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## A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Undergraduate Mcnair Program Experience of Program Alumni Currently Serving as College Faculty

Lunaire D. Ford  
*Loyola University Chicago*

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY EXPLORING THE  
UNDERGRADUATE MCNAIR PROGRAM EXPERIENCE OF PROGRAM  
ALUMNI CURRENTLY SERVING AS COLLEGE FACULTY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

LUNAIRE D. FORD

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MAY 2011

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To Kishasha, for your enduring love and support throughout this journey.

To Big Momma, for teaching me to love learning.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Minority Faculty in Higher Education	4
Educational Attainment of People of Color in Higher Education	8
Undergraduate Research as Preparation for Faculty Careers	11
Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program	14
Purpose of the Study	20
Research Questions	20
Significance of the Study	21
Summary	23
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	24
Introduction	24
Prior Research on the McNair Scholars Program	25
Undergraduate Experiences of McNair Participants	32
Non-McNair Program Influences on Participants	33
McNair Program Influences on Participants	35
Graduate School Experiences of McNair Program Alumni	41
Research on McNair Program Alumni as Faculty	46
Undergraduate Research, Graduate School, and Career Outcomes	48
Defining Undergraduate Research	48
Types of Undergraduate Research Programs for Students of Color	51
Undergraduate Research and Graduate Degree Attainment	52
Undergraduate Research and Career Outcomes for Students of Color	56
Faculty of Color in Higher Education: How Did They Get There?	59
Aspirations, Socialization, and Mentoring and Career Paths for Faculty of Color	61
Degree Aspirations	61
Career Aspirations	63
Socialization of Faculty of Color	67
Anticipatory Socialization	68
Organizational Socialization	69
Mentoring	70
Lapses in the Literature: A Place for the Study	74
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	76
Introduction	76
Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach	76
Research Approach	79
Criteria for Participant Selection	83
Data Collection	84

Gaining Access to Faculty Participants	85
Biographical Data	86
Artifacts	87
Interviews	87
Data Analysis	89
Ethical Considerations	91
Criteria for Judging Quality	92
Trustworthiness	92
Credibility	93
Transferability	94
Dependability	94
Confirmability	94
Researcher Positionality	95
Limitations	97
Sampling Procedures	97
Researcher Bias	98
Summary	99
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	101
Introduction	101
Findings from Participant Biographical Data	102
Findings from the Interview Data	109
Motivation to Participate in the McNair Program in College	109
Seeking to Maximize Their College Education	109
Getting a Ph.D.: A New Focus	111
Referrals by Faculty, Staff, and Alumni	115
Summary	116
The Most Memorable McNair Program Experiences	117
Rewarding and Recognizing Intellectual Labor	118
Becoming the Person that You Admired	120
They Cared About Us: Like Family	122
A Sense of Normalcy, Love, and Camaraderie	124
Feeling More Prepared for Graduate School than for a Faculty Career	127
Summary	130
McNair Program Experiences and Influences on Graduate Study and/or a Faculty Career	131
Thinking about Doctoral Study	131
Researching Something You Love and Having a Voice in the Academy	133
Demystifying the Process, Cementing the Idea, and Providing a Path	134
Having A Leg Up in Graduate School	137
Encouragement and Support from the McNair Program	138
Summary	140
Non-McNair Program Influences on Pursuit of a Faculty Career	141
Amazing Faculty and Supportive Family/ Blind Pride	141
Fell in Love with the Discipline, Discussion, and Teaching	145

Summary	148
Lessons Learned from the McNair Program Used by Faculty of Color in their Current Positions as Faculty	149
Lessons about Teaching and Mentoring	149
Lessons about Research Practices	153
Attributions to Accomplishments: Why Are You Among the Six Percent?	157
Summary	164
Recommendations from McNair Faculty Alumni to Current McNair Scholars	
Who Want to Pursue a Faculty Career	167
Find and Pursue Your Academic Passion	167
Establish a Mission and Develop Goals, Timelines, and Skills	171
Maintain Mentoring Relationships and Build Support Networks	174
Summary	178
Findings from the Artifact Data	179
Chapter Summary	186
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	188
Summary of the Study	188
Problem	188
Context	189
Purpose of the Study	190
Method	190
Research Questions	191
Significance of the Study	192
Key Findings	192
Conclusions and Discussion	194
Opportunities and Aspirations	194
Laying a Foundation for an Academic Career	198
Influence on Motivation for Graduate Study	200
Indirect Influence on Faculty Career Pursuits	204
Non-McNair Program Influences on Faculty Career Pursuits	207
Teaching and Mentoring Future Academicians	210
Nurture Passion and Mentoring Relationships	214
Recommendations for Stakeholders	217
For McNair Scholars	217
For McNair Directors	219
For Future Research	222
Conclusion	224
APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY	226
APPENDIX B: SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH	229
APPENDIX C: CONFIDENTIAL BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FORM	232

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY	235
APPENDIX E: ANNOUNCEMENT FOR LIST SERVES	239
APPENDIX F: REGRET LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS NOT SELECTED	241
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	243
APPENDIX H: TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT	247
APPENDIX I: THANK YOU LETTER TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS	249
REFERENCE LIST	251
VITA	262



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participant Biographical Data	107
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## ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, government agencies and the higher education community have invested greatly in preparing undergraduate McNair Program participants for doctoral study. The expectation has been that most will complete doctoral degrees and enter into careers in college teaching and research. However, current data show that relatively few participants of color enter into the professoriate (McCoy, et al, 2008). The purpose of this qualitative study is to gather the stories of McNair Program alumni of color who succeeded in college and graduate study and went on to pursue faculty careers.

The review of the literature indicated that studies of the McNair Program are largely national program evaluation reports. Many studies focus on participant and graduate alumni experiences but only one study examines McNair Program alumni as faculty. The influence of undergraduate research on minority graduate enrollment and career choice is well cited in the higher education literature. The literature related to the preparation of faculty of color indicates that aspirations, socialization, and mentoring are important factors and are facilitated by other faculty. However, experience of McNair Program alumni as faculty is absent from the higher education literature.

A phenomenological methodological approach was used for this study. Ten to 12 minority faculty members participated in face-to-face interviews lasting 90 minutes on average. Participants were McNair Program alumni who earned doctoral degrees and ere

employed as full-time faculty members. A thematic analysis of interview data was conducted and categorized by the interview and research questions. The significance of this study is its promise to extend an understanding of the role that the McNair Program served in preparing minority students for the professoriate. The findings of this study show that the McNair program significantly influenced a) decision to pursue graduate study; b) enrollment in graduate study; and c) success in their doctoral studies. The McNair program indirectly influenced the decision to pursue a faculty career. A small sample size and potential bias of the researcher due to experience with the program limited the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, minority undergraduate and graduate enrollments have increased from 19.6% (2,704,700) in 1990 to 32.2% (5,867,400) in 2007 (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009, table 226). However, over the same time span, there have been only small increases in the representation of African American, Latino American, and Native American faculty (Moody, 2004; Shinnar & Williams, 2008). These minority faculty are underrepresented both in comparison to their representation in U.S. baccalaureate and doctoral degree attainment and in the U.S. population (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009).

Faculty of color bring a value-added benefit to student learning and pedagogy (Antonio, 2002; Umbach, 2006). These benefits include broadening the range of instructional approaches, developing a deeper appreciation for other cultures, and preparing for working in a more diverse society (Astin, 1993; Hurtado, 2001; Shinnar & Williams, 2008; Turner & Myers, Jr., 2000; Umbach, 2006). Consequently, institutions of higher education and our national society pay an opportunity cost due to the lack of faculty diversity. Foregoing the chance to utilize the intellectual assets of a more diverse faculty lessens the chance that colleges and universities will take the full advantage of the range of new perspectives that push the limits of knowledge (Maher & Tetreault, 2009). According to Maher and Tetreault a diverse faculty contributed to excellence and to

“. . . an understanding about how multiple perspectives across disciplines can restructure the university of the future and transform the lives and scholarship of faculty” ( p. 5).

Postsecondary teachers are projected to be among the fastest growing occupations between 2006 and 2016 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). This expected growth is due, in part, to the thousands of faculty and other Americans who will retire over the two decades (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). The United States has an opportunity to make the most of an investment in potential among underrepresented minorities (Schuster & Finkelstein) as the dramatic population growth of people of color is expected to continue (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The exodus of retiring faculty presented an additional opportunity to redress the historic underrepresentation of faculty of color. This opportunity to address the lack of diversity in the professoriate over the next two decades may not be realized during this century (Anonymous, 2009). The persistent underrepresentation of faculty of color calls for new research, which deepens our understanding of their experiences. In this study, the researcher uses qualitative research methods to explore the experiences of minority undergraduate research program alumni who have entered the professoriate.

The literature on undergraduate research revealed that many colleges, universities, government and private agencies, and philanthropic organizations sponsored undergraduate research programs in order to create a faculty pipeline for high-achieving underrepresented minorities (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007; Swaner & Brownell, 2008). The central components of many undergraduate research programs included: research experiences, academic support, social support, personal counseling, and cultural

activities (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999). Many undergraduate research programs are also commonly known as graduate school preparation programs (GSPP; Simpson, 2004; Spears, 2007).

Prior studies on undergraduate research have focused on effectiveness (Grimmett, Bliss, & Davis, 1998; Ishiyama, 2007), impact on career goals and aspirations (Nnadozie, Ishiyama, & Chon, 2001; Russell, 2006), student skills and abilities (Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Seymour, Hunter, & Deantoni, 2004), and retention and graduate enrollment (Hathaway, Nagda, & Gregerman, 2002; Kinkead, 2003). Scholars have noted that more research is needed on how these programs contribute to the personal, educational, and professional development of participants beyond graduate school (Swaner & Brownell, 2008).

This chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section provides the context for the study and discusses the underrepresentation of faculty of color in higher education and the value they add. The second section includes current data on the educational pipeline including the status of educational attainment of people of color in higher education in the United States, including graduate enrollment and graduate degree attainment. The third section describes prior scholarship on undergraduate research programs as early preparation for faculty careers. In the fourth section, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program is the focus. It is an undergraduate research program designed to encourage low-income, first generation and underrepresented college students to pursue doctoral study and faculty careers. The fifth section presents the purpose of the study and the research questions. Specifically, the

purpose of this study was to explore the connections that McNair Program faculty alumni may make between their undergraduate research experiences and their careers as faculty in higher education. The sixth section presents the significance of the study. Finally, the last section provides a summary of Chapter One and a brief introduction to Chapter Two's Literature Review.

### Minority Faculty in Higher Education

Enhancing the diversity of the American professoriate has been a struggle for higher education (Antonio, 2002; Shinnar & Williams, 2008). Although efforts to diversify the professoriate over the last four decades have been noted, progress has been slow (Antonio, 2002). According to Turner, Myers, and Creswell (1999), "there is an urgent need to reexamine the issues surrounding the recruitment, retention, and development of faculty of color" (p. 27). Recent reports on the status of minorities in higher education reveal that the vast majority (80%) of faculty, administrators, and staff positions are held by Caucasians (Ryu, 2008; Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009). The majority of American college faculty often come from "well-educated and middle class backgrounds" (Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998, p. 35).

In 2007, Caucasians and Asian/Pacific Islanders were overrepresented among full-time faculty compared to their representation in the U.S. population. In 2007, Caucasians represented 66% (199,092,000 out of 301,621,000) of the U.S. population and 76.8% (540,460 out of 703,463) of all full-time faculty. Asian/Pacific Islanders represented 4.6% (13,903,000 out of 301,621,000) of the U.S. population compared to 7.6% (53,661 out of 703,463) of all full-time faculty (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009,

table 246; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, table 8).

On the other hand, as of 2007, African Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans were underrepresented among full-time faculty, as compared to their representation in the U.S. population. Specifically, Latino Americans represented 15.8% (45,504,000 out of 301,621,000) of the U.S. population and 3.6% (24,975 out of 703,463) of full-time faculty in 2007. African Americans represented 12.8% (38,756,000 out of 301,621,000) of the U.S. population and 5.4% (37,930 out of 703,463) of all full-time faculty. American Indian/Alaskan Natives represented .97% (2,938,000 out of 301,621,000) of the U.S. population and .5% (3,340 out of 703,463) of all full-time faculty (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009, table 246; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, table 8).

Researchers have found that growth rates in the number of full-time faculty follow or surpass overall growth trends in the U.S. population (Li, 2006; Ryu, 2008; Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009). The U.S. population grew by 21% from 1990–2007. From 1992–2007 the total number of all full-time faculty in U. S. colleges and universities grew by 33% (from 528,000 to 703,000, respectively).

Minority faculty increased in representation during the same period. From 1992–2007, the total number of full-time Asian/Pacific Islander faculty rose by 91.6% (from 28,000 to 53,661), Latino American faculty rose by 78.3% (from 14,000 to 24,975), African American faculty rose by 38.4% (from 27,400 to 37,930), American Indian/Alaskan Native faculty rose by 28.4% (2,600 from to 3,340), and Caucasian faculty rose by 18.2% from 1992–2007 (from 457,000 to 540,460, respectively; Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009, tables 246 and 252). So, over the 15-year period from 1992–



2007 all minority groups showed significant growth in their representation. However, African American, Latino American, and American Indian/Alaskan Native faculty are, surprisingly, still underrepresented among full-time faculty today.

Scholars have noted that faculty of color make valuable contributions to higher education (Antonio, 2002; Shinnar & Williams, 2008; Umbach, 2006). Faculty diversity has been shown to increase cultural knowledge and awareness for all students (Astin, 1993). Faculty members from underrepresented backgrounds have been shown to be strong role models for minority students and influence student success in college (Shinnar & Williams). Also, a racially diverse faculty plays an important role in preparing college students for citizenship in a pluralistic society (Hurtado, 2001; Turner & Myers, Jr., 2000; Umbach, 2006).

Moreover, institutions with a higher percentage of minority faculty are, overall, likely to use a broader array of instructional strategies to teach college students (Hurtado, 2001). Faculty of color scored higher than Caucasian faculty on four aspects of faculty-student interactions and student learning, namely: interactions with students, use of active and collaborative learning techniques, diversity-related activities, and higher order thinking (Umbach, 2006). Antonio (2002) found that minority faculty have a higher commitment to “activities reflective of the scholarship of teaching, integration and application” (p. 598). Competence in teaching a diverse group of students will be important in the preparation of future faculty (Austin, 2002).

Scholars have reported on the barriers to success in the academy that exist for faculty of color. Some researchers suggested that the underrepresentation of faculty of

color is due to a “pipeline problem” (Trower & Chait, 2002, p. 34). In other words, since only a small number of minority graduate students complete doctoral degrees, large numbers of minority students are therefore ineligible to assume positions as college faculty members in most four-year colleges and universities (Myers & Wilkins, 1995). Trower and Chait also noted that too often, the pipeline “leaks” when newly minted minority Ph.D.’s enter unreceptive environments and leave the academy prior to earning tenure (p. 34). Other factors that may also accentuate the low number of minority faculty include a disregard for minority faculty research focused on underrepresented minorities, greater teaching and advising loads, poor mentoring by senior faculty, and discounting of minority applications without completed doctorates from the most prestigious graduate programs (Antonio, 2002).

Addressing the underrepresentation of faculty of color has been among the most difficult problems for many colleges and universities. Smith, Turner, Osefi-Kofi, and Richards (2004) noted that, “the least successful of all the many diversity initiatives on campus are those in the area of faculty diversity” (p. 133). In fact, others have noted that “it will take nearly a century and a half for the percentage of African American college faculty to reach parity with the percentage of blacks in the nation’s population” (Anonymous, 2009).

In summary, the representation of faculty of color has grown over the past 15 years but higher education still has far to go before parity is reached for this segment of the professoriate. Institutions of higher education must be more inclusive of faculty of color and make best use of the valuable contributions they bring to the educational

setting. Rectifying the unbalanced representation of faculty of color can help colleges and universities to be more effective in improving levels of educational attainment of an increasingly pluralistic student body and broader society.

#### Educational Attainment of People of Color in Higher Education

Researchers have found that increases in the educational attainment of people of color also follow overall growth trends in the U.S. population (Li, 2006). These demographic trends are important because they are related to college enrollment, degree attainment (Ryu, 2008; Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009) and the need for more faculty of color.

These demographic trends include projections that by 2020, minorities are expected to represent nearly 40% of the U.S. population and over 50% by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). General U.S. census data also show minority groups are growing at different rates. Further, the total U.S. population is expected to be over 400 million by 2050. From 2008–2050, Latino Americans are expected to grow by 182%, from 46.7 million in 2008 to 132 million in 2050, and Asian/Pacific Islanders are expected rise by 162% from 15.5 million to 40.6 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). During the same period, American Indian/Alaskan Natives are expected to grow by 82% from 4.47 million to 8.12 million, and African Americans are expected to grow by 46% from 39 million to 56.9 million.

Recent reports show that college degree attainment disparities exist among racial groups at the bachelor's degree level from 1997–2007 (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009). During the same decade, the total number of bachelor's degrees increased by 30%

from 1.1 million to 1.5 million. In 2007, Caucasians were awarded 72% of bachelor's degrees, African Americans 9.6%, Latino Americans 7.5%, Asian/Pacific Islanders 6.9%, and American Indian/Alaskan Natives were awarded .8% (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, table 284). In 2007, full-time faculty who are African American (5.4%), Latino American (3.9%), and American Indian/Alaskan Natives (.5) were underrepresented when compared to the percentage of bachelor's degrees attained by these groups in the same time period.

Between 1997–2007, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to Caucasians and Asians was higher than the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans and Latino Americana (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). In 2007, 30% of Caucasians, age 25 and over, reported having attained at least a bachelor's degree, as compared to 17% of African Americans, 49.5% of Asian Americans, and 12.5% of Latino Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). College enrollment and degree attainment rates are important because they impact doctoral enrollment and potentially, doctoral degree attainment.

Recent reports on the growth rates in doctoral degrees awarded to African Americans and Latino Americans show progress. From 1997–2007, the total number of doctoral degrees awarded increased by 32% from 45, 876 to 60, 616 (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009, table 290). Doctoral degrees earned by African Americans increased by 67% from 1,865 to 3122 in the decade 1997–2007. Similarly, doctoral degrees earned by Latino Americans increased 82% from 1120 in 1997 to more than 2034 in the same time period (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, table 290). However, despite these increasing rates

of doctoral degree attainment for African Americans and Latino Americans, they still represent disproportionately small shares of doctoral degrees awarded by U.S. universities (Nettles & Millet, 2006).

Recent data show that African Americans and Latino Americans have the lowest doctoral degree attainment rates among minorities with respect to their representation in the U.S. population. In 2007, the total number of doctoral degrees awarded in the U. S. was 60, 616 (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009, table 290). Caucasians earned 56% (34,071) of all doctoral degrees, African Americans 6.1% (3,727), Asian/Pacific Islanders 6.2% (3,541), Latino Americans earned 3.4% (2,034), American Indian/Alaskan Natives earned .4% (249), and, surprisingly, Non-resident Aliens were awarded 28% (16,994) of all doctoral degrees (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, table 290). Davidson and Foster-Johnson (2001) stated that, “doctoral level education is an area where there has been woeful underrepresentation of populations of color” (p. 549).

In summary, the growth rates of bachelor and doctoral degrees for African Americans and Latino Americans are high. However, the number of doctoral degrees attained by these two underrepresented populations remains disproportionately low. The underrepresentation of minority faculty in higher education must be addressed as the dramatic increase of minorities in the U.S. population continues. The disproportionately low numbers of advanced degrees earned by Latino Americans and African Americans effect the number of individuals who can enter into careers such as college teaching and research (Simpson, 2003). Colleges and universities have implemented undergraduate research programs to successfully prepare underrepresented minority college students for

doctoral study and, ultimately, for faculty careers. The next section provides an introduction to undergraduate research programs as a way for higher education to provide early preparation for graduate study and to address the underrepresentation of faculty of color.

### Undergraduate Research as Preparation for Faculty Careers

Many colleges and universities implement undergraduate research programs in order to promote the success of all students. The primary goal is to enhance college student preparation for advanced study and for academic (faculty) careers. Undergraduate research has been particularly noted for enhancing the retention, persistence, and graduate enrollment of underrepresented minority students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Generally, undergraduate research programs involve collaborations between college students and faculty members, in which they identify a problem, utilize scientific methods to investigate a problem, and present results (Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Kardash, 2000). This process mimics the professional socialization of graduate students and faculty (Pascarella & Terenzini).

The first undergraduate research program was established at MIT in 1969 (Bauer & Bennett, 2003). Today, hundreds of efforts that also promote the involvement of underrepresented populations in undergraduate research exist. These programs can be categorized as: (a) national-disciplinary based programs, (b) federally-based programs, such as the Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program (the McNair Program); (c) institution-based programs, and (d) institutional consortium-based programs (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007). Many undergraduate research programs

are implemented during the summer; and student research experiences can vary by discipline, duration, and institution (Simpson, 2003). The primary focus however is on faculty mentoring and research experiences as a means to expose students to work in the academy.

Undergraduate research programs are valuable to higher education because they have been shown to positively impact a number of educational outcomes such as: (a) clarifying and influencing student career goals within a discipline, including the possibility of a faculty career (Hathaway, Nagda & Gregerman, 2002; Loppatto, 2004; Nagda et. al., 1998; Russell, 2006), (b) enhancing the likelihood of recruitment, admission, transition to and success in graduate school (Grimmett et al., 1998; Nandozie, Ishiyama, & Chon, 2001), and (c) furthering the development of research skills (Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Kardash, 2000).

Scholars have noted that undergraduate research is an especially effective method for preparing low-income, first-generation college students as well as underrepresented racial minorities for doctoral study and subsequently for faculty careers (Kardash, 2000; Loppatto, 2004; Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel, & Lerner, 1998). Although many of these programs are designed to prepare participants for academic and professional careers in colleges and universities, a heavy emphasis exists on undergraduate research in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, and psychology disciplines. There is also a growing emphasis in the humanities and social sciences disciplines (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007).

Previous studies on undergraduate research examined various outcomes of

participant experiences (Grimmett et al., 1998; Nnadozie, Ishiyama, & Chon, 2001), alumni perceptions and experiences (Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Spears, 2007), and faculty perceptions and experiences of their involvement in undergraduate research (Hunter, Laursen & Seymour, 2006; Kardash, 2000; Schuech, 2007; Zydney, Bennett & Bauer, 2003). Although the undergraduate research literature has grown over the past 15 years, there is still a need for further research on the professional outcomes and experiences of alumni of these programs after completing the doctoral degree. There is only one known study that has examined the post-graduate school experiences of undergraduate research participants who have entered the professoriate (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Previous work by scholars in this area provided the groundwork for this study of faculty who are alumni of the Ronald E. McNair Program, an undergraduate research program.

In summary, there is evidence that undergraduate research programs offer opportunities and benefits for all students, particularly minority students, to experience the life of an academician (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). However, there is a limited amount of research that explores the experiences of underrepresented minority program alumni who have completed the doctoral degree. Of particular interest to me are the experiences of alumni who are currently serving as faculty themselves. The literature on undergraduate research is examined further in Chapter Two. The next section focuses on one comprehensive, national, undergraduate research program, the Ronald E. McNair Program—the single largest federal effort designed to encourage and prepare underrepresented college students to pursue doctoral study and, ultimately, to pursue careers in academia (Taylor, 1999).



### Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

The Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair Program) was authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and subsequently amended in the Higher Education Amendments of 1986 [Pub. L. No. 99–498 ] (Pell Institute, 2002). The McNair Program is one of the six Federal TRIO Programs administered by the Office of Higher Education Programs (OHEP) in the U.S. Department of Education. The TRIO Programs were created to promote the success of students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The name TRIO was derived from the first three programs created in the 1960s namely, *Upward Bound*, *Talent Search*, and *Student Support Services*. The TRIO Programs continued to grow in the 1970s to include the *Equal Opportunity Centers* and the *TRIO Training Programs*. The McNair Program itself was established in 1986 (U. S. Department of Education, 2005).

Currently, 185 McNair Programs are located throughout the United States—including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The first McNair Program grant awards were made to projects in 1989. Recently, total annual funding level has grown from \$38 million in 2003–04 to \$42 million in 2004–05. The average institutional grant award decreased from \$245,880 in 2003–04 to \$235,000 in 2004–05. Institutional grants are awarded for a period of four years. Five-year institutional grants are awarded to 10% of grantees for exceptional grant proposals. The majority of McNair Program grants are awarded to public, four-year, and non-minority status institutions. Nationwide, approximately 4,200 students participate in McNair Programs per year. Each student

receives a training stipend up to \$2,800 each year (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

The McNair Program was named after Dr. Ronald E. McNair, a nationally renowned, laser physicist and astronaut, who died aboard the National Aeronautical Space Administration (NASA) shuttle *Challenger* in 1986. The program is designed to encourage low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority college students to pursue doctoral study (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The ultimate goal for the program is to “diversify the professoriate” (Gallardo, 2009, p. 64) through student involvement in research and other scholarly activities (U. S. Department of Education, 2005). McNair programs provide seven major kinds of activities and services in order to prepare participants for doctoral study and careers in the academy, namely:

1. Research experiences for college students beyond the sophomore year.
2. Mentoring by faculty and graduate students.
3. Workshops and other activities to prepare students for doctoral study.
4. Internships and a training stipend (up to \$2,800).
5. Tutoring.
6. Academic counseling.
7. Assistance in securing admission and financial aid for graduate school. (U. S. Department of Education, 2005)

Services and activities provided by McNair Programs vary.

Each year colleges and universities who host McNair Programs must submit Annual Performance Reports (APR). In 2004–05, nearly 90% of McNair Program participants took part in counseling, seminars, and faculty and peer mentoring services.

Approximately 80% participated in admission and financial assistance, and cultural enrichment activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). About 70% participated in test preparation and presentations. Nearly 65% participated in research experiences, conferences, graduate school visitations, and internships. Other activities in which students participated to a lesser degree included tutoring and teaching activities (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Nearly all programs provided academic counseling, seminars, and summer internships (U. S. Department of Education, 2005).

McNair Program participants are a diverse group of college students. In 2004–05, 71% of its participants were first-generation college students and low-income, and 29% were underrepresented minority (African American, American Indian/ Pacific Islander, and Hispanic). In 2004–05 the approximate race and ethnicity percentages of participants were 43% African American, 24% Latino American, 21% Caucasian, 5% Asian, 3% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Caucasian participants rose by 4% from 2002–03 to 2004–05 while African American and Latino American McNair Program participants dropped slightly by 2% (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Of importance to this study is the capacity of the McNair Program to prepare underrepresented minority individuals for doctoral study and the professoriate. Combined, underrepresented minority groups (African American, Latino Americans, Native American/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander) comprise 71% of McNair Program participants in 2004–05 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). This is relevant because underrepresented individuals represent 31% of the U.S population but

only slightly over 9% of all faculty members in the United States (Kewal Ramani, Gilbertson, Fox & Provasnisk, 2007; U.S. Department of Education). Over the past two decades, McNair Programs throughout the country have prepared thousands of underserved college students for doctoral study. In doing so, the program has contributed to the number of low-income and underrepresented minority students who pursue the professoriate and is therefore worthy of study for its facilitative role in promoting minorities to enter the professoriate.

Literature on the McNair Program is thin. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) monitors these programs and periodically publishes comprehensive national reports. For example, one such report is titled: *A Profile of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program: 1997–1998 through 2001–2002* (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). This report was based on annual performance report (APR) data from program directors. It provides key information on participant demographics, services provided to students, participants, enrollment, and degree attainment and the extent to which program objectives were met.

Norfles and Mortenson (2002) conducted a study for the Pell Institute for Opportunity in Higher Education. These researchers examined the characteristics of McNair Program alumni and the ways in which they financed the first year of their graduate education. These researchers utilized mailed surveys and a series of follow-up telephone interviews. The data were collected from a random sample of 462 McNair Program alumni. Two hundred fifty-two individuals responded to the survey producing a response rate of 55%. With 252 respondents, McNair Program alumni were compared

with data on graduate students with similar backgrounds in the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 1995–96 (NPSAS: 96).

Several key findings from the Norfles and Mortenson (2002) study were that McNair alumni were more apt than other graduate students to:

1. Come from multicultural and lower socio-economic backgrounds.
2. Enroll in graduate study sooner.
3. Enroll in research extensive institutions.
4. Enroll in doctoral degree programs sooner after the bachelor's degree in lower numbers.
5. Receive financial aid than graduate students of the same race.

Norfles and Mortenson (2002) concluded that “[f]urther study—particularly related to McNair alumni choices of graduate programs and factors affecting persistence in doctoral study—could well lead to an increase in doctoral attainment among McNair alumni” (Norfles & Mortenson, p. 3).

More recently, the U.S. Department of Education (2008) published a study titled *Educational and Employment Outcomes of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program Alumni*. The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent McNair Program participants earned doctoral degrees and to what extent they obtained faculty or research positions in higher education (U.S. Department of Education). Using automated telephone survey methods, researchers inquired about the undergraduate, graduate, and employment experiences and characteristics of McNair Program alumni. The total population identified for the study was 12,530 alumni. A subset of 1,332 alumni

completed a Ph.D. (N = 319), other doctorates (N = 222), or a professional degree (N = 791; U.S. Department of Education).

The study results, in part, showed that McNair Program alumni: (a) were more likely to earn doctorates if they worked fewer than 12 hours each week; (b) worked with supportive faculty mentors as undergraduates; (c) earned doctorates in the life sciences (26%) and social sciences (24%), and (d) were employed as college faculty members (75% of Ph.D. holders and 65% of other doctoral degree holders held faculty positions). At the time of the study, just 2% of McNair alumni were tenured faculty. This is due, in part, to the length of time it takes to obtain tenure (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). My study will expand on this study using qualitative methods and focusing only on alumni who pursued faculty careers.

To conclude, prior research on McNair Programs and participants underscore gaps in the literature and research related to program alumni who have completed their doctoral study. Evidence exists that the McNair Program has contributed to increasing the representation of faculty of color in higher education. Therefore, this research seeks to give a voice to McNair Program alumni who not only completed doctoral studies but who in fact, entered careers in college teaching and research. This researcher used qualitative methods to illuminate important findings from the experience of these individuals, which may lead to increasing their numbers in the academy. Norfles and Mortenson (2002) found that qualitative methods could provide further insight on this population. The aim was to give voice to these faculty to expand on what is already known about how these advanced degree holders successfully navigated their way into and through the academy.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather the stories of McNair Program alumni who succeeded in college and graduate study, and went on to assume faculty careers. Potential relationships between their student experiences in the McNair Program and their current experiences as minority faculty using a phenomenological research design were explored. Since this is a new line of inquiry, a qualitative exploratory research approach was appropriate (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

This study resulted in portraits, stories, and a discussion of themes and patterns of the connections, if any, these alumni made between their McNair Program, their graduate, and their faculty careers. Undergraduate research experiences included conducting or assisting with research, academic writing, publication, and presenting research findings. Other McNair Program experiences included financial support, personal counseling by staff, peer group and social network interactions, graduate school visitations, and educational workshops. Non-McNair Program experiences included relationships and experiences with family and others at the college. The primary aim of this study was to extend an understanding of the role that the McNair Program served in their journey to the academy.

### Research Questions

Since the study focus was to explore the experiences of McNair Scholar alumni, a qualitative approach to gather rich data from participants was used. The researcher emphasized interviews to explore their motivation for participating in the McNair Program, what they retained from their experiences, and how those experiences shaped

who they are today. Other key experiences were explored through interviews. Study participants were invited to reflect upon their experiences in light of the following overarching research questions:

1. What factors motivated current faculty of color who are alumni of the McNair Program to participate in the program while an undergraduate?
2. What do McNair Program alumni most remember about their experiences as a McNair Scholar during their undergraduate years? Why?
3. To what extent (and in what ways) do alumni believe their McNair Program experiences influenced their motivation for graduate study and/or a faculty career?
4. What non-McNair Program factors may have contributed to alumni pursuit of graduate study and/or a faculty career?
5. What lessons learned from the McNair Program are used by faculty of color in their current positions as faculty? Why?
6. What recommendations do McNair Program faculty alumni offer to current McNair Scholars who want to pursue a faculty career?

This study used data gathered from interviews to illuminate the experiences of minority faculty who participated in McNair Programs as undergraduate students at colleges and universities across the U. S.

#### Significance of the Study

This study provides insight on how the McNair Program is increasing diversity among higher education faculty. Using a qualitative approach, the influences of the



McNair Program and other student experiences on the educational and professional success of McNair faculty alumni were explored. A study of the McNair Program faculty alumni is important in order to:

1. Discover new strategies for the success of students of color to pursue the Ph.D.
2. Extend our understanding of how the McNair Program contributed to the development of faculty of color.
3. Extend understanding of how McNair Program faculty alumni make use of the lessons learned from the program in their current roles as faculty.
4. Provide insight for students and institutions of higher education to address the underrepresentation of faculty of color.

As previously mentioned, the McNair Program represents the largest federally-funded effort focused on diversifying the academy in all disciplines. The significance of this study was its promise to expand upon the research on underrepresented students and to help researchers and practitioners to clarify how participating in an undergraduate research program, as an underrepresented college student, may influence the career of minority faculty members. It was also important to explore the experiences of underrepresented students to understand how to raise graduate degree attainment and the representation of faculty of color.

My study seeks to ascertain relevant McNair Program and other experiences of underrepresented students, and how they use these experiences in their roles as faculty. McNair Program faculty alumni may have unique experiences, information, and

relationships that facilitate their success in graduate school and in their faculty careers. Study findings can offer university administrators insights on how to improve recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty of color. The study results will also be of benefit to graduate school administrators who seek to improve their retention and graduation rates for underrepresented students. This study will contribute to the limited literature on McNair Programs, as well as reveal how underrepresented students navigate and negotiate the barriers to doctoral study and the academy. Researchers and practitioners may find the results useful to produce future research on this population.

### Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the underrepresentation of faculty of color in higher education and their value added to higher education. It was followed by factors contributing to the underrepresentation of faculty in the professoriate, such as lower doctoral degree attainment for underrepresented minorities. Subsequently, undergraduate research programs were described as helping to address the undergraduate preparation of low income, first-generation, students of color for future faculty careers. Next, the McNair Program, its mission, goals, and contributions were reviewed. Lastly, the purpose of the study, the research questions that guided this study, and the significance of the study were presented. In Chapter Two, literature on undergraduate research and McNair Programs, as well as research related to the experiences of faculty of color, is examined. Also, gaps in the literature and a place for the study are proposed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program is a program designed to encourage low-income, first generation, and underrepresented college students to pursue doctoral study and faculty careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The purpose of this study is to explore the potential relationships between undergraduate student experiences while in the McNair Program and student pursuit of an academic career. This chapter reviews the relevant literature that provides a broader context for understanding, in part, both programmatic and non-programmatic aspects that may contribute to the entry of students of color into the professoriate.

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section, reviews literature related to the McNair program's educational outcomes. Also, this section reviews studies pertaining to participants' undergraduate experiences, graduate school experiences, and faculty career outcomes. The second section discusses findings on the influence of undergraduate research programs on doctoral degree attainment and faculty careers for students of color. The third section discusses the literature on aspirations, socialization, and mentoring as factors associated with preparation for and success in faculty careers. Finally, gaps in the literature and the ways this study can contribute to the literature are presented and discussed.

### Prior Research on the McNair Scholars Program

The most well known studies were published by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Education. These two groups recently published three comprehensive studies on the McNair Program, which provided a comprehensive profile on 179 programs and participant outcomes. McCoy, Wilkinson, and Jackson (2008) authored the study titled, *Education and Employment Outcomes of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program Alumni*. The authors sought to determine the extent that McNair Program participants earned bachelors, masters, doctoral, and professional degrees. They also examined the extent that alumni pursued careers in college teaching and research. The authors collected data from annual performance reports (APRs) submitted by McNair program directors. Additional survey data were collected via an automated telephone survey. Only data from participants enrolled in the program between fall of 1989 and spring of 2000 were used.

Key findings of McCoy, et al. (2008) reported there were 541 (6.1%) out of 8,929 McNair participants who earned doctorates. Of the 541 doctorates earned, 319 were Ph.D.s, and 222 were other kinds of doctorates (namely, a Doctor of Education, Ed.D.). As far as doctoral degrees earned by race, the authors note that, “In comparison to their representation in the McNair Program, whites and Asians, who are not considered underrepresented minorities, were over represented among those McNair survey respondents who reportedly obtained doctoral degrees while blacks and Hispanics were underrepresented” (McCoy, et al., p. 19).

Since this study is focused on McNair Program alumni who were faculty, data related to Ph.D. attainment only is summarized. According to race, Caucasian McNair Program participants earned 136 (43%) out of 319 of the Ph.D.s, but were 19% of the McNair population. African Americans earned 80 (25%) of the Ph.D.s, but were 44% of the McNair population. Hispanics earned 60 (19%) of the Ph.D.s, but were 25% of the McNair population. Lastly, Native Americans participants earned 8% of Ph.D.s, but were 2.5% of the McNair population (McCoy, et al., 2008). Most alumni earn their Ph.D.s in the *life sciences* (26%), *social sciences* (24%), or *physical sciences* (14.6%) (McCoy, et al., 2008, p. 19).

Also, at the time of this study in 2004, McNair Program alumni earned more professional degrees (802) than doctoral degrees (541). Professional degrees include disciplines such as law, medicine, pharmacy, etc. Nonetheless, some of these alumni entered faculty careers in higher education (McCoy, et al., 2008). Given these findings, this project examined the motivation of McNair Program participants to participate in the program. Also, the program's role in their decisions to pursue doctoral study was explored.

Lastly, the funding from the U.S. Department of Education for the McNair Program is, in part, dependent upon the number of participants that earn Ph.D.s. The Department of Education awards credit for funding purposes to programs when participants earn bachelor's degrees and Ph.D.'s only. These credits are indicators of program success, as well as factors contributing to the mission of the McNair Program overall. This study provides useful information about program services and activities that

contributed to McNair Program participant doctoral degree completion. It also examines their experiences in college teaching and research. Moreover, this study sought to understand the role that the program served in students' decision to pursue faculty career paths. In addition, it sought to understand the "uniqueness of the lived experience" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 47) of McNair Program faculty alumni.

Another national study on the McNair Program was conducted by researchers Seburn, Chan, and Kirshstein (2005). These researchers detailed the strengths and weaknesses of McNair Programs nationwide. In the five-year study titled, *A Profile of the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program: 1997–1998 through 2001–2002*, the researchers compared McNair Program participants with a national sample of students with similar backgrounds from the "*Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study*" (Seburn, Chan, & Kirshstein, 2005).

Seburn, Chan, and Kirshstein (2005) reported that by 2003, 80% of McNair programs were established in public colleges and universities. Only 18% of the grantees were in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) or Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI's). By 2001–2002, over 4,000 McNair Program students were served and the gender and racial composition was as follows: 69% female, 47% African American, 24% Hispanic/Latino American, 18% Caucasian, and less than 5% were Asian, Native American, and or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (Seburn, et al.).

At the time of the study, 72% of participants were from first-generation/ low-income (FG/LI) backgrounds and 28% were from groups underrepresented in graduate education. Nationwide, 41% of graduate students are first-generation backgrounds, and

14.9 % are from groups underrepresented in graduate education (Seburn, et al., 2005). Seburn, et al. noted that “[o]f participants in 2001–02, 62% of African Americans, 66 % of Latino Americans, and 51% of American Indian/Alaska Natives were also low-income and first-generation, in addition to being underrepresented in graduate education” (Seburn, p. 14). So, the majority of participants were underrepresented, first-generation, as well as from low-income backgrounds (Seburn).

Nationally, 40% of McNair Program alumni who earned bachelor’s degrees gained acceptance into graduate school. Ninety-eight percent of those accepted subsequently enrolled in graduate school. Overall, 16% of McNair Program alumni earned Master’s degrees and 4% earned a doctoral or terminal degree (Seburn, et al. 2005). McNair alumni entered graduate school at a higher rate than non-McNair participants (6.4 versus 5%). However, McNair alumni persistence in graduate school is lower than non-participants. Seburn, et al. reported financial difficulty and lack of social support as the most frequent reasons that McNair Program alumni, and students with similar backgrounds, withdraw from graduate study.

Norfles and Mortenson (2002) conducted a study to examine the ways in which McNair Program alumni paid for the first year of graduate school. The study focused on McNair alumni who earned a bachelor’s degree by 1998 and received financial aid in the 1998–99 academic year. The authors compared McNair alumni data with graduate students with similar backgrounds in the National Postsecondary Students Aid Study, 1995–96 (NPSAS).

McNair alumni data were obtained from a database created through collaboration between the Council of Graduate schools (CGS) and the Council for Opportunity in Education. The CGS/Council for Opportunity in Education Joint McNair Committee's database allows program directors to input data on graduating McNair Program participants into a searchable database. Student data files were sent to over 450 graduate school deans across the U.S. to recruit McNair Program participants into graduate degree programs.

Using a randomly selected sample, the researchers mailed surveys to 462 McNair Program alumni. The survey gathered demographic, educational, and financial aid data from McNair Program alumni who immediately enrolled in a graduate program between 1998–1999. A total of 252 surveys were returned, providing a response rate of 55% (Norfles & Mortenson, 2002). McNair Program alumni financial aid data were compared to NPSAS data on graduate and professional student financial aid.

Interestingly, McNair Program alumni were more likely to: (a) receive grants or scholarships, when compared to other master's degree students, (b) matriculate immediately into a graduate degree program at a higher rate than other students, (c) to attend graduate school at non-doctoral degree-granting institutions, and (d) enter a master's degree program (Norfles & Mortenson, 2002). The researchers noted, "The program seems to be successful in garnering financial aid for its students" (Norfles & Mortenson, 2002, p. 11). These researchers concluded that the McNair Programs were an important part of facilitating students' enrollment in graduate study and identifying resources for alumni to pay for graduate study (Norfles & Mortenson, 2002). Further



qualitative research was recommended to determine why alumni chose to pursue master's degrees at non-doctoral degree institutions.

Other researchers have analyzed the efficacy of the research component of the McNair Program. Nnadozie, Ishiyama and Chon (2001) conducted a study to determine the relationship between the rigor of the research experience and success in graduate school. The researchers sent a survey to 157 McNair Program directors nationwide and to 69 McNair Program alumni from Truman State University. The survey asked program directors to: (a) rate the "rigor" of the research component in their respective programs, (b) rate their level of "success" in training students to conduct research, and (c) ask teaching students about the culture of graduate study (Nnadozie et al., p. 145).

Rigor was defined as thoroughness of pre-admission requirements, number of research workshops, and expectations for the research component of the program. Expectations included submitting a research proposal and research design, presenting research findings at a conference, and submitting a research paper for publication. Success was defined as: "admission in to graduate school, obtaining funding for graduate school, and completing a graduate degree" (Nnadozie et al, 2001, p. 147). Thirty-five usable surveys were returned producing a response rate of less than 23%.

The survey results revealed that McNair Program directors rated their programs as rigorous but to varying degrees. Results showed that 51% of participants submitted research designs, 62% submitted research proposals, and 68% submitted research papers. In contrast, the program directors reported that less than 50% of their McNair Scholars presented at local, regional, or national conferences, slightly more than 31% of programs

required students to submit papers for publication. Only 14.7% required students to publish their research papers for a scholarly journal (Nnadozie, Ishiyama, & Chon, 2001). These findings revealed that McNair scholars might receive rigorous exposure to research, but few required students to publish their research papers.

McNair Program alumni rated the effectiveness of the research component higher than the McNair Program directors. Both alumni and directors rated the program more highly in terms of effectiveness in gaining admission to a graduate program. Overall, research experience was positively associated with success in graduate school (Nnadozie, Ishiyama, & Chon, 2001). This study provides helpful data on the McNair Program research component and its other scholarly activities. Further insights from faculty alumni regarding their current experiences related to publishing and research beyond graduate study would inform program practices.

In summary, there are several concerns raised by the national studies of McNair Programs.

1. Most studies are quantitative which provide little insight into the experiences of participants and more recently alumni.
2. Ph.D. attainment is low.
3. Although African American, Latino Americans, and Native Americans represent the largest segment of the McNair Program population, they earn doctorate degrees to a lesser extent.
4. Finding more ways to persuade McNair Program participants to pursue doctorates than professional degrees are needed.

5. Publication opportunities could be improved for McNair Program students.

Investigating the perspectives of McNair alumni currently serving as faculty may provide helpful insight into these practices and doctoral degree attainment.

#### Undergraduate Experiences of McNair Program Participants

As of 2010, the McNair Program is in its 21st year of existence. The literature on McNair Programs falls into two thematic categories. The first category is non-McNair Program influences on the personal, academic, and professional development of participants. The literature on the personal development of participants is limited. This category contains three studies related to the impact of family on educational aspirations to attend college (Acker-Ball, 2007); the challenges and successes of McNair Program participants (Bryson, 2005); and the social, academic, and family influences on program participants (Exstrom, 2003).

The second category is McNair Program influences on academic and professional development of participants. This category includes 12 studies in the following areas: scholarly identity development (Beal, 2007); influences of mentoring on academic goal achievement and career development (Carrera, 2002); preparation for graduate school (Esler, 1998); expectations and satisfaction of participants with program services (Grimmett et. al, 1999 ); anticipatory socialization (Hallock, 2003); expectations and perceptions of mentoring of FG/LI, minority, and Caucasian students (Ishiyama, 2007); retention and graduate school enrollment of FG/LI students (Ishiyama & Hopkins, 2003); impact of the mentoring and support components (Lechnitz, 2006); success in graduate school (Nnadozie, Ishiyama, & Chon, 2001); decision to pursue graduate studies (Vance,

1993); and academic, research, and social self-efficacy (Williams, 2004). A discussion of these studies and their relevance to this study follows.

#### Non-McNair Program Influences on Participants

Acker-Ball (2007) examined the influences of race, culture, and parents' educational and social economic status on the college attendance of McNair participants. A case study method was used to interview nine undergraduate McNair participants at a public doctoral institution in the northeastern region of the U. S. Three key research questions were used to investigate family influences on participant aspirations to pursue a college degree: "1) Does family contribute to a child's attitude toward education?, 2) How does family affect students' attitudes toward education?, and 3) What educational or cultural practices did the family engage in that impeded or enhanced the student's academic awareness?" (Acker-Ball, 2007, p. 67). A cultural capital theoretical framework was used for this study.

The findings of Acker-Ball's (2007) study suggested that students and their families saw college degree attainment as a means to improve their social and financial status. This contributed to their students' attitudes about going to college and obtaining the college degree. Parents' clear and consistent emotional and psychological support with an emphasis on doing well in school played a role in the motivation to attend college. In addition, family participation in religious activities provided additional avenues for information about college opportunities and motivation to attend college. The author noted that, "The McNair Program also played an important role in contributing to the participants' aspirations to obtain a college degree and exposed them to

postbaccalaureate education . . .” (Acker-Ball, 2007, p. 147) and that “. . . other programs are needed to assist students who are just entering college” (p. 144).

Exstrom (2003) used a case study method to examine family, social, and academic influences of four McNair Program participants at a large Midwestern college. Through a series of in-depth interviews, the author obtained descriptions of experiences of these first-generation and low-income college students. Key themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews were that students: (a) frequently relocated and transferred to different colleges, (b) were reluctant to socialize with peers, and (c) were determined to do well in college and toward the goal of improving their lives (Exstrom, 2003). Given these findings, the research examined the non-program related program experiences that encouraged or potentially dissuaded McNair Program faculty alumni to pursue faculty career paths.

Bryson (2005) conducted a study to examine the challenges and successes of 21 McNair Program alumni of a large public university in Florida. He used in-person and e-mail interview techniques to obtain narratives from 19 African Americans, one Latino American, and one Caucasian participant. Key findings revealed that McNair Program participants faced challenges such as “racism, having their abilities underestimated, feeling discounted or dismissed” (2005, p. iv). Non-program factors that influenced persistence were, “faith and prayer, determination, persistence and a positive mental attitude; the support of family and friends, participation in university support programs and securing finances” (p. iv). These studies reveal that the determination that McNair Program participants bring to college helps them to succeed academically in the face of

great challenges in their lives. Feedback from McNair Program alumni regarding what was most memorable about their college experiences would be insightful in helping students with similar backgrounds.

In summary, although evidence on the non-program influences of McNair Program students is limited, findings from these studies suggest that family background influences McNair Program students' educational and professional aspirations. In addition, students may be motivated to enter college and the McNair Program as a means to further their academic and economic ambitions. McNair Program students, like other high-achieving students with similar socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, must overcome personal and situational challenges to succeed. Further examination of the non-program influences of successful alumni could provide further insight.

#### McNair Program Influences on Participants

Williams (2004) measured and compared academic, research, and social self-efficacy among McNair Program students who had not participated in the research component with students who had completed the McNair Program research component. The author defined academic self-efficacy as “a personal judgment of one’s capabilities to organize and execute the necessary courses of action to attain designated types of educational performances” (Williams, p. 33). Research self-efficacy was defined as, “the degree to which a person believes in her/his ability to complete various research-related tasks” (p. 37). Social self-efficacy was defined as the ability to which a person can “create social networks” which aid underrepresented students in their persistence in graduate school (p. 40).

Williams (2004) used a national sample of McNair Program participants. The author enlisted the assistance of the Council for Opportunity in Education to obtain agreements from 61 McNair Program directors in order to recruit student participants for the study. Approximately 624 out of 1,082 surveys sent to McNair directors were successfully completed by students, resulting in a response rate of 58% (Williams). Key findings from this study were that self-efficacy among pre-McNair students was high. This finding suggests that the selection criteria of the program and the caliber of McNair Program participants are also high. Participation in the undergraduate research component increased levels of academic, research, and social self-efficacy, as well as increased knowledge about graduate study for McNair Program participants than students who had not completed a McNair research experience (Williams).

Academic efficacy was also increased through participation in workshops on graduate school admission and test preparation. Research self-efficacy was increased through engagement in research projects with faculty. Social efficacy was increased through participation in social and cultural activities with faculty, staff, administrators, and doctoral students (Williams, 2004). William's study provides the basis for inquiry of McNair Program faculty alumni about the role the research component served in their preparation and selection of a faculty career.

Similarly, Vance (1993) found that the McNair Program research component was instrumental in increasing self-interest and self-confidence in the decision to pursue graduate studies among African American males, and students with GPA's of 2.5 and above. Non-black males, especially non-black minority males, revealed an increase in

self-confidence. Females regardless of race showed no increase. Nnadozie, Ishiyama, and Chon, (2001) found that participation in the McNair Program research component clarified goals regarding career options for low-income, first-generation and underrepresented McNair Program participants.

Carrera (2002) used survey research to examine the mentoring component of McNair Programs across the U.S. Study results indicated that effective mentoring addressed the intellectual, personal, and career development of participants. McNair Scholars who were ethnically different from their faculty mentors revealed more psychosocial mentoring functions compared to McNair Scholars who shared the same ethnic background with their mentor (Carrera, 2002). Grimmett et al. (1998) surveyed 68 McNair Program alumni at one state university in the northeast. These researchers concluded that the most beneficial and satisfactory experiences for McNair Program participants included financial support, building credentials for graduate school, and exploration in their field. However, contrary to Carrera (2002), the faculty mentoring component was rated the least effective among all self-reports from alumni participants.

Leichnitz (2006) used an ethnographic case method to interview seven McNair Program participants at two universities in the southwestern U.S. The findings of her study revealed that the mentoring and support network in the McNair Program was valuable in helping participants to persist through college. Giving back to others was also identified as an important part of educational success. Ishiyama (2007) interviewed 33 McNair Program participants at Truman State University. The following three groups of students were interviewed:



- low-income, first-generation Caucasian students
- low income and first generation African American students
- continuing-generation African American McNair Program participants

The purpose of the study was to compare student perceptions of the mentoring component of the McNair Program. The author found that African American participants were “more likely than Caucasian participants to emphasize the personal consideration role of mentors, psychological benefits from the research and to describe a good mentor as someone who is personally supportive” (Ishiyama, 2007, p. 547). The results of this study confirm similar findings cited by Carrera (2002)—that African Americans may believe faculty mentors with a race different than their own provide more psychosocial support.

Hallock (2003) utilized interviews, observations, and document analysis to explore how undergraduate McNair Program participants: (a) learn about the academic profession, (b) develop a scholarly persona, and (c) perceive the values and norms of academia. The findings of this study reveal that the McNair Program was integral in providing undergraduate McNair Program participants with valuable exposure and preparation for the academy. However, while most McNair Program participants liked the idea of being employed at institutions of higher learning, only a few wanted to become academician—unless it was after they had other careers (Hallock, 2003). Hallock found that students were still learning about the professoriate and had not yet constructed their professional identities:

Although study participants would continue to acquire knowledge and skills to advance their career, at this stage of socialization, the students seemed to be

constructing a picture of the professoriate that was consistent with their sense of their own identities and aspirations rather than reshaping their images of themselves to fit into a dominant professional norm . . . they emphasized those professional roles that they saw attractive and consistent with their individual interests, including teaching and advising students. (Hallock, p. 111)

Also, Hallock (2003) reported that even though they hadn't committed to pursuing faculty careers, participants reported they were "committed to creating different kinds of change and giving back" (p. 147). Participants in this study used "separating the personal" in order to negotiate between their high achievement status and discrimination from others in the college setting (Hallock). Good professors were individuals who integrated the perspective of underrepresented groups into their research and instruction (Hallock).

Similar to Hallock (2003), Beal (2007) studied the scholarly identity development of McNair Program participants at one university in the mountain region of the United States. Scholarly identity was defined as, "a student who has identified, developed and internalized research and academic strengths to utilize as independent learners, and can negotiate the resources of the entire academic environment to further his or her academic pursuits" (Beal, 2007, p. 4). The author used a convenience sample of six McNair Program participants, six faculty mentors, eight program alumni, and two program staff. Case study and auto-ethnography techniques were used consisting of phone and in-person interviews, program document analysis, and observation of participants' interactions during program activities. The alumni interviewed in the study were currently enrolled graduate students. The six alumni were all underrepresented minorities (three African Americans and three Latino Americans).

Several findings of this study were that, “the McNair Program did not support students’ efforts in exploring other career arenas/paths they could have considered, given the level of research training they received through seminars and from faculty” (Beal, 2007, p. 642) and that it “offered students a peer community to learn about scholarship” (p. 644). Further, the author noted:

Though not explicitly stated in the program’s national legislation, the intention of the McNair program was to steer students toward academic research and teaching career paths. Although several students stated an interest in these occupations, this myopic view of possible careers to pursue with a doctorate was out of sync with the needs of most students whose goals were to: give back to the community, work directly with people and implement prior research results by applying their findings to real problems in society. (Beal, 2007, p. 646)

Although Beal (2007) interviewed several faculty mentors in the program, none were former participants/alumni of the McNair Program. Beal recommended that, “exploring the degree of academic/professional success of McNair Program graduates can provide information on the training most valuable to their success” (Beal, 2007, p. 649). However, mentoring opportunities and information about career opportunities have been found to be very influential for other McNair participants (Bryson, 2005).

A strength of this study, as well as Hallock’s (2003), is they document the challenges of McNair Program, program directors, along with faculty and others, to encourage first generation, low-income, and underrepresented students to pursue careers as faculty in higher education. This study aimed to add to the research on these groups by exploring the experiences of McNair Program alumni from several institutions who have completed doctoral degrees, and who currently hold faculty positions in colleges and

universities. Ways in which McNair Program alumni gives back to others were explored as well.

In summary, some evidence exists that the mentoring and research component of the McNair Program has multiple intellectual, personal and professional benefits to students. On one hand, undergraduate McNair participants' mentoring, research, teaching and perhaps other experiences may contribute to their aspirations to academic careers. On the other hand, negative experiences and perceptions of faculty mentoring and research, may dissuade some McNair Program students from committing to a faculty career path. Also, travel and cultural opportunities provide meaningful exposure for students. Furthermore, the McNair Program's supportive nurturing environment, and family atmosphere are viewed as influential to participants (Bryson, 2005). Lastly, counseling was particularly helpful in assisting some students to overcome personal challenges and giving back to others is an important influence for these undergraduate alumni (Exstrom, 2003).

#### Graduate School Experiences of McNair Program Alumni

Most prior research on former McNair Program alumni focuses on graduate placement/enrollment (Ishiyama, 2003), transitions to graduate study (Simpson, 2003; Spears 2007), and perceptions of the helpfulness of program services and activities (McCoy, Wilkinson, & Jackson, 2008). A discussion of the prior research and its relevance to the current study follows.

Simpson (2003) explored the academic and social transition experiences of ethnic minority graduate students who participated in the undergraduate research components of

the McNair Program, and other programs, using a survey available via U.S. mail and website. The survey was sent to 4,661 minority graduate students at 35 doctoral institutions. Six hundred and twenty-one African American, Latino American, and Native American graduate students responded to the survey resulting in a 13% response rate.

Key findings of this study were:

1. Graduate academic and social experiences were generally positive for all groups. However, the social transition experiences were less satisfactory for all groups. Social experiences were reportedly related to the lack of contact with a faculty advisor, thus influencing the students' sense of community, campus climate, and retention of minority graduates (Simpson, 2003).
2. Latino American students reported slightly higher social transition experiences than African Americans and Native Americans.
3. Students who participated in holistic undergraduate research programs (like the McNair Program), which also provide seminars, trips to graduate schools, personal and academic advising, reported slightly higher levels of academic integration than those who participated only in undergraduate research only programs.
4. Minority graduate students with no research experiences, interestingly, reported more positive academic transitions than those with participation in research programs (like the McNair Program). One reason for this is that academically high-achieving minority students possess a motivation to find

opportunities such as McNair-like graduate school preparation to further their development (Simpson, 2003).

Tinto's theory of student departure (1993) was the theoretical framework. This study illustrates that the success of McNair Program, and other programs, are pivotal to increasing minority graduates and an opportunity to increase the pool of minority faculty.

Spears (2007) interviewed seven low-income McNair Program participants to investigate the influence of social economic status on their academic and social transition to graduate study. The study took place at a rural research-based institution in the Midwestern region of the U. S. where the author served as program director. Using purposeful sampling techniques, Spears invited 10 students who participated in the research component of the McNair Program she directed in 2005, and who enrolled in graduate study in fall 2006. Seven McNair Program alumni responded. Other data were collected, via four to six interviews with each participant, a series of focus groups with alumni, program document reviews, and observations of each student's interactions with peers.

The findings reported that as low-income graduates academically transitioned into graduate school they, "struggled to make connections, recognize a culture of power, and perform good student roles" (Spears, 2007, p. 175). Low-income graduate students' social transitions to graduate school included feelings of alienation from their families and within their graduate departments. Managing financial matters, appearance, and relying on the program director for advice were key features of their social integration experiences (Spears).

Participants in this study reported that they felt that the McNair Program prepared them for the “challenging work of graduate school . . . at least on a cognitive level” (Spears, 2007, p. 181). Even before graduate study, McNair Program students have two to three years of faculty-supervised research experience as undergraduates. These students will often submit their undergraduate research papers as writing samples for admission to doctoral programs.

Still, McNair Program participants felt the program could be more help to them in the first year of graduate school, namely, “dialogues about the personal impact of graduate school on self, personal, and professional relationships” (Spears, 2007, p. 181). Spears’s findings are similar to Simpson’s (2003) regarding the academic and social integration of minority students. Both studies reinforce that the cultural and social aspects of graduate study are difficult for low-income students as well as minority students.

Ishiyama and Hopkins (2003) found that for students in the McNair Program, the graduate school placement rate was 55.3%, as compared to 19.5 % of the control group. Ishiyama and Hopkins wrote, “In other words, the McNair program recruits students from groups that are least likely to be retained by the university, graduate in a timely fashion, and enter graduate school, and makes them the most likely to succeed” (p. 401). While data available on minority and women graduate enrollment and degree attainment are widely available, a need exists for more studies, which provide insight into the experience of the few individuals who successfully go through this process (Nettles & Millet, 2006).

McNair Program alumni, generally, choose not to enter into doctoral degree programs (Norfles & Mortenson, 2002). McNair Program alumni are younger, poorer,

work more hours, and are more diverse than students nationally (Norfles & Mortenson). Additional financial and other support is needed for McNair Program alumni in their first-year of graduate study in order to improve enrollment and retention rates for McNair alumni in doctoral programs nationally. Norfles and Mortenson suggested using qualitative methods to examine graduate school and program choice among McNair alumni.

McCoy et al (2008) collected responses from McNair Program alumni to learn about, “their perceptions of the helpfulness of McNair Program services they received as undergraduates, once they were enrolled in graduate school” (p. 13). A summary of the range of services and activities as well as the results follows. Program services included career counseling, instruction on library resources, seminars (e.g., research skills, networking etc.), and workshops (e. g., study skills, time management skills, and writing). Program “research activities” listed were faculty mentoring, publishing papers, summer research, and working on research (McCoy, et al., 2008, p. 14). The top three services, on a scale from 1 to 4 with 4 being very helpful, for alumni with doctoral degrees were:

- Seminars (on developing research skills; 3.60)
- Special for-credit courses (3.62)
- Career counseling (3.48)

The highest rated research-related activity for doctoral degree holders was publishing papers (3.84/4.0), followed by working with faculty (3.76), summer research (3.71), and faculty mentoring (3.63).



More low-income and first-generation McNair Program alumni held doctoral degrees than underrepresented minorities who were not low-income and first-generation. This finding suggests that underrepresented minority McNair Program participants may complete doctoral degrees at higher rates than their low-income underrepresented minority peers. Finally, while low-income and first-generation alumni comprise 71% of the McNair Program population, only 62% earned doctoral degrees (McCoy, et al., 2008).

In conclusion, prior studies on the graduate school experiences of the McNair Program population are mixed. Although graduate placement and enrollment rates are higher, as compared to the general population, McNair Program participants seem to enroll in and persist in doctoral programs at lower rates. Further, many McNair Program alumni are successful in graduate study but social experiences are not as positive. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to explore various outcomes. Researchers have suggested using qualitative methods to gain insight on the influence of the McNair Program on alumni graduate school choice and personal and professional development. This study explored the role of program expectations and obligations on students' journey to the professoriate.

#### Research on McNair Program Alumni as Faculty

As of 2004, 1330 McNair Program alumni earned doctoral or professional degrees. Of this population 386 (29%) were employed in higher education, with the majority, 240 (75%), holding Ph.D.'s (McCoy, et al., 2008). Nearly all McNair Program alumni, 97%, who earned Ph.D.'s were employed at four-year colleges and universities.

Regarding faculty status, 181 out of 240 (75.4%) of McNair Program alumni with Ph.D.s were employed as faculty members. One hundred seventy eight out of 181 (98.3%) were Assistant Professors and 3 out of 181 (1.7%) held positions as Associate or full Professors (McCoy, et al).

Researchers have found that, “Although the majority of Ph.D. and other doctoral degree recipients on faculties were in tenure track positions, only six indicated that they had obtained tenure” (McCoy, et al., 2008, p. 36). One hundred fourteen out of 181 McNair Ph.D. alumni held tenure-track faculty positions, only three (1.6%) were tenured faculty members, and the remaining were non-tenure track or their status was unknown (McCoy, et al.).

Currently, 65 out of 240 (27%) McNair alumni who earned Ph.D.’s were employed outside of higher education. Of these Ph.D. recipients 43 out of 65 (66.2%) sought employment in industry or business. The authors note these individuals were attracted to the higher salaries outside of higher education as a means to pay debt from their undergraduate and graduate studies (McCoy, et al., 2008).

Finally, McCoy et al’s study (2008) offered new and valuable insight into the accomplishments of McNair alumni. The study is a unique contribution to what is known about the McNair Program alumni. As noted by these authors, “. . . no prior study of the McNair Program or its participants has obtained information from former participants specifically about their education and employment outcomes” (2008, p. 5).

The research conducted by McCoy et al. (2008) detailed the extent to which McNair Program alumni serve as faculty. This study provides data on McNair Program

services and research-based activities that were most helpful to alumni at all attainment levels. However, no analysis was provided on the helpfulness of these resources beyond graduate study. This study uses qualitative methods to contribute what is known about successful McNair Program faculty alumni. Rich and in-depth analysis regarding the experiences of this extraordinary group of alumni may illuminate successful strategies for underrepresented students who are also largely from low-income and first-generation backgrounds.

### Undergraduate Research, Graduate School, and Career Outcomes

The McNair Program is the largest federally funded program designed to prepare individuals for doctoral study and careers in research and college teaching across all disciplines. It is a comprehensive graduate school preparation program in that it provides financial and support services as well as an undergraduate research component (Simpson, 2003). McNair Program alumni indicate that the undergraduate research component is the most helpful activity with regard to enrollment and success in graduate school (McCoy, et al., 2008). However, some programs focus solely on undergraduate research alone. This section reviews empirical studies related to graduate degree attainment and career outcomes for students of color who participate in these research-only programs

### Defining Undergraduate Research

Undergraduate research can be defined as “an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original, intellectual, or creative contribution to the discipline” (Merkel, 2001, p. 7). Undergraduate research experiences can vary by discipline, but typically involve collaboration between college students and faculty

members, during which they identify a problem and utilize scientific methods to investigate a problem and present results (Kardash, 2000). Faculty served as guides or mentors to students to facilitate their learning of the disciplinary traditions in academic writing, research methodology, and presentation techniques (Kinhead, 2003).

Although undergraduate research varies by goal, disciplinary focus, and institutional contexts, generally, the purpose of these programs is to promote active student learning through meaningful interactions with faculty outside of the classroom. Undergraduate research can be implemented in several ways, including structured programs, formal participation in a faculty member's ongoing research project, and through internships or service learning opportunities.

Examples of undergraduate research may include: “writing a one-act play, cloning genes as part of a larger scientific experiment, or conducting ethnography for a sociology student” (Schuech, 2007, p. 10). Students can integrate the knowledge and skills in a way that mimics student-faculty research collaborations and mentoring in graduate education (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999). Undergraduate research programs also provide an opportunity for students to experience the life of an academician. In addition, students bring knowledge and skills from the undergraduate curriculum and have the opportunity to apply these skills to the research experiences where they can solve real-world problems (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Researchers have determined that undergraduate research is positively associated with a variety of educational outcomes for students and the institutions they attend. Prior

studies on student outcomes associated with undergraduate research fall under five major categories:

1. *Student satisfaction* (Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Frierson et al., 1996; Grimmett et al., 1998; Hunter, Laursen, & Seymour, 2006; Ishiyama, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Seymour, Hunter, Laursen, & Deantoni, 2004; Swager, 1997).
2. *Knowledge and skills development* (Bauer & Bennett, 2003; Hunter, Laursen, & Seymour, 2006; Ishiyama, 2002; Kardash, 2000; Loppatto, 2004; Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel, & Lerner 1998; Swager, 1997).
3. *Retention and persistence in college* (Ishiyama & Hopkins, 2001; Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel, & Learner, 1998; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Swager, 1997).
4. *Graduate degree enrollment and attainment* (Foertsch, Alexander & Penberthy, 2000; Hathaway, Nagda, & Gregerman, 2002; Kinkead, 2003; Loppatto, 2004; Seymour, Hunter, Laursen, & Deantoni, 2004; Simpson, 2003).
5. *Career/vocational development* (Coad, 2003; Hathaway, Nagda, & Gregerman, 2002; Loppatto, 2004; Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel, & Learner, 1998; Russell, 2006; Scheuch, 2007; Seymour, Hunter, Laursen, & Deantoni, 2004).

In this section of the literature review, the focus is on prior studies related to students of color with undergraduate research experience and graduate degree attainment and career development.

#### Types of Undergraduate Research Programs for Students of Color

Undergraduate research programs have been in existence for over four decades (Merkel, 2001). Since that time, a growing interest has occurred in the impact of undergraduate research on college students, graduate students, faculty, and institutions (Gonzalez, 2001). However, very few studies focus specifically on the perspectives of underrepresented minority alumni who entered into careers as faculty. Gandara and Maxwell-Jolly (1999) conducted a study that examined strategies being implemented in 20 different programs across the U.S. that promoted the achievement of underrepresented minorities in higher education. Undergraduate research opportunities and internships were provided by 13 of 20 programs for underrepresented minority students in this study, and served as an effective model for promoting success among academically high-achieving underrepresented minority students. The authors noted similar opportunities were needed for underrepresented minority students who were academically underprepared (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 1999).

Today, there are hundreds of efforts to promote the involvement of underrepresented populations in undergraduate research. These programs can be categorized as: (a) *national-disciplinary based programs*, such as the National Conference on Undergraduate Research and Research Experiences of Undergraduates; (b) *federally-based programs*, such as the McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement; (c)

*institution-based programs*, such as the University of Delaware Undergraduate Research Program and; (d) *institutional consortium-based programs*, such as the Summer Research Opportunities Programs at the University of Michigan and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Most of these programs are designed to prepare students for graduate study and careers in research and teaching in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007).

#### Undergraduate Research and Graduate Degree Attainment

Prior studies revealed that undergraduate research is positively associated with graduate enrollment and degree attainment among underrepresented minorities (Davis, 2008; Foertsch, Alexander & Penberthy, 2000; Hathaway, Nagda, & Gregerman, 2002; Hu, Scheuch, Schwartz, Gayle, & Li, 2008; McGee & Keller, 2007; Nagda, Gregerman, Jonides, von Hippel, & Lerner, 1998; Villarejo, Barlow, Kogan, Veazy, & Sweeny, 2008). Most of the positive effects of undergraduate research have been associated with faculty interaction and mentoring activities.

However, other researchers have reported that no need exists to provide special initiatives to increase the graduate degree attainment of underrepresented minorities and other underserved students (Russell, 2008; Tsui, 2007). Russell (2008) surveyed 15,000 undergraduate participants and recent graduates who participated in undergraduate research programs sponsored by the National Science Foundation between 2003 and 2005. The sample population was diverse in terms of discipline, race, and gender. Still, study results revealed that voluntary, long term undergraduate research experiences were influential on all students' academic, career, research, and personal development

outcomes when facilitated by skilled and personable faculty mentors. Russell (2008) found “no evidence that [undergraduate research opportunities] should be structured differently depending on race/ethnicity or gender of participants” (p. 53). In this view, what is good for majority students is good for minority students as well (Tsui, 2007). Some feel that creating undergraduate research programs for minorities can create a stigma or a remedial reputation (Tsui, 2007).

In terms of the importance of undergraduate research experiences on the graduate enrollment and degree attainment of students of color, Davis (2008) conducted a study examining the influence of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC). The Summer Research Opportunities Programs (SROP). CIC is an academic consortium of graduate schools and the SROP is an eight-to-ten week program that provides faculty mentoring and under-graduate research experiences for underrepresented minority college students.

Davis (2008) conducted 11 interviews and seven focus groups of current SROP participants and SROP alumni. The results of the study show that, “Faculty mentorship plays a key role in fostering the academic socialization processes of future scholars” (Davis, 2008, p. 282). Key findings were that SROP faculty mentors influenced protégés in the following ways: (a) individually as evidenced by the aspiration to pursue a doctorate and also an “interest in modeling the mentorship experiences as a future faculty member” (p. 282); (b) interpersonally as indicated by “modeling the type of work expected in the academic community, but also demonstrated collegial information exchange common within the profession” (p. 285); (c) collectively in terms of



“encouraging continued contact with fellow participants that promoted the practice of collaboration and nurturing social networks necessary for success in academe” (p. 289); and finally, (d) extra-programmatically in that, the students indicated an interest in shared information about their fields of study in academic and non academic settings. This study highlights the powerful influence of mentoring and undergraduate research on graduate degree attainment and pursuit of academic careers for racial minorities.

Foertsch, Alexander, and Penberthy (2000) conducted a widely cited longitudinal study to determine the impact of the Summer Research Opportunities Programs (SROPs) on participants at 14 campuses. The researchers conducted interviews of SROP alumni, program directors, college administrators, and 10 faculty mentors. Methods also included an analysis of 11 years of exit surveys and demographic data from 4,600 participants. The key findings reveal that across the (CIC) schools 52% of minority SROP participants enrolled in graduate programs, 35% reportedly completed advanced degrees (Foertsch et al., 2000). Students in the sciences and engineering tended to have higher graduate school enrollment rates. However, the authors did not seek to determine which alumni earned Ph.D.s and the impact of the program on their specific employment outcomes.

Hathaway, Nagda, and Gregerman (2002) conducted a study to investigate the relationship of undergraduate research to graduate enrollment, degree attainment, and pursuit of additional research activity. The researchers surveyed two groups of alumni, (those who participated between 1989–1994), as well as those who applied but were not admitted to the University Research Opportunities Program at the University of Michigan. The researchers inquired about differences between participants and non-

participants in the following ways: (a) graduate enrollment and research activity post graduation, (b) use of faculty recommendations for jobs, and (c) benefits by race or ethnicity (Hathaway, et al., 2002).

The authors distributed surveys to 497 students and 291 were completed, resulting in a 58.8% response rate. The sample of 291 was comprised of 183 graduate and 108 non-participants of the undergraduate research program. Nearly 48% were underrepresented students of color. Regarding graduate degree enrollment and attainment, the findings of this study revealed that 75% of respondents pursued or completed a graduate degree with 57% earning professional degrees or a Ph.D. and 43% earning master's degrees (Hathaway, et al., 2002). In addition, UROP respondents "were likely to . . . pursue post undergraduate research activity and use faculty for job recommendation than students who did not participate in undergraduate research" (Hathaway et al., p. 623). In-depth feedback from Ph.D. recipients and their career outcomes were not addressed in this study.

In their review of the literature, Hu, Scheuch, Schwartz, Gayle, and Li (2008) noted the potential of undergraduate research in that it "clarified goals for career options and graduate school attendance, especially among those who are first-generation or from underrepresented groups" (p. 35). In addition, Hu et al. noted that, "undergraduate research experiences have strong potential to recruit students into the pipeline of disciplines where they are traditionally underrepresented" (p. 39). The authors suggested that further research could ask, "how the research process benefited them personally" (p. 38).

On the other hand, Tsui (2007) reviewed the literature on 10 commonly adopted strategies for enhancing undergraduate learning including: research experiences, mentoring, Summer Bridge, seminars, tutoring, career counseling and awareness, learning centers, academic advising, and financial support. Tsui's (2007) findings suggested that research experiences and the above mentioned strategies influence the graduate enrollment and "overlaps with what is known to be beneficial for the overall student population" (p. 573). Tsui recommended a comprehensive approach that includes multiple strategies to promote diversity in the STEM disciplines. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were suggested for further research in order to, "move beyond 'what' (works), and toward 'for whom', and 'how' " (p. 573). One limitation of most studies on undergraduate research is that they primarily address the outcomes of students in the STEM disciplines. However, my study seeks to gather insight on the personal and professional experiences of McNair Program alumni currently serving as faculty in a variety of all disciplines.

#### Undergraduate Research and Career Outcomes for Students of Color

Researchers have studied the career development outcomes of minority students who participate in undergraduate research. Hathaway, Nagda, and Gregerman (2002) revealed that student participation in the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) at the University of Michigan likely influences the "pursuit of professional academic fields" among African American and Latino American students (p. 629). Likewise, Seymour et al. (2004) pointed out that students viewed participation in undergraduate research as being a way to improve their own career prospects. Loppatto

(2004) found that participation in the summer undergraduate research programs sponsored by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute furthered the career aspirations in science fields for women and minorities.

Loppatto (2007) distributed an online survey to 2020 college students, of which 38% were underrepresented minorities. He found that underrepresented students showed higher learning gains than the comparison group on 13 items related to preparation for scientific careers. Loppatto (2007) concluded that undergraduate research acts as a pathway for minority students into science careers.

Villarejo, Barlow, Kogan, Veazy, and Sweeny (2008) conducted a study to explore the influence of an undergraduate research program on the career choice of high-achieving underrepresented minority participants in a biomedical research opportunities program. The *Career Path Survey* was designed to collect information about a number of factors that influence career choices including, initial career interests as entering freshmen, college major, research experiences, academic achievement in college, career goals at graduation, family background, academic background, values and interests and ultimate career goals. There were 322 students in the sample and 201 respondents, resulting in a 62.4% response rate. Key findings of the study were that underrepresented minorities and students from low-income and first-generation backgrounds were most likely to be inspired by the research experience. Also, the undergraduate research experience was a major factor for a small number of minority students who entered college as premed majors, but changed career paths and pursued Ph.D.s in biomedical research instead of pursuing the Doctor of Medicine (M.D.).

Russell (2006) indicated that undergraduate research helps to explain the availability of career options, the variety of fields that exist within a discipline, and the possibility of an academic (faculty) career path. On the other hand, undergraduate research experiences also, interestingly enough, provide clarification to students that research is not what they would like to pursue as a career (Russell). Russell found that “research participation is most likely to be an effective motivator when it is done voluntarily and out of genuine interest and requiring research experiences for undergraduates may be counterproductive” (p. 22). This study confirms similar findings of the McNair Program participants by Beal (2007) and Hallock (2003) that students may find the academic career path is undesirable.

McGee and Keller (2007) examined characteristics among college undergraduates that predicted persistence into Ph.D. and Ph.D./M.D. programs. The researchers interviewed 26 out of 109 undergraduate students at the start, near the end and 12–18 months after the research experience. The authors found five characteristics common among those individuals who pursued doctoral degrees:

1. “Curiosity to discover the unknown.
2. Enjoyment of problem solving.
3. A high level of independence.
4. The desire to help others indirectly through research.
5. A flexible, level of independence” (p. 316).

No differences were found between underrepresented minority students and non-minorities.

### Faculty of Color in Higher Education: How Did They Get There?

The purpose of this study is to extend an understanding of the role that the McNair Program played in the entrance of its participants of color into the professoriate. This section discusses factors that influenced the career path of faculty of color; what motivated people of color to decide to pursue faculty careers and when?; and which individuals and experiences were the most helpful or influential in their choice of a faculty career?

### Overview of Research on Faculty of Color in the Academy

Few studies have focused specifically on the factors that influence people of color to pursue academic careers. In the recent review of the literature, Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood, (2008) synthesized the past 20 years of research on faculty of color in academe. The purpose of their review was to provide “scholars and practitioners with the current state of the field” (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, p. 156). These researchers examined books, book chapters, journal articles, dissertations, excluded websites, video recordings, and conference papers. Their search returned 211 studies and 41 dissertations on faculty of color in academe.

Using a computer software program, Turner et al (2008) were able to produce a thematic and graphical analysis of the research on faculty of color in higher education. The themes were categorized through a conceptual framework, which consisted of departmental, institutional, and national contexts. The authors categorized themes of research across five-year time spans. The authors found scores of issues addressed in the publications regarding faculty of color including underrepresentation, socialization,

networks, contribution to teaching, and issues related to research, service, and tenure (Turner et al.).

The major themes emerged across departmental, institutional, and national environments. *Supports and challenges* of faculty of color in academia were the first theme. An example of support included revision of hiring, tenure, and promotion processes which honor diversity. In addition, scholars posited that mentorship was critical to the professional success of faculty of color. Turner et al (2008) stated, “[h]aving mentors along their career path is a leading factor contributing to the growth and development of faculty of color” (p. 151).

Examples of challenges to the success of faculty of color cited in this review were: (a) undervaluation of research and unwritten rules in the tenure process, (b) a lack of mentorship to aid their incorporation into academia, (c) historical literature indicating continued underrepresentation, segregation, and exclusion, (d) faculty pipeline issues, and (e) persistent myths in the recruitment and hiring process (Turner et al., 2008). The second theme cited in the literature was recommendations to address barriers and build on successes of faculty of color, which included two areas: the need for research support for faculty of color, particularly for non-tenured faculty and opportunities for mentorship.

Finally, Turner et al (2008) recommended further research regarding faculty of color in specific institutional contexts. The authors note suggests exploration of opportunities and “overarching policies that create multilevel pathways to the professoriate and continue to support across contexts” (Turner et al., p. 152) along with “issues that are unique or specific to various racial/ethnic groups and to faculty women of color, and the

impact of mentoring and other factors on the recruitment and retention of faculty of color, nationally” (p. 157).

Turner, et al., (2008) provided a comprehensive review and synthesis of the literature on faculty of color in higher education. Key issues related to the career development of faculty of color include socialization and mentoring. No studies related to faculty of color who were former participants of McNair Program or other undergraduate research programs evident in the literature.

#### Aspirations, Socialization, and Mentoring and Career Paths for Faculty of Color

The research related to the preparation of faculty of color focuses largely on educational aspirations, socialization, and mentoring. In their 20-year review of literature on the impact of college on students, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) noted that a number of factors influence student aspirations. Factors may include family, teachers, counselors/advisors, mentors, and peers. Institutional type, size, culture, and mission may also influence future degree and careers aspirations (Pascarella & Terenzini).

#### Degree Aspirations

Other key influences on degree aspirations include interactions with faculty and peers especially outside of the classroom (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Faculty student interaction is the cornerstone of undergraduate research experiences for undergraduates. Student aspirations have been associated with future degree attainment, and degree attainment has been associated with occupational attainment (Pascarella & Terenzini). On the other hand, Kao and Thompson (2003) concluded that aspirations are an important indicator for degree and occupational attainment, but that they may not be the best



predictors of future educational and occupational attainment for minority students. Even though family socio-economic status influences aspirations and attainment greatly, “there is clearly a place for explanations that do not rely solely on social class . . . researchers might consider how immigrants and minority families and youth contribute to our knowledge of how individuals succeed in light of great obstacles” (Kao & Thompson, p. 436). Understanding the degree aspirations and determination of underrepresented minority students is important to increasing diversity and inclusion in the professoriate.

Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, and Flowers (2004) examined the differences among racial groups in their aspirations to pursue graduate study. The authors used data from a longitudinal study of college student experiences and outcomes. The data included 1100 students at 18 colleges. Influences on graduate degree plans included family social economic status, high school grades and test scores, academic performance, effective teaching, and extracurricular involvement with peers (Pascarella, et al., 2004). Pascarella, et al. concluded that African American students who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were far more likely than their African American peers who attended Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) to aspire to complete graduate degrees. Effective teaching positively influenced the graduate degree plans for both Caucasian and African Americans but not for Hispanics. Good teaching encouraged aspirations for graduate study and is a form of “positive anticipatory socialization for graduate education” (Pascarella, et al., p. 314). This finding confirms Hallocks’ (2003) findings that good teaching also helps shape student perceptions of the academy and aspirations to an academic career.

Perna (2004) used measures of social and cultural capital in an econometric framework to examine differences in aspirations to pursue a graduate degree by gender and race. The framework included measures of aspirations to pursue a graduate degree in relationship to costs, benefits, and other needed resources. She used large data sets from the 1993–1997 *Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study* (B&B:93) and the *National Postsecondary Student Aid Study* (NPSAS: 93) to obtain interview and survey data on the experiences of 9,241 baccalaureate degree earners (83%) in the data set. Findings of this study include nearly half (48%) of study participants enrolled in post-baccalaureate study, mostly below the master's degree level. Asians were more likely than all other groups to enroll in graduate study (Perna, 2004).

In Perna's (2004) study, post-baccalaureate enrollment also included professional certificate programs other baccalaureate programs, associate degrees. African Americans and Caucasians were equally likely to enroll in non-degree or certificate programs, master's programs, and professional degree programs (Perna). In addition, interaction with faculty and peers was positively associated with graduate enrollment and "especially important to the graduate enrollment process for men" (Perna, p. 523). Programs that provide information and exposure to graduate study serve as "social networks" and can shape educational aspirations to pursue graduate study (p. 523). Cultural and social capital was found to be a predictor of graduate school enrollment.

### Career Aspirations

Aspirations for academic careers have been examined in the literature. Multiple personal and situational factors influence undergraduate students' aspirations to pursue

careers as faculty. Cole and Barber (2003) examined the occupational choices of high achieving minority students and the influences on choosing an academic career. These researchers found that that some minority students chose academic careers while in college, but African American students tended to choose later than Caucasian students. Relatedly, aspirations to an academic career were associated with higher grade point averages and higher self-confidence (Cole & Barber).

On the other hand, Cole and Barber (2003) also found that students were dissuaded away from faculty careers due to (a) the length of time it takes to earn a Ph.D., (b) being tired of school, and (c) lack of self-confidence. Lower salaries of academic careers compared to other occupations were found to have little impact on student aspirations. Further, these researchers argue that faculty mentors with the same sex or the same race/ethnicity had little effect on the choice of an academic career for students, as did Pascarella and Terenzini (1991). However, faculty contact was generally found to be highly influential on students' aspirations of becoming a professor (Cole & Barber).

Golde and Dore (2001) conducted a survey to examine the experiences and aspirations of doctoral students. These researchers surveyed over 4000 graduate doctoral students across 11 disciplines and 27 colleges and universities. Over 83% of survey respondents were Caucasian, 53% were female, and 21% of the respondents reported having a parent with a Ph.D. The authors reported that nearly two-thirds of respondents were interested but their interest weaned over time indicating a lower level of interest in faculty careers toward the end of their studies (Golde & Dore). Doctoral student career aspirations were influenced by a desire to teach, conduct research, and serve in

institutions of higher learning. Students of color were less likely than Caucasian students to aspire to faculty careers (58% versus 64%). The sources of inspiration regarding faculty career paths may be similar for both undergraduates and doctoral students of color regardless of participation in an undergraduate research program or McNair Program.

Lindholm (2004) reported that limited research addresses specific aspirations to pursue academic career paths. Using interviews, Lindholm conducted a study to explore the factors that influenced the career aspirations of junior and senior faculty. She interviewed a sample of 36 full time, tenured and tenure track professors (12 male and 24 female) across four departments at one public research university. The racial and ethnic backgrounds of the sample reported to be reflective of the institution's demography. Astin's (1984) need-based socio-psychological model of career choice was used as a conceptual framework for the study. This interesting model emphasizes the concepts of motivation/aspiration, socialization, the structure of opportunity, and expectations for a career (Lindholm).

Three themes emerged from the faculty interview data regarding influences on choice of an academic career: (a) an inherent attraction to academic work as evidenced by "*the need for autonomy, independence and individual expression . . . seemingly boundless freedom*" to pursue intellectual puzzles and lines of research inquiry that are "inherently interesting" and . . . value of "pursuing knowledge for its own sake," (Lindholm, 2004, p. 611), and (b) vocational interest development through "*early experiences and family influences*" . . . as evidenced by their interests developing consistently over the years and early family experiences where some parents were faculty

members and others enjoyed discussion of ideas at home (p. 614). In addition, career aspirations for most of the faculty in this study begin in college. Research and teaching experiences with faculty in college and in graduate study had the strongest influence on the majority of faculty in this study (Lindholm). The research findings are useful as they relate to how individuals develop interests in academic careers. Although her study did not report findings related to race, ethnicity or social class, Lindholm noted:

Understanding better how personal and environmental forces operate together to shape individuals' decisions to pursue faculty careers may help us attract newcomers to the profession from groups that have been historically underrepresented within the professoriate such as women and racial and ethnic minorities. (pp. 604–605)

Also, the author pointed out that more research is needed on: the career choice processes and experiences of today's younger cohort of faculty, the personal and situational factors that influence the choice to pursue faculty careers, and graduate school training and socialization influences on academic career aspirations (Lindholm, 2004).

Lindholm writes in support of areas of further inquiry concerning academic career aspirations:

The important associations between personal and situational factors in shaping academic career aspirations and attainment have not been well documented empirically. While quantitative approaches to vocational choice research can inform us how prevalent certain experiences, perceptions, or personal characteristics are within a given profession, they are less informative for providing insight as to how, and why, people make the choices they do. Qualitative approaches enable us to understand more fully both the processes by which career decisions are formed and the motivations that underlie people's differential attractions to various vocational pursuits. (p. 607)

### Socialization of Faculty of Color

Socialization has been defined in many ways (Johnson & Harvey, 2002). In their review of the literature on faculty of color in the academy, Turner, et al (2008) noted that the socialization of faculty of color has received some attention in the 1990s. The works of Tierney and Bensimon (1996), Tierney and Rhoads (1993), and Turner and Thompson (1993) were three of the four most widely cited studies. Here, the researcher depended primarily on these works, and others, to define and describe the socialization process, as well as to highlight key issues related to the socialization of faculty of color.

Socialization is considered a cultural process where faculty interact both intellectually and socially. Tierney and Bensimon (1996) described it as a, “ritualized process that involves the transmission of the organization's culture” (p. 36). This process continues for the duration of the professional life of faculty (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). However, the start of a faculty member’s career may be challenging, especially as the faculty member seeks to understand the culture and meet the expectations of the institution (Tierney & Rhoads).

New faculty often feel “exasperated and uncertain” due to limited amount of knowledge about their new workplaces (Johnson & Harvey, p. 299). Tierney and Bensimon (1996) view the socialization of new faculty as a two-way process. In this process, new faculty members learn about the institution and vice versa (Tierney & Bensimon). This acclimation process provides faculty of color with opportunities for successful integration into the academy. Successful integration of new faculty of color is

critical to diversity, inclusiveness, and organizational change in the academy (Tierney & Bensimon).

Anticipatory Socialization. Tierney and Rhoads (1993) divided the socialization of faculty into two stages of development: anticipatory and organizational. In their view, socialization takes place, mostly, during graduate study and requires students to assimilate to the culture of the academy. Organizational socialization consists of two stages, which include initial entry and role continuance (Tierney & Rhoads). Since the researcher's study focused on the preparation of faculty, the anticipatory stage is discussed.

Anticipatory socialization occurs, primarily, during graduate education, followed by the organizational stage where the new faculty member enters into the academy in a new institution. Anticipatory socialization is, "the process by which persons choose occupations and are recruited to them, gradually assuming the values of the group to which they aspire and measuring the ideals for congruence with reality" (Clark & Corcoran, 1986, p. 23). During the anticipatory stage, individuals become acclimated to the ethos of the academic profession (Clark & Corcoran, 1986). Some scholars believe a faculty member's careers begin in or before graduate school (Anthony & Taylor, 2004; Austin, 2002; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993).

Anticipatory experiences shape how faculty approach their future academic work (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Consequently, the anticipatory socialization experiences of faculty who attended large public research-based universities may be incompatible with the expectations of teaching-based institutions (Johnson & Harvey, 2002). The

anticipatory socialization experiences in American graduate programs do not prepare future faculty well for the realities of the academy (Austin, 2002; Golde & Dore, 2001; Tierney & Rhoads). Austin stated, “the socialization process in graduate school must change substantially for new faculty members to work effectively in the ever changing world of higher education” (p. 95).

Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) noted that, “anticipatory socialization is a process or set of experiences through which individuals come to anticipate correctly the norms, values, and behavioral expectations they will encounter in a new setting” (p. 403). Therefore, faculty socialization can occur at any point prior to entering the professoriate. I suggest that McNair Program experiences socialize underrepresented students for faculty careers before graduate study and entry into the professoriate. My proposed study seeks to examine if, how, and why the McNair Program was influential for its alumni currently in faculty roles at institutions of higher education throughout the U.S.

Organizational Socialization. Organizational socialization involves two stages: initial entry and role continuance (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). The initial entry stage occurs, primarily, during the recruitment process and hiring process. In addition, it entails initial interactions and learning experiences with senior faculty after a faculty appointment has been accepted (Tierney & Bensimon; Tierney & Rhoads). Role continuance takes place when new faculty members are acclimated to the institution and academic departments and continues through the various phases of their careers (Tierney & Rhoads).



Initial entry is challenging for new faculty (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Concerns about being successful in their new faculty role become more important, whereas before entry concerns about finding employment were most important. New faculty often encounter points of “disillusionment and adjustment” due to the pressures that come with a faculty appointment such as teaching, service, or research (Tierney & Rhoads, p. 36). Also, new faculty members may encounter a lack of collegiality, and marginalization (Turner & Thompson, 1993). This study on the experiences of McNair Program alumni serving as faculty may provide insight on the influence of the program at this crucial point for new faculty of color.

Role continuance is the point where faculty move through the tenure and promotion process (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). This stage of organizational socialization involves both formal and informal interactions. For example, tenure review processes are considered a type of formal socialization. Discussions with faculty colleagues about the tenure process are an example of informal socialization (Tierney & Bensimon). Most McNair Program alumni serving as faculty are new, tenure track assistant professors (McCoy, et al., 2008). An investigation into their interactions as faculty of color and the helpfulness of the McNair program or other experiences during this point on the faculty career path may be insightful. I now turn to researchers who have studied mentoring as a means to enhance the success of aspiring scholars of color.

### Mentoring

Another strategy identified prominently in the literature on faculty of color is mentoring. The literature on mentoring in higher education is vast for this review. This

section focuses on the influences of mentoring on undergraduates, graduate students, and junior faculty of color in preparation for success in faculty careers.

Gandara and Maxwell-Jolly (1999) reviewed literature on mentoring in 20 programs that support academically talented students of color. Gandara and Maxwell-Jolly defined a mentor as “someone with great experiences and/or stature in the field . . . [who] shares this knowledge with the protégé with the intent of enhancing the protégés academic path” (p. 30). These researchers found that many programs used mentoring strategies to increase academic achievement among students of color. However, there were differences in who could serve as mentors. In some cases, programs described mentors as peers, administrators, staff, or other professionals.

Smith (2007) conducted a study to determine how students of color and first-generation college students access social capital through mentoring relationships. Social capital is defined as, “an intangible form of capital that refers to having access to privileged channels of information and resources via social relationships” (p 36). The elements of social capital include establishing norms (such as regular meetings), sanctions (disallowed privileges to events, resources), closure (close connections to network members), and information channels (Smith).

According to Smith (2007), mentoring programs are:

Structured differently and have different objectives depending on the needs of the institution, but the purpose of most academic mentor programs is to assist students in acclimating to the academic and social culture of the institution. . . . Many mentor programs target underrepresented students because these students generally have less access to informal networks with faculty and administrators who tend to be primarily white, middle-class males. (p. 36)

Smith (2007) interviewed eight participants: four undergraduate students and four

faculty mentors. Findings show that sharing information channels was the most prominent in these relationships. Mentors served critical roles in helping protégés to understand the culture of the discipline and the institution. Mentors tended to be attracted to students who were intellectually curious and independent (Smith). Also, both mentors and protégés benefit from these relationships. Faculty and students become involved in mentoring relationships because they perceive it to be a valuable interchange of “academic knowledge and resources” (p. 44).

Pinkston-McKee (2001) examined the mentoring experiences of Ph.D. graduates. Kram’s (1988) model of mentoring was used as a conceptual framework that is comprised of career and psychosocial functions. Career functions include sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenge, exposure, and visibility. Psychosocial functions include role modeling, counseling, acceptance, confirmation, and friendship.

Pinkston-McKee (2001) used surveys and interviews to gather data from alumni who earned Ph.D. degrees in 22 different academic disciplines. Pinkston-McKee mailed 297 surveys with 125 useable surveys being completed. The response rate was 52%. Key findings were that participants reported: (a) having mentor relationships, (b) mentoring relationships were typically initiated by faculty, (c) most reported satisfactory mentoring relationships, (d) most engaged in psychosocial activities, (e) fewer mentorship activities were career related activities, (f) differences occurred in alumni experiences by both discipline and gender, and (g) mentoring activities were influential to career advancement (Pinkston-McKee). This study supports Kram’s framework for mentoring and career advancement for aspiring academicians.

Solorzano (1993) used surveys and interviews to explore the experiences of 66 Latino American doctoral graduates who were recipients of the Ford Foundation Fellowship. The purpose of the study was to examine the “critical events, barriers, and resources on their road to the doctorate” (p. vii). Critical events included needing to work during college and obtaining research assistantships. Barriers included lack of preparation and skills, lack of support from dissertation chair or advisors and discounting of their research, racism during their educational experiences throughout high school, college, and doctoral study. Participants in this study noted that, “the single most important factor was a positive mentoring experience” (Solorzano, 1993, p. x). Key resources included faculty advice on research and dissertation topics and encouragement from peers and family.

Espinosa-Herold and Gonzalez (2007) interviewed two senior faculty scholars about the characteristics of good mentoring, strategies for junior faculty of color in coping with challenges in academe, and recommendations for advancing mentoring. Senior faculty offered insight and suggestions that, (a) good mentors provide collaborating experiences on research projects and emotional support and encouragement during psychologically stressful times,” (b) junior scholars should continue “networking and developing a collective force with colleagues that can empower junior scholars to develop resiliency to resist adverse cultural and ideological forces in academia,” and (c) maintain an active research agenda with high-quality scholarship and social justice outcomes” (Espinosa-Herold & Gonzalez, p. 332).

Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008) conducted a critical review of the literature on

formal faculty mentoring programs. She defined mentoring as “a reciprocal learning relationship characterized by trust, respect, and commitment, in which a mentor supports the professional and personal development of another by sharing his or her life experiences, influence, and expertise” (p. 555). She noted the benefits and challenges to contemporary mentoring approaches. Benefits to protégés include increased teaching effectiveness and relief from isolation and alienation (Zellers, et al., 2008). Challenges include underrepresented minorities and women not having mentoring relationships with those who have power and influence in their institutions and the field. She noted that “more rigorous examination of such programs is warranted in relation to their impact on women, non-White men, and other marginalized groups within academe” (p. 582).

#### Lapses in the Literature: A Place for the Study

The literature in this chapter confirms that exploration of the experiences of McNair Program alumni serving as faculty can extend understanding of ways to increase diversity in the professoriate. Three areas in the literature are addressed by this study.

First, this study adds to the emerging literature on African American, Latino American, and Native American faculty. Very little of the literature on faculty of color examined the undergraduate experience in terms of personal influences and motivation in preparation and pursuit of a faculty career. This study sought to explore the factors and strategies that students of color implemented to overcome the obstacles to complete their doctoral degrees and begin faculty careers.

Second, this study adds to emerging literature on the role of the McNair Program and how undergraduate research programs contribute to the development of faculty of

color. McNair Program alumni serving as faculty represent a small segment of the professoriate. Few studies have reviewed McNair Program experiences or undergraduate research experiences and their influences on current faculty of color. This researcher asked faculty to recall their experiences as program participants and link these experiences to their present day experiences as faculty.

Third, this study illuminates the literature on the McNair Program and undergraduate research programs as community or social networks. Participants were asked about the role the program played in their entry into the academy. Also, how these faculty give back to others and to institutions to increase diversity and inclusiveness in higher education were probed.

Chapter Three, I describe the methodology that is used for this qualitative study. The study's design, data collection procedures, and methods of data analysis were addressed. Additionally, the following chapter addresses ethical considerations, research bias, and limitations of the method used.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### Introduction

As mentioned in Chapters I and II, the goal of the McNair Program is to prepare low-income, first generation, and underrepresented college students for doctoral study and faculty careers. Prior studies on McNair Program participants have generally used both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore various educational and employment outcomes of McNair Program participants. However, no qualitative data exist on the lived experiences of former participants who have become college professors. The goal of this study is to attempt to shed light on the experiences that enabled former McNair Program participants, who were college students of color, to become faculty in higher education. In this chapter, the rationale for the research methodology used in this study is described. Sampling, data collection, and data analysis strategies are discussed. Steps taken to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also addressed. Finally, a discussion of the limitations of the methodology is presented.

#### Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach

Over the past two decades, government agencies and the higher education community have invested greatly in preparing McNair Program participants for advanced study with the expectation that most, if not all, will enter into careers in research and college teaching. McNair Program, program directors have, collectively, witnessed many students obtain graduate degrees. However, current data show that relatively few

participants of color go on to obtain the Ph.D., and even fewer enter into the professoriate (McCoy, et al, 2008). This study sought to raise the voices of those former McNair Program participants of color who currently serve as faculty in higher education.

This study sought to understand how a small group of McNair Program participants, currently serving as faculty, experienced the program as undergraduates. Exploring the day-to-day lived experiences of these former program participants helped to elucidate what it was like to be in the McNair Program. Exploring the meanings of these experiences shed light on how, when, and why these particular faculty chose to become faculty in higher education. The existing research on McNair Program faculty alumni relies primarily on quantitative research methods. This researcher believes that statistical approaches limit deeper reflection into the lived experience of former program participants. In order to learn about the experiences of current faculty of color who participated in a McNair Program as undergraduates an alternative methodological approach to the quantitative approach is required. Thus, a qualitative approach is appropriate for this study.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), “[m]any qualitative studies are descriptive and exploratory” (p. 397). An exploratory qualitative approach is suitable given the absence of research on the lived experiences of former McNair program participants serving as faculty. McMillan and Schumacher further explained that qualitative studies that are exploratory and descriptive in nature:

. . . add to the literature by building rich descriptions of complex situations and by giving directions for further research. . . . [The] research purpose of descriptive exploratory [studies is] to examine “new” or little known phenomena [and] to



discover themes of participant meanings. . . . Qualitative researchers usually focus on individuals, groups, processes, or organizations and systems. (p. 397)

A qualitative approach was chosen because the experience of faculty who participated in McNair Programs has not been included in the higher education literature. A qualitative approach allows for exploration and description of the reflections and experiences of this population. Relatedly, a qualitative approach provides information about how McNair (Scholar) participants create meaning in their world. Further, such an approach may help to reveal potential relationships between undergraduate student experiences while in the program and students' pursuit of an academic career.

Several philosophical and methodological assumptions are shared within the qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative approaches to research share the following assumptions: (a) the world exists in a subjective, multiple reality, according to human involvement, consciousness or perceptions; (b) the purpose of research is understanding the meaning humans make of involvement in and perception of their world; (c) research methods are adaptable, changeable, and evolve during the study; (d) the researcher is engaged with participants and the phenomena that are being researched, and (e) the research findings are applicable to specific situations or environments (Broido & Manning, 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

As a qualitative researcher, this researcher resonates with a constructivist epistemology. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) “[q]ualitative research is based on a constructivist philosophy” (p. 396). Constructivism is also referred to as a paradigm (worldview; Lincoln & Guba, 1994) and an epistemology (knowledge acquisition; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Constructivist epistemology “seeks to

understand individual social action through interpretation or translation. . . . The aim is to understand aspects of human activity from the perspective of those who experience it...all knowledge is dependent on its context” (Jones, et al., p. 18).

Ontologically, this researcher concurs with the relativistic notion that “constructivists are concerned with multiple realities [of how knowledge is] constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 96). In the constructivist epistemology “researchers are interpreters . . . and their role is to understand phenomena in an inventive way” (Jones, et al., 2006, p. 18). In this study, I aim to understand and interpret the experiences of former McNair Program participants as they reflect upon their quest to become faculty in higher education.

### Research Approach

This study used a phenomenological methodological approach. “A phenomenological study is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 107). As van Manen (1990) stated, “phenomenology asks, ‘What is this or that kind of experience like?’” (p. 9). Phenomenology aims to illustrate “the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon” (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). The phenomenological approach assumes that:

There is an essence or essences to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The essences of a phenomenon, for example, [can be] . . . the essence of being a mother or the essence of being a participant in a particular program. (Patton, 2002, p. 106)

According to van Manen (1990), “Phenomenology includes a descriptive (phenomenological) element as well as an interpretive (hermeneutic) element” (p. 26). Hermeneutic phenomenology was conceived by German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. This approach emphasized “interpretation and understanding” and is consistent with constructivist epistemology (Jones, et al., 2006, p. 46). In phenomenological studies the researcher acts as interpreter and “engages in critical self reflection about the topics and the process” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 98).

The phenomenon being explored in this study is the essence of being an undergraduate participant in the McNair Program who eventually becomes a college professor. Using the phenomenological perspective, the focus of this study is to explore, describe, and understand the essence of lived experiences of undergraduates of color who participated in the McNair Program and entered into the professoriate.

According to Patton (2002), phenomenology:

. . . focus [es] on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning. This requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon—how they perceive it, describe it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others. To gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have “lived experience” as opposed to second hand experience. (p. 104)

Jones et al (2006) identified six research activities that are central to the phenomenological methodology. The phenomenologist should first, develop “deep question[s]” and an “interest in understanding what something is like” (p. 48); second, conduct in-depth interviews in order to “generate thick description” of the experience (p. 49); third, conduct a “thematic analysis” of the text (p. 50); fourth, interpret the

experience through writing and rewriting and eventually coming to a response to the question “What is it like to be...[a McNair Scholar]” (p. 51); fifth, remain focused on the phenomenon under investigation (Jones, et al.); and sixth, give equal attention describing both what McNair Program faculty alumni reveal in their stories and illuminating the essence(s) of being a McNair Program participant who has become a college professor.

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of faculty of color who participated in a McNair Program as undergraduates. The aim of this study was to find out what they experienced, how they experienced it, and what the experiences mean to these individuals. Stated differently: *How do McNair Program alumni who are now faculty describe their undergraduate experiences?, What is the essence of being a McNair Program participant who currently serves on the faculty in an institution of higher education?, What is the quality or essence of their shared experiences?, and What did these former participants bring with them to their current faculty roles?* The descriptions of experiences and the meanings associated with them can shed light upon strategies that helped participants succeed to become college and university faculty of color. Purposeful sampling for participants was an effective way to address the goals of this study.

Purposeful sampling is a hallmark of qualitative studies (Jones, et al., 2006; Patton, 2002). It allows the researcher to “focus in depth on relatively small samples” (Patton, p. 230). The selection of participants is based on identifying “information rich cases which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, p. 230). Since the purpose of the study was to explore the

experience of McNair Program alumni, the most information rich cases were comprised of faculty who experienced the phenomenon of being a participant in the McNair Program as undergraduates.

Patton (2002) noted that, “there are several different strategies for purposefully selecting information rich cases” (p. 230). This study uses both intensity sampling and snowball sampling. The intensity-sampling strategy allowed the researcher to identify “information rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely” (Patton, p. 234). The participants selected for this study will be from underrepresented backgrounds, namely African American, Latino American, and Native American.

The rationale for this sampling approach is that although African American, Latino American, and Native American McNair Program participants comprise the largest segment of the program population (about 70%), they earn fewer doctoral degrees (42%) (McCoy, et, al. 2008) and thus they enter into the professoriate in lower numbers. These faculty are underrepresented compared to the overall McNair Program population. Conversely, Caucasians comprise roughly 19% of the program population and earn 42% of Ph.D.s and other doctorates. Thus, Caucasian McNair Program participants are overrepresented among doctoral degree holders (and among faculty). “Women, representing 67 percent of McNair participants, reportedly earned 52% of combined Ph.D. and other doctoral degrees” (McCoy, et, al., p. 18).

The snowball-sampling technique was used to find information rich sources. The “snowball sampling or chain sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 234) approach allowed the researcher to ask members of the McNair Program community (i.e., McNair Directors

nationwide) to forward study materials to their faculty of color alumni. Prospective study participants who met the criteria for selection elected to participate in the study or not.

#### Criteria for Participant Selection

Participants in this study:

1. Were former participants in an undergraduate McNair Program.
2. Were self-identified as a person of color, defined as African American, Latino American, and Native American.
3. Have an earned doctoral degree, defined as Ph.D. or other doctoral degree (i.e., Ed.D).
4. Were employed as a full-time faculty member at a two-year or four-year college. Full-time faculty member is defined as tenured, tenure track or assistant, associate, or full professor. Faculty who are not on the tenure track, but who are employed on a full-time multi-contractual, were also included in the sample.

Former participants of this researcher's own McNair Program were excluded from this study.

This study selected participants from the population of McNair Program alumni employed as tenured or tenure track faculty members at institutions across the U.S. The following is a general overview of the characteristics of the population of McNair Program faculty alumni nationwide. As of 2000, 69%, (267 out of 386) of McNair Program participants with doctoral and professional degrees were employed as faculty at colleges and universities in the U.S. The rank of these faculty were as follows:

- 9 were professors or associate professors
- 250 were assistant professors
- 8 were instructors/lecturers
- 6 faculty were tenured
- 169 are tenure-track faculty
- 54 were not on the tenure track (McCoy, et al. 2008).

Phenomenologists typically conduct “interviews with up to 10 people” (Creswell, 1998, p. 113). Ideally, 10–12 participants were sought for this study.

### Data Collection

#### Gaining Access to Faculty Participants

Gaining access to faculty participants for this study depended upon the “existing relationships that the researcher has with those who can provide access” (Jones, et al, 2006, p. 74). This researcher maintained a professional relationship with 15–20 (out of 190) current McNair Program directors nationwide. These individuals are “key informants” and “gatekeepers” in order to access faculty participants for the study (Jones, et al, 2006, p. 74). McNair Program Directors are key informants because they typically are in contact with their faculty alumni. In order to successfully negotiate access to potential participants, it was necessary for this researcher to provide “a compelling case for the request for access that includes presenting a clearly thought out plan for the research . . . establishing credentials as a researcher, and providing assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, and responding to [their] questions and concerns” ( Jones, et al., p. 75).

The following is a description of how the researcher accessed faculty participants for the study. First, approval of the study from my Institutional Review Board was obtained before contacting any liaison or potential participant. Second, 20–25 McNair Program Directors were contacted via telephone and email seeking their assistance in identifying potential faculty participants who met the study’s criteria for inclusion and who forwarded my research materials to these potential participants. The directors who oversee McNair Programs with a longer history were likely to have a greater number of doctoral degree recipients and were more likely to have access to a larger pool of McNair Program faculty alumni. Also, the researcher contacted the directors of the first 28 McNair Programs. There were 14 programs established in the initial 1989–1993 funding cycle. An additional 14 were established in the subsequent 1993–1997 funding cycle. Public data that was available from the U.S. Department of Education was used to identify the 28 programs and their program directors.

As of 2008, there were 200 McNair Programs in the U.S. Some of the original programs were no longer in existence. Therefore, the researcher contacted directors of programs that had at least a seven-year program history. The researcher asked the Program Directors to forward to alumni:

1. An invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix A).
2. A synopsis of the study (see Appendix B).
3. A biographical data form (see appendix C).
4. An informed consent form (see Appendix D).



Additionally, because more participants were needed for the study, the researcher sent an emailed announcement of this study, with a request that the announcement be sent out on each organization's list serve (see Appendix E) to the following organizations: (a) Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education, (b) the Illinois Council for Black Concerns in Higher Education, (c) Diversifying Faculty in Illinois, (d) the Committee on Institutional Cooperation Coordinators, and (e) Program Directors of the Doctoral Scholars Program coordinated by the Southern Regional Education Board. Faculty of color who read an announcement regarding the study were told to contact the researcher for additional information, including the formal invitation to participate, the synopsis, and the informed consent form. Finally, faculty of color (whom expressed an interest in this study) were asked to contact other faculty (who met the criteria that they knew) for inclusion to the study and to invite them to contact the researcher for possible inclusion in the study.

### Biographical Data

A brief confidential biographical data form (see Appendix C) was sent to each participant. This form was used to collect data about each participant's gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, and professional experience. It was also used to collect data on the name of the undergraduate institution where participation in the McNair Program occurred and the years of participation. This information sheet was designed to ensure selection of a diverse pool of participants with varied teaching experience, employment classification, professorial rank, and academic disciplines for the undergraduate degree and doctoral degrees. Based on the data gathered, a final selection

of 10–12 participants was made. Once selections were made, participants were contacted by telephone, with electronic mail as a back up method, to arrange a time and location for the interview most convenient for them. Regret letters (see Appendix F) were sent to those participants who were not selected.

### Artifacts

Lived experiences can be illustrated by “descriptions drawn from novelists, poets, painters and choreographers” (Creswell, 1998, p. 122). Interview participants were invited to bring to the interview an artifact that represented either the essence of their McNair Program, or some other meaningful undergraduate experience in relation to who they are today—faculty. Participants were asked to share only those artifacts they were comfortable in sharing. Prior to the interview, each participant was encouraged to bring a photograph as another possible artifact of his/her undergraduate experience. If the participant brought an artifact or a photograph, a discussion of that artifact and its meaning to the participant served to explore, in richer detail, the participant’s story (Creswell, 1998). With the participant’s permission, a copy of each artifact was photographed for the researcher’s confidential files.

### Interviews

In-depth face-to-face interviewing was the primary source of data collection for this research study. This method related well with the phenomenological approach used in this study (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). According to Seidman (1998), the central focus of in-depth interviewing is, “an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience . . . it requires that we realize that

we are not the center of the world . . . and that others' stories are important ” (p. 3). My aim is to create “rich, thick descriptions” of each participant’s experiences (Arminio & Hultgren, p. 454; Creswell, 1998, p. 203).

In addition, the researcher followed Patton’s (2002) suggestion for combining both the “interview guide approach” with a “standardized open-ended interview approach” (p. 347). Patton suggested that this combination “specifies certain key questions exactly as they should be asked while leaving other items as topics to be explored at the interviewer’s discretion” (p. 347). Using this format, the researcher also prepared probing questions to pursue some topics further in depth. This allowed for greater flexibility to raise topics not specified in the interview protocol. This technique required that, as the interviewer, the researcher listened much more than he spoke, in order to extract the meaning of participant experiences (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). In using this approach, the researcher was mindful that he played a powerful role in representing the voices of the participants (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002).

Creswell (1998) suggested developing an Interview Protocol Form (see Appendix G) based on the research questions for this qualitative study. This data collection tool assisted the interviewer with pertinent details about: (a) the logistical information specific to each interview, (b) how to begin and end each interview, and (c) thanking the participant (Creswell, 1998). The interview protocol was two pages in length, contained open-ended questions, and involved recordings of selected participant responses to questions (Creswell, 1998).

Before the interviews, the researcher communicated with all participants via phone and e-mail to coordinate and then document and confirm the logistics (day/date, time, duration, and location) for each study participant. Interviews lasted on average 90 minutes, and permission to audio record the interviews was obtained prior to each interview. All interviews were transcribed by an external transcriber, whom was asked to sign a Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement Form (see Appendix H).

Shortly after each interview, the researcher listened to the audio recording and recorded initial notes and observations from the interview and site. Notes were taken regarding the researchers own experiences in the data collection process. Then, “bracketing” was performed, where the researcher recorded and therefore suspended his own preconceived notions due to his experiences with the McNair Program (Jones, et al., 2006). This activity helped to better understand the lived experience of participants and “bring forth previous understandings connected to the phenomenon being studied” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 453). Moreover, these activities established an “audit trail that verifies meaning making” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 454). All participants were sent a thank you letter after their interviews (see Appendix I).

### Data Analysis

Rossmann and Rallis (2003) found that “[d]ata analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is time-consuming, creative, and fascinating” (p. 278). This researcher followed seven procedures in qualitative data analysis, as described by Rossmann and Rallis. First, the researcher organized the data by making field notes and creating file folders. In the field notes,

location, time, and the (pseudonym) name of the participant interviewed were recorded. Interview transcripts were stored in filed folders and organized alphabetically. Second, the researcher familiarized himself with the interview data by reading transcripts multiple times and thinking deeply about the data. Third, the researcher extracted evidence from the interview data to illustrate themes of what participants experienced, how they experienced it (structure), and what it meant to them. Themes were categorized according to the interview questions (Rossman & Rallis). Fourth, the researcher developed initial codes for each category by highlighting sections of interview data and writing a word that represented a particular category in the margins (Rossman & Rallis). Fifth, after the researcher developed initial codes for each category, the data was interpreted, with the aim being to “fin[d] meaning beyond the specifics of the data” (Rossman & Rallis, p. 287). Using “thick description” is key to this process (p. 288). In order to interpret the data, the researcher addressed the following questions: *What is the shared meaning of these participants?* “What is the essence of the phenomenon? What is this phenomenon an example of? What story do these data tell?” (p. 288). Sixth, the researcher explored alternative understandings that challenged and questioned his interpretations. During this phase, the researcher searched through the interview data for “negative instances of the patterns and incorporate these into [my] story” (Rossman & Rallis, p. 290). A colleague, who is a senior research associate at Columbia University and who earned a doctorate from American University, agreed to serve as a peer auditor. This colleague’s dissertation was a mixed-method study on the academic experiences of McNair Program students. Therefore, he understood this researcher’s design, and the experiences of McNair

Program participants. Also, the colleague looked for different examples and helped evaluate the sense this researcher made of the interview data. Doing so helped to build support and credibility for the study. Last, since writing is a critical part of qualitative analysis, this researcher wrote analytic memos immediately after the interviews. Analytic memos are short, informally-written notes that record “emergent insights, potential themes, methodological questions and links between themes and theoretical notions” (Rossman & Rallis, p. 291). In addition, the researcher discussed each theme, which addressed the overarching research questions for the study.

#### Ethical Considerations

Generally, qualitative interviewing “lays open the thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience, not only to the interviewer but also the interviewee” (Patton, 2002, p. 405). According to Patton, “The researcher needs to have an ethical framework for dealing with such issues” (p. 406). All guidelines provided by Loyola University Chicago’s Institutional Review Board were followed. Also, Patton’s Ethical Issues Checklist (p. 408) was used as a framework for dealing with ethical issues that may arise throughout this research. Five areas were addressed:

1. *Explaining purpose.* All participants were reminded of the purpose of the study prior to the interview and the potential use of the study.
2. *Informed consent.* All participants received and were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D) prior to the interview process. All participants were also asked for permission to audiotape their responses.

3. *Confidentiality*. All participants were assigned pseudonyms. No data was stored on a public server.
4. *Data collection boundaries*. All participants were told that they could stop the interview, if they wish, at any time, for any reason.
5. *Data access and ownership*. All materials related to this project were kept in a locked drawer in the researcher home office, accessible only by him, and will be destroyed within two years after the completion of this study. (Patton, 2002, p.409)

#### Criteria for Judging Quality

In this study, the researcher was interested in gaining thick descriptions from faculty, in order to illuminate the essence of their lived experiences, while participating in a McNair Program. The researcher was also interested in elucidating the meaning of those experiences in light of their current faculty roles. In qualitative research a trustworthy study must be conducted competently and ethically (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The trustworthiness of these data is largely used to describe quality in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Other terms used by other researchers include: verification (Creswell, 1998) and goodness (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006).

#### Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1994) used alternative terms to describe trustworthiness in qualitative research. These terms are parallel to terms used in quantitative research namely: credibility (paralleling internal validity), transferability (paralleling external

validity), dependability (paralleling reliability), and confirmability (paralleling objectivity). Arminio and Hultgren (2002) argued that using terms closely associated with positivistic paradigms “is a kind of aggression against the qualis” (p. 447).

Rossman and Rallis (2003) stated that “trustworthiness of a qualitative research project is judged by . . . competent practice and ethical conduct” (p. 63). Therefore, a researcher must be diligent in assuring that the research process is administered fairly and data must be presented accurately (Rossman & Rallis). In this study, the researcher used Lincoln and Guba (1985) criteria for establishing trustworthiness namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### Credibility

Credibility is established in a qualitative study when there is “prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators” (Creswell, 1998, p. 197). In this study, triangulation was ensured through the use of multiple data collection methods, including personal interviews, biographical data, and artifact collection.

A second method for establishing credibility was member checking. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this technique “is the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Member checks involve the researcher sharing information with the participants in the study and requesting the input of these participants to verify accuracy (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba). The following steps will be followed in this study in order to ensure accurate member checks: (a) each participant will receive a copy of his/her transcribed interview; (b) each participant will be asked to read the transcription,



determine its accuracy, and return to me within a three-week period; and (c) Each participant was informed of this researcher's availability to address their questions and make corrections to the transcriptions. They were also informed that if the researcher did not hear from them by the end of the three-week time period, the interview transcription would be assumed to be accurate and approved.

### Transferability

Transferability is achieved through the creation of "[r]ich thick descriptions" (Creswell, 1998, p. 203). Conversing with McNair Program participants about their program experiences, in the context of an in-depth interview, allows for immersion in their world. Thick descriptions were generated by describing time, location, and specific details about the context/environment. The purpose of this technique is to allow other researchers to determine if some of the findings of this study are transferable (Creswell).

### Dependability

Dependability in qualitative studies is developed via an "audit trail" (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, 454). An audit trail documents the researchers' reasoning and decision making during the data collection and analysis processes. In order to demonstrate dependability in this study, the researcher established a detailed audit trail. All materials generated by the study (recordings, interview transcripts, field notes, data analysis) is stored in a secured file cabinet in my home office.

### Confirmability

Confirmability is addressed by tracking the researcher's interpretations back to the raw interview data, and other evidence gathered during the research process. In this

study, the researcher makes use of the audit trail to document my interpretations. The audit trail will include analytic memos, field notes, categories, thematic analysis, and member checking (Creswell, 1998).

Arminio and Hultgren (2002) posit that in phenomenological research “goodness is shown in the lived quality of the language and the deeper meaning brought forward by the researcher in conversation with the text” (p. 453). Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) concur and offer six elements for goodness that set an alternative standard for conducting research and for judging the quality of inquiry in the qualitative paradigm. The six elements and their relationship to this study includes: (a) epistemology and theory (constructivism and interpretivism), (b) methodology (phenomenology), (c) methods (interviews, biographical data, and artifacts), (d) the representation of voice (thick description, bracketing, and positionality), (e) interpretation and presentation (reflection, writing, and thematic analysis), and (f) recommendations (context and implications for practice).

#### Researcher Positionality

The purpose of the study was to explore the potential relationships between undergraduate student experiences while in the McNair Program and subsequent pursuit of an academic career. My interest in this topic stems from a long career at various levels of the educational pipeline. I began my career working in middle school education, helping middle school teachers prepare their students for college preparatory high schools. Later, I worked with programs to prepare minority and poor high school students

for college. Here, I elaborate further on my social identities and how they influenced my research study.

My engagement in my present study is primarily due to my experience serving as the Director of a McNair Program at an urban public doctoral degree granting institution in the Midwestern United States. In my role as a program administrator, I provided services and found ways to encourage low-income, first generation Caucasian and underrepresented minority college students to pursue doctoral degrees, and to ultimately enter faculty careers. For many years, I have served as an instructor, advisor, and friend, at the same time while pursuing a doctoral degree. Today, I have a strong interest in learning more about what meanings McNair Program participants take with them to their faculty roles and why. In other words, what meaning did they give to their undergraduate experiences in the program?

A few years ago, it seemed as though I was becoming a participant in my own McNair Program. Over the years, I've had the privilege of travelling with students to conferences and graduate schools across the U.S. On my own campus, I have conducted scores of workshops, and organized symposia and faculty talks on topics germane to graduate study and careers in academia. Because of these socialization activities I design, I've also become more interested in being a better doctoral student, researcher, and faculty member. This is different for me because my initial career aspiration five years ago was to be a mid-level college administrator. So perhaps, what also brings me to this inquiry is my own newfound aspirations to pursue an academic career.

I am a middle class, middle aged African American man. As such, I am a member of a group underrepresented in higher education. Therefore, I may have an insider view due to commonalities with study participants who are also from groups underrepresented in higher education. At the same time, no racial and social class group is monolithic. So, due to ethnic, cultural, geographical and historical differences I may be viewed as an outsider. These identities influence the research process of this study.

Educationally, I may share similarities with my participants. I am a first-generation college graduate who is pursuing a doctoral degree. As such, I may share similar views as my participants about what it is like to go through the higher educational system. Conversely, I have yet to complete the doctorate. Professionally, although I am a former McNair Program director, I am not a faculty member. I have preconceived notions about faculty and McNair Program participant experiences. I acknowledge that I have an affinity for my former program participants and the McNair community. I also assume that study participants may have a sense of obligation to participate in the study. As I conducted this study, I carefully negotiated insider/outsider and power dynamics with my participants throughout the research process. The phenomenological methodology required of me to continuously reflect and document the evolution of my role as a researcher.

### Limitations

#### Sample Procedures

There are several limitations in the sampling, data collection, and data analysis approaches chosen for this study.

1. First, the criteria for participant selection in this sample are limited to African American, Latino American, and Native American former McNair Program participants serving as college faculty. Therefore, no insights were gained from Caucasian and Asian McNair Program participants.
2. Second, the sample size, of 10–12 participants for this study is small and does not allow for generalizations beyond the findings of this study. Nonetheless, the size and composition of this sample are reflective of the guidelines for phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 1998; Jones et al., 2006).
3. Third, the participants in this sample may represent experiences from a variety of McNair Programs. On one hand, the varied experiences of this sample are a strength of this study because they may illuminate “. . . an essence or essences to shared experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 106). Yet, on the other hand, the shared experiences of the participants may be viewed as a limitation because program implementation and student experiences differ across McNair Programs. Accordingly, this study attempted to gather rich depictions of the journey to the professoriate for a small group of McNair Program alumni. It is not intended to capture the differences in all students or all McNair Programs.

### Researcher Bias

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003) “[q]ualitative researchers . . . reject the notion that bias can be eliminated, that anyone can be completely disinterested” (p. 51). However, there are a few limitations concerning data collection and data analysis for this study. In the data collection process, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews to

immerse himself in the everyday experiences of the participants (Jones, et al., 2006). Acting in the role of *researcher-as-instrument* is a strength of qualitative methodology but can also be viewed as a bias or a limitation (Jones, et al., 2006; Patton, 2002). As the researcher conducted his inquiry, he used the process known as “*bracketing*” whereby he consciously attempted to “set aside all [of my own] prejudgments . . . to obtain a picture of the [participants’] experience[s]” (Creswell, 1998, p. 52). The researcher used a journal, hoping to shed light on his own experiences and to present the unique stories of the participants.

During the data analysis process, the researcher extracted direct quotes from the transcriptions to illustrate the structure and meaning of the participants’ experiences. In addition, other strategies to reduce researcher bias, including member checking of transcript data and using a critical research peer to read and question interrelations and findings, were used. Finally, as this researcher acknowledges the limitations of this study, he is encouraged by a quote from Rossman and Rallis (2003) that goes: “no studies are perfect; that findings are tentative and conditional; that knowledge is elusive and approximate and that our claims should be humble, given the extraordinary complexity of the social world we want to learn about” (p. 134).

### Summary

This study uses a phenomenological methodology to explore the lived experiences of faculty of color who participated in a McNair Program as undergraduates. The aim of this study was to find out what they experienced, how they experienced it, and what the experiences meant to these individuals with respect to pursuing a faculty career. Each

participant was engaged in an in-depth interview as the primary source of data collection. As interview and other data are collected, they will undergo data analysis, as rooted in the phenomenological paradigm. The objective was to find similar patterns and themes. The overall goal was to produce effective findings in order to construct a phenomenology about the lived experiences of faculty of color who participated in a McNair Program as undergraduates.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents findings from personal artifacts and in-depth interviews with 12 faculty of color who participated in McNair Programs as undergraduate students at colleges across the United States. Thick descriptions of participants' experiences are used to offer insight into their motivation for participating in the McNair Program, what they retained from their experiences, and how those experiences shaped who they are today as faculty in higher education. The findings in this chapter are presented in relation to the six overarching research questions for this study:

1. What factors motivated current faculty of color who are alumni of the McNair Program to participate in the program while an undergraduate?
2. What do McNair alumni most remember about their experiences as a McNair Scholar during their undergraduate years? Why?
3. To what extent (and in what ways) do alumni believe their McNair Program experiences influenced their motivation for graduate study and/or a faculty career?
4. What non-McNair Program factors may have contributed to alumni pursuit of graduate study and/or a faculty career?
5. What lessons learned from the McNair Program are used by faculty of color in



6. their current positions as faculty? Why?
7. What recommendations do McNair Program faculty alumni offer to current McNair Scholars who want to pursue a faculty career?

In order to provide a context for the data and findings of this study, this researcher begins with a brief summary of the findings from the biographical information on the 12 study participants.

#### Findings from Participant Biographical Data

Eight of the twelve participants were female (five African American and three Latino American). The four remaining participants were male (two African American and two Latino American). All participants were full-time faculty with earned Ph.D.s—except one who was ABD. The tenure status and rank of the study participants are as follows: one tenured associate professor, nine tenured-track assistant professors, and two multi-year contract lecturers/instructors. A 15-year time span existed between the years of participation in the McNair Program. The earliest year of participation for this sample was 1987; the most recent was 2003.

Yvette is a recently tenured associate professor in a humanities discipline at Deep South University. She has been at her current institution for seven years. She was also recently promoted to department chair. Her undergraduate degree is from Interstellar University located in the West. She earned master's and doctoral degrees at a large public research university located in the Northeast. She actively serves as a mentor to McNair students at Deep South University and is African American.

Jose is an assistant professor in a humanities discipline at Independence University, a private university located in the Midwest. He recently started his first year of teaching at Independence University. He earned both his bachelor's and Ph.D. degrees from Explorer University, which is a large public research university located in the Midwest. Jose is Latino-American.

Rigoberto is employed as an instructor/lecturer under a multi-year contract at New England University, a public university located in the Northeast. He also earned bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees in a science discipline from New England University. In addition, Rigoberto serves as undergraduate advisor for his department. Currently, he serves as a faculty mentor to McNair students. Rigoberto is a Latino-American.

Dorothy is an instructor/lecturer at Coastal Community College, a two-year public college located in the Southwest. She has taught at the college level for six years and has been in her current position for just one year. She also serves as the program director in a social science department at Coastal. Dorothy participated in a McNair Program for one year at Journey University, a mid-sized private institution located in the East. She earned her bachelor's degree from a mid-sized public institution near Journey University. Dorothy is a doctoral candidate and has completed all requirement except the dissertation (ABD) for her Ph.D. She expects to complete the degree within the next six months. Dorothy is African American.

Elizabeth is an assistant professor in a social science discipline at Interstellar University, which is a public institution located in the West. She has been employed at

Interstellar for four years. Elizabeth holds a bachelor's degree from Supernova University where she participated in the McNair Program for one year. Supernova is located in the Midwest. Her Ph.D. is from a large private research institution in the Midwest. Elizabeth currently serves as a faculty mentor to McNair Program students at Interstellar. Elizabeth is African American.

Karen is a tenure-track assistant professor in a social science discipline at Plainfield University, a large public institution in the upper Midwest. Karen has been employed at Plainfield for four years. She earned her bachelor's and Ph.D. degrees from Origin University where she participated in the McNair Program for two years. Origin is located in the upper Midwest. Karen is African American.

Karina is a tenure-track assistant professor in a social science field, at Mid-America University, a large public research institution in the Midwest. She also graduated with a bachelor's degree from Stardust University where she participated in the McNair Program for two years. Karina has taught for three years. She holds a Ph.D. from a large public research institution in the upper Midwest. Karina also serves as a faculty mentor to McNair Program students. Karina is Latino American.

Melissa is a tenure-track assistant professor in a humanities discipline at Carver University. Carver is a large public university in the South. Melissa has been employed at Carver for five years. Her undergraduate degree is from Pathfinder University, which is located in the South, where she participated in the McNair Program for one year. Melissa earned her Ph.D. from a large university in the southern U.S. Melissa is African American.

Sonia is an assistant professor and teaches in a humanities discipline at Gulf State University. She has been employed at Gulf State two years. She earned a bachelor's degree from Stardust University where she participated in the McNair Program for two years. She earned master and Ph.D. degrees from a large public research university in the Midwest. She currently serves as a faculty mentor to McNair Program students at her university. Sonia is Latino American

Alma is an assistant professor in a social science discipline at Heartland University. She has been employed at Heartland for two years. Heartland is a large public research institution located in the Midwest. Alma participated in the McNair Program and received a bachelor's degree from Interstellar University, a large public institution in the West. Her Ph.D. is from a large public research institution located in the southwestern U.S. Alma is Latino American and mentors McNair Program students at her current institution.

Archie is a tenure-track assistant professor in a humanities discipline at Challenger University. He has been employed at Challenger for five years. Archie participated in the McNair Program at Challenger University for two years where he also earned his bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees. Challenger University is a large public research university located in the upper Midwest. Archie also mentors McNair Program participants at his current institution. Archie is African American.

Elijah is an assistant professor in a natural science field at Palm College. Palm is a two-year, public community college located in the South. He has been employed at Palm for nearly three years. Prior to working at Palm, Elijah worked as an assistant professor at

a large public research institution for seven years and in private industry for several years. Elijah earned his bachelor's degree from Challenger University and his Ph.D. from a large, private research institution in the Midwest—the same institution where Elizabeth earned her Ph.D.

Table 1 shows the bibliographical data of the 12 participants outlined in this study.

Table 1. Participant Biographical Data

<b>Name</b>	<b>Undergraduate Institution</b>	<b>Years of McNair Program Participation</b>	<b>Gender &amp; Ethnicity</b>	<b>Degree &amp; Discipline</b>	<b>Current Employer</b>	<b>Full-Time Teaching Experience (Years)</b>	<b>Rank/ Title</b>	<b>Tenure Status</b>
Alma	Interstellar	1996–1998	Female Latino American	Ph.D. Humanities	Heartland	5	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track
Archie	Challenger	1996–1998	Male African American	Ph.D. Humanities	Challenger	5	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track
Dorothy	Journey	2002–2003	Female African American	ABD Social Science	Coastal Community	6	Instructor /Lecturer	Tenure-Track
Elijah	Challenger	1989–1990	Male African American	Ph.D. Physical Science	Palm Community College	10	Professor	Contract Faculty
Elizabeth	Supernova	2000–2001	Female African American	Ph.D. Humanities	Interstellar	4	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track
Jose	Explorer	1999–2000	Male Latino American	Ph.D. Humanities	Independence	1	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track

Table 1. (Cont'd) Participant Biographical Data

<b>Name</b>	<b>Undergraduate Institution</b>	<b>Years of McNair Program Participation</b>	<b>Gender &amp; Ethnicity</b>	<b>Degree &amp; Discipline</b>	<b>Current Employer</b>	<b>Full-Time Teaching Experience (Years)</b>	<b>Rank/ Title</b>	<b>Tenure Status</b>
Karen	Origin	1992–1994	Female African American	Ph.D. Social Sciences	Plainfield	4	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track
Karina	Stardust	1999–2002	Female Latino American	Ph.D. Social Science	Mid-America	3	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track
Melissa	Pathfinder	1999–2000	Female African American	Ph.D. Humanities	Carver	5	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track
Rigoberto	Geospace	1998–1999	Male Latino American	Ph.D. Earth Science	New England	2	Instructor/Lecturer	Contract Faculty
Sonia	Stardust	2000–2002	Female Latino American	Ph.D. Social Science	Gulf State	2	Assistant Professor	Tenure-Track
Yvette	Interstellar	1987–1988	Female African American	Ph.D. Humanities	Deep South	7	Associate Professor	Tenured

## Findings from the Interview Data

### Motivation to Participate in the McNair Program in College

Initially, this researcher wanted to learn more about participant motivation to join the McNair Program as undergraduates. A compelling interest was to ascertain the participant's aspirations to academic career paths prior to entering the program. The first research question asked, *What factors motivated current faculty of color who are alumni of the McNair Program to participate in the program while an undergraduate?*

The four themes that emerged are:

1. Seeking to maximize their college education.
2. Participating in multiple research opportunities.
3. Getting a Ph.D.: A new focus.
4. Referrals by students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

### Seeking to Maximize College Education

So, who were these 12 individuals? Why did they join the McNair Program and at what point in their college careers did they decide to get involved? This researcher's analysis of the interview data revealed that this group was diverse in age. Participants' ages ranged from their late twenties through early forties. Participants in this sample were motivated, loved school, and sought to maximize their education. These individuals learned about and joined the program, typically in their junior year in college. Some participants were bored with their studies; some felt isolated on campus; and some did not feel ready for graduate school or the job market.



One participant, Yvette, a self proclaimed “military brat” and an older transfer student, explained her feelings about school and provided a sense of why she joined the McNair Program:

. . . as someone who was very motivated who’d come from a small liberal arts school and had life experience, I was very enthusiastic about my work. I loved school. I let everybody know I loved school . . . . As I understood it, the program was designed for people like me who loved school but did not really know how to go about maximizing their opportunities.

Another participant, Melissa, described what it was like to be at a critical point in her college education when she joined the McNair Program:

. . . I was in the initial class at my university, and I was getting close to graduation and I realized that I was not ready to go into the job market and so I had to reevaluate what it was that I wanted to do . . . and I saw this advertisement in the school newspaper about this McNair Program that would help underrepresented groups pursue graduate study . . . and I had been thinking about graduate study anyway but I didn’t really know much about it . . . the ad said something about . . . all these characteristics of what the program could do. And I was like that’s what I need. That is what I need right there. Because I knew that I wanted to go on that path but I had no idea how to get there . . . [S]o I immediately filled out the application, got my letters of recommendation and I knew that was something that was going to help me get to, or figure out, the next step of my career.

Elizabeth, who was a traditional-aged freshman in college at the time, was seeking a challenge. Elizabeth was having a tough time connecting to the classes in her major. Most of her media classes were large lecture classes. Moreover, she found professors in the department to be distant. However, she liked the way that one female media professor dressed and presented herself in class. Elizabeth went to visit the professor during office hours. The professor offered little career advice but referred Elizabeth to the McNair Program, program director at Supernova University. Elizabeth’s story tells how and why she joined the McNair Program:

. . . So, I talked to [the Director] on the phone, she . . . [told] me about the McNair Program, about research . . . [and I thought] that sounds interesting but I [I also wanted to] study abroad. . . . She set me up with an interview. . . . [R]ight after the interview they told me welcome to the McNair Scholars Program and . . . I [thought] I'[d] try it out instead of going abroad. I fell in love with it. I had my first mentor and I was like you mean to tell me that I could spend the rest of my life reading and thinking and people would pay me for it and all I have to do is teach some classes and I could have the summers off? So for a 19-year-old that just, I was like sign me up—I'm . . . [done]. (laughs)

Alma participated in a debate team at a two-year college prior to transferring to Interstellar University. She recounted how she experienced the desire for a different way of learning—a desire for something more:

. . . after I went away and then came back um, I really felt like it was such a regurgitation model of learning. . . . I wanted something more than just taking in information, acquiring it and spitting it out. And what debate did for me is actually encourage me to play with ideas and actually encourage me to cross pollinate ideas and encourage me to think beyond my classes. So I didn't just go read my poli sci book; I read my poli sci book and then I read the critiques of my poli sci book. And then I read the novels and the memoirs and the things that my poli sci book was based on because for debate I needed that . . . So, it encouraged me not to see the classroom as the boundaries of my learning; it encouraged me to see my learning as so much bigger.

#### Getting a Ph.D.: A New Focus

In learning about participants' motivation for joining the program, this researcher asked participants probing questions about their own academic and careers goals in relation to the program's goals. Overall, I found that most participants, as undergraduates, had little knowledge about the Ph.D. degree or about careers in college teaching and research. Participants held a spectrum of views about the goals of the McNair Program but most understood that the primary goal of the program was to select a Ph.D. path. Also, participants' own academic and career goals varied at the time of joining the

program. The McNair Program recruitment interview was particularly helpful in clarifying the program goals, as well as the participants' own goals.

Jose reflected on his motivation for joining the program at a critical point in his college career:

. . . I still knew so little about what exactly you had to do to go to grad school. . . . So as they were starting to tell me the goals, as those were becoming my goals I saw that it was in my interest to join. Because . . . I think I would've joined at that point if I would've been steered toward maybe another program I maybe might've joined that as well in addition to this. I was now at that point starting to need help or figure out how it is one goes about going to grad school since multiple professors by that point—maybe four or five—had all told me I should go to grad school. But no one had sat down with me and even laid out the steps that one needs to take in order to go, actually be admitted into a graduate program.

Similarly, Sonia reminisced about meeting Ms. P., a McNair Program alumna, who returned to Stardust University to work as a college advisor:

. . . [Ms P.] went off to do her first year of graduate work at some university far away and then just couldn't deal with the distance and so she came back home to Texas . . . so the McNair folks helped her get a job in the education department as a counselor . . . [I arranged an appointment to see her] . . . She asked me the classic: 'have your parents gone to college?' I'm like no. Um, 'you wanna get your PhD?' Yes. 'Are your parents from a low socioeconomic background?' I'm like yes. She's like 'gimme a second.' She calls the director of McNair and it just so happened they extended the deadline by like a week. And so she got me in just in the nick of time. I turned in all of my paperwork right before I had to and that's [it] . . .

Alma talked about the McNair Program recruitment interview when the staff asked her about her academic and career aspirations. As this researcher and her sat at the dining room table in her home, Alma said:

. . . so, I went there and I had an interview and the questions they were asking me were very tender like for me. Like . . . why did you decide to pursue college and stuff. And I remember like crying in my interview . . . (chuckles) and um, I just remember like no one's asked me these questions before.

As Alma spoke, tears formed in the wells of her eyes. She quickly wiped her eyes and continued to talk for a few minutes more about her educational experiences. In those days, Alma remembered feeling as though she had “fallen through the cracks” and that participating in the speech and debate team, previously, at the community college “. . . was picking up where [her] undergraduate education . . . [left] off.”

The researcher asked Alma about her tearful response when speaking about the McNair Program recruitment interview:

LF: Can I take you back to something I noticed when you were talking about the interview for the McNair Program?

Alma: Yeah.

LF: It seemed like you got a little misty-eyed there.

Alma: (laughs) I did.

LF: Why? What was that about?

(Brief pause) (Tears form in Alma’s eyes again)

Alma: Um . . . (Begins crying softly)

LF: . . . it’s ok. I did notice that.

Alma: It took a lot for me to believe I could be something else. It took a lot of ignoring of so many things to even say out loud ‘I wanna be a professor.’ I mean that wasn’t, that’s not meant for people like me. . . . Yeah. You know and so I think it took me back to that place where like I had to completely ignore what people expected of me, I had to ignore what people thought was right for me. I had to rethink who I thought I was in that moment. Because up until, you know . . . like I would consider myself a late bloomer educationally. And so (laughs) um, for me it was like that is the moment I stood up for myself. Where I believed in myself before anybody else would.

Another participant, Melissa, was *absolutely* sure that the program's goals were a match with her own personal, academic, and career goals. She decided to go on to graduate school to pursue a master's degree. Melissa talked with faculty during her junior year about her academic aspirations but didn't get the answers she needed. She recalled, ". . . I don't know that I was in search of something else to give me those answers but the [Program] kinda fell in my lap and I instantly knew that that's what I needed." Melissa, like Yvette, Dorothy, and Jose, knew nothing about the difference between the master's and the Ph.D., but her goal was to find out. Nonetheless, she was convinced, like the others participants, that the McNair Program could help her.

Prior to joining the program, most participants wanted to become school teachers. This was a clear career goal for most participants because they didn't know about the Ph.D. degree. For example, Archie, an older transfer student, talked about his career goal to become a high school teacher, but his college mentor had another goal in mind. According to Archie "...he um, really wanted me to go to graduate school. I did not wanna go to graduate school. I had planned on simply going to....get a bachelor's degree and go teach high school English. That was my goal."

Similarly, another participant, Dorothy, understood that the goals of the program were to ". . . help underrepresented students go on to graduate school and get a graduate degree. Not just a graduate degree but a doctoral degree." However, Dorothy didn't feel that the goals of the program matched her own because ". . . at the time I was, I thought I was just going to be a school teacher. You know I just wanted to be a school teacher."

Alma, Karen, and Sonia thought about becoming college professors prior to joining the program but didn't know how to go about it. Sonia, who was a transfer student from a two-year college, knew that she "wanted to be a history professor . . . because she didn't like the thought of teaching high school. . . ." She thought that she had to become an education major, earn a Ph.D., teach high school, and only then could she become a college professor. She learned from a counselor in the education department at her school that she didn't need a Ph.D. to teach high school nor did she need to teach high school to become a college professor.

The McNair Program helped to clarify and cement these possibilities for some participants. For example, Karina stated:

. . . it helped focus my goals because I was still, wasn't quite sure whether I wanted to get a Ph.D. and go into graduate school. But knowing that that's what the goals of the program were and knowing that as a sophomore I was going to say yes this is what I'm going to do for graduate school it helped cement that focus.

#### Referrals by Faculty, Staff, and Alumni

An analysis of the interview data revealed that many participants' decisions to join the program were also influenced by their interactions with faculty, McNair Program alumni, and staff. Yvette shared her experience about how and why she joined the program:

I worked in the academic advising office and . . . the director of academic advising knew about the McNair Program and she [also] knew about my passion for higher education. So she told me about it in passing, 'oh you know you'd be a great candidate for the McNair Program.' Oh great, ok. Kinda blew it off and worked for the next couple of weeks. And then she says 'well have you gone to check out the McNair Program yet?' And I said no. And she says 'well you can't work another day until you go and find out about the McNair Program.' So I went to find out about the

program. It turns out it was wonderful timing. They were . . . doing intake. And so once I learned about it, once they learned about me, filled out the application and . . . found a match, a very interesting match.

Dorothy talked about how another McNair Scholar discovered her:

. . . a former McNair Scholar who lived in my [residence hall] . . . was taking classes with me at college and . . . she . . . mentioned to me that there was a program going on at another school that took students from our school as well. As she got the sense that I was a good student and I was into research and that I would be into it. So then, I . . . I met with [the Director] at the time and did the application and then I remember the interview process and that's how I got in.

Karina, remembered that a psychology professor who had overseen a scholarship she received at Stardust University told her about the McNair Program:

He told me about the McNair Program, said I should go try for it and that I could work with him. So that's the only reason I would've known. So I went and applied. Heard . . . what it was all about. I was a sophomore in undergrad . . . I was tentative about trying to get into it because I was also toying with the idea of either going into psychology for graduate school or being a lawyer. And so I wasn't sure about which one I wanted to do yet because I was still a sophomore. And the McNair staff let me know basically if you are applying for this program you need to be sure that you wanna go to graduate school. And so I took a chance and I said I would try and I ended up getting in.

Likewise, Jose had never heard of the McNair Program until he took a class with, a sociologist who was closely connected with the Program. “. . . I was talking to a lot of my professors at that point already in my undergraduate education . . . [H]e recommended that I apply to the program . . . I was already exploring [the idea of going to graduate school].”

### Summary

The decision to participate in the McNair Program was influenced by a number of elements. First, this diverse group of participants included academically motivated

college students. Most joined during their junior year. Nonetheless, they joined the program seeking more intellectual challenge because they were feeling isolated or because they felt under prepared for a job or graduate study. Participants entered the program and similar opportunities to fill a void. Second, the recruitment interview was often mentioned by participants as the moment when the goals of the program became clear—to get a Ph.D. and to become college professors. Although most wanted to become school teachers, participants committed to the goals of the program whether they matched their own or not—at the time. The program helped to confirm their own developing aspirations and motivations for advanced study and, perhaps even teaching at the college level. Third, the decision to participate in the program was also inspired by professionals in the college environment. Faculty, staff, and, current McNair Program alumni had informal conversations about the potential match between the program and the talents of these 12 individuals.

#### The Most Memorable McNair Program Experiences

The second research question asked, *What do McNair alumni most remember about their experiences as a McNair Scholar during their undergraduate years and why?*

This section presents key findings that depict the experiences that were most memorable for the 12 faculty as they reflected back on their participation in the McNair Program.

Five themes emerged from the memorable experiences that McNair Program alumni had during their undergraduate years. They were categorized as:

1. Rewarding and recognizing intellectual labor.
2. Becoming the person that you admired.



3. Feeling they cared about us, like family.
4. Feeling a sense of normalcy, love, and camaraderie.
5. Feeling more prepared for graduate school than for a faculty career.

#### Rewarding and Recognizing Intellectual Labor

All participants in the study recounted that the McNair Program contributed to their success toward getting into graduate school. They felt the program provided professional development, and rewarded and recognized their intellectual accomplishments publicly and often. Participants felt that they contributed to the success of the program through their hard work.

For example, Jose earned all As by his junior year in college. He started having ongoing conversations with faculty about the possibility of graduate study. He reports:

I don't really attribute my undergraduate success to the McNair Program because at the point where I joined it, I was on the path to grad school. I was almost there. . . . I attribute my success to getting into grad school to the McNair Program.

Melissa was also a successful college student. She felt that the program was helpful in providing guidance on how to get into graduate school:

Well I think I was a pretty determined student anyway. But . . . I was kind of floating in the wind. I didn't, I knew what I was trying to get to but I didn't know how to get there. And I don't think without the McNair Program I would've had the guidance that I needed. . . . But here I am going into my senior year, I had no idea how to do any of this stuff.

Dorothy felt similarly to Jose and Melissa. She said:

. . . I would've been successful without the McNair Program. But they had mentoring; they were mentoring you. They had you working on research, which is probably something I probably wouldn't have had a chance to do if I weren't in the McNair Program. Because at that time I don't know if they had any summer undergraduate programs. Maybe they did, but I didn't know about it. So having the chance to do that—when I got to graduate school I knew how to summarize an

article, for example. I mean I just did very well at it. You know and I think I even had a professor say you know ‘why is it that you’re able to do this so well?’ And I’m like hey, I was in the McNair Program. You know, back in the day I was like ‘I was in the McNair Program.’ You know we did this. We had to like read an article and summarize it and figure out the key points. You know so they train you to do that kind of stuff.

On the other hand, Yvette emphatically stated:

. . . McNair is totally responsible for my success. And yeah, I would’ve figured it out and I was committed and I was hungry and I was passionate and I came with a skill set . . . But it was the McNair Program that gave me the specific tools to pull all of those different skill sets together to be effective as an academic.

Jose recollected about his McNair Program’s emphasis on undergraduate research experiences and conference presentations. He also shared how he experienced the recognition and reward from the program for his intellectual accomplishments as a McNair Program participant in college:

I was one of the hardest workers and they uh, recognized that right away. And I remember several events that I was able to participate in that not everybody qualified for. And I thought that was very . . . impressive to me that they recognized my labor . . . and . . . at the end of my first summer internship my paper was selected for a graduate school conference . . . at the University of Texas at Austin, which then and still now has one of the best [graduate programs in my discipline]in the country . . . but I was an undergraduate. I applied, they liked the work, and I was accepted. And of course I went to my director and said ‘I’ve been accepted to this . . . and I remember my director . . . was so excited that I got accepted . . . he said . . . ‘whatever Jose needs let’s help him’ . . . they were all excited . . . delighted with the work, they received notes from other professors saying ‘this student is doing excellent work. This is very good.’ And I think it was clear to me too . . . that there is a degree of wash . . . that is . . . [my McNair Program] recognized that . . . I worked so hard and the work was coming out well that I made the program look really good too . . . When I . . . present[ed] papers . . . professors . . . would always say this is a McNair [student] . . . so I was making the program look really good and they were very happy with that; that I just kept doing better and better and better . . . so they rewarded me and I thanked them and . . . I continued to work hard. The harder I worked the more I was recognized. So it was . . . wonderful, to this day my picture is up I think on the wall . . . [to signify that] he’s kept doing what the program was designed to do; he’s kept going too. He’s kept going.

### Becoming the Person That You Admired

Participants' experiences unveiled a myriad of personal lessons that have stayed with them. The most memorable had connotations of becoming like the people they admired—becoming a scholar. Elizabeth said:

. . . in general [I remember] the importance of discipline and meeting deadlines. It's not natural; it's a skill that's acquired. When someone pushes you and forces you to meet them—no excuses, just get it done. That sort of thing . . . You know so that kind of tough love-ish; do you want it or not? . . . You don't have to be smart. Because I've been to graduate school; everybody ain't smart. It's just how badly you want it? . . . I didn't have that when I was in school. And all my personal statements from McNair said I wanted to be the person that I couldn't study with . . . [and that means] I didn't know any young, black female faculty that I could really be honest with, shoot the breeze with and would force me to be my best self. But now I am that person . . .

Alma selected a faculty mentor who was held in high regard in his own discipline.

Alma explained that her mentor provided excellent mentoring in terms of modeling scholarship in her discipline. However, she would have liked more advice on pursuing advanced study and other matters. Alma said . . . she learned that sometimes, “you become the teacher you wish you had.”

Yvette recalled an early lesson about what it means to be a scholar:

. . . Well I laugh because it's so embarrassing...I was *so* into being a McNair scholar. I'm a McNair scholar. I thought I was somebody. So the personal experience . . . was, when I was in the McNair Program . . . we'd been pumped up like 'you are . . . this elite fighting force like the A-Team.' Like 'yeah, you know you are McNair scholars and you are going to go in and conquer.' And I was just like yeah, I'm a McNair scholar . . . So all I remember it was a comparative literature course . . . whew . . . I was McNair scholar and I was going to represent . . . So I get up there and I had spent so much time in the structure of thinking of myself as a scholar and I really didn't have a lot of time to process the meanings and different interpretations of these texts and things like that. So I got up there and I did an instructive presentation that was really condescending, at best. And it was a disaster. And the little chick after me, and I do mean chick . . . [a] little blond haired, surfer dude girl in some flip flops and shorts went up and gave the

most profound and beautiful interpretation of these texts—pulling out all sorts of stuff. And she wasn't instructing nobody; she was just thinking out loud. And I was humiliated because I'd learned too well that being a McNair scholar set me aside. And that lesson, even though it was outside of a McNair classroom, humbled me in a way to really make me appreciate what McNair *did* give me and what it didn't. A doctoral degree, a Ph.D., letters behind your name, doesn't mean you are intellectually a giant. It means that you have letters behind your name. It wasn't about getting the Ph.D. for the letters. She taught me, the little girl in flip flops and shorts, taught me that it was about exploring knowledge.

Sonia, summarized the most memorable personal lessons in one word, “tenacity.”

She remembered taking the GRE multiple times and felt highly dissatisfied with the results each time. Sonia received encouragement to retake the exam from her partner, the McNair directors, and others in her support network. Sonia shared a personal lesson about taking the GRE that she connected to aspects of being a college professor at her current institution:

. . . [in college] one of my fellow McNair students that came into the program with me got such a high score that she started to teach in the class. And there was a moment of tension there for me because I was like who is she to teach me? . . . So there was an awkwardness but the minute I was able to get over that I learned from her and I took that test over again and it taught me to just keep doing it you know. . . . Rejection is big right now as a faculty member. (laughs) I think when you submit articles...when you submit for job applications. . . . So you have to deal with a lot more no's before you get a yes. And I think that's what definitely I learned from McNair . . . [S]ometimes those yeses come in like leaps and bounds. When I applied for graduate school I applied to 12 programs thinking I'd not get into one. I not only got into one; I got into all the other ones, all eleven. . . . And I was just like dumbfounded. So that . . . taught me that don't let those demons take over and let them stop you because who knows what other, what things lay ahead.

Rigoberto remembered how the McNair Program staff greeted participants in his program:

. . . I think just the fact that while you're in McNair the key . . . I guess—I don't wanna say brainwashing you—but they keep instilling in your brain the fact that you can achieve and you can be a doctor. . . . Like I was at an awards ceremony and you know they always address you by Dr. So-and-so, right? Dr. So-and-so.

And I think that little . . . positive reinforcement it just helps you along the way that you can achieve it. Alright? Even though it might take seven, eight years or so, it's a long journey and you know you can do it. . . . I learned from the McNair [Program] that I was and I am capable of doing this stuff. Even though you're along that journey, you feel like you don't know what you're doing. You feel like you're not smart enough. You know you're not . . . like other colleagues that you're around. But you can do it. It's just a matter of . . . Find[ing] the perfect support system and just achieving.

Rigoberto goes on to share another memorable lesson from the program:

. . . I think one of the things I learned was, to be honest I love to do research but under my own terms. . . . I [became] interested in understanding why I and my family immigrated to America but [I] put it through a research component. And then I did that and then the other, for my Ph.D. then I began doing things like uh, churches. Like I'd grown up in church all my life; you know my dad's a pastor, I had missionaries come through the house, you know people I can read in books—I can say that person was in my house. Right? And all of a sudden it just clicked with me why not look at something I do kinda like on a personal level, but look at it from a research perspective; as an insider looking at it. . . . But I think the lesson is just that passion that I got from McNair about researching and the stuff I always done about researching things that I love.

#### They Cared About Us: Like Family

Study participants revealed that relationships with faculty, students, and staff associated with the McNair Program. In a hotel conference room after her presentation to a group of McNair Program students, Yvette sat down with this researcher and described what she remembered most about the caring nature of her relationship with her McNair Program, program director:

. . . it was her passion and her joy at our successes that made us like I would do anything for her. I wanted her to be proud of us. She gave so much. I mean she was just, she had it all figured out, she was tight. And it's funny, as I say that I still have the portfolio—Interstellar University, McNair Scholars Program—that I was given on graduation. . . . I've been carrying this thing since 1999; it's now 2010. It's very functional. But I carry that with pride because my relationship with my director was she showed all of us. I remember she took, you know we were on a trip—our first trip-[years ago] . . . and it turns out years later as a graduate student and as a faculty member on two different occasions I was at that

same . . . [place with my] students. And it was just this like surreal experience because it made me understand how much she cared about us; how much she really wanted us to succeed.

Jose conveyed the nature of the relationship with his McNair Program advisor:

I think that there was a caring quality to the program . . . and someone like [my McNair advisor] where you felt like he cared about you on that level. Even though he was responsible to get you to do your work and stuff . . . I think maybe I probably still keep some of that.

Karen shared her experiences with her McNair program:

Well . . . a general idea or thought is that they took very good care of us. I mean I got on my first airplane because of being in the McNair Program . . . [my Director] told me ‘oh, you’re going to the African American Women on Tour concert.’ Terry McMillan was speaking . . . We went to California and they gave us spending money. It was like \$60 but I was like I’m loaded. You know? . . . I mean you know it was just crazy. I’m like where are you guys getting all this money from? Doing all this stuff; feeding us, going to McNair conferences. At the end of you know the summer or whatever, you know how you take part in the 8 week whatever—you gotta present your research—that was helpful. They had classes and stuff. I mean it was just, they just took very, very good care of us . . . I mean it was helpful, especially with them giving us all these kinds of experiences. I mean I grew up in the inner city so having the chance to go to some big you know, I guess—I don’t know if it was a national conference—but you know just going to like a big conference and you know seeing other people who were being successful; other you know African American or minority college students at the McNair conference.

At a crowded café inside a popular bookstore near her university campus, Melissa described the relationship she developed with other McNair Program participants, faculty mentors, or staff that still continues today. She spoke highly of her first faculty mentor in the McNair Program. She described her relationship with him as “endearing.” She went on to say:

I studied with [him] for the summer program and he has been in my corner ever since. I talk with him on a regular basis. What is this . . . Ten? Almost eleven years later. He has been awesome . . . not just in terms of professionalization, you know reading my applications, writing letters of recommendation—he does all of

that too . . . but after I moved on to graduate program, my Master's program, I had a time adjusting to, we'll say, the rigors of graduate school . . . I had a faculty member who believed in hazing other African American graduate students. . . . And so I went through that . . . And at that point, it moved from just being a mentoring relationship to more of a very personal investment in my success. . . . I get the sense that . . . I'm part of his inner circle, as he calls it . . . he that [other scholars in the field] . . . know who I am and if I need anything that I am to be taken care of because I'm his student.

On a restaurant patio where loud pop music played in the background, another participant, Sonia, smiled as she described her relationships with the staff in her McNair Program at Stardust University. She talked about three women: the director, the coordinator, and an academic advisor in her McNair Program. She described the director as her “grandmother” and the coordinator as her “tough momma.” I asked Sonia what she took away from the staff in her McNair program:

Sonia: Oh . . . what's the word? Support, unconditional support. Even if [tough momma] was hard on us, even if I knew that she was like disappointed I knew it was a good thing. You know she was like ‘you don't wanna disappoint your mom because you know she loves you and you know she knows you can do more.’ And so when [tough momma] would give you the ‘let's go talk in the office’ it was like she knows I'm not doing 100% of what I should be doing and I've disappointed her. And then you realize yourself that you haven't been doing what you're supposed to be doing. And so I think from all of them I learned unconditional love and unconditional support.

#### A Sense of Normalcy, Love, and Camaraderie

A sense of normalcy, love, and camaraderie was the fourth theme that emerged in response to the second research question regarding the most memorable experiences during undergraduate participation in the McNair Program. This theme uncovered the lasting imprints of specific McNair Program activities or events left on the study

participants. Yvette reminisced about feelings of normalcy and camaraderie during her time in the program:

. . . I felt a part of a team. I felt a part of that development that I wasn't in it by myself; that I learned from my peers and I grew and they challenged me and we asked each other questions . . . it made me feel normal. For the first time I felt normal. I wasn't just you know some geeky you know 'there she goes again, off with her head in the clouds asking questions' . . . it really comes down to understanding identity and ideas. And just being in that collective was a very powerful experience for me . . . the ethic of caring was central to my [college] experience. But it was, I think . . . it made me feel normal. Like a normalcy. Academic achievement as a norm. Because my family cares about me, I care about them, I love them. They don't know about what it means to write a journal article and have to revise and resubmit or be terrified about taking the GRE or why I'm still in school eight years later. You know so the relationships that I had with McNair people was definitely a caring relationship but it was one grounded in understanding; normalizing the process of being an academic and also identifying. There's a difference between sympathy and empathy. You know some people sympathize. My family sympathized with me that I was going through all these traumas and you know, especially through graduate school. But there was an empathy that you know the McNair scholars and I experienced together about understanding intimately the struggle.

Yvette continued vividly describing the camaraderie she felt as she traveled with a fellow McNair Program scholar:

. . . He was a Mexican kid from east LA who'd never been out of east LA. And I had been everywhere but like grad school . . . We drove cross country together after our McNair summer. We figured out we . . . could go at the same time. We drove cross-country together to graduate school. And it was one of the best experiences. We were both scared out of our wits but we had been through this McNair experience together and we were going to graduate school. We literally cried half the way. We cried all the way through Texas because we were so scared. And I dropped him off in DC and then I drove up to Massachusetts. But I had somebody to experience this with. . . .

Similarly, Alma reflected upon the feeling of love and camaraderie at the large student conferences that highlighted the undergraduate research of McNair Program participants:



I remember going to my very first academic conference- it was the national McNair conference—and I believe it was in Wisconsin. . . . Yeah . . . I just never remembered feeling so much love and camaraderie. Because we weren't there based on um, our academic fields; we were there because we were all in the same place. And so it was really powerful to me, students like me from all around the country you know . . . I mean I just actually um, ran into my McNair presentation (chuckles) my very first one—like when I told my partner . . . that you were coming out and he's like 'look what I found in the . . . ' you know in the garage. And I'm like oh my God, it's hilarious.

Sonia reflected on her experiences in her McNair Program:

. . . we used to . . . have weekly meetings or bi-weekly meetings . . . a time where all the McNair students would get together and there would be a topic covered . . . God knows what the topic was—it might've been . . . the stressors of graduate school or [the] GRE. But it was a time where all of a sudden you're in a room with people that were like you, that had the same fears, the same anxieties, the same self-doubt and you could actually get it out. You know? And then it also helped to see other people succeed. . . . So those weekly meetings I think were fabulous.

Karina keenly remembered how the program facilitated her attendance at various conferences, which helped her network with leading scholars in the discipline she now teaches:

. . . I think the biggest positive would be the conferences; that's the thing I remember the most. So I went to McNair [student] conferences and then when I was a senior the McNair Program helped pay for me to go to [discipline-based] conferences so I went to two. I changed [majors] right before my senior year . . . got a new mentor, started a new research project. Then she suggested—my new mentor suggested—I go to two discipline-based conferences . . . and my new mentor set me up with helping me network that basically cemented the idea of me going to graduate school for [the discipline that I teach now] and then she'd also introduced me to the people I needed to go work with. . . . So it was a specific niche of studying [my current lines of inquiry], which got me interested. And so she . . . introduced me to her friends and colleagues- in [the field] . . . and told me this is who I think you'd be most comfortable with, these are the people I think you need to work with. And talking to them, I changed my idea of which schools I was going to apply for . . . I think with the McNair Program . . . I had the networking of talking to my first faculty mentor. He got me into the program and then from then it just seemed like everybody was connected that led me to where I am now . . . Basically, they helped connect all the dots. They let me know how to

network, the importance of networking, importance of presenting at conferences for what I wanted to do in graduate school and in the profession. And then I was able to get support from the McNair Program and then go and find those people I needed to know.

### Feeling More Prepared for Graduate School Than for a Faculty Career

Surprisingly, only a few participants recalled specific ways that the McNair Program prepared them for the realities of a faculty career. Some had an array of thoughts about what the program did and did not do with respect to preparing them for a faculty career. Jose explained what the program did and didn't do for him:

. . . I think our program . . . was sort of encouraging us to go to grad school. They were taking students who professors had identified . . . funnel[ed] into the program . . . [and] . . . identified these students as people who would do well or could go on to grad school . . . I really saw what some of the professors did at my school but I really didn't know what they did. I didn't know what it took to write a book. I didn't really know what it takes to conduct research by yourself for days and hours on end. I didn't know how alienating the work could be . . . So it's almost like, I don't think McNair could fully prepare us for life as a faculty member or even life in grad school. I think they can only give us the best means to get there and give us some tips on what others have experienced—some experience.

Archie thought the program laid a good foundation for graduate study, and that it couldn't, and shouldn't, do much more to prepare students for faculty careers:

. . . the way that I've experienced the McNair/SROP Program and the way that I think about it is that it's to prepare minority undergraduates for the rigors of doing graduate level research and writing. And . . . I think that . . . it's too much of a jump . . . [to] go . . . from an undergraduate experience [that is] know is going to prepare you for a faculty position. There's a whole host of other things that has to prepare one for a faculty position. I think that McNair can play a major role by giving you a solid foundation as a budding researcher early on. But that's the extent of it. But that being said, I think that the McNair/SROP Program . . . played a major role because as an undergraduate I knew how to conduct research. I knew how to formulate academic arguments. And more than anything I think that, well not more than anything but probably most significantly, it taught me how to write you know in the academic sense. I could write as an English major but to write you know as a researcher was something else. So my McNair/SROP paper that I

started working on the summer of 1996 eventually became my Ph.D. . . . So it just kept building. It was like a series of bricklaying . . . my undergraduate degree, Master's program, conferences, publications as a graduate student . . . it's kinda like a pyramid; you know you just kept building up. You know so it's not one piece. I don't think it's fair to put the onus on McNair/SROP Program for preparing a faculty member. It's an entire constellation thing.

Melissa remembered that she didn't think the program itself prepared her for an academic career, but more so her McNair Program faculty mentor, who assumed that role. She said:

No. But . . . I don't think that's a bad thing. I think we had enough on our plates just being prepared to go into graduate school. So I wasn't even thinking about what it meant to actually be at the other end of that. And I don't think I was ready to think about being at the other end of that. So, I don't think that that's necessarily a bad thing that they didn't prepare us—in terms of my participation in the program. Because, as I mentioned before, my mentor has kind of taken up that role. He has made sure that I know what I need to know, I know things that I probably don't need to know about being a faculty member. Not just you know being professional and promotion in tenure but the politics of being a faculty member. A faculty member of color. Being a woman. You know what that means and how I'm going to be treated and how I need to deal with that sort of thing when I'm in the profession. So while the McNair Program itself didn't prepare me, I feel like my mentor, as an extension of that experience, absolutely has, and continues (chuckles) to do that.

Dorothy didn't make the connection that her program participation was in preparation for a faculty career. She knew she wanted a Ph.D., and needed to do research before joining the McNair Program. Dorothy recalled that the programmatic offerings of the McNair Program at Journey University heavily emphasized research, but emphasized teaching to a lesser degree:

I didn't realize that getting a Ph.D. meant becoming a college professor. I had never made that link. I understood that you'd get, you'd do research and that would get your doctorate degree but I didn't understand that that meant that you went and then taught at the college level. So, and I don't remember that coming, I don't know if it was just me in the McNair Program—I wasn't aware of that connection—but I guess I wasn't aware of it until later on until we started talking

about you know teaching at the college level. Even when I got to graduate school . . . it all started to come together and make sense that first semester—‘oh, you’re here to become a faculty member.’ I knew I wanted the Ph.D. because I wanted to do the research but again that faculty teaching connection wasn’t there for me. I can’t say that it was the program’s fault though; it must’ve been me off in la-la land not making those connections. I can’t, I mean we talked a lot. We went to so many workshops on research and presenting. I guess I was so focused on the research aspect of it I didn’t see the connection to actual college faculty teaching.

Karina thought that the McNair Program at Interstellar University made efforts to prepare participants for the realities of a faculty career:

. . . They tried to, I think they tried to have speakers and talks for us and even showed us a video [*Shattering the Silences*] I think about demands we might have being a faculty member that was from a racial and ethnic minority group. . . . So we had an idea that that would be what we might have to deal with. Um, also my two McNair mentors that I had in undergrad also gave me an idea of what the challenges were, what I needed to do. . . . They would let me know basically like what they did in their job, which is probably the hardest part to figure out. What does it mean to be a professor? It’s not just about teaching. What does it mean to do the research? Get involved at the university; get involved at the professional level. And what are some of the challenges? . . . I didn’t get the [full] tenure discussion probably until graduate school. They didn’t wanna worry me too much in undergrad . . . [b]ecause for [undergraduates] it’s still hard to even understand what graduate school will mean.

Alma, also felt that the program better prepared her for graduate study than for a faculty career.

I found myself head and shoulders above um, above my peers in regards to presenting papers and getting my intellectual ideas out there and networking at conferences, entering into an intellectual discussion; you know those kinds of things students were not professionalized at the level that I was because I had been doing it since I was a sophomore. I don’t know if I think the McNair Program is necessarily connected to my role as a faculty as much as I believe that it made me the best possible doctoral candidate that I could be.

Finally, Elizabeth talked at length about her experiences in the academy. She spoke emphatically and at great length about the challenges of teaching in the classroom, the political dynamics among her colleagues in her department, and getting tenure. She

also discussed the future of higher education and future career plans. Elizabeth reflected on whether she felt the program prepared her for the academy:

No . . . But I don't, but I don't blame them . . . Because things have changed. The game has changed. I mean a friend, he's . . . I don't know . . . up for tenure next year maybe so he's just a few years, 3-4 years ahead of me. And he says to me, he's like 'the academy that we signed up to work in doesn't exist anymore.' So you're just going to have to let that go; it's gone. The world that we thought that we would be able to live and think in doesn't exist anymore. It's just that simple. . . . When I was 19 I started this program and I said I wanted to write a book and get tenure. Get my PhD, write a book and get tenure. And that's what I'm going to do. And after that I'm going to be doing something else. This is just personal. Just because when I was a kid I said I wanted it. And a lot of my friends were like 'we say lots of things when we were kids, you should move on now.' I'm like I'm really close. I'm really close and I'm going to finish it just because I said I would.

### Summary

For these 12 faculty, memorable McNair Program experiences included success in their overall college experience. Success in school was not attributed to the McNair Program as many were doing well in school already. The program, however, enhanced their college experiences. In performing well in undergraduate research and other instructional activities, students reported that they made the program look good as well. Students recall the personal lessons about tenacity and commitment needed to succeed in graduate school and in academic work in general. The caring nature of the program was analogous to a family and essential to their success. The caring nature of individuals associated with the program fostered diversity of culture, race, and academic discipline evident in fostering student participation in both local and national conferences and workshops. This caring spirit also created a sense of normalcy and camaraderie as participants prepared for advanced study. Participants felt well prepared for graduate study, often better than their first-year peers. Opportunities to interact with scholars in

the field laid the foundation for exploration of a discipline, graduate programs, and a potential career as an academician. Participants didn't necessarily feel that the program specifically prepared them for their current faculty roles, but acknowledged that this was not a major purpose for the McNair Program in which they participated

McNair Program Experiences and Influences on the Motivation  
for Graduate Study and/or a Faculty Career

The third research question asked, *To what extent and in what ways do alumni believe their McNair Program experiences influenced and/or a faculty career?* This question explored the extent and ways in which participants believed that their McNair experiences influenced their motivation to seek advanced study and or a faculty career.

Five themes emerged and were classified as:

1. Thinking about doctoral study.
2. Researching something you love and having a voice in the academy.
3. Demystifying the process, cementing the idea, and providing a path.
4. Having a leg-up in graduate school.
5. Encouragement and Support from the McNair Program.

Thinking About Doctoral Study

Eleven of the twelve faculty participants began thinking about pursuing a doctoral degree during their undergraduate studies. Only one individual in the sample decided to pursue a Ph.D. while completing the master's degree. Yvette was a sophomore in college when she began thinking about pursuing a doctoral degree. She reflected on the role of the program during that time:

Other people may have known what a Ph.D. was but I had no clue. . . . In my McNair interview when I found out that there was such a thing. . . . I never, not once, thought that I could do that until someone said ‘well you know this is a program for Ph.D.’s and we’re here to train faculty.’ And I was like well, I was gonna be a high school teacher but wait a minute. . . .

Jose, Melissa, and Dorothy decided to pursue a doctorate in their junior year of college. Jose distinctly remembered two professors at Pathfinder University who spoke with him about graduate school. He remembered each professor told him, casually, that he should consider advanced study. Jose said that back then, “I didn’t know what he was talking about. . . . No idea how you got a PhD. Nothing. . . .” Also, Jose remembered thinking that his professors didn’t know him as well as they thought that they did. He said that they generally “didn’t know who they were teaching.”

Melissa, knew that it was time to make a decision in her junior year. She shared her thoughts from back then:

. . . I only have another year before I have to decide. . . . I needed to, because in my mind I always think ahead. . . . So I said ok, well what are the options? I played around with being a lawyer but I knew what my passion was. And I said ok, if I’m going to teach, and I knew I didn’t wanna teach school—high school—I knew I wanted to teach adults, I realized that I needed to have a Ph.D. And so I was like ok, well then what’s the next step? How do I get that? But that was the moment when I knew that I had to go that extra mile to do what I wanted to do.

Rigoberto decided to pursue a doctorate toward the end of his master’s degree. He said, “. . . I think McNair allowed me to say ok I can do it . . . and then once I got to my Master’s, I said: ‘you know the Ph.D. is around the corner; might as well just go ahead and pursue it.’ ”

Researching Something You Love and Having a Voice in the Academy

For many of the study participants, pursuing the Ph.D. meant researching something they loved. Also, pursuing a Ph.D. was, in itself, a means to an end, to have a voice in the academy and to make a difference in the world. For example, Alma, remembered her internship at the White House one summer. Alma was excited about the opportunity. She felt that, “this is where influence happens.” Alma recalled helping the special projects staff with a speech for President Clinton. Alma proudly remembered her suggestion to replace the term “Hispanic” with “Latino.” Alma watched the president’s televised speech and learned that the president “changed every word” and thought, “holy crap . . . that’s a tangible thing I influenced.

Alma’s boyfriend was in graduate school at the same time. She recalled that:

. . . he sent me an article and every time I read journal [articles] I was really disconnected. But I read this article . . . written by this professor at the University of Texas . . . she was more ideologically in line with me than any scholar that I had run across. And I just remember reading it and being like this is what I wanna talk about; this is what I think is important. And um, and [my boyfriend said] ‘well you know you can go work with her.’ I had one semester of my undergrad left. I could’ve stayed [for another internship at the White House] . . . I just decided that those ideas[in the journal article] interested me more. And I felt like I could have a voice in the academy in the way that I couldn’t have it in public policy and it was always gonna be about what could be done not what should be done. It was gonna be about winning the campaign not what was right. And those things did not interest me as much.

Archie initially wanted to become a high school teacher. He saw that as a way to be an advocate for societal change. After he completed the McNair Program summer research component at Challenger University, he decided to pursue the Ph.D. as “a means to an end.”



. . . I had a lot of anger . . . [about] what was being said publically and the atrocious practices that take place in classrooms when it comes to teaching black students . . . I had an emotional connection to it. So it goes back to my experiences . . . some bad experiences in school. But that outraged me. I thought that was an injustice. So I was more interested in . . . being a warrior and fighting this injustice than I was in terms of the entire veneer of having a Ph.D. . . . So the degree was just a means to an end for me and to me even now it still is . . . I see myself more as an activist than . . . 'I'm a Ph.D. holder or whatever.' I really don't care anything about it. It's not important. What's important is that it allows me to do some work that I find meaningful to me. That's about it.

The participants in this sample didn't know much about the Ph.D. However, the Ph.D. represented the ultimate in academic achievement as embodied by their professors. Yvette thought back to her feelings back then, of how she loved school, and how she thought the Ph.D. would allow her to:

. . . go to school forever and ever and I can be a faculty member. And it was . . . like yes, well, that's exactly what I'd like to do . . . it was my second year in school when I was interviewing for the McNair Program and it all came together . . . talking with my faculty mentor, getting to know the program better, looking at my professors in a different light going 'oh my gosh, maybe I could teach at this level instead of high school.' It's just like yeah, wow. That's what I wanna do.

Rigoberto talked about what made him want to go further as he came to the end of his Master's degree program:

Well I think when people said the Ph.D. was the ultimate . . . the ultimate level of achievement. I think I would've been at the same point in my life without going to the Ph.D. Maybe I would not have the title, maybe I would not have, the salary . . . And maybe I would never have the opportunity to move further up the ladder without my Ph.D.

### Demystifying the Process, Cementing the Idea, and Providing a Path

Participants in this sample expressed that the McNair Program played a key role in demystifying the process, cementing the idea, and providing a path to doctoral study.

Karina thought about going to law school before joining the McNair Program.

She spoke about the program's influence on her decision to pursue a Ph.D.:

. . . So it was a big influence basically. . . . I got in the McNair Program and just hearing the McNair staff talk to us and be involved in the program and know that we had a good experience, we had a good opportunity, but that we still needed to be accountable to the program and to others who could be involved in that opportunity and that we needed to get our Ph.D.

The McNair Program exposed Alma to new horizons where she encountered faculty and other professionals. Although the faculty and staff were from different socioeconomic backgrounds than her own, Alma felt she could speak openly with them. It was through those relationships in the McNair Program that Alma obtained the resources she needed for graduate school. So, for Alma, the McNair Program influenced her decision to pursue a doctorate and it was,

. . . one of the single most influencing factors . . . it demystified the process for me where I could actually identify and see myself in it. . . . I really do think—and I don't say this lightly—that I don't know that I would've totally been here without the McNair Program . . . [because] there was no one else there providing that path . . . my parents [didn't finish] high school so [they went] to work. . . . I mean my family is very successful . . . many of them are small business owners but none of them pursued higher education. I was the first one in my family to not only pursue advanced degrees but just to pursue college.

Jose remembered talking to other McNair Program participants who were a year or two ahead of him and applying to graduate schools. He says it was during those conversations that he began to assess his own potential for advanced study. Jose revealed his thinking processes at that time, as he decided whether to pursue a Ph.D.

. . . I thought to myself 'I could do this.' And as I started moving towards that direction it basically . . . pulled me into a community that leads you to that place. So there were the actual . . . bread and butter step—here's step one, two, three. . . . It was like you're learning by observation.

During the interview, Rigoberto indicated that he participated in the McNair Program, as well as other research experiences, on the pathway to his doctorate. He said:

. . . I think doing the McNair Program is the biggest [influence]. . . . But part of my dissertation comes out of research I did for [a faith-based] University. I got hired to be the surveyor and the interviewer to . . . look at the Hispanic church's side. . . . So when I was picking topics for my dissertation, I was like look, I did all this stuff and I would like to add these components . . . I participated in [another research project] looking at the Latino population in [New England]. So, along the journey I felt like I could do this stuff and I could do it a little bit better or [with a] different insight.

Melissa's participation in the McNair Program helped her learn more about the doctoral degree. She said, "I quickly found out that I needed a Ph.D. to do what I wanted to do which was to teach college." She further stated:

. . . I think a lot of the discussion [in the Program] was about Ph.D. programs. It wasn't about Master's programs. And so, I was like ok, 'well what's going on there?' . . . I knew . . . after going through some of these workshops and thinking about what it was I wanted to do that, ok, this is what I wanna do and I have to have a Ph.D. to do it.

Dorothy spoke about how the McNair Program influenced her decision to pursue a Ph.D.:

. . . it was really my commitment to the McNair Program and [my Director and I] talked about this at length. [He said to me] 'You're committing yourself to get a Ph.D., if you choose not to it does hurt the program.' So, I had all of that in the back of my mind. So, I wanted to teach but I've always loved being in school. So, going back to school wasn't an issue. But as we talked through my options [he said] 'well yeah you can go get a Master's degree but you know it's hard to get money for [that]. You don't have any money as it is, do you really wanna borrow all that?' You know it just made sense, it was just through that mentoring with my director that I decided to go the Ph.D. route and to honor that commitment to the program.

Karina shared the things that convinced her to pursue the Ph.D. in her current social science discipline versus a degree in another discipline:

. . . Well, when I got into the program and started, it wasn't like necessarily like one thing. But when I got into the program, I made that decision that it's not gonna be law school. And then being part of the program, it just kept cementing it for me that I knew that I was getting a good opportunity, I was getting some help—that I knew why I should be doing my Ph.D. And I also, when I changed to political science, it was also knowing that there were less women and less minorities in political science than there were in psychology. And so that was also something else I was thinking about; I know I'm gonna get into this, there's not that many people that do it, this is why I'm doing it.

### Having a Leg Up in Graduate School

In this fourth theme, participants indicated that the McNair Program contributed to their success in graduate school. For example, Dorothy talked about her McNair Program research experiences in relation to her doctoral experiences:

Well, I definitely felt that because [I was] in the McNair Program I felt covered. I didn't feel like I didn't know anything. I knew what people meant when they said SPSS. Why? Because I'd went through that as a McNair scholar. I had done a research study even though I didn't have a Master's Degree and didn't do a thesis. I had done a research study. So, I felt like I could play along in that sense and I didn't feel so awkward. I definitely wouldn't have gone right into a Ph.D. program if it wasn't for McNair, at all. I probably would've went into Master's program and I probably would've stopped at that point. But I definitely, I remember sitting in classes and they'd say things and it would come back to me from McNair. It felt good to have that kind of knowledge base so you don't feel intimidated by the other students.

Melissa also talked about how the McNair Program research experience provided a competitive advantage that paid off in graduate school. She stated:

. . . well I know I definitely had an *upper leg* on some other graduate students particularly with the Master's program and that got me to the Ph.D. . . . Sure, I had written critical essays, but having the experience of doing interdisciplinary research because my mentor is actually a historian and so we . . . combined both of our disciplines and figured out what was the best route for our research project. It gave me a chance to experience how to do research, how to write research . . . as a Master's student . . . that kind of pushed me ahead of, or made me more competitive even with other Ph.D. students. I took courses that were mixed with Master's and Ph.D. students. And as I went through that two year [Master's]

program I kind of honed those skills even more . . . I had already come with the foundation and by the time I got to my Ph.D. program, I was even more fine-tuned than perhaps some of my other cohorts in terms of just doing research.

Jose appreciated how the two McNair Program research experiences helped him learn the importance of producing work in a timely manner:

. . . doing [two] summer long research [internships] with the program really *did a lot to prepare me for graduate school*. I . . . learn[ed] to submit things in relation to deadlines even if it's not what you want it to be. I learned structure and I learned to submit and I became more, even more disciplined than I was. And grad school became a series of papers and projects that had to be completed at certain times and there wasn't really room for excuses or for lack of discipline. . . . So the pattern continued and the intensity level that I've continued to take it up a notch every time has continued to pay off for me.

#### Encouragement and Support From the McNair Program

The fourth overarching research question sought to understand the non-McNair Program influences on participants' pursuit of a faculty career. However, during the interviews I asked a follow-up question to explore participants' feelings about the McNair Program's contribution to their desire to seek a faculty position. Thus, a third theme emerged that described the encouragement and support that participants received from the McNair program as undergraduates. What follows are verbatim examples from the interview transcripts that illustrate this theme.

In the next paragraph, Elizabeth describes the encouragement she received from her McNair Program director. Elizabeth alluded to the impact the encouragement and support had on her:

[My Director]. She believed in me. I mean with good reason; I was gonna be good at it. You know. Like it was a good call on her part. But she believed in me and that was really encouraging. . . . She sent me places. She would send me an email, 'Elizabeth, I think you should go to this conference. We'll pay for it.' Ok.

‘Elizabeth, I think you should meet this person. They seem really well connected.’  
Ok. She did a lot of introductions for me that helped me make it to the next level.

Yvette, Melissa, Dorothy, and Elizabeth each felt that the McNair Program contributed to their decision to seek a faculty position. Specifically, Yvette was the only tenured faculty member in the sample. She talked about how the McNair Program provided research experience and a support network where she learned to communicate with faculty and high-level college administrators. She recalled,

That was huge . . . every time there was a research presentation day there would be not only my faculty mentor but other people’s faculty mentors . . . and staff members. . . . So, as a McNair scholar we were required to participate in the intellectual competitions . . . undergraduate research competitions. I actually won for my division and then we went to the state level. So, being in McNair you develop this whole support network; not just your faculty mentor but it was so engrained in the camps . . . there were . . . high level administrators, vice presidents of research and things like that, who I then developed a relationship with. So I got to rub elbows with upper administration in a way that made me feel totally comfortable in talking to an associate dean or a dean.

In contrast, Melissa felt that although the McNair Program was encouraging and supportive as it indirectly contributed to her decision to seek a faculty position. She said:

McNair really gave me something that was missing-both with the encouragement but also just helping me get to where I needed to be. I didn’t have anyone else that I could really talk to about these things. So McNair was that place for me . . . it definitely clarified the pathway for me. I don’t know if it has a direct influence but certainly an indirect influence on deciding to be a faculty member. I think I already had that idea in my head and McNair really helped me kind of fine tune it; exactly what did I wanna do, why did I wanna be a faculty member, what could I offer as a faculty member- that sort of thing. So maybe a more indirect influence.

Dorothy is a faculty member at a two year college. She shared her thoughts about whether the McNair Program influenced her desire to seek a faculty position.

Definitely. If it wasn’t for McNair . . . I can’t imagine where I would’ve ended up. (chuckles) I’d probably be a public school teacher with a Master’s degree right now and still be teaching. I don’t know if I would’ve found the path. I

probably would have but it would've been later in life . . . it happened at a much earlier time for me because of the program. . . . I don't know of any other program that would've provided all that opportunity to present, travel, to talk about your research. . . . So, I guess it's the amount of experiences through that program that really left an impression on me . . . with McNair there was something we were trying to achieve and this program was helping us get there.

On the contrary, there were some participants that took issue with the notion that the McNair Program influenced their decision to seek a faculty position. In fact, Karen said, "No, I wouldn't say that they influenced it. I think they fostered it, they supported it. But I wouldn't say that they influenced it."

### Summary

In summary, the McNair Program alumni in this sample decided to pursue a graduate study at different points in their college careers. Their motivation to pursue a graduate degree was largely influenced by their believing that a Ph.D. was the ultimate academic achievement. Most participants in this sample wanted to become like the people whom they admired, their college professors and faculty mentors in the McNair program. While in the program and participants conducted research with faculty mentors and found personal and even emotional connections to the places, people, and things they studied. Earning a Ph.D. meant being able to conduct research on topics that they were passionate about, something that they loved. Since many participants knew nothing about attaining doctoral degrees, the McNair Program was the constant catalyst encouraging them to pursue a Ph.D. With multiple resources illuminating the process and the path to the Ph.D. participants committed themselves to pursuing a doctorate and kept themselves and others accountable along the way. Participants indicated that the McNair Program experiences contributed to their success in doctoral studies. With

research experience under their belts, participants entered their advanced studies with confidence in their academic abilities, giving them a leg up on fellow graduate student peers.

The McNair Program emerged as a significant but indirect influence on their decision to pursue a faculty career. On one hand, some participants felt the McNair Program contributed to their decision to seek a faculty position. Specifically, McNair Program directors and staff continually encouraged participants by sending them to conferences and providing research experiences. The program provided a broader support network with important connections to college administrators and scholars in their respective fields of study. On the other hand, some participants indicated that the McNair Program indirectly influenced their decision to seek a faculty career.

#### Non-Program Influences on Pursuit of a Faculty Career

The fourth research question asked, *What non-McNair Program factors may have contributed to alumni pursuit of graduate study and/or a faculty career?* This question explored the non-McNair Program experiences that influenced participants' desire to pursue a faculty career. Two themes emerged and were classified as:

1. Looking at professors differently and blind family pride.
2. Fell in love with the discipline.

#### Amazing Faculty and Supportive Family/ Blind Pride

During the interview, I asked participants if they felt that family, friends, peers, staff, or college faculty contributed to their decision to pursue a faculty career.



Participants indicated that their desire to pursue a faculty career was, first and foremost, influenced by their college professors. Yvette spoke to this point when she said:

I had really good professors at Interstellar University. I had awesome professors and they all had very different and strange personalities. One guy insisted that we call him [Mike] and not Dr. So-and-So. But he'd come into a huge lecture class and he'd kick his Birkenstocks across the room and then just start talking. . . . He was great. My English professor who [said] 'you have to read Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness" and then you have to find a book review for every decade since it has been published.' . . . The only place you can find this is on microfilm or microfiche. I mean just madness. I started to look at my professors differently in that I knew I loved class, I was learning about this thing called research, I was learning about this thing called lecturing as a professor and exchanging ideas and it's like yeah this is why . . . I ended up in college because I visited a high school class of a person who invited me to read my poetry. And I did and I went back and I went back and it was this most amazing thing of exchanging ideas with people. And I had never thought that I could do that at a college level until someone said 'hey, you know you could do this at the college level.' Then I started looking at my faculty members differently. And it was all that one semester where it was very clear this is what I was gonna do.

During the interview, Melissa realized that she modeled her own academic career after another faculty mentor she'd encountered in college. Melissa said:

I didn't know this then but it all comes to light now. There was actually a faculty member in the English department. . . . But she didn't actually have a Ph.D. but she was quite influential as well. She didn't actually serve as my official mentor but I kinda modeled my career after her. She kinda introduced me to my research topic and so she was quite influential. She was still finishing the Ph.D. program and she told me things then that I didn't quite understand until much later. . . [The take-away lesson from her was] . . . Her teaching style. She was actually the very first professor, my first day of college and she taught my composition course. She walked in and she was this black sister . . . and it was just something about the way that she communicated with the class. It was not just 'ok, class we're gonna do this today.' It was very personal and engaging. And I wanted to be that kind of teacher. I wanted to be the kind of teacher that didn't just spit facts at you or show you how to do something; I wanted to be more than that. She just had a very personal connection. She invited me to her home. When I was going through hard times, I could just call her. She'd come pick me up from the dorm. She showed me the other side of being a mentor and a faculty member. And no one else did that. No one else did that . . . I don't know. I mean because she wasn't just that

way with me so I think it was just her nature. But she was very nurturing. A very nurturing faculty member.

Participants were inspired by their own professors who encouraged them to consider college teaching. During Karina's interview, she was asked to describe the moment when she knew she would become a professor, and describe that moment as if it were a headline story on the front page of a daily newspaper. Karina said:

It probably would say something like 'Karina becomes number 26' or something . . . because I knew what number I would be of Latinas with their Ph.D. in [a social science] that study Latino [issues] . . . I knew what number I'd be. Because when I started going to those first conferences and saw, and got to meet everybody. Because the group was so small and then I especially got to meet the Latinas. And Vicki would let me know, they all started counting on their hands 'how many are there? How many are professors with their Ph.D.? Ok, Karina, you would be this number.' So, knowing that . . . I was like wow, this is pretty sad that I knew this number. . . . And then I knew I could bring my perspective to it and I knew that I had this interest especially . . . and I could be a Latina professor and there was very few . . .

Later in the interview, Karina responded to a follow-up question asking if any of her professors, mentors, or advisors had specifically talked to her about pursuing a faculty career. She replied:

Yes. He always [talked] about it. I don't remember when exactly he started but it was always something he would mention, going to the conferences, meeting with the other faculty members, and then talking to my mentor. I was always getting information on what I needed to do if I wanted to be a professor.

Dorothy spoke about the people who influenced her desire to pursue a faculty career:

. . . [it's] mainly my students. They would say all the time 'oh you're good, you're so good at that.' And that's a curse and a plus to have your students love you. I've told them that before. But they're the ones that make me realize . . . Because even if I have a problem with my chair or my dean or whatever, it's my student. If they see, if they tell me I'm doing a good job then I'm doing a good job. And I heard that enough at [my firer institution] to say that this is definitely where I should be.

Archie was mentored by highly respected scholars, both as an undergraduate and a doctoral student. He talked about the influence of those scholars on his decision to pursue a faculty career:

I knew that [I wanted to continue] the work that was being done by the people that I respected. [I was influenced by] the tremendous teaching of my undergraduate mentor [Dr. Richard Harris], and the tremendous scholarship and teaching under [Dr. Georgia Sherman]. I knew that I wanted to do that work. They were, in part, tracking me to do that work. So, they were like well if you wanna do this work this is what you must do. You know . . . you can't be an adjunct faculty and do this work; you know you have to get in here and you need the protection of tenure....Dr. Sherman sent my recommendation for this job I have now. She said that I was 'serious as a heart attack.' That I was a serious student . . . you know I ask tough questions; I was very critical. I guess they saw a future faculty member because I pursued the issues with a high degree of seriousness and probably more than anything I produced whatever was expected of me.

For some participants, family was supportive, but not necessarily an influential actor in the decision to pursue a faculty career. One participant, Dorothy, spoke to this point.

I think half of my family don't understand what I'm doing. My dad does and he was really touched by the whole doctorate degree. When I graduated he . . . called it like a circle of life and how the circle of life is complete. . . . He was the first in his family to get a college degree and now I'm his first child to have gotten a graduate degree. . . . [M]y mom just, she thinks I just go to school because I like to go to school. I don't even think she understands when I tell her that I teach classes and that I'm the professor sitting up there. I don't know if that registers to her, and some of my other siblings. You know they'll say 'well we went to your graduation. You're done.' I have to write my dissertation, I didn't finish that. And they don't understand what that is. They don't understand that I'm not quite done yet (laughs) in their minds. So it's uh, they've been definitely supportive-but very limiting on how much I can get into. My dad knows a little bit more about my research than anybody else in the family. My mom would be like 'what study? She did what?' (laughs) You know that's a lot for her to understand what I'm doing. But, they're definitely supportive and happy that I've found something that I like to do.

Melissa's family, like Dorothy's, was supportive, but not really influential on the pursuit of a faculty career. Melissa explained:

Interestingly there were no support from family members. They're like 'oh, you're doing that? Ok, good.' They didn't really understand what it was I was doing. I'm a first generation college graduate . . . so I think they knew the value of it. They knew it was important. . . . They didn't really understand what it was. . . . When are you gonna be finished? You're gonna be in school for forever? That sort of thing. . . . Just because they didn't really understand the process. And again, they didn't really know what it was I was doing; just that I was doing something and no one else had done it. So there was, I guess, this sort of blind pride in it.

The death of Alma's mother was earth-shaking to her. It caused Alma to radically rethink her life. Alma reflected upon her career as an academician. In her interview, Alma shared thoughts of how she felt back then:

What am I doing? Do I really wanna be here? So, a lot of things have come to light for me through that process . . . I think . . . what influenced me to become a faculty member. . . . was . . . I do have this passion for ideas and the fact that I get to get up everyday and speak my truth and research the things that are important to me and talk about the things that I think are important in life . . . is such a gift. It's what my parents didn't have and what I was able to create for myself. I think that's the base of why I do what I do. . . . I think that you just need to be a little bit crazy to be an academic. . . . But I had no idea what a great thing I was creating for myself. I had no idea.

#### Fell in Love with the Discipline, Discussion, and Teaching

A second theme that emerged described the lived experiences of participants falling in love with their disciplines, discussion, and teaching in college. The following quotes exemplify the aforementioned theme and addressed the fourth overarching research question regarding other non-McNair Program factors that influenced participants' pursuit of a faculty a career.

For example, Jose told a story about how the love affair with his discipline began.

. . . I fell in love with the discipline. I kept reading more and more about history. I kept reading about Mexican Americans and the history of Mexican immigrants. I began to see that there were holes in the picture. Things that weren't being said that didn't seem to fit with my family's own history—with the histories of so many people that I know. . . . During that first [McNair] internship I assessed a rebellion that occurred in Mexico between 1926 and 1929. My great grandfather actually participated in that rebellion. . . . So, the challenge for me was to assess this big picture event. Through my grandmother's recollections of it . . . but also through what American and Mexican newspapers had to say about the event [during that] time period. So, I went through all papers that she shared with me. Her father was ultimately captured during the rebellion and executed. She had his last words and the newspaper articles about his activities in the rebellion. I remember, as I read these readings and as I read the books that were published on the topic and I kept thinking some people were really getting the story wrong. I thought I really now have something to say. I think it was that transition from being a person who loves to read books to a person who actually wants to start writing. At that point, I said I really would like to become a historian, which would mean a fulltime faculty member. The goal would be to be paid to research and write and to correct what has been said about a number of topics that I think are misunderstood.

Participants loved the idea of talking and teaching in college. Some developed a passion for classroom discussion and debate as college students. Others developed an affinity for discussion and teaching during graduate study when they served as a teaching assistant. Dorothy was a teaching assistant during her doctoral studies when she realized that she was sold on the idea of becoming a professor. She reminisced:

So my second year in there I finally got to start teaching college classes. And that really sealed the deal for me. As a kindergarten teacher I [love] the feel but I didn't actually like the requirements for being a kindergarten teacher to be everyday, same thing, all the time, repeat over and over. [That] turned me off to public school teaching. But I loved it when I started teaching at the college level. I loved developing my own syllabus, my own activities, having to grade, and working with the other teachers. . . . I'd work with the other instructors in the cohort so that we would plan joint activities and assignments for our students. That was a really nice experience. After that, I was [said] 'this is definitely what I wanna do; I wanna teach at the college level.'

Rigoberto also spoke about undergraduate and graduate school experiences that sparked an interest in college teaching:

I was an undergraduate and I loved the idea of talking to people and teaching them. I remember a world history class and I was the one that formed a study group with eight people. I was the one telling them ‘you do this, you do that. This is how you’re gonna do it.’ . . . I was able to guide people and help them to study for the test. That felt good and I liked that. When I came into graduate school, I began [as a teaching assistant] and I began having my own discussion sessions. I loved that. I loved interacting with the students. That led to me teaching my own class. Eventually, that led to opportunities in the summer. Then, [I thought] ‘I’m good. You know, I can honestly say I’m good.’

In her college level courses, Melissa had intense and inflammatory discussions about societal issues. Those experiences were influential on her desire to become a faculty member. She commented:

I think it was particularly in the courses that had African American interest—whether it was literature or history—I, there was a passion there. There were very intense conversations in the classroom. We never talked about this in high school. I realized that if I was going to be a teacher or if I was gonna lead discussions . . . I had to do it on the college level. I didn’t wanna be restricted to what I could and could not talk about in the classroom. I wanted to be able to talk about race and racism and slavery in a way that was not sugar coated; that was you know inflammatory by all means. . . . To get my students to talk and react the way that I had talked and reacted and gotten so impassioned about . . . I completely just loved being in the classroom setting like that. I felt I learned so much and it was so invaluable to my overall experience as a human being that I wanted to carry that on. I wanted to be the person at the front of the classroom asking those inflammatory questions and getting my students all riled up to talk about these very important issues. So, that was really, that really influenced my decision to become a faculty member.

Archie’s interest was in specific social justice issues as well. He also chose to address them through research:

. . . . like I said it’s not like I . . . said ok I’m gonna pursue . . . an academic career. Really, I was interested in the issues. So, in other words, if I could . . . get at the questions and do the work I need to do required a law degree I would’ve did that. I was also hoping on being a high school teacher but I was told- the long short of it- is that in order to pursue the scholarship, pursue the work and make the impact

that I wanted to make I had to pursue it. So, it wasn't a cost decision. You know, I have my students saying 'oh I don't know if I'm gonna pursue a PhD.' For me it was a given; if I need to conduct research, what other form am I gonna do this in a meaningful way? And you know be able to you know support myself. You know it's the only way . . . other than becoming a hermit or to win the lotto and be independently wealthy.

### Summary

The participants in this sample indicated that their college professors were the most significant non-McNair Program factors that influenced their decision to pursue a faculty career. Participants in this sample admired their college professors and described them as "awesome and amazing teachers." Nearly all of the participants in this sample had professors who talked with them about graduate school. Most had professors who encouraged them to consider a faculty career.

Another, non-McNair Program factor that emerged in the interviews was family. Participants who spoke about their families described them as generally supportive. Those participants who talked about their families felt that family members didn't understand the process of becoming a faculty member. Nonetheless, some described their families as having a blind pride in their careers and accomplishments. Losing a family member increased one participant's focus on pursuing her passion for ideas and validated her career decision.

Passion for the academic discipline was a significant factor. Participants indicated that they fell in love with their topics as undergraduates. Research and classroom experiences provided an opportunity to explore personal connections to specific topics and further develop their writing and research skills. A love for college teaching was fueled by passionate discussion and debate as undergraduate students and as graduate

student teaching assistants. Not all participants sought to become faculty members. Some were interested in addressing specific social justice issues. So, academic research and activism was the most natural path to making a difference.

Discussed next are the findings for the fifth research question. The lessons participants learned from the McNair Program that they use in their current faculty roles are discussed.

Lessons Learned From the McNair Program That Faculty of Color Use  
in their Current Faculty Positions

The fifth research question asked, *What lessons learned from the McNair Program are used by faculty of color in their current positions as faculty and why?*

Three themes emerged and were classified as:

1. Lessons about teaching and mentoring.
2. Lessons about research practices.
3. Attributions to their own accomplishments.

Lessons About Teaching and Mentoring

This first theme highlighted the lessons learned from the McNair Program that were integrated into study participants' current approaches to teaching and mentoring college students. Overwhelmingly, the faculty in this study expressed a commitment to teaching and mentoring the next generation of academics.

Yvette referenced the negative lesson that she learned about “what it meant to be a McNair scholar” when she gave the presentation during her comparative literature class



in college. She connected that lesson to her current beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about teaching as a new faculty member. She remembered:

I've learned that I was incredibly narrow-minded as a faculty member in my first couple of years. I still have that same drive and narrow-mindedness in dealing with my students in that I train scholars. That's what I do . . . I train scholars. . . . I assume that you are training for, even if it's not graduate school or professional schools explicitly, that you are going into a workforce and you wanna be competitive. Because that's what I do. I train. Yes. This is just how I teach. I teach and I mentor with the underlying assumption that you want something out of this class, that you want something out of life . . . I think sometimes that's gotten me into trouble because not everybody wants to go to graduate school . . . So I've had to reevaluate how I put together my syllabus . . . how I talk to the students . . . [and] my assumptions and understand that it's ok for someone to want to take a class to learn more and not wanna go to graduate school right away. That I don't have to shove it down people's throats . . . So . . . I've learned to be a little bit more flexible in those expectations and not just be so rigid. . . . (chuckles)

Melissa remembered one of her “most memorable experiences in college” was an outburst during a lecture given by a professor of African American History who later became her McNair Program faculty mentor. In that moment, when she, “wanted to flush out some of these things . . . in greater detail. Not just hear them and regurgitate them on a test.” Melissa, related that experience with her current beliefs about teaching college students:

[When I teach] . . . I don't lecture . . . I just absolutely will not lecture. I appreciated it from my [McNair faculty] mentor and he's good at it and I think he comes from the old school . . . that's what they did . . . So, my whole teaching philosophy has kind of been influenced by that. As I say in my teaching philosophy. [I want students to be] active participants in their education. Allow them to find their voice . . . we're gonna read this text and it's your job to kind of pick that apart and discuss with me what's going on- how you're interpreting this. I'm not gonna give you my interpretation; I'm not just gonna tell you what I think . . . I tell them at the beginning of class . . . I'm the moderator; this is a conversation. So, we have to talk to each other because otherwise nothing's gonna get done. I think that comes directly from my[student] experience in the classroom.

Similarly, Rigoberto spoke about how his own experiences in college as a McNair Program scholar influenced his current approaches to teaching, as well as in advising college students. He stated:

I think I see myself in a lot of them. Right? That kid that didn't know or that kid that had the potential . . . it's just a matter of having that communication and that interaction and maybe it clicks. . . . Then a couple of years from now they'll be Dr. So-and-so or they'll be working or they'll have their own business or whatever . . . I think everything I've been talking about; my experiences with McNair, people reaching out to me and believing in me and providing me opportunities. I think everything I do is just with that . . . I work maybe more long hours at night because I'm answering emails or preparing classes or grading stuff. . . . I'm doing exactly what I wanna do . . . and the giving back aspect of attracting the students, the teaching component you know; that's what I enjoy.

Karina's undergraduate experiences as a McNair Program student influenced the ways she mentors both undergraduate and graduate students today. She remarked:

The way I handle talking to my peers about how to get through graduate school, what to expect later, I've sort of continued to do it. I did it in grad school with my peers- I was a mentor to people, informally. Also, I was a mentor to other people at those conferences and then I still continue to do it now. So, I haven't had too much experience with the graduate students but I am on a PhD committee. I've continued to tell them what my experience was and how I had to think through the process of the dissertation. . . . So, I keep thinking what did my mentors do? How did they get me to think it through?

Over the past 11 years, Melissa still enjoys a mentoring relationship with her undergraduate McNair Program mentor. She indicated that her current relationships with college and graduate students are in part, influenced by her undergraduate mentoring experiences in the program as well. She noted:

Well I, I also feel a responsibility . . . I think this has to do with McNair but also just my experience as a minority student . . . I feel an obligation to be a strong mentor to those students. Particularly ones that I see potential in, I'm always 'oh, have you heard of the McNair Program?' for the undergraduates. And for the graduate students [I pull] them to the side, inviting them to my home, being very

personable with them to make sure that they get through that program. Because I also realized and this is not to boast . . . but I was the first person from that [McNair] program to get my Ph.D. And I don't know that there has been another McNair scholar that has done that. So I realized, and even in my graduate program, I still have people who came in with me who still have not finished. And I realize ok, I did something that is not usual.

Melissa continued to talk about following in the footsteps of an advisor in her Master's degree program. Melissa, after finishing her Ph.D. in three years, realized that she had immense drive and competitiveness. She spoke about how abnormal it was to complete the doctorate so quickly, although she doesn't advise students to replicate that experience. She talked about that lesson and how it influenced her current day relationships with her students:

I realized after going through that experience . . . that everyone has a very different pace, different things affect different people, you know different motivations. . . . Someone could go through a really hard time personally and not finish the program. I realize that I had to do it. So, I did it. But I, I realize that now and it's very important for me to make sure these underrepresented groups once they're in the system, once they're in the graduate program I feel like ok, you have to finish. You have to finish, you have to do this. And I try my hardest to make sure that they finish. And so, I feel like that's, that's my responsibility as a former McNair scholar and that's just, what I do.

Sonia always goes the extra mile for the students she teaches. She mentioned a conversation she had with her students about how people who fought in the Iraq War shouldn't die in vain. Sonia related that idea about not dying in vain to her feelings about the investment that the McNair Program had in her. She pointed out:

I feel like that's kind of how I'm doing, that's how I feel about [my McNair Program] is that I don't want them to feel like their efforts were in vain. And maybe now more than ever because I'm dealing with my own students who I feel sometimes that like I put so much more work into what I do for them . . . and they don't even appreciate it. And I want [my McNair Program] to know that I appreciate it.

Jose is a first year assistant professor at a private university in the Midwest. There is no McNair Program at his current institution. Nevertheless, he described how his own mentoring experiences as an undergraduate participant in the program influenced what he looks for in students he chooses to mentor today. He recalled:

McNair took me in at a point where they recognized hard work and some talent in me. But I was a bit unpolished. Yet they took me in and polished me up. I think because they gave me that opportunity I look for students sometimes who are like that. When I have a student whose writing has some original contribution to make and is working really hard but is unpolished I tend to really seek out those students because I think I'm seeking out students like me. . . . I'm about to start working with a student. I read some of his work. He applied to our school and was admitted and his work reminded me a lot of mine. But this student's a European American German student who wants to do the history of German workers in Chicago and the Midwest in an earlier period. But his writing was rough, unpolished. He's from a blue collar background; his father I think is a steelworker. But I saw a lot of myself in his work. I liked that. I liked that he was working so hard and he's, and he has something really original to contribute from what I've read. But it's unpolished; he doesn't have the pedigree. So, I think because McNair gave me that opportunity I tend to look for students who I could also polish up but who I also see are working hard and have talent.

#### Lessons About Research Practices

The second theme revealed lessons that faculty of color learned from the McNair Program that were formative in shaping their current research practices. This theme also addresses the fifth overarching research question for this study. Following are excerpts from participants' interviews that vividly depict their research experiences as students in the McNair Program and their current research practices as faculty.

Yvette is a tenured associate professor. When asked what lessons she learned from the McNair Program that were applicable to her current research practices, she replied:

For my research, it was just the process. . . . I teach research methods, practical research methods for the McNair Program. I teach the class that [a professor] taught when I was a [McNair] scholar. And I love it. I've taught it three times. And it's great because when I'm in the middle of a research project and I have to go give a lecture on methodology it reminds me like 'oh my God, what is my methodology?' I'm working on an article right now and I have to think about methodology because I have to explain it. It makes it awesome for me to constantly go back to the process of research. What is the process of research? How do you ask a question? What is your sub-question? What is your data set? How does your data set impact your methodology? What interpretation are you using? Who may disagree with you? What does your literature review do for you? What, whose side are you taking? Because no matter what statement you make you're taking a side. Those types of things are the process of research. It's constantly with me because I'm continually involved in McNair. . . . Always back to the basics. Always back to the basics. It's been great.

Jose fondly remembered the research papers he produced during the summer internships with the McNair Program at Explorer University. He talked about a lesson he learned regarding how to refine his undergraduate research papers. He uses that same research practice as a faculty member today:

[I was] bouncing a lot of my papers . . . I wrote . . . off of different people at different points, even in parts. And I got sometimes very critical . . . sometimes critical, sometimes not, sometimes useful, sometimes not, feedback. I was doing that even before the program but the program encouraged it. So I've kept doing that and I think that's an intelligent scholar [who] always bounces off their work to as many people as they can; particularly before they try to put it in print. Because . . . it isn't in your interest to put something in print that hasn't been assessed and commented on by as many people as you can get to do it. It's in your interest to do that.

Karina joined the McNair Program as a sophomore in college. Like all McNair Program scholars, she conducted undergraduate research under the supervision of her McNair Program faculty mentor. As an undergraduate, Karina learned that her research interests were unique within her discipline. Having a solid research niche continued to

influence Karina's research in her doctoral studies. In her current role as an assistant professor, Karina knows she is:

Still somebody that's doing something that not many people do. And so I sort of had the idea when I was getting into, undergrad and graduate school and becoming a professor that there was a motivation or reason why I was studying what I'm studying. So, it's because there's not that many Latinas that are doing it, I have this interest and what I teach also doesn't really get taught too many places. And the kind of research I'm doing is even again looking at this minority- how they're in office, not many people are studying it. So, adding all of that together gives me sort of the motivation and the focus that I need to know I'm still filling a niche, hopefully, somewhere.

Karina continued to reflect on the lessons she learned from her undergraduate experiences in the McNair Program. She talked about the initial formation of a network of researchers who still keep her motivated to practice research in her current faculty position. She commented:

I think with McNair it just sort of got me started right away on forming the groups that I knew that were gonna keep me motivated to do what I do. I'm gonna hear their research, I'm gonna hear what they're doing, know I'm on track . . . and keep going . . . that's what I had to do, especially in graduate school. I knew it was important even if I had to pay for most of the trips because my department hardly gave us any money. But I knew I had to because it was gonna be something to keep me motivated to keep going. And then give me ideas as well for my research. Now, I'm also trying to limit myself from going on trips because I know I'm supposed to keep working. I know when I go on trips it helps keep me motivated. It usually gives me ideas for even more papers that I probably don't have time for just yet. I kinda have to pull in the reins and say you're only gonna go to one or two conferences a year because you have papers to finish.

Archie's life experiences influenced his overall college experience as well as the research he conducted in the McNair program. During his interview he shared the connection between his research practices in college, in graduate school, and in his current research practices as a college professor. He remembered,

One of the things that I based my dissertation research on and the last couple of publication projects that I've engaged . . . is the ways that learning takes place outside the classroom and the role that it has in terms of either intervention or building some kind of intellectual knowledge. . . . Just in brief, in high school- my learning didn't take place in the classroom. Very little of it did. It was mainly outside the classroom . . . the things that were offered outside the classroom and doing things in terms of the community that I saw clearly was making a difference. That influenced my dissertation research. I wanted to see when you introduce a subject- like you introduce black subject matter for example or a radical theory or critical race theory- all the scholarship . . . said that students will write differently and talk differently. But to me it only matters once, unless it has some kind of impact- demonstrable impact-outside the classroom itself. And that, that is what my dissertation pretty much focused on . . . it's only from talking to you that I can see that. You know you kinda brought that out that I can see the current now better now than I could before. I mean there's theoretical stuff that's been written. . . . Paulo Freire and . . . But there was a gap in the literature when it came to that. So, now that you got me talking about it I can see that that was occurring; that's always been there all along.

Dorothy's McNair Program experience placed a heavy emphasis on research.

Those research experiences impacted her research practices today. However, Dorothy felt there was little connection to her teaching. She explained:

It's hard for me to think about the influence McNair had on my teaching. Definitely on my research . . . I talked about when I worked with middle school aged girls— doing this oral history project of their low-income community and to look at how we engender civic engagement in young children or youth. I remember giving them the . . . talks [my McNair Program director gave] . . . about going out in public and watching what you say and people are noticing you and making sure that you're just aware of what's happening. It was an interesting conversation with them you know because they saw it as like you're trying to get us to be someone we're not. . . . So trying to explain that to them was really interesting in my research. So those, lessons that I learned from participating in McNair-how you carry yourself, how you present yourself, which is all a part of research and professionalism anyway-I was trying to put that on to some middle school aged youth. . . . I think they were starting to understand. And others . . . didn't but that's definitely something [I remember].

Attributions to Their Own Accomplishments: Why are You Among the Six Percent?

Presented here is the third and final theme that emerged from participant interviews regarding their level of awareness of the fact that only 6% of McNair Program alumni of color who earned Ph.D.s entered into the professoriate. In addition, verbatim responses from eight out of the twelve study participants regarding what they attribute to their own accomplishments are discussed.

In short, none of the participants in this study were aware that only 6% of McNair Program alumni faculty of color with Ph.D.'s became professors. Specifically, Alma, Archie, and Jose simply weren't "aware" that only 6% of the McNair Program alumni that earned Ph.D.'s become college professors. Elijah wasn't aware either but said that he, "suspected that the numbers were low" due to overall Ph.D. attainment rates in the U.S. Similarly, Rigoberto said, "that wouldn't surprise me. But, I can see why." Yvette said, "I wasn't aware. Unfortunately, it's not surprising." Karen replied, "No. but what is the point? The point is to suggest that they're not meeting their goal?"

Karina expounded on her thoughts about finishing the Ph.D. as if that was synonymous with entering the professoriate. She said:

I didn't know the number was so low. I had a feeling it was low just from the Stardust University experience knowing that whenever I'd keep in contact with McNair staff from the school they would let me know how other people were doing. And at least with the cohort of the group that graduated with me I was, I think, the first one to finish the Ph.D. and to get a job. Then, I constantly asked about the other people. So, for some reason, it seemed very hard for some of my colleagues to first stay on track to do their PhD. They either got their Master's, got out, went from a couple different schools still trying to figure out what to do or I'd just lose contact with them. Or, they'd take much longer to finish. Since then, Sonia, who you're gonna talk to, has finished. So, we kept in contact. Then there's one other girl I keep in contact. She's still working on finishing the Ph.D.



During the interviews, eight out of the twelve faculty of color in this sample shared their thoughts about why they were part of the 6% of McNair Program alumni who completed Ph.D.s and entered into the professoriate. Most participants found the question, *Why are you a part of the 6%?* difficult to answer. Nevertheless, the faculty of color in this sample gave an array of answers. In fact, the participant responses to this question was the most disparate of all the research questions in this study. The following excerpted responses illustrate this.

As an undergraduate, Jose fell in love with his discipline by finding holes in the written history of America. What he saw didn't fit with his own family history—a story about his great grandfather. Jose reminisced about when he realized that he wanted to become a professor. He spoke candidly about the devotion and sacrifice it took to accomplish what he has. Also, he gave specific reasons as to why he was among the few McNair Program alumni of color to earn a Ph.D. and enter into the professoriate:

I think that's a difficult question to answer . . . I do think one of the things that has differentiated me is that at an early stage I began to realize that I needed to put my goals above everything. That was the only way somebody . . . from my background was going to become a professor. The only way that I envisioned that was gonna happen was I needed to put my work first; before my family, before my friends, before my wife . . . families who were [not] professionals or professors. They did not know, it seemed, what we were going through. . . . It was very hard for my peers to say no to things. I think that was one of the reasons. I actually attribute that to a big reason as to why I've been very successful. I acknowledge all the external factors and . . . that without mentors, without money, all of these goals are nearly impossible. But what I realized was that, in the McNair group, a lot of us didn't have money, a lot of us didn't have a lot of these things. So, it really came down to how much are you willing to sacrifice? Because at the end of the day we really couldn't change the amount of money our parents had or . . . we couldn't change those things. What we could control was how much are you gonna devote to finishing and getting your job? How much? How much are you willing to sacrifice? And that, I could control, even if it meant conflicts with my family. I had a lot of conflicts with them. They didn't

understand what I was doing and it caused a lot of problems. You know, but I just dealt with that as in this is my goal, nothing's gonna get in my way. That's it.

Similarly, Alma found this question difficult to answer. She talked about how the people she met, whom had the same intellectual capacities as she did, but did not complete the master and/or doctoral degrees. Alma, remembered an old adage that seemed to describe her experience: “good things happen to people who prepare and are lucky.” She talked about her attributions to her accomplishments as to why she is part of the 6% of McNair Program alumni who earned a Ph.D. and entered into the professoriate:

I think it was . . . this inner drive that they did not have and that I had. You know the drive that keeps you going when you get beat up at every point in the dissertation process. Or, every point in the Comps process and you just get beat down and you just get right back up. Like, there was just. I'm gonna do this; this is what I was meant to do because it feels so right. So, I think there was that. I think I engaged in an incredible amount of preparation for these steps. In my McNair [program] I was thinking about who could help me get into doctoral work. So, I was always thinking three steps ahead . . . I felt like when I chased my passion and my dreams like, and I think this is the case for most things, you have to pound some doors but man doors open too and I walked where doors opened.

Archie grew up hard. His mother was a drug addict and he lived in crack houses as a youth. Archie sought opportunities in the military. Later, he married and raised a daughter while pursuing a college degree. In college, he met several mentors who were scholars in his current discipline—a humanities field. His first mentor was an African American male professor at a historically black college he attended. After transferring to Challenger University (a primarily Caucasian institution), Archie was mentored by a distinguished humanities professor in the McNair Program who ultimately directed his doctoral dissertation. Today, Archie is a successful assistant professor of humanities at Challenger University. He is happily married to his second wife who is pursuing a Ph.D.,

and they are expecting a second child. Archie serves as a mentor for McNair Program students at Challenger University.

Still, Archie had a lot of anger. He saw the Ph.D. as a means to an end. During his studies, he discovered he had an emotional reaction to issues concerning public education and the literature in his discipline. He decided the best way to address the injustices he experienced in school (and that still exist in society today) was to do it through research and activism. Archie shared his thoughts about why he is among the 6% of McNair Program alumni of color who earned a Ph.D., and later became faculty:

It's a research question of mine . . . there's no way to avoid this but part of it is a spiritual question . I know people that came up a lot easier than me that didn't make it . . . I was talking to [my former mentor] about this a little bit last night- in our interview [for an article I'm writing] . . . I asked her 'where do we go from here?' You're about to retire, you've had this storied career. What about these new generations? Because I'm really pessimistic about the new Ph.D. holders that are black. I go to conferences with them and they really piss me off . . . because they just wanna be Ph.D.'s and 'oh, I'm so-and-so' and 'oh I have tenure and I just published this.' All that . . . stuff is valuable only to the extent that it makes a difference in something dealing with our struggle. Because we still got 45% of the of black kids failing a grade, at least once. Forty-five percent of the U.S. prison population is black. In other words, we're in crisis and you're walking around . . . like who gives a damn . . . [My mentor] said 'what we need to do is make sure that we transmit, that our students understand that young black scholars experience and appreciate struggle' . . . [I have noticed that] the students that end up [studying] with her are typically those students that have shared that same passion . . . someone who is willing to throw themselves on the fire . . . someone who's going to give their all . . . and fight.

Yvette worked several minimum wage jobs and returned to college seeking an advanced degree to earn more money and professional opportunities. Yvette was also an "Air Force brat." Although born in DC, she lived in New Mexico, California, Germany, Illinois, and Arizona by the time she was 11-years old. She attended graduate school,

worked in the Northeast, and is now an associate professor at Deep South University.

Here, Yvette expressed her thoughts about why she was a part of the 6%:

I've seen a lot of different perspectives. Early on I had exposure to international life . . . I learned German and then English. So, my teachers treated me differently- better. I internalized it like 'oh yes, I can do it.' So . . . when I actually did *get* into college I was less afraid of things that were different because there was nothing that was unfamiliar to me. . . . I wasn't a xenophobe. I had been to a lot of different places, seen a lot of different types of people, I didn't hate white people. . . .So, it was my ability to be flexible in an unfamiliar, in an unfamiliar environment. I think contributed to my success in a way that other people may have struggled because they are from 'here.' My momma from here, my daddy from here and this is who I am. . . . Going to a predominately white institution is different; these people are different, I've never heard of these people. So, I think that really played a part in me being successful. . . . Putting together my tenure packet was awesome because it was just like accounting work. . . . And that was fun for me because I was a night auditor. So those are things . . . Those are the barriers. They think that different is bad, it's unfamiliar, and it makes them uncomfortable. You know they don't have experience with interpersonal conflict. They get freaked out when they're in uncomfortable situations. They don't understand that being an academic is not just about being smart; that it's about taking care of your business. That there are certain things that you have to do accounting wise that come, to a surprise . . . I mean that's why faculty don't get tenure. The same with the retention issue. I don't like these people, they're different, and they don't like me. I don't fit here. Not like everybody's different; it's *I'm* different. No, everybody's different. There's racism here, there's sexism here. But you bring something to the table. And if you've traveled the world you understand the world's a big place and you know you bring something to the table. It's not just kind of a deficit model.

During the interview, Karina drew a diagram of her faculty network, while verbally describing the relationship between those networks and her success in becoming part of the 6% of McNair Program alumni of color currently serving as college professors. Karina 's diagram was extremely detailed in describing the various support networks she developed during her undergraduate years in the McNair Program that expanded to graduate student and faculty support networks. These networks were

instrumental in her choice of Ph.D. programs, research area, and success in her current faculty position. She reported:

I still have the same close cohort at conference levels. So, I have other people that study [my research area] that are also assistant professors. When I started in grad school we were all in grad school together and then they all finished before I did because they were, they had been in it for a longer time. So, they have a bit more experience than I do. So, they help if I have any questions or problems. There's ten of us - we all help each other. We always find a time to get together and go dancing and stuff like that at conferences. I also do research with them. Then, the more senior people are still the mentors I wrote down in my little diagram that I still can go to. Then, I have department level, junior people, there's only about four of us now; three of us came in together and so we are pretty close knit. We help each other through the day-in process of how do we do this or I just sent this paper and got rejected, what should I do? So, we help each other out with that. And then I have two faculty mentors that the department set me up with. Both mentors help me out a lot to figure out what I need to do. My third year review was in February, they let me know how to prepare, what was expected, looked over my essays. . . . Then also the females within the department are pretty close. And then other assistant professors um, that I've met and become friends with at the university level- I have a good group there. So, I have so many different groups going on. . . . I have a Latino studies [group of professors] that I am part of. We just started a minor here. So, it's anybody that studies Latinos in the U.S. in different departments have a group. . . . [Various disciplines] We have like five or six professors. So we get together every once in awhile and try to figure out what to do with our minor.

Today, Melissa teaches in a humanities discipline at Carver University. She thought that a faculty career would be the best career path for her. Melissa reiterated that students and fear are why she is a part of the 6% of McNair Program alumni of color currently serving as college professors. She commented:

Fear. Fear of failure, first of all. That is what motivates me. I felt like as a first generation college graduate it was the alternative to not doing something with my college degree? I didn't feel like I was prepared as an [humanities] major. I didn't feel like I had any skills to go into the job market. What was I going to do that was gonna be fulfilling to me? I was like oh . . . I was deathly afraid of failure. I was like ok; well I'm not ready for that. Let me go back to school, figure something else out. Fear was the number one factor. Um, and then I have come also to realize that I am just driven. I am just competitive. I don't think that really

was stirred in me until my undergraduate experience . . . I realized ah, I got something here. . . . So, fear of failure; of not doing anything with my life. It just pushed me to do. Even with the McNair Program, putting together the application I started to realize, you know, I look good on paper. I have some accomplishments. I have something to work with. I wanted to be more competitive. When I went into that interview [to become a McNair Scholar] I just knew I had to get this. I don't know. So I, just have to say it's just, [the] competitive drive that's in me. I do ok with school. I think that is my, that is the thing that I'm good at. Some people are good at other things; that's what I'm good at.

Rigoberto works as a lecturer with a full teaching load at New England

University. He also serves as the undergraduate advisor for his academic department. He reluctantly refers to himself as a faculty member because he's not on the tenure-track.

He's ok if he's not counted among the 6% of McNair Program alumni of color with a Ph.D. and are college professors. Nevertheless, Rigoberto described what he attributes to his accomplishments:

You have to be very good at multiple things. You have to do it really well. Not just . . . teaching . . . [My department chair once told me] . . . 'I want A researchers and B- teachers.' And they didn't get B-, we got like D teachers. So, they don't care about students. They don't like teaching. They do it because it's part of their requirements. So, finding an individual that is true, a researcher that is true, a true professor, and a true mentor- that's very difficult . . . in most cases. In my case, researching is not my strength but I'm good at the advising component, I'm good at the teaching component. So, I guess people find out along the way that truth. It consumes you. You have no other life. They have so much pressure in academia, researching, you have to continue the next grant, you have to find the next money, you have to manage people, you have to manage your proposals, you have to go to conferences, continue...you have to be like a sales person. And I think it's not meant for everyone . . . I think my parents . . . expectations placed upon me at a very young age that I needed to do this. By the same token um, I just love school. Since I was a kid it just came natural to me. My sister struggled all her life with school. You know it never came easy to her. With me it was you know . . . I feel like I'm still a kid . . . And everything that I do I try to do has passion behind it. I love what I do. Otherwise, I don't see the purpose of doing it you know.

Finally, Karen, who teaches statistics and measurement, was asked why she was part of the 6% of professors. She simply replied, “Because I wanted to be a professor.”

When asked to elaborate, Karen replied:

Again our experience just wasn't that tight like that. How many years does that have to span? Somebody going from undergrad to Master's to Ph.D. and then to being a professor. That's a long time to keep up with people . . . of people in the cohort when I was in it- one is a medical doctor, one is a lawyer. When these people are in the program they're undergraduates. You have no power over them when they leave . . . Does that mean that they're a failure or . . . that the program has failed when they go off to be a lawyer? . . . So, make a pie chart [showing the 6% who are professors but the other whatever . . . I'm sure they have good jobs. So, to me that's success. Maybe they need to change the goal of the McNair Program . . . because Ronald McNair . . . was he ever a professor? He was . . . an astronaut . . . So, did he go and get tenure somewhere? So would he be considered a failure? How would you record him in history to say man, if he were in this very program then he would not be part of your 6% because he was an astronaut?

#### Summary

In conclusion, the fifth overarching research question explored the lessons learned from the McNair Program that alumni use in their current faculty positions. Eight out of twelve participants told stories about lessons learned with respect to teaching and mentoring, as well as research practices. In addition, participants reflected upon what they attributed to their own accomplishments and why they were among the 6% of McNair Program alumni of color who earned Ph.D.s and entered into the professoriate.

Lessons learned about teaching and mentoring were vividly described as participants recounted their own McNair Program experiences. Participants expressed a commitment to teaching and mentoring the next generation of academics. Participants' teaching practices were based upon beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that they teach and train future scholars. Early in their faculty careers, they realized that not all students

come to college to become researchers. Similarly, participants' college and McNair Program experiences influenced their teaching styles and philosophies—namely communicating belief in students and pushing them to become active participants in their own education. Others passed on lessons about mentoring that they learned from their McNair Program directors and faculty mentors regarding appropriate behavior in the field and how to successfully surpass challenges in doctoral level research.

Lessons about research practices were also transmitted to their current faculty roles. Participants' taught research methods courses to McNair Program students; doing so strengthened their own adherence to the fundamentals of research as well as their own research agendas. Also, participants continued the practice of using critical feedback to improve the quality of their scholarship. Finding a research niche within their disciplines as students carried over into their faculty roles. Specifically, connections between their McNair Program research projects carried over to their doctoral dissertation research, as well as their first scholarly publications. Attending McNair Program student conferences and discipline-based conferences helped them to stay motivated to encourage collaboration on research and publications. Others felt that the McNair Program placed a heavy emphasis on research and practically none on college teaching.

Eight of the twelve participants in this sample were unaware that only 6% of McNair alumni of color earned Ph.D.s. Participants were not surprised at the low percentages of McNair Program alumni in faculty positions given the reports from their program directors and cohort peers. In addition, others weren't surprised due to their knowledge of overall Ph.D. completion rates for underrepresented minority groups in the



United States. Participants found it difficult to think of reasons why they were a part of the 6% of McNair Program alumni of color who earned Ph.D.s and obtained faculty positions. After some reflection, participants identified an array of attributions to their own accomplishments including the following:

1. Motivation to address social injustices.
2. Changing the scholarship on African Americans and Latino Americans in academic disciplines such as history, politics, and literature.
3. A willingness to sacrifice and put their career accomplishments first, even above family.
4. Preparation and luck.
5. Exposure to international life that contributed to the ability to be flexible in unfamiliar uncomfortable environments.
6. A strong faculty support network.

In addition, participants also reported that a fear of failure, or of not doing anything with their college degree, as significant to them being among the 6%. Parental expectations and enjoyment of teaching were also reported as factors. Finally, one participant simply attributed her own desire to become a college professor as to why she was part of the 6% of McNair Program alumni of color who earned a Ph.D. and entered into the professoriate.

The next section discusses findings for the sixth and final overarching research question.

## Recommendations from McNair Faculty Alumni to Current McNair Scholars

### Who Want to Pursue a Faculty Career

The sixth and final overarching research question for this study was, *What recommendations do McNair Program alumni offer to current McNair Scholars who want to pursue a faculty career?* Three themes emerged from the recommendations offered by the 12 McNair Program alumni participants and were classified as:

1. Find and pursue your academic passion.
2. Establish a mission and develop goals, timelines, and skills.
3. Maintain mentoring relationships and build support networks.

### Find and Pursue Your Academic Passion

Five out of the twelve McNair Program alumni recommended that students study an academic subject or topic they love. That is, students should find and pursue an academic discipline or topics about which they are passionate. According to participants, current McNair Program scholars can find their passion by reading about experiences of people like them. Developing a passion for writing was also recommended as a critical step in having a successful faculty career. The McNair Program alumni also suggested that students consider alternative routes to academic careers instead of focusing solely on careers at research-based institutions. Finally, some alumni recommended that current McNair Program scholars find and pursue the practical applications of their chosen academic disciplines. For those alumni, simply pursuing an academic discipline based on passion could prove detrimental for a faculty career, given the current job market in some disciplines.

Yvette felt that having a passion for what you do was central for those who are considering an academic career. She recommended:

You hear this all the time- be passionate about your topic, be passionate about your question. That is so central. Life is a choice. Joy is a choice. Choose joy. Choose something that you love. Choose something that you're curious about. Choose to do this type of work because you want to. Nobody's forcing you to go to graduate school. Shoot, if you're not sure you want to, it'll eat you alive . . . same thing with being a faculty member. So, choose your passion. Choose joy. Be dedicated to it. . . . You decide. It's a choice. . . . If you don't believe you're gonna be successful, you won't. If you don't believe you have something to offer, you don't. . . . So, you have to choose actively this joy, like, an attraction to something. Not that you're trying to run away from poverty or run away from . . . ignorance or run away from anything; you're running towards something.

Jose believed that students could find their passion by reading about the experiences of people like them. One summer, Jose taught a class of mostly African American high school students participating in an *Upward Bound Program*. The Upward Bound is a federally funded TRIO program designed to prepare low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority high school students for college. In the classes, Jose taught students to read about the *Black Panther Party* and the *Civil Rights Movement*. He was heartbroken about how little students knew and how in one class, his students even equated the Black Panther Party with the Klu Klux Klan. After much reading and discussion during that summer, Jose recalled how students began to ask more to read. Therefore, for Jose, students can find a passion for any topic when they can see themselves in it. He believes:

I think every student, every African American and Mexican American student needs . . . to be handed books so that they can read about experiences about people like them. I think there's a real detachment from intellectual culture and their daily lives. A real detachment. . . . If I can inspire you to want to learn then, if I can light that fire, then you will take off on your own. . . . So, in other words, if the passion is there, if the desire is there I think that these other sort of tools that

you need to accomplish the goal you'll work hard at yourself without me telling you 'you know you need to study more, you need to read more.'

Similarly, Jose taught an undergraduate level Mexican American studies class, while pursuing his Ph.D. It was the first time he taught a class composed of mostly Mexican American college students. Jose and his students read and discussed various topics, including Mexican art and Mexican American culture. He remembered how excited students were. Several even asked for additional resources after each class. During that class, Jose talked with his students about graduate study and remembered how little they knew about it. Jose expressed that anyone considering pursuing a Ph.D. and a faculty career must have an intense desire to learn about a topic. He further stated:

I think the real thing is . . . people need the desire. They need the expertise but they also need to have the desire to want to do this. I think the only way they could even remotely have a desire is if they're exposed to some of the wonderful and powerful histories of their people; of their experiences. I really think a lot of students can go through their education like I did without ever reading about anybody like you or with very limited experience in that. I really think that that's key. Getting them to start, exposing them to all that's already been written. But they don't have access to or the know-how as to how to access it. About people that they can find a connection to, intellectuals that they can find a connection with. So, to me it's like inspiring them to want to learn. I think if a kid wants to learn then going to grad school becomes a step as opposed to go to grad school but for what purpose; what is the purpose of that? So, I think it's about inspiring them to want to learn . . . and then the rest can be made possible.

Developing a passion for writing is critical to becoming a successful academician.

Jose also recommended that McNair Program students, in particular, should learn to write very well:

I learned from that first McNair internship where I started developing this passion to write, this passion to change the way my discipline thinks about my topic: Mexican Americans. If that's the goal then the time it takes to accomplish that goal is irrelevant. The amount of money I'm gonna make when I finish, is irrelevant. The amount of sacrifice in terms of maybe upsetting family members if

I can't help with the family situation, is irrelevant. . . . For whatever complex sociological reasons, I find that a lot of students of color, in our society, really need to work on their writing if they wanna compete with the students who end up attending the elite colleges and universities and graduate programs. I tell students that this, ultimately, this is not a verbal culture; it's a written culture. What you say is not empirical. Anybody can say anything, anywhere. What you put into print really is a . . . reflection of your intelligence. So, really, really, really, you need to work on your writing as early as possible.

Similarly, Rigoberto offered the following recommendations to current McNair Program Scholars in relation to pursuing one's passion. He stated:

Simple: do what you want. I mean do what you're passionate about. Do what you like and everything else will take care of itself. I think it's as straightforward as possible . . . I think it's part of the stuff that you enjoy doing . . . I think a lot of the students and a lot of kids—and generally it's a lot of minority students—the parents have told them they have to do this. I've seen that with a lot of Latino kids; they have to be engineers or they have to be business managers. That's because that's what the parents thought . . . then they might not necessarily like it. So, test it out; see if you like it. I think that's where internships with McNair come into play . . . because you know you might not like it.

During the interview, Rigoberto spoke again about his passion for teaching and advising students. Rigoberto was no longer interested in a tenure track, faculty position—not liking the pressure of the job. In Rigoberto's view, it takes a certain personality to become a faculty member—particularly at research-based institutions. He described that kind of personality as “cut through.” He elaborated:

They know what they want and they have a true passion about that. That's a marvel because I don't have it. They do have it and they like it and that's fine. I don't think it's for everyone. I think . . . [What] we also have to tell students is you don't have to be a faculty [at] a research one institution. You can be the same kind of individual and enjoy what you're doing at a liberal arts college. They will love you because you teach four classes per semester. Right? You advise 200 students or whatever it is. Then, go to a liberal arts school. That's ok. You know what I mean? In some cases, we'd just say ok if you don't go to Michigan, if you don't go to [Berkeley], if you don't go to North Carolina you're a failure. [There are] other options. You're not a failure if you don't do it . . . I think that's the other stuff that we have to tell students . . . there's multiple paths . . . It's not meant for everyone.

And I think success or failure of the McNair Program should not be measured by how many students or how many individuals actually follow a faculty tenure track position.

During her interview, Karina offered recommendations to McNair Program scholars considering a faculty career. She said, “Make sure it’s something that you’re actually passionate about; you’re interested in doing every day.” On the other hand, Elizabeth also held a different view. She recommended:

Get a Ph.D. in something practical. Don’t become a (rhetorician). Nobody even knows what that is. No. English is not practical because you can’t get a job. Well, history takes 10 years on average to get out of a history program. Students that are in communication, I tell them...take a few classes that you like. [That’s] not gonna get you a job outside of the academy...I mean, that’s clearly a deficit in my education; like no one told me to sort of do the swath of [my discipline]-I just did what I liked. So, I’m kind of crippled in a lot of ways. I had to teach myself how to do qualitative research; I never had a class. I can’t read SPSS. (laughs) You know, those things. I’m doing a lot of catch-up. . . . So, I would definitely tell them to diversify and to focus on the more practical aspects; things that you don’t have to wonder what you’re gonna do with it. Then you could clearly apply to something outside of the academy whether it’s a consulting position or if it’s a government position. Focus on that is what I would do. And the stuff that you love, make them your electives. . . . Write about your passionate thing in an area that’s more practical so that you have options. . . . Because they’re not getting jobs; the academy is pretty much shut down right now. There are no jobs . . . expand your options. Go overseas. Get a (full ride). Try to be the Americanist in the Caribbean, in England, or Germany.

#### Establish a Mission and Develop Goals, Timelines, and Skills

In this second theme, McNair Program alumni recommended that current program students also establish a mission and develop goals, as well as timelines, in order to be successful in faculty or alternative careers.

In fact, Dorothy recommended that current McNair Scholars pursue their passion for a topic or discipline but should also understand,

. . . what [the McNair program] is: that you're being prepared to get a degree which will lead to a faculty position. And you should know that right away. That it's a combination of teaching and research that you should want. I know someone who's just finished a Ph.D. in computer science; he's never gonna be a teacher. Ever. So, if he would've gotten somehow . . . I mean he's German, [and] he could . . . have gotten into the McNair Program . . . [if] he did, it would've been a shock to him because teaching is nothing he ever wanted to do with his Ph.D. He wants to work in industry and business and that sort of thing. So, I think you need to know, first off, what you're getting into.

In the same spirit, Jose recommended that current McNair Program scholars ask themselves key questions to connect their passion for a discipline to an overall mission and goal for their faculty careers. According to Jose, students need to ask themselves:

. . . why they're going into this. . . . What I often start off with students is asking them, *Why do you want a Ph.D.?* If its money . . . there's all sorts of other things, you can do to make money. If you wanna make money become so many other things. But, I don't know why you're pursuing a Ph.D. If you're afraid of time- a lot of undergrads tell me 'you know it terrifies me that it might take nine years to get my Ph.D.' And I say to them 'what should terrify you is you're gonna devote nine years to something and no one's ever gonna read a page of what you wrote.' That's scary to me. So, [I ask], 'What is your mission? Is your mission to get in and out as quick as possible? I mean, is that what the goal is? Is the goal to make lots of money? Are you a businessman now?' . . . So, for me, the goal is changing the way my discipline teaches people about Mexican Americans. . . . The fact is, maybe you shouldn't be doing this if the goal does not fit with the outcome. What is the goal?

Further, Jose recommended that current McNair Program students develop realistic timelines and learn to negotiate their time well, if they want to pursue a faculty career. He emphasized:

. . . [learn] to really negotiate your time . . . [which] really does require very much a degree of discipline on your part. I think in working class families . . . You gotta learn to say no and you gotta manage your time and you gotta be a disciplined person. . . . Once you have a Ph.D. and your son or daughter wants to pursue one, you're not gonna say 'oh, you're not gonna come to your grandmother's 66th birthday [party]?' You're gonna know that they're working on their . . . thesis; that's what comes first. You're gonna do what the people with Ph.D.s do with their kids. But, if you have no idea what the kids do you're gonna say 'you're actually gonna read a book as opposed to coming to your grandmother's [party]?'

Karina set her 10-year college reunion as a timeline by which she wanted to obtain a Ph.D. and a tenure-track faculty position. She recommended that current students develop realistic goals and timelines in a similar fashion if they are considering a faculty career. She commented:

Try to figure out what goals [to] set in your mind and then how you're gonna do it. My biggest goal [as a] part of the McNair Program, was to get my Ph.D. [But], I also had a goal when I started school. I was going to graduate and get a job before my tenth year high school reunion, which I did. I knew that that was one of the biggest goals I had and I finished it, , , , But, it still meant a lot for me to go [to the reunion]. I knew it was that timeline that I had set in mind that I could finish undergrad in four years, finish grad school in five. . . . I finished it all, on time. [So students should have] a realistic idea of how long things will take. Because it will always take longer than you think. Try to figure out . . . and prioritize what your biggest goals are. . . . My biggest goal was to get the job, to do well in the job, and to get tenure, eventually. So, I knew what I needed to do, to do that. I also know that I have that close family connection. So, I knew that I'm going to have . . . go home to visit or they'll come up here to visit. . . . I'm gonna figure out how to not be too busy because I know I'm gonna need that time. So I can still have that balance. But, I knew my big priority is to do this job.

For Karen, developing key skills required in faculty jobs were equally as important as having passion, a mission, timelines, and goals. She recommended that current McNair Program students considering faculty careers also develop the following skills:

You have to teach. Students could maybe teach an hour long . . . seminar on some topic. Because really that's the thing; research, teaching . . . service is gonna be emailing you or knocking on your door. You need to be an effective teacher. You need to be able to write well. So, if they could write up whatever and submit [for publication along with] the professor that they're working with. . . . But, at the same time, as an undergraduate you just don't have that kind of mindset to be an academic writer. . . . Editors can be harsh and I don't know how well a student would take it when they get a letter back saying that their paper sucks. (laughs). . . . I don't know if you wanna put them through that. . . . Seminar class you have . . . 15 people [you] usually sit in . . . and . . . you're forced to speak. You need that practice to get your point across or to make an argument. . . . Look for classes where you're gonna have to write. If you wanna work at a research institution,



you have to know how to give presentations. So, you have to know how to speak orally pretty well.

Finally, Elizabeth had the most divergent views of the 12 faculty in this sample.

Elizabeth recommended that current McNair Program students develop skills, but that are not limited to a faculty career in the academy. In addition, Elizabeth felt that pursuing the practical applications of one's discipline should take priority over pursuing one's passion:

McNair gave me skills. McNair gave me discipline. And that's what makes me successful. It makes me successful as a faculty member, it makes me successful as an intellectual. But those skills aren't limited to the academy. I think McNair [students] should still focus on that; skills and discipline. After that you do whatever you want. It doesn't have anything to do with how smart you are. Nor does it have anything to do exactly with what your aspirations are after you get it. But those are the things that you really need to be successful in a Ph.D. program and anything one would go on to do with the Ph.D. Do you wanna start your own nonprofit? Do you wanna work for the government? The academy? Skills and discipline. (laughs). . . . It'll take you all the way through . . . It always helps though. If you're black and you wanna be in public you better be a doctor somebody if you got to tell white people what to do with themselves.

#### Maintain Mentoring Relationships and Build Support Networks

This theme emerged in response to the sixth research question concerning the recommendations from McNair Program alumni to current McNair Program scholars who want to pursue a faculty career.

To illustrate, Yvette offered suggestions to current McNair Program students considering faculty careers. Specifically, students should seek interactions with faculty who are passionate about their work. Yvette elaborated at length on this topic. Her comments should prove insightful to current and future McNair Program students. She suggested:

My first response would be to get them around faculty of color. But I think that's too easy. That puts a bigger burden on faculty of color. My mentor was white.

She's a white woman in kinesiology and physical education; ain't got nothing to do with black people, black women, nothing. She was fabulous. So, my first reaction is to let them see faculty of color; that they actually exist. But, I think it's much deeper than that. I think it is getting them connected with faculty who are positive, who believe in them. Because, I would much rather have a white faculty member who believes in me than a black faculty member who doesn't. It's not as easy as saying 'oh race doesn't matter. You just have to pair them up with somebody who cares about them.' Because there's a lot of patronizing white faculty who will say all the right things but don't, but won't challenge. They're so liberal they're afraid to challenge the student and push them and have incredibly high standards and beat 'em up . . . to . . . rough 'em up a little bit to make 'em tough so they can get you know. So, it has to be a balance. I think the most important thing is to get them around faculty members who are passionate about their work regardless of race, regardless of you know whatever. Find faculty members who are hot stuff, who are passionate about their work, who wanna talk about their stuff. Like what faculty member doesn't wanna talk about their stuff? But talk about it in a way that is of service to these students. Because that will expose them to their options. Get them in the library, I mean that kind of stuff. And help them, counsel them-academic counseling- to help them find their passion. Because if they find their passion as students then it'll be a lot easier to work with faculty members. If they don't know what their passion is then working with the greatest faculty member in the world is still gonna be a struggle because they don't know what they wanna study. So I think you know getting them around passionate faculty and helping them, you know doing that, you know here are your options—get in the library, who inspires you a lot of assignments about looking at you know who would you role model? Who are your role models in your field? Finding those types of things because then they can see themselves you know 'ah' and they can find 'ooh, well they wanted to do this but I don't wanna do that.' And they won't be so likely then to be taken under the faulty mentor's wings and assume their faculty's research and not have their own passion.

Melissa recommended that students seek out faculty mentors who are vested in the success of their protégés. She was candid about the benefits of working hard to maintain those relationships over time. She remembered:

I think first you have to find the right mentor. This summer . . . I taught a writing seminar. I noticed that some of the work these students. I asked them who's your mentor? They were paired with mentors who were not experts in the research they were doing. . . . Well, I didn't want to overstep my bounds . . . trying to manage the program. I did tell the student 'well you should look this person up. This is what they do for a living. This is their research area.' Had no idea this person was

even at the university. So, I think it's important for them to find the right mentor. Not, not just allow themselves to be paired with a mentor. See who's at your university who's doing what research. If you find a mentor who is doing the work that you want to do I think you have a more productive relationship because there's just that common passion. I think that can blossom into other things. So, that would be my first piece of advice. Also, I can't stress how important it is to have a mentor that's gonna walk the walk with you. Have someone who's invested in your success . . . Sometimes all you have to do is continue to follow-up with emails or make a phone call and say 'this is what's going on with me. Can you guide me? Can I ask you about this particular situation?' Whether you're in a Master's program or a Ph.D. program. I'm willing to bet that they will give you the advice and the guidance that you need because you've already established something. So, don't be afraid to hold on to that relationship. Use it. Use it for all it's worth. I don't think I would have survived intact had I not had my mentor. Because there some things that went on . . . that if I didn't have someone outside the situation, just to let me know that I'm seeing straight, I might've gotten more intimidated. Who knows, I might've not finished. You know? So, I think that's probably the most important thing is that relationship with your mentor.

Karina recommended that McNair Program students build new faculty support networks at the peer and senior levels. Karina said, "find people that are gonna support you [through] various networks, both at the peer level and at the more senior/mentor level."

Similarly, Sonia advocated that once McNair Program students become assistant professors, they should continue building mentoring relationships with senior faculty with full tenure. Sonia said:

Just seeing people in the higher echelons...is good. Of course, it doesn't always help because . . . even those folks that have reached higher positions don't turn around and help everybody down the line . . . Very bootstrap mentality. I think that's not our generation. . . . So, it's gonna take time because we have to work our way through the system. . . . I went to the National Association of Chicana/Chicano Studies conference early this year. In that, conference there was a small little panel about getting full professorship. They made a really good case for becoming a full professor. Because when you're a full professor then you automatically have a different voice on the campus. Then you might be considered for [deanship]. I think that's one thing . . . right now I'm just worried about getting tenure. I've never thought about pushing it to full professor . . . I

talked to somebody who says they just got tenure three years ago; they're already starting to get on the line for full. I never thought that was even possible. I felt like I was a McNair student again; I'm like I didn't know that was possible. So, I think that one thing we need to do is those of us that are already in try to push us towards even getting further. So, it's not just about getting into a Ph.D. program, it's not just about getting a faculty job. Now, it's also about becoming a full professor.

Karina suggested that current and future McNair Program students considering faculty careers keep family close for support. Karina felt that family can be a double-edged sword and can be a drawback for many first-generation and minority students:

I'm the oldest in my immediate family. So, the whole extended family knows what I'm up to. My dad and mother tell everybody. So, it's constantly keeping on track knowing that they know what I'm doing and they're also asking me. . . . If I start to feel bad about my progress they tend to remind me of the good things that I've been doing and not to give myself such a hard time. . . . Or they'll do the opposite to get [me] back on track. So, that helps out a lot. So, when I published my first journal article I had to give a copy to my mom and my brother . . . And they've also wanted to hear me talk about my research. . . . So, I go home and then go to the conference. So, [my mom will] look at my PowerPoint and even like let me practice in front of her . . . And so they've all sort of had that really involved role . . . [So,] again, try to keep motivated. Try to get a balance. I just mentioned all the good things with my family. But, again, they could provide some of, not necessarily the problems but the drawbacks to the kind of profession I'm. I had to go somewhere else for graduate school and . . . when I'm done with my Ph.D. . . . I explained what it means to be a professor and . . . a top job . . . was probably not gonna be in Texas. Then, keep active and do what you needed to do for your job. . . . [My mentor] said this one time to me like: 'your family could be like a double-edged sword . . . Because some people let them be the reason that they didn't finish or that they can't get away from their family.' . . . One other friend that in the program . . . never made it to graduate school. She even had a fellowship to study in Spain for a year and she never even went.

Finally, Jose, recommended that McNair Program students surround themselves with people who are doing the things they aspire to do. He felt strongly that doing so would also help students succeed in their faculty careers. He explained:

You know, if you hang around with people who are not Ph.D.'s they're not gonna understand. It's not that you should be discriminatory, [or] hate them, . . . but

there's just a reality here that if you're not hanging around with people who are doing what you're doing you're gonna feel they don't get you and you don't get them. You know, like why are you spending countless hours at the library when you could be out having a good time? Why are you doing X? Your parents are the same way; if your parents are not Ph.D.'s they're not gonna know what you're doing. They're gonna ask you to help out with little Timmy, they're gonna ask you to help out with the family. . . . There's always a family issue, in a lot of working class minority families. I know there's always a family event or a family crisis. That's what I tell my students too; always a family crisis. Always. Someone's always messed up. That's the nature of being a minority in America. Someone is always messed up and there's always some sort of family event you can go to.

### Summary

In summary, the McNair Program alumni of color who are currently serving as college faculty offered a number of recommendations to current McNair Program scholars who want to pursue a faculty career. First, McNair Program students should stay motivated to succeed in their faculty careers by maintaining the mentoring relationships that they've established as undergraduates. McNair Program students should find faculty who are passionate about their work regardless of race, gender, and even discipline. Students must also seek mentorship from faculty who are vested in the success of their protégés. Alumni strongly recommended that students work hard to maintain those mentoring relationships for the duration of their academic careers.

Second, the faculty in this sample recommended that current and future McNair Program students build new faculty support networks at the peer and senior levels. Doing so can enhance advancement opportunities. Also, in the spirit of love and respect for their families, the faculty in this sample recommended that McNair Program students look to their family for support. However, alumni suggest that current McNair Program students understand that family can also be a drawback for first-generation and minority students.

Relatedly, students should cultivate relationships with people who are on similar interests and career paths for additional support.

The next section discusses the results of the artifacts data collection. The meaning that participants give to their personal artifacts will provide additional insight into the lived experiences of these individuals and their journey into the professoriate.

#### Findings from the Artifact Data

In-depth interviewing was used as the primary data collection method for this study. In addition, artifacts were collected. Participants were asked to share artifacts that were relevant or significant to their McNair Program-related experiences. Many of the artifacts that participants brought to their interviews were photographed and included:

1. A leather portfolio.
2. A plaque.
3. An inspiration box.
4. A hand embroidered poster.
5. A 100 MB zip disk.
6. A certificate.
7. A photograph.

This section presents the analysis results of the artifact data.

Artifact data collection was difficult but somewhat productive. Six of the twelve participants brought artifacts to their interviews. Two participants did not bring artifacts. In addition, poignant responses from the six participants who brought artifacts to their interview, as well as a detailed description of each artifact and the meaning behind each

one are presented. Lastly, the artifact findings, with respect to the relevant overarching research questions for this study, are discussed.

The six participants who did not bring artifacts to their interviews were Jose, Elizabeth, Karen, Melissa, Alma, and Archie. Although Melissa and Alma did not bring artifacts, they briefly talked about the artifacts that came to mind. For instance, Melissa said:

I actually have some stuff in storage that I could not get access to. I have the journal where I published . . . my research for that summer. So, if I can find that I would love to share that with you. The tape of the interview is with my mentor. So, I don't actually even have a copy of it. But, those were the first few things that came to mind. I don't have any photographs to speak of.

Alma somehow misplaced the artifact that she wanted to share during her interview. The artifact was a set of overhead transparencies that she presented at her first academic conference in 1997. That conference was the sixth Annual McNair Scholars Research Conference and Graduate Fair held in Delevan, Wisconsin. Alma shared the meaning behind the transparencies she had planned to share:

I just actually ran into my McNair presentation (chuckles) my very first one. When I told my partner [Dave] that you were coming out and he's like 'look what I found in the garage. And I'm like oh my God, it's hilarious . . . But . . . it was all about like how the republican family values campaign is detrimental to women. (laughs) . . . or something like that. So, you know, but I mean what I'm saying is like it's like, I looked at it and it was like oh this is so sweet. Like I had, it was so earnest, you know. (laughs) Like um, about kind of um, how women are constructed and the roles they play and I was, and as I looked at it I was like really kind of dealing with that myself . . . I think it was because, you know, I had a very traditional Latino father who was like would've been real happy with me kind of having some babies and getting married. And it became very clear that that wasn't, what I, the role, that was not the road I was gonna take. And so um, I was struggling with that. And I found a kind of, a release intellectually by kind of understanding how these roles get constructed and publicly.

Alma's reflections about the conference transparencies provide further insight into her early socialization into the academic community. Producing the artifact was an intellectual effort presented at her very first academic conference. Alma articulated the meaning behind the artifacts—a story of intellectual release and empowerment. The artifacts also signified an earnest struggle with “traditional” family values and aspirations to pursue academic achievement. The meaning behind this artifact resonated with Alma's overall experiences at that National McNair Conference in 1997. At that conference, Alma felt that she and her McNair Program peers had something in common. Earlier in her interview, she stated, “we weren't there based on our academic fields; we were there because we were all in the same place.” Thus, the meaning behind the artifact is also consistent with the one of the themes for this study, *A Sense of Normalcy, Love, and Camaraderie* and addresses the second overarching research question for this study.

Yvette, Rigoberto, Dorothy, Karina, Sonia, and Elijah shared items during their individual interviews. Some participants shared their understanding of the experiences that they associated with their artifacts. Moreover, they shared the meaning they made behind their artifacts.

For instance, Yvette brought a black leather portfolio to her interview with the Interstellar University seal embossed on the front center. She'd received the portfolio from her McNair Program director at Interstellar University. Yvette articulated why she still carries that portfolio:

I would do anything for [my McNair director]. I wanted her to be proud of us. She gave so much . . . she had it all figured out. It's funny . . . that I still have the portfolio, [it says,] Interstellar University, Yvette Yarborough, McNair Scholars Program. [It] was given [to us] on graduation. . . . I've been carrying this thing



since 1999; it's now 2010. It's very functional. But, I carry that with pride because my relationship with [her] . . . she showed all of us . . . how much she cared about us; how much she really wanted us to succeed.

The story behind Yvette's portfolio conveys the meaning that she made of her relationship and experiences with her McNair Program director. Furthermore, Yvette's story about the artifact also exemplifies the appreciation, excitement, and immense pride that exuded from the McNair Scholar alumni interviewed in this sample. The experience and meaning behind Yvette's artifact is consistent with one of this study's themes, *They Cared about Us like Family* and addresses the second overarching research question.

Another artifact was a 10" by 8" plaque made of wood and topped with a black metal plate. The plaque was prominently displayed on the middle shelf of the bookcase in Rigoberto's campus office. Inscribed on the plaque was: Geospace University, Academic Support Programs, Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program, Dr. Rigoberto Robles is presented with the Alumni Trio Achievement Award for Academic and professional achievement in memory of Dr. Ronald E. McNair.

Rigoberto talked about the award and its meaning:

It's for alumni that represent or embodied what McNair has been . . . being a student back in '98 and I think achieving and graduating and getting my Ph.D. and being here and then mentoring students back in the McNair Program. I think that's what that award entitles. So, I guess full circle kind of like, completion . . . completing that entire cycle. . . . That's one of the things that I try to do . . . with the McNair Program . . . just let them know that even though I graduated, I'm still here. If there's anything they need from me, I'm there. It's just part of the things you also learn in McNair; you always are a McNair [Scholar] and you always are expected to give, back to the community. So, that's what that award means to me.

The story behind Rigoberto's artifact (an award) is consistent with another theme for this study, namely, *Recognizing Intellectual Labor* and addresses research question number two.

Sonia brought a wealth of artifacts. In fact, she brought the most of all participants. [The researcher is not surprised she would as she's an anthropologist.] Most of Sonia's artifacts were photographs of students, faculty, and staff at various events sponsored by the Stardust University McNair Program. However, the researcher only photographed three artifacts that seemed particularly meaningful to her: an inspiration box, an embroidered poster, and a 100 MB Zip Disk. The inspiration box was reminiscent of a jewelry box. Sonia's McNair Program, program director gave them as gifts to her and to other McNair Program students who graduated college in 2002. The inspiration box was made out of a silver mesh-like metal with an interlaced floral/heart pattern all over it. It was roughly 3" tall and 3" in diameter and cylindrical in shape. There was a matching top that secured its contents. Inside this small, metal, cylindrical mesh container were six tiny white paper scrolls. Each scroll had a small rubber band around it. During our interview, Sonia unrolled the first scroll that had a message that said, "Things Take Time." The second scroll, profoundly stated: "Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow'." Finally, the third scroll read: "Dwell in the possibility." During the interview, Sonia wept as she told the story behind her artifacts. She opened some of the scrolls for the first time during our interview. This thoughtful gift reflected the theme, *They Cared About Us Like*

*Family*. Thus, it also addressed the second overarching research question regarding the most memorable experiences for the faculty in this study.

Sonia's second artifact was the embroidered poster. Sonia created the poster at a time when she was having trouble in her Ph.D. program. The poster was a 12" by 11" poster board covered with a white linen canvas. A blue star was embroidered in its upper left corner. There were smaller blue and gold stars embroidered in the middle of the canvas showering toward the words: "Never, Never, Never, Never, Give Up." So, Sonia's second artifact was consistent with the theme, *De-mystifying the Process, Cementing the Idea, and Providing a Path*. The story behind this artifact addresses research question three regarding influences on the pursuit of a Doctoral degree.

Sonia's third and final artifact was a 100 MB zip disk. She described the meaning of this artifact:

So, I got my old research [on disks] back when they used to give us zip drives.(laughs) I kept those is because you never know what you're gonna need in there . . . proposals, statement of purpose, personal statements. I would love to go back and read. God . . . next year it'll be ten years. So, it'll be interesting to see what I used to write about . . . I really do wanna go back there [and read] notes that I might've taken on articles that I would've read. I remember researching for McNair and I was looking at this article that [my mentor] gave me to read. We were doing higher education and Latinos. The author was [Veramonte]. And they referenced Dr. [Veramonte] and I just jumped up and down. I'm like 'that's not me but it will be me! One day, I'll be having a printed . . .' You know, yeah. So, I wanna go back and find what article that was.

The significance of the artifact for Sonia is related to her aspirations to publish research as an academician. The lived experience and meaning she associated with this artifact echoed another theme that emerged in this study, *Becoming the Person that You Admired* and addresses research question two regarding the most memorable experiences.

Dorothy brought a certificate of participation that she received from the 11th Annual Ronald E. McNair Research Conference and Graduate School Fair held in Delevan, Wisconsin in 2002. Dorothy shared her experience and talked about the meaning of this artifact:

I remember this one in particular, this certificate, because at the time, it was also a graduate school fair and that's the first time I met a recruiter from Best University. She had came by my, I think I did a poster session, and she had come by and we talked and she really is the reason why I ended up at BU. After that, she kept in touch with me, emails all the time, heavily recruiting me to come there for graduate school. So, I remember that conference presentation.

Dorothy's artifact, the certificate of participation, reminded her of the experience of how her McNair Program research presentation at a conference lead to her being recruited to the university where she ultimately pursued her Ph.D. The story behind this artifact is also consistent with the theme, *De-mystifying the Process, Cementing the Idea, and Providing a Path*, and addresses research question three regarding program influences on the pursuit of a doctoral degree.

The last artifact, a photograph, was of Dorothy standing with her McNair Program cohort at Journey University. Dorothy commented on how thin she looked back then, which she liked. Dorothy went on to describe the meaning of the picture and why she keeps it nearby. She reminisced:

It's just one that I just kinda keep in the drawer; I don't even file it with other photographs in an album- it's just in this drawer that I pull out and I, you know can see from there. So, um, but it was a good time for all of us getting started into the program; all the excitement you know of being a McNair scholar. You know just a really good exciting time for us . . . Um, for me it's just remembering why I'm doing what I'm doing; how I got into this. So, that to me was, the McNair Program was my introduction to graduate school, to research, to a career in faculty. So, to me I see that as just a beginning; I remember how it all started.

The story behind Dorothy's photograph is also consistent with the theme, *De-mystifying the Process, Cementing the Idea, and Providing a Path*, and addresses research question three regarding program influences on the pursuit of a doctoral degree.

In summary, the artifacts collected reflected five themes that emerged in response to the overarching research questions:

1. Recognizing intellectual labor.
2. Becoming the person, you admired.
3. They cared about us: like family.
4. A sense of normalcy, love, and camaraderie.
5. De-mystifying the process, cementing the idea, and providing a path.

The stories behind the artifacts collected were consistent with the responses that participants gave during their interviews to research question two (regarding the most memorable experiences) and research question three (the program's influence on their pursuit of a doctoral degree) respectively.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the lived experiences that enabled 12 former McNair Program participants who were college students of color to become faculty in higher education. Data was examined and presented to show the factors that motivated alumni to participate in the McNair Program as undergraduates, and their most memorable experiences while in the program. In addition, I data was examined and presented to show the McNair Program and non-McNair Program factors that may have contributed to alumni pursuit of graduate study and/or a faculty career. Lastly, data was explored and

presented to reveal the lessons from the McNair Program that faculty use in their current positions, and the recommendations that faculty offer to current McNair Scholars who want to pursue a faculty career.

In the final chapter, a summary of the study is presented and a discussion of the findings and conclusions from the study are offered. Recommendations for key stakeholders, as well as recommendations for future research, is also provided.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I present a summary of the study including a description of the problem, context, and purpose of the study. An overview of the data collection and analysis methods and key findings are also included. Next, conclusions drawn from the findings of the study are presented. Then, I offer recommendations for key stakeholders and, finally, recommendations for future research.

#### Summary of the Study

##### Problem

Although minority undergraduate and graduate enrollment in U.S. higher education has increased (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2009) over the past two decades, African American, Latino, and Native American faculty still remain underrepresented both in comparison to their representation in U.S. baccalaureate and doctoral degree attainment and in the U.S. population (Snyder, Dillow & Hoffman, 2009).

Disproportionately low advanced degree attainment among minorities, affects the number of individuals who can enter into careers such as higher education college teaching and research (Simpson, 2004).

Moreover, in the next two decades, large numbers of college faculty are expected to retire (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). During the same period, extraordinary population growth among people of color is also expected to continue (Census Bureau, 2008). These two shifts present an opportunity for America to reap the benefits from an

investment in human capital among under-represented minorities (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). This window of opportunity to redress the historic underrepresentation of faculty of color may not come for another 150 years (Anonymous, 2009).

### Context

Many colleges, universities, philanthropic organizations, government, and private agencies have sponsored undergraduate research programs in order to create a faculty pipeline for high-achieving underrepresented minorities (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007; Swaner & Brownell, 2008). As addressed in Chapters I and II the positive influence of undergraduate research experiences on minority graduate enrollment and career choice is well cited in the higher education literature (Davis, 2008; Hu, Scheuch, Schwartz, Gayle, & Li, 2008). However, the research on the experiences of alumni of undergraduate research programs who are currently serving as faculty in higher education is thin.

More specifically, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program represents the largest federally funded effort focused on diversifying the academy in all disciplines. Over the past two decades, government agencies and the higher education community have invested greatly in the McNair Program. The expectation has been that most undergraduate participants will later complete doctoral degrees and enter into careers in college teaching and research. However, current data show that relatively few McNair participants of color enter into the professoriate (McCoy, et al, 2008). Qualitative research on the experiences of McNair Program alumni



as faculty is also absent from the higher education literature. The persistent underrepresentation of faculty of color in higher education calls for new research that deepens the academy's understanding of their experiences.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gather the stories of McNair Program alumni of color who succeeded as undergraduates and graduate students and went on to assume faculty careers. I was particularly interested in exploring potential relationships between their undergraduate experiences in the McNair Program and their current experiences as faculty. In this study, I use qualitative research methods to explore the experiences of minority undergraduate research program alumni who have entered the professoriate.

#### Method

Since my study was a new line of inquiry, an exploratory research approach was appropriate (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In my qualitative study, I conducted face-to-face interviews with 12 African American and Latino faculty who were employed at 12 colleges and universities located in 10 states. In addition, I collected personal artifact data to further illustrate the meaning of McNair Program-related experiences. Six of the 12 participants shared artifacts, including a portfolio, plaque, jewelry box, poster, computer disk, certificate, and a photograph. Each item was photographed except for the portfolio. I used a phenomenological methodological approach and conducted interviews with each faculty member that lasted 90 minutes on average. The phenomenon explored in this study included the experience of being an undergraduate participant in a McNair Program and that experience's impact, if any, on the decision to pursue a faculty career. I

coded and categorized emergent themes arising from the interviews and in order to address my research questions. I analyzed the interview data using phenomenological procedures outlined by Creswell (1998, pp. 147-149).

### Research Questions

The reflections from my participants' experiences were used to address the following research questions:

1. What factors motivated current faculty of color who are alumni of the McNair Program to participate in the program while an undergraduate?
2. What do McNair Program alumni most remember about their experiences as a McNair Scholar during their undergraduate years? Why?
3. To what extent (and in what ways) do alumni believe their McNair Program experiences influenced their motivation for graduate study and/or a faculty career?
4. What non-McNair Program factors may have contributed to alumni pursuit of graduate study and/or a faculty career?
5. What lessons learned from the McNair Program are used by faculty of color in their current positions as faculty? Why?
6. What recommendations do McNair Program faculty alumni offer to current McNair Scholars who want to pursue a faculty career?

### Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is its promise to extend an understanding of the role that the McNair Program serves in preparing students of color for the professoriate. It is important to explore the experiences of underrepresented students to understand how to raise rates of graduate degree attainment and the representation of faculty of color in higher education.

### Key Findings

Through the collection of interview data, several findings emerged. First, the major factors that motivated participation in the McNair Program included participants' search to maximize their college education, a new focus on getting a Ph.D., and the need to following the advice of faculty, staff, and program alumni. Second, the most memorable experiences for the 12 faculty in this sample included: being recognized for their intellectual efforts; becoming the person they most admired; being cared for by their program staff; feeling a sense of normalcy, love and camaraderie among students; and feeling more prepared for graduate school than for a faculty career. Third, the alumni did affirm that the McNair Program influenced their motivation to pursue graduate study. The program influenced their pursuits by allowing participants to research something that they loved and to have a voice in the academy; by demystifying the process, cementing the idea of, and providing a path to graduate school; and by giving them a “leg up” in graduate school. Fourth, the McNair Program also emerged as an indirect contributing factor to the pursuit of a faculty career.

Fifth, significant non-McNair Program experiences that contributed to participants' pursuit of a faculty career included faculty mentors and falling in love with their academic discipline. Sixth, lessons learned from the McNair Program that faculty use in their current positions included lessons about teaching and mentoring. One participant revealed that it was best not to have an “I only train scholars attitude” in her first year as a college professor. Another participant sought “critical feedback” on his writing and used that process in mentoring college students. The sixth and final key findings were recommendations to current McNair Scholars included finding and pursuing one's academic passion and maintaining mentoring relationships and faculty support networks.

The findings from the artifact data analysis supported findings from the interviews. The data collected from artifacts provided a more concrete illustration of memorable experiences and influences on the pursuit of doctoral study. Specifically, the artifact data correlate with findings for research questions two and three. That is, the second research question pertained to the most memorable experiences associated with the McNair Program. The meanings behind the artifact data were consistent with four out of five themes that address most memorable experiences. The third research question concerned the McNair Program's influence on participants' pursuit of a faculty career. The meaning behind two artifacts was consistent with a theme that addressed the pursuit of a faculty career.

### Conclusions and Discussion

In this section, I present seven conclusions and discuss them with respect to the findings and literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The first conclusion was that joining the McNair Program was an effort by my participants to take advantage of undergraduate educational opportunities that would enhance their college education. In doing so, changes in their educational and career ambitions occurred. My second conclusion that participants most remembered the socialization experiences that normalized the process of, and laid the foundation for, an academic career. A third conclusion was that alumni believe that their McNair Program experiences significantly influenced their motivation for graduate study. The fourth conclusion confirmed that alumni, overall, believed that their McNair Program experiences indirectly influenced their motivation to pursue a faculty career. A fifth conclusion was that college faculty and their passion for their academic discipline were the most significant non-McNair Program influences on the pursuit of a faculty career. A sixth conclusion revealed that alumni are deeply committed to teaching and mentoring future academicians. The seventh and final conclusion of this study was that alumni recommend that nurturing one's own passions and faculty mentoring relationships should continue beyond the McNair Program and throughout one's academic career. Each of these conclusions are discussed further in the sections that follow.

### Opportunities and Aspirations

The first research question was designed to investigate participants' motivation for joining the McNair Program as undergraduates. The first conclusion of this study is

that the increased educational opportunities and changes in educational and career aspirations were factors that motivated my interviewees to participate in the McNair Program in college.

In Chapter I, I noted that the overall goal of the McNair Program was to provide preparation for doctoral study and to encourage program participants to pursue careers in research and college teaching (Beal, 2007). The review of the literature presented in Chapter Two showed that McNair alumni earned more professional degrees than doctoral degrees in 2004 (McCoy, et al., 2008). Results from the interview and artifact data revealed that the 12 McNair alumni, in this sample, were all academically motivated as college students. Their motivation for joining the McNair Program grew out of a desire to address isolation, a lack of information about graduate study, and a lack of preparation for the job market. Many participants wanted to become school teachers. Ultimately, the program addressed participants' needs in the above-mentioned areas, by presenting them with new goals and educational and career opportunities. Surprisingly, my respondents suggest, that their educational and career aspirations began to change, or were clarified, during the interview for admission to the McNair Program.

Several faculty participants in this study support the conclusion regarding motivation to participate in the McNair Program as an educational opportunity on the college campus. For example, Yvette who was attracted to the program because she thought it was “designed for people like me who loved school but didn’t really know how to go about maximizing their opportunities.” Alma said that she was drawn to the program because it “encouraged me not to see the classroom as the boundaries of my

learning.” These examples are consistent with Hollack's (2003) findings that college students joined the McNair Program because they saw “opportunities to be involved in 'real research' and to gain skills that would help them in graduate school” (p. 105).

The findings from Russell's (2006) study on undergraduate research participants also support the first conclusion of this study. Russell (2006) found that nearly 50% of undergraduate research participants majoring in science chose to participate because they wanted “hands-on experiences to reinforce what had been learned in class” (p. 13). Russell (2006) also noted that a significant number of college students participated in research experiences because of a desire to earn course credit.

With respect to changes in educational and career aspirations, Hu et al. (2008) indicated that undergraduate research experiences “clarified goals for career options and graduate school attendance” particularly for students of color (p. 35). The following example illuminates the above point. One participant, Jose joined the McNair Program because the program goals aligned with his developing aspirations. He said, “as they were starting to tell me the goals, as those were becoming my goals, I saw that it was in my interest to join.” Like Jose, the aspirations for many participants changed before fully engaging in the McNair Program. This implies that the program provided students with key information and opportunities that influenced their aspirations to pursue goals as outlined by the McNair Program.

With respect to educational and career aspirations, the data collected in this study showed that the McNair Program recruitment interview was a pivotal moment when

students expanded or changed their academic and career aspirations. Alma's interview illustrates this point.

It took a lot for me to believe I could be something else. It took a lot of ignoring of so many things to even say out loud, 'I wanna be a professor.' I mean that wasn't, that's not a lot; meant for people like me. . . . I think it took me back to that place where like I had to completely ignore what people expected of me, I had to ignore what people thought was right for me. I had to rethink who I thought I was in that moment.

Further, Hunter et al. (2006) pointed out that college students viewed participation in undergraduate research experiences as a way to improve their own career prospects. An example from Melissa's interview illustrates this. Melissa said that she joined the McNair Program as an undergraduate because it was, "something that was going to help me get to, or figure out, the next step of my career." Hunter et al. (2006) also concluded that the "undergraduate research experience confirmed many students' preexisting interest in attending graduate school" (p. 70). The above findings raise a question about whether individuals in this study were predisposed to a career in teaching, perhaps as early as the primary and secondary school levels.

The conclusion that participants were motivated to join the McNair Program due to educational opportunities and changes in educational and career aspirations is consistent with the evidence in the literature on educational and careers aspirations and attainment. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) noted that college student aspirations are associated with future degree attainment, and degree attainment has been associated with career attainment. In contrast, Kao and Thompson (2003) noted that student aspirations are related to degree attainment and occupational attainment. However, they posit that aspirations do not, necessarily, predict future educational and occupational attainment for



minority students. In other words, even though McNair participants' initial aspirations align with the program, participants may not actually attain Ph.D.s and pursue faculty careers.

Cole and Barber (2003) noted that many academically motivated minority students “are interested in academia when they enter college, and that most retain that interest through college; but when asked to make a 'final' occupational choice, the majority of those with an interest in academia choose to go into some other occupation” (p. 80). These findings provide more insight into the motivation of most McNair participants to join the program but ultimately pursue professional degrees in greater number than they pursue Ph.D.'s (McCoy et al., 2008).

#### Laying a Foundation for an Academic Career

The second conclusion of this study was that alumni participants most remembered experiences that sensitized them to the process of and laying a foundation for an academic career. Interview and artifact data revealed that their experiences in workshops, counseling, and at national conferences as key influences. The memorable experiences were related to how the McNair Program recognized their intellectual work; exposed them to peers, faculty, and staff that they admired; cared for them like family; and normalized the process of becoming an academic.

Recognition came in the form of participant exposure to early, public, and frequent praise, acknowledgement, awards, and financial support for their intellectual efforts. Admiration came in the form of McNair staff, faculty, and students who taught participants about “discipline and meeting deadlines,” modeled mentoring, taught about

“exploring knowledge,” and taught participants about tenacity and dealing with rejection—all by example. Caring came in the form of faculty and staff associated with the program who demonstrated a “personal investment” and showed “unconditional love and unconditional support,” and who “took very good care” of these 12 McNair participants and showed how much they really wanted participants “to succeed” as future scholars. The sense of normalcy was revealed through experiences that made participants feel as though they were “part of a team” with “academic achievement as the norm” and these were viewed as experiences “normalizing the process of being and academic.” These findings suggest that the McNair Program provided socialization experiences that helped to develop participants’ attitudes and character needed for doctoral study and a faculty career.

The second conclusion that I have reached regarding how the McNair Program laid a foundation for an academic career is supported by the literature on socialization. Clark and Corcoran (1986) suggest that socialization to faculty careers begin at the anticipatory stage which is, “the process by which persons choose occupations and are recruited to them, gradually assuming the values of the group to which they aspire and measuring the ideals for congruence with reality” (p. 23).

Scholars who also suggest that a faculty career can begin in or before graduate school (Anthony & Taylor, 2004; Austin, 2002; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993) also support my second conclusion. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) note that, “anticipatory socialization is a process or set of experiences through which individuals come to anticipate correctly the norms, values, and behavioral expectations they will encounter in

a new setting” (p. 403). Therefore, socialization can occur at any point prior to entering the professoriate.

Anticipatory socialization of McNair participants has also been examined in the literature. Beal (2007) noted that the McNair Program “offered students a peer community to learn about scholarship” (p. 644). Hallock's (2003) research also suggests that the McNair Program provided valuable exposure and preparation for the academy at a time when students are still forming their professional identities. Hallock (2003) further noted that,

At this stage of socialization, the students seemed to be constructing a picture of the professoriate that was consistent with their sense of their own identities and aspirations rather than reshaping their images of themselves to fit into a dominant professional norm. (p. 111)

The socialization experiences of McNair alumni of color who are currently serving as college faculty in higher education are insightful in that one can see from their point of view. The underrepresented McNair alumni in this study had similar socialization experiences that exposed them to important norms and values of academic culture. Their stories revealed insight into how key socialization experiences matched their developing personas and aspirations.

#### Influence on Motivation for Graduate Study

A third conclusion was that alumni believed that their McNair Program experiences significantly influenced their motivation for graduate study. The perspective of McNair alumni currently serving as college faculty is a unique perspective in the higher education literature. It is exciting to learn how the McNair Program encourages pursuit of a doctoral degree. In light of the fact that many McNair alumni do not pursue

Ph.D.'s, it was also interesting to learn how and why these alumni chose to pursue a doctoral degree.

The program's influence on participants' motivation to pursue graduate study was revealed through the vivid stories shared in this study. Participants developed personal connections to their academic disciplines through research experiences in the McNair Program. Personal connections were related to family history, school experiences, and social justice concerns. These connections grew into an emotional and intellectual love affair with their academic disciplines which became a driving force to pursuing graduate study. The theme "researching something you love and having a voice in the academy" illustrates this point.

The third conclusion is consistent with findings from McGee and Keller (2007) who noted that students who participated in undergraduate research experiences and pursued doctoral degrees shared common characteristics including "a curiosity to discover the unknown, enjoyment of problem solving, and the desire to help others indirectly through research" (p. 316). The McNair Program staff and faculty mentors consistently clarified the purpose of a Ph.D. and discussed reasons why participants should pursue the degree. This finding is in keeping with the research conducted on undergraduate research and McNair Programs. Nnadozie, et al (2001) noted that the McNair research component clarified career goals and options. During her interview, Alma said: "it demystified the process for me where I could actually identify and see myself in it." Hu, et al (2008) noted that, "undergraduate research experiences have strong potential to recruit students into the pipeline of disciplines where they are

traditionally underrepresented” (p. 39). Davis (2008) also noted that faculty influenced aspirations to pursue a doctorate.

The findings of this study are consistent with research regarding the McNair Program's influence on graduate study. Research by McCoy et al (2008) suggests that research-related McNair Program activities were the most helpful during graduate school for alumni with doctorates. Simpson (2003) also provided evidence that undergraduate research programs (like McNair Programs) contribute to academic integration in graduate school. Relatedly, Grimmett et al. (1998) identified building credentials for graduate school and exploring a field of study as two of the most beneficial activities to McNair Program participants. Perna (2004) confirmed that interaction with faculty and peers was positively associated with graduate enrollment. Specifically, undergraduate research programs provide information and exposure to graduate study serve as “social networks” (Perna, 2004, p. 523). The cultural and social capital available through the program helps to shape educational aspirations to pursue graduate study.

The program helped to foster participants' confidence in their abilities to do well in their doctoral studies. This finding is also consistent with studies conducted on undergraduate research and McNair Programs regarding pursuit of graduate study. Participants indicated that they were well prepared for graduate study and had a “leg up” on their peers. Similarly, Vance (1993) found that the McNair Program research component was instrumental in increasing self-interest and self-confidence in the decision to pursue graduate studies. Nnadozie, Ishiyama, and Chon (2001) demonstrated that participation in the McNair research component clarified goals regarding career

options. Williams (2004) showed that participation in the McNair undergraduate research component increased levels of academic, research, and social self-efficacy, as well as, increased knowledge about graduate study.

A surprising result was that the McNair Program instilled a sense of commitment and accountability in participants to pursue a Ph.D. Dorothy, in her interview, illustrates this conclusion:

. . . it was really my commitment to the McNair Program and [my Director and I] talked about this at length. [He said to me] 'You are committing yourself to get a Ph.D. . . . if you choose not to, it does hurt the program.' So, I had all of that in the back of my mind . . . it was just through that mentoring with my director that I decided to go the Ph.D. route and to honor that commitment to the program

Also, Karina's response to the program's influence on her decision to pursue a doctoral degree is revealing:

Therefore, it was a big influence . . . just hearing the McNair staff talk to us and be involved in the program and know that . . . we had a good opportunity, but that we still needed to be accountable to the program and to others who could be involved in that opportunity and that we needed to get our Ph.D.

It is clear that faculty, staff, and peer mentoring relationships developed through the McNair Program provided many benefits to participants in this study. McNair faculty and staff mentors served as valuable information resources to participants. This finding highlights the importance of the role that social capital can play in facilitating doctoral degree pursuits among McNair participants.

Perna (2004) suggested the social networks available through undergraduate research programs (like McNair) at college and universities provide cultural and social capital, which can shape educational aspirations to pursue graduate study. The benefits of mentoring relationships or networks extend into and beyond graduate school. Smith

(2007) defined social capital is as “an intangible form of capital that refers to having access to privileged channels of information and resources via social relationships” (p 36). Faculty mentoring and undergraduate research experiences are key to exposing students to a career in the academy. The alumni in this study underscored that their McNair Programs afforded them strong faculty and staff mentoring relationships. The social capital participants received from those relationships is an important consideration in encouraging more McNair participants to pursue Ph.D.s. and faculty careers. I suggest that the McNair programs represented in this sample provided a high degree of social capital consisting of established norms, privileges, connections, and information (Smith, 2007). may explain why the faculty participants in the study all conveyed a sense of “commitment” and “accountability” to pursue doctoral study.

#### Indirect Influence on Faculty Career Pursuits

The fourth conclusion is that the McNair Program does indirectly influence participant motivation to pursue a faculty career. This section addresses this conclusion in more detail. Findings from my study imply that the McNair Program indirectly influenced participants’ decision to pursue faculty careers through encouragement and support from staff and faculty mentors. It is clear from my interviews that McNair directors and faculty recognized and believed in the talents of these alumni as undergraduates. Program directors helped to clarify participant goals and used personal and program resources to connect participants’ intellectual talents to other faculty and administrators throughout the country. In doing so, the McNair Program indirectly influenced participant success at the next level their academic careers.

Findings from the participant interviews bring to light that some McNair Programs might not explicitly emphasize the pursuit of a faculty career as much as they emphasize the pursuit of a doctoral degree. Two examples from my interviews support this conclusion. Melissa said, “I wasn't even thinking about what it meant to actually be at the other end of that [Ph.D.]” In addition, Dorothy said, “I didn't realize that getting a Ph.D. meant becoming a professor. . . . I never made that link [until I got to grad school].” Participant interview responses imply that some programs offered staff talks, guest speakers, and films that gave “tips” and a realistic picture about what they “might have to deal with” as future faculty. These are consistent with the legislated goal of the McNair Program, which is to “increase the attainment of doctoral degrees” (McCoy, et al., 2008). These findings may be interpreted as contradictory to the intent of the McNair Program, which is to “diversify the professoriate” (Gallardo, 2009, p. 64).

The findings from this study both support and contrast with previous studies on McNair Programs with respect to the McNair Program's influence on motivation to pursue faculty careers. Research has showed that McNair participants gain valuable exposure to the culture of graduate study and the academy through faculty mentoring and research experiences. However, some McNair participants are still uncertain about plans for graduate study and even more uncertain about a faculty career (Hallock, 2003). Research reveals that minority undergraduate McNair participants had similar plans for graduate study as non-McNair participants but McNair participants also developed unfavorable perceptions of the academy and faculty careers (Hollack, 2003). Other research on McNair Scholarly identity development implied that McNair participants



were aware of the expectation for a faculty career (Beal, 2007). Most minority McNair undergraduate and graduate student alumni began to develop scholarly identities while in the program but most were dissuaded from pursuing a faculty career (Beal, 2007). Beal (2007) noted:

When poor academic knowledge and background impeded some students' success in the role of scholar, their resolve and intentions were lost. Students like Avatar realized that they could not justify the degree of self-mutilation and estrangement from culture and self that acquisition of the scholarly role demanded. (p. 647)

Findings from my study indicate that some McNair Programs might not explicitly emphasize the pursuit of a faculty career as much as they emphasize the pursuit of a doctoral degree. Both Hollack's (2003) and Beal's (2007) findings are in contrast to my conclusion. Both authors imply that participants received training in programs that clearly expressed the expectation for participants to pursue a faculty career. Beal (2007) noted: "the McNair Program did not support students' efforts in exploring other career arenas/paths they could have considered, given the level of research training they received through seminars and from faculty" (p. 642) Beal further points out that:

Although several students stated an interest in [academic research and teaching career paths], this myopic view of possible careers to pursue with a doctorate was out of sync with the needs of most students whose goals were to: give back to the community, work directly with people, and implement prior research results by applying their findings to real problems in society. (Beal, 2007, p. 646)

Research by McCoy et al (2008) also showed that McNair alumni are increasingly obtaining doctoral degrees over time. However, the number entering into faculty careers remains low. There appears to be an inherent tension or perhaps a misconception

regarding the McNair Program's goals and its implied intent. Based on the experiences of participants and the overall outcomes of the McNair Program, in terms of alumni entering into the professoriate, perhaps programs should not only explicitly articulate the expectation for faculty careers but also explicitly state alternative careers involving research.

#### Non-McNair Program Influences on Faculty Career Pursuits

The fifth conclusion of this study was that the most significant non-McNair factors contributing to alumni pursuit of a faculty career were their college professors and falling in love with their academic disciplines. The findings suggest that alumni in this study encountered dynamic faculty in college. Participants interacted with professors who were sometimes quirky and informal, thus shocking students with their casual manner and antics to get their attention in the classroom. Professors engaged participants using a process of discovery by sending participants on quests to the library to build research skills that sparked participant imagination and developed a thirst for inquiry and knowledge about a variety of subjects. Faculty were also connected to students personally outside of the classroom. Some professors allowed students to call them to talk through personal issues. They picked students up from their residence halls to talk and sometimes invited students to visit their homes and families-- showing them that faculty also have a nurturing side as well. Not all faculty responded to participants in the same way. Some faculty made a greater impression on students than others. Participants' keen observations of and experiences with their college professors shaped their views about the kind of teachers they wanted to become -- dynamic teachers at the college level.

This study finds that alumni participants had not initially thought about becoming professors. Instead, they became deeply interested in college teaching in their junior year of college. They observed their professors more closely to learn what professors did on a daily basis and what it meant to be a college professor. At the same time, participants were learning about research, which also gave them new insight on what it meant to be a college professor. Some professors introduced participants to their first undergraduate research topics. Findings of this study show that, ultimately, many participants modeled their own faculty careers based on experiences with their college professors.

Information and encouragement to pursue a faculty career also came from participants' college professors and other scholars they met at discipline-based conferences. Karina said, "I was always getting information on what I needed to do if I wanted to be a professor." Prominent Latina scholars surrounded confirmed that she could make a specific contribution to the field and that there was a place for her in academe. Archie was inspired to pursue a faculty career by the "tremendous teaching" and "tremendous scholarship" of the faculty he encountered. In Archie's words, ". . . I knew that [I wanted to continue] the work that was being done by the people that I respected . . ." Support and encouragement from college professors contributed to Archie's pursuit of an academic career.

The findings of this study are consistent with research on educational and career aspirations. Pascarella (1991) pointed out that future degree and career attainment is influenced by student aspirations. Pascarella, et al. (2004) indicated that the effective college teaching is "a positive anticipatory socialization for graduate education" (p. 314).

Hollack (2003) confirmed that good teaching helps to shape perceptions of the academy and aspirations to an academic career. Faculty interaction was the most significant influence on student aspirations to an academic career (Cole & Barber, 2003). Similarly, Lindholm (2004) found that teaching experiences with faculty in college had the strongest influence on the specific aspiration to become a college professor.

Participants' passion for their academic discipline was also a key non-McNair Program factor that contributed to participant pursuit of a faculty a career. Participants' excitement and intense desire to explore their disciplines were enhanced by their classroom experiences as well as their research experiences. Intense reading facilitated participants' deep personal connections to specific topics. Participants were particularly drawn to inflammatory questions about slavery of African Americans and a desire to correct the stories told about Mexican immigrants in literature and history. Intense intellectual pursuit of these topics enhanced writing and research skills and revealed gaps in knowledge. Participants began to shift from reading and consuming knowledge to writing and producing knowledge. In addition, participants were drawn to teaching opportunities due to their passions for their disciplines. Many viewed themselves as scholar-activists and chose an academic career to pursue scholarship that would make a difference in society. For example, a comment from Archie's interview reflects this point. He said:

. . . . it's not like I . . . said ok I'm gonna pursue . . . an academic career. Really, I was interested in the issues. I was also hoping on being a high school teacher but I was told—the long short of it- is that in order to pursue the scholarship, the work, and make the impact that I wanted to make I had to pursue it. For me it was a given; if I need to conduct research, what other form am I gonna do this in a meaningful way?

Research conducted by Lindholm (2004) noted several factors that contribute to choosing a faculty career. The factors were “the need for autonomy, independence, and individual expression”; pursuing “inherently interesting” topics; pursuing knowledge for its own sake”; and “early experiences and family influences” (p. 611). Research experiences with college faculty also influence aspirations to faculty careers (Lindholm, 2004). The passion that the alumni in this study found in their classroom and research experiences clearly contributed to their aspirations to and choice of a faculty career.

In contrast to Lindholm’s (2004) study, findings from this study did not show family to be a significant influence on McNair alumni choice of a faculty career. Several of the faculty participants in Lindholm’s study had, at least, one parent who was a college professor. None of the parents of participants in this study were college professors. Most of the faculty in this study were the first in their families to graduate from college or to earn a graduate degree. According to Dorothy, her family was generally “supportive and happy” for her. Melissa said that her family, “really didn't understand the process . . . they didn't know what I was doing . . . just that I was doing something and no one else had done it. So, there was this sort of blind pride in it”.

#### Teaching and Mentoring Future Academicians

The sixth conclusion of this study was that alumni participants were deeply committed to teaching and mentoring the next generation of academicians which are activities they experiences as undergraduates. This conclusion draws from responses to the question *What lessons learned from the McNair Program are used by faculty of color in their current positions as faculty?*

Research by McCoy et al (2008) noted that McNair Program alumni, who held doctoral degrees, indicated that publishing papers, working with faculty, summer research opportunities, and faculty mentoring as the most helpful research-related activities “they received as undergraduates, once they enrolled in graduate school” (p. 13). Findings from my study show that McNair alumni currently serving as college faculty transferred lessons learned from these activities and use them in their current faculty roles as well.

Regarding teaching, a surprising finding was that alumni in this study felt that their McNair Programs generally placed a heavy emphasis on research and little emphasis on college teaching. Nonetheless, some alumni learned teaching-related lessons from the McNair Program that they used in their roles as college faculty today. Some McNair alumni serving as faculty appeared to integrate both classroom teaching with mentoring undergraduates in research. Yvette, when she was a first-year professor, said, “I train scholars,” that's just how I teach . . . I teach and mentor with the underlying assumption that you want something out of this class . . . something out of life.” Admittedly, Yvette's statement as a first year-faculty member bears some relation to the “I am a McNair Scholar. . . . I am going to conquer” mindset which is related to her undergraduate McNair experiences. Cole and Barber (2003) emphasize, “What attracts many academically high-achieving students to the occupation of professors appears to be the teaching, not research” (p. 141).

Given that teaching as well as research is integral to the role of a college faculty member the McNair Program should consider programming that would give students

experience in college level teaching. However, teaching may be less important than research in relation to tenure and promotion especially at research universities. Given this conclusion, McNair Programs may need to consider broadening faculty career preparation for its participants to include teaching at non-research-based institutions.

With respect to mentoring, Cole and Barber (2003) also noted that minority students who aspired to become professors see “the opportunity to mentor minority students as a positive aspect of being a university professor” (pp. 142–43). Faculty mentors taught Karina that attending conferences could provide motivation and good ideas for research and opportunities for collaboration on research. Therefore, these McNair alumni remain committed to mentoring undergraduates in the process of conducting and collaborating on research.

This conclusion is consistent with research on mentoring. Prior research on the mentoring and research components of the McNair Program has shown that giving back to others was important to McNair participants and a byproduct of their own mentoring experiences (Beal, 2007; Exstrom, 2003; Hallock 2003; Leichnitz, 2006). McNair alumni in this study connected their undergraduate McNair experiences to their mentoring and teaching experiences as faculty. For example, Yvette, the only tenured professor in the study, learned research methods as an undergraduate from a course in her McNair Program. Today, she teaches that same research methods course. Yvette said, “it makes it awesome for me to constantly go back to the process of research . . . because I’m continually involved in McNair.”

Both faculty and staff mentors in the McNair Program helped Jose to “polish” his writing and research skills. Jose received constructive feedback on his research papers and now enjoys giving back as well. He now provides critical feedback to talented students whose writing is “a bit unpolished” just as he was—as an undergraduate McNair participant. Pinkston-McKee (2001) pointed out that “psychosocial [mentoring] activities included providing safe and comfortable mentoring relationships where protégés can take risks and receive constructive feedback on projects in a supportive environment” (p. 229). Although higher levels of psychosocial mentoring activities were reported in Pinkston-McKee's study fewer participants served as mentors themselves in some disciplines but those that did mentor did so based on their previous “positive mentoring relationships” (p. 230).

The importance of psychosocial mentoring activities has also been highlighted in the research on McNair programs (Carrera, 2002; Ishiyama, 2007; Lechnitz, 2006; Williams, 2004). In my study, participants reportedly mentoring others and indicated that their approaches to mentoring were based on their own previous faculty mentoring relationships in the McNair Program.

The findings of this study reveal that all participants had faculty mentors and wrote and presented papers at national McNair student conferences as undergraduates. During their interviews for this study, Archie, Karina, and Rigoberto emphasized that they used their undergraduate McNair research as the basis for their doctoral dissertation research. Only Archie and Karina noted that they produced their first faculty publications as an extension of their undergraduate McNair research projects. In contrast, research



conducted by Nnadozie et al (2001) noted that less than 50 percent of McNair Scholars presented at local, regional, and national conferences. Nnadozie et al (2001) also noted that fewer than 14% of McNair programs required participants to submit papers for publications. My study did not investigate the undergraduate publications of alumni. Current information regarding the undergraduate publications of McNair participants would be useful. Information regarding undergraduate publications, doctoral dissertations as well as faculty publications may also be interesting.

#### Nurture Passion and Mentoring Relationships

The seventh and final conclusion of this study was that McNair alumni enhanced their undergraduate, graduate, and faculty careers by nurturing their academic passion and by seeking faculty mentoring relationships at every level. The alumni in this study generally agreed that nurturing faculty mentoring relationships should continue throughout one's academic career.

With respect to nurturing academic passion, McNair alumni recommend that for current and future McNair participants : (a) “choose something that you love . . . something that you're curious about”; (b) “read some of the wonderful and powerful histories of [your] people-of [your] experiences”; c) find a connection with intellectuals”; (d) “start developing a passion to write; so, really, really, really, you need to work on your writing”; (e) “Do what you want . . . what you're passionate about . . . and everything else will take care of itself”; and f) “get a Ph.D. in something practical: write about your passionate thing in an area that's more practical so that you have options.”

With respect to nurturing faculty-mentoring relationships, Yvette suggested that students get:

Connected with faculty who are positive, who believe in them . . . who are passionate about their work regardless of race . . . and help them to find their passion. Because if they find their passion as students then it'll be a lot easier to work with faculty members.

Melissa had a similar response and suggested that students “find a mentor who is doing what you want to do. I think you have a more productive relationship because there's that common passion. I think that can blossom into other things.”

The conclusion that McNair alumni enhanced their undergraduate careers by seeking faculty mentoring relationships is consistent with the research on mentoring reviewed in Chapter Two. Responses from participants illustrate this conclusion. McNair Scholars and students participating in undergraduate research programs should establish mentoring relationships with staff, faculty, and peers. Smith (2007) noted that the social capital obtained through mentoring relationships is particularly important “to assist students to acclimating to the academic and social culture of the institution” (p. 36). Maintaining faculty mentoring relationships are particularly important for underrepresented participants who aspire to be academicians “because these students generally have less access to informal networks with faculty and administrators who tend to be primarily white, middle-class males” (Smith, 2007, p. 36). Davis (2008) noted that establishing and maintaining mentoring relationships could serve “a key role in fostering the academic socialization processes of future scholars” (p. 282). Prolonged mentoring relationships can assist McNair participants in mastering the fundamentals of “collegial

information exchange” (p. 285) and “the practice of collaboration and nurturing social networks necessary for success in academe” (p. 289).

The conclusion that alumni enhanced their careers by seeking faculty mentoring at the doctoral level is also consistent with the literature reviewed in this study. Solórzano (1993) noted, “the single most important factor was a positive mentoring experience” for minority doctoral students (Solórzano, 1993, p. x). Faculty advice on research and dissertation topics was also key. Pinkston-McKee (2001) highlighted that mentoring relationships vary based on duration, needs of the protégé, and distance. She noted that psychosocial mentoring activities occurred more frequently than career activities during and after doctoral studies. However, doctoral or postdoctoral mentoring “career activities most frequently linked to career advancement were related to research. Protégés were kept abreast of research in their fields through collaboration with their mentors on research projects and by sharing findings from other research projects in the field” (Pinkston-McKee, 2001, p. 229). Hathaway et al (2002) noted that students who participated in undergraduate research “were likely to . . . pursue post undergraduate research activity and use faculty for job recommendations than students who did not participate in undergraduate research” (p. 623).

The conclusion that alumni enhanced their careers by seeking faculty mentoring after beginning their faculty careers is consistent with the research. McNair alumni in this sample recommended that current and future McNair faculty alumni build support networks at the peer and senior faculty levels. This conclusion is consistent with research on mentoring that has shown that social networks are facilitated through mentoring

relationships and activities can enhance advancement opportunities (Espinosa-Herold & Gonzalez, 2007; Zellers et al, 2008). Espinosa-Herold and Gonzalez (2007) noted that senior faculty mentors can “provide collaborating experiences on research projects and emotional support and encouragement during psychologically stressful times” (p. 332). Creating a support group of other junior scholars of color can also facilitate research and scholarly productivity in the academy. Similarly, Zellers et al. (2008) noted that mentoring could increase teaching effectiveness and provide relief from isolation and alienation in academe. Not having mentoring relationships with those who have power and influence in their institutions and in the field can be challenging for underrepresented minorities and women faculty (Zellers et al., 2008).

#### Recommendations for Stakeholders

##### For McNair Scholars

Participants in my study confirmed that the McNair Program directly influenced their decision to pursue a doctoral degree. However, the McNair Program only had an indirect influence on their pursuit of a faculty career. My study participants are among a small but rising number of McNair Program alumni who have a) attained doctoral degrees and b) entered into the professoriate (McCoy, et al, 2008). Still, if the McNair Program is to play a greater role in diversifying the academy (Gallardo, 2009) many more McNair participants must choose to pursue faculty careers. Recommendations emerged from this study, which may prove helpful for McNair Scholars.

McNair Scholars should understand that the purpose of the McNair Program is to prepare them for doctoral study and to become a college professor. Students should seek

clarification from their faculty mentors and program staff if they are unclear about the goals of the program. Students should also clarify reasons to pursue advance degrees and an academic career. Once clarity is reached students should seek assistance in developing a well-thought-out plan to fulfill their faculty career aspirations. All program participants should remember that they have a responsibility for communicating educational and employment accomplishments to their program staff. Reporting outcome-based information is vital to the overall success of the McNair Program.

Working alongside seasoned researchers, McNair Scholars learn how knowledge is created. Becoming a college professor will require students to carefully examine their ideas, topics, issues, problems, and questions that interest them most. In other words, they should choose a topic in an area of study that they could be devoted to before, or soon after, joining the McNair Program. Reading books about people they admire or who are from similar backgrounds can facilitate students in finding their passion.

McNair Scholars should understand that when seeking a mentor, race and gender are of secondary or tertiary importance, most often. My study participants also confirm that the best mentors are those who are passionate about their work and care about the success of their protégés. Well-established faculty and staff mentoring relationships can provide important social capital that extends beyond college and into faculty careers. Ongoing communication helps students to develop a support network of mentors over time. Students should do simple things such as make phone calls, send e-mails, and visit their mentors to seek guidance and exchange information.

In my study, participants underscored the importance of excellent writing and teaching skills for McNair Scholars who intend to pursue doctoral degrees and faculty careers. Students should develop a habit of requesting frequent feedback from faculty and staff on writing assignments. McNair Scholars should take college and graduate level courses in which an academic style of writing is required. When possible, students should attempt to coordinate their academic-year college coursework with their research assignments within the McNair Program. Asking faculty members to assist them with writing tasks may also help students. As undergraduates, McNair Scholars should seek assistance in advancing their own written work in preparation for publication opportunities and for doctoral dissertation research. Students should also seek opportunities to develop teaching skills.

Many McNair Scholars should consider faculty careers at two-year community colleges and four-year liberal arts colleges with a master's degree. McNair Scholars should also be aware that at two-year and four-colleges, teaching is often emphasized, not research. Students earning research doctorates should stay aware of academic job market conditions and prepare for non-academic careers as well. Developing transferable skills in areas such as grant management, statistical analysis, and productivity software applications may also help McNair Scholars to remain professionally mobile.

#### For McNair Directors

McNair directors should clarify the intent of the McNair Program with respect to faculty careers. When I served as a McNair Program director, I articulated the desired academic and career outcomes for my program participants, which were to earn a Ph. D.

and pursue a faculty career. Other studies by McNair directors (e. g., Beal, 2007; Hallock, 2003; Simpson, 2003; & Williams, 2004) confirm a similar articulation. Faculty participants in my study brought to light that the McNair Program indirectly influenced their pursuit of a faculty career. Directors should continue to argue for changes in the legislated purpose of the McNair Program to specify objectives regarding preparation for a doctoral study as well as faculty careers.

Program directors must diligently recruit and retain highly qualified program participants. Directors should ask faculty mentors what they look for in a student and provide evidence to prospective students that a Ph. D. and a faculty career are still valuable and viable career options. Evaluating students periodically and reminding them about their commitment to the program can enhance retaining the best students.

Development of a seminar series on teaching to help students explore teaching at the college level would be good for directors to implement. Participants in this study reported that good teaching skills were essential in their faculty roles. However, most admit that their McNair Program emphasized research skills only. Faculty members can be invited to develop workshops and to discuss the practical aspects of teaching. Sharing experiences about how to handle inappropriate student comments in class is one topic. In addition, faculty can share their experiences in dealing with negative teaching evaluations from students. Incentives and support for faculty mentors to work with students on teaching as well as academic research can be valuable.

Minority college students who are attracted to faculty careers have a strong interest in college teaching (Cole & Barber, 2003). Teaching experiences at two-year and

liberal arts colleges should be described for McNair participants. Faculty from those institutional sectors can be invited to share their educational preparation, teaching experiences, faculty life, and career paths. Campus and classroom visits can expose students, first-hand, to the faculty role and career. Directors may have a very strong connection with individuals who can intimately talk with students about faculty careers in ways that the directors cannot.

Several participants in this study expressed a concern that the McNair Program narrowly focuses on academic careers. Dorothy suggested that the academy is only one-way to use their Ph. D.'s and Elizabeth said, "the academy is shrinking." In other words, there are a "decreasing number of tenure track academic positions" (Golde, 2001, p. 9). Thus, McNair directors should encourage and prepare their students for careers inside and outside of the academy. Elizabeth emphatically asked, "Do we need to be there?" and pointed out that "public intellectual" be added to the list of suitable professions for McNair Scholars. Public intellectuals are academic researchers who may or may not be affiliated with universities. These individuals may be self-employed, publish books, and are hired as consultants, expert commentators, and contributors by newspapers, national cable television, and radio programs. Directors should inform students of these options.

Directors should establish a national database of McNair Scholars currently serving as faculty in higher education. Faculty should be asked to upload an electronic version of their curriculum vitae, to a secure database, which could allow them to update information regarding institutional affiliations, educational accomplishments, research interests, and scholarly publications. Detailed information with respect to McNair



Program experiences, graduate experiences, and faculty experiences could be entered. The database would allow members to conduct specific searches using any of the above-specified criteria. The database could help McNair Program directors and alumni to produce reports and research studies that can be relevant to individual, program, and national interests.

#### For Future Research

Several recommendations emerged from the findings of my study that present new questions for research related to McNair Program alumni serving as faculty in higher education. The following section presents the research questions and recommendations.

How do the experiences of McNair alumni serving as faculty at two-year colleges differ from the experiences of those faculty who teach in four-year institutions?

My study examined the lessons learned from the McNair program that faculty used in their current faculty positions. Only two of the faculty in my study were employed at two-year colleges. The differences in experiences or perspectives of alumni who teach at two-colleges in comparison to four-year colleges were not examined. Further investigation of lessons learned from the McNair Program that alumni use in their current faculty positions at two-year colleges would be of value.

What are the McNair Program experiences of low-income, first-generation, non-underrepresented minority program alumni currently serving as college faculty?

An investigation should be conducted with McNair alumni, who are not underrepresented racial minorities serving as college faculty, but who are from low-income (LI) and first-generation (FG) backgrounds. Low-income and first-generation

McNair participants, who are not underrepresented minorities, are largely, Asian American and Caucasian American. African American, Latino American, and Native Americans are considered underrepresented in graduate education (Seburn et al., 2005). Combined Caucasian American and Asian American McNair participants earned 50 percent of the Ph. D.s, but were 25 percent of the McNair population (McCoy et al., 2008). The findings of the proposed study could be compared with the findings of my study. Such a study would provide insight regarding similarities and differences between these McNair participant populations and suggestions for current and future McNair scholars interested in faculty careers.

What are the current viewpoints of all McNair Program alumni serving as college faculty regarding graduate education and the professoriate?

Six out of 12 participants in my study conveyed opinions about their doctoral training, the academic job market conditions, and future plans. A broader perspective from the larger segment of McNair Program alumni serving as college faculty may be beneficial to participants, directors, graduate schools, and other alumni. This study could use quantitative or qualitative methods. Suggestions regarding preparation for academic and other careers will be insightful. In addition, findings from the proposed study could improve doctoral experiences and offer valuable information about the faculty experiences in the academic marketplace.

Is there a relationship between the undergraduate McNair Program research experience and the current research of program alumni serving as college faculty?

Several of the faculty participants in my study indicated that their Ph. D. dissertation research as well as their faculty research publications were related to their McNair Program research experiences. A study that examines if, how, and to what extent program research experiences contribute to McNair participants' research publications over time can be important to undergraduate programming. In addition, doctoral degree enrollment and degree attainment may be enhanced.

What are the experiences of other McNair alumni of color who are currently serving as college faculty?

My study explored the McNair Program's influence on 12 former minority participants' faculty careers. Though the findings of my study are not generalizable, they can be used to develop a survey of all McNair alumni of color who are currently serving as college faculty. The results of this survey may provide a "big picture" perspective of the McNair Program's role in shaping academic careers. Comparing survey findings regarding the influences on choice of a faculty career may yield interesting results for students who want to pursue faculty careers.

Conclusion

As stated above, I explored the McNair Program's influence on 12 minority participants' faculty careers. When I began this study, my initial question was "what do the McNair Program experiences mean to McNair Scholars serving as college faculty?" The study revealed many important findings regarding the program's influences. As I conclude this study, I ask myself what has it all meant for me? Three words come to mind: curiosity, inspiration, and gratitude.

First, I was most curious to hear how the faculty in my study would talk about their faculty experiences in relation to their undergraduate McNair Program experiences. I was keenly curious to learn if alumni felt that program directors and staff made a difference in their personal, academic, and professional lives. Indeed, the faculty in my study affirmed that their McNair staff were caring, encouraging, supportive, and influential in their lives. Second, I drew inspiration from my travels for this study. I flew through beautiful clouds in the sky; I drove through the Great Plains and over two different mountain ranges. I drew the most inspiration from meeting my McNair participants as a doctoral student, a researcher, and a former McNair director. Third, I am grateful to my 12 faculty participants for their help in completing this project. I thank them for treating me like family. I thank for them for teaching me that courage is sometimes quiet, that things take time, and to dwell in my own possibilities. Finally, the McNair Program is a vital resource for preparing low-income, first generation, and underrepresented students for doctoral work and faculty careers. I am convinced that McNair alumni currently serving as college faculty are, collectively, an untapped resource. Greater attention needs to be given to their dedication to students and many contributions to higher education.

APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Date:

Name:

Institution:

Address:

Email:

Dear:

You are invited to be part of a research study, which focuses on the experiences of McNair Program alumni currently serving as college faculty. I am conducting this project for my Ph.D. dissertation at Loyola University Chicago.

As a doctoral student in the Higher Education graduate program, I am interested in understanding your previous experience as a McNair participant, and what influenced you to pursue a doctoral degree. I am also interested in exploring the meaning you attach to your McNair Program experiences and how those experiences may have shaped you as a college faculty member.

If you decide to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

- Complete a brief biographical data form in order to ensure a diverse selection of participants for this study. You may return the form to me via email or fax.
- Allow me to interview you, for approximately 60-90 minutes, in person, at the location you choose. This interview will focus on understanding the meaning of those experiences that may have contributed to your pursuit of a doctoral degree, pursuit of a faculty career, and shaped you as a faculty member today.
- Give me permission to audiotape our interview. I will send you a transcript of the interview for your review. If necessary, allow me to contact you to clarify or expand statements made during the interview. All information will be confidential, and your identity, that of your institutions, and any other information which might identify you in the interview will be masked and not revealed.

- Share with me any artifacts that you see as relevant or significant to your McNair Program experience. These may include photographs, journals, or items you associate with your participation in the program and journey to the professoriate. Other examples could be drawings, images, poems, papers, essays, or awards and letters. If feasible, allow me to make copies of or take a photograph of an artifact or document. All original documents will remain in your possession at all times.

This study is qualitative in nature. My aim is to gain valuable insight into the experiences of former McNair Program participants who are now faculty. Your experiences will assist those who work with McNair Programs and similar undergraduate student populations. Your experiences may also provide insight into the value that former McNair Program participants, as faculty of color, bring to the professoriate.

Thank you for considering my invitation to participate in this research project. I hope you will email or telephone me within the next two weeks and accept my invitation to participate. Also, if you know of other McNair Program alumni who are African American, Latino, or Native American and are currently serving as college faculty, kindly invite them to contact me for possible inclusion in my study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with further questions.

Yours truly,

Lunaire D. Ford  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Loyola University Chicago  
[lford1@luc.edu](mailto:lford1@luc.edu)

APPENDIX B  
SYNOPSIS OF RESEARCH



A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Undergraduate McNair Program Experience of  
Program Alumni Currently Serving as College Faculty

A Study by Lunaire Ford, Ph.D. Candidate at Loyola University Chicago  
[lford1@luc.edu](mailto:lford1@luc.edu)

**Who I am:**

My name is Lunaire Ford. I am a former McNair Program Director and Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education program at Loyola University Chicago. Please contact me with any questions, either through email (see above) or at (773) 425-9940.

**What I am studying:**

As part of my dissertation research, I am conducting a study, which collects the stories of former McNair Program participants, of color, who are currently serving as college faculty. The study seeks to discover the meaning of the experiences that shaped the aspirations of attaining a Ph.D. and pursuing a faculty career. It is also the intention of this study to offer strategies for encouraging the attainment of a doctoral degree and faculty career for current underrepresented college students.

**How the study will be conducted:**

First, the researcher will contact 20-25 McNair program directors, via telephone and e-mail to request assistance with identifying former McNair Program participants currently serving as faculty in higher education. Second, McNair directors who agree to assist me will be asked to forward study materials to prospective participants. A confidential biographical data form will be distributed to all persons interested in participating in the study and who fulfill the basic criteria (e.g., person of color, former McNair Program participant, have an earned doctoral degree, and employed as a full-time college faculty member). Based on the responses received, I will select a diverse pool of 10-12 participants. I will gather information by conducting personal face-to-face interviews lasting 60-90 minutes with each participant at a location of his/her choice. I will also collect and examine personal artifacts (photographs, journals, awards, etc.) that participants make available to me. These artifacts are symbols that may help to illuminate the meaning of the undergraduate McNair Program experience in light of who the participants are today.

**Managing data and results:**

All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. Each participant will receive a transcript of his/her interview. Participants will have three weeks to review the transcript and offer corrections and additions. If I do not hear from the participant or receive a returned transcript after the designated three-week period, I will assume that the participant acknowledges the transcript as accurate.

The names of all participants, their undergraduate and graduate institutions, as well as their current teaching institutions will be masked by pseudonyms. Other persons or places referred to by the participants will also receive pseudonyms. All information collected will be kept confidential and secure. The data collected and analyzed will be reported as part of my dissertation. A summary of the results will be made available to all participants in the study upon request.

**Possible risks to participants:**

The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort that I anticipate in conducting this research are no more than would be experienced in daily life. The only identifiable risk is the possibility of a breach of confidentiality. As stated above, the assignment of pseudonyms will be used to mask the identity of the participants, and other information, which may identify them. All data, including the audio-taped interviews, will be stored and secured in a location with access only available to me. I will destroy all data within two years of completion of the study.

**Possible benefits to participants:**

There are no direct benefits to participants, but their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences will contribute valuable insights into the experiences of McNair program participants and the preparation of underrepresented minority college faculty. Participants will add valuable insights to understanding the personal, academic, and professional experiences of undergraduate students of color who aspire to faculty careers.

As interviewees reflect on their faculty roles and articulate the meaning of their McNair Program experiences we stand to learn more about how and why these experiences served in becoming an academician. Through their participation, interviewees may begin to articulate their approaches to attain doctoral degrees and faculty careers. These approaches may be disseminated to current and future McNair Program participants who may want to pursue faculty careers. A summary of the study's findings may also prove helpful to the participants as they reflect on the value of their own stories and those of their colleagues.

APPENDIX C

CONFIDENTIAL BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Please respond to the following questions by choosing the answer which most appropriately applies to you and writing specific responses on the blank space(s) provided.

1. Please indicate the name of the undergraduate institution(s) where you participated in the McNair Program.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In what years did you participate in the McNair Program?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Please indicate your sex: \_\_\_Male      \_\_\_Female

4. Please select the description that best reflects your race/ethnicity:

\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_ American Indian/Native American

\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino/a

\_\_\_ Other (*please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

5. In terms of your own educational attainment, you currently hold (*check all that apply*):

\_\_\_ a. a bachelor's degree (*specify degree and discipline*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ b. a master's degree (*specify degree and discipline*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ c. a doctoral degree (*specify degree and discipline*) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ d. other (*please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Current

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

7. What academic discipline(s) do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are you a full – or part-time instructor? \_\_\_\_\_full-time \_\_\_\_\_part-time
9. How many years have you taught? \_\_\_\_\_ full-time? \_\_\_\_\_part-time
10. How long have you been at your current institution? \_\_\_\_\_years
11. What is your rank/title:
- \_\_\_\_\_Instructor/Lecturer \_\_\_\_\_Assistant Professor
- \_\_\_\_\_Associate Professor \_\_\_\_\_Professor \_\_\_\_\_Other
12. Are you in a tenure track faculty line? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No
13. If no, are you a full time contract or clinical faculty? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
14. Have you been granted tenure? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

Thank you so much for providing this confidential biographical data. Please return to me via email [lford1@luc.edu](mailto:lford1@luc.edu) <insert date> (within one week).

Best regards,

Lunaire D. Ford  
 Ph.D. Candidate  
 Higher Education Program  
 Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

**Project Title:** A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Undergraduate McNair Program Experience of Program Alumni Currently Serving as College Faculty

**Researcher:** Lunaire D. Ford

**Faculty Sponsor:** Dr. Terry E. Williams, Associate Professor, Loyola University Chicago

**Introduction:** You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Lunaire Ford for completion of a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Terry E. Williams in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a McNair Program alumnus/a, have an earned doctoral degree, are an African American, Latino, or Native American and are employed as a full-time college faculty member. Approximately, 10-12 faculty members will participate in this study. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in this study.

**Purpose:** I am conducting a study that investigates the meaning of the undergraduate McNair program experiences for college faculty of color. The purpose of this study is to gather the stories of McNair Program alumni who succeeded in college and in graduate study and then went on to assume faculty careers. My emphasis is on using interviews to explore your motivation for participating in the McNair Program, what you retained from these experiences, and how those experiences shaped who you are today. The intent of this study is to: a) discover new strategies for the success of students of color to pursue the Ph.D., b) extend understanding of how the McNair Program contributes to the development of faculty of color, c) extend understanding of how McNair faculty alumni make use of the lessons learned from the program in their current roles as faculty, and d) provide insight for students and institutions of higher education to address the underrepresentation of faculty of color.

**Procedures:** Prior to becoming a participant in this study, you completed a brief background sheet in order to ensure the selection of a diverse pool of participants for this study and you were officially selected to participate. As a participant in this study, I ask you to grant me a personal face-to-face interview regarding your experiences. The interview will last between 60-90 minutes and will be conducted at a location that you choose. The subject matter of the interview will focus on your experiences as an undergraduate McNair Program participant and how these experiences may have shaped your role as a college faculty member today. You are also invited to bring artifacts to the interview such as official documents from your undergraduate institution, journals, personal correspondence, or photographs that illustrate your experience. With your permission, I will photograph the artifacts to include a copy in my confidential files.

The interview will be recorded using a digital audio recorder and transcribed at a later time. A third party may transcribe the audio recordings; however, this party will be asked to maintain strict confidentiality and to sign a confidentiality agreement. Your identity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym. Any identifying information, such as names of institutions, other persons, or places mentioned in the study, will be masked to the best of the researcher's ability. I will send you a complete transcript of your audio-recorded interview. You will have a three-week period to review the transcript for accuracy and return to me with any corrections. All data, including the digital recordings, hard copies of the transcript, and the brief confidential biographical data form, will be stored in a locked secure location with access only available to me and will be destroyed within two years of completion of the study.

**Risks/Benefits:** Your harm or discomfort as a participant is no more than what you may encounter in daily life. The sole risk may be a breach of confidentiality and, as outlined above, every possible step will be taken to assure that such a breach does not occur. All participants, as well as their undergraduate, graduate, and teaching institutions, will be given pseudonyms. There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but your willingness to share your knowledge and experiences will contribute to valuable insights into the experiences of McNair program participants and underrepresented minority college faculty. A summary of the findings of this study will be distributed to participants upon request.

**Confidentiality:** All information that identifies individuals, institutions and other persons/places will be assigned pseudonyms and will be kept safely secured by the researcher. All consent forms will be stored separately from the interview transcripts to keep participant identities confidential. All data, including audiotapes, will be kept in a locked secure location with access only available to me. All data will be destroyed within two years of study.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in the study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Questions:** If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Lunaire D. Ford or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Terry E. Williams at the contact information listed below.

**Researcher**

Lunaire Ford  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Higher Education Program  
Loyola University Chicago  
[lfordl@luc.edu](mailto:lfordl@luc.edu)

**Faculty Sponsor**

Dr. Terry E. Williams  
Associate Professor  
School of Education  
Loyola University Chicago  
[twillia@luc.edu](mailto:twillia@luc.edu)



If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

**Statement of Consent:** Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Researcher Signature

---

Date

APPENDIX E  
ANNOUNCEMENT FOR LIST SERVES

My name is Lunaire Ford. I am a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago, and a former McNair Program director. I am conducting dissertation research on McNair Program alumni currently serving as college faculty. The purpose of this study is to gather the stories of McNair Program alumni who succeeded in college and in graduate study and then went on to assume faculty careers. My emphasis is on using interviews to explore their motivation for participating in the McNair Program, what they retained from their experiences, and how those experiences shaped who they are today.

The intent of this study is to: a) discover new strategies for the success of students of color to pursue the Ph.D., b) extend understanding of how the McNair Program contributes to the development of faculty of color, c) extend understanding of how McNair faculty alumni, make use of the lessons learned from the program in their current roles as faculty, and d) provide insight for students and institutions of higher education to address the underrepresentation of faculty of color.

I am looking for a diverse group of 10-12 African American, Latino, or Native American full-time college faculty members who participated in a McNair program as undergraduate students. I hope to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants selected for the study for approximately 60-90 minutes. If you know of anyone who might be interested in participating in this study, please contact Lunaire D. Ford, via e-mail or by telephone.

A synopsis of my research is attached to this e-mail. Thanks so much for your assistance.

Best regards,

Lunaire D. Ford  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Higher Education Program  
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX F

REGRET LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS NOT SELECTED

Date:  
Name:  
Institution:  
Address:  
Email:

Dear:

Thank you so much for expressing an interest in participating in my Ph.D. dissertation project titled A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Undergraduate McNair Program Experience of Program Alumni Currently Serving as College Faculty. My qualitative study explores the undergraduate experiences of minority college faculty. The sample for this study needs to be diverse by demographic and professional characteristics of participants.

Due to these sampling considerations, and because of the limited scope of the project, I am unable to include you in the study at this time. I appreciate your cooperation in completing and returning the biographical questionnaire. In the possible event that my research on this topic may be expanded, I would like to keep your name on file as a possible participant.

If you would like to discuss this study, and, as it proceeds, its findings, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Lunaire D. Ford  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Higher Education Program  
Loyola University Chicago

APPENDIX G  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FORM

**Dissertation Project:** A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Undergraduate McNair Program Experience of Program Alumni Currently Serving as College Faculty”.

Time of the

Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee (Title & Rank): \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me today. As you know, the purpose of my study is to explore the meaning of the undergraduate McNair Program experience of program alumni currently serving as faculty in higher education. I’m particularly interested in exploring your McNair Program experiences, how those experiences may have shaped your pursuit of a faculty career, and what these experiences mean to you in light of who you are today. Before we begin, I kindly ask that you complete the **Informed Consent Form**. The results from this study will be used to fulfill the requirements for my doctoral degree. I’d be very happy to provide you with an abstract of the report upon completion, if you wish. Our session will last no longer than 90 minutes. You can stop at anytime and for any reason, if you wish. If we could, I’d like to begin our interview with this question:

**1. Can you help me understand how and why as an undergraduate you decided to participate in the McNair Scholar program?**

Probes:

About when did you first learn about the McNair program (in high school, as a first year college student, some other time)?

What did you understand the goals or objectives of the McNair program to be? Do you feel these goals matched your own goals for getting involved? Why or why not?

Were there any specific people who influenced you to get involved in the McNair program? If yes, who do you feel may have influenced you?

**2. I’d like you to think back now on your undergraduate experiences as a McNair Scholar. What do you most remember about those experiences and why are they so memorable for you? Did you bring an artifact or a photograph that you could share regarding your experiences?**

Probes:

To what extent do you attribute your success as an undergraduate to your McNair experiences? Why or why not?

What personal lessons, if any, did you gain from your McNair experiences that you feel have stayed with you today?

How would you describe the relationships you had with faculty and/or with program staff as an undergraduate? What about with fellow Scholars?

Were there any specific events, programs, activities, trips, etc. that you associate with the McNair program that left either a positive or negative imprint on you?

In what ways did the McNair Program prepare you or not prepare you for the realities of a faculty career?

- 3. Can you help me understand when it was that you began thinking seriously about pursuing advanced graduate work (doctoral level) and what may have influenced your desire to seek a doctoral degree?**

Probes:

Do you now feel that your McNair experiences had any impact on your desire to seek a doctoral degree? Can you explain why?

To what extent, if any, do you feel your undergraduate McNair experiences may have contributed to your success as a doctoral student? Why or why not?

- 4. Can you share with me any experiences that may have influenced your desire to become a full-time faculty member?**

Probes:

Were there any influential family, friends, peers, staff, or faculty who encouraged you to consider a faculty career?

Were there any other experiences you had that you know influenced your decision to pursue a faculty career?

Do you feel that your McNair experiences contributed in any way to your decision to seek a faculty position? Why? Or, why not?

- 5. When you look back upon your McNair experiences are there any lessons learned that have been formative in shaping your faculty life, research, and life in the academy in general?**

Probes:

Are there people or specific experiences you had as a McNair Scholar and/or as a graduate student who really influenced who you are today and/or what you most believe in as a faculty member?

Do you feel that your current day relationships with your students are in any way influenced by your own experiences as a McNair Scholar and/or as a graduate student? Can you provide some examples to illustrate that for me?

Were you aware that only 6 percent of McNair alumni become faculty? Given this fact what do you attribute to your accomplishments? What are you a part of the 6 percent?

- 6. What are some of your recommendations for current and future McNair Scholars who are preparing for graduate school and/or for faculty careers?**

Probes:



What suggestions do you have for McNair directors for ways to ensure that more Scholars are enrolling in and being successful in doctoral programs?

What suggestions do you have for ways to motivate more students of color to consider a faculty career?

APPENDIX H  
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to transcribe  
the (Insert Printed Name of Transcriber)

interviews for the doctoral research of Lunaire D. Ford entitled "A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Undergraduate McNair Program Experience of Program Alumni Currently Serving As College Faculty". I will maintain strict confidentiality of the data files and the transcripts. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- I will not discuss them with anyone but the researcher.
- I will not share copies with anyone except the researcher.
- I agree to turn over all copies of the transcripts to the researcher at conclusion of the contract.
- I will destroy the audio files I receive upon conclusion of the contract.

I have read and understood the information provided above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Transcriber's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX I

THANK YOU LETTER TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Date :  
Name:  
Institution:  
Address:  
Email:

Dear:

Thank you so much for participating in my Ph.D. dissertation project: "*A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Undergraduate McNair Program Experience of Program Alumni Currently Serving As College Faculty.*" My qualitative study explores the undergraduate experiences of minority college faculty. My study has a professionally and demographically diverse sample of participants because of your participation. Your experiences will assist those of us who work with McNair Programs and similar undergraduate student populations. In addition your experiences may provide the broader higher education community with insight into the personal, professional, and academic experiences that shape the faculty career paths of McNair participants and similar populations.

As a reminder, your identity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. Also, any identifying information, such as names of institutions, other persons or places mentioned in the study, will be masked to the best of my abilities. Please know that all data, including the audio taped interviews, transcripts, and the brief confidential biographical data form, will be stored in a locked and secure location with access only available to me and will be destroyed within two years of completion of the study

Enclosed please find a transcription of your interview. I ask that you read the transcript to determine its accuracy and return it to me along with any corrections or additions by <insert date>. I am available to address your questions and make corrections to the transcriptions via phone or e-mail. Also, if I do not hear from you by the end of the date specified above, the interview transcription will be assumed to be accurate. Again, thank you for your participation.

Best regards,

Lunaire D. Ford  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Higher Education Program

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## VITA

Lunaire D. Ford received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a Master's of Science in Education degree in Adult and Continuing Education from Northern Illinois University.

His professional work experience includes serving as a Training Consultant and Program Coordinator for the Chicago Algebra Project, Assistant Director for the Upward Bound Program at Northern Illinois University, and Director of the Ronald E. McNair Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He now serves as the Director of the Graduate Pathways to Success Program and Associate Director for the Summer Research Opportunities at the University of Illinois at Chicago.