but they also shared the meaning behind their selections. I renamed all documents that would have had limers' names or initials at the recruitment stages and replaced them with their pseudonyms. Limers' transcripts were organized in folders, one designated to round one and another designated to round two under their pseudonyms. Limers' photographs were also stored in a folder for all photographs with subfolders for each limer. All folders were saved on the researcher's laptop with password protection.

I submitted an interview protocol with guiding questions for the limes for the IRB process. I used this document to make notes on each lime under limers' pseudonyms during and after each liming session (see Appendix F). These notes were typed up and recorded the date and time of the sessions, both rounds one and two. These notes were saved in a folder organized with the limers' pseudonym on my personal laptop with password protection. I used yellow highlights to note emerging themes or particular stories where limers went in-depth about a specific experience. I also identified any nuances or areas that I might need to unpack with limers in round two by adding a comment on the side of the document as a reminder to follow up for round two. I used the same document with the guiding questions for each limer for both sessions to avoid any confusion.

Liming and Photovoice Analysis. The liming analysis was guided by the

following meaning-making process outlined by Fernández Santana (2020). As part of the

liming process, I interacted with limers after the sessions and maintained communication.

Through the relationships formed and strengthened during the lime, I was able to reach

out to limers to provide feedback on the progress of the study. This feedback included six

limers helping to develop the model in Chapter 5. Other limers provided insights on

diagrams used in the study and some volunteered to read various sections of the

dissertation. Liming and Photovoice methodologies presented a unique opportunity to not

only build connection but to affirm the use of a Caribbean methodology. For some limers

attending the onlimes and reviewing their transcripts and confirming their approval of the

information was one aspect of the liming process. While other limers were interested to

learn more, engaged with the process, and continuously wanted to know what was the

latest happening with the research.

Firstly, the liming itself was the raw liming data of the video and audio recordings

of the limes. This step included identifying the moments of laughter, humor, overlapping

talks, and interruptions while transcribing the recordings. Secondly, the process also

involved processing the liming data, that is, the transcription. For this study, the

researcher had two limes per limers, a total of 20 limes, along with 60 photographs.

I transcribed all recordings for the study and as a gift to the limers. For example,

some limers expressed that they would be writing their personal books and would love to

have the texts from the transcripts to support their work. Thirdly, I used transcriptions to

perform inductive coding, that is, emergent and data-driven coding (Saldaña, 2013). With

20 detailed transcripts, the researcher used both manual coding by hand along with the

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NVivo 12 software organizing the liming data and inductive coding by topics. NVivo was extremely helpful when generating the codes as the researcher analyzed the liming data. This is where an inductive approach was used to code ole talk along with memos in the form of comments on documents to track the information shared by limers. The researcher uploaded the transcripts in NVivo and manually went through each line of the transcript, added general codes, reread scripts, added new codes, and kept repeating this open code process until all the transcripts were coded. This iterative process was time-consuming in a good way. For example, transcribing all the audios meant that I was fully immersed in the liming data and manually coded using the NVivo software. This also supported an in-depth analysis of the data.

Analysis of the 60 photographs started during the limes. The researcher leaned on aspects of the SHOWed technique to analyze the photographs (Wang, 2006; Sutton-Brown, 2014). Limers submitted their six photographs, of which three they wrote narratives for. During the final lime, both the researcher and limers engaged in a collective interpretation of what was being depicted in the photograph. Limers led the session discussing the meanings behind the photographs and their narratives and how they connected to the prompts. I engaged in the process where necessary and this facilitated the co-constructing of meanings behind the photographs, themes, and issues discussed within this process (Liebenberg, 2018). Photographs through the eyes of the limers provided a mirror to their home community environments and their lived experiences. Through the photographs, I was able to visualize how both their environments and lived realities connected to their higher education journey.

A critical component of liming and photograph analysis was to ensure that limers validated the findings. After completing each transcription, I shared transcripts and recordings with limers as part of the member checking process. Member checking is the process of "checking in" with participants in a qualitative study so that they can review and comment on their responses (Frey, 2018). Member checks help confirm the researcher's interpretation of the information and help with the credibility and reliability of the study (Frey, 2018). Member checking was helpful in follow-ups with limers to check the accuracy of the information gathered. For example, I wrote comments on transcripts and some limers responded to either clarify, agree or add additional thoughts to my comments in the document. All limers had the opportunity to authenticate the transcriptions. Some limers followed up with the researcher to check in on how the study was going even after receiving their transcripts. Limers were also asked to share what topics they saw emerging from their limes, and some happily responded to the email and were fully engaged in the process with the researcher. As an insider, I was also able to confirm some of the events shared by limers that resided in St. Andrew, Jamaica which also supported the accuracy of the study.

Additionally, I utilized the theoretical framework to evaluate whether or not the research questions were represented in the data. In using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, I focused on the microsystem, the first level of the theory. This layer examines individuals' interactions within their immediate environment, such as family, home, school, teachers, and peers. This was directly connected to the study as I focused on home community environments influencing first-generation Jamaican university students' higher education journey. I also utilized a (post)colonial lens to identify

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colonial norms, values, and experiences shared by limers. All of these elements of the

analysis process, beginning with the inductive codes, emergent themes, and topics

generated from the limes and photographs, mapping the theoretical framework along with

the researcher's journal, informed the writing up of the findings and discussion chapters.

Lastly, narratives were kept highly contextualized, and stories were organized by topics

based on the research questions when writing up the findings.

Self-Location, Reciprocity, and Ethical Considerations

Here I am, a novice researcher

seeking to engage in research with my people using our way.

Struggling with tensions of the process.

Some days were anti-everything; other days, I felt trapped in the middle.

Nevertheless, my ethics and sense of care stood firm.

- Shen

In this chapter, the researcher's positionality discussed her role as an

insider/outsider, as Collins (1986) discussed. Liming methodology follows this

positionality as the researcher had to continuously locate herself within the study not just

as the researcher but also as one of the limers and as a Jamaican liming with other

Jamaicans. As discussed, liming is similar to the conversational method discussed by

Kovach (2010). The researcher, having met eight of the 10 limers either in her

community, at university, or from a previous organization, "must have a certain amount

of credibility and trustworthiness for people to participate in the research" (Kovach,

2010, p. 46). This connection increases the likelihood of a deeper conversation (Kovach, 2010), which was evident by the lengths of the onlimes. With this in mind, as one of the limers, I shared my experiences, feelings, and ideas with other limers so that the limes did not feel one-sided or that I was just listening to solely extract information and facilitate a discussion but also to engage and learn from them. I was also hyperaware of doing no harm to limers and approached all limes with a sense of care. The process of sharing with limers also added to building reciprocity, sharing during the limes, and giving limers my word that I would transcribe all audio and share both transcripts and audio recordings. Liming methodology relies heavily on a reflective process, and the researcher's positionality and experiences are critical to the process (Fernández Santana, 2020).

As for other ethical implications, it was necessary for limers to choose their pseudonyms to protect their identity. Names of communities, universities, and any identifiable data were not disclosed in the writing up of the study in an effort to respect and maintain the confidentiality of the participants. All information gathered from the limes and photographs was kept confidential, and only the researcher had access to the data. I was also mindful that some participants shared that they would be writing their autobiographies. I wanted to honor this as the researcher by not reporting certain information and photographs shared during the limes. Some limers insisted that it was okay, but I shared that this was their story to tell, not mine.

Summary

This study focused on extending the current literature on first-generation Jamaican university students by exploring the role of home community environments.

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Additionally, the study sought to address the inclusion of home community environments in higher education conversations around creating spaces for students to persist. The study's findings provide insight into the need to provide greater support for first-generation students in Jamaica and not separate students' home community environments from their university experiences. In this chapter, I offered a rationale for qualitative inquiry, introduced a Caribbean research methodology, liming, and explained how both liming and photovoice were suitable for the study. I also explored data collection and analysis stages for liming and photovoice and closed with ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Findings

Initially, my community and university experiences

sparked my interest in this research.

I could not have imagined that this interest would lead to this body of work.

Surprises, secrets, and most importantly, phenomenal stories of first-generation

Jamaican university students.

- Shen

Introduction

This study aimed to understand the role of home community environments shaping first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. Of the 10 participants, two were current students attending two different universities in Jamaica, and eight were graduates who completed their first degrees in Jamaica between 2010 and 2022. Specifically, I was interested in learning more about first-generation Jamaican university students, how they described their home community environments and how these environments shaped their educational experiences regarding access and persistence in higher education.

Therefore, the main research questions were, "How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their home community environments?" and "How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their access and persistence in higher

education?" Two sub-questions further supported the focus of the research: "How do home community environments shape first-generation students' higher education journey?" and "How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their higher educational experiences?" To answer these questions, I had one-on-one onlimes with all participants.

Limers' conversations were based on their lived experiences within their home community environments and education journey. Chapter Four synthesizes the findings in response to the research questions discussed in the 20 onlimes and the 60 photographs submitted by the limers. Liming analysis, as described in Chapter Three, and the guidelines for the photovoice process were used to analyze the transcripts. Also, the difference between liming and thematic analysis is that for liming, the importance of the topic is not defined by the researcher but based on what limers shared in the raw liming data. For example, each finding presented in Chapter Four was identified based on how much time limers spent sharing their particular stories responding to a question. Therefore, I focused on the depth of the content and context of what the limers were saying when analyzing the findings. By virtue of having guiding questions, limers would naturally share similar stories. Still, the experiences were different, even if they shared about their university application process or trauma from high school.

A practical example of the analysis process was to have the NVivo software open with transcripts and another screen with the photographs and the audio recording. I selected one limer at a time and opened that specific audio and transcript, the folder with photographs and narratives. I then went through this transcript line by line and generated

initial codes using colors such as green for anything related to the community environment. I went between the recordings and transcript to contextualize the lime and to ensure that I understood what limers stressed, identifying elements of ole talk, including humor, interruptions during the limes, and observing tones (moments of sighs, pauses, exaggerations, emotions, and so forth). I also created a table and entered all possible findings that were emerging based on the emphasis of limers, the context provided, and in relation to the research questions. I revisited the transcripts, photographs and recordings multiple times to cross-reference where possible between limers since some were from the same type of communities and attended the same primary school and university at different times. As part of the liming analysis, I was able to connect limers' experiences with the English language and relationships with teachers in high school. These were not specific research questions, all limers were asked the same question regarding education experiences. As the researcher, I am tasked with writing up the report for the study. Therefore, my role was to ensure that I maintained and preserved the limers' stories based on their account. The liming data were coded using an inductive approach which led to identifying four main findings for the study.

The chapter is organized around the four main findings with sub-themes for each. To determine these findings, both the research questions and the content of what limers shared were used to organize the main findings along with the process described above. Also, when discussing the location of limers' home community environments, limers were influenced by different elements within the location. Factors included the physical features of the spaces and the human interaction within these spaces, including family,

community members, teachers, friends, and church among others. The first finding focuses on how limers' home community environments motivated their higher education pursuits, while the second finding highlights limers' journey to accessing higher education. For the third finding, I share how limers' home community environments shaped their persistence in higher education. The fourth finding focuses on limers' environments inspiring their self-actualization and graduating from university with their degrees as first-generation Jamaican university students. Each finding is connected to sub-themes related to limers' location (environment) and educational pathways. Also, pseudonyms were created for limers, names of limers' communities, schools, and universities shared in the limes to protect limers' identities.

Limers' responses with ole talk elements from the limes are layered throughout the chapter in italics text with photographs. Importantly, in cases where limers' top three photographs showed the faces of their family members or any other person, these were described in a textbox to protect limers' identity and the intimate stories they shared regarding their families. Also, limers' voices are connected with the sub-themes under each finding, the initials SF refers to my voice as the researcher when presenting the direct block quotes in Chapter Four. The personal narratives/poems shared in Chapter Four represent snippets from my research journal during and after the limes. Lastly, I recognize that on the reader's behalf some of the narratives in the authentic voices of the limers might be confusing or difficult to understand due to the use of Jamaican Creole and the code switching between English and Jamaican Creole. However, these narratives are intentionally kept as is without translation. Moreover, there is a "de facto language

policy in which English was superior to all languages…because of the assumption that English was morally and intellectually superior to Creole" (Tuitt, 2019, p. 212). It was clear from the findings that this policy continues to impact Jamaicans' experiences with the tensions regarding engaging our native tongue and mastering the English language. For this study, it was important to maintain the authentic responses of limers as expressed during the limes regardless of confusion or any grammatical errors that may be frowned upon by outsiders.

Finding One: Home Community Environments as Motivation for Higher Education

In Chapters One and Two, I refer to the elements of a tree, the seed, roots, trunk, and branches. I applied the same features as I combed through transcripts and listened to limers' descriptions of their home community environments through the recordings along with the photographs. Limers' home community environments were the foundation (the root) of their motivations to pursue higher education. This motivation was two-fold. Firstly, limers' physical location of their home community environment and the interactions within this space shaped their higher education pursuits and experiences. Notably, within these physical spaces are various elements that shape limers' motivation including the layout of the space, the people within the area (family, friends, neighbors, teachers) and the socio-cultural and economic conditions (violence, poverty, housing infrastructure). Secondly, limers' messages received within the educational systems also shaped their higher education journey. Next, I discuss the role of location and the educational pathways with examples from limers.

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Contextualizing the Place and Space: The Home Community Environment

For the 10 Jamaican first-generation current students and graduates that participated in the study, their home community environment was the first step in their development and education journey. The place was not just the physical location of the home community environment but also the people within this space that engaged with limers. Examples of places and spaces within limers' environments include churches, schools, neighbors' houses, barbershops, corner shops or wholesale, plazas, community centers or open fields, and bus stops. I asked limers to describe their home community environments, including talking about their experiences, family, lessons, and values learned. Limers summed up their experiences within their home community environment as a place where they learned many valuable lessons, including "getting a good education." The lessons and values constitute the label of the home community environment as a repository of knowledge.

A repository of knowledge meant that limers' home community environments provided them with a wealth of information. The home community environment was a place of guiding principles and lessons. This information was overt and subtle messages within limers' home community environments that defined their lived experiences and informed their decisions in life, including their educational choices and the type of university they would ultimately choose when upon completing secondary education in Jamaica.. Limers did not explicitly know or appreciate the value of the lessons at the time, but as they grew and interacted with various systems (for example, school, friends, church, or work) leaned on this knowledge from their family and community members.

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The many lessons and values taught within limers' home community environments served as helpful knowledge for both their characters and their motivation through university. The lessons were the unique experiences of limers, and the values were the principles.

When describing core values learned from their family and community, limers shared the words: compassion, determination, discipline, hard work, honesty, humility, integrity, and respect. For example, Phoenix shared her father's profession as a farmer and the many lessons from this job. Phoenix's father taught her to give customers at the market the correct weight for their fruits and vegetables. Phoenix said that her father "used the principle of the scale to teach us honesty. He said, do not back the scale; you do not steal from the poor." Phoenix stressed that her father said that people who do not give customers their correct weights would have "bad blessings" following them. Phoenix has taken this principle of honesty from her father to teach her son, which has guided her higher education journey by ensuring that she is honest with her assignments at university and with everyone she interacts with on campus.

Phoenix and I laughed at this story regarding the scale and vendors at the market. The scale was a common source of tension in the Jamaican culture, where customers and vendors at the market are constantly arguing about the correct weights. I told Phoenix that my mother and I had experienced the same deception when we went to the market to purchase from vendors and that my mother always taught me to be honest so that no "bad blessing will follow her children and grandchildren. Phoenix responded with:

Mhm, hmm. I think I really think so because I have seen some situations turn

around for me. And I know it's because of, of good, good practices of the parents

the blessing is coming down. And I have that nature to give, I always want to give

because of what they instilled into us and to work hard. And education was also

very important. My father, so I can disclose this is probably like the first time I'm

disclosing this outside of my family members. My father could not read and write.

The first line of Phoenix's response is agreeing with the belief that if we are dishonest

"bad blessings" will follow us. She further stated that because of this good practice,

referring to the lesson of honesty by her parents, she has received many blessings.

Phoenix ended her statement by sharing that her parents also instilled the importance of

education. She shared that one of the main reasons for this emphasis on education due to

the fact that her father was not literate. I also noted that Phoenix was sharing this personal

story for the first time outside of her family, with me. We continued the conversation

with:

SF: Oh, I have, I have a lot of that in my family, a lot of that in my family. I am so

happy you shared that.

Phoenix: So, my father couldn't read and write and I'm telling you Shenhaye

every day, my father I tell you what we learned in school. And I found it so...I

never know my father couldn't read and write until I was an adult.

SF: Oh wow, oh my goodness Phoenix you gonna mek mi bawl…hold now. Oh,

my goodness Phoenix you know what you saying to me, you know like it's almost

taboo for persons to talk about these things because people feel a way.

Phoenix: Exactly.

SF**:** …and who gonna look down on who and that type of thing. And sometimes you nuh wah talk bout it inna the community because people like to bully people and mock people…

Phoenix: …and judge.

SF: And that type a thing. So, the fact that you and I are here talking about these things, this is the reality of so many persons.

Phoenix: Yes.

SF: Especially on my mother's side of family me, you know much times me afi forge signature when mi likl you know when you afi go pon school trip and your parents have to sign and you have to read it to your parents and then you have to forge the signature and that type of thing because they didn't know what to do, and after a while you start teach them one and two things, ABC.

Phoenix: Yes.

SF: Oh, my goodness. I've never had this conversation with anybody.

I intentionally gave Phoenix space to share her story as she was liming on her phone via audio recording on Zoom and our voices were cracking as this story of her father hit home. To reciprocate as an active limer in the study, I also shared my personal family story. When I stated that I had to forge signatures, I was referring to forging my mother's signature that was needed for permission slips for school trips. The conversation continued as Phoenix was sharing this story outside of her family for the first time and I was doing the same as I have never had a one-on-one discussion with anyone about

literacy in my family, only light remarks or for my application essays which I knew would only be read by a selected few. By sharing with Phoenix is one of many examples of how I actively participated in the limes, emphasizing that the conversation was not one-sided. I could have easily ignored this moment and hide behind Zoom instead it was important to me to reciprocate the level of intimacy regarding the stories and experiences shared by limers. Both limers and researcher's interventions are what help to shape the onlime session (Fernández Santana, 2020).

Phoenix submitted a photograph of her father eating from a calabash bowl on his birthday. The calabash bowl is of cultural significance as Phoenix shared that her father chose to eat from the wooden bowl, which is popular in African culture, instead of a porcelain plate. His friends were teasing, asking why he ate from the calabash bowl on his birthday. In keeping with the confidentiality clause of the study, the photograph is not shown here to protect Phoenix's and her family's identities. Figure 4 describes the photograph using alternative (Alt) text and includes the limers' narrative for the photovoice prompt and photograph. The lessons taught by Phoenix's father (e.g., being honest and the importance of education) within her home community environment motivated her to achieve more via education.

Figure 4: Phoenix's Motivation for HED from Home Community

> ***Description of image:*** *Phoenix's father is sitting on a small blue chair eating from a calabash bowl in his black leather hat, black and white t-shirt with matching black and white pants and a red pair of Clark shoes.* ***Phoenix's narrative:*** *The…image of my father encapsulates a part of my ethos. His story and life are factors that inspired me to pursue higher education.*

Phoenix continued the narrative of the photograph by stating:

> Here you see him decked out in brand-name clothing and shoes, yet he is eating from a traditional bowl made from the dried shell of an unpopular plant. It shows humility and loyalty to culture, and that is something I have instilled in me through him. So even though I am on my third degree, I will remain humble and never forget my roots that I am that girl from a poor rural community. My father is illiterate, unable to read and write, yet he dresses well, and the naked eyes and untrained eyes are able to unearth his insecurity and flaws. This photo embodies strength and perseverance. It signals the idea that we all wear a mask to cover something. My father's untold story will always motivate me to achieve more. He always said, "education is the key to prosperity."

The photograph with Phoenix's father was more than just him eating from a wooden bowl. This practice of eating from a wooden bowl represented the value her father placed on non-material things and staying true to his culture, and not being distracted by materialistic ways of living. Although he did not have the opportunity to access education, he was able to teach Phoenix and her siblings life lessons that shaped their educational pursuits. Phoenix was completing her third degree during the time of this dissertation and kept all the lessons learned within her home community environment and from her parents as guidance throughout higher education. Phoenix's father was seen as a repository of knowledge since he taught her so many valuable lessons.

Baller also learned many core values from his grandfather; one memorable lesson was the core value of humility. Baller expressed:

> …and I was telling you something earlier about what my grandfather did is my grandfather come up with this brilliant idea of planting callaloo. We a plant it and everything, everybody else inna di yaad. People weh more familiar with the community and ray ray…di man say a you a go sell the callaloo. So, me now this big sportsman, this, this youth weh everybody know. Mi now afi push a barrow at least weh you would a…it…call it now...me afi push the barrow inna di...almost the entire community. So, mi afi cover almost one, two to six miles radius in... maybe more than that you know...push barrow and a sell every single callaloo. So, what that did for me is kill every single pride weh mi have inna me. So, see them likl pride ways deh weh mi did have it killed everything.

Baller was extremely expressive in sharing all his stories and I was laughing uncontrollably for our lime as I could visualize what he was saying. In the narrative above like all the onlimes, the stories were not told in a linear manner. Limers would refer to one memory and then remember another point which added to the circular and conversational nature of liming. Hence in line one Baller said, "…and I was telling you something earlier about what my grandfather did." In the narrative above Baller was sharing that he learned the lesson of humility from his grandfather. Baller was tasked with selling the callaloo that his grandfather planted on the farm. What was "embarrassing," was selling the vegetable from a wheelbarrow walking up to six miles in and around the Baller's community. Baller was popular in his community for playing sports as such those who were looking on were teasing him, in disbelief that the superstar sportsman is walking and selling vegetables. Baller was laughing as he made the point of how the selling of the callaloo basically taught him to "work for his own" and not allow his pride to prevent him from doing what he needed to do. Baller also shared another lesson from farming in his community. Baller said:

> So, um as a tell you before, in younger years I always see persons a go a bush you know, a go a them farm. There is not a day weh you doh even see them a put on them crocus bag and water boot and a go a farm. Whether rainy day, sunny day...them always a go. So that always instilled in me that no matter what you always have to get on with it.

Baller communicated that growing up no matter the weather on the day, he always saw people in his community going to their farms and this taught him that no matter what he

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always has to keep it moving, get on with the flow, get on with life, rain or shine, good or bad. This lesson was not just tied to Baller's family, the fact that he referred to always seeing farmers (persons) going to "them farm," meant that other farmers (persons) in the community indirectly shaped the lessons instilled in him.

Defining Community as Family

Along with examples of lessons from limers' communities, limers also shared the role of their community as family and how this unit taught them certain core values such as respect. For example, Mens Rea shared how he was taught to respect everyone within his community, including the elders. Mens Rea along with all limers emphasized the importance of community as family and a symbol of unity where their lessons did not just come from within their immediate household but also within other elements of the microsystem. All these elements within the home community environment acted as motivating factors to access higher education. Here I share an example from Mens Rea who said:

Community is more than family, and for, and especially in the rural area, community is a village. I am a firm believer that it takes a village to raise a child. Uhm, in my youth, there were things that I would have done, but because of the elders in the community and the respect that hat I had for them, I did not do those things.

Mens Rea defined community as more than family and believed that it was like a village and everyone within the village is involved in raising the child. Mens stated that because of the lesson of respect if he thought about doing something bad like running away, he

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would not because he had tremendous respect for the people in his community. Mens Rea said:

> [laughs] And then I say to myself if mi run weh what would Mister M and Miss D think of me and those were two of the older persons in the community that I had tremendous respect for. I would pass Mister M and Miss D they were a married couple right. And I would pass them in the mornings and I'll say good morning, Miss Dorothy, good morning, Mr. Mike and five minutes later I'm coming back down the road, good morning. And I think they would take it for a joke because if I pass them 6 times in the morning, I'll be calling to them. Because that's the way my mother taught me. And so, you know it was like growing up in rural village, it was I would see my, if my mother didn't have likl salt, she would run to the neighbor and beg yu likl salt and they would give it. And if my neighbor cut a banana, she would bring a hand [of bananas] to my mother. If like somebody plant some irish and they picking it and they say come and pick up some a di old ones mon. You know you get a piece a yam, you get some cow's milk and from here and there.

Mens Rea stated that if he passed the neighbors six times for the morning, he would always say good morning as that is the way his mother taught him to have tremendous respect for the elders in the community. Because he was polite and respectful on the days when his mother needed anything, for example, salt or yam, cow's milk, or irish potato, she could easily ask the neighbor. For Mens Rea, being respectful was important as shared in his narrative because of the relationship he had with persons in his "village" he

was able to receive assistance for his family during times of need. Therefore, the lessons and core values from limers' physical spaces within their communities were important to shaping their higher education experiences. I have only shared three highly contextualized examples as other limers mentioned some of these same values.

Geographical Location: A Motivating Factor

Another feature of the location of place and space included limers' specific descriptions of their home community environments and how the geographical position of these spaces motivated their higher education journey. Limers hailed from two types of communities: four were from rural farming communities, and six were from urban communities. Limers' descriptions of their communities were based on the physical features and how society defined these spaces. For example, all four limers from the rural communities indicated that their home community environments lacked specific resources. When asked to describe her community, Star shared that:

> Uhm farming community mainly…didn't have access to a lot of things like…probably a library or you know uhm community centers not as much. Uhm, you didn't have a lot of people, so you basically knew everybody, because it was a small but tightly knit, yes. But was, it was a very poor community.

Star pointed out the fact that access to certain resources was limited in her farming community and although it was a small community, they were very close. Mens Rea, when describing his community indicated that from hearing the name of his community, one would know that it is a farming community. I understood his expression as in

Jamaica, it is common for the name of your community to be descriptive of the type of community based on the messages we heard while growing up. Our conversation was:

> Uhm, so I grew up in Yamz Hill, and from you hear the name, you know it's a rural community. Well, I grew up on the outskirts of Yamz Hill, really in a little farming community.
>
> SF: Is that part of St. Club or St. Rios?
>
> Mens Rea: I'm in the St. Rios parts.
>
> SF: Okay.
>
> Mens Rea: So, I grew up in Vega [in Yamz Hill]. It's very rustic, rural, you know very nature-centric uhm community.
>
> SF: Is farming predominant in that community?
>
> Mens Rea: Yes, it's an agrarian community, subsistence farming. And so, you know, I grew up in what you call humble means…we did not have a TV in my house.

Mens Rea was describing the community and parish that he was from. I was not familiar with the location of his community as such I probed further for clarification to ask which parish. Mens Rea shared that his community spanned two parishes in Jamaica but that shared that he was from the side closer to St. Rios. With specific descriptions of where Mens Rea's community was located, I was able to visualize the distance he travelled between primary and high school and home.

Mens Rea further shared that his community practices subsistence farming which meant that it was a small-scale farming. He also shared that he did not grow up with a TV

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in house. By mentioning having no TV, Mens Rea provided insights into the socio-economic status of his single-parent family household. In other words, to some having access to a television was a privilege and luxury not afforded to everyone. Throughout our limes Mens Rea emphasized his community and the lessons learnt not just from his family and community members but also through farming. Phoenix was also from a rural farming community. Phoenix described her community by saying:

> Okay, so I am from, I grew up in a rural community in St. Townhall…the forgotten parish…growing up you don't see a lot of persons going out to work. It's more of a farming area. There used to be a factory…that used to provide work. The factory closed down…so a lot of the persons that…worked there became unemployed. So…what I grew up seeing a lot was farmers, persons working in supermarkets and the wholesales.

Phoenix described the type of employment within her home community environment. In her response above, she mentioned farming and people who worked in factories, supermarkets, and wholesales. Baller was from the same parish as Phoenix but a different district. Baller also spoke about employment being related to farming and people who worked in the factories. All limers from the rural communities stated that they were motivated by the lack of access to resources in their community and the types of jobs within their environments as their dream was not to grow up to work in the factory or on the farm or to remain in their home community environments with limited social amenities. Instead, their dream was to migrate to the urban areas with big towns and cities.

For limers from the urban communities, they described their home community environments as inner-cities based on the location. Also, this description came from the characteristics of their communities, such as the infrastructures, levels of education and poverty, and the high levels of gun violence. The urban communities also had more resources than the rural communities. For example, libraries, hospitals, community centers, and other services were close in proximity. I acknowledge that in the U.S. context, the phrase inner-city is highly politicized, racially loaded, and usually refers to communities where African Americans reside (Axel-Lute, 2017). However, in Jamaica, a predominantly Black country, the term does not carry the same meaning in our culture. In Jamaica, the inner-cities are located only in two areas, the Kingston Metropolitan Area and the parish of St. James (Bailey, 2011). Figures 12 and 13 are images shared by limers from urban inner-city communities.

Also, the term inner-city on the literal meaning of communities within cities. In Jamaica, the two major cities are Montego Bay, St. James, and Kingston (KMA). Finally, Jamaica's inner-city communities are based on social class, not racial differences. This was clearly understood by limers from the urban communities, who shared that their communities were not among the affluent areas. Our conversation was:

Jason: All right, so for starters, I grew up in an inner-city community, which is fairly volatile. At times, very volatile.

SF: You call it inner-city or a just because you…grow up and that you hear say…you…dem call we garrison, inner-city?

Jason: No, I have adjusted to calling it inner-city because that is the politically correct term for it in recent times.

Jason described his community as inner-city. Although I knew what he meant, I asked why he called it inner-city, to which he answered that this was the term he heard growing up to describe his community. Additionally, Jason used the terms *garrison* and *ghetto* to describe his community. These terms which are often used in the Jamaican vernacular provided insights into the type of community Jason was from as well as insights on the crime and violence which he spoke about throughout the onlime sessions. Similar to Jason, Hertzfries was from an urban inner-city community. Hertzfries communicated that:

Okay, so I was born and raised in Spain Brook, Kingston [St. Andrew], Jamaica. Uhm the experiences, they have been a roller coaster. There have been times, where it's calm and okay, and then there is a next time where it's just a lot of rampage going on. Because I've had experiences where I was younger like about five or four were like gunmen actually stood right beside my house and fired some shots. So yeah, so it was a bit traumatizing from an earlier age. But it's, sad to say that I've gotten used to it [the gun violence].

Hertzfries named his community, which is located in the Kingston Metropolitan Area urban inner-city communities. Hertzfries describes his experiences as a roller coaster as sometimes his community is calm while other times gunshots. In thinking of a roller coaster, there can be mixed reactions. Some roller coasters are super-fast while others are slow but based on my experiences with roller coasters, I can never tell at what point it

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will move fast or slow. In other words, they can be unpredictable similar to the sporadic violence in Hertzfries' community.

Hertzfries also shared a close encounter from his childhood that traumatized him regarding gunmen firing shots beside his house. This memory resonated with me, as I could relate to this encounter as a child growing up in my volatile community. Hertzfries' last statement is even more profound as he indicated that he has gotten used to the gun violence. The phrase "gotten used to" signaled that hearing gunshots or about the crime and violence became the norm and as such we have become numb to the violence and the sound of the gunshots. In other words, just another day in the community. Our conversation continued with:

SF: [laughs in agreement] yeah, yeah mhm, hmm.

Hertzfries: [laughs] But living the area I think after a time you're gonna.

SF: You become numb to it?

Hertzfries: Get used to it. Yeah, yeah if you hear the gunshots, you're gonna be like, oh this one is not near me or that sounds pretty close.

My immediate response to Hertzfries saying that he had gotten used to gun violence, was laughter. This is the perfect example of ole talk playing out in liming. My laughter was not directed at Hertzfries as he too laughed. This laughter was us "taking bad somethings make laugh" although this was a serious matter. Through humor, there is some form of coping. Hertzfries was sharing a story that happened more than at least 15 years ago and his description was "traumatized from an early age" regarding exposure to gun violence in his community. We continued with:

SF: Yeah, yeah right, right .

Hertzfries: So that's how it has been uhm…

SF: …yeah so, I have been talking to persons…who they're from different areas…

HF: …yeah.

SF: So, there were some persons who they grew up in St Thomas, for example, and them come from rural community so you know farming and whatever. And then them will tell you say boi mi nuh used dem ting deh weh gwaan a town cah dem supm deh nuh gwaan a country. People cuss and whatever but like domestic like you know man and woman cussing and dem supm there but them say them bangarang deh weh gwaan a town dem say when them move come a town them never used to dem bangarang deh. But then there was somebody that I talked to…I never meet this person before but she went to UWI she lives in the community too. She lives in Spain Brook, this is my first time meeting her last week, and she was saying that she just, she just get so used to you Know and mi say yeah mi understand weh yuh feel…weh ya say because that's me I'm just like oh it's just another day in the city. Is neither here nor there as long as it nuh deh right deh so weh yuh know say it a guh ketch yuh

Hertzfries: Close to yuh yeah.

I interrupted Hertzfries during the lime to share that I have been interacting with others from different communities such as rural areas and they do not have the same experiences as it relates to community violence as crime and violence rates are lower in farming communities. I shared that I met someone who was from the same community as

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Hertzfries and they too shared that whenever they heard gunshots, they became numb and perceived it as another day in the community and random gunshots have become the norm. This also shed light on the ways in which limers from the same communities had similar experiences or perceptions of community violence regarding the geographical location of their home community environment. We continued with:

SF: Yeah, exactly but, but yeah how, how you think other people see the community?

Hertzfries: Uhm…

SF: …outsiders

Hertzfries: Outsiders?

SF: Mhm, hmm.

Hertzfries: From what I've experienced like it's a very dangerous community. I can't I cannot say they're wrong yeah very kind of is dangerous. Like living in the community, you, you have an understanding when and what time the dangers might occur or because you have persons in and around the community. Like say for instance, something is gonna happen they are like all right you afi clear here so…

SF: Right.

Hertzfries: …and so forth. So, from the outside they can say yeah it's dangerous and so forth. Because I've had experiences where just because I came from August Town like in the social ladder like I am beneath some people so I've experienced that uhm like at school and also when I play hockey too so...

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SF: Ohhh okay. I remember when I used to work at UWI uhm this lady this lady uhm you had a couple people who would be like oh you mean you mean those people, those people down there I'm like weh yuh mean a August Town me cum from to eno. What are you trying to see as if you know you're supposed to look a particular way uhm if you come from garrison communities that type of thing right? Tell me about some good things about your community.

Hertzfries: Uhm like. I would say the people. Okay, because apart from apart from the violence, like when there's anything that we should come together.

I was hyperaware that limers from the inner-city communities would share about violence in their community because it was such a dominant feature of where they were geographically located. With this awareness, I also asked limers to share about the good things of their community as outsiders might utilized the stereotypical view of the environment while those who live within these spaces see the violence as well as what is beneath the violence. For Hertzfries, one of the layers beneath the gun violence in his community was the unity presented among everyone in the community, the fact that members of the community came together when it was necessary. Limers from both rural and urban inner-city communities spoke about their admiration of the unity within their home community environments.

Another example of geographical location came from Ashley who said the following about her community:

Ashley: So first, I grew up in Spain Brook right so. It is a very, it's a good community, but it is very violent.

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SF: Describe that very violent for me and describe what is good about it [the community] to you.

Ashley was from the same community as Hertzfries, again located in the Kingston Metropolitan Area as an urban inner-city. Ashley described her community as being good but also violent which led me to probe further regarding how she described the "very violent" and what was good about it. Ashley said that:

So, personally, it [volatile community] has really instilled in me like made me realize things that I don't want for myself and it has encouraged me to move forward. Because I looked at it as, as a lesson to say I don't want this for myself, I wouldn't want this for my family or I would want to come out or maybe change it. So violent in terms of you can just be here right now and somebody just walk up and you just hear gunshots and that's it even with students or children on the road or anything that. So...it has impacted me in some way whereas one particular time I, when I was in high school and it started early in the morning and we were at a bus stop and we had to go back home. We couldn't, couldn't go to school. So, sometimes I had to stay home or maybe go to Heinz Park where my grandma is in order for me to move freely.

Ashley in responding to what is good about her community, indicated that being in the environment made her recognize her vision for herself and her family and served as encouragement for her to keep moving forward. According to Gratitude, when he described his community, he said:

And one would describe Top Hill as one of those volatile communities where it's prone to violence. There are, there isn't a lot said about it in terms of positive things because it...the thing is, results have shown that the persons who come out of this community aren't always the top of, the top in society because based on their educational background, for instance. So, while there are opportunities to go to school here in the community it also goes back to the household you grew up in. I know not everybody is ahhh...has good finances but some make it work. So, I would see my family in that bracket. We made it work. So, it also goes back to parenting. So, my parents were adamant that hey yu need to go to school. So, hey even if you sick yu need to go to school.

The location of Gratitude's community is in the urban inner-cities of the Kingston Metropolitan Area. All six limers shared similar descriptions regarding associating violence with their communities and they were all from volatile communities within the Kingston Metropolitan Area. In the narrative above, Gratitude suggested that persons who are from his community are typically not always at the top of society. Gratitude shared an example of education, a reference to the social stratification in Jamaica which is also informed by one's level of education. This perception fed into the stereotypical view of outsiders when discussing volatile urban inner-city communities. This response was no surprise to me as I have had similar encounters where I am socialized to believe that "nothing good comes from the inner-city" and I am always left with the feeling that I have to prove that this statement is false by persisting in whatever I do. It was evident that Gratitude had a similar understanding of persons from his community being viewed

as less than hence his statement "not the top of society." Although Gratitude's family lived in the urban inner-city of Top Hill, they made it work financially since his father was working. Gratitude also noted his parents' emphasis of education. Even if he was not feeling well, going to school was important. We continued with:

> SF: Why you think they were adamant about that?
>
> Gratitude: I think they are adamant about that, because they knew that ahh when they were growing up, they didn't have opportunities. I can tell you that my father, for instance, he at least got the opportunity to go to the high school level. But his parents couldn't afford tertiary education for him. My mother now, my mother, she had some setbacks, because her father uhm wasn't, you know in Jamaica in terms people say you're ignorant but ignorant really can be you lack knowledge not just being miserable. So, her father was rather ignorant, he used to say no, you need to do the housework, you can't go a school before you do the housework, that sort of thing. And he would be pretty much ahh, he was, he wasn't understanding [chuckles] he wasn't understanding.

I probed further by asking what he thought was the reason for his parents being adamant about education. Gratitude responded that his parents did not have the opportunities to access tertiary education. Gratitude shared that his father went to up to the high school level but unfortunately his mother was not able to due to her father believing that her role was in the house, therefore, completing housework before school. This is also suggestive of the social history of gender roles and education in Jamaica.

In summary, the home community environment was not just a place where they physically lived. Home community environments were part of the microsystem that influenced limers understanding and perceptions of life. Part of this understanding and perception included the many lessons from limers' home community environments which shaped not only their understanding of the world but also acted as one of the main catalysts for accessing higher education. Limers' descriptions of their experiences within their geographical location varied depending on the type of community environment they were from. It was evident that limers' experiences within rural farming areas in comparison to limers' from volatile urban inner-city communities were glaringly different. In fact, when rural limers were asked about violence, the response was domestic violence or praedial larceny, with only Phoenix and Baller mentioning a gun once during their onlimes as gun violence was rare in the rural communities. As a Jamaican, I was not surprised by the low rates of gun violence in rural communities. I am aware that rural farming communities tend to have less gun violence. Regardless of limers' descriptions of their community, the many lessons learned and their experiences within these places and spaces were motivating factors for higher education.

Educational Pathways Shaped by Environment

Limers highlighted that the messages received from their family, community members, and the schools they attended within their home community environments motivated their higher education pursuits. Attending basic and primary schools within your home community or an institution close to the community is common in Jamaica. Basic schools are government-sponsored and community-based institutions for children

ages three to five. In the U.S. context, basic schools would be similar to pre-kindergarten. However, schools considered kindergarten in Jamaica is attached to private preparatory schools and infant school is attached to public primary schools. In Jamaica, primary school typically consists of Grades 1 to 6 for children ages 6 to 12 years old.

For this study, all limers attended basic and primary schools within their home community environment. There was a collective thread in the liming data where limers stressed the notion of going to school to get a "good education" and a "good job" to elevate themselves and their families. This level of schooling and academic performance expectations started with attending basic school and transitioning to primary school. For example, one photovoice prompt asked limers how their home community environment shape their higher education journey. Phoenix's response to this prompt was her primary school.

Figure 5: Phoenix's Primary School Shaping Education Journey

Phoenix spoke proudly of her primary school experiences in her home community environment. Phoenix shared that this was the institution that laid the foundation for her

education journey and it was her academic performance at this institution that made it possible to attend her "town school." When discussing why she submitted this photograph of her primary school for the prompt regarding community influencing education journey, Phoenix shared the following:

> Because that's the country primary school that I attended and propelled me to where I am today. Had I not done well there, I would not have been able to step out of the community to go to Gold High School. And then now see all these tertiary institutions and to propel to...so that was like the genesis.

By country school, Phoenix was referring to rural. In Jamaica, it is common to say country versus town meaning rural versus city/urban. Phoenix expressed that her primary school was central to all that she has achieved to date as this was one of the places that laid the foundation regarding her education. Additionally, Phoenix constantly desired to go to a "town school" and stated that she idolized people from the town. Earlier, I mentioned that limers from rural communities dreamt of moving to the urban city.

The idea of going to "town" by Phoenix is an example of people from a rural community having a desire to move to an urban community or attend a school in the big city. In Chapter Two, the conversation with my dad, emphasized that each social class had different rules and if you were Black you stay at the pack of the pack but if you are white, you are all right. Through a (post)colonial lens there is the perception that anything white is superior, therefore, the behavioral patterns of this group is seen as the ultimate goal. In the case of Jamaica, a predominantly Black population, whiteness is equated to the upper echelons of society, families with wealth and education. Some of these wealthy

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persons resided in the "big city" or as stated by Phoenix, in the "town." Growing up in her rural community, Phoenix perceived "town" as a place that was filled with privileges and opportunities for persons like her from rural farming communities. Like Phoenix, it is commonplace for children to be exposed to these socio-cultural norms of wanting to migrate to communities that were closer to the upper class, had prominent high schools and better-resourced education institutions, and provided multiple opportunities for employment. Phoenix's strong desire and motivation to attend a "town" school in the big city confirmed that there were some levels of disparities between the rural and urban areas regarding socio-economic resources provided in communities and schools.

For Phoenix, the big city was Kingston and St. Andrew, Jamaica. Phoenix said, "We heard that is bright students get placed to the town school." By placement, Phoenix was referring to the national standardized examination that children at the end of primary school in Jamaica must take to matriculate to high school. This exam was called the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). The Primary Exit Profile assessment has since replaced this test. Phoenix, who resided many miles from Kingston, was able to live her dream of attending a "town school." Limers like Phoenix recognized that they had to "test well" on the standardized test to attend the high school of their dreams.

Therefore, limers' performance on the GSAT or PEP examinations determined their high school placements. If you test "better," you were placed at your school of choice. The impact of standardized tests was echoed across all limers as they knew that if they did not test well, their education future would face additional challenges to access higher education. Moreover, based on the messages received within their families that

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education was valuable and the only way out of poverty and away from the gun violence, limers' had the additional pressure of working hard to attend their high school of choice.

It is noteworthy that two limers had a unique experience as they did not pass the GSAT for their high school of choice. In other words, they would have "missed" the "opportunity" to attend their ideal high school. Big Mama shared that upon receiving her GSAT results, she passed for a non-traditional high school and her father got her transferred to a traditional high school. This suggested that her father did not want her to attend the specific non-traditional high school as it was labeled a "failed school." Big Mama communicated that she rarely shared this story during our lime and felt disappointed. Big Mama said: "Ahh, I feel disappointed, knowing that my parents and I, we were expecting to...well, I was expecting to do very well."

On the other hand, another limer did not pass for his high school of choice, nor did he get a transfer to a different high school. Instead, he attended his non-traditional high school. He shared that one of his primary school teachers, upon hearing his GSAT results, boldly expressed their disappointment with his placement, indicating that she expected better. Both limers stated that their GSAT grades shattered their confidence and pushed them to prove naysayers wrong by ensuring they accessed higher education.

Additionally, limers' home community environments were also one of the main reasons their families emphasized the value of education. For example, Jason shared that his mother didn't want him to get caught up in the gun and gang violence in his urban community. Ergo, growing up in his environment, Jason had to stay at home reading books most days after school. Jason's mother made a heavy investment in education to

ensure that he could be gainfully employed after university and in the same positions as herself and other community members. Jason's mother was strategic in that she got a job at a university so that Jason would benefit from the tuition assistance program provided for employers at the university. Hertzfries stated that his older sibling emphasized education and felt like he was forced to go to university. From a tender age, his sibling tried to instill in him that this was the only way to elevate within and outside the home community environment. His older sibling witnessing the community's various elements (poverty and violence) meant that he did want Hertzfries to have the same experiences. Interestingly, aside from teaching Hertzfries to speak proper English, his older sibling was also intentional about his name. Hertzfries said that writing his name on a résumé would not make him easily identifiable ethnically. Hertzfries commented:

> Yes, like he's like with, with your name like if you're overseas and like say, for instance, you're going for a job just seeing your name on a paper, they would never, they would never expect to see a Black person with that name.

It was clear that Hertzfries' brother was aware of the implicit bias regarding names and home addresses on a résumé. Hertzfries already had one obstacle against him when applying for jobs, his home address, and as such, his unique name and pronunciation gave him more leverage when applying for a job.

In conclusion, the presence of (post)colonial Jamaica regarding the levels of social disparities and socio-economic conditions in limers' home community environments were evident from their descriptions. It is these (post)colonial realties of poverty and crime and violence that led limers to understand that education was an

investment for the greater good. Education was their only way out of rural farming communities and urban inner-cities, and as such, they were highly motivated to not remain "stuck," in Star's and Ashley's words. Limers' experiences and lived realities within their immediate (post)colonial home community environment served as a driving force for the "I need to get out" mindset. Limers had a strong desire to change their particular set of circumstances. However, the financial reality was that this expectation through the conduit of education was not as easy as their family, parents, friends and community made it seem.

All six limers from urban inner-city communities were still residing in their communities even after accessing higher education. It was clear that there was an unspoken assumption that once they graduated with their bachelor's they would be able to immediately change their socio-economic circumstances. However, this was not the case for many limers as they either had financial obligations such as the repayment of student loans, the reality that they were not eligible for home loan mortgage from the National Housing Trust (NHT) due to their salaries upon graduating or their expenses and the prospects of owning a home in a non-violent environment were not feasible to achieve immediately after graduation. Added to limers' financial reality post-graduation was also the reality of coming to terms with Jamaica's (post)colonial state. As a (post)colonial nation, Jamaica is highly indebted and faces numerous socio-economic challenges which inevitably affect the most vulnerable population, including those who experience poverty and community violence. Nevertheless, limers remained hopeful and steadfast in their pursuit of education will bring socio-economic changes over time.

Finding Two: Pre-University Experiences Shaped Access to Higher Education

This section focuses on how limers' pre-university experiences at high school motivated their access to higher education. One must climb along the trunk to get from the root of a tree to the branches and the fruits. Limers' pre-university experiences represented the bridge (the trunk) to accessing higher education. They could not climb to the pinnacle of this tree if they did not pass all the required examinations in high school.

High school in Jamaica starts in Grade 7 and ends in Grade 11. At the end of Grade 11, students take a national exam called the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), also called CXC. All limers attended public high schools in Jamaica, both traditional and non-traditional. Non-traditional high schools are secondary schools in Jamaica that are upgraded to high schools (Adams & Hayle, 2021). Non-traditional high schools are usually perceived as less prestigious than traditional high schools and can limit students' access and choice of university. Chapter Four also highlights examples from limers where it was clear that the type of high school, they were initially placed at based on standardized examinations impacted their confidence as well as had a connection with the type of community they were from.

Firstly, for this finding, I address the policies within the education system that contributed to various pathways of access to higher education for limers. By policies, I refer to the rules and regulations provided by the Ministry of Education and Youth and the rules at the specific high schools. I provide examples of how the policies and expectations of the education system in Jamaica constricted limers' access or made it challenging. Secondly, for this finding, I discuss how the people within limers' various

locations shaped their access to higher education. By people, I am referring to the messages received at the high school level from teachers and peers and the persons within their home community environments whom limers interacted with. For example, these interactions were framed by family, mentors, and teachers. Educational policies and messages from the people within limers' environments shaped their higher education choices and access process.

Access represented the trunk of the tree, the stem of the plant.

Education was the passport to access.

Access was determined by where I was from and my academics.

Access was the road to success.

Success was attaining a degree.

A degree was one step closer to a better life.

- Shen

Through their varied educational experiences, Limers recognized that access to higher education meant they had to conform and fit into the Jamaican educational system. Simply put, following the rules and trying to be the "model" student, obtaining good grades for their reports, and testing well on standardized exams would make limers' access journey possible. Following the rules meant limers had to stay on a specific path in their home community environments. For example, you either focus on school or be led astray by other activities such as joining a gang, hanging out on the corner, or not attending classes, among other distractions.

Educational Systems and Policies Shaping Access

Limers' experiences within the Jamaican education system also shaped their access to higher education. There were cases where there were barriers to access such as standardized exams and there were cases where positive experiences such as limers' relationships with teachers supported their college-going process. Nevertheless, within their educational experiences, limers received specific messages at school that ultimately shaped their choice of university. When I asked limers to share their high school experiences and what led to their access to university, they all spoke about the education system and standardized tests and the rules they had to conform to within their respective institutions. In primary school, the message was to test well in the standardized examinations so that you could be placed at your high school of choice. For high school, the message was the same: test well in the regional Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exams (CAPE), and you will have a greater opportunity to get accepted by your university of choice.

The policy around standardized tests meant that limers had to perform well in CSEC and CAPE. Students need to pass all standardized tests to be accepted to university. Most higher education institutions require CAPE, while only a few admit students with CSEC grades. Before 2021, high school students had two options: sit CSEC and graduate or enroll in Grades 12 and 13 (6th form) and take the CAPE. For all limers in the study, when they were in high school, attending 6th form was optional. Therefore, eight went to 6th form, and two did not attend 6th form. Limers who did not attend 6th form found it harder to transition to university. Similar issues related to not attending 6th

form have resulted in the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOE&Y) in Jamaica passing a new policy that requires all students to attend 6th form to complete CAPE or the Career Advancement Program (CAP) (Sterling, 2021; Adams & Hayle, 2021). Both CAPE and CAP are pathways to accessing higher education. CAPE focuses on academics, and CAP focuses on technical and vocational education and training.

Ashley and Hertzfries realized that having not attended 6th form in high school, their prospects of applying to a university that required CAPE grades presented additional hurdles. For instance, Ashley was accepted as a part-time student at the university of her choice to prove she could handle the course load. Ashley did not meet the university's CAPE requirement, which led to her being offered part-time enrollment. Ashley said:

> And also, in fifth form my school, my Foods teacher, she was the one who said
>
> that uhm sixth form, it's best to go to sixth form to get that experience, before
>
> going to college anything...I just rejected because I never believe in CAPE.

Ashley communicated that she wished she had listened to her teacher's advice as she was unaware that she would need to present her CAPE results to apply to some universities in Jamaica. However, at the time of the advice, attending university was not something Ashley thought about while in high school. As such, 6th form was a waste of time in her mind. Similarly, Hertzfries did not attend 6th form and faced challenges accessing a university that required the CAPE exam. Instead, Hertzfries applied to another university and changed his major. Limers shared that had they known in high school that they needed CAPE to apply to university, they would have attended 6th form. However, at the time, 6th form was not mandatory. Therefore, it is understandable why Ashley and

Hertzfries did not attend. Thus, the policies around the standardized tests created additional roadblocks for Ashley and Hertzfries. Interestingly, the National Qualifications Framework and PIOJ Economic and Social Survey would have created policies to alleviate barriers to accessing higher education around the time that Ashley, Hertzfries and Canary were seeking to apply to university. Yes, policies are created to provide opportunities for multiple pathways to access higher education. However, I continue to question which high schools benefit from these policies and how the information is disseminated. While students are encouraged to seek information, there is also a need to provide additional support for first-generation students whose high schools do not have transition programs or Grades 12 and 13 and what conversations are taking place around the requirements to attend university in Jamaica.

The Role of Language: Barrier to Access or Not?

Another policy was the power of language both in limers' home community environments and educational institutions. Limers echoed the (post)colonial expectation of speaking and writing the language of colonization which is the language of the Jamaican education system. Britain colonized Jamaica and our native African dialects were frowned upon as we were forced to speak English. According to Caribbean scholar, Yewande Lewis-Fokum (2019), sometimes we take for granted the "intersections between language, power, and social practices, especially in the realm of education policy and practice" (p. 94). And there is a need to conduct critical discourse analysis studies in this area as "[s]uch research is valuable in postcolonial nations steeped in a history of power imbalance, as inequities still haunt social institutions such as education"

(Lewis-Fokum, 2019, p. 94). The English language was not just a tool for socialization but also for civilization (Lewis-Fokum, 2019). Today, English is still seen as the language of the elite; speak how you want to be addressed in society. After all, English is the language of business and the "proper" way to speak according to our colonizers.

While conducting the limes, I noted that two limers, Hertzfries and Gratitude, directly asked if it was okay to use the Jamaican dialect. Following my response, both limers were relaxed and smiled. For example, during my lime with Gratitude, he asked, "Oh, by the way, am I allowed to include patois in my dialogue with you?" and I said, "Of course, of course, absolutely!" As the researcher, I found it interesting that so many limers openly stressed the value of the English language. I noted that there was a pattern around the discussion of mastering the English Language, which played a role in accessing higher education. Hertzfries' story focused on his older sibling instilling in him the lesson of *"speak how you write."* If you don't speak how you write, this will impact your trajectory in life to access opportunities. In other words, one must practice speaking "properly" so that they can access "opportunities" in life. We laughed about how we always had to be "speaky spokey," as we say in Jamaica. Hertzfries stated that from a tender age, he always took pride in how he spoke at school and anywhere he went. Hertzfries also encountered lecturers asking him which school he attended and where he was from because he *"spoke so well."* When Hertzfries stated the name of his community and primary or high school, he would be met by a surprised facial expression. Hertzfries understood that some people perceived that "speaking well" may not be a characteristic of the setting based on where you lived and the school you attended.

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Phoenix also alluded to mastering the queen's language in primary school. In her words, "I was well-spoken." When referring to transitioning to high school in the urban parish of Kingston, she shared that her activities in primary school afforded her to be aware of some expectations. Phoenix said, "I had a little knowledge, I could conduct myself uhm properly, and I could speak Standard English." During our lime, Phoenix was cognizant from a tender age that to attend a "town school," she had to master English. In other words, English and education were the perfect "opportunity" for a better life, and she ensured that she knew how to fit within these expectations and test well in English.

Finally, the findings highlighted that limers had preconceived notions about community college and university. Limers shared examples of narratives they heard growing up, which led them to apply to Jamaica's "top" university. For example, Mens Rea shared that he did private tutoring while in high school and the mother of the student he was assisting teased that while her daughter was going to university, Mens Rea would be going to college. I interrupted Mens Rea agreeing with him, and we laughed at this moment as I am aware of the stigma attached to community colleges in Jamaica, which also influenced my choice of university. Mens Rea, at the time, did not understand the difference between college and university, but it was clear that college had a negative connotation. Mens Rea stated, "I developed a subconscious resentment towards college, where I was like I'm not going to college; I'm going straight to university." Therefore, his eyes were only set on institutions with the word "university" based on this comment from the parent. He had to prove this individual wrong that he too had qualities that would get him into "university."

It was evident that there was the assumption that universities were ranked higher than any institution associated with colleges. All limers dreamt of attending Premier University. However, not all limers met the admissions requirements to be accepted at this university. As to what influenced this choice, I would add that socio-cultural factors in (post)colonial Jamaica played a factor in limers' understanding of how institutions were classified. In fact, limers' pre-university experiences added to their levels of awareness regarding the perceptions of traditional versus non-traditional high schools. This awareness was also evident when they spoke about their university of choice and even the need to master the English language. The findings of the study suggested that limers were judged based on the institutions and communities they were affiliated with and how they engaged with these spaces.

Interactions with People within Limers' Spaces: Influencers for Access

Another factor that influenced limers' journey to higher education was the people they engaged with at high school and within their home community environments. Some of these interactions were positive and affirming, while others were negative, and some shattered limers' confidence. Nevertheless, the messages from these interactions were motivating factors for limers to access higher education, even if this meant not immediately after high school.

Baller shared an example of student-teacher interactions regarding his high school English teacher. Baller shared that he had a block against English in high school as his English teacher preferred students who knew the English language and, in his words, those who "spoke a little better." Baller expressed his dislike for his English teacher and

her bias in the classroom, so much so that he did not complete the national English Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). Later in his education journey, the English exam would affect his prospects of getting into university. Baller also stated that popular students who played sports in high school like himself were labeled as not serious about their schoolwork and viewed negatively regarding academics. Despite his battle with the English Language, he set his sights on running for a position within the student body, which meant that he had to participate in a debating competition.

Baller stopped attending English classes from Grade 8 in high school. This action meant that he would have missed the lesson on persuasive arguments, which impacted his performance in the debating competition. After leaving high school, Baller participated in computer skills training class. He grew to have a greater appreciation for the English language by having a teacher who could communicate the lessons for him to understand the intricacies of the topic. Baller's high school English teacher did not cater to his learning style. However, he met another teacher who taught his computer training class and appreciated learning English.

Figure 6: Baller's Journal as Motivation for HED
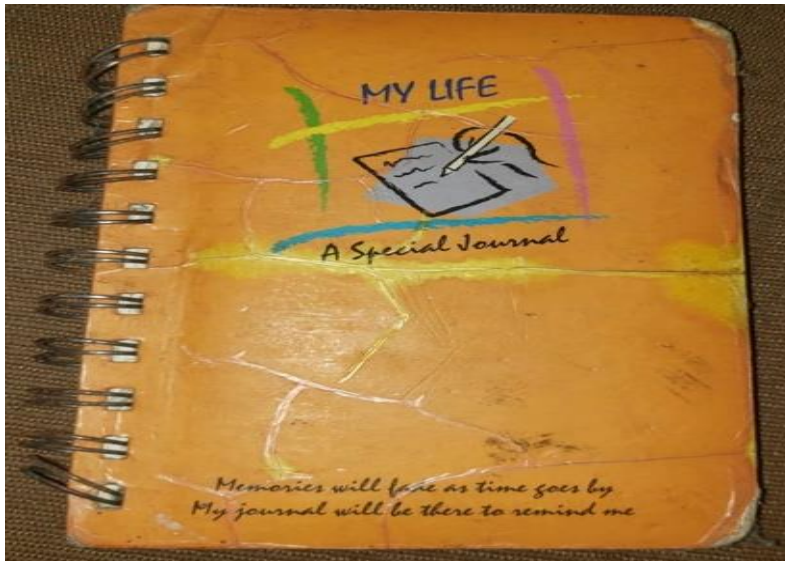
Baller submitted photographs of books and the journal in Figure 6. He said that:

> I like to read, but in the beginning, I hated reading. My love for reading came at a
>
> time where I was struggling with English and after signing up to the
>
> HEART/Trust Program. I then discover that reading helped me how to understand
>
> and even write better on my schoolwork and assignments. I never looked back

After high school, Baller attended a skills training program in his community, where he

learned about data entry and other subjects, including English. He shared that the teacher

inspired him during this program, and his passion for reading and learning was reignited.

Baller stated that the journal was significant as he had to write daily about what he

learned and how he felt. In the computer class, Baller understood the English language's

intricacies because the teacher had a different approach from his high school teacher.

Baller emphasized his experiences with both teachers, which provided insights on how

the dynamics between teachers and students can impact academic performance. Baller

did not appreciate the English Language until he graduated from high school and had to learn the language in vocational training program by a teacher who seemingly cared about reaching all students with the class lesson. Regardless of limers' interaction with the English language, they were always motivated to improve themselves. Therefore, limers attitude was to do whatever it took to meet the educational system's expectations and fit in as best as they could.

Phoenix shared another example of her experience in high school which led to a negative student-teacher interaction. During our lime, Phoenix shared that she experienced classism at her high school and which led her to be feeling victimized and bullied. As result of being bullied Phoenix had varied interactions with her teachers. Next, I share the full context of the discussion in parts. Phoenix said:

> So high school was bittersweet. I was happy I got the opportunity to come to Kingston. But for most of my years I felt embarrassed and victimized. Coming to…I'm not sure if you know the poem, Colonial Girls School.
>
> SF: Oh, I hate it. I know it, I had to repeat it so many times.
>
> Phoenix: Yes, repeated it so many times and I think I was living the hell of going to a colonial girls school. And there remnants of classism still existing at my school. So, because, because I used to take the bus come up, and I never have no parent a drop me off and so, I felt at times victimized.

Phoenix always dreamt of attending a "town" school and that she did when she passed her GSAT and passed from a high school in Kingston. However, Phoenix had bittersweet memories at her elitist high school where she felt judged, embarrassed and victimized.

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We had a connection of high school experiences as we both had to recite the poem Colonial Girls' School by Olive Senior. In short, this poem reflected on the impact of colonialism and racism on the colonial education system in Jamaica that shaped perceptions of various things such as physical beauty and what was acceptable for girls to wear. My response to Phoenix was that I hated this poem, we recited it ever so often at my elitist high school and the rules for how to dress were colonial. For Phoenix, her high school experience was "a living hell." Phoenix switched the conversation to share a side story and then continued on classism which ultimately leads to the student-teacher interaction. Phoenix said:

> So back to high school now. I encountered a lot of classism. When I started, I
> went to summer school, I never have nuh one bag of fancy something. And I
> remember seeing them picking on a girl on the third day [of summer school] to
> say that she had on the same pants three days in a row at summer school. So, I
> recall that first incident of the classism right there and the mocking and the
> teasing persons for how they look. Then teachers, when I officially started the
> teachers treated me differently too. I saw it, what do you call those undertone
> comments.

Phoenix shared examples of how students were teased at her high school and she believed based on classism for example, how they looked and what the resources they had. Phoenix also said that teachers treated her differently which she also based on the fact that she too was from a marginalized background. Phoenix continued:

But back to high school. Yes, I remember getting I remember doing a similar,

we're doing the same weh you say break the same rule…with me uptown

classmates them and is me one get inna trouble me one.

SF: Alright, mi wah yuh unpack that fi me. You keep, keep referring to classism

right and the uptown and downtown and disenfranchised. I want you to kind a

unpack that a little bit more for me.

I asked Phoenix to unpack classism as she kept referring to this experience. Phoenix

response was: "because I experience what it was like to be marginalized based on my

economic and social background." Phoenix was from a rural community and her friend

who was being teased were from volatile inner-city communities. Phoenix said:

So, I form clique with a group of persons from communities that were not

acceptable communities. So, I had a friend from Kintyre, and we are still friends

to this day. So, one friend from Kintyre, my friend from Jungle, me from country,

one from Gordon Town, one from Southside and one from Spoilers. So, you

realize the type of community that I'm talking about. So, the disenfranchised, the

underrepresented is we. So, we form a clique cause we say we are the not rich

crew. We doh have it and we are the crew that never go foreign. I had my rural

experience. My friends from the inner city had their jumping uhm running from

the gunshot and hiding under bed. So, we had to…[form a clique].

As a result of the mocking and teasing, Phoenix and her friends who were from

marginalized communities bonded and formed their own clique. The communities named

in Phoenix's narrative are well-known volatile inner-city communities in the Kingston

and St. Andrew Metropolitan areas in Jamaica. Phoenix hails from a rural farming community and transitioning to an elitist high school in Kingston, bonded with students who were from volatile inner-city communities. The significance of this story was the fact that Phoenix shared the common element of being from a low SES, she was not exposed to gun violence in her rural community, however, Phoenix recognized that like her friends in high school, they were all from communities affected by poverty and shared similar experiences at their elitist high school.

Although Phoenix and her friends were from different types of home community environments, they still shared commonalities. I intentionally kept the names of the above communities since Phoenix was not from any of these communities. The ultimate tipping point came when Phoenix was called a convict due to being involved in a fight with students who were more affluent and her high school teachers kept picking on her not understanding why she was fighting. Phoenix described the fight and which she closed with what happen when everyone was summoned to the principal's office with their parents. Phoenix was emotional in sharing this story and it was evident that this encounter in high school was beyond painful for her to experience especially with being banned from her high school graduation ceremony and being labeled as a convict. Phoenix said:

> They told me I would be a convict. I CANNOT, listen that is why I say it is bittersweet. I love the lessons about being a lady and all those things. But they said to me, and you have to be careful of the things you say to children.
>
> SF: Words matter, mhm, hmm.

Phoenix: They said to me if I don't change, I'm going to be a convict. I got the

message that they are saying to change because I was always fighting. Every year

I fought. I said to mom, I am fighting, because I am being picked on when I'm in

the class if I turn around when the teacher says look forward and five other

students turn around a me one a get punish [voice cracking].

This was the turning point in Phoenix's high school life where she got the message and

refused to be defined by the label of a convict Phoenix was banned from attending her

high school graduation, passed her CSEC exams, and became pregnant at 16. Phoenix felt

like her family and teachers had given up on her. Phoenix said, "Everybody give up on

me now. It's done, it's done." By everyone Phoenix was referring to her teachers and

family. Phoenix said: "I want to go to college. I said I'm showing my mother that I'm not

a failure." These experiences catalyzed her higher education journey as she was

determined not to be a convict and to prove that she would go beyond secondary

education in spite of being banned from the high school graduation and becoming

pregnant as a teenager.

      Hertzfries also shared two distinct experiences in high school, one with a teacher

that did not think he and his classmates would amount to anything in life and another

with a teacher who motivated him and his peers to stay focused. He stated he lost his self-

confidence in high school when his Grade 8 teacher referred to all the students in the

classroom as "dunce." This term is a derogatory term used to describe students who are

not perceived as "smart" or those perceived to be "troublemakers" in Jamaica's

educational system. Hertzfries said it was almost normal for teachers to be demoralizing

and demotivating. He was traumatized by this specific incident so much that he told his mother, who encouraged him to continue participating in class, and at the end of the year, he won the highest award for his grade level.

During the photovoice session, when Hertzfries was asked what motivated him to access higher education, aside from his family, he spoke highly of his high school teacher. He said, "Coming from a Non-traditional High School, society had low expectations of us, but Ms. Memphis, the Science Department Coordinator, and a few other instructors had something to say about society's expectations of us." Hertzfries, similar to other limers expressed the perceptions of society regarding students who attend non-traditional high schools which he described as "low expectations." Hertzfries shared an example of his high school teacher with him at his graduation and she was one of his motivators.

Figure 7: Hertzfries' Motivation for HED

Description of image: *Hertzfries poses with his high school at his graduation. He is wearing a blue graduation gown with his awards in bundled in his hand. His teacher poses in her black dress at his graduation.* ***Hertzfries' narrative:*** *They worked relentlessly with us to ensure that we passed our CXCs, which we did. "You guys are the future of this planet, and you will go out and make your families, your friends, but most importantly, yourself proud. Because you committed your time to your education."*

By looking at the photograph with Hertzfries and his teacher, I saw only smiling faces which brought his story to life as I could see through the photographs the significant role Ms. Memphis played in his high school life. In Figure 7, I share the narrative for the photograph. Hertzfries said that Ms. Memphis "was a huge motivator to seek higher education." Although he had negative encounters with some teachers, he also had those who mentored and encouraged him along the way. All limers stated that at least one teacher constantly motivated them to go beyond high school with their education. Additionally, high school mentors also included coaches for limers who played sports. For example, both Jason and Mens Rea were track athletes and shared that their coaches encouraged them to take the SATs so that they could study abroad while playing sports. While both did not attend university abroad, they were exposed to taking the SAT's and passed the exam. Jason and Mens Rea also shared that they received acceptance letters from numerous colleges and universities in the United States. Jason and I discussed:

SF: Oh, so what was the intention was to do SAT and go away or get a scholarship and go away abroad?

Jason: So, having heard…was conversation with him that now became a part of the plan.

SF: Oh. That was your plan A then? Jason: Yeah, that was plan A. So, because what would happen was...because we're a part of the track team uhm and we had, we had the tradition of the guys who were in sixth form before us...ahead of us.

SF: Right.

Jason: You would hear them talking about the various scholarship offers that they would get and the Penn Relays and them approach the coach and the coach. So, the opportunity presented itself. So, we knew that there was real opportunities for us as youths from the ghetto.

As a youth from the ghetto, studying abroad presented itself as an opportunity due to sports which Jason participated in from attending primary school in his home community environment. Jason shared how the SATs came into the conversation as part of his journey to university due to the fact he was a student-athlete and had colleges looking into his profile to attend university abroad. Jason shared his entire SAT story and, in the end, it came down to finances regarding the decision to study abroad. Jason said:

But I know that when I thought about it and I thought all right, if I go here and I happen to doh have any money or…and mommy decide say she wah send me some money. If mommy even suppose to find $10,000 to send me on a weekly basis barely a $100. I cah survive on a $100.

SF: And she making so much and no more.

Jason: No more, right. So, when I examine those realities…

SF: …yeah, you started to look, that you started to think afar to say mhmm I'm not going to take that risk right.

Jason: So, mi say no mon da foreign supm ya gonna find supm ya nah go really work out. And when me, so mi weigh the pros and the cons and say all right Premier University is free.

After considering all the different possibilities regarding the financial risk even with half scholarship, Jason recognized that it may not be feasible for him to take up any of the college offers. Moreover, his mother intentionally got a job at a university that guaranteed Jason free tuition and as such he resorted to an option that he felt had a lower risk in terms of being able to provide for himself while studying at university. Mens Rea also passed the SATs and got accepted into various colleges in the U.S. but stayed in Jamaica due to unforeseen challenges and finances. For example, in high school, Mens Rea had a block against Mathematics and stopped attending classes as early as Grade 8. This would impact his Math section of the SATs. However, he still got offer letters from various colleges and universities.

Another factor in limers' access journey was their families. Having learned valuable lessons in their home community environment from a tender age, the emphasis on university came when limers' were in high school. Mens Rea credited his mother and paternal grandfather for laying the foundation for his educational pursuit. Both were role models and mentors and contributed to motivating Mens Rea to access university. Despite his rough start in high school, he quickly realized that he needed to focus on obtaining good grades, as he said education would be his passport. Mens Rea said,

> So, my mother plays an integral role in my education. From as early as primary school, she would you know she, she, she told me education would be my passport. Because remember eno Shenhaye, I'm dirt poor uhm, and so I knew from very early that I had no choice but fi tek in mi book, you know. And so, my education, my high school academic career did not get off to the best start.

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Mens Rea mentioned his socio-economic status and education as his passport in his statement. A passport is a document that enables one to travel to different countries. A passport is seen as a privilege, and a passport with a visa is even a greater privilege. When one owns a passport, they can move freely to any country that accepts that passport as a requirement for entrance. A passport also allows individuals to access mobility from one place to another. Also, Mens Rea constantly spoke of how his mother was adamant that education was his tool to a life away from poverty. Mens Rea realized in high school that he had to figure out a strategy to improve his grades so that he could do well at CSEC and be accepted into 6th form to take CAPE so that he could apply to the university of his dreams. I observed that limers from a single-parent household spoke highly of their mothers or older sibling as their primary motivators for accessing higher education.

The final example regarding interactions within limers' spaces, I share Gratitude's photograph in Figure 8. Six limers resided in communities within a university town. According to Ashley, Big Mama, Canary, Gratitude, Hertzfries, and Jason, their urban inner-city's geographical locations, were close to the university township where several higher education institutions were located. The limers saw their home community environment having a positive impact in this light as physically seeing universities had them dreaming of being there one day. Big Mama shared that while in high school, she saw a few persons from her community attending university, which made her hopeful that she could access university.

In Gratitude's photograph in Figure 8, he described a revolving gate on the perimeter wall of one of the universities near his community. He called this gate the

"opportunity" to pursue higher education. Gratitude in both onlime sessions expressed how convenient it was to live in close proximity to a university and how this represented the fact that one day he would be able to access this opportunity of attending this same university. Gratitude said: "I took the leap to get on the other side of the gate as the environment I was raised in gave me a better appreciation of pursuing higher education." The gate Gratitude refers to is located between the white walls in the photograph (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Gratitude's Home Community Motivating Access to HED

In analyzing Gratitude's photograph, I thought about the reason for the wall at the university. Yes, there was a revolving gate, but the wall signaled that the campus itself was not necessarily an open space without boundaries since it was located in the middle of communities exposed to high rates of crime and violence. Although other limers lived within this area, not all had the same connection to the university. For example, while Gratitude was inspired by living close to a university, Ashley was intimidated.

Ashley traversed the road that the university was located daily while attending primary, high school and community college and going about her general day-to-day activities outside of school. However, she never once thought that this university was a place where she belonged and as such Ashley never saw herself attending university.

Ashley thought university was for persons who were deemed to be more superior and intelligent. For example, during our second lime, Ashley shared the following:

> SF: Okay, got you, um. When you look at your degree, what comes to mind?
>
> Ashley: [laughs] First, I never thought I would have it. So...
>
> SF: Oooo...tell me why?
>
> Ashley: …because I thought it was for the fortunate, and it was for bright people. I never see myself as bright.

In both limes, Ashley shared that university was never on her radar. Ashley believed that although her community was located short distances from several universities, this space was not for her. This perception was held based on the messages Ashley received about people who attend university. For example, these people were "bright, smart, and wealthy." Ashley did not see herself with these characteristics. However, Ashley's interest in accessing university came after a semester at community college and realizing that she did not want to complete this program, coupled with a lack of funds to continue to the next semester. Ashley did not want to feel like a failure after being unable to complete her community college program, so she started to look at other options. She got advice from her aunt, who was also attending university, and encouragement from her high school teacher.

In summary, finding two discussed the two major factors that impacted limers' access journey to higher education. These included their performance on the required standardized tests between primary and high school and their interactions within their community environments and high school settings. In reflecting on the transcriptions and

the onlimes, there was a sense of agony and frustration when limers discussed the standardized tests. For some limers, standardized exams and failing a required subject for admission to university played a role in delaying their access to university. Again, even with policies created through the Ministry of Education and Youth as well as the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission (J-TEC) all prior to 2021, not all limers benefitted from these policies and frameworks that supposedly advocated for pathways to access higher education. For the next finding, I discuss how the features of limers' home community environments as well as their campus engagements or lack thereof shaped their persistence. Limers' pre-university experiences within high school shaped their access process. Having accessed university, the next step was to persist ad complete the degree.

Finding Three: Persistence Shaped by Community and Campus Engagements

Accessing university meant that multiple doors of opportunities were going to present themselves and create new levels of socio-economic gains. Having climbed the trunk of the tree, even if it took some of them many years after high school to get there, they made it to university. Attending and persisting in university represented the branches of the tree. University came with many possibilities, the good, the bad, and the in-between, with one goal in mind, leaping to reach the fruit (graduation).

I asked limers what motivated them to persist in higher education. There was an overwhelming response that their home community environments and family were critical factors for their persistence and perseverance in higher education. Additionally, their university experiences, such as their campus engagements, also influenced their desire to move to the next semester. Persistence focused on limers' determination and

drive to pass their semester examinations and transition to the next semester through to graduation. As first-generation Jamaican university students, persistence had a deeper meaning, and that was not just surviving each semester but also thriving to achieve their educational goals of graduating with their first degrees and fulfilling their desire for upward social mobility as they were aware of the circumstances within their home community environments.

In one onlime there was a discussion about accessing university and then trying to find funding or scholarships. For some limers, their persistence in higher education was through taking out student loans so that they could pay their tuition and move on to the next academic year. For example, during the second onlime with Star we revisited a point she made regarding why she thought universities should consider students' community environment as when she was applying to university, she was not aware of certain scholarships. During our first onlime, Star expressed that she had to take out student loans. Star said:

> I didn't have no plan B.
>
> SF: Wow. And you didn't apply it to no scholarship no nuttn. This was just your, you just say SLB, SLB that was it?
>
> Star: That was a thing because I really didn't know much about scholarships.

Star only had one plan regarding funding which was to apply for a loan from the Student Loan Bureau (SLB) in Jamaica, having been accepted to her university of choice. The Student Loan Bureau was the plan B for limers who wanted to access university and faced financial challenges. In essence, the SLB was a conduit to access higher education.

Mens Rea like Star also applied to SLB and shared that his only challenge was finding a guarantor for the loan, otherwise, he had no financial challenge since his father agreed to pay for his boarding on the hall of residence. Mens Rea was raised in a single-parent household with his mother, however, he decided to ask his father for support to attend university. Mens Rea shared:

> And so, I said to him, I said I didn't let him ask me, I told him I said here's my plan. I'm going to go to university, I'm not asking you to cover my tuition I just want you to pay my boarding. I'm going to take out student loan. But you know the hassle with getting student loan right?
>
> SF: Yeah, yeah, yeah yuh afi get guarantee guarantor and all a that jazz yeah.
>
> Mens Rea: So, couldn't find a guarantor.
>
> SF: Mhm, hmm.
>
> Mens Rea: One lady promise me say she would be my guarantor but she flaked out at the last minute. But you know that's a whole other story. But finally, I you know get two guarantor, got the student loan, uhm lived on dorm, did extremely well at UWI, got several awards.

Mens Rea shared his frustration with finding a guarantor, which was his only challenge as it related to funding his tuition. Once a student is approved for SLB for the duration of their degree, the lending agency would ensure that payment was issued to the university each academic year. Mens Rea would be faced with a student loan debt at the end of his studies, which was another challenge in immediately achieving upward social mobility immediately after completing an undergraduate degree.

The conversation around student loans came up in my second onlime with Star when we revisited home community environments. We had this conversation:

SF: So, let me ask you a question why, why you think that uhm or do you think that universities should consider students community environments when they are creating support services for students to succeed and make it to graduation?

Star: Trust me, they should.

SF: And tell me why?

Star: Not everybody comes from the same background. And this has been proven in so many ways and so many times. I mean I'm coming from a rural community where farming is predominantly what most of the people do. As against somebody who's coming from a different area, who doesn't have to do farming to survive to send their kids to school.

SF: Right, exactly.

Star: [inaudible] Remember we're saying in the first interview, the first session that we had sometimes the rural students don't have access to these scholarships and bursaries or they don't know.

SF: Right, I remember you said that yeah.

Star: So, when you can provide that avenue and consider the community that these kids are, these children are coming from, students are coming from. Then it would augur well to the access that they'll get and the support that they'll get...in terms of uhm transitioning through or navigating.

SF: Right…exactly, exactly. Yeah.

In the narrative above Star was expressing the need for higher education institutions to understand students and their home community environments. She explicitly stated that not everyone came from the same background. Moreover, she used her example of being from a rural farming community, where some of the students do not have access to scholarships and bursaries and some are not cognizant of the fact that they can receive some form of funding for university. Therefore, Star believed that if higher education institutions provided a pathway for students coming from certain communities, this "would augur well to the access" and that these students would be supported as they transition and navigate the university experience. Hence, supporting their persistence and ability to thrive in higher education.

For some limers thriving meant doing well so that they could be an example to their siblings who would access higher education, their children, extended family, and people within their home community environments. For example, Phoenix shared that when she got into Teaching University, her father told the entire community that his daughter was attending university. She felt proud knowing that her father and her siblings were proud. Phoenix excitedly shared:

> So, I became the first one to be enrolled in college and mi a tell you say everybody inna a [the community] weh encounter wid me parents, them tell say mi a go a Teaching University. Shen, I can't figet, a Tekking my father say mi a go enuh…and mommy tell everybody. Everybody ask how mi nuh see Phoenix a because she's going to college mon.

Phoenix was mimicking the way in which her father pronounced the name of her university. This also confirmed Phoenix's story of her father's level of education and that although he was not able to pronounce the name of the school he was elated for his daughter. Phoenix shared how proud her family was and she too was proud of attending college. Phoenix said:

> So that was like strike one for me of level one of feeling satisfied already. Like gosh mi get enrolled in college and they felt so proud. My sisters felt so proud, everybody felt proud…that me in college. My likl brother and mi have on mi uniform a go college. I felt so nice. Like...a one suit a uniform mi have a fi Teachers University. One brown uniform and one heels. But it felt so good and I worked…I didn't enjoy weh yuh call, the freshers fete and them things there. Never go to any of them I was always working.

As Phoenix shared how her family felt proud that she was going to Teachers University, she was not able to attend any of the campus events such as the parties as she was always working. Therefore, Phoenix had limited engagement with the campus community due to working and studying at the same time.

For limers, persistence also meant maintaining their funding for limers who were awarded tuition-based scholarships. Gratitude, Ashley, Big Mama and Canary were all on the same scholarship, however, not at the same time. I share an example of challenges and scholarship here since they all mentioned the stress of managing courses and maintaining their GPA for the scholarship. Gratitude said:

…so, for me to persist I had that in the back of my mind to say just get it done and leave. And then, when it came to you know juggling classes and that sort of thing, a few courses got harder. But at the same time, I had enough confidence in myself uhm to know that I am I smart person, I get the work done. So, it just required a lot…high self-esteem…self-confidence to say yeah, you'll be all right, and I, I like to plan things so I normally when like the semester schedule is out I would print it put it on my wall that's sort a thing. Exam schedule, put it on my wall so I had ample time to prepare. Never always went how I planned it but at least it set the stage.

In the first section of Gratitude's narrative, he shares some of the strategies that assisted him in persisting at university. For Gratitude, similar to other limers, he was of the mindset that he had to get this [university in this case] done, therefore keep it moving as Baller said earlier in this chapter. Gratitude was juggling and as well facing challenges with some of his courses. Gratitude also believed that he had enough self-confidence to get the work done as he knew he was smart. Therefore, his strategy was to organize and maximize by scheduling his tasks such as exams and preparing in advance. This spoke Gratitude's characteristics as a first-generation student, learning from his challenges and pivoting as necessary to ensure that he persisted to graduation. Gratitude admitted that even with these strategies everything did not go as planned but at least there was a start. Gratitude continued by stating that:

And there were some fears, because I remember in my I think it was in my second semester in first year, my GPA really dipped because the courses I did, weren't

necessarily courses I loved, and I...is like my attention for it and how I grasped

the content was a bit lacking. So, my GPA dip. But then it comes back to the fact

that I don't want to stay any longer. So, I did what I needed to do in the coming

semesters to get it back up.

Gratitude expressed that his university experience also came with some fears. Gratitude

sharing his experiences as a first-generation students is an example of how to provide

resources for these students so that some of these fears can be alleviated during their

university journey. Gratitude gave an example regarding the second semester of his first

year at university. Gratitude shared that his GPA fell due to the fact that he was enrolled

in courses that he did not love and this impacted his understanding of the content which

ultimately impacted his GPA. The conversation went to another topic and then in the

latter part of our lime, Gratitude shared another point regarding the scholarship.

I asked Gratitude if there was anything regarding support systems that he wished

he had while at university. Gratitude responded with:

Well, uhm it goes back to what I was saying you don't know, what you don't

know. So, sometimes you really have to make this step to seek after knowledge,

so you can't jump to blame the University. So, for me uhm in my first and part of

my second year as well, I never realized the value of how much you could get

from the library online system where you could get past papers. So, if I had

known that early, I think I would have even gotten better grades in the first two

years. Right, it was cause as a say to you, in my second semester first year my

grades dipped. And then I was able to improve it because I got further access to

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like past paper that sort of thing and then I realized the deeper value of people

networking as well.

SF: Did you lose the scholarship at any point in time?

Gratitude: No, I didn't.

Gratitude wished he knew more about the services and resources at the university, such

as the library services. He believed that if he had known about these services, then he

would have gotten better grades. Gratitude did not utilize the full benefits of the library

until after his first year, and this knowledge came through networking. It was evident that

students' campus engagements and interactions with their peers within the university

environment also helped with their persistence. Additionally, I observed that Gratitude

did not blame the university as he believed it was his responsibility to seek knowledge.

This also speaks to his independency as a first-generation student in his first year, taking

matters into his own hands. While Gratitude's independency was a positive attribute as a

first-generation student, I also observed several cases across limers who were under 30

where they did not see it fit to hold the university accountable for any misinformation and

administrative challenges that impacted their higher education journey. Instead, they

quickly admitted that they should know better and that it was their responsibility to find

the information.

Features of Home Community Environment Shaping Persistence

I found that limers used the features of their home community environments as a

sense of inspiration to persist in higher education. Features within this context

represented elements within limers' environments, including trees, farms, infrastructures,

and community violence. For instance, some limers expressed that there were days when they had no meals growing up and while studying at university the vegetation within their communities supplemented their meals at home. For example, Big Mama shared a picture of the ackee tree in her yard (see Figure 9). I asked Big Mama, why she submitted the photograph of the ackee tree as we discussed her university experience and what was the meaning behind the picture. We discussed the following:

> Big Mama: So, this is kind of touching because, when we were unable to for ends to meet…is like we had to resort to the ackee tree. Sometimes we just eat ackee, and we nah nuh saltfish in there."
>
> SF: Listen girl mi know weh ya talk bout.
>
> Big Mama: We nah nuh season in there.
>
> SF: Big Mama mi know weh ya talk bout…
>
> Big Mama: Yeah, is like [laughs]…
>
> SF: …mi know weh yah talk bout.
>
> Big Mama: …is like tears a come mi eyes but mi afi hold it up.
>
> SF: Mi know weh yah talk bout, Big Mama. One time mommy cook up di ackee right...nuh saltfish nuh in deh innu but the way how mommy cook up fi ackee yuh swear say saltfish in deh.
>
> Big Mama: [laughs] saltfish in deh .
>
> SF: [laughs] Because mem...so tell me about that now the fact that you have this access in your community, right. Because is not all communities have a ackee

tree, a fruit tree, a vegetable tree, that type of thing, right? So, talk mi...this

connection with the ackee tree and your community as well.

Big Mama: Alright then uhm how do I put this. So, because...alright then...as

students there are going to be day when you don't really have nothing to eat,

right?

SF: Right.

Big Mama: So, because of the ackee tree on the border of the fence

SF: Mhm, hmm.

Big Mama: Sometime you nuh have nuttn fi come home wid proper, proper, so

the likl ackee and the likl rice you know help fi kinda warm up supm inna yuh

stomach so yuh can get fi go a one nedda class.

SF: Exactly, cah yuh know say when yuh learn pon hungry belly that is not

normal.

Big Mama: It nuh so wonderful. Yeah, it nuh wonderful.

SF: No, I feel you I feel you. Uhm let me see all right so that's the ackee tree right

there. I'm definitely using the chair for sure.

Big Mama: [laughs]

During our onlime session, Big Mama indicated that it was emotional for her to share the

story of her family depending on the ackee tree to provide their meals. There are multiple

ackee trees across Jamaica including the university campus that Big Mama attended and

as such it is common knowledge that Jamaicans reap fruits and vegetables from the

natural vegetation within their communities. Big Mama's openness to share about the

ackee tree in her yard also brought back memories for me with my mother cooking ackee

even if we did not have all the ingredients for the meal. I used this moment to share that I

also had an ackee tree which served the same purpose for my family even when we did

not have all the seasonings. We laughed about not having any saltfish to mix with the

ackee as our families simply could not afford all the items for the meal.

Figure 9: Ackee Tree as HED Inspiration for Big Mama

Ackee is the national fruit of Jamaica and is prepared with the country's national dish

called ackee and saltfish. The conversation around the ackee tree not only extended to ole

talk but was also a reminder that many community members in under-resourced and

underserved communities rely on the natural vegetation of their home community

environment to supplement their meals. For example, it is common to find fruit and

vegetable trees in backyards that goes from the tree into the kitchen and are served for

dinner or breakfast. As we discussed the ackee tree, I asked Big Mama which one of the

photovoice prompts she was using the ackee tree for and she said:

> Uhm [inaudible], I will say uhm both. But mostly it leans to your community.
>
> Because when you know say you nuh have anything proper to eat, it nuh help yuh
>
> fi learn better and say yow yu afi come out a the situation.

By both, Big Mama was referring to the two photovoice prompts regarding the

inspiration for higher education and community influence on her education journey. Big

Mama also referred to the impact on the brain when one has no food to eat and this

affects learning. Big Mama also expressed that when you know you have nothing proper

to eat, it makes you think to yourself that you must come out of this situation. All limers

expressed this "get out" and "come out of" phrases when referring to their experiences

within their communities. Figure 9 also provides insights into the layers of Big Mama's

perimeter wall which consists of zinc fences and a concrete boundary line. The concept

of zinc fences is explained in Figures 12 and 13.

> Along with the community violence, Big Mama also shared a socio-cultural

feature of her community that also shaped her education journey. Here Big Mama refers

to teenage pregnancy in her community. Big Mama said:

> Alright then. So uhm everybody somewhat...well...everybody is somewhat aware
>
> of what happened in Spain Brook and all a that with the gun violence and all a
>
> that. But you have cases, another thing that helped me be motivated was that
>
> young persons, young ladies in my age group they drop out a high school because

of teenage pregnancy. So, your [my] parents see that and say yow nuh bother

come ya wid them foolishness de eno. So, them things deh help to kinda groom

you and mould you in [inaudible].

SF: So, based on what you were seeing, you were saying I don't want to be in that

situation?

Big Mama: Situation...yes, mhm, hmm.

Big Mama was referring to the example of teenage pregnancies in her community and

how her parents would remind her not to come home with this "foolishness" as becoming

pregnant as a teenager was not favorable in the community as well as this would be

frowned upon in Big Mama's Christian family. Big Mama did not want to be in this

situation as such she was motivated in her educational pursuits. During this point in our

lime, I interrupted Big Mama as we were talking about her church which is outside of her

community. This conversation was then shifted again to the original thought of

experiences within the community and Big Mama said that:

I must say that the Spain Brook community uhm we...it's a community that

produce a lot of talented individuals right. [names of celebrities mentioned here],

among other persons, netball player. So many persons. Even a gentleman that I

saw on the television. He grew up in Spain Brook and went overseas. Went

overseas when he was five and he is now top basketball player. So, my

community, it is a product of talented individuals right and persons are involved

from day to day in quality stuff right. But you have those unattached youths that

probably didn't grow up with a father figure or probably them never you know,

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get the education that they really wanted. Or probably them never have the love in

their home. So, they lean to the negativity like taking up badness, taking up gun

and them things. But away from that, I believe that the community, if we work

together as one community more then you will see more progress, and you nah go

hear nuh bag a crime.

Big Mama shared the goodness about her community with talented and famous

individuals despite the gun violence, there are members of the community involved in

positive activities. Big Mama also mentioned unattached youths and said they might be

in this "unattached" situation due to not growing up with a father figure. Big Mama was

raised with her brothers and both parents. Therefore, she experienced the active role of

both parents and as such was socialized with her father present during her upbringing.

Regarding unattached youths, Big Mama further shared that maybe they did not

receive the education they wanted, which impacted their choices of engaging in

"badness," such as taking up guns. Big Mama was hopeful as she believed that there

would be less crime if the community came together and united. All these features shared

by Big Mama echoed similar stories shared by limers from the urban inner-city

communities regarding community unity, teenage pregnancies, vegetation in the

community supplementing their meals, and unattached youths, which Jason referred to as

the guys on the corner. All these features of the community shaped their higher

educational journey.

Additionally, Mens Rea also shared a photograph of his home community environment, specifically his mother's farm (see Figure 10). Throughout all onlimes Mens Rea spoke highly of his mother's farm and the animals he fed.

Figure 10: Mens Rea's Rural Farm as HED Inspiration

In Figure 10, Mens Rea shared a photograph of his mother's farm in his rural community regarding the photovoice prompts. Mens Rea narrative for the photograph was:

> I am from a small rural community. My mother is a small farmer. As a child, I had to fetch water from the river to give to our animals and for domestic chores. I had to feed my goats and perform several other chores. These chores helped to build my character. My community taught me to value the simple things in life. We did not have much growing up, sometimes nothing to eat. We had an ackee tree on the property.

Mens Rea proudly spoke of the experiences within his home community environment and how the lessons learned helped to build his character. Mens Rea shared numerous stories of his meals being supplemented by an ackee tree on the farm as well as vegetables during difficult times. He said:

> You know, Shenhaye, I grew up…I remember one time my mother went to
> [pauses] it was like just this period of time [pauses]where things was really
> difficult and I remember, we didn't have much or anything at all to eat. And we
> had a you know, like you live a country, so we have, we had a one ackee tree on
> our property. And there was a Potato Hill weh we call Potato Hill, a country,
> right? [laughs]

As Mens Rea shared his story there were brief moments of pauses as he reflected on his experiences that shaped his higher education journey. Mens mentioned Potato Hill as this place provided meals in a time of need when Mens Rea and his family had nothing to eat and he kept telling his mother that the potatoes at Potato Hill must be ready but his mom insisted that they were not ready. Mens Rea said:

> And hungry a buss wi shut [shirt]. When mi tell you say wi hungry. And mi just
> tek up the cutlass and say mi a go dig up the potato. Yow and Shenhaye I went
> out to the Potato Hill cause you know…and I started digging and when I started
> digging when I dug maybe more than 1000 pounds of potatoes.
> SF: WHAT!

Mens Rea opened the statement above with "hungry a buss wi shut," this is a Jamaican saying for extreme hunger, simply put they had no food. Mens Rea took it upon himself to go and reap the potatoes to prove to his mother that it was ready. Mens Rea said:

> And when I went and called her and she came and she saw the amount a yam...we were able to sell a crocus bag to the market.
>
> SF: Yu lie!
>
> Mens Rea: And had yam for like dinner for weeks.

In the end, he said that having found so many potatoes they had enough to sell to eat as dinner for weeks. My response "yu lie!" was not referring to Mens Rea as a liar but rather expressed as hyperbole in our Jamaican lingua to stress the incredulity of the statement and in this case, my amazement at how many potatoes he had found for his family during this time of dire hunger.

For some limers, the physical features of their environments served as a reminder of their socio-economic status in society. Within this context, limers had the mindset of being liberated from the restrictions of their home community environment. Simply put, all limers had a "get out" mentality as they all felt like they would be stuck had they not and hoped to get out of this type of community or infrastructure. Therefore, the visible features served as an inspiration that, through higher education, they would be able to upgrade their SES and the type of housing they lived in. Jason shared his experience growing up in a tenement yaad as he was saying describing his household as he reflected on what inspired his higher education journey. Jason's description was:

I mean when you grow up inna tenement yard and you a share a bedroom or ya

share a bathroom inna the middle a the yaad.

SF: Did you grow up in a tenement yard though?

Jason: I did. So, for the first 10-11 years of my life, I was in a tenement [yard].

So, for the first two years of my life, two and a half years I was at my

grandmother's, which was extended family, my uncles, my aunts, their kids, my

grandmother. And this was like a 3–4-bedroom wooden structure. And nuff a we

deh, deh, nuff, nuff.

SF: Plenty, plenty people right?

Jason: Each room have in like two or three beds you know nuff, nuff.

In Jamaica, a tenement yaad is a large compound usually with multiple families sharing

spaces such as kitchen and bathroom facilities. For Jason, this space was shared with his

extended family. Jason added to the definition of first-generation students being from

multigenerational families as he grew up in a tenement yard with his extended family.

Again, this supports the argument that first-generation students do not all fit within the

universal and accepted definition of being from a nuclear family.

Figure 11: Ashley's Community as a Dark Hole

Ashley referring to Figure 11, said:

…living in a violent community feels like the same as living in a hole. Not just a

hole, but a very deep and dark one. But the brighter side to all of this is that you

can find alternative routes to get out of that hole or rather to find some light

Ashley emphasized that this route out of the dark hole was education. Her community has

always inspired her to go after what she wants and use her growth through education as a

motivation for the upcoming youths in her community. The liming data showed that other

limers from urban inner-cities like Ashley shared similar sentiments regarding feeling

trapped in their communities. The only way out was through education.

Figure 12: Community Treated Garbage – Jason's Motivation for HED

In Figure 12, Jason shares an image of a garbage can. Jason said:

> The photo is titled "Garbage" is another representation of how my community
> influenced my educational journey. This is said because many people in the
> ghetto are socialized to believe that we are lower than garbage due to the fact that
> we have limited access to government resources such as social services, and our
> rights are often abused without recourse. I, therefore, saw my educational journey
> as a means of escaping these realities.

Throughout our limes, Jason spoke passionately about his community and the treatment
of the people. Having witnessed the best and worst parts of life within his community,
Jason used these experiences to remind him of his purpose and why his mother got a job
at the university. Therefore, each time he was faced with an additional challenge while
attending university, Jason had education at the center of his thoughts as one-day this

escape through education would not just be mental but also physical. By this, I mean that Jason wanted to move out of his community, which he did when he transitioned to living in the hall of residence. We both agreed with this analysis as we could relate to the discrimination and ill-treatment by outsiders regarding our communities.

Canary and Gratitude also spoke of the physical features of their environments through the photographs. For example, Canary and Gratitude had different opinions of the zinc fence concept, depicted in Figures 13 and 14. In Jamaica, zinc fence is a recognized derogatory term that implies one's socio-economic status as defined by society. It is common knowledge that people used to collect and flatten cans and galvanized drums to build fences as their perimeter wall between the properties. In other words, the zinc fence symbolized that one could not afford to erect concrete structures and, in most cases, limers' families did not own the property. On the contrary, Hertzfries highlighted his community with fewer zinc fences facing the street and all yards with concrete wall perimeters. There was an underlying assumption that concrete structures and zinc fences were associated with one's social status even within communities that experienced poverty and community violence. In other words, within each social class structure, there were subsets of varying levels of poverty and socio-cultural experiences.

Figure 13: Canary's Physical Features of Community

Canary's narrative stated that before participating in the study, she had been thinking about the new features in her community, where some homes have upgraded infrastructures from zinc fences to concrete walls. When referring to her family, Canary said:

> We don't have the resources nor the lifestyle that a lot of the people around us have. And it's just another source of motivation, you know to work hard so that I can be proud and comfortable with where I'm sitting.

Canary's tone dropped when speaking about the zinc fence photograph (see Figure 13). Canary's house was the only structure with zinc fence as depicted by the green paint in the photograph. The concrete structured provided insights into who had access to particular resources including finances to upgrade their housing infrastructure. Therefore, families with zinc fence like Canary did not have all the resources to upgraded their housing. As I reflected on Canary's photograph, I told her my story of moving from one home to another and that all homes had zinc fences. I shared that I grew up with zinc

fences and a zinc roof, and I understood her reflection. I openly shared that there were days when people laughed about houses with zinc fences within the community, and I ended with the fact that my mother does not own any property, and as such, we have always paid rent for homes with zinc fences. We spoke candidly about educational attainment and our dreams of owning a home.

Figure 14: Gratitude's Physical Features of Community

During the photovoice session with Gratitude, I asked about the reason behind the zinc fence photograph (see Figure 14). He indicated that the zinc fence was the separator for the persons living on the other side of his yaad. Gratitude then made a distinction by saying, "so it's really their zinc fence." The use of "their" suggested a disassociation with the zinc fence. He stated that these structures worldwide "depict that one is from a lower-income position in society." Gratitude's opinion was that persons in the community are caught up with the zinc fence and have not changed to a concrete wall. A feature of liming methodology has to do with negotiations or disagreements. Therefore, it was natural to disagree with other limers. I disagreed with Gratitude's opinion. I probed further and asked if he knew who owned the property since not everyone owns properties, and some persons pay rent.

Gratitude stated that he believed the neighbors owned the property, yet they have not upgraded their perimeter wall. I share this example to highlight some limers condemned and frowned upon zinc fences. The zinc fence was a daily reminder for Gratitude and his social standing. However, he did not let this physical and mental boundary limit his educational pursuits. Instead, he used this reminder to motivate him to persist through higher education, knowing that he could achieve anything.

Hertzfries also submitted a photograph of the physical features of his community (see Figure 15). Hertzfries said:

> My mother did not want me to become a gang member, since Spain Brook has a knack for converting prospective young boys into gang members. My mom made sure that I did my best in school in order to get out of that situation.

Hertzfries explained that he grew up on the block, considered a "residential" area within his community, referring to the physical concrete structures as depicted in Figure 15. He shared fond memories of playing with his friends on this said street. However, this residential area was located within a volatile community, and he could not play on the road daily. Hence, he spoke about the role of his mother in emphasizing that he needed to do well in school and not join a gang.

Figure 15: Hertzfries' Physical Features of Community

Although Hertzfries was from a community that experienced high levels of gun violence, like Canary and Gratitude's communities, the physical structures were different. During Hertzfries' lime, it was understood that there was the perception that communities with fewer zinc fence structures had a more positive impact on the community and residents. There was a sense of pride for residents with homes that had concrete perimeter walls.

For Star, her motivation to persist in higher education came from her family and farming in her rural community. Star said, "I was motivated by my family, which I always saw through the lens of farming. Flourishing plants reminded me of the hard work my mom and dad had to do in order to finance my higher education journey."

Figure 16: Community as HED Inspiration by Star

Star's narrative for Figure 12 continued with:

> …the rugged plants seen through the rough patches represented by the brown
>
> roots of the coconut tree seen in the picture was a constant reminder that 'if you
>
> want good you nose afi run.' The green leaf of the leaf-of-life plant proved to be a
>
> reminder that no matter what happens along the journey, once there is life,
>
> anything is possible.

Notably, the pink flower symbolizes the happy and exciting experiences that punctuated

Star's higher education journey. Although all of Star's photographs aren't shared here,

the majority embodied a sense of hope and motivation. Whenever Star felt like quitting or

giving up during her higher education journey, she gained inspiration by visiting her

home community environment to remind her of the ultimate goal, which was to persist to

the end.

The final example of physical features in limers' home community environments highlights the crime and violence in the urban inner-cities. This was important to highlight as six limers spoke about the influence of crime and violence on their persistence in higher education. As limers got older, they began understanding what was happening in their spaces. Ashley and Jason shared that during their educational journeys, at some point, they had to leave their homes and seek refuge outside of their communities due to high gun violence. Jason communicated that by the time he was at university as a commuting student, the violence in his community was one of the reasons for him to seek safety by moving into a hall of residence. Jason could not afford to live in the hall of residence; however, his life was in danger, and he was able to get support from a hall manager. Ashley and Jason said that these experiences and exposure to violence in their home community environments were signs that they needed to access and persist in higher education so that they could "get out." Jason said:

> I went to AB community for a short stint to escape the violence of the pull of the gang culture, and so on. Because, because of where my house. At the time I did, yes. I mean the conditions were not necessarily ideal but it mek sense. So, I was...yeah, so as mi say, because of where my house is situated. Uhm, it at some, at some point, it would become like a lookout spot for the community.

Jason spoke openly about the violence in his home community environment and how the violence was manifested in different ways at different stages of his education (primary, high school, and university). In Figure 17, Jason shared a photograph called breaking

barriers referring to poverty, crime, and limitations in his community. These community

barriers were catalysts for Jason's motivation to access higher education.

Figure 17: Photograph of Community Barriers as Motivation for HED

Jason's narrative for Figure 17 stated:

> This photo that I call breaking barriers is used to reflect one way in which my
> community influenced my educational journey. The photo taken from behind a
> fence shows a garden being grown on the other side. The fence represents barriers
> such as poverty and crime in my community which could have become barriers
> restricting my growth and development. But my motivation to push beyond those
> limitations to expand my horizons using educational mechanisms. This has
> facilitated the honing of my potential, thereby allowing for me to flourish like the
> garden on the other side of the fence.

In the narrative above Jason was sharing the features of his community (poverty and

crime) that acted as visible barriers that restricted opportunities for growth yet catalyzed

his university journey. Jason was determined to push beyond these barriers so that he could access university and leap beyond the borders of his home community.

Two limers submitted photographs of Zones of Special Operations (#ZOSO). In Jamaica, #ZOSOs were put in place in 2017 under the Special Operations Act as a crime-fighting measure to stem the increase in criminal activities in communities deemed rampant with escalating violence, murders, and gang warfare (Stubbs-Gibson, 2017). This act gives the Prime Minister of Jamaica the power to decide which areas should be under a #ZOSO. The #ZOSO is a form of curfew, and the government, through security forces, creates barriers and controls movements through checkpoints.

Figure 18 provides an example of this checkpoint. Canary, a current student, stated that the roads in her community had been empty coupled with the pandemic. She said that the #ZOSO in her community *"speaks to the level of violence in the area."* This visual reminder she used as a motivation to persist at university.

Figure 18: Photograph of #ZOSO Taken by Gratitude

For context, the checkpoints usually consist of police officers' vehicles along the road as they check random vehicles going in and out of the communities. Gratitude said,

> Barriers at an entrance signal that outsiders and insiders should proceed with caution as crime has tainted the area. With this reality, my home community has been a driving force in my pursuit of higher education so that I can improve my circumstances and be a beacon of change for other families who must battle the negative factors plaguing the area.

Gratitude understood his reality, and even before attending university, he knew that he had to use education to become socio-economically stable to support his family. The #ZOSO had become part of limers' lived reality. Big Mama shared that, to an extent, the community felt safer with the presence of the security forces. At the same time, for other limers within, nothing had changed regarding the crime and violence even with the presence of the #ZOSO. Interestingly, Gratitude also shared an encounter with the police officers during the #ZOSO being present in his community. Gratitude reflected on his

exchange with the #ZOSO checkpoint in his community for a routine spot check. The police officer at the checkpoint requested his identification. Gratitude explained that:

> So less than a month ago, I was, I was coming home and the police just came out and stopped me. They were doing a routine spot check. And the first remark how yuh look, how do you look so young, do you have your license?

Upon noting the company where Gratitude was employed, the officer asked why he was still living in the community. Gratitude further stated:

> And then when I presented my papers and my driver's license. The remark was where do you work? And then ahh the police officer asked me, so why is it that you work at X place and you still live in in this community. And I believe part of the problem in society, is that oh you're saying to me, you have you have a big job and why is it that you haven't moved from a place of crime. Ahhh, not understanding that if you want to legitimately come out of an area, you're going to have to work for it and it doesn't happen overnight.

In Gratitude's statement he was sharing that having presented his identification for a routine check at the entrance of his community, the conversation was ladened with stereotypes as the police officer was being judgmental about the fact that Gratitude worked for a well-known company yet he resided in an inner-city community. Gratitude who was frustrated by this encounter stated that this type of judgment and assumption are the root of our problem in society where it is assumed that because you have a big job that means you can afford to move out of the community immediately. He further stated that because

he was working legitimately, this physical act of moving away from the violence does not happen overnight due to various reasons. Gratitude continued by stating:

> Part of the problem is you're telling me oh, why are you still here, what do you want me to do go and engage in criminal activity and then you come after me. So, that was the type a conversation I had to have. And yeah, just what you said, that cause me to reflect on it. It annoys me sometimes.

This conversation was triggered by the fact we were talking about housing crisis in Jamaica and the cost of mortgages which led to Gratitude in remembering his encounter with the police officer a month before he participated in the study. We both ranted at this encountered and discussed how the police officers are part of the issue regarding the stigma attached to certain types of home community environments. During the lime, Gratitude mocked the police while re-enacting the scenario, asking if the officer would rather have him involved in criminal activities if he could not afford to move from the community even with his "fancy job." Gratitude was hurt by the officer's comment so much that he presented his bachelor's and master's graduation pictures, and the officer responded, "oh, you are an outstanding citizen." Together we complained about how annoying this encounter was and discussed the stigma attached to the community. Encounters with law enforcement similar to Gratitude also played a role in how limers' home community environments shaped their access and persistence in higher education with the desire to one day elevate their socio-economic status.

Persistence in Higher Education Shaped by Campus Engagements

Their engagements within the university campus also shaped limers' persistence in higher education. This engagement included the administrative offices, mentors, faculty, staff, student development and hall managers, and peers. Also, engagement or the lack thereof consisted of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on limers who were still attending university between 2020 and 2022. Seven limers were commuting students at their various universities, and their engagements with their respective universities were different from limers who lived in a hall of residence.

Firstly, limers who strongly connected with assigned mentors through university programs spoke highly of their experiences. Ashley spoke about utilizing officers as well as her assigned mentor and office hours. Regarding her assigned mentor, Ashley said:

> And also, my mentor that I got from the scholarship…she has assisted me and helped me a lot. She encouraged me and also helped in some ways…like to achieve these goals. And, for example, like, if I have course work, she's in governance and most of my tourism work is based on governance, governing the sector. So, I will like…send it to her uhm for her to advice and all of that. So, she was great help along the way.

Ashley also wanted to transition to full-time so she could get a scholarship. By the time Ashley received her scholarship, she was assigned a mentor located in a different country but maintained constant communication and provided excellent tips for her to navigate the university. Based on Ashley's description of her relationship with her assigned mentor, it was clear that benefitted from having a mentor. It was also clear that Ashley's

mentor was present and active in her higher education journey. It was also helpful that Ashley was paired with a mentor that was in a field that connected with some aspects of her major. Ashley's mentor was assigned through her scholarship program, and she appreciated her mentor's regular check-ins and encouragement.

After semester one, Ashley realized she could not obtain good grades by not attending classes or taking notes. With these goals in mind and after seeing her first semester grades, Ashley purchased a planner and started to plan her study sessions, assignments due dates, and when to attend office hours. Ashley said:

> So, if I'm not sure on a particular course, I would ask for help. I utilize the consultant meetings with my lecturers, and I would just ask them to explain it. Because you know they always have some meeting times like on Fridays at two o'clock. So, I utilize those as well.

When Ashley started university, she was not attending office hours or consistently attending classes. However, Ashley developed a new mindset after seeing her grades in the first academic year and as such she started to utilize office hours.

Another example of campus engagements was shared by Mens Rea. Having done well in high school, Mens Rea thought he could easily do the same at university without studying. By the time he got to the second year, he had said, "this program is kicking my butt." Mens Rea's tuition was funded by the Student Loan Bureau (SLB), and as such, he was cognizant that failing a course meant he had to be able to make payment for a re-sit. Mens Rea's flatmate from the hall of residence, approached him one day and stated that he noticed that he did not study after classes. Mens Rea said that his flatmate told him

that "you can't make it at university without studying no matter how bright you are. Mid-semester is next week, and everybody out here is studying, and you are not." Mens Rea appreciated that students in the dorms were looking out for each other. There was this big brother, big sister mentorship camaraderie. Hertzfries, Star, and Jason also spoke about building connections on campus and capitalizing on these networks.

Other limers were not as involved or engaged on campus and regretted not making these connections while at university. In fact, all limers said they wished they were more involved on campus as this could have made their higher education journey less challenging. For example, Big Mama stressed that she wished she would have taken the step to be more involved to know what to do for exams and so forth. For example, Big Mama never used the library on her university campus. She did not have the internet at home during her earlier years at university. However, her community was located near the campus, and as such, her campus engagement outside of attending classes and working was from the blue chair on her verandah.

Figure 19 shows the spot where Big Mama for a study space by accessing the university's hot spot from her home to complete her assignments and study for her exams in the comfort of her home. Big Mama had little to no interaction with the university's library and was comfortable studying from home.

Figure 19: Big Mama's Blue Chair Study Spot on Verandah

The blue chair on the verandah was significant for Big Mama, as this was her connection away from the campus. For Big Mama, there was no need to go to the library since she could access the internet by connecting to the university's wi-fi hotspot. For Big Mama, going to the library was only necessary for printing or if she needed to help a friend. Big Mama was not aware that the library provided other resources and support services as well as she was comfortable studying at home with the benefit of being able to access the university's wi-fi from her community. Interestingly, Big Mama also admitted that she wished she was more engaged on campus so that she could have leaned on additional resources. I asked her why and Big Mama's response was:

> …and one of the skills that I, one of the lessons I should say I've learned is that I
>
> should be more weh you call it? Be more involved and thing. Because you know

when yuh involve you can be aware of what is coming on exam or what is…or

you know you get little links there and get more knowledge and certain stuff and

that's where I went wrong.

Big Mama believed that if she was more involved on campus, she would have been privy

to more information, including preparing for examinations outside of what was taught in

the classroom by the lecturer (faculty). By links, Big Mama refers to networking, for

example, knowing whom to talk to if she wanted a student job, getting internships post-

graduation, and learning about more opportunities that would support her career path.

Notably, limers' campus engagement was interrupted during the COVID-19

pandemic. Ashley and Baller were finalizing their courses between 2020 and 2021 and,

as such, were impacted by the pandemic. Jason and Star were in their graduate programs

and completed the remainder of their courses online. Limers shared that before the

pandemic, they were overwhelmed by the pressures of university, and this feeling

intensified during the pandemic. Hertzfries and Canary spoke openly in their limes about

mental health along with the fact that their community continues to be impacted by

violence.

Canary started university during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, therefore her

entire university experience has been framed within this context. Canary openly shared

about her mental health and provided insights into her experience during the pandemic

while attending university as a first-generation student. Canary said:

I feel like every semester it gets harder mentally. It becomes more of a struggle.

First year we did more courses but it was like easier to get done. Uhm, the

assignments and group work don't stop. But you know you see the deadline

you're like, I have to get this in. Especially at this point in the program, know

where every course you do matters for the next semester. So, you know you can't

fail anything.

In our second lime, Canary said, "If nothing else, I struggled mentally. Last semester was

the most taxing for me, so…You know, being forced to say inside and stuff was a little

hard but check on a university student cause it rough." Canary, like Hertzfries, had some

aspects of their learning shifted to online, and as such, they had few interactions with the

campus space during the lockdown periods in Jamaica. Hertzfries shared his experience

and said:

When it [COVID-19] just started like it was a bit tedious because we didn't know

anything about like the online system. So, like finding the tests and the

assignments and how to upload them and so forth, that was a bit tedious when it

started. Like having classes was easier cah you know you nuh afi go campus. You

can just deh weh you deh turn on your laptop or so forth, but that was the easiest

part of it. But like maneuvering and the entire online system was, was a bit rough.

But gradually it became easier. So that was just it, it started out hard but them.

For Hertzfries, at the beginning of the pandemic, there were some challenges as it was

difficult to maneuver the online platform. This was also compounded by Hertzfries' role

in his household as the only male "man in the house" as his older sibling was overseas

and he was now the person who his younger cousins emulated at home. Hertzfries in

discussing his university experience and being the "man of the house" said:

And then uhm like a bit a burden in a sense where... everything just jump dung

pon mi. But like there were sometimes where I just felt like ugh I cannot. But fi

know say like ...you see because the same way I try to emulate Jamal [older

brother] and Bill try fi emulate me [referring to his younger cousin]

SF: So, your, your...for the purpose of the record you have to set an example for

your cousins within the household?

HF: Yeah.

SF: Okay, got you. Talk me through that now. So, because of that now you like oh

mi cah give up mi afi do this?

Hertzfries: Yes. Cause there are times that you have a mental breakdown because

you're going through a lot. And you a try fi just keep everything in check but like

nuttn nah go right. And then you cah mek him [referring to Bill] see you at your

lowest point because he keeps you at such a high level. That's...you don't want to

break him for him to not be encouraged, because him a say if Hertzfries look so

and Hertzfries a do that, wah a go happen to me?

For Hertzfries, there were days when he would have a mental breakdown because he was

going through a lot with school, responsibilities at home and working and did not want

his younger cousins to see him in this light. He believed that if he could not hold it

together, he would be letting down those who looked up to him within the household.

For our first lime, Canary shared that she had struggled with anxiety since high

school, and now that she was at university, her anxiety became worst. I asked if she felt

like anyone understood? Her words were "definitely not…I was just weird." We paused,

and I agreed with Canary that people sometimes do not understand individuals who struggle with anxiety. The transcript showed that I went into roughly two pages of discussion sharing my anxiety experiences with Canary. We discussed the university's support services via the health center and our conversation expressed:

> Canary: So yeah, I did reach out in November and I had a session. But then I reached out this semester, and they said that my uhm counselor isn't there anymore. So, I would have to like wait to speak to someone to know who I was assigned to.
>
> SF: And had, did they follow up with you?
>
> Canary: No, I'm going to have to call them.
>
> SF: You must call the people them when needed? This is foolishness. What!
>
> Canary: Yeah, I reached our…to them on WhatsApp and they thought and they're saying I'm going to need to call on a Thursday…I…around 1 p.m.
>
> Canary: To know who I was re-assigned to.
>
> SF: Oh, OK so once you contact them then you…thing there. Okay well, I'm gonna actually follow up with you on this.
>
> Canary: Okay.

Canary who is an advocate for mental health has taken steps to book an appointment with the university's counselor services. However, it was clear that the onus was on her and not the university to assign another counselor to Canary since the previous counselor was no longer with the university. This is indicative of the lack of communication and accountability on the part of the university. Why was there no follow-up from the

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university since the student took the initiative to schedule and appoint and yet she was not able to receive support immediately. This support was delayed and provided insights into the value placed on mental health at the institution. Since we bonded over our anxiety, we have constantly checked in with each other and I followed up with her to see if she had scheduled the session.

Another campus engagement example came from Baller as he discussed his confusion regarding how many courses, his transcript issue and wishing he had support. Despite the challenge, Baller did not let these interactions with the campus deter him from completing. Baller was sharing multiple frustrations and expressed:

> So, the whole lifespan of university a just, I think UWI have it weh them have some person that help the student. I'm trying to find the word because I didn't go UWI but I hear them talk bout it now and then…

In the statement above Baller was attending a private university and was trying to remember the terminology used at the University of the West Indies regarding providing support for students and the registration process or anything relating to transcripts and academics. He said that he did not attend this university but he always heard other people talking about it. In recognizing what Baller was referring to, my response was, "Academic...them call it academic support". I laughed and shared that I did not know that I had an advisor for my bachelor's while at university as such I was not surprised that Baller did not know he was assigned an academic advisor. Baller confirmed that the term I used is what he was trying to remember. Our conversation was:

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Baller: That mi a talk bout, yeah that mi a talk. [laughs] Mi wah tell yuh say mi have a transcript issue. A choo you come up with transcript me member that [laughs].

SF: [laughs] Tell me about that.

Baller: Because I had switch from doing straight Biz Ad right. And mi did a go marketing.

SF: Right, so wah yuh degree inna now Biz Ad and marketing.

Baller: No is just, is just Biz Ad.

SF: Them call it BIZ AD, okay, okay.

Baller: Because I was trying to even though eventually it nuh work out. But them did put it up as marketing. So, at the time mi a get some courses and mi a say what is this? And mi feel like mi kinda do too much course still. Honest to God.

SF: You probably gone over, yu credit limit, don't it?

Baller: [hisses teeth] right now mi can get back some credit.

SF: WOW.

Baller: So, I'm like what is this? And mi a get some marketing course and one a mi friend from Massey, she was like bredren why you doing them courses deh? That's the courses me get when mi a do the marketing thing.

In this first section of what ultimately led Baller to receive academic advice, he was not sure about the courses he was doing based on what his major was. In fact, it was an interaction with his friend that made him realize that he was doing the wrong courses as she questioned why he was taking a marketing course. So much so that Baller strongly

believed that he has surpassed his credit limit for his degree. So, the interaction with his friend who also attended his university was helpful as he was informed as to what he needed to do to continue on the track to his degree.

I then probed by asking "So who tell you fi do [the marketing course] …so you never have nobody fi register that, nuh school advisor?" Basically, I was asking Baller who told him to take the marketing course in the first place when he registered for the course and asked if he did not have an advisor? Baller's response finally shed some light on the issue. Baller said:

> No mon. You have a map right and remember I had switched, so the map and member mi did stop. Member me stop one-time eno. So, sometime all a them thing. So, sometime how me sort out my thing me afi go inna the office and siddung with somebody. And that was the last and that was one of my defining moment when I went in, and I speak directly to the program coordinator. Miss T and she a say no Baller you afi do this and you afi do this and sometime me challenge her and say so why me cah just do that and she a say no.

Again, all limes had a circular format where conversations from both limes weaved into each other, and as such Baller in the statement above indicated that he received a map (coursework plan) and as discussed previously he took 12 years to complete his degree so each time he stopped impacted his progress as well as the information received. During this particular transcript issue closer to the end of Baller's degree, he went to the office and spoke directly to the program coordinator who advised him of what he needed to do. On one end Baller having no engagement with the university during the semesters he was

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not attending classes due to financial challenges, which impacted his degree completion. After his friend made him aware that he was doing the wrong course and took the initiative to go to the office to finally figure the issue out, he then received his first official academic advice aside from being handed a course map. It was this engagement with Miss T that helped Baller during the final lap of his degree program.

In summary, the third finding of the study focused on how students' persistence in higher education was shaped by the features of their home community environment and their levels of interactions at their respective universities. I used the term features to emphasize that poverty and crime and violence were not the only elements within first-generation Jamaican university students' immediate environments that shaped their persistence in higher education. I found that the dynamics regarding the characteristics that made up ones' home community environment served as a catalyst in both access and persistence stories. There is no debate that the characteristics of an educational institution can influence students' performance and experiences. However, I argue that this same conversation needs to take place regarding understanding the intricacies of first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments and how various elements within these spaces shape access and persistence in higher education. Failure to explore this phenomenon is missed opportunity for all government stakeholders in the Ministry of Education and Youth along with higher education institutions in Jamaica to provide support for first-generation students from rural and urban inner-city communities.

The final finding emerged when limers were describing their higher education experiences.   The liming and photovoice data analysis revealed during the lime that while limers spoke about wanting to achieve more and elevate themselves, they too gained new insights at university as they started to recognize their true potential as we say, "the sky is the limit." Next, I share examples of Finding Four, representative of all limers.

Finding Four: First-Generation University Students' Recognition of their True Potential at University

"That moment of epiphany, that moment of self-actualization,

that moment of me being here,

it put something in me like even though I already had the fire

it ignited, uhm, the desire that I could not let my community down."

- *Mens Rea*

As I moved back and forth, combing through the transcripts, replaying the audio recordings, and reviewing the photographs, I noted images of the sky, dreams of achieving more, and dreams of fulfilling childhood desires. In other words, looking towards the crown of the tree and reaching for the top, after all, by their final year limers recognized their potential was limitless. Limers recognized that climbing the tree and making it to the top was possible despite all the challenges or self-doubts they encountered along their higher education journey. For example, climbing to the top of the tree for Ashley was one step closer out of her community, which she described as a "dark hole" in Figure 11. I open Finding Four with Mens Rea's narrative above which came

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from a day when he was walking on the university campus, and he stopped under an ackee tree and had a moment of reflection. During this pause, he realized that being from a rural community with only a few professionals, it was a historic moment to attend the university of his dreams. During our lime, Mens Rea said, "I'm not going to say I'm brilliant you know, I was good, with doing my schoolwork and so forth." Mens Rea casually stated that he does not view himself as brilliant but a hard worker, and everything he hoped for came to fruition from this moment of reflection under the ackee tree.

Various experiences shaped limers' higher educational journey in different environments. These included their home community, basic, primary and high school, and higher education environments. All these experiences inspired limers to achieve their full potential, that is, persevering and persisting to self-actualize their dreams of obtaining their bachelor's degree and more. This full potential was climbing to the top of the tree and reaping the fruits. Mens Rea used the term *self-actualization* indicating that he was now honing his full potential and becoming his true self (Ratner, 2018). Weinberg's (2005) definition of self-actualization admits that it is difficult to define. However, a loose definition is one's "full use and exploitation of talents and potentialities" (p. 315).

This finding connects with the last sub-question regarding limers' descriptions of their higher education experiences. This section is not organized into two sub-headings similar to the first three findings of the study. Instead, I dedicate this section to limers and their graduation goals as they recognized their true potential which was also inspired by their interactions on campus. For limers, unlocking their full potential was realizing that

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all that they thought was impossible during their pre-university experiences and at the beginning of university was achievable in the end. The realization of the unimaginable opened many doors for limers as they prepared for graduation and life after university.

Firstly, rural and urban inner-city communities shaped limers' sense of purpose and self-awareness. Having entered a new space that was utterly foreign to them in terms of the structure, the size of the campus, the expectations of the university, the financial burden, and many more challenges, limers had to lean on their value systems and lessons learned from their home community environments. Limers admitted that their first semester or first year was when they had to learn how to find their landing, and the university presented the space for them to become their true selves. For some limers, understanding who they were and constantly reflecting on their lived experiences within their home community environments also meant that they had to motivate themselves.

This self-motivation came with the understanding that limers had to balance work and studies, navigate the university, and cope with community violence. Limers' value systems from their home community environments kept them going even when they felt like giving up. I observed that all limers, either by the end of the first semester or first year, found a formula that worked for them and realized that they could obtain their degrees if they applied specific skills. Some skills shared by limers were organization, time management, leaning on support systems, group study, discipline, and consistency.

For some limers, their university journey was fulfilling and memorable; for others, it was bittersweet. All limers' were hyper-aware of their realities, especially by the time they got the high school. For example, in Jamaica, high school is where limers

meet other students outside their home community environments and recognize that they all experience different SES. Jason said:

> ...and as a youth growing up in the ghetto, you recognize that you were lesser privileged than many others. As a matter of fact, sometimes you don't even recognize the privilege that we didn't have because everybody around you shared similar circumstances.

During this conversation, Jason and I spoke about how high school painted the real picture for us, and that university confirmed it. This picture was referring to seeing the social differences once we stepped outside of our home community environments. Therefore, by the time they got to university, limers already knew their social position. For some, it was obvious based on remarks passed by students on campus or by the lecturers in the classroom. This self-awareness of their socio-economic status fueled limers' determination to graduate with their degree, surpassing the limits placed on them by society.

For Jason, meant elevation, identifying his goals and objectives, and realizing that he could make his dreams a reality.

Figure 20: Jason's Inspiration on Higher Education Journey

Jason said that "this photo is captioned "elevation" because my pursuit of higher education was geared towards helping me to obtain status and status symbols such as a house, cars, and a comfortable life at the end of the journey." Additionally, Jason said:

> Yeah, so that is that, for me, is inspiration. Because I mean you're growing up as a ghetto youth you as you say, you fantasize about having real money to afford real things. The Benz, the Bimmer, uhm the jaguars, the range rovers, the massive Honda bikes. All these things that we thought, and of course the mansions and these things we thought outside of the scope of our reach with our limited resources.

Jason and his friends thought that aiming for a luxury house was outside the scope of their reach with the limited resources they had access to. They would often daydream about their future life outside of the community. At this moment, we discussed that many persons within certain types of communities have never gone beyond the boundaries of these spaces. Jason also expressed:

I came to the realization that access to education and through education could

allow me to grasp those things. So, my educational journeys inspired by wanting

the finer things and getting meaningful assets to create generational wealth.

Jason also expressed that having attended high school outside of his community he was

able to recognize that there is more outside of the borders of his community, which also

informed his higher education pursuits and helped him to push his limits, therefore

aiming higher. Jason said:

You know, so when I started to go out there and to become exposed to what the

world had to offer me and I recognized the barriers existed. That inspired me to

break free of that and to push the, push my limits to see how or where I could end

up, outside of that space [the community].

Jason was more exposed to the society outside of his community which led to his

determination to go further so that he could leave his community. Jason also shared that

the lack of exposure to the outside world made some young men in Jason's community

think that only "gay men" attended university. However, Jason's mindset changed based

on his interactions on campus which led him to maximize his leadership abilities. Next, I

share the full context of how Jason transitioned from one mindset to a new mindset. Jason

said:

At the time I was going to campus, first thing is that them used to say, is

predominantly gays, gay men come campus…It was deemed to be, it was thought

that it was predominantly gay men who came to UWI. Because one of the notions

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about UWI in the public was that a lot of the men who were in authority on the

campus were openly gay. So, people like a Rex Nettleford and them people.

This discussion alluded to features of Jamaican patriarchal society as a result of

colonialism. These features also dictated perceptions of masculinity and how one's dress

code and demeanor determined their sexuality in the Jamaican society. Jason was fearful

of having the stigma of being labeled as a gay person attached to him especially because

of the type of community he lived in. Jason said, "So I didn't want that stigma attached to

me worse mi live inna the garrison." As such Jason's decision was to change his entire

appearance. Jason no longer wore braided his hair or wore cut-off jeans pants. Jason said:

> So, I had my hair cane row, most of the time it was half comb half Afro. I used to
>
> wear mi cut jeans go class with me. So, this rebel ragga muffin look, mi
>
> drawstring bag wid one five subject book in it.

Above Jason described how he dressed at the beginning of his university journey based

on the preconceived notions about men who attended university. Ragga muffin is

translated to ragged, unkempt, and urchin-like. However, Jason's mindset began to

change when he had greater diplomatic aspirations. He also realized that access to and

through education could allow him to own the finer things in life and obtain meaningful

assets to create generational wealth and expose him to a world outside of his home

community environment. During his undergrad, around his third year, Jason realized that

he could fulfill his desire for student leadership, graduate with his degree and become one

step closer to his big dream. The way Jason dressed for university then changed. Jason

said:

And I, and I maintain that image to the point of becoming involved in the [student leadership]. Uhm so in 2007 going 2008 I cut my hair, mi did still have mi one strap [bag] though but mi start wear long jeans. So that is when I started to refine.

SF: Okay, okay. Cah yu dress eno when mi say yu dress, yu dress.

Jason: Yeah, mon I started to refine by then. So, I recognized that to exist in that kind of culture you had to blend in. And yeah, so I, I dress the part I, talked the part a good bit. And even, even just or general day-to-day engagements outside, so I worked, I had a solid network of friends, who I could rely on to give guidance and some feedback on school related stuff. And I poured myself into my [student leadership] responsibilities.

Jason like Star and Mens Rea realized they needed to capitalize on their sports and leadership strengths. In the narrative above Jason shares how he transformed his attire appearance at university to fit in with the culture of students that were in that space of student leadership. Jason had gained enough confidence to transition from his "ragga muffin" attire due to the label of being a gay person in his community by virtue of attending university. Jason through his interactions with his peers recognized what he needed to do to blend in so that he could participate in the elections for student leadership. Jason, Star, and Mens Rea all alluded to recognizing that university was their time to shine. After all the negativity from individuals in high school and their home community environments, limers became their true selves which factored into them recognizing their true potential and completing their degrees.

Notably, Phoenix and Baller's source of purpose was intensified when they became parents. Yes, limers' families played a critical role but becoming parents created a hidden drive that they did not know they needed to achieve the ultimate goal of graduation. For Phoenix, at the core of her higher education purpose was her son, and she shared that,

> He is my source of motivation. The moment he was conceived during a teenage pregnancy, I knew I could not let him down. I knew I had to achieve the best because I didn't want him to think he hindered my academic achievement because of his unplanned entry into this world. I needed him to see that I was different from the average teenage mother, and he needed to know he is not the average child of a teenage mother.

Phoenix was on a mission to break down barriers and refused to be defined by her teenage pregnancy. Moreover, Phoenix was aware of how others felt about her teenage pregnancy and the expectation that she would become another statistic. Phoenix was sure of her goals even before she got to university. However, once she was accepted, she realized that she desired more. Her son was her fuel, and Phoenix wanted to see him actualize his full potential hence the reason to pursue post-graduate studies to show her son that anything he wanted to achieve was possible. Phoenix was banned from her high school graduation but has attended several since then and more to come.

For Baller, he did not want his daughter to be in a situation where she would be filling out a form for him. By this, Baller was referring to parents who depended on their children to help them read and write. Baller experienced people in his family and rural

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community being supported by their children and vowed to never be in this position. With the birth of his daughter, his purpose became clearer while he was still attending university. In other words, his daughter was his ultimate inspiration and he garnered a deeper motivation to keep the momentum going so that he could graduate with his undergraduate degree. Baller said: "And I learn later on, down in life, that you can't be doing something for yourself. And that's when mi look back mi a say shit, that's the reason why mi stop so much." Moreover, Baller stating that he stopped from school referred to the number of times he had to pause his studies for multiple reasons. However, with his daughter entering his life, he realized that he was no longer pursuing higher education for himself. Baller took 12 years to complete his studies and realized he could surpass the limits placed on him at every stage of his life.

Another aspect of limers recognizing their full potential was the process of overcoming their fears. Some limers had a lot of fear and anxiety regarding the unknown at university. For instance, having not experienced a transition program from high school to university, some limers felt like they had various challenges being thrown at them. This fear was met with intimidation; for example, Hertzfries discussed being fearful of being in a large lecture theatre with hundreds of students and having to adjust to participating in class. Hertzfries also had the trauma from his primary and high school experiences with negativity from some of his teachers. However, once he felt settled at university, Hertzfries realized that, just like his older sibling, he could achieve anything and was determined to utilize his resources, mainly his friends, who would help him see that he deserved to be at university and that it was possible to achieve his dreams.

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Figure 21: Overcoming Fear - Ashley's Motivation on HED Journey

Figure 21 shares an example of overcoming fear. Ashley equated her fear of crocodiles to how she felt about failing at university, a place where she never thought she would be. However, the moment she learned that it was okay to embrace failure, Ashley said:

> It has been one of my biggest motivations in my educational journey. I failed many times, things I thought I could not overcome, but I used those moments as a stepping stone to move forward and as a lesson to my future self.

Ashley thought that she could not overcome the challenges thrown at her from being part-time, to trying to obtain good grades to receive a scholarship, to figuring out how organize and plan her study timetable among others, she conquered her fears and maximized her potential and completed. Like Ashley, when limers spoke about completing their higher education experiences especially their degrees and graduating,

there was this sense of pride, and they were excited to achieve more as their first degree was just the beginning of what was to come. Some limers were also in disbelief that they overcame all the challenges, and on the other hand, some limers felt like they had found their real purpose in life and were ready to pay it forward to their siblings. All limers at some point in their university journey had this epiphany moment of believing that they could really accomplish their goals.

Gratitude from the beginning of our first lime stated that he knew that regardless of feeling constricted by the education system, he felt like he had no choice but to push through university. Gratitude said:

> For me, after finishing the bachelor, I said all right, yeah. Uhm, I did accounting, I got a job. But something still felt lacking in that I felt like I was still not able to make a bigger impact. So, I thought if I do the post-graduate degree, uhm financial, wise I would be able to afford to do more. And I think it was just part of self-actualization as well because knowing that I could do more. I went ahead and did more, and for me, ahh, just being in the community, in that environment, it painted a picture that, oh, you need to do more if you want better to go and do the postgraduate degree. So it was, like uhm, all right, yeah, you have this mindset being exposed to the community, and now you have a new mindset.

Gratitude was from an urban inner-city and was exposed to community violence. His lived experiences shaped the mindset he had towards education. Like Gratitude, all limers were self-motivated during their undergraduate studies and were trying to surpass the expectations of their families, scholarships, and home community environments. Limers

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became the best version of themselves, and as echoed by all, they continued to pursue further studies or branched out into another field of interest. Having accomplished their goal of graduating with their first degree, limers felt like they were starting to walk in their purpose.

During the time of the study, five limers had their masters, one had a terminal degree, and another started their doctoral studies with another pending application for a doctoral program. These accomplishments were greeted with amazement and pride in making sense of these stories of potential, elevation, and surpassing limitations during the liming analysis. From the first round of onlimes, limers shared sentiments regarding outsiders' assumptions of their home community environment which influenced how they were socialized and came to understand their community through the lens of outsiders and society in general. Reflecting on Jamaica's (post)colonial state also played a role in this recognition of potential. For example, Jamaica's social stratification system came with the notion of remaining rooted where you were planted. Growing up in rural and urban inner-city communities, limers were socialized to adhere to the unwritten rule of staying in their lane. I map this to years of discrimination, exploitation, and oppression experienced in underserved and under-resourced communities where society limits what we can achieve. All limers were accomplishing the opposite of the narrative ascribed to rural and urban inner city communities – we can aim high; the sky is not the limit and there is an abundance of opportunities outside the borders of first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments. Congratulations to all limers and thank you for sharing your stories with me.

Summary

The analysis of the data for this study resulted into four major findings. The study found that first-generation Jamaican university students valued the many lessons learned within their home community environment which served as motivation for their educational pursuits. I further found that first-generation Jamaican university students access to higher education was catalyzed by their interactions within their home community environments and their experiences at their primary and secondary schools. Additionally, I found that first-generation Jamaican university students persistence in higher education was shaped by their lived experiences within their community environments such as being from marginalized communities as well as community violence. First-generation Jamaican university students levels of engagement with their campus environment also shaped their persistence. The final major finding focused on how first-generation Jamaican university students experiences in higher education helped them to recognize their full potential.

Countering first-generation Jamaican students motivation and desire to access higher education and complete their degree, were the many challenges experienced while at university. I found that although these students faced challenges, they had the ability to quickly pivot, when necessary, by focusing on their inner drive and socio-cultural capital. The findings presented in this chapter triangulated data obtained from the onlimes, photographs and follow-up responses received during the member checking process. I shared both positive and negative examples through highly contextualized narratives. In the end, I found that first-generation Jamaican university students' home community

environments played a significant role in their higher education journey and experiences. Finally, the findings from this dissertation challenged the universally accepted definition of first-generation students with the unspoken assumption of being raised with both parents who do not possess a degree. I found that first-generation students like myself were not solely from nuclear families but also from single-parent families and multigenerational households. The findings also challenge the assumption that first-generation students were the first in their immediate families to access and graduate from university. I found that first-generation students also had siblings like myself who attended university, and their parent(s) or guardian(s) did not have a university degree.

Chapter Five is dedicated to discussing the findings through the use of a first-generation Jamaican university students model called H.O.P.E. This model is explained in Chapter Five and was designed in collaboration with the limers who were able to provide feedback on the iterations of the model. Chapter Five describes the features of the model and lays the groundwork for the implications of the study based on the findings and the use of liming and photovoice methodologies. Chapter Five also presents action-oriented recommendations and areas for future research for understanding and supporting first-generation Jamaican university students.

Chapter Five: Discussion

And it's then that it struck me, that listen,

your lecturers are only giving you a spoonful.

You need to go and get the other ingredients

in order to get this product [the degree].

- *Mens Rea*

Introduction

The product in Mens Rea's narrative meant obtaining a first degree at the end of

his undergraduate studies in Jamaica. Mens Rea recognized that he needed a formula with

all the ingredients to help him complete his higher education studies similar to how his

rural home community environment played the role of teaching him about the main

ingredient for success, which was education. I sought to understand students like Mens

Rea in this liming and photovoice study. The overarching purpose of this dissertation was

to gain a deeper understanding of the role of home community environments in shaping

first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education.

Through Liming and Photovoice Methodologies, I gathered multiple perspectives and

experiences from both current university students and graduates who identified as

Jamaican nationals and completed their first degrees across four universities in Jamaica.

This chapter begins with an overview of the purpose of the study and research

questions. Then, using the theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems

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Theory through a (post)colonial lens (see Figure 1 in Chapter One), and the literature review, Chapter Five discusses the findings, implications, recommendations, and areas for future research. This final chapter synthesizes the research by providing practical recommendations for supporting first-generation Jamaican university students.

Overview

In Chapter Two, I presented two types of home community environments in Jamaica (rural and urban inner-cities). I reviewed the literature on colonialism and community environments and the social history of Jamaica's education system from elementary to the impetus for higher education institutions. Chapter Two also reviewed first-generation students' access and persistence in higher education, highlighting deficit narratives and an assets-based lens. Within this context, there continues to be a growing need for higher education institutions to understand the varying needs of first-generation students and their home community environments. Moreover, understanding first-generation Jamaican university student and their home community environments is an impactful element, especially for underserved and under-resourced communities (Mayers & Jencks, 1989; Sampson et al., 1997; Lowe et al., 2014; Chung et al., 2020). Importantly, based on the findings of the study, it is evident that first-generation students come from various backgrounds, types of families and home community environments and do not fit into the universal definition of first-generation students.

First-generation Jamaican university students' higher education experiences cannot be divorced from their home community environments. The findings provided evidence of how limers' environments played a role in their higher education journey.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory has implications for higher education since individuals' relationships within multiple settings (e.g., home, family, school, university) inevitably shape their development over time. The findings revealed that while limers had some similarities regarding their lived experiences in their communities and higher educational journeys, there were also differences. This further supports the notion that even in helping first-generation Jamaican university students, higher education institutions cannot approach this from a one-size-fits-all approach as these students had varied experiences within their rural and urban inner-city communities, although they all identified as first-generation university students. Simply put, first-generation Jamaican university students are not monolithic; they come to higher education spaces with varying experiences nurtured within their home community environments.

Failure to integrate home community environments when preparing university programs for first-generation Jamaican university students will not support the narrative of being inclusive by aiming for Vision 2030, which includes the strategic goal of access to higher education for everyone in Jamaica. This research aimed to understand the role of home community environments in shaping first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. Accordingly, the main research questions ask, *"How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their home community environments?"* and *"How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their access and persistence in higher education?"* Two sub-questions supported the research questions: *"How do home community environments shape first-*

generation students' higher education journey?" and *"How do first-generation Jamaican university students describe their higher education experiences?"*

The analysis of the liming and photovoice data led to creating a First-Generation Jamaican University Students H.O.P.E. model to discuss the findings (see Figure 22). The H.O.P. E. acronym stands for <u>H</u>ome, <u>O</u>pportunity, <u>P</u>ersistence, and <u>E</u>levation.   The first-generation Jamaican university student H.O.P.E. model connects all four findings emerging from the liming and photovoice analysis using African and Jamaican adages, some of which were expressed during the onlimes and used to layer the stages of the model to integrate limers' stories. The model mapped limers' experiences as first-generation Jamaican university students to the layers of the model as they emphasized the meaning behind home, and educational opportunities told their persistence stories and aim high by elevating. The ecological model (see Figure 1) also influenced the process of getting to the H.O.P.E. model as it was the limers' experiences within their immediate environments that informed the elements of the model as I explored the meaning behind their home community environments and university experiences shaping their access and persistence in higher education.

In the next section, I present each layer of the model as I discuss the findings. The black, green, and gold honor the Jamaican national colors. The green also represents limers' home community environments, whether farming in the rural areas or the vegetation in the urban towns. The sun and blue symbolize the limers' hopes and dreams aiming towards the light and sky. The varied sizes of the tree represent different stages of growth, and the black mortarboard symbolizes a layer of limers' unlocking their true

potential: graduating with their undergraduate degree as first-generation Jamaican

university students with sheer resilience and determination.

There is a river called Hope River that flows through various communities in St.

Andrew, Jamaica. Some limers hail from these communities, and one lived on the banks

of the Hope River. Hope River is symbolic for multiple reasons and is a focal point of

these communities.

I attended Hope Valley Experimental Primary School, located across from the

Hope River. I played in this river with my older brother and friends, swam in it, and

caught janga (crayfish).

-   Shen

Figure 22: First-Generation Jamaican University Students H.O.P.E. Model
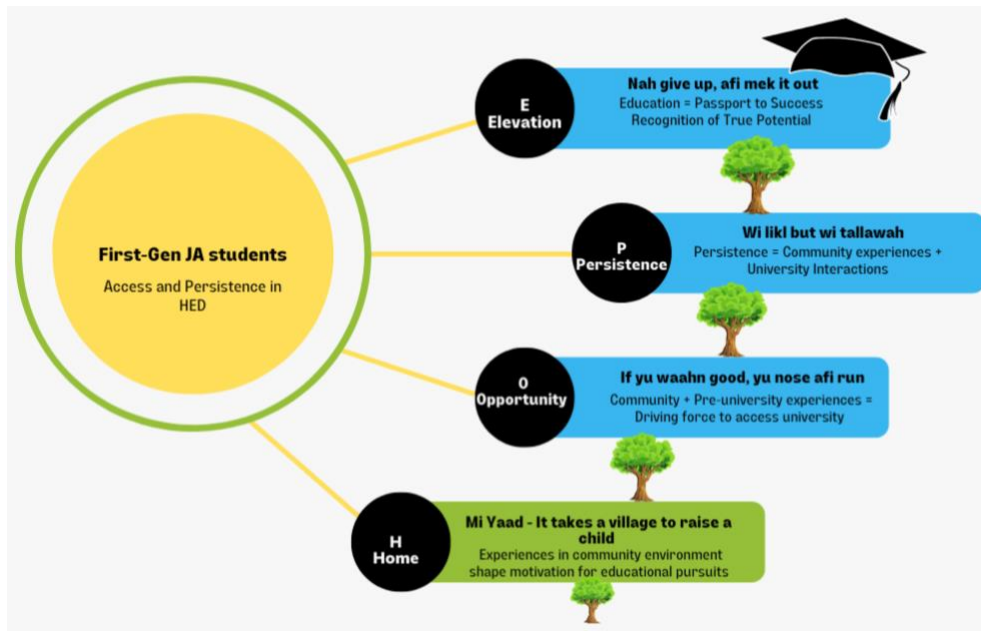
The H.O.P.E. model was designed to understand the critical role of home community environments that shaped limers' lived experiences and by extension their access and persistence in higher education. Whether emerging from the bondage of their home community environments (violence, poverty, limited access to resources) or rising through their challenges, growth was at the forefront of their access and persistence in higher education. Through a community environment lens, growth for first-generation Jamaican university students was informed by H.O.P.E. I found that although limers had challenges accessing university, these encounters did not hinder their ability to complete their degree programs. As a result of this H.O.P.E. I observed that limers thrived by leaning in on their hidden assets, including their inner drive to figure things out independently, as described by Minicozzi and Roda (2020). This desire to thrive at university was stimulated through a H.O.P.E. mindset in which their home community

environments were the foundation. In the next section, I present each layer of the model as I discuss the findings to emphasize how H.O.P.E. is unique through a community environment lens for first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. Lastly, for my readers who engage with this dissertation, I would like to share that at least six limers were involved in the different iterations of the model and provided feedback that led to the final design (see Figure 22).

Discussion of Findings and the H.O.P.E. model

Several observations were drawn from the analysis of the liming and photovoice data. As I transcribed each audio and reviewed transcripts and photographs, I noted that there was this commitment and dedication as well as a sense of being H.O.P.E.ful at every stage of their lived experiences to access and persist in higher education. As Mens Rea puts it, "…I've never thought about the amount of perseverance and dedication it took on my part to be where I am today." Some of the limers' attitudes toward being dedicated and persevering through their challenges were not something they learned at university. Instead, this was evident based on their lived experiences within their families and home community environments. To this end, the layers of the H.O.P.E. model are connected to limers' lived experiences and realities in Jamaica's rural and urban inner-city communities. These experiences contribute to first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education.

Home (Mi Yaad): It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

Firstly, the Home layer of the H.O.P.E. model's base is called *Mi yaad: It takes a village to raise a child.* The adage: *it takes a village to raise a child* is a popular African

proverb used in Jamaica (Mohamed, 1996). This saying refers to the reality that individuals and their households do not exist within a vacuum but in the wider community where they interact with persons outside their physical home, which shapes their lived experiences. Simply put, within the Home layer of the model, the messages received from everyone in the community, including peers, teachers, and school curriculum at basic and primary schools, neighbors, extended family, and all social systems and services students interacted with, played a role in their motivation to access and persist in university. In understanding the uniqueness of home community environments for first-generation Jamaican university students, the notion of being raised by a "village" aptly embodies limers' descriptions of how their environment motivated and shaped their university experience.

It is often said that universities are a microcosm of society. While this is true to an extent, the reality is that higher education institutions are perceived to be colonial and elitist places and are not spaces that represent the majority of marginalized communities. Rural and urban inner-city communities' physical features of poverty, garrisons, and lack of social services are reflective of Jamaica's colonial legacy, which led to class divisions, impoverished communities, and the rampant gang and gun violence, as discussed in the study. Furthermore, there is nothing elitist about first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments. With this in mind, I found that the role of the village in nurturing first-generation Jamaican university students at Home is not a guaranteed support system at the university level as the institution does not have a holistic understanding of the needs of students from marginalized communities.

Moreover, when accessing university from their marginalized and disenfranchised rural and urban inner-city home community environments, these students, in some instances, were left to search for this village that would aid their sense of belonging to a community that shaped their persistence. For example, in cases where first-generation students were assigned mentors who understood their majors and were able to relate to limers and help them to understand what it means to be a university student. Unfortunately, not all students received this type of mentorship which compounded their challenges, especially within their first year at university.

For students, expectations within their home community environment were glaringly different at their higher education institution. For example, regarding feelings of culture shock, Star said, "So, for example, when I came to Kingston, I realized that I am used to saying good morning. I'm used to...saying hi to everybody. In town, they don't care." While living in the halls of residence, Star like Mens Rea recognized that the university culture was different from their rural home community environment, which came as a culture shock as in their eyes it was normal for everyone to greet each other. Regardless of encounters like these, the first-generation Jamaican university students kept their core values and lessons from their home community ultimately impacting their multiplicity of experiences as university students.

Additionally, the Home layer around the notion of the village also represents where first-generation Jamaican university students received messages about the value of education as their passport out of the physical home community environment as well as socio-economic gains. As part of these messages around getting an education came with a

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sense of fear regardless of the type of community environment, limers were from. There was a fear of failure which created self-doubts, for example, failing academically which connects with Ashley's comments regarding not thinking she was deserving to be a university student as she taught it was a place for "rich and bright people." While for limers from urban inner-city, there was a fear of the unpredictable high levels of violence not knowing what their future would look like with the constant crime and violence plaguing their community.

Moreover, this unpredictable volatility in the inner-city communities disrupted limers education, especially when some were uprooted from their physical homes and had to protect their lives by moving temporarily to another community. For example, in cases where Jason and Ashley left their communities due to gun violence and relocated for a short time. This notion of fear acted as a double-edged sword as it motivated limers' goals and aspirations in higher education. By understanding students' Home layer of the H.O.P.E. model through the lens of *it takes a village to raise a child*, higher education institutions need to consider the same approach to intentionally shape first-generation Jamaican university students' university experiences.

Limers' home community environment taught them that with a little drop of hope, they could seek all the opportunities through education so that they could elevate their socioeconomic status and reduce their exposure to community violence. Within this opportunity context through education, I discuss the next layer of the H.O.P.E. model.

Opportunity: If Yu Waahn Good, Yu Nose Afi Run

Education for rural and urban inner-city limers came with many labels.

You pick up your book; you're labeled "nerd."

Deemed to have "bad behavior,"; you're labeled as a "convict."

Failure to test well; you're labeled as a "dunce."

Regardless of the labels, only three "opportunities" existed:

1. Access all levels of education,

2. Partake in illicit activities or

3. As Jason puts it, "remain in the same impoverished and depressed state" in your community.

- Shen

The Opportunity layer of the H.O.P.E. model is called *if yu waahn good, yu nose afi run*. This Jamaican adage translates to "if you want good, your nose has to run." In simple terms, this adage means if an individual wanted to be successful, they had to work hard, or rather hard work was integral to achieving and fulfilling their goals in life, and they have to make sacrifices. Similar to the saying "blood, sweat, and tears," this was the reality of all limers from rural and urban inner-city communities as they interacted with the institutionalized policies and practices of schooling in Jamaica which intensified in high school. The connection between the Home and Opportunity layers is the lesson taught within the home community environment around education being an investment and a tool to access higher education which will inevitably open the doors to other opportunities. Limers' value systems within their home community environment

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emphasize the importance of accessing higher education. For limers to access university, they needed to complete their education at the pre-university stages. Within the context of the study, limers' academic performance in national exams in primary and high schools (including sixth form) shaped their pre-university experiences which inevitably influenced their university access journey.

In Chapter Two, I indicated that Jamaica is highly stratified, and one's level of education helps to determine their social position in our classist society. Unfortunately, sometimes your home community environment dictates the quality of education one receives, for example, based on the location of the school (volatile and under-resourced communities), the type of resources available within the institutions, and of course the type of school (public vs. private). By the time limers transitioned to high school, which was located outside their home community environments, this meant that they had to leave the Home. However, prior to high school, they had a basic understanding of why they were told that education was their opportunity for a better life based on their home community environment. As Hyacinth Evans (2001) puts it, we expect schools to solve all problems, including illiteracy, overcome violence-related problems, prepare children to be good citizens, and provide them with upward social mobility.

Additionally, within the Opportunity, layer education at primary and high schools (pre-university stages) played a dual role, where limers used it to escape their lived realities by embracing their new knowledge as well as a place they had to physically and mentally toil to meet the pressures of Jamaica's colonial education system in order to test well to access university. Historically, "education was seen as a means of escaping the

harsh physical conditions of working the soil with little or no return for effort (Evans, 2001, p. 2). For limers, their noses had to run as they were up against multiple factors, the notions of power within the education system and the pressures of academic life. The notions of power were evident in the findings regarding limers' experiences with teachers and administrative staff. Limers' descriptions of negative teachers were emphasized in their narratives with stories of being labeled as "dunce," "convict," and Jason, Mens Rea, Star, and Baller being perceived as not good enough to participate in high school leadership roles due to their socio-economic background and in some cases academic performances. These labels have revealed how colonial education in Jamaica continues to affect "students' sense of self, identity and belonging" (Escayg & Kinkead-Clark, 2018, p. 239). Unsurprisingly, "in the over two hundred years since the abolition of slavery, education continues to reflect a highly segregated and exclusionary system along racial, gender and socio-economic lines" (Escayg & Kinkead-Clark, 2018, p. 237).

Although education was perceived as a great opportunity, it aimed to indoctrinate and discipline students to maintain the stratified social structure in Jamaica (Evans, 2001; Escayg & Kinkead-Clark, 2018). Also, "teacher-student relationships and pedagogies may, in fact reflect many defining characteristics of the colonial social order" (Escayg & Kinkead-Clark, 2018, p. 238). One element of this social order was the power dynamic between limers and their high school teachers. For example, Phoenix's experience after being involved in a school fight led to her being banned from attending her high school graduation. Phoenix felt powerless when summoned to the principal's office with her mother and her peers who were not punished because their parents were more affluent

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and perceived to be more valuable to the school, for example, parents who made donations. In the case of the Phoenix, many educational institutions still reflect the historical legacy of colonialism (Evans, 2001; Escayg & Kinkead-Clark, 2018). This colonial legacy also involves the role of power where educators are perceived to be masters and students are the subordinates. Phoenix felt voiceless and powerless as an equitable approach would have been to punish all who were involved in the fight which was captured on video.

Limers' being from rural and urban inner-city communities took pride in speaking the English language "well" and their performance in English at the pre-university stages shaped their access to university. Simply put, one needed to pass the English exam as it is a requirement for admission to universities in Jamaica. If you failed CSEC English then you would have to do an entrance exam at university, for example. This emphasis on English brings into the discussion how language continues to be weaponized in educational institutions and the wider society. Historically, language has been used as a socio-political tool to (dis)empower communities, cultures, and individuals worldwide (McConnell-Ginet, 2020; Herrera & Bryan, 2022). I found that some Phoenix and Hertzfries felt empowered knowing they were commended and acknowledged for speaking "properly." In contrast, Baller noticed how not being able to master the English language created segregation in the high school classroom as the teacher seemingly preferred the students who spoke and wrote the language well for the class. Moreover, "language has been systematically used as a weapon to assert control, delegitimize,

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negate membership and opportunities, and disassociate groups of people who look and act differently from those in power" (Herrera & Bryan, 2022, p. 2).

Lastly, the Opportunity layer where limers' education experiences outside of their communities, in high schools, informed their transition to university, which is perceived to be the ultimate opportunity. High school transition consisted of, passing CSEC examinations in Grade 11, matriculating to Grades 12 and 13 (sixth form) to complete CAPE exams, and then applying to university. However, failing to test well in CSEC lowers students' chances of being accepted into sixth form. Before 2021, sixth form was not mandatory but made it easier to apply to universities in Jamaica requiring CAPE for admissions. Grades 12 and 13 are now features of non-traditional high schools, and these are the institutions that were once secondary and have been upgraded to high schools (Adams & Hayle, 2021). In Grades 12 and 13 students are expected to be prepared for university, however, the limers of this study would not have benefitted from the 2021 sixth form mandatory policy, therefore, some students did know that they needed to go to sixth form or saw it as a necessity to access university. Surprisingly, limers who attended sixth form also felt unprepared for the university as they had no transition programs, they were first-generation university students and eight had no family member attending university to guide them and for those in rural communities, they had no examples of persons attending university in their communities.

In summary, understanding the Opportunity layer of the H.O.P.E model through a community environment lens provides insights into how students' educational pathways lead them to access university. Limers were forced to thrive within colonial education

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systems so that they can access higher education to essentially liberate themselves from

their current socio-economic positions in order to break the cycle of poverty and a desire

to move away from community violence. I use the term forced because both rural and

urban inner-city communities emphasized education as the only vehicle to access any

form of success or upward social mobility. For limers, education was the only choice if

they wanted to elevate themselves. All these aspirations are the driving force behind first-

generation Jamaican university students' attitude of *if yu waahn good, yu nose afi run.*

Liberation does not come without accessing the opportunity. Once students access the

educational opportunities at the pre-university stages this sets the pathway for their higher

education journey, where their new goal is to complete their degrees. This brings into the

discussion why universities need to understand home community environments through

the H.O.P.E. model regarding layer three, the persistence of first-generation Jamaican

university Students.

Persistence: Wi Likl But Wi Tallawah

The Persistence layer of the H.O.P.E. model is reflective of the Jamaican adage,

wi likl but wi tallawah. The literal translation is we are small, but we are mighty and "is

common amongst Jamaicans. It is symbolic in its text as well its meaning, that even

though we as a small nation are small, we are strong and mighty" (Stewart, 2019, p. 11).

This proverb encompasses the drive and resilience that limers spoke about regarding their

higher educational journey being motivated and inspired by their home community

environments where they experienced poverty and gun violence which shaped their

university experiences. In other words, with a tallawah mindset, we can do anything in

life. The purpose of the persistence layer is to also emphasize that place matters in education, students experiences are shaped within the various spaces their live in and study, which leads to the consideration of understanding limers' varied experiences within their home community environments that shape their persistence.

In Chapter Four, the findings presented examples of how limers' university persistence was shaped by their home community environments and the type of campus engagements. As pointed out by Roofe et al. (2022), in (post)colonial Jamaica, challenges faced by first-generation students are compounded; as such, some students are internally driven to persist in higher education. Therefore, it is significant to understand how first-generation Jamaican university students' persistence through a community lens not to replicate systems that compound the multiplicity of challenges these students encounter at university. While some limers were fortunate to have a primarily positive university experience, for others, it was bittersweet similar to their pre-university journey.

I found that limers' parents had a great desire and aspirations to obtain higher education after high school. For example, as shared in Chapter Four, Jason's mother intentionally got employment at a university so that she could access the staff benefit option regarding tuition for dependents. This aspiration did not mean all parents understood the university admission process or knew precisely what limers were studying or the subjects they did in high school. However, it was evident that parents knew that education represented some form of elevation and financial stability they wanted for their children. Many limers echoed their findings regarding their parents' desire for them to be in a better social position than they were. To this end, once first-generation Jamaican

university students enter the university environment, having no in-depth knowledge of this unfamiliar space (university) directly impacts how well they transition in this new place.

Within the Opportunity layer, I discussed that once students completed Grade 11 in high school and their CSEC subjects, they were eligible for the world of work since going to Grades 12, and 13 was not required until 2021. This was atypical in the Jamaican culture because there is the narrative that students from families that experience low-SES are expected to seek employment immediately after Grade 11. For example, Ashley had no interest in university in high school as she thought that she did not belong in this space and she did not attend sixth form after completing her CSEC subjects. On other hand Mens Rea, Baller, Phoenix and Star had no examples of people attending university in their rural communities. However, only Star and Mens Rea attended sixth form in their rural communities based on their high school experiences. While Baller and Phoenix sought employment after high school before accessing university as their pre-university opportunities were hindered by multiple reasons. For Baller, he did not complete CSEC English which is required to access university and university was not at the forefront of his mind until he moved from rural to town. For Phoenix she was not able to complete her CAPE exams due to being pregnant and she saw this as a setback on her higher education journey.

With the mindset of *wi, likl but wi tallawah* limers' persistence was activated with sheer determination and their hidden assets of being independent and pro-active regardless of their socio-economic circumstances and their various pathways to

university. The findings revealed that the physical features of limers' home community environments were a critical factor that fueled their persistence in higher education. As Jason expressed, he recognized that he was less privileged than others outside of his community. Regardless of the type of community that limers were from, limers explicitly stated that they wanted more opportunities for their families and communities which was only possible through persistence.

In understanding the H.O.P.E. model through a community lens it is necessary for higher education institutions to be thoughtful regarding the type of campus engagement and involvement that supports first-generation Jamaican university students' persistence. University environments must be knowledgeable of the experiences of students within rural and urban inner-city communities. By knowledgeable I am not referring to just what is said about these communities on the news but by facilitating capacity-building workshops for all university stakeholders about the student population which includes first-generation university students from rural and urban inner-city communities. This engagement includes mentors, peers, campus administration, and lecturers/faculty, university leadership, and others. First-generation Jamaican university students who reported higher levels of engagement within the university campus space were perceived to have a smoother transition and better understanding of university expectations. The literature highlighted first-generation students were less likely to participate in co-curricular activities (Padgett et al., 2012). There was evidence in the findings regarding first-generation Jamaican university students who lived in a hall of residence being highly active in co-curricular activities, including student leadership and sports. Additionally,

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some students who commuted participated in at least one club activity but were less involved than those who lived on campus. Also, students who worked while studying and had additional responsibilities such as parenting was even more disengaged from the campus activities and sometimes excluded from campus engagements.

Limers' felt connected within their home community environments although their experiences were glaringly different in the rural and urban inner-city communities. Limers had tightly-knit immediate family and extended family and community family where everyone showed up when it mattered. In understanding how students are connected to their home community environment will aid best practices around students feeling a sense of belonging within the university environment. First-generation Jamaican university students will not all feel a sense of belonging if the intricacies of their home community environments are excluded from the university space.

Students residing in the halls of residence had a greater sense of belonging and indicated how, through the "big brother, big sister" type of mentorship that was mandatory in the campus dorms, they were better able to navigate the university space and system and find their balance at least by the end of their first academic year. For example, Mens Rea was mentored by his grandfather in his rural community which motivated him to access higher education. Once Mens Rea accessed university and experienced the "big brother" type of mentorship while living in the hall of residence he was able to connect with what his peers who encouraged him to study if he wanted to do well academically, similar to how his grandfather within his home community environment represented a tower of wisdom and mentorship. For urban inner-city

students, a sense of belonging was searching for a safe environment. For example, one of the main factors Jason moved on hall after two years of commuting was due to his life being threatened. For Jason, the university was a safe place, one where he could escape his reality from the gun violence in his community. For rural students, the university was a place of unlocking opportunities that could not have otherwise been afforded in rural communities with limited social amenities.

Simply put, when first-generation Jamaican university students were able to make connections across their home community environments and university as it relates to having a community of support system and feeling safe, they were in a better position to navigate and persist through higher education with fewer challenges. First-generation Jamaican university students were the epitome of – *if yu waahn good, yu nose afi run* and *wi likl but wi tallawah* to persevere and persist in higher education. Even though they had this inner drive, it is still the responsibility of the institution to ensure that these students are not left to navigate a complex system all on their own. The final layer of the model discusses how students' persistence led them to discover their full potential in higher education.

Elevation: Nah Give Up, Afi Mek It Out

The final layer of the H.O.P.E. model is called *Elevation* and embodies the Jamaican saying *nah give up, afi mek it out* and where first-generation Jamaican university students recognized and unlocked their full potential in higher education. The literal translation of the adage is *not giving up, have to make it out*. The examples shared in Chapter Four, echoed a resounding desire to elevate oneself, trying to find the best

versions of who you are so that you can inspire others within your home community environment including your children. First-generation Jamaican university students' university experience shaped their understanding of pushing beyond their limits, overcoming their fears, fueling their burning passion, and adopting new perspectives.

Limers' potential was constrained within the Home and Opportunity layers of the model due to being from marginalized communities where certain socio-cultural beliefs were held and where progress was not anticipated without education as Hertzfries said "society had low-expectation of us" when sharing about his non-traditional high school where many of the children from his community also attend. Inside of limers' communities, some of the interactions and experiences they were immersed in left them dripping with doubts and fears which at times had them pessimistic that they could really accomplish as much as a university degree. I found that first-generation Jamaican university students' interactions outside of the home community environments influenced their perspectives on life and their ability and university was the environment outside of their home community where they started to unlock these abilities. This first realization was experienced when they attended a high school located outside of their community. This meant they were traveling on the bus or in a taxi to school and observing new spaces and places. This exposure to traveling outside helped them, too, as Jason puts it, "recognize that you were lesser privileged than many others." This awareness also informed first-generation students about unlocking their full potential with the mindset of Jason who said, "well, I can have privileges too," and the passport to this privilege was through higher education. To get to this space, first-generation Jamaican university

students had to demonstrate resilience by adopting the mindset of *nah give up, afi mek it out* which resulted in limers' having a new perspective while on the pathway of completing their degrees.

An example of this change in mindset at university was Jason's story of being fearful of being labeled as a gay man in his urban inner-city community. Some young men within Jason's home community environment were not exposed to the broader society and had preconceived notions regarding men who attended university. Historically, Jamaica inherited a patriarchal society from colonialism, which informs notions of gender roles and norms, masculinity, and femininity, shaping Jamaica's social and cultural realities (Thame & Thakur, 2014). Notably, these notions informed expectations of how one should dress based on perceptions of gender identity, and if you did the opposite, you were labeled. In this context, Jason's fear of being labeled resulted in him wearing "masculine' attire at university and his mindset was that if he dressed the opposite of what the men in his community portrayed as "masculinity" then he would be labeled. However, this change in university attire was temporary for Jason as his university campus interactions with his peers elevated not only his perceptions of caring for what his community perceived to be a gay man but also encouraged him to participate in student leadership. Jason had a great desire to be actively involved in student leadership, however, he had to change the way he dressed to "blend in" as he said so that he could maximize this potential. As a result of Jason's newfound aspiration, he changed his "ragga muffin" attire to a button-up shirt and long pants. This was the point where Jason no longer cared if the young men on the street corner in his community were going

to tease him for dressing "prim and proper" as he now recognized that he had a greater purpose to unlock, therefore, feeding into the gay men mentality in his community would only prevent him from unlocking his full potential.

I found that first-generation Jamaican university students' interactions within the campus environment solidified this recognition of their true potential, one that was not always present within their pre-university experiences while residing in their home community environments. Therefore, access to higher education was considered a great benefit to first-generation students believing in themselves in their quest of *becoming*. Becoming was not just getting a degree but also evolving and improving themselves (Obama, 2018). Lastly, recognizing their full potential during their higher education experiences also motivated first-generation Jamaican university students to pursue post-graduate studies after completing their bachelor's. This is a direct result of the limers' experiences within the elevation layer. The that they did not give up and completed their degrees, the fact that they were able to find themselves and discover their skills and assets served as a catalyst for them apply for post-graduate studies as they realized that there was more in store for them through education. First-generation Jamaican university students realized that they could do more and therefore became lifelong learners, their higher education journey was only the beginning of the greatness which was rooted in their home community environments and developed through their university experiences.

This finding of elevation by unlocking their true potential is significant as it informs how higher education institutions in Jamaica can understand the role of community environments in shaping feelings of self-doubts. If universities were to

understand the psychological impact experiences within of rural and urban inner-city communities, they would be better able to create programs that motivate students to push beyond their limits and become the best versions of themselves and dispel the myth that "nothing good comes from the inner-city and poverty-stricken communities."

H.O.P.E. Model: Understanding First-Generation Jamaican University Students

Firstly, understanding the role of home community environments through the H.O.P.E model helps recognize the critical role of first-generation students' community village (Home) in shaping their access and persistence in higher education. It was clear from the findings that there were some red tapes in accessing resources that would aid first-generation Jamaican university students who reside in marginalized communities in matriculating to higher education. These red tapes include messages received within home community and school environments, lack of infrastructures to access the internet, legal electricity, running water, transportation, and other social amenities. Importantly, the need to reside in a safe home community environment not plagued with gun violence and one where basic need such as food is provided without having to rely solely on the ackee tree and Potato Hill. The findings highlighted that community violence created additional fear and displaced first-generation Jamaican university students. While all students experienced days without lunch while attending classes at university, a memory that they were familiar with from their urban inner-city and rural communities. All these red tapes must be taken into consideration when Jamaican policymakers and government leaders are creating social welfare and support programs for marginalized communities (rural and urban inner-cities) that experience high levels of poverty and community

violence. Failure to address the challenges within rural and urban inner-city community environments directly impacts Jamaican's Vision 2030 and beyond.

Secondly, the H.O.P.E. model helps stakeholders to understand first-generation students' experiences with the Jamaican education system. The findings play a significant role in informing educators within the primary and secondary systems that there is a need to improve student-teacher engagement at all levels so that students can have meaningful and transformative experiences at school instead of being traumatized by teachers' negative stereotypes, labels, and predictions of their future, such as communicating to students that they will never elevate to the upper echelons of society based on their socio-economic background. Understanding students' experiences within their different types of environments (home and school, for example) can facilitate the implementation of measures that will determine if educators are positively affirming students so they can academically perform to matriculate to university. While at the same time creating support for educators within a system that is heavily under-resourced and underpaid in high-stress environments.

Thirdly, the H.O.P.E. model is also needed for higher education institutions to understand the role of first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments. Specifically, higher education institutions have a unique role in supporting these students to see them through to completing their degrees. By virtue of completion, this degree has implications for first-generation Jamaican university students and their families. Besides, completing their degree with the tailored support of the university also presents the opportunity for first-generation students to persist to graduation with fewer

challenges and make a tremendous impact on their home community environment. For example, by inspiring others to access university, including their siblings, family, and friends in their home community environment. For higher education institutions, understanding the H.O.P.E. model informs the best practices needed for these students to thrive in higher education and unlock their full potential. For example, the unique type of mentorship that is reflective of how students were motivated by their home community environments. Access to quality and equitable higher education also means catering to first-generation Jamaican university students from marginalized communities so that they can improve their quality of life and, by extension, their socio-economic status.

Fourthly, through the H.O.P.E. model, higher education institutions must recognize the role of home community environments in creating a tightly knit community for first-generation Jamaican university students. Regardless of their socio-economic experiences, the unity and support within their communities was never questioned. These students expect this same high level of support when transitioning to university. Therefore, higher education must consider how to create or replicate this sense of community and humanize campus environments where students have a high level of support, similar to that experienced within their village. It is not enough to admit first-generation Jamaican university students without understanding the role of their home community environment in shaping their university experience.

Finally, I congratulate all first-generation Jamaican university students that graduated, completed their masters, are enrolled in doctoral programs, and continue to elevate themselves and unlock their full potential. I also acknowledge the current first-

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generation university students who participated in the study and are still on their journey to obtaining their degrees. Congratulations to all. The remaining sections discuss the implications of the findings for policy and research, recommendations, areas for future research and my reflections.

Implications for Policy and Research

This study has several implications for current higher education policies in Jamaica, utilizing culturally affirming methodologies, and how research is conducted in academia. This study may be helpful to policymakers working with Jamaica's Vision 2030 team on the education policies and seeking to address the issues of access. Although all limers eventually accessed higher education, it cannot be ignored that some students took a longer time to matriculate to university because of multiple barriers and systemic inequities within the education system. For a tree to thrive, it needs water and sunlight. For changes to occur within the education system to support first-generation Jamaican university students, effective policies are necessary tools required for students to flourish in higher education.

Current Policies in Practice

Firstly, the study has implications for the way in which higher education models around access and persistence are applied to first-generation Jamaican university students. Jamaica's National Qualifications Framework as discussed in Chapter Two has various functions. One of these functions is the fact that individuals' progress in education, as well as their access, should be facilitated by this framework. Moreover, the framework is directly connected with Jamaica's Vision 2030 aiming to create a world-

class education and training system. The framework emphasizes providing high-quality education at the tertiary level and is aligned with international standards. Access automatically takes into consideration funding and there is no debate around the need for more scholarships and grants for students in higher education. Missing from the NQF-J policy is understanding the different types of students in higher education, including first-generation students and their home community environments. The NQF-J like many policies in Jamaica are created at a high level and limers who participated in the study who faced challenges with meeting all the requirements for standardize exams and university application could have benefitted from the insights of the NQF-J policy had they been aware of the fact that there were alternative pathways for them to access higher education as mandated by the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission.

Also, policymakers play an integral role in being instrumental in the Opportunity layer of the H.O.P.E. model where 1) first-generation Jamaican university students interact with institutional policies and practices within the education system which creates barriers through the curriculum and expectations and 2) students' home community environments emphasize education as the only tool to alleviate poverty and move away from a community experiencing gun violence. This is connected to the current practices by the Ministry of Education and Youth and policymakers have a unique role in implementing assessments and resources for students who struggle to "test well," training for teachers to be more compassionate and capacity-building workshops for teachers to understand that students enter the classroom with various learning abilities. Mens Rea and Baller should not have been absent from Math and English class

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respectively, because they did not understand the way the subjects were being taught. Current practices in Jamaica, include mandating students to attend Grades 12 and 13 upon graduating from Grade 11 (Adams & Hayle, 2021). New students who might face similar situations like Mens Rea and Baller, would have the opportunity to redeem themselves by attending Grades 12 and 13 and pursue courses along the CAPE or CAP level. While this is a positive step forward, this is only one side of the solution as there is an unspoken assumption that students' parent(s) will be able to afford two more years of high school, that is, Grades 12 and 13. Also, my concern is what happens to students whose high school stops at Grade 11 and they dreamt of attending Grades 12 and 13? These students like Hertzfries are forced to attend private institutions such as community colleges then transition to university.

Indeed, Adams and Hayle's (2021) UNESCO report discussed flexible learning pathways that have integrated with higher education for students who drop out of high school to access higher education by completing preliminary programs. However, it is unclear as to how many students are aware of these opportunities. Finally, Grades 12 and 13 are lauded as the ultimate pre-university experience, the final years of learning what to expect from university. As presented in Chapter Four, limers who attended Grades 12 and 13 (sixth form) still felt unprepared for university and faced challenges to navigate their higher education experiences. Therefore, policymakers in tandem with the Ministry of Education and Youth must engage with students to determine how they are experiencing schooling at the pre-university stages. This is necessary, as these students need if not supported will face challenges accessing university which has implications for Jamaica's

Vision 2030. In other words, how are these policies being implemented to reach all students in traditional and non-traditional high schools?

Finally, policymakers, government leaders, and higher education institutions have the power to collaborate to address the disparities within the education system that creates disadvantages for students based on their home community environments and limited resources within this space. These disparities include unfair punishments of marginalized students, labels assigned to students who do not conform, preferential treatment toward those who master the English language, and inconsistencies with resources provided for standardized exams at non-traditional vs. traditional schools, among other examples. The Ministry of Education and Youth and higher education institutions should look to develop equitable policies for both non-traditional and traditional high institutions to support. We need basic policies that create equity and well-intended opportunities for marginalized communities. Education policies cannot be a matter of only creating more pathways to access without the necessary resources. A policy without resources will not be effective and make the intended changes. Therefore, it is essential to understand the role of the H.O.P.E model through a community environment lens to inform the type of policies and programs created to increase access for first-generation Jamaican university students from rural and urban inner-city communities.

Based on the findings and first-generation Jamaican university students' frustrations with some of their pre-university experiences as presented in the opportunity layer of the H.O.P.E. model, I suggest that continuous assessments of policies aimed at

alleviating issues of access are completed on a wider scale. This will ensure that administrators and analysts are going in the field to confirm that all institutions from primary to higher education have a better understanding of how the policies work and benefit students. Therefore, they should be no bias in determining who is based on whether students pass the standardized examinations required for their university of choice. Instead, how do we help these students to advance to higher education through the alternative pathways created?

Implications for Research and Scholarship

Secondly, the findings of this study can also inform the multiple layers of defining first-generation students in higher education. Currently, the common understanding of first-generation students does not apply to the different types of first-generation students. I began the dissertation process with the universal definition of students who are the first in their immediate families to obtain a college degree. Then this definition changed amid data collection. The findings confirmed that first-generation students were from multigenerational, single-parent, and nuclear families and were also from different types of home community environments. Also, some had siblings who attended university. The only common element was that their parent(s)/guardian(s) did not have a degree. Based on these findings, I argue that understanding first-generation students and their home community environments can improve the experiences of these students within the campus environment. It is imperative that higher education institutions gain a better understanding of who these students are and their unique characteristics.

Thirdly, this study also has implications for how research is conducted for and by the Caribbean. This study was the first to utilize Liming Methodology using an online platform with the inclusion of Photovoice. This thesis advances the work of Lining and advocates for using decolonial and culturally affirming research methodologies. Doctoral advisors advising international students are encouraged to challenge these students to lean in on their own ways of knowing and not necessarily rely on the traditional research methodologies. This challenge and question posed by my advisor led me to enquire about research methodologies for the Caribbean. Having learned about Liming methodology, I was able to build connections with the team of researchers from the Caribbean Research Methodologies Network. The powerful narratives embedded throughout the Chapters, the depth of contextualization from the onlimes and photographs, the authenticity of the narratives kept in the form of the raw liming data verbatim, unfiltered and unedited contributed to the gap in decolonial approaches to Caribbean research.

Finally, another layer of the methodology was meeting the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements for conducting research studies. Honestly, I dreaded the IRB process as I had to adjust the information submitted to check the boxes. In other words, my study would face challenges of approval if I failed to check the IRB boxes. Some of the IRB stipulations were so outdated and embedded in colonialism and whiteness including the fact that the term "subjects" were still printed in the document. Nevertheless, the study was able to maintain all ethical considerations including confidentiality which had implications for the photovoice process. The informed consent sheet indicated that photographs with faces of persons would not be used in the study.

However, I was not surprised when limers submitted photographs of their families and mentors indicating that these persons were influential in their higher education journey. The issue therefore was honoring these photographs without breaching confidentiality. This was done through the use of alternative (alt) texts with descriptions of the photographs along with the narratives submitted by limers. Therefore, this study might be useful to researchers engaging in photovoice while working through tensions of the IRB process, stipulations of research and strategies for engaging participants and maintaining their stories as presented during the data collection process.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

After analyzing the liming and photovoice data gathered for this research, several recommendations are relevant to understanding the role of home community environments shaping first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. The following recommendations were created together with the limers of the study and are representative of what was expressed by limers during the onlimes as well as during the member checking process of the study. I have organized recommendations using sub-headings.

Policy: Addressing Educational Inequity

Within the Opportunity layer of the H.O.P.E. model, the findings revealed that for students to access higher education, they are required to check specific boxes. These boxes include passing all high-stakes national and regional examinations to matriculate to the next level of the education system (primary, high, sixth form, and higher education). It was clear from the study that at some point in their education journey, some first-

generation Jamaican university students were impacted by these mandatory standardized tests that dictated whether or not they were competent enough to be placed at a traditional high school. Moreover, the findings revealed some students attended non-traditional high schools. For example, Baller did not take CSEC English, and Mens Rea did not take CSEC Math, which meant that they both had no grades for these subjects, both needed for university admissions. Another example, Hertzfries, and Ashley did not complete CAPE, another set of exams that would make their access journey smoother.

In the end, first-generation Jamaican university students' high school academic performance on the CSEC and CAPE are evaluated for university admissions requirements. For students who do not test well in these high-stakes assessments, their dreams of accessing higher education are faced with additional obstacles. They must go through different pathways before they can be admitted unconditionally to the university. It is significant to consider the impact of standardized tests not only on students' placement and university choice but also on their self-confidence. Therefore, hindering students from marginalized backgrounds' opportunity to higher education. I acknowledge that some form of assessment is needed to determine if students understand the lessons taught inside the classroom, and highly likely that these standardized tests will not be replaced, only multiple iterations and name changes with the same objectives of high-stake testing. Therefore, all stakeholders: policymakers, the Ministry of Education and Youth, and secondary and higher education institutions in Jamaica must think address education inequities regarding the impact of standardized tests for Jamaica to achieve its mission of a world-class education system by 2030 (Roofe, 2017).

Based on the premise that students from rural and urban inner-city communities are already faced with compounded challenges, including cases where for example, Mens Rea was absent from school due to not having any money for transportation or lunch, which caused him to miss significant learning and impacted his report card at the end of the first year. Mens Rea said:

> There were days that my mother could not afford to send me to school because, at the time, she had a young baby. And you know, Baby formula and diaper and all of those things took precedence over me going to school. And I didn't get to sit some of my exams. And so, at the end of the period, they were like, boi we really can't move you forward. You know, I had to repeat first form. All my friends moved on ahead of me. You know, people in the community laughing.

Although Mens Rea experienced this setback in high school, it also informed his academic progress coupled with the added stress of not being able to go to school. Moreover, it was during this time that Mens Rea had a mental block against Math, and as such, he did not complete the CSEC Math exam. Understanding the H.O.P.E. model through a community environment lens better explains students' experiences at the pre-university level, which is directly connected to accessing university.

Practices

The following best practices are recommended:

Mandatory High School Transition Programs

The Opportunity and Persistence layers of the H.O.P.E. highlighted the need for transition programs for some students coming from rural and urban inner-city areas

environments with no example of university students within their communities. Jamaica's Vision 2030 and its strategic goals regarding increasing access to higher education must be emphasized and targeted. While I acknowledge that the sixth form (Grades 12 and 13) has now been made mandatory with various pathways, the Ministry of Education and Youth in Jamaica has not fully developed the structure regarding this new policy. An extension of high school to mandate students to enroll in Grades 12 and 13 without any mandatory high school university transition program does not support the vision of increasing access to higher education. Considering that the first-generation Jamaican university students of the study attended both traditional and non-traditional high schools and expressed that they wished they had known what was required for university. They would have been better prepared and advised if they had access to a transition program.

While all students may not have the desire to go to university, it is essential to equip them with all the necessary resources and provide adequate advising and support programs so that they not only know the value of higher education but also for them to make a choice and clearly to decide what going to university means for them. If first-generation Jamaican university students understand what it means to access and persist in higher education or just to obtain a degree, then maybe they would be better able to navigate their journey after high school, which for some includes attending university in Jamaica. Hence the need for a transition program in high school.

A radical and intentional shift needs to occur between higher education and secondary institutions through the Ministry of Education and Youth in Jamaica to have a transition program in all high schools in Jamaica equipped with college counselors. As

echoed by limers' in Chapter Four, non-traditional high schools are perceived as less prestigious and lack specific resources. Therefore, a collaboration between high schools, higher education institutions, and the Jamaican government through the Ministry of Education and Youth could explore partnering to create transition programs that will prepare students in advance before Grades 11, 12, and 13. The conversation around university needs to begin before taking national exams such as CSEC and CAPE. Simply put, first-generation Jamaican students can benefit from early "college prep" to aid their access and persistence in higher education.

I acknowledge that recruitment officers in Jamaica do visit some of the high schools. Still, there is no guarantee that they will visit all schools, for example, schools located in remote rural areas or in communities that experience violence. Simply put, this practice is exclusive. For the recruitment visit, sixth-form students are targeted with the objective of advertising the specific university. In other words, the aim is to increase enrolment by making a short presentation on why to apply to the university and what is needed. Creating a targeted program of engaging students in all high schools would increase the probability of students becoming more aware of the admission process, for example. As part of the transition program, short courses could be created to teach high school students foundational knowledge, including admission requirements, university choices in Jamaica, understanding expectations, and increasing their knowledge of university life. Providing such information would better meet the needs of first-generation Jamaican university students from underserved and under-resourced communities and attending both traditional and non-traditional high schools.

First-Year Experience Program

The high transition school program also feeds into another recommendation at the institutional level. While transition programs for high school students are helpful, there is a need to support first-generation students from rural and urban inner-city communities when they attend university as they are entering the space from traditional and non-traditional high schools with no guarantee that they have been prepared for university. Hence the need to create mandatory first-year experience programs. For example, at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, a first-year experience (FYE) program exists. However, it is not mandated as such not all first-year university students participate in these programs. The first-generation Jamaican students in the study expressed some of their challenges in their first academic year, including balancing work and academics, meeting the requirements of their scholarships, financial challenges, access to meals, obliviousness of the university's resources such as the library services, the need for finding a temporary place to live during times of community violence, not understanding expectations of the university among other challenges.

Access is only one piece of the puzzle to achieving Jamaica's Vision 2030 regarding higher education. The other piece of the puzzle brings into focus what should institutions do once first-generation Jamaican university students from rural and urban inner-city communities enter the university? One of the answers to this question is to support students' persistence. To meaningfully help these students, we need to identify them. Students could be identified during the admissions stage or first-year experience program. The first-year experience program must also include a transparent discussion

about funding higher education. Some of the first-generation Jamaican students of the study expressed their financial challenges and how they had to work or take out a loan. The financial session could target sharing information on grants, bursaries, and scholarships so that first-generation Jamaican university students unaware of available scholarships could be informed.

Engaging First-Generation Students' Parents

While parents were not the focus of the study, they were at the foundation of the H.O.P.E. model and there was a clear recognition that parents motivated their children to pursue higher education. The lesson from first-generation students' home community environment was that education was their passport to success, the ticket to success, the opportunity to achieve upward social mobility, way out of poverty and away from gun violence. Therefore, engaging first-generation Jamaican university students and their parents would be worthwhile during the first academic year. For example, universities could create a purposeful FYE program to be inclusive of parents or invite them to orientation. The findings revealed that the parents of the first-generation Jamaican university students did not attend any form of higher education institution. Parents either obtained only a primary school education or high school but no post-secondary education as expressed by the limers, yet they were a source of inspiration. Including parents in the orientation and first-year experience program would speak to higher education institutions in Jamaica, intentionally supporting incoming first-generation Jamaican university students. The inclusion of parents within the Jamaican context does not mean daily communication with parents or requiring them to be physically present for each

event. Instead, a great start is creating an open line of communication, for example, inviting them to participate in orientation so that they too can be aware of some of the expectations of their child's university.

Increasing Awareness for Academic Advising

For first-generation Jamaican university students to persist in higher education, there needs to be greater efforts to communicate with students regarding academic advisors. While some first-generation Jamaican university students will lean on specific assets such as being proactive, knowing when to attend office hours, utilizing skills such as networking, and having a sense of agency to support their university journey through various interactions, others also need targeted support. Therefore, administrators at the institutional level need to develop new policies for tracking students so that academic advisors and administrative staff who handle students' applications and transcripts can identify where students are coming from. By being aware of students' experiences within their home community environments, higher education institutions have more knowledge regarding how best to maximize programs for first-generation Jamaican university students so that can have an avenue to engage with the campus as well as ensuring that they are successfully matriculating from one semester to the next.

The role of academic advisors is critical for first-generation Jamaican university students. The findings revealed that one limer was enrolled in the incorrect course while others had challenges regarding academic performance. By creating an intentional program where first-generation Jamaican university students are aware that they have been assigned to a specific advisor and that they should consult this advisor regarding

their issues related to registration, for example, would go a long way. Academic advisors can empower first-generation Jamaican university students by checking in and connecting students with relevant resources that would aid the completion of their degrees.

Mentorship Programs and Networking Opportunities

The Persistence layer of the H.O.P.E. model highlights how first-generation university students' experiences within their community environments shaped their expectations so their university experiences. Building capacity through targeted mentorship for first-generation Jamaican university students should be a significant consideration. Generally speaking, a holistic approach to mentorship to support first-generation university students can help build resilience in higher education (Ramos, 2019). A holistic approach takes into consideration "the whole student and their lived experiences" (Ramos, 2019, p. 56). The findings revealed that first-generation Jamaican university students who had mentors assigned through their university programs were positively impacted and felt encouraged as they persisted in higher education. These students received mentors through their scholarship program, while others received mentorship through the halls of residence. However, this excludes first-generation Jamaican university commuting students who do not reside on the university's campus or are on a scholarship program that pairs them with mentors. Therefore, in planning academic and student services affairs initiatives, institutions in Jamaica should examine how these activities can incorporate target mentorship, which would add value to first-generation Jamaican university students' higher education experiences.

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Along the same line of mentorship, the findings revealed that first-generation Jamaican university students recognized the missed opportunity of networking at university or the lack of opportunities to network. Against the background that first-generation Jamaican university students enter the campus environment from different home community environments with varying needs and lived experiences as well as those who are parents, compounds their higher education journey. In order to increase access to higher education to achieve Vision 2030 in Jamaica, institutions should include consistent programs that will communicate with students regarding networking opportunities that would benefit their career paths. Also, institutions should consider how they can inform first-generation Jamaican university students of the various services on campus and create events for students to mix and mingle with peers to gain further insights. In this research, first-generation Jamaican university students communicated that they wished they had capitalized on networking with their peers to gain insights on exam tips and other campus services and connections regarding internships.

Mental Health Support

The H.O.P.E. model provides insights into the needs of first-generation Jamaican university students from marginalized communities as they persist in higher education. One such need came from Canary, who said, "Pay more attention to mental health. I feel like that is not really explored enough, especially in Black communities." Canary is from an urban inner-city community and while she was open during our lime regarding mental health issues and her anxiety, this was not a conversation she was having within her home community environment.

First-generation Jamaican university students enroll in higher education to obtain their degree, which increases their chances of helping their families, possibly moving away from their volatile communities and elevating their socio-economic status, all of which they intend to achieve through access and persistence in higher education. For this study, first-generation Jamaican university students reported that they struggled mentally. Some of these students faced multiple pandemics, including community violence and the COVID-19 pandemic, while expecting to meet the demands of the university and maintain their scholarships.

As higher education spaces continue to grow and access increases, the student population becomes diverse with students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, it is significant to consider addressing rural and urban inner-city first-generation Jamaican university students' possible unique mental health needs (Garriott, 2017). There needs to be an emphasis on raising mental health awareness as first-generation Jamaican university students are divorced from the trauma or hardships faced within their home community environments. Moreover, said students also aspire to complete their degrees; therefore, their academic performance and navigating university as a foreign space can create additional challenges and obstacles.

Catering to Non-Traditional Students/Adult Learners

The H.O.P.E. model is also unique in understanding first-generation Jamaican university students experiences within the Home, Opportunity, and Persistence layer shaping how they experience university. Higher education institutions in Jamaica have become increasingly accessible to non-traditional students entering university as adult

learners, young mothers, and students who experience low socioeconomic status. This means that the traditional profile of higher education institutions in Jamaica regarding their undergraduate student population is changing. Higher education institutions will experience a missed opportunity if it considers only catering to traditional students attending university immediately after high school. It is not enough to admit non-traditional students and leave them to navigate university without targeted support, especially after being out of the education system for a while.

For this study, two first-generation Jamaican university students did not engage in post-secondary education after high school until a few years later in their adult life. One of which took 12 years to complete due to compounding challenges. Both students worked while they attended university; one became a parent as a teenager while the other became a parent during their university journey. Considering first-generation students' multiple experiences and responsibilities, there is a significant need for higher education institutions to understand the student population they serve. This population includes first-generation students who are non-traditional/adult learners from rural and urban inner-city communities. Additionally, supporting non-traditional students who are parents also means providing services for parents who take their children to the classroom while attending university. For example, one of the first-generation Jamaican university students expressed, "if higher education is trying to increase access, then why aren't higher educational institutions in Jamaica, and perhaps across the world uhm have a childcare facility and especially at Teaching University where it is an educational institution." Therefore, creating targeted programs such as a childcare facility designed

for adult learners/students who are parents. Moreover, not all parents have the luxury of having a multigenerational family within the location that they reside while attending university. Also, not all parents are able to afford after-school care coupled with the fact that sometimes their classes might be scheduled during evenings or nights which further adds to their challenge of finding daycare while they are rushing to get to class on time. This recommendation was stressed by Phoenix which made it clear that some first-generation students are also parents. It is imperative that higher education institutions consider the various characteristics of first-generation Jamaican university students.

Delimitations of the Study

Of course, I only knew of limitations of study prior to embarking on this dissertation journey.

This journey was about trials and errors – I had many!

This journey was delayed – LONG STORY!

This journey had many limitations, stretched my imagination and abilities.

But this journey was also limitless, filled with more opportunities for change than constraints.

This journey was research in the most authentic version that I could offer during this process.

This journey embodied if yu waahn good, yu nose afi run.

This journey was filled with the constant reminder that mi likl but mi tallawah

And education is my ONLY passport to thriving in a (post)colonial era.

- Shen

While limitations focus on the constraints and weaknesses of a study that are beyond the researcher's control delimitations focus on the "scope of the study…and are self-imposed restrictions" for the study and also allows the researcher to confirm that the study cannot be generalizable based on boundaries of the research (Miles & Scott, 2017, p. 7). With this in mind, I share four delimitations of the study which purposefully targeted first-generation Jamaican university students. The findings of this study are best understood through the context of the 10 first-generation Jamaican university students who participated in the onlime sessions and as such this study remains very context-bound. Firstly, the study is delimited to Jamaican nationals who completed their first degrees at higher educational institutions in Jamaica. This was supported by the use of a criterion strategy to identify these students as discussed in Chapter Three. A study with other Caribbean nationals might have yielded findings that differed across the region. Likewise, a study on international, first-generation students or students who identify as immigrants would also present different findings. The unique experiences of limers from two types of communities in Jamaica provided more information about their lived experiences within their home community environments and higher education institutions. Within this context, the study is not generalizable, and the findings do not represent all first-generation Jamaican university students.

Secondly, the study was delimited to only four higher education institutions represented in the study. As such, the dissertation does not capture all the tertiary institutions located in Jamaica and the findings and experiences of students at other universities are not generalizable to other institutions. Thirdly, the study was delimited to

first-generation Jamaican university students who were from underserved and under-resourced communities in Jamaica. This was the targeted population of the study. Fourthly, although liming and photovoice were a shared space for knowledge construction and limers were involved in the process to the end of the dissertation, including providing feedback on the variations of the thesis, I did the actual writing up of the study due to time constraints to complete my doctoral program. I also considered the demands of limers being involved in the entire analysis process can be time-consuming. Nevertheless, I am grateful for those (six) who were able to respond and even shared their excitement that they were being included in some aspects of the data analysis and writing process.

Areas for Future Research

This study is significant as the findings offer a foundation to engage in further research that explores how the H.O.P.E. model through the lens of home community environments shapes first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. In Chapter One, I shared that Roofe et al. (2022) and Paterson and Hutchinson (2019) were two studies from Jamaica that mentioned first-generation students. This research can be seen as a starting point for studies related to understanding first-generation Jamaican university students' home community environments and their higher education journey. Also, this research sets the foundation for an in-depth study on first-generation Jamaican university students and the need to holistically understand these students' experiences so that they can not only access higher education without socio-cultural barriers but also persist with target support at the institutional level. As

previously stated, current literature does little to explore the role of home community environments on first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education. The are several areas that I suggest for further research.

Firstly, expanding the study to other geographical areas to understand how home community environments in different parishes across Jamaica shape first-generation Jamaican university students' access and persistence in higher education could extend the layers of the H.O.P.E. model or include additional factors that might influence each layer. For this study, students were from four parishes in Jamaica and two types of communities, rural and urban inner-cities. Secondly, expanding the study to include more than four higher education institutions in Kingston and St. Andrew, Jamaica; to compare first-generation Jamaican university students' experiences to gain a better understanding of how many of these students are within the population and how best can institutions foster their success and persistence. Also, the institutional type may impact first-generation Jamaican university students' experiences and access to resources hence the need to conduct research for students who attend higher education institutions in other parishes in Jamaica.

Thirdly, expanding the study to include more first-generation Jamaican university students from rural and urban inner-city communities and exploring the impact of their educational experiences within their home community environment (basic and primary schools) and high school on their access and persistence in higher education. Fourthly, exploring other research methods to help evaluate how many first-generation Jamaican university students are within higher education spaces in Jamaica. There is a need to track

the number of these students better to determine an accurate representation of how many are attending university in Jamaica. Finally, analyzing the H.O.P.E. model through a community environment lens it is clear that first-generation Jamaican university students are not monolithic and are from different home community environments with their own unique experiences. Future studies should consider including these students' home community environments as the existing literature regarding first-generation Jamaican university students is limited.

Reflective Thoughts

I was curious to learn about first-generation Jamaican university students, not knowing exactly how my research interest would evolve. Still, I knew that I wanted to learn more about the community environments and violence impacting educational pursuits. This was born from my experiences in Jamaica as a first-generation Jamaican university student from a highly volatile community. My late desire to become an educator further piqued my interest in conducting a study related to education and the environment. Initially, I was interested in targeting students from volatile communities because this was part of my lived experiences.

However, that was not the fate of this study. With the COVID-19 pandemic, research had restrictions regarding face-to-face interactions during lockdown periods. Advertising the study on social media opened up the space for multiple perspectives and learning how to create a research space on the Zoom Video Conferencing Platform while using a Caribbean research methodology, Liming. I would have never thought I would have participants from four different parishes, four universities, and nine communities.

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With a broader group of first-generation Jamaican university students, I was able to understand and appreciate the similarities and differences between students' varied lived experiences in rural and urban inner-city communities.

This study is significant because it highlights opportunities for higher education institutions to develop meaningful and targeted support for first-generation Jamaican university students by understanding their lived experiences within their home community environments through the H.O.P.E. model. This study fills a gap in the literature by exploring and understanding first-generation Jamaican university students and their home community environments shaping access and persistence in higher education. The study also develops knowledge of first-generation university students in Jamaica. The study provides insights into how higher education institutions can partner with the Ministry of Education and Youth, government agencies, and other institutions to better prepare first-generation university students from rural and urban inner-city communities for accessing higher education.

This study is significant because it recognizes the lived experiences of first-generation Jamaican university students by representing their authentic voices through the highly contextualized narratives in the study to inform research and the structure of support programs to aid these students' persistence in higher education. Lastly, everyone must be on board to achieve world-class education for Jamaica's Vision 2030. Institutional leaders, faculty, administrative staff, policymakers, members of parliament who represent communities, and all levels of educational institutions, among other stakeholders, must be inclusive in their practices and intentions of creating access for

first-generation Jamaican university students and providing institutional support that acknowledge and recognize these students' home community environments, multiple identities, and experiences some of which have been discussed through the H.O.P.E. model.

I wrote this dissertation from multiple spaces and places at various hours.

What remained constant was my passion regarding home community environments and first-generation students. There were many personal pieces from limers that I excluded as those were their deep seated truth to tell and not mine.

This was the beauty of liming with my people.

First-generation students are strong, independent and proactive.

First-generation students also experience moments of feeling confused and self-doubts of their abilities.

First-generation students' home community environments are the ROOT of their future. Universities must support this future holistically. I was born and raised in a volatile community called August Town. I am a first-generation student raised by mother; my community shaped my educational decisions.

<div style="text-align: right">- Shen</div>

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

UNIVERSITY of DENVER
OFFICE OF RESEARCH &
SPONSORED PROGRAMS
Research Integrity & Education

DATE:	February 7, 2022
TO:	Shenhaye Ferguson, BA, MA
	Christine Nelson, Ph.D. Faculty Sponsor
FROM:	University of Denver (DU) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[1844728-1] Community Environments and First-Generation Jamaican University Students in Higher Education
SUBMISSION TYPE:	**NEW STUDENT PROJECT**
APPROVAL DATE:	February 7, 2022
NEXT REPORT DUE:	February 7, 2023
RISK LEVEL:	Minimal Risk
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review
ACTION:	**APPROVED**
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Expedited Category # 7

Category 7: *Research on group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Thank you for your submission of the New Project materials for this project. The University of Denver Institutional Review Board (IRB) has granted Full Approval for your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission. The IRB determined that the criteria for IRB approval of research, per 45 CFR 46.111, has been met.

This submission has received an Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations. This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Please note that the following documents were included in the review and approval of this study:

- Advertisement - Appendix A_Revised_Recruitment Flyer_SFerguson_Final.png (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)
- Application Form - IRB PartOne_rev_Human Resrch App_SFFinal.docx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)
- Consent Form - IRB_Informed Consent Waiver Form_appendixa.docx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)

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- Consent Form - Appendix E_IRB_informed_consent_expedited_FINAL_SFerguson.docx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)
- Letter - Appendix B_rev_Recruitment Letter or Email_IRB Format_SFerguson.docx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)
- Other - Appendix D_Recruitment Tracking Guide_SFerguson.xlsx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)
- Other - Appendix C_Recruiting Script_SFerguson.docx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)
- Protocol - Appendix G Interview 2_Photography Script_SFerguson.docx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)
- Protocol - Appendix F_Interview Protocol_SFerguson.docx (UPLOADED: 02/6/2022)

Informed Consent Process

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

Approval of alternative forms of Informed Consent -Not signed by participant (45 CFR §46.116 (d))

Amendments and Study Modifications- Changes to Approved Research

Prior to the implementation of any changes in the approved research, (i.e. personnel changes, revised survey questions, updated recruitment materials, etc.) the investigator will secure IRB approval of the changes by submitting the Amendment/ Study Modification form to the IRB via IRBNet. IRB approval must be obtained prior to implementing any changes to the study, unless the change is being made to ensure the safety and welfare of the subjects enrolled in the research. (see Reportable New Information)

Reportable New Information

To report changes made to ensure the safety and welfare of the subjects or any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others, the investigator will use the Reportable New Information (RNI) form, submitted via the IRBNet system. The investigator is responsible for reporting within five days of the occurrence indicating what safety measures were taken and provide an updated protocol and/or consent if applicable.

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others (UPIRTSOs)

Any incident, experience, or outcome which has been associated with an unexpected event(s), related or possibly related to participation in the research, and suggests that the research places subjects or others at a greater risk of harm than was previously known or suspected must be reported to the IRB. UPIRTSOs may or may not require suspension of the research. Each incident is evaluated on a case-by-case basis to make this determination. The IRB may require remedial action or education as deemed necessary for the investigator or any other key personnel. The investigator is responsible for reporting UPIRTSOs to the IRB within 5 working days. Use the Reportable New Information (RNI) form within the IRBNet system to report any UPIRTSOs. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

Continuation Review Requirements

Per the federal regulations, this expedited review project does **not** require continuing review. This project has been assigned a **one-year review period** by the IRB and will require communication to the IRB at the end of this review period to either close the study or request to extend the study for another year. The one-year approval period is posted in the Next Report Due section on the IRBNet Submission Details page for your project.

During this one-year period, the Office of Research Integrity may also conduct a Post Approval Monitoring visit to evaluate the progress of this research project.

PLEASE NOTE: This project will be administratively closed at the end of the **one-year review period** unless a request is received from the Principal Investigator to extend the project. If the study is completed, you have graduated or you are no longer affiliated with the DU, please submit a Final Report to the DU IRB via the IRBNet system. If you are no longer affiliated with DU and wish to transfer your project to another institution, please contact the DU IRB for assistance.

Study Completion and Final Report

A Final Report must be submitted to the IRB, via the IRBNet system, when this study has been completed. All records associated with this study must be retained in a secure location for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the University of Denver Human Research Protection Program/ Institutional Review Board at (303) 871-2121 or through IRBAdmin@du.edu. Please include your project title and IRBNet number in all correspondence with the IRB.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within the University of Denver (DU) IRB's records.

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Appendix C

Sample of Recruitment Tracking Guide

Potential Participant	Pseudonym	18 & Over (Y/N)	From Community (Y/N)	Student Status	First-Gen	Access to technology (Y/N)	Dates	Comments
Potential Participant 1	Gratitude	25-30	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	March 3 & 7, 2022 &	Liming sessions completed; older sibling graduated first
Potential Participant 2	Hertzfries	20-25	Y	Student Status; 3RD YEAR	Y	Y	March 6 & 25, 2022	Liming sessions completed; older sibling graduated first
Potential Participant 3	Phoenix	30-35	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	February 14 & 28, 2022	Liming sessions completed
Potential Participant 4	Baller	35-40	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	February 13 & 21, 2022	Liming sessions completed
Potential Participant 5	Canary	19	Y	Student Status; 2ND YEAR	Y	Y	February 21 & 28, 2022	Liming sessions completed; turned 20 in April
Potential Participant 6	Jason	35-40	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	March 7 & 28, 2022	Liming sessions completed; Started as P/T in 2005, transitioned to F/T; took 5 years to complete BA
Potential Participant 7	Big Mama	25-30	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	February 19 & March 2, 2022	Liming sessions completed
Potential Participant 8	Star	25-30	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	February 21 & March 6, 2022	Liming sessions completed
Potential Participant 9	Ashley	20-25	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	March 2 & 16, 2022	Liming sessions completed; Graduated February 2022
Potential Participant 10	Mens Rea	30-35	Y	Graduate	Y	Y	March 4 & 20, 2022	Liming sessions completed

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter and Scripts

[Inserts Date]

Dear [inserts name],

I hope you and your family are well amid this pandemic.

My name is Shenhaye Ferguson, and I am a graduate student at the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver, in Denver, Colorado, USA. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about community environments (hometown you grew up in or were raised in) and first-generation Jamaican university students. As a researcher, I will be interviewing [liming with] participants from underserved/under-resourced communities to understand how they describe the community's role in their time in university. This study defines first-generation as anyone who is the first in their immediate family to attend university currently or have graduated from university in Jamaica, as well as where no other member of your immediate family has completed a university degree.

If you decide to participate in this study, the researcher will conduct two (2) one-on-one interviews [limes] which will last up to 75 minutes on Zoom. The first interview [lime] will be a conversation about the role of your community environment in shaping your university experience. The second interview[lime] involves an opportunity to share six (6) digital photographs by answering two questions based on what inspired you while pursuing your studies at university. The information gathered in the interviews will be used to complete a dissertation study towards the award of a graduate degree. All information will be completely confidential, and the researcher will not reveal any information in the reports.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to be in this study or not. Please feel free to share the attached Recruitment Flyer with anyone you think would be interested in the study.

Again, I thank you for your interest. If you would like to participate, need additional information about the study, and have further questions, don't hesitate to contact me via email at shenhaye.ferguson@du.edu.

With appreciation,

Shenhaye Ferguson
Ph.D. Candidate
Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver, Colorado, USA

Script Informing Participants regarding eligibility, consent form

Dear [inserts name]

Thank you again for your interest in the study and for completing the five questions.

[If participants do not meet the requirements] Please be advised that you do not meet the criteria for the study based on your responses. Thank you again for taking the time to engage with me.

[If participants meet all requirements] Please be advised that you meet the criteria to participate in the study. Attached is an informed consent information sheet providing additional details of the study. Please review this sheet and feel free to email any questions to Shenhaye.ferguson@du.edu.

Follow-up Email with Potential Participants and Schedule Interview

Dear [inserts name]

Thank you once more for your willingness to participate in this study.

If you are interested in moving forward after reviewing the Informed Consent information sheet and participating in the interviews, please share your available dates and times to schedule our first Zoom interview at your convenience.

Again, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out at Shenhaye.ferguson@du.edu.

Interview Schedule Details

Dear [inserts name]

Thank you for sharing your available dates and times for our first interview.

Please see the Zoom meeting details and password below.

[inserts Zoom link and password]

Should you have any questions or concerns, please email me at Shenhaye.ferguson@du.edu.

Closing for all communications

With appreciation,

Shenhaye Ferguson
Ph.D. Candidate
Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver, Colorado, USA

Appendix E

Informed Consent Sheet

Informed Consent Information Sheet to Participate in Research Study

Study Title: Community Environments and First-Generation Jamaican University Students in Higher Education

IRBNet #: 1844728-1

Principal Investigator: Shenhaye Ferguson, Ph.D. Candidate

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Christine A. Nelson, Assistant Professor and Faculty Advisor

Study Site: Virtual audio/video recorded interviews conducted on Zoom

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research study is **voluntary.** This document contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate. If you choose to be involved in this study, this form will record your permission. If you consent to be part of this research study, you will be invited to participate in two (2) one-on-one interviews on Zoom Video Conferencing Platform that will last up to 75 minutes. The first interview focuses on how community environments (hometown you were born in or raised in) shape your university experience. The second interview focuses on six (6) digital photographs submitted by you based on two questions/prompts.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to understand how community environments (hometown you grew up in or were raised in) shape first-generation Jamaican university students' higher education journey. You will be asked to describe the community's role in your university experience. The study focuses on first-generation students, that is, being the first person in your immediate family to attend and/or graduate from university and where no other member of your immediate family has completed a university degree.

Risks or Discomforts

The researcher has taken steps to minimize the risks of this study. With this in mind, as a participant, you may still experience some risks related to feelings that may be evoked based on the questions being asked during the interview on Zoom. If at any point during the interview you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you may decline to answer the question or end the session. You may also choose to withdraw from the study. The researcher assures you that there will be no penalty or consequences for ending the Zoom session or withdrawing from the study.

In keeping with COVID-19 protocols, all interviews will be conducted on Zoom. Interviews via Zoom will require a password to minimize the risk that the meetings can be hacked and breach confidentiality. While there is the potential that the video meeting might be hacked, we believe that the steps we have taken to protect you make this risk minuscule.

Benefits

While there may not be any other direct benefit to your participation in this research study, you may benefit indirectly because first-generation Jamaican university students who may come in contact with the study's findings will receive additional support based on the experiences you have shared. As a participant in this study, you may feel valued as your voice and story will be honored in this study, focusing on your experiences. You may also learn how to understand and interpret some of your own experiences through reflecting as you share in each session. Finally, you may also learn how to identify opportunities for other first-generation students that you may come in contact with.

Study Costs (if applicable)

You will not be expected to pay any costs associated with the study.

Confidentiality

The researcher will make all efforts to keep your information private. There will be no identifiable information used with this study, and a pseudonym of your choice will be used to keep your information safe throughout this study. Your identity will be kept private if the information is presented or published about this study. The information you provide will be stored on a password-protected software. The researcher will destroy the original information once transcribed, and the study is completed.

Sharing of Information Gathered

The findings from this study will be used to complete this doctoral study and for recommendations for relevant higher education institutions. The information gathered will also be used for possible conference and journal publications. All identifiable information will be removed, and as a participant, you will be able to choose your preferred pseudonym for the study to protect your anonymity. The name of your community, university, and any other personal information shared will not be disclosed in the study's findings or any future publications and presentations.

Member checking

The researcher will follow up with you throughout the writing of the study to ensure that your opinion, experiences, ideas, stories, photographs, and transcripts are accurately reflected. If you do not agree to quotes or other findings arising being included, even anonymously, please communicate with the researcher.

Any Questions?

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you may contact *the researcher, Shenhaye Ferguson, Ph.D. Candidate, Shenhaye.ferguson@du.edu. You may also contact my faculty sponsor, Dr. Chris A. Nelson, Christine.nelson@du.edu.*
If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office at IRBAdmin@du.edu

Verbal Consent (this will be recorded at our first Zoom meeting before beginning the interview)

DU HRPP Use Only:
Consent v2 June 2019

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This study involves Zoom video/audio recording and photography. If you do not agree to be video recorded, you can still participate in the study by agreeing to audio recording only. Photography refers to images you will capture on your phone based on two questions that the researcher will ask. These images can be a place or an object that represents your response to the questions/prompts. Photographs with pictures of yourself or any other person will not be used in the study to maintain anonymity.

Do you understand the informed consent information sheet I have just read and reviewed with you? Yes or No
Do you agree to be audio recorded? Yes or No
Do you agree to be video recorded? Yes or No
Do you grant the use of photographs? Yes or No

If so, let's begin...

Appendix F

Interview Protocol and Scripts

Name of Participant (Pseudonym):
Researcher:
Date:

Verbal Introduction

Greetings, my name is Shenhaye Ferguson, and I am a graduate student in the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver, in Denver, Colorado, USA. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. I am truly honored and excited to listen as you share today! I really appreciate your time and willingness to be a part of this study.

This study is focused on understanding the role of community environments in shaping first-generation Jamaican students' university experiences. This study defines first-generation as anyone who is the first in their immediate family to attend university currently or have graduated from university in Jamaica, as well as where no other member of your immediate family has completed a university degree.

I anticipate that this session will last up to 75 minutes. Kindly note that your participation in this interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Your responses will be kept confidential, and you have the choice of selecting a name/pseudonym for the purposes of anonymity.

Informed Consent information sheet:

The information sheet was sent to you ahead of time,
- Were you able to review it? Yes or no

Let's review the information sheet together before beginning.
- Do you have any questions before we begin our interview? Yes or No

Okay, now I am going to turn the recording on to confirm your verbal consent for the record
- Do you understand the informed consent information sheet I have just read and reviewed with you? Yes or No
- Do you agree to be audio recorded? Yes or No
- Do you agree to be video recorded? Yes or No
- Do you grant the use of photographs? Yes or No
- Do I have your permission to continue with the interview? Yes or No

Thank you. Let's begin...

Check-In: Ask participants any one of these questions.
1. How are you?
2. Tell me something that's been on your mind lately?
3. What's one of your favorite activities to engage in?

The following questions will guide the study:

Interview Zoom Session One:

1. **Tell me about the community you grew up/were raised in?**

Additional questions to ask (if time permits)
   a.   Tell me about your home environment
   b.   How would you describe your community?
   c.   Tell me about your experiences with your family.
   d.   Describe your own experience in your community?
   e.   What values did you learn in your family?

2. ***Tell me about your high school experiences and what encouraged you to go to university?***

Additional questions to ask (if time permits)
   a.   How did you hear about going to university?
   b.   Who are the persons in your family that went to university?
   c.   Why were you interested in pursuing a university degree?
   d.   Describe any challenges you experienced in accessing university.

3. ***Describe how you persisted in higher education***

Additional questions to ask (if time permits)
   a.   What were some of the skills you utilized to support your persistence to the next year through to the degree?
   b.   What values did you learn from pursuing your degree?
   c.   Who are some of the persons that exposed you to higher education, and how did they do this?

Wrap Up for Zoom Session One:

- Do you have any questions for me?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that you did not mention in the interview?

Thank you for your willingness to share today. I will send you an email to schedule our second and final interview. Also, I will email you the next steps for our final interview, which includes instructions for taking six (6) photographs based on two questions.

Interview Questions for Zoom Session Two:

Based on the first zoom session, we discussed questions involving your community environment, that is, your hometown or community you grew up in or were raised in. We also spoke about the role of your community in shaping your university experiences and your education journey.

Thank you for submitting your photographs in advance. These will be the basis of today's interview session.

Based on the questions that were previously sent to you, we will now move into our interview to discuss your photographs. Here is a reminder of the questions:

      a.   What inspired you or motivated you on your higher education journey?

      b.   How do you see your community influencing your educational journey?

Wrap Up for Zoom Interview Two:

- Do you have any questions for me?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add that you did not mention in the interview?
- Any additional comments about the photographs submitted?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research. Once the interview is transcribed, I will email the transcript to you so that you can edit or provide any additional feedback that you would like me to address in the research. Feel free to contact me at Shenhaye.ferguson@du.edu should anything come up (place contact details in Zoom chat).

Photovoice Email Script

Dear [Inserts name],

Thank you once more for participating in the first interview [lime] for the study. As discussed at the end of our first Zoom session, I am writing to schedule/finalize our second and final interview as well as share the instructions for the taking of photographs to support this interview session.

<u>Photographs</u>

As part of the study, photographs will be used for you to engage in a process of reflection on your lived experiences relating to your community environments (hometown) and educational and university experiences. Photography refers to images you will capture on your phone based on two questions that the researcher will ask. These images can be a place or an object that represents your response to the questions/prompts. Photographs with pictures of yourself or any other person will not be used in the study to protect your privacy and community.

<u>Instructions</u>
Please take six (6) digital photographs based upon the two prompts provided, select three (3), and provide a brief narrative for each. The two (2) prompts are:

a) What inspired or motivated you on your higher education journey?
b) How do you see your home community influencing your educational journey?

Submit all six (6) digital photographs and indicate the three (3) you have chosen to provide a brief narrative/description for one (1) week prior to our final interview. We will use these photographs and descriptions to shape our discussion for the second and final interview.

[If participants provided their available date and time for the second interview in the first Zoom session, the researcher will insert the Zoom session details in this email] *Please see the Zoom link and password below for the available date and time you confirmed in our first interview for the final Zoom session.*

[If participants did not get to set their second interview date and time in the first Zoom session, the researcher will include the following in this email] *Please indicate your next available date and time within the next two weeks for our final interview on Zoom. I will email you the Zoom link and Zoom password details.*

Again, I thank you for participating in this study and look forward to our next interview. Please feel free to reach out with any questions by emailing me at Shenhaye.ferguson@du.edu.

With appreciation,

Shenhaye Ferguson
Ph.D. Candidate
Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver, Colorado, USA |

Appendix G

Approval to Adapt Liming Diagram

To: Shenhaye Ferguson

Hi Shenhaye:

I hereby confirm I grant you permission to use the Liming image from my thesis in your research. Please feel free to contact me if you need anything else.
Kind regards,

Anabel Fernandez Santana

On Tue, Jun 14, 2022 at 1:55 PM Shenhaye Ferguson <Shenhaye.Ferguson@du.edu> wrote:
Thanks Ana.

Yes, please send me an email confirming permission to use the image.

I will attach it in the appendices and send to advisor for committee.

Thank you so much.

Absolutely yes, I will connect with you in the summer for sure lolol yes.

Cheers,
Shen