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African American Entrepreneurship: Narratives of Fresno County, California, African American Entrepreneurs

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AFRICAN AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
NARRATIVES OF FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, AFRICAN AMERICAN
ENTREPRENEURS

A Dissertation Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Organization and Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Felix Shielim Nwaeke Enunwa
San Francisco, California
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UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

African American Entrepreneurship:

Narratives of Fresno County, California, African American Entrepreneurs

The entrepreneurial spirit of African American has been misunderstood. This dissertation used the voices of 15 African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County to reconstruct the historical development and performance of African American entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship developed from the necessity to survive; it was the outcome of deprivation, exclusion, and legal and political alienation. For African Americans, historical development and experience in entrepreneurship has been turbulent; understanding of African American entrepreneurship has been distorted with flawed theoretical constructs based on false premises of a lack of a tradition of business establishment and inadequate support for capitalism in African American communities.

Despite many constraints, African Americans have exhibited the same kind of entrepreneurial spirit as every other ethnic group; they have engaged and performed well in ethnic entrepreneurship. This was demonstrated through firsthand accounts of 15 African American business owners residing in Fresno County. Data were obtained through observations, dialogues, notes, and comprehensive face-to-face interviews. The words of the participants revealed that a number of African American aspiring entrepreneurs in Fresno County were successful despite daunting challenges. Their cultural resilience enabled them to survive through hard times and played a crucial role in the outcomes of their entrepreneurial efforts.
This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation committee and approved by members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Felix Shielim Nwaeke Enunwa

Candidate

May 2, 2012

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May 2, 2012

Dr. Betty Taylor

May 2, 2012
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, the late Chief Enunwa Osakwe, and my mother, the late Mrs. Janet Nwabuogbu Enunwa. I am sure they are proud of their son. For my late brother, Christopher Maduabunachukwu Enunwa, and my sister, Lucy Odimbu Nnamdi, who are resting under the sheltering arms of the Lord, and my late friend Christian Chijioke Ogbodo, who was an inspiration.

Finally, this is for all the African American pioneers in entrepreneurship who, despite so many odds and challenges against them, left legacies that will last forever, including those who lost their businesses and lives in the Oklahoma genocide of 1921.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanksgiving and appreciation I want to say “thank you” to all those who have, in one way or another, helped me achieve my life dream of obtaining a doctorate degree. This would never have happened without my Almighty God, from whom my inspiration came. I hung on to his promise never to leave nor forsake me. I kept moving on because of the blessed assurance.

I am indebted to my advisor and mentor, Dr. Patricia Mitchell. Her direction and encouragement made me believe that my goal was attainable. I cannot forget the hard work of my other dissertation committee members, Drs. Ellen Herda and Betty Taylor, who spent days reviewing my papers and providing me with feedback that made my goal attainable.

Finally, I must thank my loving wife, Rita Obiajulum Enunwa, and my children, Chukwuma Enunwa, Chidiebele Enunwa, and Chifumnanya Enunwa, who spent time wondering whether I had made it to San Francisco. They believed in me and prayed for journey mercies each time I left the house to pursue this noble cause. I thank God for my other family members and friends who encouraged me during my low points. Completing this research would not be possible without the cooperation of the 15 participants who allowed me to cut into their tight schedules for interviews.
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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the last 3 decades, ethnic entrepreneurship has increased significantly in the United States. One of the reasons many people become entrepreneurs is to accumulate wealth and avoid poverty. Light and Gold (2003) noted that ethnic economics has been used consciously as a vehicle or mechanism whereby ethnic groups seek to shape their own fortunes and avoid discrimination and economic disadvantage. Like people of other ethnic groups, African Americans have a long history of entrepreneurship; the entrepreneurial spirit has been part of their cultural heritage and has motivated them to engage in self-employment as a way of sustaining their families. However, there has been some misunderstanding about African Americans’ entrepreneurial work. Factual distinctions and differences in culture and experiences among ethnic groups should be acknowledged, and comparing groups creates opportunities for bringing personal biases and prejudices into the judgment. Rogers (2010) noted that an information gap exists regarding the combined effect of law, politics, economics, sociology, and other factors in charting the paths and circumstances of Black people at all historical stages of their journey from slavery to freedom.

Many negative experiences with banking institutions, the government, and even the general public have marred African Americans’ view of their opportunities for success in entrepreneurship. Negative experiences impacted the self-esteem of so many African American persons that many came to the pessimistic conclusion that they no longer needed to try. Walker (2009) noted that until African Americans rethink this perception, they will continue to lag in ethnic enterprise. Rogers (2010) explained that
non-Black scholars have not discussed the historical roots of Blacks in their research on how distinct ethnic groups have adjusted to American capitalism through entrepreneurial endeavors. Rogers added that exposure to new information should remove the cloud of ignorance and misunderstanding from the general population as to why Black people remain behind in establishing business enterprises in the 21st century. In this study I have used the terms African American and Black interchangeably.

According to Rogers (2010), historians have largely ignored the stirring success stories of Black entrepreneurs, inventors, and other Black innovators who achieved so much in the face of great adversity and oppression. There will always be some who give no credit to the contributions of African Americans. This view was initially expressed by Du Bois (1899) and reemphasized by Burrell (2010). Du Bois noted that the propaganda against the Negro since emancipation was one of the most stupendous efforts ever seen to discredit human beings; it involved universities, history, science, social life, and religion. As Burrell (2010) advised, it is time to provide a realistic assessment of the participation of African Americans in business and take a new look at the existing theoretical constructs that fail to recognize the success of many African American businessmen and businesswomen who have contributed to American capitalism.

Purpose of the Study

The present study explored the entrepreneurial experiences of 15 local African American business persons in Fresno County, California, in their own voices. Specifically, the study examined their perspectives and histories as they pertain to African American entrepreneurship. Generally, scholars as well as the general populace have lacked understanding of the entrepreneurial spirit among African American business
persons. Walker (2009) noted that racism rather than any trait of African Americans must be acknowledged as the single most important factor in the low participation rate and low profits earned by Black business people. African Americans have been excluded historically from the mainstream of the American dream.

Kraybill, Nolt, and Wesner (2010) noted that entrepreneurial skills and vision transform the opposing effects of resource constraints and other difficulties into enterprise. This idea is true for African Americans who, despite long years of slavery and exclusion, had the courage to endure. According to Light and Gold (2003), entrepreneurship in any particular population can be explained by looking at three broad categories: culture, social movement, and situation and acculturation sources. Walker (2009) suggested that a reconstruction of the African American business tradition provides a basis for challenging the existing theories of lack of business tradition or participation.

Background and Need for the Study

Entrepreneurship research began in the mid-19th through early 20th centuries with the work of Weber, Schumpeter, and Marx. Light and Rosenstein (1995) named Weber the founder of entrepreneurship research, who linked the beginning of entrepreneurship to Puritan theology (Weber, 1905/1930). Weber credited the religious reformation of the 16th century with the development and outcomes of modern capitalism. Hedonism, which is the pursuit of or devotion to pleasure and the avoidance of pain has also been implicated in the development of modern business. A plethora of studies have focused on the interaction between resources, constraints, and culture in the development and outcome of small business among ethnic groups (Frazier, 1968;
Light, 1972; Light & Rosenstein, 1995), but have given little attention to the participation and success of African American pioneers in entrepreneurship. Consequently, there has been misunderstanding and a dearth of valuable information regarding the path that delineates African American entrepreneurial work in the United States in general and in Fresno County in particular.

Weber’s (1905/1930) view of the role of the Protestant work ethic was later challenged by Sombart (1951), who claimed that it was Jewish religious ideology that opened up the road for entrepreneurship. Whether viewed from a Judeo-Christian, Islamic, or other perspective, the role of religious ideology cannot be ignored in the history of entrepreneurship. Butler (2005) noted that the Protestant reformation that gave rise to Calvin and Luther also gave rise to the Amish church and Amish capitalist thinking. Butler observed that religious institutions were connected to the development of benevolent and insurance societies. Despite the separate approach by researchers, a comparison of the theories offers insight on the nature of the African American quest for survival through self-employment.

Waldinger, Aldrich, and Ward (1990) posited that the changing economics of small proprietorships and new evidence of the growth of ethnic entrepreneurship point to the fact that ethnic entrepreneurship has been one way immigrants and ethnic minorities can respond to the restructuring of Western economic mobility. African Americans have not responded with ethnic enterprises. Fairlie and Robb (2008) demonstrated that no evidence exists of significant improvement in business ownership rates by Blacks in the past 25 years in the United States. The researchers also reported that nearly half of all
Black families possess assets of $6,200, which is about one-eleventh of the median for White families.

Despite the importance of, and increased interest in ethnic entrepreneurship, a study of history reveals a past and present lag in African American ownership of small businesses. The existing body of literature has failed to acknowledge the contributions of African Americans who have succeeded in this arena, despite severe barriers to entry and success. The myths about African American entrepreneurship are based on false theoretical concepts that view African American entrepreneurs as failures with no tradition in entrepreneurship. Woodard (1997) noted that from before the First World War, African Americans had a long and rich history of entrepreneurship and exhibited the same entrepreneurial spirit as other groups that migrated to the United States. Woodward also cautioned that the prospects for African American entrepreneurship as a means of accumulating wealth in the future are uncertain, identifying fear and self-doubt concerning chances of success as major factors in discouraging African Americans from becoming entrepreneurs. The fear and self-doubt, Woodard added, can be alleviated only through formal technical education.

Venable (1972) pointed out the great difficulty African Americans have in benefiting from the entrepreneurial drive in America, observing that their competition is 200 years ahead of them and speeding away from them. He likened African Americans reaching to gain equality to boarding a flight that is already in supersonic mode. As experts continue to examine the African American experience in light of the stranger hypothesis of entrepreneurship, they come up with more questions than answers. Two of
the myths espoused by experts are that African Americans lacked business success symbols and had no traditions of business enterprise (Light, 1972).

African Americans have been involved in American business as long as there has been business in the United States. There is no difference between African American capitalism and the capitalism of other ethnic groups. African Americans have all the same instincts. African American heritage includes a business tradition that has been passed from generation to generation, although some was lost during the slavery era. Slavery took away their heritage such that the community sees the African American businessman as a symbol of frustration and hopelessness rather than an example of achievement, success, and leadership.

Yet historians like Light and Bonacich (1991) continue to ignore or marginalize the harsh context in which African American entrepreneurs operate. For instance, other ethnic entrepreneurs have the advantage of the advice and counsel of their predecessors, but most African American entrepreneurs do not. The important relationships between businesses and credit institutions that supply start-up credit or capital are not there for African Americans. Fairlie and Robb (2008) noted that racial disparities in start-up capital may reflect differences in the potential success of firms and ability to raise capital. Failie and Robb added that some Black entrepreneurs may have difficulty raising capital because their businesses are predicted to be less likely to succeed. The built-in management assistance provided by the government and banks that other ethnic immigrant entrepreneurs enjoy, which are very important in the development of small businesses, does not exist for African Americans.
Glazer and Moynihan (1963) explained that African Americans were denied opportunities to develop skills in financial planning, business organization, and management. Also, Walker (2009) explained that it was not the failure of Blacks to establish a pattern of savings that account for their poor business performance but government’s failure to support them as it has supported White businesses. In addition, U.S. schools do not educate enough African Americans because of covert discrimination that serves to exclude African Americans and other minorities in schools. J. Moore (2008) explained that the condition of Blacks in America is still almost as subordinate as it ever was, noting that discrimination and prejudice are different but the reasons for them are the same. J. Moore added that although schools understand that separate is inherently unequal, schools are still segregated spatially. Also, Kozol (2005), noted that the extremes of racial isolation that were matters of grave national significance 35 years ago are still there, and schools that were deeply segregated then are no less segregated now.

People engaged in business often form numerous overlapping and interlocking networks that provide support to young entrepreneurs (Venable, 1972). The history of ethnic entrepreneurs globally shows that such associations are very important to the success of businesses. The names given to these associations vary from place to place, but the functions are similar and the networks tend to have the same effects. These cooperative associations are quite effective in helping minority business owners develop small businesses. They wield power that can impact or even demand the involvement of other financial bodies and the government. Venture capital for African American businesses came from Blacks and reflected a self-help tradition. Since the antebellum period, African America business activity has paralleled mainstream American business
activity except in heavy manufacturing industries, albeit at a much lower level.

According to Wheeler (1993), self-help associations were used by African Americans in California in the 1800s.

Venable (1972) posited that the school system can promote the economic advancement of people who have been excluded. For African Americans to take their place as an entrepreneurial force in America, efforts should be directed toward accelerating their entrance into the general business community. This requires a study of African American economic needs and the development and testing of innovative approaches that stimulate the development of an entrepreneurial class. Entrepreneurs can then create self-perpetuating organizations independent of erratic support from federal agencies and private companies and foundations. African Americans need institutions that can serve as forums, clearinghouses, planners, credit pools, and guaranty projects for young African American entrepreneurs (Venable, 1972).

For the disadvantaged in the general labor market, the only hope of advancement and status is to look for a place in self-employment. As perplexing as the underrepresentation of African Americans is in the entrepreneurial drive, it is hard to explain why other ethnic immigrants who had similar experiences have excelled in self-employment. Shane (2008) posited that foreign-born Whites had the enormous advantage of colorless skin and therefore experienced milder discrimination. Light (1972) observed that White people who wanted to treat Black people like “field hands” and exclude them from all prestigious or remunerative positions had an easy time spotting them. Light contrasted the experience of Chinese and Japanese Americans: their poverty, discrimination, and ethnic visibility appeared to encourage business proprietorship. Why
has there not been a parallel development among African Americans who had similar experiences?

Waldinger et al. (1990) noted that there is a situational difference between African American immigrants and other ethnic immigrants. For African Americans the migration was not voluntary. This difference helps to explain some of the differences in business activities between the groups. Some authors such as Walker (2009) tried to explain the remarkable absence or underrepresentation of African Americans in entrepreneurial activities in America by pointing out that African Americans have been plagued by the undermining of achievements of great African Americans in the field of business. Therefore, the new information on the path that delineates African Americans’ economic journey and current status warrants a reconstruction of that path. A careful examination of the historical development of African American capitalism in the United States reveals that African Americans have exhibited the same entrepreneurial drive as people of other ethnic groups.

According to Doctors and Huff (1973), most African Americans who were brought to this country as slaves were taken from West Africa. West Africa is flourishing in trade today as always; it is an area that has a strong business tradition. The Onitsha market in Nigeria is one of the greatest trading centers in the world and a training ground for young entrepreneurs. The business acumen of the Ibos of Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. In their book *Minority Enterprise and the President’s Council*, Doctors and Huff (1973) showed that huge African market places such as the one in Onitsha, Nigeria, on the banks of the Niger River thrive on the business acumen of West African merchants. The researchers demonstrated that today, as throughout much of modern
history, the West African trader has a reputation for being an unusually skilled entrepreneur. They added that some Nigerians do several hundred thousand dollars a year in business and run operations with branches in many countries that employ hundreds of people.

The historical and modern success of West African entrepreneurs suggests that the reason for the underrepresentation of their progeny in the U.S. entrepreneurial drive lies in their experience since coming to America. The effect of slavery and the denial of economic opportunities in this great nation of America is the simple but reasonable explanation for African Americans’ lack of faith in self-employment. Historians have failed to recognize or acknowledge the historical path African Americans have taken that has determined their current experience as entrepreneurs.

Walker (2009) posited that although the pattern of Black savings or lack thereof is important, it is not the significant factor in the comparatively low business-participation rates and business receipts of Blacks. Neither is the failure of Black consumers to support Black business, nor is the absence of a historic tradition of business participation. Rather, Walker explained that the propensity in American culture is to view the social and economic condition of Blacks as one of failure rather than acknowledging that the real problem is that the government has failed Blacks.

The circumstances of immigrants before and after coming to America affect the degree to which they adjust. Some blend into the new culture easily; they let go of their cultural patterns and practices and assimilate into the new way of living. Others hold on to their culture. According to assimilation theory, differences in acculturation can affect the propensity of a group to engage in entrepreneurship. Assimilation theory originated as
an interpretation of the cultural and social changes experienced by European immigrants in the first half of the 20th century (Light & Gold, 2003). This theory holds that economic self-interest causes newcomers to acculturate and assimilate. Economic self-interest can drive immigrants to gain employment, or immigrants’ reluctance to surrender certain cultural values and heritages can hinder them. African Americans had no choice other than to assimilate. Forced assimilation on the plantations stripped them of the business heritage they brought from Africa, though they did not lose their cultural resilience.

Forced assimilation shaped the culture as well as the religious ideology of African Americans. Both culture and faith influence ethnic entrepreneurship. Jalloh and Falola (2002) noted that business practices reveal the power of culture and tradition as entrepreneurs manipulate religion, kinship, and household labor to run and expand their businesses. Over the years, opinions have differed as to why African Americans remain behind other ethnic groups in the United States in establishing small businesses. Shane (2008) noted that White Americans are twice as likely as African Americans to be in business for themselves. Shane observed that this ratio had not changed since 1910, even though the lives of African Americans have changed dramatically since that time. Also, Fairlie and Robb (2008) reported no evidence of significant improvement in business ownership rates by Blacks in 25 years. The authors noted that 13 million people in the United States (1 in 10 workers) own a business, yet rates of business ownership among African Americans are much lower.

The issue of lack of business tradition among African Americans has been the subject of debate among ethnic entrepreneurship theorists. Despite all the laws that have served as barriers to the establishment of small business by African Americans, African
Americans have exhibited entrepreneurial spirit and business tradition. The Black business activity of the civil rights era was a continuation rather than the beginning of a historic tradition of Black American business, a tradition that had its origin in precolonial West and Central Africa (Walker, 2009).

The scholarly arguments of the 1970s undermined and ignored the successes of great men and women of African American descent who have achieved much in business. Woodard (1997) noted that even before World War I, African Americans had a long and rich history of entrepreneurship and exhibited the same entrepreneurial spirit as did other groups that migrated to the United States. Entrepreneurship develops from the necessity to survive; it is the outcome of deprivation, exclusion, and legal and political alienation. For African Americans, the propensity to engage in entrepreneurship resulted from a long history of exclusion, marginality, and discrimination, and was an extension of their African heritage of entrepreneurship. Blackford (1991) noted that although most African Americans who were engaged in business activities by choice were so engaged for commercial purposes; some were engaged for nonmonetary motivations such as the desire for individual advancement through entrepreneurial activities, personal and family security, and independence. House-Soremekun (2002) observed that although still disproportionately underrepresented, African Americans are now making significant inroads in the field of small business in America. Social conditions in America as well as laws that institutionalized exclusion stripped African Americans of the cultural heritage that had encouraged and facilitated business activities in the Black community. House-Soremekun added that African Americans have a strong tradition of entrepreneurship and have survived against almost insurmountable odds.
The opponents of Black capitalism, like Frazier (1968), argued that the remarkable absence or underrepresentation of African Americans in the entrepreneurial drive in the United States was due to lack of business acumen, role models, or a business tradition. To make this kind of assumption is to underscore the loss of cultural identity and self-esteem that the continued humiliation of Black men caused to their psyche. Mistreatment has not only damaged the emotions and self-esteem of African Americans, but has become so ingrained in the minds of the people that even now it stirs feelings of inadequacy, loss of self-worth, and inferiority. Walker (2009) noted that even though Frazier, Moynihan, and Glazier acknowledged that racism, prejudice, and discrimination locked Blacks out of consumer markets thereby affecting their abilities to gain access to credit; they insisted that Blacks must be accountable for their lack of venture capital. The experiences of each ethnic group are unique and can influence and enhance the nature, size, and function of ethnic entrepreneurship. These experiences, or stories, make up their narratives. Poverty, discrimination, and cultural resilience to survive and overcome the rough roads they travelled are parts of the narratives of African Americans. Because of the uniqueness of their experiences, treating all groups as a block or comparing African Americans with other immigrant groups would be unfair. Therefore, an inquiry into the voices and perspectives of African American entrepreneurs will shed light on the misunderstanding regarding their entrepreneurial spirit.

African Americans in Fresno County

Fresno County is located in the center of the San Joaquin Valley of central California. The city of Fresno, located about 200 miles (322 km) north of Los Angeles and 170 miles (274 km) south of Sacramento, is the economic hub of Fresno County. It is
the fifth largest city in California and the 35th largest in the nation. In 2010, the population of the county was 930,450. Of this number, Whites constituted 55.4%; Blacks, 5.3%; Asians, 9.6%, and Hispanics, 50.3% (some people fall into more than one category; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

The main economic support of Fresno County is agriculture. The area is characterized by extensive poverty and high unemployment. Consequently, many immigrants there engage in self-employment as a way of fighting historical poverty. Although African Americans have been in the area longer than most ethnic groups, they still lag behind in the ownership of businesses. Those who dare go into business usually cease operations within the first 2 years. The number of firms in Fresno County in 2007 was 58,764, and African Americans owned only 3.9% of them. By contrast, Asians owned 11.4% in 2002 and Hispanics owned 21.4% in 2007. Women owned 29.4% in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Poverty, discrimination, and exclusion are parts of the experiences of many immigrant groups, but each group’s experiences since arrival in the United States have shaped their efforts to engage in entrepreneurship and have promised the outcomes of those efforts. Consequently, it is only fair to explore their social histories and experiences as unique groups rather than as a single group. Rogers (2010) noted that historians have largely ignored the success stories of Black entrepreneurs, investors, and innovators who achieved much in the face of great adversity and oppression. This negligence, he added, has deprived the world of valuable lessons that could be learned from studying the lives of these extraordinary individuals. The narratives of African American entrepreneurs describe a people with cultural resilience; a people who survived through many years of
hardship, enduring the most humiliating laws and institutional exclusion. New information is beginning to come to light that contradicts early conceptual frameworks that were based on biased perspectives. The narratives of African Americans are extraordinary, and exploring the paths they followed in their quest for economic success will add to the body of literature on African American entrepreneurship and help remove the cloud surrounding their entrepreneurial spirit.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. What is the historical path of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County?
2. What advice would successful African American entrepreneurs give to African Americans who want to start their own businesses?
3. What do African American entrepreneurs see themselves doing 5 years from now?

Theoretical Framework

Entrepreneurship has many definitions arising from different disciplines and many components that make finding a single theoretical framework that will support all the components very difficult (Todd, 1995). As a result, there is no single theory that covers all the areas described in the various disciplines. Amit, Glosten, and Muller (1993) defined entrepreneurial theory as a verifiable and logically adherent formation of relationship or underlying principles that either explain entrepreneurship, predict entrepreneurial activity (e.g., characterize conditions that are likely to lead to new profit opportunities and to the formation of new enterprise), or provide normative guidance.
(i.e., prescribe the right action in particular). Walker (2009) noted that to interpret the business activities of antebellum Blacks from the perspectives of the Black businessman as entrepreneur or the Black entrepreneur as creative capitalist is to defy the historical images of pre-Civil War Black occupational patterns that were found in conventional historical interpretations. Walker did not believe it necessary to redefine entrepreneurship to accommodate Black business activities; rather it is important to put the existing theories together to get perspectives of pre-Civil War Black business activities. Walker (2009) wrote,

The antebellum black businessman … in managing his enterprise was also called upon to estimate, with tolerable accuracy, the importance of the specific product, the probable amount of the demand, and the means of its productions. … In the course of such complex operations, there is an abundance of obstacles to be surmounted, of anxieties to be repressed, of misfortunes to be repaired, and of expedients to be devised. (pp. 28–29)

The statement describes exactly what took place in Oklahoma on that fateful day of June 21, 1921, when the hopes of successful African Americans were wiped out in what has been described as the “Black Wall Street holocaust” (Johnson, 1998).

Theoretical constructs in past studies about African American entrepreneurship focused on the lack of historical tradition in business participation and the failure of Blacks to support Black businesses. Walker (2009) pointed out, for example, that constructs that are critical of business performance by Blacks proceed from the premise that Black American businesses fail not because of racism or historic failure of government to support them as it has supported White businesses, but because African Americans lack a tradition of business participation. Frazier (1968) concurred, noting that theorists understood the difficulty encountered by Blacks in their attempts to develop
successful business enterprises in the context of a simple fundamental sociological factor: African Americans lacked business traditions. Walker observed that this construct was not challenged in the academic community.

African American entrepreneurial efforts have been marred by stereotypes and myths that give only negative pictures of the African American entrepreneur. Most existing theoretical constructs were developed with biased and myopic viewpoints and without historical foundation. Their conclusions were based on inadequate evaluation of the history of African American capitalism. For instance, most of the existing literature stresses the myths that African American entrepreneurs lack traditional business role models; support from their community; and bookkeeping, accounting, and money-management experience. These theories fail to acknowledge the cultural resilience of African Americans and the rich business heritage they had from West Africa. Also, very few acknowledge the effects of American laws and institutions, including slavery, on the ability of African Americans to engage in small business.

Rogers (2010) noted that the story of Black Americans’ quest for economic liberty and free enterprise is a story of trials, tribulations, and triumphs. The current research explored African American entrepreneurship from a perspective and mindset different from the traditional positions, with a more holistic view that looks at narratives of African Americans and leadership theories that more accurately explain the current state of African American participation in ethnic entrepreneurship.

In answering the question of what ignites the fire or authentic passion in each entrepreneur, it is necessary to look into the heart of the entrepreneurs by exploring their
voices and perspectives. To truly understand the perspective of the entrepreneur, it is necessary to see the context. The following theories underlie this study.

Theory of Entrepreneurship/Innovation

According to Drucker (1993), the theory of entrepreneurship revolves around the following three questions:

1. What is the business?
2. Who is the customer?
3. What does the customer value?

A common word in entrepreneurship is innovation. Innovation involves change. The word entrepreneur was first used by Say around 1821. Say defined an entrepreneur as one who shifts resources from an area of lower productivity to an area of higher productivity and greater yield. Later, American sociologist Schumpeter became the first to study entrepreneurship. There were differences among economists on the relationship between entrepreneurship and innovation. Schumpeter (1934) believed that innovation was central to the character of the entrepreneur and to entrepreneurship. This idea was supported by Drucker (1993), who stated that whether an entrepreneurial business was small or large, it was characterized by innovation. Rogers (2010) also noted that the essence of entrepreneurship is creativity, innovation, opportunity discovery, and adapting to risk to bring new products and services to the market.

Schumpeter (1947/1950) introduced a new economic concept of creative destruction that distinguished entrepreneurship from economic innovation, treating entrepreneurship as only one of several ways economic innovation can take place. Schumpeter opined that introducing new products either eliminates the former products
or marginalizes them so they are out of date. Light and Rosenstein (1995) wrote that Marx, who was one of the pioneers in the area of capitalism, was not interested in entrepreneurship or small businesses because in his opinion, with time, big firms would drive out smaller ones. By any of these standards—innovation, creativity, ability to adapt—African Americans have always had the characteristics of entrepreneurs. Despite their courage and optimism, historical racism, together with institutional laws and regulation, has denied them a place in the field of entrepreneurship.

Schumpeter (1934) described the incessant changes in business as a part of capitalist economies, and that innovation in entrepreneurship is what creates opportunities for one business cycle to destroy another. Schumpeter compared the field of business to a hotel that is always full of people, but people who are forever changing; as the factory wiped out the blacksmith shop and the car made the horse and buggy obsolete, so every innovation brings change.

Theory of Exclusion and Marginality

The theory of marginality states that the more individuals are excluded from their environment, the more likely they are to create new ventures. The theory is premised on the idea that entrepreneurship develops as a result of situational and cultural factors:

African Americans’ money was not accepted at white-owned banks so they established their own banks. White-owned insurance companies would not sell them insurance, so they provided their own. There was no social service system to care for widows and other poor blacks, so black churches took care of such things. White owned-companies would not hire African Americans, so they started their own business. White-owned newspapers printed prejudiced articles, so African Americans produced their own newspapers. Excluded from white-owned theatres, they built their own theaters. White-owned baseball leagues refused to let blacks play, so they organized the Negro National League. (Byers, 2004, pp. 56–57)
According to Rogers (2010), the hallmarks of capitalism are government protection of the freedom of economic contract, government protection of all persons’ right to own property, government protection of the individual’s freedom to choose whether to make business decisions free of the dictates of others or the routines of tradition, and a nondiscriminatory system of bank financing. Unfortunately, government support of the slavery of Blacks and approval of their segregation from others and of discrimination in employment, housing, contracting, borrowing, and other aspects of life made it clear that America excluded Blacks from participating in the economic system of capitalism (Rogers, 2010, p. 9). The exclusion and marginalization suffered today by African Americans in the economic mainstream is an extension of the imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism that took African Americans from their homelands.

The resource constraints faced by African Americans make it difficult for them to strictly adhere to all the rules of the game. Consequently, there is a lack of checks and balances in both the structure and the administration of their businesses; this lack has led to the early demise of many African American businesses. Lee (2010) observed that the hope that racial inequality has all but disappeared is not yet a reality; Black entrepreneurs continue to face many of the same challenges they faced 50 years ago. African Americans have had negative experiences with the government, banks, and the judicial process. These experiences diminished their self-esteem and self-respect and replaced them with a lack of self-confidence. Without self-confidence, one cannot function well in the self-employment as an alternative to wage employment.

The educational level of an entrepreneur can influence entrepreneurial activity and outcomes. Frazier (1968) pointed out that in 1968, many African Americans had little
education, had practically no skills, and had never known a “normal” life. Fairlie and Robb (2008) suggested that general and specific knowledge and skills acquired through formal and informal education may be useful for running a successful business. Most African Americans do not have enough resources to attain a high educational level. Possibly, one reason is that as programs in community colleges that support low-income people are the first to be cut in difficult economic times, it becomes impossible for many African Americans to pursue higher education. However, Fairlie and Robb (2008) added that lack of education is not the primary explanation for the difference in the rates at which Whites and Blacks start businesses. Shane (2008) explained that if education accounts for the difference in rates of self-employment among Whites and Blacks, then there should have been some movement in the ratio of White–Black self-employment since 1910, as the level of education among Blacks has changed dramatically since that time.

According to Boyd (2004) the resource-constraint version of the disadvantage theory of entrepreneurship holds that members of destitute ethnic groups often respond to labor-market exclusion by becoming survivalist entrepreneurs. Labor-market conditions push the disadvantaged population to seek alternative means of sustenance. Boyd added that Blacks have arguably been the most severely resource disadvantaged, and this can explain why they enter into self-employment. However, racism and marginalization contributed to their less successful outcomes.

The dual-labor-market theory divides the labor market into two parts: a primary market of better jobs and a secondary market of lower quality, lower paying jobs. Minorities are often segregated to the secondary labor market if they are admitted at all.
In order to better their situation, they turn to entrepreneurial activities, occupying a middle position between primary and the secondary markets.

In addition, hostility is the main reason for the middleman minority. Butler (2005) stated that middleman groups engage in business activities due to the negative and hostile environment in which they find themselves in the host society. Butler added that exclusion in a society enhances ethnic solidarity, which creates a more cohesive and united group. The effects of and response to exclusion are different for each ethnic group. Hostility to the minority group forces the fledgling entrepreneur to act as an intermediary, or middleman, between the rich White groups and the poor ethnic groups.

The major goal of the original middleman minorities was not to stay permanently in a new country, but to develop thriftiness, engage in business, make money, and send the money back to the place they considered home (Butler, 2005). Many of the people who came to America with the hope of going back to their native countries decided to stay, which diminishes the broad applicability of the sojourning middleman minority theory. This is why the middleman minority is different for each ethnic group and even among different generations in the same ethnic group. For African Americans, the premigration and postmigration circumstances were different from those of every other immigrant group, and therefore the model is not truly applicable. However, during the antebellum period, some middle-class African Americans acted as middlemen between rich Whites and poor Black slaves.

As people from minority groups face hostilities, they find solace in using the communal resources available to them. These resources include human and financial capital. When institutional laws shut the doors against minorities who live in economic
hubs, many find alternative methods of survival. Exclusion helps professionals develop ways of fending for their own people. If a community is able to use the services of its members to support the community, that community offers enough support from its members to sustain ethnic business.

Butler (2005) wrote that the tradition of African American businesses prior to the Civil War was augmented by a tremendous tradition of self-help institutions. These self-help institutions were banks, insurance companies, and other benevolent structures. These and other African American efforts to compete in business in America are devoid of documentation in the scholarly world. The American media deliberately failed to record the achievements of the pioneers of Black capitalism. Instead, they brainwashed African Americans and even caused friction in the Black community. The statements of some African American sociologists such as Frazier (1962), who claimed that the notion of African American capitalism was mere speculation and never happened, is one example of fruition of the seeds of discord.

African Americans were handicapped by their failure to secure or have access to start-up capital compared to other ethnic groups. Dandridge (2009) stated that the disparity in entrepreneurial activities between Blacks and Whites was and continues to be connected to barriers and challenges rooted in our nation’s not-long-past racial caste system and oppression of Blacks. Dandridge added that the inequity between the races has created a social condition that directly affects an entrepreneur’s access to social capital that is vital to the successful emergence and continued advancement of one’s business.
Fairlie and Robb (2008) noted that owners’ level of wealth affects their business success. The liquidity constraint is one of the greatest challenges facing African Americans as potential businessmen and businesswomen. The size of their capital determines the extent of their development. Most African American businesses are undercapitalized, causing their premature demise. Lack of available capital resources plays a significant role in how African American entrepreneurs can expand their businesses or acquire additional loans for the growth of their businesses.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following terms were operationalized to clarify meaning.

*Antebellum,* a term that means “before war,” is used to define the period before the U.S. Civil War.

*Black capitalism* is a movement among African Americans to build wealth through the ownership and development of businesses, a means of stimulating economic development for Blacks (Boston, 1997).

*Blacks* is a term used for African Americans. The dominant culture did not consider African Americans legally capable of being American citizens until after the ratification of the 14th Amendment in 1868.

*Cultural values* is a term defined by Moon (2003) as the norms, beliefs, behaviors, artifacts, and other meaningful symbols represented in the pattern of life adopted by a group of people.

In this study, the terms *entrepreneurship, small business,* and *self-employment* are used interchangeably to describe employment other than working for someone else. An *entrepreneur* is a person who finds a niche and raises capital to fill the niche. Waldinger
et al. (1990) defined ethnic entrepreneurship as a set of connected regular patterns of interaction among people sharing a common national background or migration experience. For the purpose of this study, entrepreneurship will be used to mean a process by which individuals pursue opportunities (whether for profit or nonprofit purposes) without regard to resources they may currently control; an entrepreneur recognizes an opportunity to make a profit, raises the money to open a business, and eventually hires managers to run the business (Rogers, 2010). Rogers observed that entrepreneurs are innovators, agents of change, and risk takers who establish their ventures regardless of whether they currently have the financing they need.

*Entrepreneurial leadership* is the kind of leadership that can create visionary scenarios used to assemble and mobilize a supporting cast of participants who become committed by the vision to the discovery and exploitation of strategic value creation (Gupta, MacMillan, & Surie 2004).

*Hedonism* is the devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasure of the senses. The word is derived from the Greek idea of behavior being motivated by the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain (A. Moore, 2011).

*Jim Crow laws* are laws passed during the era of legalized racial segregation born out of greed and fear (Rogers, 2010).

*Small business* is an economic enterprise that is independently owned and operated (Blackford, 1991).

*Stranger hypothesis* of entrepreneurship is a term experts in the field use to explain why minority immigrants become entrepreneurs at a disproportionate rate (Venable, 1972).
Delimitations

According to Roberts (2010, p. 138) delimitations include what will be included or what will be left out over the researcher has control over. A few delimitations and limitations are expected to limit the usefulness of the findings of this study. Considering the scarcity of information on the topic of African American entrepreneurship, the limitations should not detract from the insight the findings provide. As defined by Creswell (2008), delimitations are the boundaries set forth by the researcher to define the scope and provide the parameters for this study. These include the choice of research questions, objectives, populations, and method of analysis. This study was limited to African American business owners in Fresno County, California. Its findings therefore may not necessarily be applicable to African American entrepreneurs in other parts of the United States. The background and socialization process of the researcher may be a delimiting factor as the researcher necessarily brings bias to the work. Also, the time of study was January 2012 through April 2012 which was not enough time to conduct a more detailed study.

Limitations

Creswell (2008, p. 207) defined limitations as the potential problems with the study identified by the researcher; they are often related to inadequate measures of variables, loss or lack of participants, small sample size, errors in measurement, and other factors typically related to data-collection analysis. These variables or limitations of the study are inherent design or methodological parameters that can restrict the scope of the findings in this study but are beyond the control of the researcher. This study was subject to a few limitations. The participants may not have accurately shared all their experiences
or provided some vital information. Participants may not have been transparent in their dealings due to lack of trust and apprehension about how the information obtained would be used. This may affect the credibility or believability of participants’ responses. Also, time constraints were insufficient for the researcher to become well acquainted with the participants. The sample may not truly represent the whole population of African American business owners in Fresno County. The study also has the potential for bias and exaggeration on the part of the researcher and participants resulting from their backgrounds and experiences. Because I was aware of the impact of researcher biases, opinions, and prejudices on the objectivity of the data, I worked to ensure personal biases did not affect the integrity of the data. Also, because there were only 15 participants in the study, the findings may not be generalized to other counties or states in the United States.

Significance

This study contributed information that supports a new understanding of the observed differences in the propensity of African Americans to engage in ethnic business and experience less favorable outcomes than others. Examining the historical developments in the African American pursuit of self-reliance in the midst of nearly insurmountable barriers, and the resilience of African Americans that causes them to succeed despite the challenges and odds against success, may help change some of the existing myths that are based on false premises. Prior research on this subject has ignored vital information that would lead to a more realistic assessment of the performance of African American entrepreneurs, compared with people from other ethnic groups. Past studies like Light and Gold (2003), Light and Bonacich (1991), Light and Rosenstein
(1995) focused on the entrepreneur and ignored the processes and circumstances of entrepreneurship. In contrast, this study explored the voices and perspectives of selected African Americans who lived the experience.

As the faith of African Americans has been a crucial part of their survival, the study also confirmed the role that personal faith and churches played in helping stimulate economic development. Walker (2009) noted that churches stimulated economic development in the African American community by providing basic support, security, and social outlets to the Black community. Spiritual capital is part of African American culture and this aspect will address the third research question. The findings of this study confirmed the significance of personal faith and churches in the entrepreneurial work of African Americans.

Woodard (1997) observed that the future of African American entrepreneurship as a means of accumulating wealth remains turbulent. The author attributed this to individuals’ fears and self-doubts concerning their chances of success, which can be alleviated only through formal technical education. The new understanding that results from this study will serve as a foundation from which leaders and planners in the field of education can develop programs geared toward training future African American entrepreneurs.

Although this study did not yield all the answers, it contributed valuable information about the existing disparities among various ethnic groups. Specifically, the study revealed paths African Americans traveled in their entrepreneurial work in Fresno County and demonstrated their ability to engage in and achieve success in small business. The findings can help leaders and educational planners develop programs that will
motivate and help train potential entrepreneurs, specifically African American entrepreneurs. As more African American students understand entrepreneurship through classroom instruction and academic programs, the now-wide gap in entrepreneurial activities will narrow.

As an indication that this is the case, consider that some faculty and professors from historically Black colleges and universities, in response to an ongoing lack of minority business cases, embarked in 2005 on projects to enhance their business curricula by increasing emphasis on the case method of instruction (Gagnon, Morgan, & Totten, 2009). This effort resulted in grants from the Ford Foundation to develop minority business cases to be integrated into collegiate curricula throughout the United States and the publication of several books toward that end. Through intercultural training and understanding, each ethnic group will learn more from others, and the combined effect will help close the existing gap. Improved academic programs will immerse African American students of entrepreneurship in the excitement of starting and sustaining businesses. Dillard (2008) predicted that academic programs in entrepreneurship will take talented students aspiring to be entrepreneurs and rapidly advance them into the community.

Summary

Although ethnic entrepreneurship and self-employment have become part of the American way of life, the existing literature continues to show African Americans fall behind in business ownership. Due to a long history of misunderstanding of the entrepreneurial work of African Americans, very little has been written on the overall life cycle or on any realistic reconstruction of the rights of passage of African American
entrepreneurs and the challenges they faced throughout history. The scant literature that is available does not move away from the prevalent myths about Black business that fail to recognize the historical development of African American capitalism. Some theorists, such as Frazier (1968), labeled the African American entrepreneurial quest a myth, stating that African Americans are without any historical tradition of business or experience in financial planning. In contrast to this point of view, African Americans have a unique experience that warrants a new mindset and a paradigm shift in scholarly literature regarding their participation and outcomes in entrepreneurship. Walker (2009) noted that the assessment of Black business proceeds from the premise that the post-civil rights era of Black business activity marks the continuation rather than the beginning of a historic tradition of Black American business that has its origin in precolonial west and central Africa.

In Chapter I of this qualitative study, the problem was stated, the need for the study argued, and the purpose and background identified. Some of the terms used were defined to provide an understanding of the ways they are used in the study. The need for the study was shown to stem from missing information regarding the true historical development and performance of African American entrepreneurs. This chapter also gave the theoretical rationale for the study and the research questions. Existing theoretical constructs are premised on factors that fail to look at the context and environment in which African American entrepreneurs operate. New revelations regarding historical developments now make it necessary to revisit the old constructs, explaining the underrepresentation of African Americans in entrepreneurship in Fresno County. Some of the existing literature is discussed in Chapter II.
Chapter II of this study examines the existing literature on the subject matter. It discusses three major themes that help to explain the theoretical constructs that prior scholars formulated regarding entrepreneurial work and the underrepresentation of African Americans in small business. Chapter III describes the methodology, including the research design, population, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. In Chapter IV, the researcher describes the findings of the study. Chapter V is a final discussion and offers recommendations for future practice and suggestions for research about the future of the entrepreneurial work of African Americans.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

A number of themes emerged in the literature reviewed for this study. One is the fact that most of the existing literature on African American entrepreneurship does not look at the historical facts or the paths that African American entrepreneurs have taken to reach their current positions, but focuses on race and historical traditions in business (or lack thereof) as the main determinants of the success or failure of the entrepreneurs. Another theme is the deep and lasting impact of slavery and ensuing racial exclusion and discrimination on the ability and desire of African Americans to engage in business enterprises. The effects of legislation, segregation, and the myth of Black inferiority are discussed. These themes have been organized into three different eras in the lives of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County. The question of whether African Americans have truly failed as entrepreneurs—whether they are people without business acumen, without tradition in business ownership, and without community support for ethnic businesses—are answered through an exploration of their activities in the following times and places:

- African American entrepreneurs in the postslavery era (1800s)
- African American entrepreneurs in the civil rights era (1950s)
- The historical development of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County

In contrast to the themes, the literature also includes illustrations of successful entrepreneurship among African Americans throughout their history, before and after the
Civil War, during the periods of reconstruction and segregation, and during and after the civil rights movement. Although the examples are few, they demonstrate that African Americans have exercised entrepreneurial power even when circumstances seemed to deprive them of it. In Weber’s (1947) terms, power includes the ability to exercise one’s will in the face of insurmountable obstacles. African Americans exhibited that power, overcoming significant roadblocks. Yet their efforts have been totally ignored in discussions of the history of business.

Walker (2009) observed that although African Americans seized every opportunity to establish a tradition of African American participation in colonial America, slavery and racism defeated their attempts. Walker added that it was race and not class that caused the economic, legal, and social subordination of the African American in America. Although African Americans worked as hard as people of other ethnic groups, their efforts either were not recorded or were marginally recognized. Venable (1972) added that to state that African Americans will be equally represented in the entrepreneurial drive in America is to minimize the difficulty involved.

Fairlie and Robb (2008) lamented that change in business ownership appears nowhere on the horizon for African Americans. The researchers observed that although Blacks have made gains in the labor market, education, politics, and legal matters, they still seem to miss the mark in business ownership and performance, and policymakers are overlooking that fact. Fairlie and Robb attributed this situation to African Americans’ low level of personal wealth, which is problematic in securing start-up capital and eventually limits the accumulation and transfer of riches to the next generation.
The historical experiences of African Americans make the group unique. Most of the existing literature is based on false theoretical frameworks that totally ignore the achievements of the fathers of African American entrepreneurship. Exclusion, discrimination, constraints, and institutional laws and regulations have played significant roles in shaping the current state of African American entrepreneurial activities. Exploring these factors will give the reader a better understanding of why, despite the contributions of great African American men and women, African American entrepreneurship has not been given its due consideration in the discussion of American entrepreneurship.

Jones and Wadhwani (2006) noted that an understanding of history is essential to the study of entrepreneurship, a perspective that has been lost in recent scholarship. They argued that historical approaches are essential to understanding the entrepreneurial process. According to the authors, despite agreement about the importance of history in the study of entrepreneurship, in recent years empirical research has ignored historical settings in favor of focusing on entrepreneurial behavior and growing irrelevance from major issues in the contemporary global economy. The authors concluded that the rediscovery of history can facilitate entrepreneurial studies and stimulate exchanges between the history and theory of entrepreneurship that Schumpeter (1947/1950) envisioned. They added that social science research on entrepreneurship has given declining analytical attention to historical context over the last few decades.

Another empirical study supported the critical roles of human and social capital. According to Nielson and Sarasvathy (2011), human and social capital impact the entry and reentry of businesses. The authors noted that people with work experience are
expected to be successful entrepreneurs. They argued that the positive impact of social capital on entrepreneurial performance usually occurs through the mechanisms of motivation and access to valuable resources such as information, customers, and suppliers. The decision to start a business involves risk and uncertainty, which is why understanding, backing, and support from family and close friends can be essential in making the decision. The authors observed that social networks are especially important for start-up businesses and success if they contain former entrepreneurs who can act as mentors or role models.

The social history of African Americans includes their past experience; their present perceptions of their current circumstances; and their future anticipation of conquering poverty, eliminating discrimination, and restoring their self-esteem. Burrell (2010) stated that understanding the current crisis is impossible without examining the historical ways in which Black fathers, mates, brothers, and sons were emasculated. Burrell added that for decades, scholars, educators, politicians, and the media have blamed Black parents and children for their shortcomings without exploring the toxic and counterproductive environment in which they are expected to succeed. The narratives of African Americans indicate that they have always been active and successful as entrepreneurs. The stories of people like Free Frank (1777–1854), who was a slave who made enough money to purchase freedom for not only himself but also for 16 family members, are testaments of the success of African Americans in business (Walker, 2009).

Rogers (2010) listed the notable periods in African American history as the pre-Civil War era, the Civil War era, the reconstruction era, the era of legally imposed segregation, and the civil rights and post civil rights eras. Here we will examine the first
four as a unit and the last two together. Then we will look at the history of African American enterprise in Fresno County.

African American Entrepreneurs in the Postslavery Era (1800s)

The 1800s era marked the beginning of a very significant epoch in the development and achievement of African American entrepreneurship. The decade was a notable period in the economic journey of African Americans. The achievements came before and after the Civil War of 1861–1865. Even though Blacks made up only 10% of the U.S. population of 4.5 million in 1860, the country had 2,300 Black-owned businesses at that time (Blackford, 1991). Yet scholars have continued to marginalize the contributions of pioneers in small businesses who are of African descent.

In the 1700s and early 1800s, free Blacks engaged primarily in small service businesses, running eating and drinking places that catered to a White clientele. In 1800, one Thomas Downing established a restaurant near Wall Street in New York that served professional and commercial classes at the location for over 30 years. In addition, free Blacks in New York were publishing the newspaper *The Colored American* in 1840 (Rogers, 2010, pp. 29–30).

One of the hallmarks of the 1800s was the division between the northern and southern states. The northern states did not approve of slavery but the southern states relied heavily on slaves to work their plantations. The southern states withdrew from the union and formed their own country (the Confederate States of America), beginning the Civil War of 1861–1865. Abraham Lincoln, who became president of the United States in 1860, was opposed to slavery; in 1863 he abolished slavery in his Emancipation
Proclamation. In the years immediately following the Civil War, the reconstruction period. Slavery was gone but racism remained strong in the south.

Slavery and racism were twin towers that kept African Americans from experiencing major breakthroughs in entrepreneurship in the 1800s. Byers (2004) described slavery as dehumanizing, noting that the slave had no money, no opportunity, and no rights, and was considered to be property to be bought and sold; slaves were not citizens and had no protection under the law. They lived at the mercy of their masters who beat and even killed them without any fear of serious punishment. Although emancipation brought a ray of hope to the slaves, it was like being free and simultaneously in bondage. Every attempt at rising up was met with force and even death.

Despite the iron gates that blocked the doorway to Black entrepreneurship, some African Americans made significant progress in establishing small businesses during the period. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding of entrepreneurial work of African Americans caused economic theorists such as Frazier (1968) to conclude that the idea of Black capitalism was a myth. The major problem, though, is trying to evaluate the success or failure of African American business by the standards of White-owned businesses. Walker (2009) noted that because slavery and racism limited the full expression of Black business activity, it is absurd to expect that Black business history can achieve legitimacy by being compared to the success stories of White entrepreneurs. Walker suggested that until America truly becomes one nation that is really indivisible, judging the success or failure of Black businesses in the context of White experiences will remain unrealistic.
Rogers (2010) observed that contemporary scholars Light (1972), Light and Gold (2003), Light and Bonacich (1991) and Fairlie and Robb (2008), writing on the sociology of entrepreneurship and race relations, have failed to acknowledge the works of Black authors and successful business leaders such as B. T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, whose ideas predate similar ideas of Rogers. These narrow-sighted authors, Rogers claimed, ignored the fact that Black scholars as early as 1898 demonstrated that free Blacks engaged in business enterprises in the 1700s even though their status was only half free.

The stigma attached to slavery and segregation continued to limit African Americans after the 1800s. Possibly, one reason is that not only were their ancestors considered inferior, but the label of inferiority became so ingrained in their minds that most still feel inadequate in the business world. Burrell (2010) noted that the unwritten, audacious promotion of White superiority and Black inferiority was and still is the most effective and successful marketing propaganda campaign in the history of the world. After emancipation, other measures were introduced to oppress the freed men and women. The passage of the Black codes allowed Whites to maintain supremacy over Blacks. These codes kept Blacks in bondage, denying them free association with Whites and any reasonable gainful employment.

One of the legacies of slavery and the ensuing years of institutionalized prejudice and negative attitudes about race is the effect on the personality and self-esteem of African Americans (Burrell, 2010). The community saw the African American businessman as a symbol of frustration and hopelessness rather than of courage. African Americans’ loss of self-esteem culminated in a decline in their interest in
entrepreneurship. The experience damaged self-image so severely that “business” was no longer a polite word in the African American community. As a result, many African Americans discouraged their children from engaging in business (Venable, 1972). Therefore, unlike other ethnic entrepreneurs, African American entrepreneurs today must start from scratch and develop what little expertise they can through trial and error. This process often leads to disaster and performance far below that of other ethnic immigrants who have always had greater access to the economic system and procedures.

A notable exception to the African American tendency to shy away from entrepreneurship in the 1800s occurred in California during the Gold Rush. Wheeler (1993) noted that in 1850, the antislavery Liberator published a letter from 37 Black men in San Francisco announcing the organization of the Mutual Benefit and Relief Society. The intent of the society was for the Blacks in California to help themselves and the new African Americans who were coming to California in great numbers from the south.

The postemancipation era was a time of insecurity and uncertainty among African Americans. Proslavery advocates had argued that slavery was necessary because without the control of slave owners, African Americans would revert to their “savage, brutish state” (Burrell, 2010, p. 53). Once slavery was abolished, African Americans had to figure out how to prove this argument wrong. Insecurity is evident today in the higher rates of arrest and incarceration of African Americans. Also, Black-on-Black violence is high due to the poverty and exclusion that have long haunted African American communities. Burrell (2010) noted that poverty remains one of the most treacherous barriers to the development of a strong Black family, it is the sixth dynamic of Black family destruction. The high rates of violence and crime leave no ground for
rehabilitation. Burrell summarized Black-on-Black crimes as follows: “There is a saying in the Black community that Blacks cannot improve as a people because, like crabs in a barrel, whenever one tries to climb out of the barrel the other ones will pull him back down (2010, p. 209).

This exclusion and deprivation sparked some Black resistance. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 brought some changes, at least on paper. But the changes did not come without opposition in some quarters. According to Byers (2004), reconstruction laws that gave Blacks equal rights and the movement of Blacks from the farms to the cities threatened White supremacy. Although legally equal, in reality African Americans continued to be separate. The cultural resilience that drove them to survive in the midst of adversities caused them to find means of sustaining livelihoods. Confronted with abject poverty, they developed ways to change their stories from failure to success, as demonstrated in California following the Civil War and during the gold-rush period.

One of the greatest challenges holding back African American entrepreneurship is the myth of Black inferiority. Rogers (2010) noted that during the 1800s and well into the 20th century economists using western European and American Whites as the standard assumed that genetic inferiority was the reason for the low economic status of African Americans. Not only did society create a kind of mental slavery that purported that anything black was bad, but it also indoctrinated the Black community into believing that nothing good ever came from anything black. Even among African Americans, elite families moved away from Black neighborhoods into “better” areas (Rogers, 2010).

This was psychological warfare that threatened African Americans as a people. There had to be a new orientation and a paradigm shift. The media and the educational
systems had to embark on a campaign to reeducate people. Not only the majority culture, but African Americans as well needed to rethink ingrained beliefs about superiority and inferiority (Frazier, 1968). Even among the few Black members of the bourgeoisie there has been a struggle for recognition and status. Upper-class Blacks (economically successful) have difficulty fitting into either the African American mainstream or the White groups. Frazier described how the ingrained beliefs about inferiority affect Blacks of all social standings:

Since the thinking of the Negro folk was not affected as that of the black bourgeoisies by the books and papers in which the Negro’s inferiority was proclaimed, the black bourgeoisie suffered spiritually not only because they were affected by ideas concerning the Negro’s inferiority, but perhaps even because they had adopted the white man’s values and patterns of behavior. Consequently, they developed an intense inferiority complex and because of this inferiority complex sought compensation. (p. 253)

One of the compensations more affluent Blacks sought for their inferior status in the 1800s was in the area of education. A good education set them apart from other Blacks. This elevated position gave them a false assumption of belonging to the elite class.

The period of the 1800s was also a period of propaganda against the African American quest for success in capitalism. It was a period when everything that is black, including services and products by a Black person were said to be inferior. The myth of inferiority can be seen even among educated Blacks such as Frazier, who did not believe that Black entrepreneurship was the way out of the dismal economic situation of most African Americans. Frazier (1962) viewed the myth from the two standpoints of economic significance and social significance. Concerning economic significance, Frazier opined that the infinitesimal accumulation of capital represented by all Black business enterprises obviously had no significance in the American economic system.
Further, Frazier tried to justify these claims by showing that one small bank in a small town in the State of New York had more assets than all the African American banks combined. Also, from the standpoint of employment for fellow Blacks, the author claimed that African American businesses hired less than 1% of all the employed Blacks.

In contrast, Allensworth, an African American, stated that to advance the African American race and discredit the malicious eugenics fallacy of genetic inferiority, Blacks had to work diligently and fulfill their potential to do for themselves instead of relying on rhetoric and White philanthropy (as cited in Wheeler, 1993, p. 173). Allensworth was a chaplain of the 24th Infantry who ministered to the needs fellow African Americans. A park in Tulare County is named after Allensworth.

Frazier (1968) did not ignore the social significance of African American businesses, stating that Black business was not only an economic fact, but was also a social myth that was institutionalized by southern African American leaders. Frazier noted that those in the African American middle class lived in a world of delusion because no argument based on facts could change their faith in Black business as a means to racial salvation; this was preached in every Black church and school. Frazier concluded that the contributions of African Americans would be realized when and only when African American intellectuals and artists freed themselves from their desire to conform and overcame their inferiority complex. The artists are those in the entertainment industry and form a great part of the African American entrepreneurial experience and contributions. African American artists play vital roles in the American entertainment industry. The discussion of the role played by African American
intellectuals and artists (entertainers) in entrepreneurship is beyond the scope of this study and is therefore recommended for future studies.

The contribution of African American entrepreneurs in the State of California in this early period cannot be underestimated. Wheeler (1993) explained that of the 12 men who served as governors of California from 1823 to July 7, 1846, only one—Pico, who was of African descent—was chosen by a legislative body. Pico made changes in the educational system in California that paved the way for California’s historical development.

Another African American who had a significant impact on the State of California was Leidesdorf, a pioneer in entrepreneurship. Leidesdorf obtained two lots in 1843 and erected the first plush hostelry in San Francisco, and in 1844 this African American entrepreneur obtained more downtown property and built a waterfront warehouse. Leidesdorf introduced the first steamboat to San Francisco’s harbor waters in 1847 (Wheeler, 1993).

Other African Americans who were pioneers in the field of entrepreneurship include Beckwourth and Dodson. Among Beckwourth’s many contributions was the opening of the Sierra Nevada Pass in 1850 with his own funds of $1,600. Beckwourth opened a trading post in the Sierra Valley (Wheeler, 1993). The present agricultural patterns in California would not have been possible without the work of generations of African Americans who introduced and refined methods of artificial irrigation. According to Wheeler, many historians now concede that the remarkable energy of African Americans and their expertise in establishing irrigation and water facilities were the most critical factors contributing to the founding of some cities in southern California.
Despite the contributions of these pioneers, in 1858 there was an attempt to stop African American immigration and label African Americans a “proscribed class” (Wheeler, 1993, p. 97). The passage of an anti-Black immigration bill in the Californian House in 1858 caused some uneasiness, but the bill did not get past the Senate. Some of the events that impacted the narratives of African Americans in California are listed below (Bancroft Library, 2008):

- 1826: Ranne, an African American, was part of the first overland party to California led by Smith.
- 1831, January 31: Black merchant Victoria, known as the “Black Governor,” took the oath of office as political and military governor of California.
- 1841: Black merchant Leidesdorf settled in California, operating a trading vessel. Leidesdorf purchased several parcels in 1846 in San Francisco and was later appointed American Consul at Yerba Buena Cove in 1845.
- 1845: Pico became a governor and served until his exile in 1846. Also, Beckwourth, a famous African American hunter and scout, took part in the Bear Flag Rebellion.
- 1866: African Americans gained access to California public schools with the provision that separate schools could be established along racial lines.
- 1875: Segregation in California schools was officially ended.

African American Entrepreneurs in the Civil Rights Era (1950s)

The 1950s saw a continuation and intensification of the segregationist policies of the 1800s that denied fairness to African Americans in all aspects of life. African Americans were not allowed to use the same amenities, restaurants, or hotels as Whites,
even when they had the money to afford them (Byers, 2004). They were “separate but equal.” Schools were segregated and Blacks were allowed to attend only run-down schools. There was discrimination in housing and employment opportunity (Byers, 2004). Consequently, frustration set in, which eventually led to the movement for civil rights that started in the 1950s and continued until 1964.

The 1950s and 1960s were periods when African Americans fought for their civil rights, economic freedom, and equality. At this time, segregation and discrimination were more subtle in the North than in the South. One would expect that governments would protect their citizens from exploitation, oppression, and injuries. Sadly, that has not always been the case. Alexander (2006) observed that the promises of protection made by the civil authorities of “even formally democratic nation-states have been mocked by gross exclusions and inequalities” (p. 2). This occurred because members of the national community actually believed that some of their own people “either do not deserve freedom and communal support or are not capable of sustaining them” (Alexander, 2006, p. 2). African Americans as a people in the United States were labeled defiant, unintelligent, and incapable of operating successful businesses. They were denied any avenue for civil negotiation. Humiliation and exclusion were the reasons for the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Butler, 2004).

Although legal discrimination was largely absent in the North, even there Blacks did not have the economic freedoms that Whites enjoyed. The Black movements for equality were so effective that in 1954, in the landmark case of *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the justices ruled that the separation of school children breeds feelings of inferiority that may affect their minds and hearts. Despite the ruling
and court-ordered integration, many schools continued to discriminate against Blacks (Robinson, 2008). The federal government tried to enforce the law that continued to divide America. Most schools in California did not comply and the fight went on, mostly in the South, throughout the 1950s.

One of the greatest forces in the fight against segregation was the church. In the face of segregation and discrimination, African American ministers joined together and used the church for encouragement and inspiration for peaceful and passive resistance. The church was at the center of self-help among African Americans and provided a forum for the discussion of grievances (Butler, 2005). It was the segregation and discrimination experiences of the 1950s that inspired Dr. King and other Black ministers to take leadership and transform their constraints into opportunities for business establishment aimed at self-sufficiency. The church combined with civil rights activists to push for racial equality, with the church serving as the central offices and uniting ground for the movement. There were demonstrations and boycotts. At the same time, there were Whites-only groups that resisted any attempt by Blacks to gain equality. Byers (2004) noted that most of the White people in the South could not imagine African Americans ever being the same as them.

Doctors and Huff (1973) noted that an economic curtain barring African Americans from the economic mainstream had been implicit for many years. This barrier, coupled with the lack of access to a power structure, bred an atmosphere of frustration and anger among minorities. There is a general assumption that Blacks are used to and content with government handouts or dependency on the charity of the White majority.
However, by the 1950s African Americans were more conscious of this assumption and were seeking resources to enable them to be part of the economic mainstream.

The civil rights movement was a response to man’s inhumanity to man that began with slavery. For African Americans, the effects of segregation and its aftermath continue to haunt them as the experiences linger in their memory. Ricoeur (2004) stated that remembering the past helps to reconstruct the present and opens up opportunities for the future.

According to Edwards (2005) the concept of a civil society can explain a great deal about the course of politics and social change that serves as a framework for organizing resistance and alternative solutions to social, economic, and political problems. Although the term civil society can be explained in various ways, the term generally denotes a group of people with a common goal, a means to achieve the goal, and a framework for engaging with one another about ends and means. Edwards (2005) explained that people in a civil society integrate their different perspectives into a mutually supportive framework. Communicative action gives individuals opportunity to discuss issues facing them at a public level. Strategic action is the use of a strategy by one group to achieve its personal goals and objectives. In the history of African Americans, communicative action failed and African Americans had to resort to strategic action. The continued disregard for African Americans’ plea for racial equality resulted in civil disobedience. All the activities of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s were strategic actions initiated by African Americans who had suffered the injustices of exclusion and oppression (Byers, 2004).
One of the forms of exclusion was the enforcement of Jim Crow laws. Jim Crow was more than a set of rigid laws against Blacks; Jim Crow etiquette became a way of life all over the United States (Dandridge, 2009). Blacks were institutional outcasts, given no opportunities to build an effective network that could enhance their positions as entrepreneurs. Jim Crow laws had two effects on African American entrepreneurship, one positive and one negative. Whereas the laws removed African Americans from the economic mainstream, denying them any entry, they actually helped encourage them to find alternative means of sustaining their families. Byers (2004) noted that White-owned companies would not hire African Americans so they started their own business, White-owned newspapers printed prejudiced articles, so African Americans produced their own newspapers; excluded from White-owned theaters they built their own theaters. At the same time, African Americans were able to take care of their families by using the only community resources available to them. They turned their seemingly hopeless circumstance into a situation filled with songs and entertainment. During the 1950s, through initiative and communal connectedness, they transformed their way of living to secure a better life for their people.

According to Butler (2004), descendants of truncated Afro-American middlemen continue to cherish and keep alive the ideas and institutions that helped sustain their successors during the years of intensive racial segregation and hostility. Butler added that between the 1950s and late 1960s, Afro-Americans engaged in what has been simply called “The Civil Rights Movement,” and that this period saw the application of a variety of programs designed to deal with the social and economic problems of Afro-Americans. If they could accomplish this while being completely excluded from other economic
opportunities, how can historians allege that the community did not have enough internal strength to support African American ethnic business?

The problem was not a failure of African American entrepreneurship, but a failure of business historians and sociologists to document the efforts of the people who made a difference in the community. The media did not record the achievements of successful entrepreneurs of African descent. Instead, they devised a way to instigate conflict among the elites in small African American entrepreneurial communities such as W. E. B. Du Bois and B. T. Washington (Frazier, 1968). They brainwashed the Black community into developing an inferiority complex, accepting the false notion that products made by other ethnic groups were superior. The damage was so severe that African American sociologists such as Frazier claimed that no African American capitalism took place; that the idea that it did was mere speculation.

It is an understatement to say that African Americans suffer from economic dysfunction. To accept this claim is to underscore the loss of identity and self-esteem that Black men suffered from the exclusion to which they were subjected during the 1950s. They were forced to develop the mindset that rejects anything “black” in favor of almost anything else. There are still damaged emotions and scars that resulted from the lynching of Black manhood. The new mindset produced feelings of inadequacy and loss of self-worth and pride. Burrell (2010) clearly stated that it is impossible to understand the current crisis without examining the historical ways in which Black men were emasculated. For decades, scholars, educators, politicians, and the media blamed Black parents and their children for any dysfunction in African American families without
exploring the toxic and counterproductive environment in which they were expected to operate.

Robinson (2008) explained that the 1950s were a difficult time for African Americans in the United States. Despite the contributions of African Americans to the nation as a whole, particularly during World War II, Black people were frequently the subjects of discrimination and outright violence. Notwithstanding the setbacks suffered by Blacks during this period, significant developments occurred in the civil rights movement, paving the way for the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Despite the success of African American entrepreneurs, the proponents of the theoretical constructs that were based on wrong premises continue to justify their claims without fair consideration of the harsh economic terms and conditions in which the African American entrepreneur operates. The education that served as compensation for the small Black business professional in the 1800s was not longer in the 1950s (Frazier, 1968). During the 1950s, many public schools were segregated by race and many African American children could attend only low-quality schools in Black neighborhoods; they received marginal educations at best. The 1954 Brown v Board of Education decision that declared the segregation of schools unconstitutional did not make many impacts until later (Robinson, 2008).

History of African Americans in Fresno County

According to Drury (2002) Fresno County was once a desert discovered during a search for a suitable mission site. The area became the property of the United States in 1846 after the Mexican War. The discovery of gold in the foothills caused an influx of miners, including African Americans who came from the South. Fresno, which is the
major city in Fresno County, was created in 1856. The name Fresno means “ash tree.” The major economy of Fresno County is agriculture. The raisin industry began in 1875; the lumber industry in 1852. In the 1800s, gold, petroleum, and cooper were products of Fresno County.

Newspapers articles can give only a hint of the history and real life of the African American population in Fresno County. The White population in Fresno County in the last half of the 1800s had only a faint impression of Negro life. The first Blacks in Fresno County came with wagon trains, driving cattle along with them. The Martin, Woodson, Baker, Moore, Deaphis, and Giles families were recorded living in Fresno County in 1880 (Marcussen, 2009). In the 1880 census, another African American, Butler, was listed as a single male, age 23, and a laborer. According to oral testimony from descendants of the pioneer toilers, a trainload of Black people from North Carolina reached Fresno in 1888. Also, research (Fresno Bee, 1965) showed that Fresno’s first-born African American was S. Brown who was born in July 11, 1888. A former farm worker, Brown was a trainer of prize fighters, and an automobile shop operator. Brown and Brown’s parents worked their farm until Brown reached the age of 24, then opened an automobile shop in 1920 and operated until 1963.

There has been a lack of understanding of the entrepreneurial spirit among these early African American business persons in Fresno County. African Americans have worked in the fields of the county for well over 100 years. They were recruited to help in farm labor in Fresno County before the dawn of the 20th century. The first African American entrepreneurs were the Moores, former slaves who, in 1866, planted the first apple and fig orchards in Fresno County. The Moores had real estate valued at $3,000 in
1870. The Bakers in 1870 had a personal estate valued at $250, which was considered significant at that time. In 1874, it was recorded that Moore sold 40 head of milk cows to some young White people who wanted to start a dairy (Marcussen, 2009). Records show that even though Blacks were among the first contract laborers in the area, they never became a major work group in the agricultural industry.

By 1880, the population of African Americans in Fresno County had increased to the point where it attracted political interest. Fresno’s first newspaper, the *Fresno Expositor*, published articles about the rights of Blacks. An article in the 1875 *Expositor* referenced an incident in which an African American person was denied service in a restaurant in Chicago.

African Americans faced challenges in Fresno County as elsewhere, and were subjected to constant harassment and legal actions. For instance, in 1903, one Adams, a Black person from Selma, was charged with assault for accidentally shooting and injuring one White person while trying to shoot another White person who had insulted and harassed Adams. Also, in 1885, an African American named Payne was charged with cutting down trees belonging to a White person. Payne’s fine was reduced due to the explanation that Payne had been instigated to perform the act by another White person (Marcussen, 2009).

African Americans in Fresno County continue to face discrimination in employment and credit. Unlike people of other ethnic groups such as Asians, they lack strong credit, collateral, or existing wealth to start businesses. The county is a difficult place for beginning and sustaining businesses, as it is characterized by poverty and high unemployment. Avalos (2008) noted that 47% of Fresno County residents do not have a
high school diploma and they therefore have little opportunity to flourish economically.

In a 2007 survey, 17.1% of Whites in Fresno County were reported living at or below poverty thresholds, compared to 33% of Blacks (Avalos, 2008, p. 11).

Although African Americans have been in the area longer than people from most other ethnic groups, they still lag behind in the ownership of businesses. Those who dare to go into business usually cease operations within the first 2 years. The number of firms in Fresno County in 2007 was 58,764, and African Americans owned only 3.9% of them. By contrast, Asians owned 11.4% in 2002 and Hispanics owned 21.4% in 2007. Women in general owned 29.4% in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

In Fresno County as elsewhere, religion played a role in the development of African American businesses. The role of spirituality and faith cannot be ignored in African and African American entrepreneurial practices. Churches traditionally held a dominant position for African Americans in their search for survival (Butler, 2005). Even on the plantations, churches served as forums for the discussion of grievances and for the organization of insurrections. When the government found ways to stop the activities of the preachers, African Americans developed other ways of holding secret meetings until changes were made that allowed some Black churches to assemble in a specific location.

For African Americans aspiring to be entrepreneurs, religion and faith have dual implications. There is a paradoxical relationship between religious belief and entrepreneurship. In some cases, African Americans’ beliefs helped them engage in and experience success in entrepreneurship. In others, their strong religious beliefs discouraged participation in entrepreneurship based on an interpretation of Biblical teachings that discourages profit making, which is thought to hinder the attainment of
heavenly goals. Hedonism and any business practices that exclude God by encouraging long hours and a focus on money are discouraged. Strong religious beliefs sometimes caused conflicts among African Americans between economic activism and moral boundaries. Weber (1905/1930) noted that in conformity with the Old Testament and in analogy to ethical valuation of good works, asceticism looked upon the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself as highly reprehensible. Also, Eveleth (2002) added that either success or failure may attend one’s work but one must not care about success because success is a burden which no person is expected to carry; the ultimate goal must be to serve God.

However, faith built strong determination to work among most African American entrepreneurs. During the interviews it was revealed that in African American communities it is hard to separate work from faith. One’s faith helps them draw boundaries and have hopes during turbulent economic times, such as those experienced today.

The Black churches in Fresno County were crucial to the development of African American businesses. The African American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church was formed in 1888, meeting at the Armory, in homes, and in a mission hall. In May of 1892, Reverend Knox started a second AME Zion in Hanford. In 1893 the Fresno AME Zion Church started an Endeavor Society, and in April 1894 an African American League (Marcussen, 2009). Walker (2009) noted that the church helped stimulate Black economic development during dark days by providing support, security, and social networks. It was the church that mapped out the course for Black economic activities.

The ability of most African Americans to obtain an optimal level of financing or even start-up capital is minimal. This in part can explain the low number of African
Americans going into and sustaining small-business endeavors. There is a difference in the mean personal wealth of African Americans and that of other ethnic groups. African Americans lack credit or personal wealth that can be used as collateral. Their loans are often rejected by banking institutions, which sometimes confront them with more stringent loan requirements or subject them to higher interest rates on approved loans than they place on others (Fairlie & Robb, 2008). Also, Fairlie and Robb (2008) noted that low levels of wealth limit business creation among Blacks, and low levels of start-up capital contribute to high numbers of business closures. According to Doctors and Huff (1973), it was not until World War II and the subsequent active policies of the federal government to help Black entrepreneurs that Black businesses attempted to break away from the old mode of thinking and the stereotypes of African American capitalism. In 1964 the Small Business Administration, headed by Foley, started the 6 by 6 program whereby loans in the amount of $6,000 were made available to businessmen and women for 6 years with little or no collateral. The idea was to help small businesses with their daily issues and provide counseling and planning. This program later became Title IV of the Economic Act.

Jenkins (2012) wrote that the voices of African American pioneers still echo in Fresno regardless of how unknown they may have been, which was the reason the advocate newspaper decided to shed light on the trailblazers who paved the way for so many today. Jenkins added that Fresno may not know the first African American TV photographer, police officer, elected councilmember, or principal, but this makes looking back into history so enlightening. Fighting equality was one battle and learning of the
fight was another. Jenkins provided a chronology of Fresno’s African American Black Pioneer Movement as follows:

1940: Fresno branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People started, which helped to push for the civil rights.

1941: Cooley started the first Black-owned mortuary, which was said to be the first known recorded African American-owned business in Fresno County.

1940: Kirkland became the first African American band member of the Gene Coy Band and in 1952 formed another band and kept it for 15 years.

1947: Earl Meyers became the first African American doctor to make house calls and serve less privileged patients. Dr. Meyers was said to be instrumental in bringing other African American doctors and lawyers to Fresno.

1949: Kelley became the first African American Police Sergeant and one of the first star football players for Fresno State, although denied participation in 1946 at Oklahoma because of his race. Kelley founded the first African American historical museum in Fresno in 1993.

1950: Goodwin became the first Black lawyer in Fresno County to own a private practice. Goodwin was appointed the first African American Judge in 1976 and was also one of the first advocates for school integration for Black children.

1950: Miller became the first African American to own a radio station in Fresno County and probably in the United States. Credited with having a winning attitude obtained from Miller’s grandmother, Miller survived in an industry that had barriers for African Americans.
1952: Goodwin became the first African American teacher.

1962: Dr. Brown became the first specialty-certified African American physician in Fresno. J. Brown, the spouse of Dr. Brown, was said to be the first Black high school teacher in Fresno County.

1965: Meyers became the first African American woman to run for mayor in Fresno County and was instrumental in sending Black children to schools in areas other than their own neighborhoods.

1967: Kimber founded *The California Advocate* to cater to the needs of the African American civil rights because the White-owned publishers would not accept any advertising that talked about discrimination.

1969: Sterling became the first Black person appointed to the City Council in Fresno. Elmer and spouse later opened a funeral home in West Fresno.

1970: Bradley became the first Black person to work in a TV newsroom as a Camera operator in Fresno County, which opened the door for others.

1972: Williams (a 19 years old African American) became the youngest Olympic long-jump champion in history.

1974: Gaston became the first African American high school principal.

1985: Dr. Adredge became the first African American city manager and was instrumental to introducing the annual trash pickup day, adopted in the 1980s. This allowed residents of Fresno to leave trash on the side of the road to be picked up once or twice a year.

2000: The San Joaquin Black Chamber of Commerce was established.
History shows that the life and contributions of the pioneers of Black history were not well documented. California became a hot spot because of gold discovery and agricultural development in the San Joaquin Valley. There have conflicting stories of the early African American settlers in Fresno County. According to English (1969), the first authenticated person of Black race to appear in what is now Fresno County was Dodson. However, in an addendum to an earlier work, English noted that Dodson may not have been the first Black in Fresno, as had been claimed earlier. English mentioned that one Ranne who were killed by the Indians in Oregon on July 14, 1828 may have actually been the first Black American in Fresno County. Ranne came with the Smith Expedition of 1826. English also commented on the effects of slavery during this time:

I could surmise on the various origins of the numerous black people that here in 1852, though I doubt the record’s reliability. It is probable that because this was a “Free State” that it was necessary to list those who were slaves as “miners.” Also, it was quite likely that many runaway slaves gave as their birthplace the northwestern part of this country. Nevertheless, there was a comparatively high percentage of black people in this mining frontier in 1852. A fact of history to be considered is that the source of many New England ship owners’ wealth was “black-birding” or the slave trade. … The wicked institution of slavery did exist in California, even after the civil war.

Again, historians have ignored the involvement and contribution of Black pioneers who set the tone for the Fresno County agriculture and other businesses. English (1969) lamented that although there may not have been many of the Black race in the early days of Fresno County, Blacks like Dermon, Moore, and the one or two others made a definite contribution to the lives of the people around them. English (1969) added that nobody has shown any interest or curiosity about Black pioneers, not even among the African Americans who claim pride in their part of American history.
Agriculture is the major economic strength of Fresno County. The entrepreneurial activities of African Americans during and after the civil war included agriculture. Rodriguez (2000) noted that for decades African American farmers have not felt that optimism; nationwide their numbers have dwindled at three times the rate of White farmers and in California they represent less than 1%. The new project set up during this period where farmers could supply boxes of their produce to restaurants in the urban centers rather than roadside sales was a big motivation. The new opportunities provide local African American farmers access to big markets and also increases their visibility.

Summary

Despite the growing interest in ethnic entrepreneurship research, there is still a dearth of literature on African American entrepreneurship. Woodard (1997) noted that African Americans have had a long and rich history of entrepreneurship and exhibited the same entrepreneurial spirit as did the groups who immigrated voluntarily to the United States, yet scholars have either ignored or misconstrued the history of Black entrepreneurship. Butler (2005) explained that the standard procedure among scholars is to treat the African American experience as if it went from slavery to freedom to ghettos of American cities. Butler added that just as African American business enterprise has been overlooked in the literature, so has African American self-help. The narratives of African Americans show that they have always been active and successful as entrepreneurs despite many institutionalized barriers.

Three periods were examined to explore the historical path that African Americans took that delineates their entrepreneurial work. These periods include

- The postslavery era (1800s)
• The civil rights era (1950s)
• The historical development of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County

In this chapter, the existing literature was reviewed in relation to several topics: the historical background and characteristics of African Americans; the effects of culture, religious ideologies, and faith on African American entrepreneurship; the effects of slavery, civil rights, and laws and regulations on African American entrepreneurship; some theories about ethnic entrepreneurship, including the myth of Black inferiority; and the connection between education and entrepreneurial outcomes.

One problem with some of the existing literature is the lack of a universal definition for entrepreneurship. This lack of a single generally accepted definition makes it difficult to have a single theory that incorporates all the components. Consequently, the evaluation of success or failure of a business is difficult. For decades, scholars, educators, politicians, and media pundits have approached the educational and economic achievement gaps among African Americans and others from an outsider’s position, pointing accusatory fingers at Black parents and their children without considering the differences in environment (Burrell, 2010). Blacks have been programmatically stripped of their cultural identity and hammered with the mindset that they are inferior.

Although there has been increased interest in research in ethnic entrepreneurship, the existing literature has been scanty in identifying and exploring successful African American entrepreneurial activities. The paucity of literature covering the historical development of African American entrepreneurship and the challenges African American entrepreneurs have faced over the years makes this study very timely. This study will
benefit African Americans as well as the general public in documenting how African American businesses overcame institutional challenges. The turbulent times are not over, but the information herein will serve the purpose of enlightenment for young African American men and women who aspire to own their own businesses. It will be like cleansing a sickness and forging ahead to the new Promised Land.

Johnson (1998, p. 145) wrote,

One great truth to be gleaned from the storied Greenwood District is the ability of time to heal and renew. Healing and renewal, however, come only when we use our time wisely—when we use time to reflect on our history and tailor our current and future actions to what we know about our past.

Most of the existing literature was authored by non African Americans who do not understand the experiences of African American entrepreneurs then or now. Recently, a few Black authors such as Walker (2009) and Burrell (2010) shed light on the historic experiences and development of African American entrepreneurship; their research gives reasons to refute the existing theoretical constructs and explore more carefully the state of African American entrepreneurship, examining the factors that keep African Americans disproportionately unrepresented in the new wave of ethnic entrepreneurship.

Despite the contributions of African Americans to the economy of Fresno County since 1865, no mention of African American pioneers has been made in any document. Not even the San Joaquin African American Chamber of Commerce or the African American Museum has information on the contributions of African Americans in business in the area. For this study, I interviewed living family members of the pioneers and current business owners of African descent and built on the existing information. New revelations in the recent literature support the need for additional studies to more
thoroughly understand African American entrepreneurial work and the gap in ethnic entrepreneurship.

Chapter III of this document presents the methodology for the study. This includes an overview of the background and a restatement of the purpose, the research design, the setting, participants, human-subject protection and ethical considerations, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the voices and perspectives of 15 African Americans in Fresno County regarding their entrepreneurial work. There has been a misunderstanding of the entrepreneurial work and spirit among African Americans despite their contributions in many areas of businesses. Also, there has been some misunderstanding about the community support given by African Americans to sustain Black entrepreneurship. By exploring the narratives of African Americans who have lived the experience, this study provides pertinent information on the path that African Americans have travelled to get to where they are today in entrepreneurial work.

Research Design

To arrive at a holistic understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by African American entrepreneurs, I used a qualitative phenomenological approach. According to Creswell (2009, p. 231), phenomenological research is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon described by participants in a study. This study focused on voices and perspectives of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County, California. It is the story and narratives of their lived experiences to help understand their past as well as the present and future in entrepreneurship. This qualitative research study relied on interviews and a review of relevant literature to arrive at an understanding of the entrepreneurial work of 15 African American business owners in Fresno County.
Bogdan and Biklen (2007) noted that qualitative researchers proceed as if they know very little about the people and places they will visit; they attempt to loosen themselves from preconceptions about what they will find—what the people will be like and what will go on in the setting. Their plans evolve as they learn about the setting. The essence of the phenomenological approach is to explore how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and in shared meaning (Patton, 2002). According to Patton, phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of meaning of our everyday experiences. Patton (2002) noted that this methodology carefully and thoughtfully captures and describes how people experience some phenomenon, how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others; this requires in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest by living the experience. This methodology was necessary because it created opportunities for participants to share freely. The environments were so conducive that most of the participants felt that it was time for this kind of research and are actually looking forward to seeing the outcome.

In addition to being phenomenological, this research is qualitative. In qualitative research researchers collect data by themselves by examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. Creswell (2009) observed that qualitative researchers often use particular lenses through which to view their studies, such as the concept of culture. According to Patton (2002), personal narratives, family stories, and life stories reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences. This research used a criterion-based sampling technique. Heppner and Heppner (2004,
p. 172) stated that criterion-based sampling is used in a phenomenological study to select participants who meet the following criteria: (a) they experienced the phenomenon under study, and (b) they can articulate their lived experiences. The rationale for choosing this phenomenological research method was that the most important aspect is to know what people experienced and how they interpreted the world.

The participants shared lived experiences in relation to the research questions. Their responses were in accordance with Creswell’s (2008) choice of open-ended questions that allowed participants to best voice their experiences, unconstrained by any of the perspectives of the researcher or past research findings (p. 225). Also, the qualitative methodology engaged the entrepreneurs in conversation through interviews, which allowed them opportunities to freely share information. During the interviews, while guiding against personal biases, I ensured that the participants were allowed to share their perceptions and let their voices be heard without interruption.

Research Setting

The observations and interviews were conducted at the participants’ business sites in the moderate-sized County of Fresno in central California. Fresno County is located between the major cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco. It is the economic hub of the Central Valley. Some of its businesses are located in the downtown business district; others are located in low- or moderate-income areas. Fresno serves as a melting pot for different ethnic groups because of its reasonable cost of living. Much of the population consists of poor immigrant farm laborers. Fresno is an agricultural community that has grown. A number of immigrants have established businesses due to the area’s high unemployment rate.
Avalos (2008) stated that Fresno County’s income inequality historically has its roots in its racial/ethnic and social-class composition. The county continues to draw massive numbers of new immigrants hoping for better lives. Avalos noted that by nearly every economic indicator, the county is mired in a low-wage economy and a large pool of unskilled, uneducated residents, a condition that results in a high rate of poverty. The ethnoracial composition of ethnic entrepreneurship in Fresno County continues to reflect disparity in the ownership of businesses. Most of the few African American businesses are small and located on the west side of Fresno, where the economic plight of the people is a problem for the businesses.

Research Participants

The target population consisted of 15 African Americans consisting of 11 men and four women who reside in Fresno County and own their own businesses. The types of businesses varied among the African American men and women, ranging from janitorial services to publishing and sandwich shops. Two of the participants currently maintain a home office. Participants were selected by network, churches, and personal contacts. The selection of these participants was based on availability and the willingness to participate. They were selected because they have experienced the central phenomenon; the identified participants have lived the experience and can speak to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). In this case, the sampling was homogeneous in that all participants were African American entrepreneurs with similar experiences. Some of the criteria for selection included being an African American, being a resident of Fresno County, and operating a business in Fresno County. There was no requirement for the number of years lived in Fresno County. The ages of participants ranged from 38 to 80.
Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this research consisted of an interview protocol, questionnaires, and observations. The interview consisted of five open-ended questions. The idea was to allow participants to freely express their perceptions without much reservation. Structured phenomenological interviews were conducted that addressed the research questions. The following interview questions were designed to address the research topic:

1. Please share your life experiences and the path you have followed to come to where you are today.
2. Tell me how you started your business in Fresno County.
3. In your business, what are some of the best practices you can share?
4. What factors played critical roles in your choice of this type of business?
5. Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

Observations and Interviews

Observations were conducted at participants’ places of business. Except for two of the participants all interviews were held at the participants’ business sites. All of the interviews were conducted face to face. The observations, questionnaires, and interview questions addressed the research questions. The observation commenced during the later part of December 2011 and continued through March 2012. Observations were made of business practices, and records provided by participants were reviewed. All fieldwork interviews were recorded with the aid of a tape recorder and were transcribed.
Validity and Reliability

Maxwell (1992) stated that researchers implicitly or explicitly rely on a variety of understandings and corresponding types of validity in the process of describing, interpreting, and explaining phenomena of interest. Maxwell added that there are philosophical and practical dimensions of descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalizability, and evaluative validity, and provided checklists for reducing threats to validity. Unlike in quantitative research, this qualitative research did not emphasize validity, due to the assumption of the existence of a reality that is external to the researcher’s perception of it. In this study, validity (descriptive and interpretative) was obtained from the accurate collection and reporting of data. My journal and field notes were used to document conversations, statements, and accounts shared by participants. The recording of the interviews on tape allowed for original participant statements rather than secondhand accounts. At the end, to determine reliability, answers were reviewed with the participants and the participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback.

Creswell (2009) suggested using multiple validity strategies in the protocol to check for accuracy. These include the triangulation of the sources of information by examining evidence from sources and using it to build justification, clarifying the bias the researcher brings to the study, spending adequate time in the field, and presenting negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes. To provide opportunities to deal with bias and beliefs throughout the process, I kept fieldnotes for the documentation of observations, statements, and anything else I deemed necessary during
the interviews and observations. The participants were given the opportunity to explain their answers where some of the answers seemed unclear.

Data Collection

Data were collected according to the stipulations and guidelines of the University of San Francisco’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS). The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews of 15 African American business owners residing in Fresno County. Also, the guidelines identified by Creswell (2008, p. 213) were considered when determining what would be included in data collection in the qualitative research. Creswell listed the following as the processes:

- Collect data using forms with general, emerging questions to permit participants to generate responses
- Gather word or image data (text and pictures)
- Collect information from a small number of individuals or sites

These processes were considered when designing the questions and collecting the data from the 15 African Americans in Fresno County who own their own businesses.

The following steps were taken to collect the data:

- Research Board permission was obtained.
- Consent letters were mailed to identified participants.
- Interviews were conducted with all participants at their business site.
- Observations were conducted and recorded.

In collecting the data, I was careful to adhere to the guidelines suggested by Creswell (2009). Boundaries were set for the study; that is, the number of participants,
the questions, the structure and approximate length of the interviews, and the types of observations were determined ahead of time. The information was collected through unstructured or semistructured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials. A protocol was established for recording information.

Facilitative communication was used to encourage participants to be transparent and share information freely. The data were captured by tape recorder and transcribed upon completion of the interviews. The interview protocol included questions that addressed the research questions. As themes evolved during the interviews, they were coded and reviewed for recurring generative themes. The identified themes are included in Chapter IV.

Interviews were conducted from the five interview questions developed for this study (see Appendix A). The open-ended questions were designed to elicit information about participants’ business practices, challenges, perceptions of their business experiences, and the effects of selected variables on those experiences.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) referred to data analysis as the process of systematically searching and arranging interview transcripts, field notes, and other accumulated materials to enable the researcher to develop findings. The process involves organizing the data, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns. The data collected during the observations and interviews were transcribed and organized according to respondents’ ideas and perceptions. In the process of data reduction, participants’ responses were coded and recorded according to the identified themes. The main sources of data for this study were
demographic questionnaires (see Appendix B), interviews, and observations. This study was guided by the research questions, enumerated below, together with the interview questions that elicited information about each:

1. What is the historical path of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno? This question was addressed by the following interview questions:
   a. Please share your life experiences and the path you have followed to come to where you are.
   b. Tell me how you started your business in Fresno County.

2. What advice would successful African American entrepreneurs give to other African Americans who want to start their own businesses? This question was addressed by the following interview questions:
   a. In your own business, what are some of the best practices you can share?
   b. What factors played critical roles in your choosing this type of business?

3. What do successful African American entrepreneurs see themselves doing 5 years from now?

Human Subjects Protection and Ethical Considerations

The ethics the research required was maintained by seeking the approval for this research from the IRBPHS prior to collection of data or making contact with participants. Upon receiving approval from the IRBPHS (see Appendices C and D), Informed Consent letters were sent with cover letters to participants (see Appendices E and F). Also, Research Board permission letter was received (see Appendix G). Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw or decide not to participate at any time and that their participation had no monetary benefits for them (see Appendix H). At the end
of the research, all participants were notified that they would have access to the results and would be given the opportunity to change their input. They were asked for permission to have the findings published at the end of the study. The participants were guaranteed the confidentiality of their personal information and identities, as necessary.

In addition, due to the nature of the study, participants were cautioned against providing any false or misleading information. The integrity of the study is of high importance. Consequently, I carefully scrutinized all the information provided and took all necessary steps to accurately credit all the sources of information.

Background of the Researcher

I was born in Nigeria, West Africa, where I had my early education. As one of the youngest children of an entrepreneur, I saw various aspects of business undertakings. I had my first business in the United States in my final year of college. Upon graduation, I took a job with the County of Fresno, where I have served in various capacities. I am currently a staff analyst in the Resources Division of the Public Works Department of Fresno County. During the past 22 years, I have served as an eligibility worker, a job specialist, a social-services program supervisor, and a staff analyst. I hold a master’s degree in business administration (MBA) and am currently a doctoral student in the department of Leadership Studies, Organization and Leadership Program.

As the owner of two businesses and the son of a renowned entrepreneur, I have experiences that would be crucial as the process of this research unfolded. My pursuit of this topic is rooted in genuine aspiration for entrepreneurship and a compassion for entrepreneurs. After many years of classroom and work experience, I have developed strong ethics that include genuineness, authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness. My
capacity for endurance, tenacity, and commitment through hard times gives me the
courage to conduct this study with the hope of making a difference in the field of ethnic
entrepreneurship. The idea for the research came after reading much literature on African
American businesses, all of which described African Americans as lacking traditional
role models or the acumen to engage in and sustain businesses. The more I read about the
failures of African American businesses, the more I was determined to probe more deeply
into the historical development and the factors that cause African Americans to lag
behind in business ownership. What I read seemed contrary to my experience.

Summary

Chapter III described the methodology, including the research design and setting,
data collection, instrumentation, human-subject protection, and the researcher’s profile.
This study was conducted to explore the experiences of 15 business persons in Fresno
County, California and the challenges that African American entrepreneurs faced. This
qualitative research study relied on observations and interviews. Through the narratives
of the participants, pertinent data were collected, recorded, and transcribed. The themes
that emerged from the interviews helped to explain the entrepreneurial work and clarify
misunderstandings regarding African Americans in Fresno County.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

This study explored the voices and entrepreneurial experiences of 15 African American businesspersons in Fresno County. Specifically, it explored their perspectives and histories regarding African American entrepreneurial work. The findings from this study represent the views and voices of African American entrepreneurs based on observation and face-to-face interviews of 15 African American business owners. The findings are organized according to participants’ answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the historical path of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno?
2. What advice would successful African American entrepreneurs give to other African Americans who want to start their own businesses?
3. What do successful African American entrepreneurs see themselves doing 5 years from now?

The results are presented according to the answers to the five interview questions and the demographic questionnaires completed by the participants. The questions asked the participants to delineate the path they followed to get to where they are now, explain why they chose the type of business they did and Fresno County as the place for their business, tell what best business practices they could share with African Americans who want to start their own business, and predict where they see themselves in 5 years. The profiles of participants are presented in this chapter together with the findings from the responses to the research questions. The themes identified aligned with the theories of exclusion and entrepreneurship.
A cycle in the historical development of African American entrepreneurial work is shown in the Figure. As the figures illustrates, three types of factors delineate the path followed by African Americans in their entrepreneurial pursuits: resources that came from their cultural and personal experiences, their family background and life experiences, and structural barriers that challenge them all along the way.

![Diagram of historical development cycle]

*Figure.* The historical development cycle of African American entrepreneurial work.

Participants

Fifteen African American business owners—11 men and 4 women—were interviewed and the interviews recorded on tape. The tapes were transcribed and participants’ responses were arranged according to identified themes. The Table presents the profiles of the research participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants.
Table

*Participants’ Profiles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Community support</th>
<th>Family history of business</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/15/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Audrey</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/20/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Les</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/21/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Corey</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/27/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Bruce</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/27/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 George M</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Willie J</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>No</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Terrance</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Leon</td>
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<tr>
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<td>13 Shirley</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 William B.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Landon</td>
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<td>No</td>
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</table>

Irrespective of the kind of business in which the participant was engaged, the reasons for going into business seemed to revolve around the same issues of exclusion, marginalization, and passion for entrepreneurship. All participants expressed passion for what they did, passion that arose from their life experiences and determination to beat the odds against them and overcome constraints. Participants made use of their limited resources to counter the effects of constraints they experienced. The effects of culture and social history were strongly evident. This section provides a brief overview of participants’ profiles and the findings based on the themes identified during the observations and interviews.
The use of participants’ first names is in compliance with guidelines of the University of San Francisco IRBPHS. First names only were used to ensure that the subjects were protected from harm and undue hardship resulting from collection of the information. All participants were African Americans and all owned and operated businesses in the County of Fresno. Age, level of education, type of business, and years of experience varied among the participants. The highest level of educational attainment was a doctorate and the minimum was completion of a 2-year college program. Some participants were second or third generation in their particular business. All participants reported that they worked full time for another person before starting their own business.

Participant 1: Ron

The interview with Ron was held at his facility on February 7, 2012. Ron is well educated, with a doctorate in organizational leadership. His father is a retired physician. While growing up, Ron learned much from his parents about entrepreneurship. He started by selling candies as a young man. His favorite TV character was J. R. Hume. Earning an MBA prepared him for his life goal of being a business owner. He initially worked with 16- to 27-year olds and determined to “make it” in life. He worked for nonprofit organizations before talking to his parents about the idea of operating a funeral home. With his parents, he started with an existing business in a very small facility and when business improved they moved to the present location. His parents were instrumental in his success in business.

Participant 2: Roshelle

Roshelle was interviewed on February 12, 2012. She started her own business because having a hobby convinced her that she liked going out, being independent, and
making her own living. She went into real estate, thinking it was the most suitable profession for her at the time. She took classes and gave herself a 2-year window for becoming certified and learning the business. Upon being certified, she worked for a brokerage company before becoming independent. Roshelle recently developed a sports drink with her husband, who is involved in sports. The product will be released soon.

Participant 3: Debra

Debra was interviewed at her business site on February 15, 2012. Debra is in the business of residential care for the disabled. In her family that kind of activity goes back to her grandmother. Her grandmother always took in and cared for unfortunate children and adults. Her mother not only fed her own children, but also took care of others who had little or nothing. She followed her mother’s model of providing care for disadvantaged children. Her goal is to be able to serve adults in the future.

Participant 4: Audrey

Audrey was interviewed on February 20, 2012. Audrey has a placement center for older adults. She had two businesses prior to opening the placement center; one helped community members to file and start a small business and the other was working with seniors. Audrey discovered that not knowing how to market makes having a business difficult. She bought her second business from someone in Bakersfield and it did not work. Her experiences were basically hit and miss, and sometimes it was more of a miss than a hit. Because she was a senior, she thought there was a niche for finding places for older adults. Audrey noted that networking is quite crucial to the development and success of a business. Marketing oneself and getting to know people will cause the business to blossom, she said.
Participant 5: Les

Les was interviewed on February 21, 2012, at his business. Three prior visits were made to the facility to observe its operation and talk with some of the employees. Les is in his 80s and is beginning to transfer all the company’s activities to his son. He had much to share as one of the most respected African American trailblazers in Fresno County and also a former politician. He was very friendly and was glad to share his information. At the end of the interview he asked his son to look for some articles published during African American History weeks in the past, suggesting they might contain some valuable information. He also noted that one of the critical factors that led him to start the business was that Blacks needed a source of information they could rely on for chronicling and inspiration because the non-Black papers focused on negatives and had nothing to uplift the spirit.

According to Les, African American men and women worked together to change the way things were done in the government and the schools. He mentioned Key, Jenkins (deceased), Norman, Adams, and Reverend Turner; they were involved in getting things done in the community to aid Black development. Others African American activists came along later: Wright (deceased), Tony, Meller—folks who were willing to make things happen.

He also mentioned that the church played a very big part in the movements at the time. He mentioned Reverend Brooks of Second Baptist Church. Les noted that a Lutheran church member who was White would fight along with them, attending Whites-only meetings and letting the African Americans know what was going on. He acknowledged help from the Catholic Church, Sister and Father Davis. In one of the
achievements of that time, Reverends Scott and Brook helped set up African American Studies at California State University, Fresno, and at Fresno City College. The United Black Men of Fresno was formed. These and other people helped get the election system changed in Fresno

Participant 6: Corey

Corey was interviewed at his business on February 27, 2012. More than three prior attempts at interviews failed because they were very busy times for the business. Corey is a funeral-home director. Most of the other employees are family members who have been in the company for a long time. Corey’s philosophy is that people cannot stop one’s drive. His grandfather goal was to have locations in Stockton and Bakersfield. According to him, the Bakersfield office is still open. His advice to the next generation is not to take no for an answer and to believe in themselves. He noted that his father always reminded him that there is nothing like can’t; stating that if you push yourself, anything could happen. His grandfather always wanted to be a funeral=home director and what he is doing now is to keep the dream alive by following the family tradition of love and satisfaction from helping someone. His success is an extension of his grandfather’s vision.

Participant 7: Bruce

Bruce was interviewed on February 27, 2012. He said his entry into business stemmed from childhood passion and experience. He had a rough start in life, using drugs for 18 years. Once he overcame his addiction, he decided to help others with similar problems. He opened rehabilitation centers for substance abusers. Later he added a printing shop to teach men and women how to become independent.
Participant 8: George

The interview with George took place on February 28, 2012. Prior to the interview I visited the site two times, observing how George operated his business. We had to reschedule the first time because the business was busy and he had to help. On the date the interview was conducted, one of his staff had called in sick and he had to fill in. I waited for some time until he had a replacement. George had trials in his business. The City of Fresno shut down his funeral escort-service business due to regulations that have since been changed. He currently operates two other businesses. George came from a family of business people, and he continued the family tradition. He described that tradition as follows:

My family started our business since 1960. My father was the first African American pharmacist in Fresno. All my life, I grew up watching him. I had the opportunity to see others, mostly learned from my father. This is a continuation of a family tradition.

Participant 9: Willie J.

The interview with Willie J. was held on February 28, 2012. The first two appointments were cancelled because neither the father nor the son had time to talk. Willie J. owns one of the oldest pharmacies in Fresno, catering mostly to a low-income neighborhood. The business has been in the same location since 1969. The owner is 80 years old and works with his son.

Willie’s father was murdered when Willie was only 11 years old. His grandfather and mother raised him on a farm. His uncle was principal of a middle school. While in high school Willie became interested in music but a teacher advised him to go to pharmacy school. He applied to the University of Alabama but at the time the Jim Crow
laws forbade Blacks from attending pharmacy school in the State of Alabama. He obtained his pharmacy education at Xavier and worked in various hospitals, rising to the rank of chief pharmacist.

In 1969, a team of African American doctors wanting to open a medical clinic in Fresno invited Willie to join them. Prior to this time, a classmate had moved to Sacramento and invited him there. Willie moved to Fresno to join the healthcare team and began providing services to the people of the westside. He has been in the same location since.

Participant 10: Terrance

Terrance was interviewed on March 1, 2012 at his place of business. Terrance has been in the real estate business for over 19 years. He was taken in at age 17 by a Jewish family and worked with them for 5 years from age 13 to 18. After graduating from college he was unable to find a job. He played professional baseball for a while with the Oakland A’s. He started in real estate by doing much research before taking his license examination. It took him 1.5 years to understand the business. One of his greatest challenges was finding somebody to invest in his business plan. He contacted five African Americans, but none seemed interested. He went to an auction where a woman was auctioning her home for $1. He bought that house for $150 and borrowed money from his parents to fix it up. Terrance attributed his success to being consistent and persistent. He had some discouraging times, but he never gave up. These qualities are sometimes lacking in the African American community, which can be problematic. He made $15,000 on the sale of the house.

Terrance narrated his entrepreneurial journey this way:
I think my entrepreneurship started when I was a little kid. As far as my business experience, I currently do real estate for the last 19 years. I couldn’t get a job after I left college. I got drafted, playing for the Oakland A’s. When I got back to Fresno, I tried to apply for a job. The last job I applied to was McDonalds, and I was told I was overqualified. I said, “What you mean ‘I’m overqualified?’ I’ve never held a job before.” After that, I decided to try real estate. I had a little background in real estate because my father was in real estate.

*Participant 11: Leon*

Leon’s interview was conducted on March 9, 2012 at his business. He recently relocated the business after downgrading, due to the poor economy. The seeds of going into business were planted by his father. His father had a 6th-grade education and moved to San Francisco to invest in real estate. Leon started out as a design engineer for a company in Palo Alto. He worked in Palo Alto and San Jose for 9 years before moving to Fresno. He went into real estate because the company laid him off. Leon’s decision to start his own business was based on his disenchantment with the management style of the company where he worked. He had offers to go to other companies, but he declined. He said the Black community does not support Black business. If any person goes into business with the hope of getting business from the community, he cautioned, the business is bound to fail.

He narrated his career path this way:

My father, he was from Texas and he had no more than a 6th-grade education. He moved to SF and began to acquire properties. And I can remember my day as a youngster—mainly did sheet rock and painting. That really turned me off cause I’d rather play basket ball. That seed was planted, so my career path was that of an engineer.

*Participant 12: Chris*

Chris was interviewed on March 9, 2012. He does not have an office, but runs the business from his garage. As we talked, I discovered that I was in junior college the same
time he was and we had taken a class together. Chris was a football player and had hoped to become professional. He came from a single-parent family so he learned how to survive and always had the ambition to do something in life. His first idea was to own a grocery store, which he could not achieve because of lack of funding.

Asked why he chose Fresno for his business, he stated that Fresno is his hometown and he is very familiar with the town. His first janitorial company folded due to lack of support from family and the community. He worked at handyman jobs before starting the current business in 2003. He always wanted to be independent, and he is the first business owner in his family. Faith pushed him to the next level, and he used this business as a starting point. One of his toughest challenges has been getting financing, but he has never been discouraged. Despite the trials in business, his resilience to achieve his goal kept him going.

**Participant 13: Shirley**

Shirley was interviewed on March 12, 2012 at one of her facilities. It took over a week to set the interview with Shirley. My initial intent was to interview her mother, who founded a business. Due to age, she has slowed down and her daughters took over the business. According to Shirley, her mother started by helping to take care of her sister’s children while her sister embarked on an educational journey. She also took care of brothers and sisters while her parents worked in the field. Young girls from her church started to have babies, so Shirley’s mother committed to helping them take care of their babies. This was a key factor in her starting a childcare business.
Participant 14: William B.

The interview with William was conducted on March 13, 2012 at a Starbucks. William grew up with a single parent and had no parental support. He was an athlete. His father was not in the home so he had no male example. He learned everything through experience. He started his first business as a result of discrimination and mistreatment by his employer.

William moved to Fresno because a friend had relocated to Fresno. He was commuting from Hollywood, doing a consulting job. He got married in 2003 and worked with the city of Fresno as an event manager. In 2009 he resigned to do something that would create opportunities for other people.

Participant 15: Landon

Landon was interviewed on March 14, 2012, at his business. Landon is a devoted Christian who attributes his being alive and current success to God. His ambition is to be able to contribute to the community so that the African American community can become strong. He acknowledges that God is everything in his life and without the presence of God in one’s life he would not have made it. Putting God first is paramount to him and his success in business. As we spoke, it was evident that he has been through trials but has not given up.

Findings: Research Question 1

Given the focus in this study, the findings are presented around the themes that emerged from the responses to the research questions. The primary focus was on Research Questions 1 and 2. Although many themes emerged, the more crucial themes are related to Research Question 1. The themes addressed in Research Question 1 are
structural barriers, family background, social history (life experience), independence, and cultural and personal values and beliefs.

Research Question 1 explored the historical paths of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County. The question was addressed by the following interview questions:

a. Please share your life experiences and the path you have followed to come to where you are.

b. Tell me how you started your business in Fresno.

These findings are based on the participants’ responses to these questions. Responses show that the path was not easy for any of the participants. All had to overcome many obstacles. In some cases, the challenges yielded positive outcomes and in others they left indelible scars that were hard to overcome. One factor that was common to all of the participants was a determination to succeed in the face of adversity.

Structural Barriers

Ron alluded to the structural barriers that African American potential entrepreneurs face that causes them to either drop out prematurely or not try to enter. Ron believed the events of the 1960s are the main reasons there are so few African American entrepreneurs:

The segregation and riots in the ’60s, no insurance in business, historical factors, no support from the community, no opportunities nor the ability to create opportunities, not being able to build wealth; this creates problems. The hours we put into business is a lot that not too many people are willing to make such sacrifice. We as African Americans do not support each other and are sometimes afraid to explore. We have to get people to think entrepreneurially.
In addition, Terrance noted that one of the greatest challenges for African Americans is obtaining funding for business. He shared that banks have different requirements for African Americans so as to deny them funds. This is how he put it in his words:

The hardest part is even though it’s not easy to find funding, if you know your business inside and out, what is discouraging is sometimes the banks won’t lend you money if it’s new. If it don’t fit on their shelves, they won’t lend you money. They rather lend to people that look like them. I hate to say it, but it’s true. To me, a couple of factors I believe it would be different. … I don’t properly speak English like I used to. I see some others—not African American, like farmers—and they give a lot of bull crap that looks cute. As for me, I give them one page that states this is how I make money.

One of the greatest powers in the building of African American businesses in Fresno was Les’s second business, the *California Advertising* newspaper. At the time he started it, Les was a criminal investigator for the public defender’s office. He ran into Reverend Davis, who was in the process of getting an SBA loan and wanted to get rid of his newspaper business because he couldn’t use federal funds. After some discussion Les agreed to take over the business. The major problem was that the White papers were not willing to accept advertising or anything that supported the antidiscrimination movement. This forced Les to start a printing press to address discrimination and civil rights issues:

> We talked for a while; I agree to take over his newspaper business in 1967. He sold the business to me because it was too much for him. The White business could not put ads in papers that support or addressed discrimination. By refusing to print our papers we were pushed to buy our own press (printing).

Another young African American, Landon, was constrained by institutional barriers and red tape that make financing businesses unattainable for African Americans. He said:

> Because it’s one of those things that, being an African American business, what happens is that it doesn’t seem like it’s even. When you walk into a bank, for
instance, just the credit situation and different things. When you’re starting off you don’t have business credit. Some of the loans and different things you see other people get, at the same status of different races, it’s not happening for you; it’s nonexistent.

*Family Background*

Of the 15 participants, more than 60% said they were influenced by family members or friends of the family. Family played a very significant role not only in the decision to start a business, but also in the kind of business. Some are continuations of family traditions in specific businesses. For instance, Corey’s business is a continuation of his family’s tradition. His father used to have him do different jobs, from mowing the lawn to cleaning floors. Each time he told his father he could not do the job, his father responded, “There is no such thing as can’t.” With this, he learned to push himself. His father played a very critical role in his choice of the funeral-director business. It is a family tradition to keep the business going. He offered,

When my father worked 50 years building the business, all the purpose was to help people. Grandfather’s goal was to have locations in Stockton, Bakersfield. The Bakersfield office is still open. Dad always said there is nothing like can’t; if you push yourself, anything could happen. Grandfather always wanted to be a funeral-home director. Keep the dream alive, the family tradition, love, satisfaction from helping someone; grandfather’s vision continues.

Also, Debra was working for a company that relocated to Nebraska in 1998, and she chose not to go. Her father came up with the idea of starting a group home. After a family discussion that lasted more than a month, the family decided to open one facility that would employ the family members. Their homes provided structure and help for the children, some of whom did not have a home. Debra’s older sister took the same direction as her mother and grandmother, caring for the children in the neighborhood whose parents neglected them. Debra’s mother operated a daycare center, and this had a
great impact on Debra, instilling the passion she now has for the kind of business she owns:

As I got older, I saw my older sister follow my mom and grandmother’s footsteps in taking care of kids. These are kids that grew up in the neighborhood; their parents neglected them. When we got older, my mom used to run a daycare center where she took care of kids. That’s my life time experience in my neighborhood.

Another participant, George, intends to continue with the family’s tradition in business. His current business is an extension of the family’s tradition. His family owned the first African American pharmacy in Fresno. He summarized his answer to Research Question 1 as follows:

As far as business, my father worked hard to keep the business open and was dedicated to moving forward. I continued on with our family business. Started about 8 years ago. We were trying to find something to do at the time. We looked into franchises in fast food and we researched it; found out the Subway had opportunity for us on the Westside in downtown. Location was necessary as there was no other Subway in the Westside of Fresno. There was a niche. They gave us permission to apply for a license and we opened up a store.

The role model-mentor theory was also acknowledged by Ron. Ron is a funeral director but explained that the critical factors in his decision to start that kind of business included discussions with his father, figuring out how to do things with numbers, and creating a reasonable business plan. The main factor was his family, particularly his father.

Additionally, Shirley conceded that she was basically influenced to start the current business by her experience as a child. Her mother was her role model who taught her everything that she knows about this business. Her mother started by raising her own siblings and helping other teenage mothers, including her own sister, to take care of their young ones while they went to school. It was easier on her because her mother had laid the foundation. Talking about her mother, who was the pioneer of the family business
tradition, Shirley mentioned that the factors that played critical roles were the facts that her younger sister needing someone to provide care and her mother had to raise her siblings. Taking care of her sister’s children was a natural thing to do. The journey involved disappointments and failures, but the parents faced challenges with determination to overcome the constraints. Both the licensing process and initial starting cost seemed insurmountable; but both she and her father made great sacrifices. Their first facility was licensed for 2 years with a capacity to hold 32 infants. Shirley noted,

The obstacle all along with becoming self-employed in the childcare area, tried to become licensed as a care provider, having to travel to Sacramento and outside to learn how to sample lessons, venues, to interview owners of other like facilities. Once she put together all the information, she took her proposal to Sacramento. It was turned down and rejected because it was unheard of. Basically, NO! NO! NO! Every door has closed for her. She went before the legislature and with private monies from my dad, who was a hard worker, who later became a city bus driver, they pulled all the money—sold their house and purchased and renovated the building for their first facility.

Corey is another African American funeral-home director. His grandfather was the pioneer and his father continued after his grandfather’s death. Corey took over the entire business upon his father’s death last year. When asked about the path he followed to get to where he is today, Corey stated,

This is the second generation of the business. Basically, my grandfather started a business, my father took over, and I’ve been working with my father for 20-plus years. After he passed in July of last year, I just kept the family tradition going. We’ve been serving this community for 70 years; throughout the Central Valley, about 50 years. My grandfather wanted to sell insurance but was not allowed to do that, so he thought that if he could start a burial business to serve the Black community that would get him into the insurance business. He thought that if he started a funeral home he could have a memorial society and insurance for Black people back then. His main goal was to serve the people. The first one was called Valley Funeral Home, opened in 1941, which is in a form of superior for low income—we started that. My father decided to open another; that’s when he came back to help his dad. It was called Valley Funeral Homes back in 1941. My dad
was a professional drummer and he started his own group before deciding to come back.

The next participant, Leon, also learned much from his father, who was a real estate investor. Although his father had little education, he did well in business. As a young man Leon helped his father fix up most of the homes he purchased before selling them, which really turned him off. Although he never liked fixing up homes, doing so helped him develop the skills and experience he would later need. His passion was to become an engineer and he was employed as a design engineer upon graduating from college; however, he eventually went into business as a real estate investor and manager.

Finally, Terrance described his path as unique. Although his natural parents were not there for him, his adopted parents helped to mold his entrepreneurial experience and skills. He credited his current success to his adopted family and life experience. When he was a young man his adopted parents administered foreclosures in the Bay area. When he decided to do this for himself and tired to get some people together to get into real estate investment, nobody would invest in his idea. Despite the challenges, he kept moving forward. He remembered attending an auction for the first time where he purchased his first house for $150. He borrowed $15,000 from his parents to fix it up and at the end sold it for $45,000. From that time on he has been buying and selling real estate. This brings me to the second theme. There were some overlaps in the two themes because most of the life experiences were part of growing up in a particular family.

**Social History (Life Experiences)**

People’s life experiences helped mold their responses to economic and social events. For instance, William grew up in Charleston, South Carolina and came to Long
Beach, California at the age of 12. Prior to starting his business, William was an athlete; he played sports in high school. He never had a father role model or male example. He said he got his work ethic from mother, who, being a single parent, tried her best to take care of the family. Because he missed out on having a father or male example, he is now reaching out to young people. William worked at McDonnell Douglas selling airplanes. He was so successful he was flown to Washington, DC to be recognized, the only young minority to receive that honor. Although the company guided him, it did not help him to develop. The upper-level opportunities in the company were kept for those from other races or employees who were related to the company’s executives. What people at McDonnell Douglas failed to realize was that they were preparing him for something better because he was very competitive. He said that he took the bad deals and turned them to great deals. He summarized his entrepreneurial journey as follows:

Being an athlete, played high school sports, to play football, and then track. Grew up in my youth in a gang area, single-mom home; much of the responsibility was on me to take care of my brothers. But what I saw was being a high school athlete that did exceptionally well, I never had parents there to support me. Not having a father there to have that male example, I missed out on that. I am reaching out to young people; always let them know they are loved. During my college graduation, my mother couldn’t make it. Also what I learned is work ethic, discipline.

One of the most experienced pioneers in African American business in Fresno County is Les. Les’s story is a testament to the fact that the experiences of African American people have dictated their ability to engage in and sustain productive businesses not only in Fresno County, but anywhere in the United States. Les and his father-in-law put together the first used-car dealership in the valley. According to him, his father in-law was a very smart man who was an entrepreneur and also in law
enforcement. They ran into great resistance from White car dealers and finance companies; they had to depend on self-finance. He said in those days Black folks owing a dealership was unheard of. When a strong recession hit, White car dealers’ banks could not finance the vehicles the dealers sold, so they had to make contracts themselves. Les’s dad had a White friend who was also a car dealer who ran into trouble with the banks and lost the lease on his lot. That friend moved his cars to Les’s father’s lot:

This guy must have put 30 cars on our lot, and we were looking good. Then we were unable to finance his cars on our lot. In fact, after the second day his cars were on our lot, his bank called him to get his cars out of the “nigger lot” or they will foreclose on him. The White man was mandated to move all the cars within 24 hours. Finance people turned people down. Then we would have folks pick out a car and take it to the finance company to get it financed; the finance company would turn them down. They would go to Blackstone, get it financed. It was unheard of. We didn’t survive for too long but that business set up opportunities for other African American businesses.

He noted that the road to his current business status did not come easy; there were many trials to overcome. Les shared some of the difficulties in his struggle to effect changes. He remembered that when the Advocate newspaper first started in 1969, he looked out the window and saw about 20 police cars:

The guys said, “What do you want?” I said, “I’m covering for the newspaper.” So they arrested me. We sued the city and during the trial, which was made out of Whites, mostly women and two or three White men, they acquitted me of all charges. They settled the suit.

He added:

All the businesses I have been involved in had a critical need. The newspaper: Black folks still needed a source of information they can depend on—one that is not racist, the real deal to provide inspiration to the kids and to really chronicle the inspiration of Black folks and our society. Non-African American newspapers focused on negatives. Everything about African American was negative; the history hasn’t changed over the years but we must keep pushing.
Leon discussed how difficult it was for an African American to succeed at the corporate level. He moved from one company to another because he did not like the management style of the company. He worked for San Jose Water Works. When he was fired from his position after 9 years, he went back into real estate management but decided to become self-employed because he was unhappy with the management style of the company. He had offers to go to other companies, but he declined. This is how he summarized his experience and how the experience led him in to starting his own business:

I worked part time for 4 years before I was forced to full time in real estate. I was an office manager for a real estate company; once I was full time, my broker made me an office manager. The bills you see, the more knowledge you gain. I had 40 bills coming across my desk every month. I left San Jose and moved to Fresno because I didn’t like the hassle of the city. When I got here, I worked for about a year as a realtor and would not have success because the Black community here is pretty close; unless you know somebody you’re not going to do nothing. I applied for an office-manager position, 50 agents. I didn’t like the social makeup of Century 21 because they strictly wear ties and white shirts. I chose to start my own business in 1999.

Bruce’s story is a good example of how one’s life experiences impact their business decisions. According to Bruce, it was his 18 years of living a very hard life that caused him to make the decision to go into business, not only to survive, but also to help others:

I was a drug user for 18 years. When I got delivered from drugs I wanted to help people that were using drugs. I opened up rehab homes. I was interested in helping people with drug problems. That’s how I got started. This led to printing shop to teach men how to become independent. I was the Chaplain for the Rescue Mission for 10 years. I was compassionate to help poor people, so not only making money but also helping people, keeping men busy and away from the streets.

One factor to which almost all participants alluded, and which also has been cited in the literature, is the lack of support among African Americans for sustaining ethnic businesses in the community. Several participants considered this experience very sad.
They observed that the kinds of network and support that exist in other cultures are nonexistent in African American communities. Leon said the Black community does not support Black business. If any person goes into business with the hope of getting business from the community, he cautioned, the business is bound to fail. He said,

I left San Jose and moved to Fresno because I didn’t like the hassle of the city. When I got here, I worked for about a year as a realtor and would not have success because the Black community here is pretty close; unless you know somebody you’re not going to do nothing.

*Independence*

Chris was very cheerful and willing to discuss all the roadblocks he encountered in getting to where he is today. He acknowledged many handicaps along the road, some of which he is still experiencing. He started as a grocery-store clerk but he was interested in having his own business. Consequently, he felt that there were not many janitorial businesses in Fresno owned by African Americans. He went into business with a close friend, but the venture did not survive due to lack of community support. He started in Fresno because he was very familiar with Fresno, having been born and raised in Fresno. He described his entrepreneurial journey:

My life was my upbringing: single mom. Then my ultimate goal was to be a football player, but that changed. I worked for several employers. Came to find out that under the strenuous work I can find dependency. That drove me to want to find a business to start.

Landon (Participant 15) had some disappointments in the path he travelled to get to where he is today. The road was not easy, but he was motivated by the hope of attaining his life goal. Before he began his current business, he had six wireless stores, all self-financed. He used his severance pay from his former employment for start-up costs.
Reasons for going into business vary among individual entrepreneurs, even within the same ethnic group. Some start their own businesses to build wealth and take care of their families, but most entrepreneurs say they went into self-employment because they wanted to be independent. Terrance noted that independence was one of his motivations for going into business. When asked why he chose real estate, he had this to say:

I felt that nobody can pay me for my value. I’ve always been a leader. Sometimes I’m a motivated leader. Real estate motivates me; I like looking at houses and properties. I just like everything about real estate. I’m totally diversified in real estate. I wake up thinking about it; I go to sleeping thinking about it. I just love everything about real estate. Some entrepreneurs tend to be creative, but you don’t have to be creative. You just need to put your mind into it. I think [I like] the freedom to be able to go to work when I want to go to work. I don’t like that people put a cap on what I can make.

Cultural and Personal Values

Values and beliefs have always been linked to the ability of communities to build and sustain productive businesses. Among African Americans, cultural and individual values were mentioned by almost every participant interviewed. The values and beliefs they spoke of included moral and cultural values, perseverance, determination to survive and provide for their families, and, most significantly, faith and religious beliefs.

Landon shared his business path as follows: “How I got to where I am right now is perseverance. If there’s one word that I would have to describe from training would be perseverance.” He acknowledged that God is everything in his life and without the presence of God in his life he would not have made it. Putting God first was paramount to him and his success in business. He has been through many trials but his faith has kept him from giving up.
Succeeding in business requires certain ethics. Although work ethics and moral standards cannot guarantee business success, most often the degree of success can be linked to the amount of hard work that goes into the venture. Hard work is a part of the work ethic people develop through their life experiences. Both Weber (1905/1930) and Sombart (1951) linked entrepreneurial establishment and success to work ethics. During the interviews and observations, the participants always described their work ethic as one of the crucial factors that made success possible.

As to why she chose real estate, Roshelle stated that “it seemed crazy at the time”; the industry was booming. Roshelle said she has always been an entrepreneur at heart, and she credited her ability to God, who prepared her to be self-employed. Her faith, she said, was instrumental in everything she has done: “In my natural sense, I can’t say I will, but if God is telling me to do something, I will step up and do it.”

Another participant, Les, shared his experiences of how African American learned through life experience to develop the resilience that is now part of their culture. Despite the great impediments of Jim Crow laws, racism, and lack of access to financial institutions, African Americans persisted. Les explained that his cultural resilience and good attitude helped him and others to effect changes in the educational system and businesses. He narrated some of his horrible experiences from the 1960s that resulted in changes in the way things were done in Fresno. On one occasion, he and more than 300 protesters surrounded the graduation area on a college campus to demand greater access for African Americans.
Findings: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 explored the advice participants would give to African Americans who want to start their own business. The question was addressed by the following interview questions:

a. In your own business practices, what are some of the best practices you can share?

b. What factors played critical roles in your choosing this type of business?

The answers to this research question were quite significant in getting the perspectives of African American business owners on what kinds of characteristics have made them successful as African American business owners. Again, in summarizing the best practices and advice they offered, participants revealed that culture, lifetime experiences, and constraints were critical in molding their lives as entrepreneurs.

Although the participants had a long list of individual best practices, the ones cited most frequently were the following:

- Effective homework before starting; research
- Vision
- Passion and understanding for the type of business selected
- Determination
- Well-formulated business plan and marketing strategy
- Resilience and courage

Of all the advice and best practices, the Five Ps Landon suggested summarized all: proper preparation (planning) prevents poor performance. As a researcher and also an African American business owner, I consider best practices crucial for potential African
Americans who want to start their own business. Therefore, rather than expanding on participants’ responses, I chose to list the best practices offered by all the participants.

Below are the best practices and advice provided by Ron:

- Focus on the numbers
- Keep expenses down
- Manage your cash flow and overhead
- Stay in a modest facility until you are able to handle a bigger one
- Be aware of your investment risk
- Bring into the business people who are trainable, have compassion for other people, and are passionate about what they do
- Create and share your vision
- Create a reasonable marketing strategy
- Empower the people

Ron gave this advice for African Americans who want to start their own businesses:

- Understand commitment
- Put things in writing
- Surround yourself with people with experience
- Do not reinvent the wheel
- Make sure the people around you understand the time required
- Solicit family support
- Prepare yourself for the next day and what you are getting into.

Roshelle offered the following advice to future African American entrepreneurs:

If there’s something that you really want to do, then do it. Do it with all your heart; don’t try to cut corners and it will happen. People expect you to cut corners, but as an entrepreneur your product will have to be better or at least be at par with other competitors.

As for the best business practices she would like to share with other African Americans who want to start their own business, Roshelle had this to say:

First of all I would say moral standards because … if you believe in yourself and what you are saying, they will follow. Have a good business practice, go the extra mile when others aren’t doing it; you go the extra mile to get it; treat people the way you would like them to treat you.
Debra said that people should not be afraid to explore, should spend time with positive people, and never say “it can’t” because it can. She noted that when the family began in business it took about a year and half to start the business and more than 2 years before anyone got paid. Their first application for a business license was denied, but that did not stop them. They provided their own start-up funds, applied for credit, her mother and father put up their money, and they used items from the home to furnish the facility. They were not discouraged. She had this to say:

Right now, I would say you have to do your homework, research the type of business you’re looking into, attend seminars where you meet all kinds of people who own similar businesses, start networking, and consult agencies that are out there that can help you with getting the knowledge in this type of business.

Audrey stated that young entrepreneurs have to be passionate about their businesses, have the discipline to make them work, and do their research. In her case, she had passion for seniors and she found through research that the business was likely to be viable. She stated,

You have to ask yourself: What kind of business do I want to go into? What kind of license and permits are required? Am I able to sacrifice, where is my money coming from to start the business? Once the questions are answered, you decide whether or not you still want to get into the business.

She pointed out that being an African American alone does not make someone succeed in business. She advised,

The banks are not going to give the money to just anybody. If you do not know someone who knows someone else … you are not going to get the money. You heard the old saying that it is who you know. It is easier for an African American to struggle at work and claw their way to get money or borrow money from relatives. That start-up cost is difficult to come by unless you are from some other certain continents. Then maybe, yeah, you have a better chance of getting it. It is difficult for people to understand that, but it is true because the way the country is built is to bow to other countries. I think it is our mentality because the fact is that African Americans in this country don’t know how to do it. They work for some people all their lives.
George noted that the main hurdle that keeps people from starting business is fear. He believed that finding a niche and a good location is crucial. In addition, any business owner has to be fair and consistent. He considered word of mouth the best way to advertise a business. He advised, “You need to sign [at least] one check to be there and know what is going on.” He added that good products and fair prices will bring people to a business. His advice to others who plan to start a business is to develop a business plan, know what permits and licenses are needed, find out if any other person is doing the same thing in the neighborhood, and learn the kind of inventory that will be needed. Once the decision to start is made, one has to have tenacity and dedication, not be afraid, and not feel that all is lost if success is not achieved in one year. He also emphasized the importance of the support of family.

Les noted that the present generation has more opportunities than people had during his time. According to him, financial institutions that were not available to Black folks when he was getting started are now set up to work with minority businesses. He talked about two such institutions that he helped to set up while a member of the city council that are still in existence. People need to take advantage of the financial organizations that are designed to assist minority businesses. He said,

So they need to take advantage of financial opportunities that we put together in order to utilize what’s there, a good business plan. They need to know and think about the saying “the darkest hour is just before dawn.” No matter how things look, you just need to hang on. Don’t even think about going into business unless you have the commitment and you have to identify and research the business you are interested in. Pick the one that is in demand.

When asked for the best practices he would share with African Americans who want to start their own business, Terrance noted that people give up easily when they
experience difficulties. He attributed his own success to his ability to remain focused even when the going was not so good. Of the best business practices that Terrance was ready to share with potential African American entrepreneurs, he noted that there is a chance to fail and one must be willing to fail in order to succeed. He added that they have to have the passion for whatever they choose to do. Moreover, they should not go into business with the only goal of making a lot of money.

In addition, Terrance noted that entrepreneurs need to be insistent and not give up when they get turned down, never promise more than they can provide, and persuade clients through their product and not their race. Finally, he stated,

Always have a back-up plan and never put your eggs in one basket, let your word be your bond, know that there will be bumps along the way and when you fail always pick yourself up, keep knocking because if you keep knocking on the doors people will listen. Also, never tell somebody that you are the best or the only one because you took someone’s model and added your personality to it.

Another participant, Willie, summarized his advice and suggestions for best practices with the following statement:

Be creative in marketing your product, we do things a little bit different from other pharmacies. We have free patient pick up, had a van to pick up patients and take them home, and had competitive prices, and there was support from the community.

Leon advised that it is critical to understand and know your business, have a mentor or two, and know your clients or business partners. In addition, he stressed the importance of working in a chosen field before beginning. Some of the best business practices for other African Americans who want to start their own business include not going by reflex action, being persuasive, being a good communicator, and selling the service, not the product.
Shirley listed knowing the person to whom you are providing service, being a good listener, striving for perfection, and knowing technology as key components of business success.

William B. noted that because we are in an information-technology age, potential entrepreneurs should have good knowledge of modern technology and be able to develop relationships and collaboration with others. He added that building relationships is quite crucial in light of the state of the economy.

In addition, he advised that people should not dabble in business unless they have done their homework and developed a well-considered plan. William also advised that African American entrepreneurs need to make themselves visible and be supportive of one another.

Landon had a number of business practices to share with young African Americans who would like to start their own business. He noted that one has to start with what they love and money will follow. According to Landon when someone finds something that moves them, it helps them to be committed; they have to strive to be better than the next person and always undercommit and overdeliver. One must not be afraid to take risks and be open to change at all times. “He who risks everything gains; the greater the risk, the greater the reward.” Additionally, he said that when one has a word to say, they must say it and mean it. He also stressed the importance of education, noting that if one wants to make easy on themselves, they will need an education.

Landon is a man of faith. He noted that faith is everything, stating that God got his attention and advised that entrepreneurs should put God first. “We are spiritual people.” Landon acknowledged that time is of importance in entrepreneurship. He hopes
that African Americans will become more successful in business. In conclusion, Landon summarized his best business practices in what he called Five Ps, which he recommended to any potential African American entrepreneur:

- **P1**—Proper
- **P2**—Preparation
- **P3**—Prevents
- **P4**—Poor
- **P5**—Performance

Among the practices Chris would share with potential African American entrepreneurs are to not give up or be discouraged, to believe in themselves, be persistent, and have expectancy. Also, he noted that they should have faith and desire to succeed at all times. At the same time he advised that entrepreneurs should be willing to help others to grow and become successful; they should share their success with others.

When asked about best practices, Corey stated that aspiring entrepreneurs have to get used to hearing “no” and believe in themselves. His father used to have him do different jobs, from mowing the lawn to cleaning the floor. Each time he told his father he could not do the job his father responded, “There is no such thing as can’t.” This “encouragement” caused Corey to push himself. He offered the following:

My advice to the next generation will be to build relations, know those in power. Always go to more than one person, have a network, and know what your goal is. If your goal is to be rich, you have already failed. Build contacts and learn the business. When my father worked 50 years building the business, all the purpose was to help people. You have to be an entrepreneur, dedicated to your goal. Drive to achieve the goal, absorb criticism.

Bruce explained that he developed his passion for helping people when he worked as a chaplain. He advised that one of the best business practices is to have passion for what you are doing and not let money be one’s main motivation. He is not only making money in his business, but at the same time he is helping to keep people off the street.
Bruce summed up his advice in a single statement: “work hard, stay focused, and keep right with God.”

**Findings: Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 explored participants’ plans for the next 5 years. Plans were varied. Some hoped that family members would continue with the family tradition, and some had no succession plan. Most of the successful businesses have been carried from generation to generation and are expected to continue. Based on the responses, most participants cautioned that they are guarded in their statements because the present economy is very volatile and it is hard to predict the future of businesses. However, most hope that they can grow their business in the next 5 years. When talking about future business plans, participants fell into two distinct groups: those who are continuing with a family tradition hoped the tradition would continue; and first-generation entrepreneurs, although they would like to see someone in the family continue with the business, appeared uncertain about the future of the business.

In responding to Research Question 3, Ron said he is always looking for opportunities to grow and he also thinks about teaching. He has a doctorate in organization and leadership. Roshelle said she sees her business expanding and booming in the next 5 years. She hopes to diversify and get into other areas in partnership with her husband.

Debra is in the services industry providing care to disabled clients. When asked where she will be in the next 5 years, she stated,

When we first started this business the time went by so fast; before you knew it was 5 years. Looking at the economy and the jobs out there, it just makes me believe that I would probably be in business for the next 5 years. I would probably
open a second home. I don’t foresee opening up a third home, but if the economy improves, my third home will be for older adults. I currently serve ages 12 to 18.

Like Debra, George is expanding on a family tradition. His family is among the first African Americans in business in Fresno County. He already has plans for the future. He sees himself expanding his franchises and acquiring one more in the next 5 years.

Les stated that he will continue to support and encourage his son in his plans to continue with the family business and keep moving forward. His son has virtually taken charge, but Les helps as necessary. Shirley stated that both she and her mother will continue to provide service to the community and work to help those who need assistance. She is dedicated to West Fresno and currently has three sites in West Fresno.

Corey also inherited a family business. He is of the third generation and hopes the business will still be around in 5 years. He hopes the person coming after him will keep the tradition going. He was not pressured to go into the business, and he believes that if children are pressured to go into the family business they might not be interested. He added that business owners must have love and passion for the type of business they operate.

Unlike the others, Audrey is pursuing her doctorate. She hopes to have completed her doctorate in 5 years and at that time will help build a school and counsel in the school. She also has a passion for seniors and will continue to help find places for seniors.

Willie J. was not sure what will happen to his business. His son, who currently works with him, is not a pharmacist and is not interested in following that route. He has an MBA and is interested in other types of business. Although one of the grandchildren
wants to become a pharmacist, he is 4 years away from achieving that goal. The current location is very convenient, there is need for a pharmacy, and there is support for it from the low-income people in the community. The center serves as a one-stop shop for all the basic needs of the people of the community.

Answering the question about where he see himself 5 years from now, William said he plans to expand his business, possibly having his children help run it. He would like to be an advocate for change, help the poor, and be a motivational speaker. He hopes that his testimony will be a good example and an encouragement to the next generation.

Terrance is optimistic about the future of his business. He hopes to continue to build and expand. He will change his business model a bit and develop a shopping center instead of buying and selling. He will no more be concerned about buying and “flipping” houses. He added that people in the African American community do not help one another but he will work to change that.

Bruce currently operates two homes, one for men and one for women. He hopes to see the organization grow to help more people. He wants to see thousands of men and women set free from drugs and alcohol. His faith is instrumental in his success; he noted that he wants to see the kingdom of God grow through his service.

Leon hopes that in 5 years he will be fishing. He has lost the passion for the business because of the aggravation that came with it. His energy level has decreased. This is a turbulent time for real estate, but he plans to always keep his license. He wants his daughter to continue with the business, but she does not have the flair for it. However, the granddaughter is interested in continuing the tradition. He will sell the property-management part of the business.
Chris hopes to expand his business and also diversify. He is looking into opening up a yogurt shop where the community can get together after the day’s work and on Sundays.

Landon wants to be a part of the great stories of his community. He noted that the more heroes there are in a community, the more brothers and sisters can do in the future. He summarized his plans for the next 5 years in the following words:

I want to go back and get some that are still in slavery, slave in their minds, come on, you ain’t going back. I want to go back and get some of my brothers and my sisters, how we can be an economically strong community. I want to be a builder, opening up new markets and possibilities, and show our people that we can overcome anything and do anything that we set our minds to.

Summary of Findings

This qualitative study followed a phenomenological approach. This approach allowed the participants to share their perspectives on their respective experiences. The focus was on the participants’ subjective experiences and their interpretation of the world as they saw it. The study explored the voices and perspectives of 15 African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County. During the interviews, participants shared their backgrounds and their experiences. The analysis of their backgrounds revealed much about their characters and their foundation in entrepreneurial work. Most attributed their entrepreneurial interest to their families and disenchantment with working for others.

The African Americans in Fresno have unique experiences that influenced their business practices. Their social histories, structural barriers, and cultural attributes are distinct and have been identified as contributing factors in their ability to engage in and sustain productive enterprise. Yet, there has been and continues to be a misunderstanding of their entrepreneurial work. Despite this misunderstanding and the turbulent path to
their economic destinations, the results of this study indicate that African Americans in Fresno County have been active and continue to play very active roles in the county’s economy.

The themes that emerged during the interviews are that structural barriers existed for African American entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurs’ social history—including their life experiences, family background, desire for independence, and cultural and personal values—helped drive their entrepreneurial aspirations and accomplishments. These themes help to explain why few African Americans are engaged in productive enterprises in Fresno County and why they experienced the outcomes they did.

The contributions of African Americans in the field of entrepreneurship have been largely ignored or marginalized. Historians continue to label Blacks as failures without any tradition in business, lacking enough community support to sustain ethnic business. The participants’ responses to the research questions proved otherwise. There is a dearth of literature on the experiences of African American entrepreneurs, past and present, and the challenges they face that cause them to fall behind in business ownership and success.

The findings of this study reveal that the path followed by African Americans to attain economic freedom has been filled with structural barriers and legal restrictions. Institutional racism, restrictive laws, regulations, and lack of access to financial institutions have been the greatest challenges to African Americans as entrepreneurs. Notwithstanding, the findings also reveal that African Americans have been active in entrepreneurship and have experienced the same success as members of other ethnic groups in Fresno County. They face challenges that hinder their ability to build and sustain productive entrepreneurship, but their cultural resilience to survive during
turbulent times has helped them to sustain productive enterprise. They overcame daunting barriers through sacrifice, determination, and cultural resiliency. It is only fair to point out that if other groups were subjected to the same treatment that African Americans have endured, those groups would also fall behind in business ownership and outcomes.

The findings also reveal a lack of community support from African Americans for ethnic enterprise in the community. With very few exceptions, there was consensus among participants that African Americans do not support one another in business. There is lack of networking and mechanisms that could enhance communication and togetherness in the community. There is lack of trust. There is no forum for discussion of the kinds of views shared by various participants that could help to bring experienced African American business owners together with aspiring entrepreneurs to help one another. This is in agreement with existing literature. Burrell (2010) noted that lack of coalescence (refusal to support and unify with other Blacks) is a problem. Burrell added that inability to form strong coalitions and fear that the rise of another Black person will threaten their upward mobility will be threatened.

However, based on the responses and discussions with the participants, I am inclined to believe that there is a new wave of young African American entrepreneurs who will change the status quo. The African American Chamber of Commerce and the African American Museum, as well as other young, dynamic groups, are ready for a paradigm shift.

In summary, the findings reveal the following:

Regarding Research Question 1, the path that African Americans have followed in Fresno County in their entrepreneurial work is handicapped by racism, exclusion, and
other legal roadblocks. The experiences of the African Americans and their ability to participate in productive enterprises have been linked to structural barriers, social histories, family, the desire for independence, and cultural and personal values.

Regarding Research Question 2, some of the best practices and advice successful African American entrepreneurs can offer to others who want to start their own business include knowing their business through research and doing their homework, creating market strategies, having a passion for the business, and properly preparing.

Regarding Research Question 3, although still uncertain about the future of our economy and irrespective of the challenges faced by African Americans in their entrepreneurial work, the majority of participants see their organization expanding and growing in the next 5 years.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The main mission was to explore perspectives of 15 African American business owners in Fresno County in their own voices, and the analysis of the participants’ responses to the demographic questionnaires and the historical paths and life experiences provided a critical understanding of their economic journey. This chapter summarizes the results of the research and presents a discussion of those results.

The research examined three questions:

1. What is the historical path of African American entrepreneurs in Fresno County?

2. What advice would successful African American entrepreneurs give to African Americans who want to start their own businesses?

3. What do African American entrepreneurs see themselves doing 5 years from now?

The themes identified from the participants’ narratives describe the perspectives of the African American business owners interviewed. The themes include

- Structural barriers
- Social history and life experiences
- Family Background
- Desire for independence
- Cultural and personal values
In addition, the findings revealed no significant difference between the male and female African American entrepreneurs in how they viewed their opportunities. The findings suggest that African American females have the same ambition, spirit, and desire regarding entrepreneurship as African American men. The females were just as capable of starting and sustaining a viable business as the males.

Discussion

Dandridge (2009) stated that the disparity in entrepreneurial activities between Blacks and Whites has been and continues to be connected to barriers and challenges rooted in our nation’s not-long-past racial caste system and oppression of Blacks. Dandridge added that inequity between the races has created a social condition that directly affects an entrepreneur’s access to social capital that is vital to the successful emergence and continued advancement of one’s business. This observation has been confirmed by the views expressed by the participants in their interviews when discussing access to capital.

The findings from this study demonstrate that the arguments that African Americans do not have sufficient mentors and role models in the area of business and that participation in business is not a positive value that is passed down generationally in the community as a desirable characteristics does not hold for African Americans in Fresno County. The results of the study support my hypothesis, mentioned in Chapter II, that exclusion and discrimination have had significant impacts on African American entrepreneurship. Slavery, racism, and exclusionary laws were implicated strongly in this study as crucial to African Americans’ viability as entrepreneurs in Fresno County. The study revealed that racism, restrictive city ordinances, covenants, and other racially
discriminatory measure completely stopped or severely restricted the entry of Blacks into self-employment.

African Americans went into less competitive areas of business in which White entrepreneurs were not interested. These were mainly service-related businesses. African American entrepreneurs determined to make a difference, refused to be held down by the constraints, and turned the bad events into positive outcomes by seeking alternatives. When they were denied loans, they used family funds; when they were denied promotions at corporate jobs, they started their own businesses. They used their cultural resilience to survive and overcome the constraints, and the used the available resources to move forward. The numbers of successful African American entrepreneurs may be few when compared to other ethnic groups, but those who succeeded were capable of creating and sustaining viable businesses. Despite the economic roadblocks and the failure of the literature on ethnic business to acknowledge African Americans as hardworking and efficient, this study revealed that they have contributed their fair share to the economic force of Fresno County. They used specific values and characteristics that are connected to the development of businesses to counter the roadblocks posed by racism, slavery, Jim Crow laws, and institutional barriers. The paths they took to their entrepreneurial destinations were turbulent and challenging.

As a researcher, I chose to look at the outcomes of this study from both the macroeconomic and psychological viewpoints. Although the psychological perspectives are vital to the outcome of the study, I spent less time considering them, as this method focused more on the entrepreneurs’ traits. Most of the themes that emerged described how the entrepreneurs themselves responded to events along the paths of their
development. This included their responses to economic and social situations and their culture as part of African American history. Being excluded from the main economic mainstream limited their opportunities for success but failed to take away their cultural resilience to survive, which came from the experiences of their forebears on the plantations. Notwithstanding the daunting challenges that African American entrepreneurs faced, their lifetime experiences and cultural resilience were quite significant in the establishment and success in entrepreneurial work by African Americans.

Conclusion

To some extent these findings concur with Walker’s (2009) point that it was not the failure of Black consumers to support Black business, nor the pattern of Black savings or lack thereof, nor the absence of a historic tradition of business participation that explain the state of Black capitalism. Historical experiences, including disappointments with financial institutions, local and state governments, and red tape, were more damaging to Black capitalism. African Americans were treated as institutional outcasts with no opportunities to compete or excel, despite having the same talents, ambitions, hopes, and desire to succeed as people of any other culture. Unfortunately, government support, networking systems, and economic infrastructures that are found in other cultures are still out of reach to them, even the 21st century.

The themes that emerged from the responses to the research questions indicate that for African Americans the historical journey in their entrepreneurial work in Fresno County has been chaotic and sometimes discouraging. Racism and other structural barriers, even 150 years after emancipation, still pose significant barriers to African
Americans trying to engage in and sustain businesses. The primary advantage that enabled the few who are active to survive is their cultural resilience. During the interviews, most of the participants showed a genuine desire to succeed and a passion for their businesses, but were hindered by a lack of access to capital and an absence of educational programs that encourage entrepreneurship among African Americans.

In addition to cultural resilience, faith and the church were identified as significant factors in the engagement and success in business ownership among African Americans in Fresno County. Most participants acknowledged receiving support and encouragement from pastors and church members. This was not surprising, as the literature noted that churches traditionally are at the center of the African Americans community in their pursuit of survival for the family. This tradition developed on the plantations, where churches served as a forum for the discussion of grievances, and has carried through to the present. Solwazi (2001) described the importance of faith in the African American experience:

It took faith, a faith rooted deep in the heart and soul, for kidnapped Africans to survive the horrendous middle passage en route to a life of slavery in the new world; it took faith for the Africans and their posterity to survive the centuries of enslavement on that new continent; and it took faith for tens of millions of African Americans to break the chains of post-civil War oppression and earn their rightful place as full citizens in the country they helped to build. … We have to remind our children how far we have come.

During the 1800s the narratives of the lives of African Americans began to expose the circumstances in which African Americans lived. One such narrative was that of Frederick Douglas, which triggered a period of renaissance. The 1800s saw a wave of mechanisms that set forces into motion that eventually eliminated those restrictions.
In the 1950s, various movements created an awareness of the plight of African Americans and put pressure on the government to end discrimination. These movements led to the civil rights period that finally brought down the last legal vestiges of slavery. Although slavery ended on paper, forces remained that would not allow Blacks to participate fully in the economic mainstream. The effect of this exclusion was twofold. First, it forced African Americans to devise methods to achieve self-sufficiency that encouraged entrepreneurship. In Fresno County, the story of Willie, Participant 9, is a testament of that. Willie joined with a group of African American doctors to open the first medical clinic on the Westside of Fresno, serving the African American population. His pharmacy remains in the same location and still serves mostly African Americans. Also, the first printing press in Fresno appeared as a result of the need to have a publication that would address the civil rights issues that were not published by White-owned papers. According to Les, several attempts were made to shut the press down. These examples illustrate the theoretical constructs described in Chapter II: exclusion, marginalization, and entrepreneurial niches help to explain the current position of African Americans in the economic mainstream of the United States in general and of Fresno County in particular.

Implications

Although Say (1821), a French economist, and Schumpeter (1934, 1950), a 20th-century American economist, are from different continents and different times, they both acknowledged the roles of entrepreneurship in economic growth. Through the years African Americans have overcome daunting odds and have made a huge impact in the evolution of the American economy. Despite the huge impact, historians have ignored
their contributions and the paths they have followed in their entrepreneurial work. There is a gaping hole in American entrepreneurship literature regarding African American entrepreneurial work. The results of this study will create new awareness and bring in a new mindset about African American entrepreneurship. At the least, it will open more avenues for further research of the subject in academia.

Furthermore, the results of the findings not only open more opportunities for further research but provide ideas for planning future research, including other decision making on how to select and deal with participants. The findings will provide valuable information on the path that African Americans follow to achieve entrepreneurial success. Also, the findings will serve as a crucible through which researchers, policymakers, professors, and practitioners view the link between culture, resources, and exclusion and entrepreneurial work. Beyond this, it will expand the existing literature on entrepreneurship and be used by future scholars as a foundation for other studies on African American entrepreneurial work.

Also, the findings of this study reveal that the percentage of African Americans who own business in Fresno is low (3.9%). There is need for more men and women of African descent to become entrepreneurs. I hope the results of the study will serve as a catalyst for various stakeholders to develop mechanisms that will encourage more African Americans to become business owners. Academics has not been forthcoming in research about African American capitalism. Rather, scholars have depended on outdated information based on false premises and flawed theoretical constructs. It is time to let go of the old understanding and develop a new mindset on how to approach the entrepreneurial work of African Americans.
Finally, once this information becomes available it will help community colleges and other schools introduce an agenda into their curriculum for new African American entrepreneurs. In addition, it will create forums for discussions among those who are interested in seeing changes.

Recommendations for Professional Practice

The kinds of mutual-aid associations that exist in other cultures seem to be nonexistent in the African American community in Fresno County. These groups serve as networks to benefit members of the group. The mutual-aid association is not discussed in this study but is recommended as a subject for future studies. For African Americans to really take their place in the new entrepreneurial drive, both governmental and educational institutions will have to set up mechanisms and mentoring programs geared toward African Americans.

In addition, the new concepts of entrepreneurial strategic profiles and entrepreneurial leadership need to be incorporated in training programs. One of the issues that emerged from the interviews is the lack of strategic management, leadership, bookkeeping knowledge, and financial planning among some of the entrepreneurs. The participants’ responses reveal that most of the participants could use some help with bookkeeping and accounting. Lack of information and the inability to cope with the current technology were apparent during the interviews. Also, to a great extent, leadership defines what happens in a business. Lack of leadership skills or vision caused uncertainties and accounted for the reports of some that they were unsure where their business would be in 5 years. Provisions should be made for seminars and educational opportunities in planning and leadership education for African American business
owners. People in the educational system and seasoned African American entrepreneurs need to take their positions as mentors and advisors for future African American entrepreneurs.

Based on my personal experience and educational background, I am sure the idea of microcredit or the informal credit association that is in place in many parts of the world and has been transferred to the United States by most other ethnic groups can help solve the start-up cost problems for young African American potential entrepreneurs. Informal credit or rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAS) serve the roles of savings and credit (Light & Gold, 2003). According to Light and Gold (2003), ROSCAS are clubs whose members contribute to a fund that is rotated among the membership; they have been around for over 400 years. Referred to as thrifts in the United States, ROSCAS are known by different names around the world: safes, outs, cooperatives, and other names. Many parents depend on these associations for their children’s education and for buying bicycles and motorcycles, building their homes, and starting businesses.

Also, technology has changed the traditional ways of doing business. For African Americans to excel in modern entrepreneurship, they have to be willing to use modern technology and media. With technology, entrepreneurs are able to access information that is pertinent to their type of business without having to travel long distances.

Finally, the African American community needs a kind of advisory board that would help entrepreneurs with budgeting, financing, bookkeeping, and succession planning. Most of the study participants did not have any succession plans. Future trends should include potential for advances in technology and awareness of new ways of looking at outcome measurements for African Americans in entrepreneurship. In
addition, an advisory board could foster a growing recognition of the contributions of individuals of African descent who are making impacts in entrepreneurial work in Fresno County.

Recommendations for Future Research

The existing literature demonstrates that the African American community has been plagued with an undermining of its achievements in the field of business. Interests have been on the poor performance and failures of some African American businesses without delineating the path they have followed to their current position and the challenges they faced along the road. Rather than looking at faulty theoretical constructs, this study looked into the perspectives of the people who have truly experienced the challenges. In this, themes emerged from the research questions that showed the long, difficult road traveled by African American entrepreneurs. Future studies need to look at the historical path travelled by African Americans from slavery through Jim Crow laws, the civil rights era, and institutional barriers. Also, researchers need to have open minds and immerse themselves in the culture of participants to allow participants to see researchers’ sincerity and provide information that is authentic.

Researcher’s Final Reflection

One of the greatest challenges facing the future of African Americans as entrepreneurs is that many have been told they cannot succeed because they do not have the ability. Consequently, many have given up trying, and those who try do not receive support and stop trying. Unfortunately, there has been misinformation regarding the African American entrepreneurial work and spirit. I dare to say that African American entrepreneurs are hostages to historical prejudices and biases. According to Shahideh
African Americans have the responsibility to remain open to new understandings and seek different meanings and interpretations about events that have shaped their history. Shahideh observed that being a victim is a horrible thing but remaining a victim is even more horrifying, and the worst result of the horrifying past that persists in lives today is the disconnectedness from history, traditions, sense of self, and one another.

The findings of this study negate the arguments by Light (1972), Fairlie and Robb (2008), Light and Bonacich (1991) that African Americans have less of the cultural tradition, fewer human resources, and less organizational wealth required for success as entrepreneurs. African Americans have successfully used the entrepreneurial ladder to prove that they can achieve economic success through entrepreneurship. Contrary to the arguments that they do not possess a viable strategy through which they can make it by engaging in business, African Americans have the necessary attributes and characteristics to achieve success in business; they have successfully created viable businesses in Fresno County. They have the moral values, work ethic, endurance, and perseverance to withstand discrimination and overcome legal barriers.

As I indicated earlier, I am looking at this study more from how African Americans have responded to the historical challenges they have encountered in their paths to economic freedom rather than from the psychological perspective, which looks at the traits of the entrepreneurs. However, the results of this study showed that African Americans also possess the traits the entrepreneurship literature acknowledges as important to success. They are endowed with skills to work hard, moral and spiritual values, cultural resilience, determination, and vision. These are the kinds of attributes that are common among successful entrepreneurs in other cultures. Therefore, the argument
that African Americans lack traditional business role models and the acumen to succeed in business cannot be totally correct. The participants in this study demonstrated that they have the aptitude and characteristics that lead to success. However, their life experiences with government, academia, and other institutions have limited their opportunities to excel in business. Despite the obstacles, a fair number of successful African Americans have played significant roles in the economy of Fresno County.

However, African Americans need to work together. An African proverb says, “One tree cannot make a forest.” Until the community starts to support its members, it will be difficult to achieve economic success as other ethnic groups have. One of the arguments against Black capitalism is that there is not enough community support to sustain African American capitalism. This contention was confirmed by statements from participants. There is still a missing link: the lack of trust among African Americans continues to affect their ability to form networks and help one another achieve success. All participants alluded to this but were hopeful the next generation would be different. Among participants, there is thinking that there is a new awakening. The results of this study may act as a catalyst that will aid in the revamping of the African American entrepreneurial spirit and a change in the perception and mindset of society. The narratives of the life of Frederick Douglass opened the doors for narratives in the 1800s that helped enlighten American society about the evils of slavery. This led to movements that changed a repressive society. Consequently, new information and new narratives on the path that African Americans travelled to where they are today as entrepreneurs can change attitudes and practices today.
Also, I strongly believe that the idea of microcredit and mutual-aid associations mentioned in the recommendations for professional practice can be a crucible through which the African American entrepreneurial drive can experience a breakthrough. Light and Gold (2003) noted that the oldest microcredit agency, the parent of the concept, is the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, founded in 1976 by Dr. Yunes. It would seem clear that the objective was to encourage mutual help through social networking.

Among other issues that can hinder the effectiveness of such a system, Light and Gold (2003) noted that because of American social conditions, including the prevalence of addictions and the extreme individualism of American culture, the inability to attain social capital occurs more frequently than in Bangladesh. The result of the interviews with the participants revealed mechanisms are already in motion in Fresno County that can help to implement a strategic entrepreneurial system. One is the Feed My Sheep ministry founded by Pastor Hood that trains young former addicts to become independent. The implementation of rotating-credit associations can enable the African American community to experience an increase in the number of businesses started. Groups of professionals can initiate this kind of association with the goal of helping their members and other members of the community. The time has come for African Americans in Fresno County to rewrite their stories and let the world know that they have the business acumen, the role models, the abilities, and the tools to engage in entrepreneurship and perform as well as other ethnic groups. Despite the horrendous, rugged path that they have travelled, African Americans with the cultural resilience to succeed have overcome structural barriers, exclusion, humiliation, and institutional barriers in their entrepreneurial work.
There are many lessons to learn from the African Americans who have lived the experience. Listening to each participant talk about their various experiences caused me to rethink my perceptions on the state of Black capitalism in the United States, and Fresno in particular. I heard the voices of those who have given their lives and limited resources to make a difference in the community. My experience as a business owner is totally different from those who were born here and had to live through years of exploitation to make it. There is still more room for growth but there is hope for the next generations of African American business owners in Fresno County. Also, African Americans are now writing their own narratives and history, rather than those who have closed their minds to the lifetime experiences of Black people.

Until American becomes one nation indivisible, the black business experience cannot be subsumed and generalized within the context of white experience. … When black businesses fail, it is not enough to dismiss their existence or reasons for their failure by emphasizing that white American businesses also fail as if race and racism are not significant variables that must be included among the reasons for the failure of black businesses (Walker, 2009, p. xix).

Finally, I conclude by referring to an inspiring statement from the narratives of Frederick Douglas, who was instrumental in effecting many changes. Douglas stated,

Sincerely and earnestly hoping that this little book may do something toward throwing light on the American slave system, and hastening the glad day of deliverance to millions of my brethren in bonds—faithfully relying upon the power of truth, love, and justice, for success in my humble efforts—and solemnly pledging myself anew to the sacred cause, I subscribe myself, (Frederick Douglass: LYNN, Mass, April 28, 1845).

Also, a friend wrote to Frederick Douglas:

My Dear Friend:
You remember the old fable of “The Man and the Lion” where the lion complained that he should not be so misrepresented “when the lions wrote history.” …I am glad the time has come when the lions write history; we have been left long enough to gather the character of slavery from the involuntary evidence of the masters. … One might indeed rest sufficiently satisfied with what,
it is evident must be, in general, the results of such a relation, without seeking farther to find whether they have followed in every instance. Indeed, those who stare at the half-peck of corn a week, and love to count the lashes on the slave’s back, are seldom the “stuff out of which reformers and abolitionists are to be made. … I was glad to learn, in your story how early the most neglected of God’s chosen children waken to a sense of their rights, and of the injustice done them. (Wendell Phillips, Esq., Boston, April 22, 1845)
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please share your life experiences and the path you have followed to come to where you are today.

2. Tell me how you started your business in Fresno county

3. In your own business practices what are some of the best practices you can share?

4. What factors played critical roles in your choice of this type of business?

5. Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT’S INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1. How do you classify yourself?

• Asian
• African American
• Hispanic
• White
• Other

Q2. How many employees do you have?

• 0 employees
• 1–2
• 3–4
• 5 and more

Q3. Your level of education is:

• No high school diploma
• High school diploma
• Some college

Q4. How many businesses have you had in the past?

• None
• 1
• 2
• 3
• and more

Q5. How do you rate your experience with the banks?

• Excellent
• Good
• Fair
• Unsatisfactory
• No opinion
Q6. How do you rate yourself as an entrepreneur?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Unsatisfactory
- No opinion

Q7. Can you tell me, what were the major obstacles to starting your business?

- The economy
- Obtaining finance/credit
- Cash flow
- Regulations
- Lack of financial understanding

Q8. Did you experience any problems in trying to seek start up information?

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

Q9. How much of an influence was your family or friends in your decision to start a business?

- Very much
- A little
- None at all

Q10. Why did you decide to start a business?

- Independence (to be my own boss)
- Financial reasons
- Difficulty finding a job
- To continue family tradition
- As a hobby or to develop a skill
- To fill a niche

Q11. How long did it take to set up the business from the original idea to the actual starting?

- Six months or less
- More than six months but less than one year
- More than one year but less than two years
- Not sure
Q12. Interviews will be treated in complete confidence and may be recorded. Do you agree to be interviewed and observed during your normal business hours?

• Yes I agree
• No, I disagree
• Not sure

Q13. What is the correct legal description of your business?

• Sole proprietor
• Partnership
• Other-Specify

Q14. Would you say that you receive support from the African American Community to sustain your business?

• Very Much
• Very little
• Not at all
• No comments

Q15. What were you doing before you started your own business?

• Working full time as an employee
• Working part time as an employee
• Self employed
• Not working
• Other-specify.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

Subject’s Signature ___________________________ Date of Signature ___________________________

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent ___________________________ Date of Signature ___________________________
APPENDIX C

INITIAL IRB APPROVAL

From: “USF IRBPHS” <irbphs@usfca.edu>
Date: November 28, 2011 8:18:53 AM PST
To: <deltafinancial@sbcglobal.net>
Cc: <mitchell@usfca.edu>
Subject: IRB Application #11-111 - Approved
November 28, 2011

Dear Mr. Enunwa:
The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #11-111). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

IRBPHS – University of San Francisco
Counseling Psychology Department
Education Building – Room 017
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080
(415) 422-6091 (Message)
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)
irbphs@usfca.edu

http://www.usfca.edu/soe/students/irbphs/
APPENDIX D

IRB MODIFICATION APPROVAL LETTER

January 13, 2012

Dear Mr. Enunwa:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for modification of your human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your modification application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #11-111).

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

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Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
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--------------------------------------------------
http://www.usfca.edu/soe/students/irbphs/
Purpose and Background

Mr. Felix S. Enunwa, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco is doing a study on ethnic entrepreneurship. Over the past several years, more and more people are beginning to go into self-employment as an alternative to paid employment. The researcher is interested in exploring the underrepresentation of African Americans in ethnic entrepreneurship in Fresno County. Specifically, the study will explore the gap in participation in entrepreneurship between African Americans and people of other ethnic groups and the challenges that African Americans face that cause them to fall behind in the curve. I am being asked to participate because I am an African American business owner.

Procedures

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will complete a short questionnaire giving basic information about me, including age, gender, job history, and business experience.

2. I will complete a questionnaire about family business background.

3. I will participate in an interview with the researcher, during which I will be asked about my family business and educational history, my business goals and aspirations.

Risks and/or Discomforts

1. It is possible that some of the questions on the structured interview/survey may make me feel uncomfortable, but I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.

3. Because the time required for my participation may be up to 2 hours, I may become tired or bored.
Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of the intersection of resources, constraint, life experiences, and culture on the establishment and outcome in ethnic entrepreneurship. Specifically, there will be a better understanding of the gap in ethnic entrepreneurship between African Americans and people of other ethnic groups and the challenges that African Americans entrepreneurs face that cause them to fall behind in the curve.

Costs/Financial Considerations

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

Payment/Reimbursement

There will be no payment of any kind for participating in this study

Questions

I have talked to Mr. Enunwa about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may call him at (559) 779-8299 or Dr. Patricia Mitchell at (415) 422-7029.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first talk with the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, and 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Consent

I have been given a copy of the “Research Subject’s Bill of Rights” and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study is not dependent on any fiscal condition.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject’s Signature</th>
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<th>Signature of Person Obtaining Consent</th>
<th>Date of Signature</th>
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APPENDIX F

CONSENT COVER LETTER

09/03/2011

Mr. John Doe
123 Sunny Circle
Anywhere, CA 90000

Dear Mr/Mrs/Dr.

My name is Felix S. Enunwa and I am a doctoral student in the College of Leadership Studies at the University of San Francisco. I am doing a study on ethnic entrepreneurship in Fresno County. Specifically, I am interested in exploring the underrepresentation of African Americans in the ownership in ethnic business and the challenges that African Americans face that cause them to fall behind in the curve.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are an African American business owner in Fresno County. If you agree to be in this study, you will complete the attached structured interview questions about your educational background, experience in business, history of family business, experience with credit institutions, and your aspirations as a successful African American business owner.

It is possible that some of the questions may make you feel uncomfortable, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, or to stop participation at any time. Although you will not be asked to put your name on the form, I will know that you were asked to participate in the research because I sent you this letter and questions. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times.

While there will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of the intersection of resources, constraint, life experiences, and culture on the establishment and outcome in ethnic entrepreneurship. Specifically, there will be a better understanding of the gap in ethnic entrepreneurship between African Americans and people of other ethnic groups and the challenges that African Americans entrepreneurs face that cause them to fall behind in the curve.

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study, nor will you be reimbursed for your participation in this study.
If you have questions about the research, you may contact me at (559) 779-8299. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Counseling Psychology Department, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1071. You can also contact my Chairperson, Patricia Mitchell at (415) 422-7029.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

Thank you for your attention. If you agree to participate, please sign the attached form and return it to me in the enclosed pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope.

Sincerely,

Felix Enunwa
Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
APPENDIX G

RESEARCH BOARD PERMISSION LETTER

Westside Church of God
1424 W. California Avenue
Fresno, CA 93706

Dr. Paul L. Binion II, Senior Pastor
Phone: 559-237-1444
Fax: 559-237-1028
Email: office@wscog.org

November 18, 2011

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
University of San Francisco
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Westside Church of God, I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Mr. Felix S. Enunwa, a student at USF. We are aware that Mr. Enunwa intends to conduct his research by administering interviews and/or written survey to selected members of our church who are business owners.

I am responsible for member’s relations and I am the Pastor of the church. I give Mr. Enunwa permission to contact selected members in our church.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office at (559) 237-1444.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Paul Binion, Pastor
APPENDIX H

RESEARCH SUBJECTS’ BILL OF RIGHTS

The rights below are the rights of every person who is asked to be in a research study. As a research subject, I have the following rights:

Research Subjects

Bill of Rights

Research subjects can expect:

- To be told the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the subject will be maintained and of the possibility that specified individuals, internal and external regulatory agencies, or study sponsors may inspect information in the medical record specifically related to participation in the clinical trial.

- To be told of any benefits that may reasonably be expected from the research.

- To be told of any reasonably foreseeable discomforts or risks.

- To be told of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be of benefit to the subject.

- To be told of the procedures to be followed during the course of participation, especially those that are experimental in nature.

- To be told that they may refuse to participate (participation is voluntary), and that declining to participate will not compromise access to services and will not result in penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

- To be told about compensation and medical treatment if research related injury occurs and where further information may be obtained when participating in research involving more than minimal risk.

- To be told whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research, about the research subjects’ rights and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject.

- To be told of anticipated circumstances under which the investigator without regard to the subject’s consent may terminate the subject’s participation.
• To be told of any additional costs to the subject that may result from participation in the research.

• To be told of the consequences of a subjects’ decision to withdraw from the research and procedures for orderly termination of participation by the subject.

• To be told that significant new findings developed during the course of the research that may relate to the subject’s willingness to continue participation will be provided to the subject.

• To be told the approximate number of subjects involved in the study.

• To be told what the study is trying to find out;

• To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;

• To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes;

• To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;

• To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study; To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;

• To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise;

• To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;

• To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and

• To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study. If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher or the research assistant. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Counseling Psychology Department, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1071.
References: JCAHO and Research Regulatory Bodies

(1) To be told what the study is trying to find out;

(2) To be told what will happen to me and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice;

(3) To be told about the frequent and/or important risks, side effects, or discomforts of the things that will happen to me for research purposes;

(4) To be told if I can expect any benefit from participating, and, if so, what the benefit might be;

(5) To be told of the other choices I have and how they may be better or worse than being in the study;

(6) To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study;

(7) To be told what sort of medical or psychological treatment is available if any complications arise;

(8) To refuse to participate at all or to change my mind about participation after the study is started; if I were to make such a decision, it will not affect my right to receive the care or privileges I would receive if I were not in the study;

(9) To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form; and

(10) To be free of pressure when considering whether I wish to agree to be in the study. If I have other questions, I should ask the researcher or the research assistant. In addition, I may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS by calling (415) 422-6091, by electronic mail at IRBPHS@usfca.edu or by writing to USF IRBPHS, Counseling Psychology Department, Education Building, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1071.

Felix Enunwa