

BLACK MEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE
BENEFITS OF PLAYING CHESS

by

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(Under the Direction of Bonnie Cramond)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess in this context. The research questions focus on how Black men benefit from playing chess and the cognitive and affective skills they learn from playing chess. Black men's perceptions of the role of chess, as well as the skills they gain from playing chess, lead to specific cognitive skills and affective skills that were linked to criteria teachers look for when identifying students to be nominated and tested for gifted programs. I used a case study design to investigate the perceptions of adult, Black, male chess players, and gathered data through informal interviews of the individuals, observations during an elicitation strategy, and discussion in a focus group.

INDEX WORDS: Chess, Black Men, Cognitive Skills, Affective Skills,
Gifted, Underrepresentation, Case Study

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2013

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December 2013

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to T.B., an amazing, gifted, boy who should have been identified for gifted programming. Without him, my passion for this study may have never been discovered. In addition to T. B., I dedicate this work to all unidentified gifted Black boys like him. Lastly, I dedicate my study to my loving husband, Ben, a gifted Black man who has supported me in every way possible. I hope this study can have a positive impact on all their lives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thankfully acknowledge the people who supported me and helped me in various stages of this process. First, I would like to thank my husband, Ben Adams, for being there through all the late nights and keeping me focused; I love you very much, Ben. I would like to thank my mother, Dr. Betty J. Sylvest, for her constant willingness to help and the numerous times she read, and re-read, my dissertation; your unending patience has been a blessing, I love you, Momma. I sincerely appreciate the time my sister, Amanda J. Parker spent reading over my drafts and her feedback as well; you did well for a quantitative researcher, Amanda. My grandmother, Maxie J. Sylvest, has supported me daily and reminded me of her pride in my goals and accomplishments; thank you, Maw, I love you. Lastly, I would like to thank my wonderful chair and committee, Drs. Cramond, deMarrais, Grantham, and Hawkins, for their patience, flexibility, and support. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

I am currently a teacher of the gifted at an elementary school in Northeast Georgia. Over my six years at this school, the gifted program has grown dramatically from 22 students my first year to 76 students my sixth year. My first year at the school, I had one Black (used in this research to name people of African descent) student, a girl in the third grade. The next year, she was transferred due to a district-wide rezoning. For four years, I served mostly White students with only two multiracial boys. Finally, a Black male qualified for the gifted program by meeting three out of four testing criteria during my fifth year. These numbers have troubled me since I have been at this school, but one student has influenced me to consider another way to look at this issue.

He is a student who was tested for the gifted program for three of the years he was at our school, but never achieved the three required scores he needed to qualify based on our district's criteria. As a teacher of the gifted and the sponsor of a chess club held during the school day, I felt that he would benefit from the gifted program because I had observed him in the chess club. I noted his quick mind in grasping the hardest parts of learning the rules of chess and his problem solving ability in using strategies. His interest in the school chess club inspired me to think about the benefits of the game. I began to think that chess not only gave him an opportunity to show his thinking ability, it may have had a role in developing those abilities I had observed. If I could get other Black boys to play chess, more of them might be nominated and tested for gifted programs. If I

can learn why Black men play chess, how they see or use problem solving skills in the game, and what makes them continue to play, I may be able to engage young Black boys in a game with the structure that allows teachers to observe some of the characteristics they look for when nominating students for testing.

Problem

Bright boys are often overlooked for identification for the gifted program, or seen as underachievers in classroom settings typical for most schools (Hebert & Schreiber, 2010). These boys are often not identified as gifted until much later in their school careers or, more often, not at all. When race is added to the mix, Black males are the most underserved population in gifted education (Ford, 1998; 2010a; 2010b). In order to identify and engage these gifted Black boys, new methods have to be explored. One prominent barrier to identification of Black males is that they are not nominated for testing (Ford, 2010a; Irving & Hudley, 2008). Classroom teachers who nominate students for testing are, more often than not, white females. The racial differences between the teachers and the Black males may hinder teachers from seeing qualities or characteristics usually seen as reasons to nominate students for testing for gifted programs (Whiting, 2006a). In order to help teachers observe characteristics that would persuade them to nominate more Black boys, the Black boys should be put in a situation in which these characteristics can be recognized. Games are something that boys seem to enjoy no matter their race or gifted identification status. Thus, Black boys who play games, such as chess, have opportunities to demonstrate the characteristics teachers look for when nominating potential candidates for gifted programs.

Chess is a game that has spanned many ages, cultures, intelligence levels, and ethnicities (Hays, 2005; Holding, 1985), and is seen as a game of problem solving. To understand how Black boys could demonstrate the problem solving skills teachers look for when nominating students, it is important to determine what problem solving skills are used and/or strengthened by chess. Chess players who frequent chess clubs and routinely play for fun or for tournaments give insight into these skills. Black men's reflections upon the problem solving skills and other benefits of playing chess help us better understand how chess promotes Black boys' problem solving skills. The problem solving skills demonstrated through chess may allow teachers to see characteristics that are common in gifted students. This understanding could lead teachers of the gifted toward a new platform to engage, and possibly identify, gifted Black boys, regardless of the level of achievement.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess. The research questions focus on how Black males benefit from playing chess and the cognitive and affective skills they learn from playing chess. Black men's perceptions of the role of chess, as well as the skills they gain from playing chess, may lead to specific cognitive skills or affective factors that may be linked to criteria teachers look for when identifying students to be tested for gifted programs. The goal of this research is to determine if chess could be an avenue toward nomination and testing of Black boys for gifted programs. There has been a paucity of research on the benefits of chess for gifted students. The participants in this study included adult, Black, male chess

players. As common with case studies, the participants were interviewed multiple times over a two month period. Formal and informal interviews, an elicitation strategy, and a focus group were methods used for this study.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black males come to play chess?
2. What cognitive skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?
3. What affective skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?

These questions gave a framework to guide the understanding of how Black men were introduced to chess and the cognitive and affective skills they identify in the game.

Limitations

This study, like any research study, was affected by limitations. The limitations for this study were specific in the areas of cross cultural research and building rapport with the participants within the time frame of the study. Attempts were made to lessen the affect of these limitations. The discussions of the specific limitations follow.

Cross cultural research

As a white female who is studying Black men in order to help Black boys, this study crosses ethnic, cultural as well as gender lines. Ford, Monroe, Whiting, and Grantham (2008) and Kamenou (2007) have discussed the issues in cross-cultural research. Researcher identity is often described in subjectivity statements, but the extents to which these subjectivities can interfere with research are often overlooked.

Researchers need to consider how their own cultural beliefs will affect the population they are interested in studying. Qualitative researchers use methods to elicit information from participants that can get personal (Kamernou, 2007), so they have to understand

how their gender, race, and even age can affect the information they acquire. Ford et al. (2008) asserted that researchers are not exempt from the effects their own beliefs, experiences, and values have on the research process. The way researchers see others is influenced by all experiences of the researcher up to that point. This is especially true of White researchers crossing the cultural barriers to study Black subjects (Ford et al., 2008). Historically, according to Ford et al. (2008), research conducted on race has been tainted by the self-interest of the researcher. Thus, it is important for White researchers to be mindful of their research methods, philosophy, and goals when conducting research on or about Black participants. The tensions between Whites and Blacks have not been eradicated just because Whites want to say they are not racists (Ford et al., 2008). Kamenou (2007) argued the relationship between the White researcher and the culturally different participant is important. She suggested that her openness to sharing and straight-forward attitude helped to establish the rapport needed to conduct research on sensitive topics, such as racial differences. Ford et al. (2008) presented guidelines to establish culturally responsive research. They offered the following eight characteristics of culturally responsive research:

- explore racially, culturally, and linguistically relevant research topics;
- apply racially, culturally, and linguistically informed theories and paradigms;
- include multiple explanations to be examined;
- practice relationship building with participants;
- show respect for participants' primary language;
- utilize racially, culturally, and linguistically congruent research practices;

- provide racially, culturally, and linguistically sensitive assessments;
- include a diverse research team.

Researchers working with participants from different cultures have the responsibility of ensuring participants are comfortable with the study throughout the entire research process.

Rapport

One necessity for this research study was to quickly build rapport with the participants. During my coursework, I met a potential participant and began sharing experiences about chess and chess clubs. Building rapport with this participant was easy because of our interactions both in my coursework and the school chess club. His introduction to the other participants allowed them to accept me. This led to the other participants I met through him to quickly build a limited, but trusting relationship. I had chosen to be completely transparent about my study and my goals for this study, so the participants would always be aware of my processes. When I first asked the participants to meet with me, I built rapport by telling my story of the student that led me to this research, as well as listening to any stories the participants wished to share.

Subjectivities and Expectations

I have been a teacher of the gifted for 10 years. During those years, I established a chess club at an elementary school with the help of one of the gifted students. I currently teach chess to my gifted students starting in kindergarten, as well as sponsor a semester-long chess club for fourth grade students who meet once a week during the school day. I am not an expert chess player, but I was taught how to play by my father when I was a child. My father was involved with chess clubs for high school students

and felt strongly about the benefits of chess, so I feel I learned that belief from him. I have always valued games in education, but I have an interesting relationship with the game of chess. I love chess for the benefits I see, but I am not a great player, so I often lose against my students.

My research on Black male chess players brings out many differences between my participants and myself, a White, 32 year old female. I bring much subjectivity to my study based on my gender, race, background, educational level, and age. My gender makes me stand out, both in the realm of chess research and chess players. There are fewer female chess players in the ranks of the highest rated chess players, as well as in the local chess clubs. Research on chess often focuses on boys or men, and the majority of researchers interested in chess are male. In addition to my gender, my race brings other issues to this research. White people are prevalent in both chess and research fields; however, my focus on Black males involved many challenges. I thought the participants in my study may have had a difficult time accepting that my only goal was to help young Black boys, but I was happy I was incorrect. I was raised playing chess and seeing others play, so my background had the potential to affect my research because it made it difficult for me to accept negative findings but I was able to accept the negative experiences shared by the participants such as being called nerd and not having opponents because of their skill level.

By explaining at the beginning of the study and asking questions to aid in understanding, I ensured that the participants understood that I saw them as the experts, and I am the student. My age, 32 years old, was the last demographic that I considered. The participants were adults 18 and older, so the younger participants needed

encouragement to accept that they were the experts. I established this by identifying them as the teachers and myself as the learner.

Expectations of myself

To prepare for this study, I researched chess, problem solving and gifted Black males. My exposure to the research suggested certain ideas before the study began. I ensured that I looked at the data I collected as pieces to make the whole and did not try to shape my findings based on what I had read or hoped to find. To ensure I did not allow these expectations to take over, I stated them plainly:

1. I expected Black men would express positive experiences with chess.
2. I expected to find that Black men could identify cognitive skills they used when playing chess.
3. I expected that problem solving skills would be a main part of the cognitive skills Black men identified.
4. I expected to find that chess helped Black men in some affective way.
5. I expected to learn the participants felt they benefitted from chess.
6. I expected the participants to be able to share their ideas verbally and/or in written form.
7. I expected to find key themes that would assist in identifying gifted Black boys.

Knowing my expectations, I made sure to watch for these findings and ensured that what I derived could be supported by the data. These expectations were a checkpoint to see if I stayed on course with my research. Throughout this study, I validated my perceptions through continual dialogue with participants and careful, systematic analysis of the data.

Expectations of participants

There were certain assumptions I made about the participants in this study. The first assumption was that they would be willing to meet with me for multiple interviews and the focus group. The second assumption was that they would be willing to discuss their games, strategies, thoughts, and feelings as they played the computer in an elicitation situation. I assumed that the participants would be honest about their experiences. For this study, I assumed that the participants would feel they could trust me. I had met two of the participants and talked with them at length, so I felt they would be open to the idea of meeting and helping me with my research. I assumed that they would have thoughts about why they play chess, and that the participants would understand and not be offended when I discussed the reason for my research- the lack of Black boys in gifted programs.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a brief introduction of the researcher and then situated the study around the problem of underrepresentation of Black boys in gifted programs. The purpose of the study is to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess. With this purpose, an underlying goal for this study is to discover if chess could be a platform that allows teachers to observe characteristics that would encourage nomination of more Black boys to be tested for gifted programs. The research questions were identified as (1) How do Black males come to play chess?; (2) What cognitive skills to Black men perceive they develop through chess?; and (3) What affective skills to Black men perceive they develop through chess? Two limitations of this study were

identified and discussed, performing cross cultural research and building rapport. Finally the subjectivities, assumptions, and expectations of the researcher were identified and discussed, as well as the expectations and assumptions of the participants.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the United States of America, each state has adopted its own definition for giftedness, some of which vary from the federal definition (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). In 1988, the Javits Act, as cited on the National Association of Gifted Children (2008) website, gave the following definition for gifted and talented:

The term gifted and talented student means children and youths who give evidence of higher performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools in order to develop such capabilities fully. (para. 7)

This opens the door to look at students on many different levels including intelligence, creativity, and others listed above when seeking to identify areas of giftedness. The location of this study required looking at the state definition as well as the national definition. The Georgia Department of Education defined gifted as:

One who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability (ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields, and who needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her ability (ies). (Georgia Department of Education, 2013, p. 23)

Gifted students can have a variety of gifts or talents including, but not limited to, academic, artistic, creative, musical, technological, and more. Academically gifted students will excel in the areas of Math, Science, Reading, or other classes. Artistically, creatively, musically, and technologically gifted students will show their gifts in their respective abilities and areas. They may have advanced drawing abilities, demonstrate ability beyond their years in creative endeavors, play one or more instruments, or possess deeper understandings of technological thinking and functions (Stephens & Karnes, 2000).

Gifted Black Males

According to the 2010 Census, the population of the United States of America was 72.4% White and 12.6% Black (U. S. Census Bureau, 2011). The most recent information for educational statistics comes from the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), but does not include details about gifted enrollment. In April 2011, Snyder and Dillow published the *Digest of Education Statistics 2010*, which presented the educational statistics for the year 2006-still the most current information available- as follows:

- Total enrollment in public and private schools(estimated private school numbers) - 55,370,000;
- Total students between the ages of five and seventeen - 53,397,000;
- Total White students between the ages of five and seventeen - 31,305,000;
- Total Black students between the ages of five and seventeen - 7,869,000;
- Total students enrolled in gifted programs - 3,236,990;

- Total White students enrolled in gifted programs - 2,191,210;
- Total Black students enrolled in gifted programs – 296,150 (pp. 43, 85).

Table 1

Percentages of Black and White Students in 2006

	Total	Black	White	% Black	% White
Age 5 to 17	53,397,000	7,869,000	31,305,000	14.74%	58.63%
Enrolled in gifted program	3,236,990	296,150	2,191,210	9.15%	67.69%
Percent of Gifted in total population	6%	1%	4%		

Note. Percentages do not equal 100% because only Black and White were used.

Table 1 presents the percentages of Black and White students in the total population as well as enrolled in gifted programs. The discrepancy in representation between the total population and the gifted population is a problem that has been addressed by many researchers (e.g. Baldwin, 1987; Barber & Torney-Purta, 2008; Ford, 2010a, 2010b; Grantham, 2011).

Underrepresentation

Black males have historically been underrepresented in gifted programs (e.g. Baldwin, 1987; Bonner, Lewis, Bowman-Perrott, Hill-Jackson, & James, 2009; Ford, 2010a). The generally accepted guideline is that ten percent of the population could be identified as gifted (e.g. Barber & Torney-Purta, 2008; Reynolds, 2010; Whiting, 2009b). With this guideline, ten percent of the Black male population could be participating in the gifted program. In 2006, according to Snyder & Dillow (2011), 9.15% of the students enrolled in gifted programs were black. The information available did not differentiate by gender.

Ford (2010a) and Irving and Hudley (2008) discussed some roadblocks to a higher representation of Black males in gifted programs. Lack of teacher referral is mentioned by researchers as a major roadblock to Black males being identified for the gifted program (e.g. Barber & Torney-Purta, 2008; Ford, 1998, 2010a; Grantham, 2002; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Reynolds, 2010). Grantham (2002) presented a candid interview with Dr. Mary M. Frasier, a researcher and advocate for gifted minorities, in which she highlighted ingrained attitudes about minorities as a roadblock to representation of Black males in gifted education.

Bonner et al. (2009), Ford (1998, 2010a), and Naglieri and Ford (2003) have pointed out that the assessment measures used to identify gifted students consistently discriminate against minority students. The lower scores on verbal intelligence tests demonstrate the bias of assessments against minority students (Naglieri & Ford 2003). Bonner et al. (2009), Ford (1998, 2010a, 2010b), and Ford and Whiting (2010) discussed definitions and policies for gifted education as an additional roadblock for Black males being identified for gifted programs. Ford (2010a) describes the policies as “stagnant” (p. 32) and the identification procedures as “outdated” (p. 32). Bonner et al. (2009) explain how definitions of gifted do not represent to a large degree the “cultural mores and traditions found to exist among African American male cohorts” (p. 194). Ford and Whiting (2010) addressed these and other issues in conjunction with retention. They claim the next step is to “find culturally sensitive instruments, strategies, and procedures” (p. 132).

Suggestions for Increasing the Number of Black Males in Gifted Programs

Some advocates have written articles and books that have promoted a change in the number of Black males identified for gifted programs and have given suggestions for how to accomplish the change (Baldwin, 1987; Bonner et al., 2009; Ford, 2010a; Irving & Hudley, 2008). Frasier (Grantham, 2002) stressed that changes will not come quickly, but they must be implemented to make progress for Black males in gifted programs. In addition to recruitment, retention of Black males in gifted programs is another priority (e.g. Baldwin, 1987; Barber & Torney-Purta, 2008; Bonner, Jennings, Marbley, & Brown, 2008; Bonner et al., 2009; Ogbu, 1992; Whiting, 2009b). Ford (2010a) has asserted that educators need to think of underrepresentation as a part of the achievement gap (Ford, 2010a). She and Whiting (2010) have recommended that educators need to examine their thoughts about Black males and assess their buy-in to deficit thinking. Washington (2010) suggested that counselors, teachers, schools, and districts should not focus on being colorblind, but should search out cultural differences and emphasize the positive aspects to reach Black males.

Some have suggested that placing blame about the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted programs on individuals or cultures does not further the agenda of identifying Black males. Families, communities, educators, and administrators need to change the current processes rather than look at who is doing what to hinder the recruitment and retention of Black males in gifted programs (Bonner et al. 2009; Ford 2010a; Washington, 2010). Some of the suggested steps are for educators to reject the status quo, change their perceptions of Black students, and receive ongoing professional development targeted to working with minority students and identifying cultural

differences (Barber and Torney-Purta, 2008; Ford, 1998, 2010a; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

Cultural Responsiveness

Educators and administrators need to be informed about the issue of underrepresentation of Black males in their gifted programs so that steps can be taken toward change. This means they must learn to be culturally responsive in their interactions with Black boys and their families. Irving and Hudley (2008), Reynolds (2010), Washington (2010), and Whiting (2009a, 2009b) have suggested working with Black males to encourage academic and cultural identity simultaneously. A brief description of each study is followed by a discussion of their findings.

Irving and Hudley (2008) studied the cultural identities of 115 African American males in 11th and 12th grade from an urban school in Southern California. They administered a 72 item survey with five subsets: cultural mistrust, academic outcome expectations, outcome values, cultural attitudes, and ethnic identity affirmation. Their items came from existing instruments and utilized a four point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. Irving and Hudley (2008) stated, “Our findings suggest that individual differences in cultural identity may be important in understanding school failure” (p. 690). They identified the need for programs that help students develop cultural identities while promoting positive ethnic identity.

Reynolds (2010) performed case studies on nine families of Black middle class parents with children in secondary schools. The 16 individual participants were interviewed and contributed to a focus group about their experiences in public secondary schools as a Black parent. The parents discussed achievement, underachievement, and

how they discuss academic as well as affective behaviors with their children. Reynolds offered suggestions for teachers, administrators, and Black families to help encourage Black boys in their academic achievements and affective behaviors and skills.

When it comes to working with Black males, many scholars discuss deficit thinking in which Black males are seen as not good enough. Instead of this view, Whiting (2009a) presented characteristics of Black males who succeed in school in his scholar identity model. His model outlines how Black males require support and direction to “master educational and sociocultural challenges” (p. 227). Whiting (2009b) defines having a scholar identity as when “Black males perceive them-selves as academicians, as studious, and as intelligent or talented in school settings (p. 227). He identified nine characteristics of a scholar identity: self-efficacy, willing to make sacrifices, internal locus of control, future oriented, self-awareness, need for achievement, academic self-confidence, racial identity, and masculinity. These characteristics, according to Whiting (2009a), have to be promoted and empowered in positive situations. He offered three central recommendations to empower Black boys: culturally sensitive attitudes and behaviors, culturally responsive content and methods, and Black male role model presence.

Whiting (2009b) built upon his scholar identity model (Whiting 2009a) by cofounding a Scholar Identity Institute (SII) for an average of 40 Black males to attend a two week program from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. During this time, the 5th through 10th grade boys listen to lectures, participate in activities, and complete reading assignments designed to “educate students and change their views and attitudes about school and learning” (p. 54). In this article, Whiting (2009b) focuses on changing the academic self-

perceptions and attitudes of learning and success of young Black males to encourage positive and strong racial pride.

In his article, “Professional School Counselors and African American Males: Using School/Community Collaboration to Enhance Academic Performance”, Washington (2010) discussed “African American males’ academic difficulties, and how these difficulties have been conceptualized within educational literature” (p. 27). He offered three areas of focus for overcoming the academic difficulties of African American males: limiting barriers to constructive school/community collaborations, community resources and school/community collaboration, and systemic change within schools.

One common suggestion found in the literature was for educators to locate a mentor for Black males (e.g. Reynolds 2010; Washington, 2010; Whiting, 2009a, 2009b). Ford (2010a, 2010b), Ford and Whiting (2010), and Whiting (2009a, 2009b) suggested multicultural counseling as a step to encourage achievement in Black males. This gives the students an opportunity to share their experiences and problems with others who have the same issues. They found that having a strong racial identity development focus for Black males can inspire them to achieve at greater levels (Irving & Hudley, 2008). Each Black male needs to feel empowered as a person, in a race, and from a culture (Ford & Whiting, 2010). Teachers need to take steps to broaden their beliefs about African American students as a whole. They should be given the training necessary to distinguish the difference between behaviors that are the result of cultural differences versus situational attitudes (Ford & Whiting, 2010; Whiting, 2009b). One cultural difference Whiting (2009b) gave as an example was Black boys using behavior as a coping

mechanism, referred to as cool pose culture (Majors & Billson, 1992). Situational attitudes are adapted to the circumstances that Black males experience. Reynolds (2010) offered positive communication as a first contact to help teachers avoid “microaggressions” (p. 154), which are unconscious or conscious attitudes and practices that demonstrate White superiority as an avenue to encourage under achievement in Black boys.

Summary of Literature on Gifted Black Males

This portion of the literature review focused on gifted Black males and examined the options available for increasing their representation in gifted programs. Research on underrepresentation, identity, and cultural responsiveness were examined. Underrepresentation of Black males in gifted programs is a problem across the nation. The lack of Black males in the gifted programs has been linked to teacher referral, test bias, and social factors. Ford and Whiting (2010), Naglieri and Ford (2003), and Whiting (2009b) offered suggestions for teacher training, nonverbal tests that minimize bias, and mentors for Black males to help increase their representation in gifted programs. The academic, cultural, and social identities of Black males have been a roadblock to their retention in gifted programs. Barber and Torney-Purta (2008), Ford (1998, 2010a) Graham and Anderson (2008), Hargrove and Seay (2011) have acknowledged that steps must be taken to help students find a balance between their cultural, social, and academic identities. Educators (e.g. teachers, administration, and counselors) must ensure they provide culturally responsive curriculums, assessments, and social settings.

Affective Skills

Definitions of affective skills are consistent among researchers. Duncan-Hewitt, Leise, and Hall (2005) describe affective skills as “strongly related to student buy-in, self- management, persistence, attitudes toward assessment, and level of success” (p. 81). A conference presentation by Vinson (n.d.) took the definitions a step farther by relating them to life, “this is the domain that deals with attitudes, motivation, willingness to participate, valuing what is being learned, and ultimately incorporating the values of a discipline into a way of life” (The Affective Domain, para. 1). The affective skills of Black males are evident in research areas such as identity and motivation.

Black males have the unfortunate roadblock of having to choose between an academic identity and a social identity (Graham & Anderson, 2008). These students are accused of acting White if they succeed in academic areas, raise their hand to answer questions in class, use standard English, or value different cultural aspects from their peers. This creates an identity crisis for these students. They have to choose between an academic identity (Irving & Hudley, 2008) in which they succeed in school and a social identity (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Whiting, 2009b) in which they share cultural values and experiences with their peers.

To some students, acting White is not a true description because they may strive to be raceless. Harris and Marsh (2010) discuss whether a raceless- a weak or low attachment to their race- identity helped students gain more educational success. They used data collected from the Maryland Adolescence Development in Context Study (MADICS) which collected information on 1,480 adolescents. Males made up 51 percent and females made up the remaining 49 percent. Harris and Marsh used a stratified sampling

procedure to select 629 Black students in grades 11 and 7 that came from families with a mean income of \$45,000-\$49,000. Harris and Marsh's (2010) study found that having a raceless identity did not lead to more success in educational endeavors. This study showed that students with higher levels of racial identity actually had more academic success.

Affective skills are some of the strongest reasons educators and researchers promote chess for young people. Adams (2012) discussed the use of chess to build affective skills. She explained, "The students learned to appreciate their opponent in the game, to think through two or three moves ahead, as well as to focus their attention" (p. 245). Ferguson (n.d.) describes ten areas of affective skills involved in or improved by chess: independence, imagination, motivation, determination, patience, will power, concentration, competition, social skills, and enjoyment. Table 2 shows how Ferguson (n.d.) sees these skills in chess.

Table 2

Ferguson's (n.d.) Affective Skills in Chess

Affective Skills	Description in Chess
Independence	Make decisions based on your own judgment
Imagination	Invent new combinations of moves
Motivation	Encourages looking for the best plan or move
Determination	Learn even if you lose a game
Patience	Look at the entire board before making a move
Will power	Capture the right piece instead of the first piece you could capture
Concentration	Focus on your end goal
Competition	Compete against other and yourself
Social skills	Build good sportsmanship
Enjoyment	Never the same game twice, you make decisions, you strategize to win

The affective skills deal with the feelings and actions that are taken. The thinking is still going on, but the affective is what is noticed first (Bloom, 1964).

Problem Solving

Definitions of problem solving with the identification of gifted students are important to this study because the underlying goal is to establish a connection between the problem solving skills teachers look for when identifying students to nominate for gifted testing. The literature on problem solving spans many fields and domains (Barbey & Barsalou, 2009; Horan, 1977; Jonassen, 2005; Okuda, Runco, & Berger, 1991) and has as many definitions. For the purposes of this study, problem-solving refers to looking at a situation or dilemma and deciding the best course of action to reach the desired outcome in the most efficient way.

The area of problem solving has a plethora of research to support the importance placed on this skill. Horan (1977) described the research on problem solving in this way:

The literature on problem solving does not appear to be bounded by time or space. Historical figures such as James (1890), Thorndike (1898), and Dewey (1933) were contributors [SIC] and current areas of inquiry include such diverse topics as creativity training and teaching computers to play chess. In his 1966 review, Davis remarked that research in human problem solving has a well-earned reputation for being the most chaotic of all categories of learning. (para. 2)

Jonassen (2005) expressed problem solving as a process with three attributes.

One, a problem is an unknown value, process, method, position, or belief that is worth finding an answer to. Two, in order to find the unknown, problem solving requires the mental representation of the problem. That is, human problem solvers

individually construct or socially co-construct a representation of the problem, known as the problem space (Newell & Simon, 1972). Three, problem solving engages cognitive and social activities that manipulate the problem space, such as model building, hypothesis generation, speculation, solution testing, information gathering, etc. (Jonassen, 2005, para. 3)

Many of the resources on problem solving expressed that the process of finding the solution is often the most important part of problem solving (Barbey & Barsalou, 2009; Condell, Wade, Galway, McBride, Gormley, Brennan, & Somasundram, 2010; Horan, 1977; Jonassen, 2005; Okuda, Runco, & Berger, 1991). Thus the emphasis is not on the solution, but on how the solution was determined.

Jonassen (n.d.) stated that learning problem solving skills is important when he pointed out Gagné's belief that the main goal of education is to teach children to be able to rationalize and problem solve. "Most educators, like Gagné, regard problem solving as the most important learning outcome from life" (Jonassen, n.d., para. 2). Knowing how Gagné regarded problem solving helps to establish how he came to study how accurately teachers identify gifted students. Gagné (1994) discussed how teachers were not worse than other referral sources at identifying gifted students when the data were analyzed and compared. The characteristics teachers use to make nominations for gifted programs are important to this study. Siegle, Moore, Mann, and Strulson (2006) studied factors that influence nominations of students for gifted programs, and they found that teachers correctly identified gifted students when they were asked to observe for a specific trait or characteristic. Teachers looked for students who stood out from the crowd.

When teachers are looking for students to nominate, many factors play a role in their decision, such as the students' creativity, interests, age, and gender (Siegle, Moore, Mann, & Strulson, 2006). This study did not address race, but researchers interested in the underrepresentation of Black students would add race as a factor for identification (Ford, 2010; Whiting, 2009a). The teachers in the study did pay attention to the socioeconomic status (SES) of students when they were identifying characteristics. The teachers in the study would over estimate ability for students in higher socioeconomic status and under estimate the ability for students with lower SES. With this in mind, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2007) presented data that says 40% of Black families live in poverty, thus the socioeconomic status of the students could correlate with their race. When teachers were instructed to look for specific characteristics in the students, problem solving processes were often given a lot of attention by the teachers (Siegle, Moore, Mann, & Strulson, 2006).

Towlson's (2006) action research studied the teaching of problem solving using chess. He modified the mathematics curriculum in England for "the year 7 set 6 to include regular chess instruction" (p. 19) which is the equivalent to sixth grade. During the week, the class received three hours of math instruction, so for this study, the students received chess instruction one hour and math instruction for two hours a week. Towlson measured "Numeracy" (p. 19) by administering a "past mathematics SATs paper" (p. 19). Affective or social skills were recorded by the teaching assistant and a sixth form student who was likely between 16 and 18 years old. From his research of the literature, Towlson stated, "I conclude that chess (and other problem-solving or strategy games)

causes the creation of neural networks in the brain. Problem-solving, especially in chess, causes many neurons to be used at the same time” (p. 20).

Towlson used a variety of data collection techniques such as questionnaires with the parents, discussions with students and staff, two case studies, analyzing base line scores for the students, and observations made by the teaching assistant and the sixth form student. Towlson did not give a complete description of the students, but he did state there were more girls than boys in his study group. He withheld the gender of his case study participants. The results of Towlson’s study showed the students began the study with a mean NC level of 3.4 and the expected outcome would have been a mean of 3.6, but the participants in this study ended with a mean NC level of 4.0. This was 0.4 NC levels higher than what was expected. Towlson addressed the transfer of skills by noting the students in his study had also improved in their Science classes. Fifteen of the students in the Science class were also in the chess study, and they were testing at 1.3 sublevels above their grade.

The results of Towlson’s study show that students made gains at higher rates than expected. Towlson realized early that it would be difficult to quantify problem-solving on its own, so he measured the scores on standardized tests to identify growth. An unanticipated, but very evident, recognition in the change in affective skills was noted by the researcher, teaching assistant, sixth form student, and leadership of the school. Towlson expressed that affective/social skills can be taught through chess, such as: sportsmanship, interaction, winning and losing, and concentration.

Farhad, Mozafar, and Ali Mohammadi Bolban (2012) compared the problem-solving abilities of fifth, eighth, and ninth grade males in Sanandaj, which is west of Iran.

For the study, a random sample of 180 male students was selected and then 86 random students from this selection were taught chess for six months. The control group, those not taught chess, was made up of 94 male students. In each grade level, the chess group was smaller, but not by more than five students. The participants were given a questionnaire of meta-cognitive ability along with a researcher-designed mathematical problem-solving test. The results on the two tests were compared and yielded statistically significant results showing that learning chess helped to improve the problem-solving and mathematical scores of the participants. Their study demonstrated “chess play, as an independent variable, has a significant role in developing meta-cognitive ability of the students” (Farhad, Mozafar, & Ali Mohammadi Bolban, 2012, p. 375). In addition, there was a positive significant relationship between meta-cognition and problem solving power for the students in the study.

Summary of Literature on Problem Solving

Problem-solving has spanned many fields of interest and impacted research studies across disciplines (Jonassen, 2005). Scholars have shared the belief that the process of finding a solution is often more important than the solution itself. Teachers value the problem-solving process, and specifically look for those skills when identifying students to nominate for gifted programs (Siegle, Moore, Mann, & Strulson, 2006). Farhad, Mozafar, and Ali Mohammadi Bolban (2012) and Towlson (2006) posited a strong positive relationship between problem-solving and chess. The participants gained problem-solving skills as well as affective skills in both studies. The research on problem-solving offers insight into how skills are identified and strengthened (Farhad,

Mozafar, & Ali Mohammadi Bolban, 2012; Siegle, Moore, Mann, & Strulson, 2006; Towlson, 2006).

Chess

According to current researchers chess can be used as a tool to promote learning in gifted students. . The paucity of available research on the topic of chess specific to gifted students is not surprising. However, the role of chess in relation to memory, strategy, and intelligence can be found in the literature (Gobet, de Voogt, & Retschitzki, 2004; Hays, 2005; McClain, 2005; Milat, 1997). A few of the resources reviewed (Frydman & Lynn, 1992; Gobet & Campitelli, 2005; Hays 2005) lead to older studies that are considered the landmark studies on chess. For the purpose of this study, five articles were identified that discussed specific skills in chess or the relationship between chess and giftedness.

Gobet, de Voogt, and Retschitzki (2004), McClain (2005), and Storey (2000) claim numerous skills that can be strengthened by chess (Table 3). These claims, based on numerous studies that are available on websites and in some peer-reviewed journals, affect districts, schools, and teachers when they search for appropriate curriculum for gifted students. Ferreira and Palhares (2008) explained that strategy games, specifically chess, contribute to the development of skills in mathematics and problem solving in a study conducted on 3rd to 6th grade children. They found that a relationship exists between the strength of the chess player and the child's strengths in patterns involving problem solving.

Table 3
Skills Strengthened by Chess

Reference	Skills
Gobet, de Voogt, and Retschitzki (2004)	Concentration, problem identification, planning strategies, appreciation for the consequences of action, creativity, lucid thinking, logical thinking, analytical thinking, patience, judgment, self-discipline, and decision-making
McClain (2005)	Problem-solving, discipline, memory, mathematical skills
Storey (2000)	Cognitive development, flexible thinking skills, verbal skills, math skills

Two data driven studies were identified that met the criteria of studies that focused on chess with gifted students. As a brief description, Rifner and Feldhusen (1997) implemented a chess team for middle school students, and then evaluated the gains on a problem solving assignment. Frydman and Lynn (1992) tested young Belgian chess players with the French WISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) to determine if it is necessary for chess players to have high levels of intelligence. The studies examined in the review of literature had relatively small sample sizes ranging from 20 to 33 and involved specific groups, therefore results are not generalizable to the entire gifted population.

Rifner and Feldhusen (1997) had twenty middle school participants, 10 of these were gifted and 10 were of average ability. Of the 10 gifted students, five were on the chess team receiving instruction and five were not. The same was true of the 10 average ability students. They utilized a blend of traditional chess instruction with unorthodox chess instruction to benefit the problem solving skills of the students involved. To evaluate the model, Rifner and Feldhusen (1997) “asked randomly selected students to analyze and interpret a Shakespearean sonnet (No. 73), a measure of problem-solving

ability unrelated to chess” (p. 38). The assignment was given in the fall before instruction and in the spring following the chess competition. The researchers recorded the participants’ think aloud as they analyzed the Shakespearean sonnet. The results of the study revealed six problem-solving behaviors that appeared to differentiate the students on the chess team from the control group.

The researchers used effect sizes to compare the difference between the mean pretest/posttest gains for both groups. The group on the chess team used more than one problem-solving method (effect size = .91), set more goals (effect size = .48), and achieved a higher percentage of their goals (effect size = 1.00). In addition, members of the chess team identified as gifted increased the number of goals set as well as the number of lines looked at for analyzing the assignment. The gifted students greatly reduced the number of guesses (effect size = -1.03) and left fewer negative evaluations unresolved (effect size = -.70). Rifner & Feldhusen (1997) were able to show the group who played chess performed better on the problem-solving activities.

To determine if it is necessary for chess players to have high levels of intelligence, Frydman and Lynn (1992) tested 33 participants in a chess tournament in Belgium in 1989. The sample included four girls and 29 boys aged 8.10 years to 13.2 years (mean 11.0 years). The chess players completed the French adaptation of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), a test of mental abilities (IQ). The performance subtests and digit span are identical to the American test; however, changes to the verbal subtests to make the test suitable for French and Belgian students were necessary. The researchers divided the sample into three groups based on their ratings in the tournament. For each group, researchers collected the scores from the Full-scale IQ,

Verbal IQ, and the Performance IQ and compared the scores between the groups. The only statistically significant result was the Performance IQ between the higher and weakest group with a seven IQ point disparity ($t = 3.09, p < .01$). This demonstrates the Performance IQ of the higher performing chess group was statistically significantly higher than the lower ability chess group, but does not signify a higher IQ is necessary to excel in chess. From this study, it is impossible to determine the cause and effect.

Chapter Summary

The literature on gifted Black boys demonstrates a need for improving nomination and testing practices. Gifted Black males are underrepresented in programs for gifted students, and have one of the hardest struggles to find their identity. The teachers and other school staff need to address the cultural responsiveness that is under promoted in schools. Teachers attempting to be culturally responsive need to find ways to see characteristics in different ways. Problem solving skills span a variety of traits, but some can be distinguished in certain settings. Chess gives a context for problem solving skills to develop and become evident. Researchers have linked memory, planning, concentration, and other problem-solving skills to chess. Chess becomes a bridge to identify gifted Black boys by putting them in a situation through which teachers can observe the problem-solving skills that may not be demonstrated in other areas. The literature reviewed supports the idea that chess could be a platform for Black boys to demonstrate some positive affective skills such as motivation, self-discipline, and patience and cognitive skills sought after by teachers nominating students for gifted programs such as planning, logical thinking, memory, and mathematical skills.

However, there are limited scholarly studies on the benefits chess related specifically to Black males. Therefore a multiple case study approach of five Black men who have been involved in chess throughout their education was conducted to provide an in-depth look at their experiences and examine the cognitive and affective skills they develop through chess.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess. A multiple case study approach was used for this study to address the role of chess in the participants' lives. Informal interviews, an elicitation strategy, and a focus group were used to collect the experiences and beliefs of the participants in order to build individual cases of the Black male chess players. The constant comparative method was used to establish thoughtful analysis and research methods (Charmaz, 2006). The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black males come to play chess?
2. What cognitive skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?
3. What affective skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?

These questions provide a framework to address the purpose of this study.

This chapter presents the research questions of this study, and then describes the research design of the study, followed by a discussion of the research design and the participant selection process, including criteria for inclusion as well as sampling techniques. The methods of data generation are explained in detail, including the coding process. A discussion on ensuring quality in the research process is included before the chapter summary.

Research Design

A multiple case study method was used to get an in-depth understanding of the role of chess within Black men's lives. As Simons (2009) argued, "The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic" (Simons, 2009, p 21).

According to Merriam, case studies are descriptive and "findings are inductively derived from the data, and the end product is richly descriptive" (Merriam, 2010, p. 457). Using a multiple case study approach provided an in-depth understanding of Black male chess players' reflections on cognitive and affective skills. The cases for this multiple case study are defined as the individual participants. Each participant shared his story of growing up and his involvement in chess. This approach yields rich description and details about their individual experiences with the game. These experiences are the basis for the data generated in the following chapters presented in both narrative form for each participant as well as a thematic cross case analysis.

Case Study Participant Selection

Participants selected for this study were Black men who had multiple experiences with chess in different situations such as, but not limited to, chess clubs, tournaments, chess classes, or regular casual meetings within the past year. They had to be available to meet in person at least three times for the study. These criteria established that the participants were over 18 years old, were available for the study, and had appropriate experiences with chess. The breadth of the criteria was necessary to identify sufficient participants for this study.

Participants for this study were selected using a networking sample (Roulston, 2010) to include four to six Black men 18 years or older. My initial contacts were two

chess players from Rockridge University. One of the participants had been a volunteer in local elementary chess clubs and a guest on a panel in a course I was taking. The second participant used chess with at-risk students in his career as a social worker. I worked with the initial two contacts to invite three additional Black male chess players for a total of five participants. The participants self-identified these criteria during our initial meetings.

The ages, education levels of the participants and their parents, the number of siblings attending/attended college, the participants' current role, participants' participation in gifted programming, and the age the participants learned chess are presented in Table 4.¹

¹ All names of people, schools, and towns are pseudonyms with the exception of chess Masters, Grand Masters, and Jeffrey Cannon's Harlem Children's Zone.

² all names of people and places throughout the narratives are pseudonyms

³ To identify quotes, data chunk numbers were used and designated as (DC# ???). The transcripts do not

Table 4

Demographics of Participants

Name	Age at time of Study	Education Level			Siblings in/completed College	Current Role	Gifted Program	Age Learned Chess
		Mother's	Father's	Self				
Alex	19	Masters of Business	Not disclosed	Sophomore Environmental Health Science	0	Undergraduate Student	Yes	6
Cyrus	22	Bachelors Degree	Bachelors Degree	Second Year Masters of Social Work candidate	1	Graduate Student	Yes	4
Daniel	32	unknown	unknown	GED	5	Musician	No	8
Emil ^a						Undergraduate Student	Yes	12
Jeremy	36	One year of College	didn't finish H.S.	Masters of Social Work, 2003	5	Social Worker	No	13

^aEmil chose to withhold some information.

Data Generation Methods

While conducting the case studies, participants were informally interviewed using the ethnographic interview format of asking open-ended questions allowing the participant to tell his story. Participants were observed while playing against a computer as an elicitation of thoughts. Finally, participants were a part of a focus group. The informal interviews and focus group were intended to address the following topics: interests in playing chess, favorite part about chess, just learning to play, enjoyable opponents, well played games, resources used to learn chess, chess teachers, skill level, strategies used, improvement plans, learning goals for chess, and impacts on other areas of life.

Following Institutional Review Board approval, I contacted two chess players through email and phone to set up a meeting time. Upon this first contact, I presented a small incentive for participation; each participant received a \$15 gift certificate to be used at multiple businesses in the local area. During this initial meeting, I described my study, my goals for our time together, the consent form, as well as their roles. Because I was using a networking sample, the first two participants had an extended role to contact one to two other potential participants on my behalf. Upon contact with the three extended participants, either by phone or email, I set the dates of the meetings. During the first introduction with each participant, I explained my study and goals, as well as explained the consent forms. The first meeting with the participants allowed me to describe how I would be using two recording devices during the interviews, the elicitation strategy, and the focus group. Informal interviews were used to gather data about the history of each person and how they came to play chess.

After the participants understood I was asking for a minimum of three meetings, they were asked for their preferred meeting times and locations. The focus group was the only meeting that had to work for everyone's schedule. I scheduled the first of two interviews for a location conducive to recording. The sites for the interviews were chosen by the participants, and had to be a comfortable meeting place for the participants, such as an office meeting space or a public, but quiet, location they frequent. Buildings on Rockridge University campus were used for the interviews and focus group. This option allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and forthcoming with personal information. I answered any questions they had about the consent forms and how the information I learned would be used.

At the first meeting I described the two types of data I wanted to collect. The first type of data was from the two interviews. One interview was scheduled to ask questions and learn the participants' stories. The second included a computer elicitation strategy. The elicitation strategy was described to the participants during the first meeting to decrease anxiety. For the elicitation, I asked the participants to play a game against a computer while I observed, asked questions, and asked participants to explain their thought processes out loud as they played. While I observed during the elicitation session, I took notes, and each night I typed up my field notes. The field notes enabled me to keep a record of the moves that were made and facial expressions the participants made while they were playing the game, as well as track the moves that required longer thought. The interviews were transcribed as soon as possible to allow for detailed memos during the first stages of the analysis based on Charmaz's (2006) description of the constant comparative method. The second type of data was from the focus group with

three of the participants during which we talked about some of the questions and findings. One participant was unable to participate, and the fifth participant joined after the focus group was conducted. I shared my transcripts and field notes with the participants for member checking, and I shared my analysis and findings with the participants.

Constant Comparative Method. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data collected. Butler-Kisber (2010) discussed constant comparative inquiry as a method used in grounded theory research. She explained that Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the method and tools known as constant comparative inquiry, which helped to “legitimize qualitative work at a time when positivism flourished and quantitative research was the norm” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 25). The method “involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 5). Their strategies became known as constant comparative method. Glaser and Strauss (1967) offered “four stages of the constant comparative method: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory” (p. 105). The analysis thus starts with coding, but researchers are not working in a linear fashion. They are reading their field notes, coding, analyzing, and building theory constantly. The goal is to generate many codes, categories, and properties from data.

The assumptions that guide constant comparative inquiry require a close relationship between the researcher and the data. The process requires researchers to be creative in their interactions with the data (Boeije, 2002). In its original form, constant comparative inquiry assumes that the researcher enters the field with no predetermined

theory in mind, but in reviewing and coding field notes, will make connections to categories and ideas which lead to theories. Researchers must spend time coding the data to discover the categories or theories. Often, they will need to compare one code or category with another data set to strengthen the emerging theory.

The analytical purposes of constant comparative inquiry can be summed up as being immersed in the data and theory. The entire time researchers are analyzing data they are working with the codes, categories, and emerging theories. These emerging theories lead to the theories that researchers endeavor to identify from their research experience. Constant comparative methods help establish thoughtful and tested analysis and research by comparing codes and categories to other data sets. There are other strengths of the constant comparative method that Charmaz (2006) pointed out, such as the demystification of the qualitative research process. The memos establish clear points in which ideas came to researchers or when they had to switch their way of thinking. The process has flexible guidelines instead of strict protocols for completing research, which allows researchers to follow where the data go. One concern mentioned is that researchers can get caught in the many paths that are revealed by constantly comparing data sets. This can lead researchers further away from their original goal, but can open up new research ideas and questions.

The process for this study started with notes including observations and thoughts while interviewing the chess players. While transcribing interviews and field notes, memos of connections, categories, and themes were included. Any other thoughts were kept in a memo to return to at a later time. After the notes and informal interviews had been transcribed, including the memos, coding and categorizing the data began. A

detailed, step-by-step reflection and technical description of my research process can be found in Appendix C.

In order to ensure accuracy and to begin the analysis, I transcribed all my interviews myself. I used Express Scribe (Softonic International S.L., 2013a) for the first nine transcriptions (including the focus group) and InqScribe (Softonic International S.L., 2013b) for the last two interviews. While transcribing, I set both programs to play at 60% of the original speed to aid in transcribing. I used a foot pedal to control the playing and rewinding of the programs. I would often have to listen to a section multiple times to try and distinguish what was being said, but there were a few (46) instances where I had to type “(??)” because I could not clearly hear what was said by the participants. While I was transcribing, I was able to make a few memos, which started the analysis process.

Coding

The coding process can be divided into four parts. Because Microsoft Excel (Microsoft, 2007a) was used, the data had to be formatted in a way so each sentence/chunk would have its own line. The first step was to combine all transcripts into one document to provide continuous line numbering. After all transcripts were placed in one document, the “Find and Replace” feature of Microsoft Word (Microsoft, 2007b) was utilized for the next steps. A search for all periods (this was used when transcribing to delineate a sentence or chunk of data), and replace them with a line break. The second step was to get the data into Microsoft Excel; all text was copied, including the headers with time and locations, and then placed into a Microsoft Excel document.

With the data formatted properly, part three of the coding process began. The process involved reading a line or chunk of data and picking words to use as a code.

Often the actual words of the participants were used, but sometimes it was necessary to name a code differently to get to the meaning. When a code was assigned to a chunk of data, the number 1 was placed in the column of the code or codes to be associated with that data. So one chunk of data could have one or ten codes, but each would be marked with a 1. This was done to enable Microsoft Excel (Microsoft, 2007a) to count the data, and to enable quick filtering of all data under each code as needed. Data was filtered out with multiple codes by using features in the “Sort and Filter” ribbon. See Appendix D Figure 1.

To ensure that each participant’s data was identifiable, pseudonym codes were placed in each column- C through G. Then, as each data chunk was read, new codes were made or assigned to codes already created. When the process was complete for all the participants, a second round was done to identify previously coded data that could fit with the new codes developed with each new participant. If a code was generated from Cyrus, such as intelligence, the process allowed going back to Jeremy and Alex to look for data that may fit in that code. The “Find” feature helped immensely with this process by allowing searches for words like smart, intelligent, intelligence, bright, and dumb. Non-examples were coded as intelligence as well, thus allowing filtering of both examples and non-examples; non-examples such as dumb and stupid were compared with the examples such as intelligent and smart.

The final step in the coding process was to categorize and count the data chunks and codes. At this point, codes were pulled out that were in similar categories; Codes such as problem solving, critical thinking, strategies, and forward thinking were all skills,

therefore, the category was built from those and named Skills. The process resulted in 75 codes and 13 categories. See Appendix D Figure 2.

Then the analysis worksheet could be rearranged by the categories and the columns were color coded. This allowed for looking for specific quotes or data pieces. The last step was to sort the data by multiple codes in order to get a total for the categories. The total of the codes does not equal the total of the categories because multiple codes could be selected, but the category was only marked once. See Appendix D Figure 3.

The analysis of the data collected has provided a wealth of information, but not all of the information was relevant for this study. In order to focus the analysis, the research questions were used to determine the categories to include. The research questions were aligned as much as possible with relevant categories and codes. Of the thirteen codes identified, (1) *learning/studying chess*, (2) *why/why not chess*, (3) *skills and strategies*, (4) *relating to chess*, (5) *reasons for chess*, and (6) *barriers to chess* best explained the research questions. The category *why/why not chess* gives insight into two of the research questions.

Narrative Methods

The data, codes, and categories collected through this study were rich with detail and descriptive of multiple aspects of chess in the lives of the participants. The participants' stories are presented in a detailed narrative method. Narrative inquiry is an approach to understanding the interactions of our daily lives (Guerrero, 2011). In this study, the transcripts presented the interactions of the lives of the participants. To generate meaning and context for each individual in the study, the lived experiences of

the participants are related (Ketelle, 2010). Warham (2012) explained narratives are social and involve the speaker and the listener. The constructed narratives using the participants' own words involve the reader at a deeper level than a narration created by the researcher. Riessman (2008) suggests that narratives are everywhere, and are present in all areas of society. Narratives are how people share their lives, thus the participants own constructed narratives are used to both introduce each participant and to tell their personal stories as related to chess.

The interview transcripts were reorganized into four categories, (1) growing up, (2) chess, (3) teaching chess, and (4) playing chess, in order to demonstrate the total impact of chess on the participants' lives. The first piece, growing up, explains about the background of the participants. They share their family and school histories. The second piece, chess, discusses how the participants learned chess and their experiences with the game. They share their learning experiences as well as specific games they recall. All the participants discussed teaching chess in some aspect, so the third piece, teaching chess was included. This section allowed the participants to explain how they go about teaching someone as well as reasons they teach chess. The piece on playing chess concludes the narratives. The participants express their thoughts as they play chess and the aspects of chess that interests them the most. Using their own words entirely, these rich narratives provide a view of the participants' relationship with chess, thus providing a deeper understanding of each participant.

Ensuring Quality in the Research Methods

To ensure reliability and validity as a qualitative researcher, I designed transparency throughout the research process, beginning with a clear articulation of each step of the research process with the participants. After sharing the vision of the future use of this research, I explained the purpose and goals of the study as well as the methods used to confirm the accuracy of the study- one of which was to enlist their help with ensuring results were accurate. I used member checks throughout by asking the participants to check the work, were used for each transcript and field notes and to read over the transcripts to see if it seemed correct or to offer suggestions for corrections if something was left out that they felt was important. For triangulation, the data was compared/checked with transcripts, notes, memos, and field notes, as well as with the audio recordings and the participants. Triangulation (Konecki, 2008), member checking, and transparency (Hiles, 2008) were three methods used to ensure quality in the research process.

Chapter Summary

This multiple case study design used informal interviews to provide detailed narratives of the participants involved in the study. The criteria for inclusion in the study were addressed, and the network sampling technique was described. Methods for generating the data including the processes of coding the data were explained. A discussion on the constructive narratives explained the method and the reason for the inclusion of the narratives. To ensure a quality study, three techniques were utilized: triangulation, member checks, and transparency .

CHAPTER FOUR:

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS: PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

The purpose of the study is to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess. Five participants were selected and interviewed to generate detailed data for the case studies. Each participant had a unique story, and narratives were constructed using the words of the participants to tell their stories. These constructed narratives resulted in a much richer description (Riessman, 2008) than paraphrasing the participants' words. Using the constructive narrative method, quotes from the interviews were pulled out to fit into a story format. As much as possible, the participants' words were left as they were transcribed, but there were some instances that required explanation or clarification. Brackets are used below to separate my words from the actual participants' words. Each participant's story has four sections, growing up, chess, teaching chess, and playing chess. In this section, narrative analyses of the individuals' stories are organized so the processes can be compared. In the next chapter, I present the data analyzed thematically.

Alex's Story

I met Alex, an undergraduate student, when he was a guest on a panel in a course on gifted and talented Black students. He is a tall, athletic, 19 year old man who participated in sports as well as advanced classes during high school. Alex was promoted directly to first grade when he began school. He was quiet, but not shy when we started

our interactions. Alex volunteered in my chess clubs a few times, and we kept in touch through emails.

Growing up

I was born in Baymore², then we moved to Winsing when I was 5 or 6. And I went to a private school until I was in the 7th grade. My father passed when I was 8 years old. [Then it was just me,] Mom and my older sister and my little sister. My sister's older than me by 4 years and I am 8 years older than my younger sister. [After spending my elementary years in private school,] the transition from public, from private school to public school in my eyes was not really bad at all. It was not bad at all. It's, it was cool, cause I always wanted, I was always eager to get on that, the yellow cheese bus, I was always wanting to ride one of those. Cause you know, from 1st on through 7th I never been on it. I'd seen, I've seen kids on it, but I just always wanted to get on it.

And actually when I was, when I was in pre-k, one of the teachers at the [school-], I was actually in, [or] I went to Skyven Elementary in Baymore for pre-k. And one afternoon my teacher actually told my mom that she should skip me, skip, she wanted me to skip kindergarten and go straight to first grade. And that's what she, that's what I did. I went to a public, I went to private school after that. I was supposed to go to Skyven again, but instead, she just sent me off to the private school.

[I have this one memory about my first day in first grade,] the teacher asked me to read the section of the book and I looked at her like, like, she was crazy. I was like, I can't read; I couldn't even read at the time. And I just looked at her, and I looked at the book, it said science, and I knew what science was, so I just said science. And I was,

² all names of people and places throughout the narratives are pseudonyms

then all the kids were laughing or whatever. And I didn't really feel bad about it, I was something like 4 or 5, nah, yeah, I'm like 5 years old. I don't know, I didn't really think much of it. [After those first few days,] I caught up real fast. I really didn't even think much of it- that I couldn't read. [As I think back on it, I think] that was just interesting how she told me, how she told my mom to skip Kindergarten and I couldn't even read. Cause all the kids there could read, but I couldn't.

[The rest of] Elementary school was probably fun; it was fun cause it was a small, like very small school. And I had maybe 11 kids in my classroom, and when I was in 4th grade, it was 4th grade, 5th grade, and 6th grade all in the same classroom and there were 11 of us. So maybe like 3 kids in 4th grade, 2 in, I don't know. It was something like that. So it's cool, it was cool to have people older than me in my class. It just was, I don't really know why, it just was. [Being in a class like that] did help me because not only did I learn about 4th grade material, but I would also hear 5th grade, 6th grade, you know. They had their little math sheets and stuff and I would try to work out theirs. So I think that helped me out a lot because I was exposed to it, you know, earlier than I should have been.

[Then I started middle school.] Middle school was, it was easy I guess- class wise. I would say it was hard to be a year younger than everybody in my grade. That's probably the hardest part. And I was kinda upset cause I didn't make the basketball team, but kids there, they were like 13, 14. I'm over here, I'm 11 years old trying to play with them. It's just, it wasn't good. [When I think about skipping grades,] I say that I wish that I didn't, but life is pretty good now, so it's not bad. Like, if I could go back in time, I don't know if I would or if I wouldn't [want to skip first grade.] I just wish that I could

see, you know, and compare what life would be like now compared to, you know, if I was actually in my same, you know, the grade I was supposed to be in. Cause you know, honestly, I probably could have went D1 [division 1] playing basketball if I had one more year. I could have got a scholarship somewhere playing basketball, but since I graduated a year early, I didn't have the extra year. But it's all good. That's probably the worst thing that I think. Every time I think about it, I'm just like, I could have went D1 [Division 1] somewhere.

[After middle school,] high school was pretty fun, well school [was fun.] In 7th grade and I guess 8th grade, it was just easy like. It wasn't, I didn't study at all and I didn't. I mean, I would like, if I'm in class the teacher had my undivided attention, but when it came to doing homework outside of class, I put, I was not the one [that did that] at all. I really wasn't. But then, they would get on me about not doing the homework and stuff, but then I'd ace the test, so they couldn't really say anything to me. And that's pretty much the same thing in high school as well. [On the weekends] I would have to say [I wanted] to just be on the basketball team every weekend, me and my friends. Well, pretty much at least three times a week, we would go to the park and play basketball. So that's pretty much what I did. [And in school,] the best subject, well, it wasn't even the subject, it was just, just the teacher I guess. She was just so laid back. In chemistry, in 10th grade, we would just, just like clown in her class all the time. It was fun, like, we all, me and my two best girl friends were in that class. Like, [they] were friends that were girls in that class. So we were all, it was just the best time, being in class with your, they were my best, best girls and they go here [university] now too.

Coming to Chess

I first began [playing chess] at my private school in the third grade I want to say, second or third grade. And I didn't really think too much of it. It was just something that we had to do. It was just like a little program we had to do. I guess that's just how it started I guess. [The person that taught me,] I cannot remember his name, but he was like some kinda chess master. He actually went out and that's how he made his living. Going out to tournaments, and he actually sponsored me one time when I went to a national tournament in Baymore. I believe I was 10, either 9 or 10 when he sponsored me. [When I say sponsor, I mean] he paid for me to play in the tournament, like, all the expenses and stuff. And I wish I could remember his name, I cannot. But, yeah, he was just, he would go off to all kinds of tournaments and just play for money and stuff like that. But I didn't know you could make money by simply just playing chess. He made a good living off that, too. [So he got me started in tournaments,] I mean after three years of him, just, you know, cause I started in third [grade], I was young when I started. You know, two or three years after, I guess I was good enough he thought that I could, you know, do something good at the national tournament. And I played in a lot of local tournaments before I won. A good number [of local tournaments.]

When we first started, I was always like, I wasn't really the best one cause it was, it was kids older than me. Like where, the school I went to, I was in third grade and there were like fourth and fifth graders in the same, like classroom. So we would all play each other and sometimes they would beat me, you know, whatever. My fourth grade year, we had a school tournament and there was about 20 kids playing each other. And I won! I came in second one year and the next year I won it. So I was kinda excited about that one. [To help me get better,] the chess master, he actually bought me a book about chess

and I just read the book and just the different kinds of moves, like skewers and stuff like that. I don't really know the lingo any more. It's been so long, but you know, just different, like, moves. [Different moves like] en passant [that] most people wouldn't know, it was in that book that I read. [En passant is like] let's say that you, there is, so you have your pawn right here [motioning to the table]. And you're just beginning; you haven't moved that pawn yet. And the opponent's pawn is where, if you move one, if you move your piece one time, he can take it. So you try to move two spaces, but he can act like you moved one and take your piece like that.

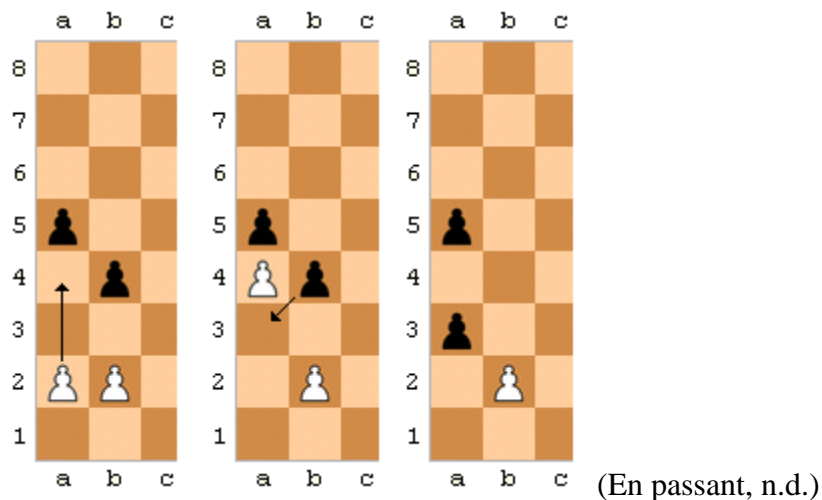


Figure 4. Stages of en passant Alex was explaining.

[So the books were a tool.] It was just books that would give you like different scenarios, to you know, if you're ever in that situation, this is how you would need to handle it. Like that. Like, of course it gave you the basic like castle, king, all that. It gave you where to set up the pieces. And, a skewer, if I remember correctly is. Oh, what is a skewer? A skewer is when you have a, I'm trying my best to remember. [It's like this,] say you have a queen, where you're checking the king while you have your eye on a rook, you know. I don't remember the lingo. I do remember fork though. And a skewer

might be where, where you have your king almost in check, but there is a bishop blocking it. So that bishop can't move. [Wait, that's pinned,] yeah, pinned, and I can't remember what a skewer is. [I was able to learn a lot from the books though at that time.]

[I always had someone with me when I went to tournaments to play.] My mom, she always made me, she always wanted me to play chess because she always, like, every tournament I would go to, she would drive me there; and she always enjoyed me winning, or whatever. [It was important to her, more important than it was to me,] so she was just always there telling me that I needed, even when I went from that, private school to a public school, she wanted me to join the chess team at the public school. I just didn't, I didn't want to. [I still liked chess, and even still play] now and again. I got it on my phone, so I play it some.

[I remember this one opponent,] in elementary school, at the private school, there was this one girl and she would always use her, horses- knights. She would always use her knights, and she was just like amazing with her knights. I don't even know how she did it, but she was just good at that. And I remember telling, one guy when he was about to play her in a little tournament, I was like, "Dude, just take away her knights; she's nothing without them." And he took them out the first like couple of moves and after that she didn't know what to do. It was, and he ended up winning the game. It's funny how you know, like my preference wouldn't be somebody else's preference in the game of chess, you know? Like, I don't really have a certain style. I go off of what my opponents do, but some people might like to use the rook, some people might go queen, some people might like to use their bishops. It's just cool to see how different people play. I don't have a preferred piece, I'm more of, a counter player. Like, someone would try to

attack my piece, but instead of me trying to defend it, I would attack one of their pieces instead. [I don't have a lot of opponents now.] Now I play with the computer the most I guess cause not too many people want to play me in chess. I played my roommate once and he was like man, forget this, I don't even want to play no more. Every, it seem like that's how it is for everybody honestly.

[I got pretty good at chess.] It's, it's similar to sports, you know, when it's competition, you wanna be the best. So that's how I went about chess. You do whatever you gotta do to, you know, improve your game so to speak. [You just have to do a lot of] practice and playing. You gotta play a lot of games, play people that's better than you. I remember we would play the chess master all the time. It would be me and two other people trying to go against him, and he'll play. I remember one time he played without his queen and without his rooks and he still beat us. Yeah, and it was three of us against one of him and he still beat us. It was demoralizing I guess. [Even though he beat us,] he always had us strategizing and showed us different, like, just different techniques and stuff to use. I remember one, at the, one time at the national tournament, this guy was playing next to me, and like, they said begin and start playing and he won in like three – four moves and I was like dang, how'd he do that? So I went online and checked that out and it was that, you know, that, move the queen out, [motioning] yeah, I liked that. [At that tournament,] I came in, 200 something out of 500 kids. [Now, looking back,] I would say I was a lot better when I was younger because I was an actual student of the game. Like I had the books and actually played other opponents that were students of the game. So I feel I was better then than I was now, than I am now. [If I look at my progression,] I would say it was kinda at the beginning I wasn't too good, then I just

increased and now I'm just decreasing steadily with me not playing as much. I just don't have the time to play like like I used to.

[You can beat players who are better than you sometimes.] I remember at the national tournament, there was this, this one kid. He was killing me all the way, like he was taking all my pieces, just demoralizing me. He got cocky, like he was just playing around with me. And he slipped up and I just got him, checkmated him. He was so mad, he was so mad. After the game, he was just saying, like, man you got me, you know, you know I should have won. I was like, well you didn't. That was the only thing I could say. Then, after, there was this little intercession, or whatever, and we just got a chance to talk. It was me and my mom and him and his mom and we was just chillin talking or whatever, and we were actually playing more. We were just playing just to play and he beat me three times straight. So it's cool that he, he wasn't cocky when [we] were playing, just playing, but he was cocky when it actually mattered. So, I just learned don't be cocky at all! Do not be cocky at all!

[There's not much talking during the tournaments.] When you're actually playing, you don't say anything. You don't say anything. You just have your game face on, you're focusing on the, you know, on the game. You're just not talking to anybody. [But you can tell a lot about your opponents during the tournaments.] You can tell by like, little body language if a person is confident, if he's in doubt, if he's nervous, it's easy to sense that from a person. [You can tell by] the way that they look at the board, their little movements. They're, if they can't keep still, you know, just little body language stuff like that. That's why I like playing a person instead of a computer. You don't know what the computer's thinking. [But after the tournament,] you would be talking about

who you played and probably like what kind of player you are and what kind of tournaments you've been in. [The best part about tournaments and chess is] winning. That's what I would have to say, cause I'm usually, I usually beat, you know a good percentage of the people I play, so I guess that would have to be the best part. [And there is more to it too.] I'm trying to think. I guess [it is] a skill that not too many people have. You know, possessing that skill to play chess. Cause people can play chess, but they might not be good at it. Like they know the moves, but they don't really know the strategy; like they don't really know the strategies of the moves or stuff like that. So you know, possessing a skill that other people don't have, you feel kind of special I guess.

Playing Chess

[When you are actually playing a game of chess, there are different parts of the game.] I guess the most challenging part would be to actually checkmate somebody. Cause you can put somebody in check the whole game, but it's hard to actually, you know, seal the deal sometimes. [Depending on the skill of the player, you can tell what kind of player they are.] I guess you could, you could most likely tell in the first three or four moves. Like I normally just move the first, one of the first two pieces in front, pawns in front of the queen and king. But then if somebody moves the pawns in front of the rooks, then I'm like, "aww, I got this guy," cause they don't know what they're doing. You're not supposed to really do that. And if somebody moves the third one from the right or left, I think that's the one; it's either third or second one. If they move the third or second pawn, then they know something that I don't know. Cause I remember my chess instructor saying that this is some kind of formal so and so. Like, you know, there's the Chinese defense where you use the pawns to go like that, that, that; it's like

where, how you set up your pawns when it's just like the Chinese defense. So there's different ways that you can, like set up your pawns to like, that's the form that it is. So you can tell in like the first three or four moves the kind of person that is. And then they move the first, if they do like how I do, then I guess they're kinda like me in a sense cause I just keep it simple like that. [There are a few ways to start a game,] you could go knight first, you could go with your two pawns here [middle] or you could go with the other pawns I was telling you about before. The third to the right or left pawns, but you really shouldn't move your, the pawns in front of your rooks. I forgot why, but that's what the chess instructor told me.

[When there is a tough opponent, I think about] just the easiest way that I could beat them without, you know, I don't want to over think it. You don't wanna like, just be too analytical with it. Cause like I said before, if you like, if you set up your moves, like, let's say you set up three moves that you think is gonna happen. And that's what you, you put in your head, like this is going to happen, but then you get on that third move and he does something totally off the wall from what you expected. Then you just, you're stuck, you're like aww man, I gotta go through three of my next moves now. So it's just better to don't over analyze, just take it, I guess, take it one move at a time, I guess. Instead of trying to plan it out. [But,] there's times like when I do [plan it out], but throughout the flow of the game, I'm usually just going one move at a time. I see what can happen if he moves here, then I'll know what to do then, if he moves there, then I know what to do. Like I don't have three concrete moves that I know what I'm gonna do all the time. [Sometimes, if a better opponent does something that looks like a mistake,] you think that he got something up his sleeve, cause you know, it's easy to trick

somebody in chess cause you'll put a piece right in their face and they're just begging you to take it. Just please take that, cause then once you take it, then they come and check you and checkmate you in the next move. So, I would just be wary of that. And that's why when someone actually tries to attack me, I don't really worry about what they are doing. I try to make my own creation, you know, cause if I focus on what he, if I go off of what he does, then I'm just playing catch up to him, you know. And that's something I just don't want to do in the game of chess.

[When I think about chess,] first off it's a nice little hobby to have, you know, instead of watching TV, you can just play some chess I guess. But you know, in some cases, it's just hard to find, you know, people to actually play chess with you on a regular basis. So, I mean, it's nice to get your brain thinking. And I guess it's a pretty good way to find friends too. You know, some people hang around and smoke together, other people you can play chess together. I was more of an 'I'll play whenever I could.' Cause I wasn't really in the situation, you know, in the environment where I would play a lot. Not really. Cause not too many people knew how to play chess and if they did, we didn't have the chess board. [Also,] I mean, at first, I didn't really care about it either way if I did or if I didn't [play chess]. It was just one of those programs that we had, you know, in the class, but you know, after getting to play it, I kinda liked it. It was just a fun little hobby to have. [And now, even though] I have a chess board at home, whoever I want to play don't want to play me a second time. That's, I've experienced that many times. And I play on my phone sometimes. And the computer beats my butt all the time. All the time. [When I was young, I wanted to play more] just because of the instructor and the program, and my mom always pushing me too to play it. [She would] just nag me,

just like that. I mean, she'd say, you should play more, you should join the chess club, she's just always nagging me. She'd always bring it up. I mean, I guess it's good, but at the time, I was just like, aww Mom, just leave me alone. But she stopped talking about it now though. [It ended up being good to have my friends to go to the tournaments because] it was cool to go. Cause we actually went to a couple of tournaments together like, it was me and maybe like 4 other friends. And we, we went, I remember we went to the Civil Center one time and we played in a tournament there. It was pretty cool to have all of us play and you know to see how we all went against other kids instead of us just playing each other; it was kinda cool. [I remember] I came in 6th and I think I was the best one I think. I was kinda mad cause a kid that I beat actually placed higher than me. I was kinda mad about that. I seen him with the, taking the picture or whatever; I was so mad. I guess he beat the kid that I lost to or something like that. I don't know. That was at the national tournament.

[Young Black boys,] I would definitely encourage them to [play chess] because it could just open up, you know, doorways for them. Cause I choose not to, you know, join the chess club, but you know, playing chess could maybe win you some money, cause you can actually win cash prizes playing chess. I mean maybe you can, I don't know if you can get a scholarship, maybe you can get a scholarship. A guy took interest in me because I was good in chess, like he actually paid for me to play in the tournament. Like kids who didn't have, [or] kids who didn't play chess didn't [have those experiences.] It's just like, when, when I was out experiencing new things, somebody who didn't play chess was just at home watching TV, you know. Instead of, you know, experiencing competition, you know, experiencing, you know, the joys of winning and the sorrows of

loosing. it was just, I just thought that was pretty cool. I mean, it's just, it's just fun. I don't even know how to explain it.

Teaching Chess

When I was going into high school, that's when I thought about [the strategies and planning ahead in chess.] This was after, after all [the tournaments]. Cause I was going to tournaments until I was maybe like 12. Until like middle school. And around, like, 14, like 12, 13, was when I stopped playing like in all kinds of tournaments and stuff. So when I got to high school, that's when I started to think about how chess could be compared to what you go through in life. Like the situations in chess could be, compared to you know life situations. [So if I was going to teach someone to play chess,] I would try to make it correlate with, you know everyday life. That's what I think. I mean, that's what I would do; I never really taught anybody how to play. [I would start with,] like when, like you would say, this is your king, you must protect him at all costs; like treat this as your little, like your baby brother, okay. You got to keep him in a secluded [area]; this is why you castle, to keep him in a secluded area. Then you have your guard, that's the rook, so protect him as well. You know, just little things like that.

You start to think that chess could be, you know, something more than just a game. It could be practice for, you know, future life situations. I remember a movie I was watching called *Fresh*. And his dad was telling him how, life, was, you know, just a game of chess. And how he, how chess was just so important in figuring out what life is all about and stuff like that. And basically, you could draw like correlations of the pieces to people in his life. Like he used his, one of his friends [as an example.] I can't remember why, but he was, his dad was saying how his friend was crazy. You don't

know where he would land, so he was kinda like the knight [gesturing] and stuff like that. And he used his friend, I can't even remember the movie now. But basically he used his friend like you would use a knight. Cause you don't know, I guess you do know where it could land, but it just moves in awkward, you know, patterns and stuff. So that's, not me personally, but that's how I would figure it would be. When I saw it [Fresh], that's when it kinda like reiterated that in my brain. [You have to know what's going on and be prepared.] Like I was saying with the guy being cocky, you know, when you're playing, you just, you can't be cocky in the game. Cause, you know, any moment the queen can come over, the rook can come over, anywhere, and you know, you gotta have your options open. You know how they say make you're, [or] plan your moves three steps ahead or whatever. Well, you, I guess you could do that, but it's good to have you know, three or four different possibilities of that set move. Cause you might do a move, but if the other person doesn't do the move that you thought, then you gotta go back and think about what [else you need to do to get to your plan.] You know, just, it's just better to have every, like, not every possibility, you can't have every possibility; but you know, a good number of possibilities of what could happen. So keep options open. See what else, good utilization of, you know, of your pieces. I guess that would be good for a leader, you know, like what piece does what and how can you use that piece to, you know, accomplish what you want to accomplish.

[When I think about skills,] the skills that you already need, I don't think you need to possess any kind of skills already. Like, I guess you could; I guess I could say that you have to be like an abstract thinker. [I mean] like don't be set in your ways, you know. Like if something's not working, then you can probably change your attack or

something like that. [And chess is good for kids or people to play because] I guess to get them thinking, you know, brain activity, to get them thinking. While you're playing chess, your mind is just rambling. You know, you come, you try to come up with possibilities; just, different aspects of what you could do or what he could do. Or just your mind is always, you know, thinking, so, that's a good reason to play chess- to keep your mind active. [The best thing a chess player can be in a tournament is] someone that's on. You can't be, too, too, what's the word I'm looking for? Just antsy, cause when we were playing in most of the tournaments, they had a clock. And if you're always worried about the clock, you're not looking at the game. So, you gotta be calm, and be, you know, knowledgeable about the clock, but be still focused 100% on the game as well. So you gotta be cool under pressure I guess.

Cyrus' Story

Cyrus' enthusiasm and excitement made our time together enjoyable and, he gave detailed information about his life and chess involvement. His well dressed exterior mirrored his high ambitions. Cyrus is a single, 22 year old master's student in Social Work. He respects academic research and pursues his own research interests in his area of study. He was passionate about his chess and school experiences, often his stories were emphasized by hand motions as well as strong verbal descriptors.

Growing up

I grew up in Bellbrook, Mississippi, and grew up there. I was born in Louisiana. We moved to Bellbrook, Mississippi when, I think I was, from my being told and my understanding, the end of [age] three [to the] beginning of [age] four because most of my dad's family was in Mississippi. Most of my mom's family was in Louisiana. Well,

actually we went from Louisiana to Hughes Town, to Bellbrook because most of my dad's family lives in Bellbrook. So that's where I was raised in Bellbrook, in that respect, then I went from Bellbrook to undergrad in Millview. I have a younger sister, it's just the two of us. [We grew up in a,] two parent household, [with] lots of familial support. I became closest to my grandmother, my dad's mom. I love both my grandma's equally, but the attachment to my dad's mom was, something ridiculous.

Educationally I started off in private school then my mom started teaching in public schools, so I went to the public school that she was teaching at. That was second grade when I started public school. I liked that public school, so when there was some talk about me going to private school for middle school and up, I didn't want to. I cried, I was like I want to stay in public school. I shouldn't have, I think that's where some of my animosity developed. Elementary school was awesome. I didn't know what this word meant back then, but it was diverse. It was religiously mixed, it was, racially/ethnically mixed, and I'm going to guess equal amount of boys and girls, I don't remember. Income was, it seems, the elementary school I went to was in the highest income zip code for Bellbrook, but it was a transfer school. So I don't, people were coming from everywhere and we didn't stay in that zip code. I just went there because my mom taught there and she was able to do the transfer because of that. So income mixed, I'm assuming.

But then for middle school, I went to an all-black school with primarily low income students. Low-income and low behavioral, reflective mental processes. Just bad behavior. I was in 1) gifted and 2) the International Bachelorette Middle Years Program [IBMYP or MYP], so I was separated from other students which would make me

ostracized. [I would] feel ostracized then, but at the same time I was also, I became, I hate this term, but I became that White acting Black boy. Then that's, this is where the animosity starts to get [here.] I hated middle school. It only got worse when I went to high school cause the MYP program turned into the actual IB program for high school.

That [high] school was across the street from the graveyard and [in] one of the lowest income zip codes in Bellbrook. [It was] miles away from home; I think I rode the bus for an hour in the morning and an hour, like with drop off and all included. But an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. [I] didn't connect with hardly any of the students. I was still that stuck up White Black checkerboard boy. Nobody played chess, since we're talking about chess. I, and I just hated, I'm questioning whether to say this or not, but I became racist against my own people. I was just like, I hate Black people. I didn't understand, I had, I did not have the capacity to understand anything [about why they were like that.] I still struggle. I kind of, I'm not, I've turned into this I just hate everybody kind of thing now. And I still find myself struggling, just not understanding how people [are like that.] I don't understand how [or] why I think the way I do sometimes. But for [me], it stems from high school. I just could not grasp [high school], I did not understand; it was a struggle.

I remember begging my mom to send me to private school then. I was like, it was St. Peter, I was like, please, just send me to St. Peter. And then I came to find out that, the real [reason I wasn't going there was because] my dad went to St. Peter growing up. He got jumped at St. Peter and that's the original reason I didn't go, but I didn't find this out until I started begging to go when I got to high school. So that was the reason I didn't go to St. Peter when I thought it was just cause I told them I liked public school. Even

then, I was like, just send me somewhere; send me to some other school. But my mom was gung ho about this IB program and benefits, blah, blah, blah and I had to stay. I'd never been so excited for a graduation in my entire life. I just didn't feel like I fit in. I felt like I had so much more potential than this little boxem [adjective Cyrus made up-referred to later as "little box of a place"] place. Then we had a [drama club], no, that was middle school. We didn't have a drama club; we didn't have any type of swimming team [or anything like that.] I was on, what was that, student council. I was [on the debate team], student council, and [on one trip] we went to this high school in Brickston. Whooo! This school was massive with, Pizza Huts, with Dominos, all of these things in the cafeteria. [They even had] a court yard. There was even a school down the street [from my school], Matis Central that was literally like five minutes away from my house. I had a friend that went there. He would talk about the breaks that they took during the day.

My school was a lock down school. I'm like, all these other schools get all this and I'm stuck in this little prison. It was such that most, so many of the kids were bad that the administration and teachers hardly trusted any of the students. I finally had forced my way into getting to make the student announcements. I was like, if I, cause that was about as high as you could get for that little box of a place. And when I tried to let my wonderful southern personality shine, after doing the announcements for some time [it came to an end.] One day, and it's not because the principal said something. Because I said "Hey Ya'll listen up for the morning announcements." And the lady that was over the IB program came out from her office, and she cut the speaker off [while I was talking and] had the secretary come and finish the announcements. [She] told me

that I wasn't doing the announcements any more. And she told me that when the principal got back, I was gonna have to apologize to the principal for saying Hey ya'll [in] the announcements. [She said] that I needed to write, I can't remember how, how much she told me to write, but I had to write some quantity of paper saying why I knew I shouldn't have said Hey Ya'll. And my whole argument to her was, if I knew I couldn't say Hey Ya'll, I wouldn't have said it! Hello! Like the simple logic, she didn't get that.

I, at that point forward, I was like, my kids are [not going here]. I don't know, it was just a culmination of bad things. I hated high; I loved elementary school; I hated middle school. And I shouldn't say this now because of all these recent things, but I wanted to blow that high school up! Not with everybody in it, but I was like, "I will burn this place down so it will not be anywhere for me to come to tomorrow and I will have to go to school in Matis down the street." So happy I'm not in there. And I hate thinking back to high school. It was ridiculous.

Of course chess tournaments were on some weekends and they were rather frequent. They weren't too spaced out. I don't remember all weekends. I had a good childhood though. It was a regular childhood. My grandmother was a flight attendant and she would visit a lot. I loved [it when she came to visit.] She would come a lot of weekends, so that was always fun.

[In] middle school we had drama club; I loved drama club in middle school. I was also a part of National Honors Society. [That's where I learned I love making speeches.] Any time I had to get in front of an audience [to] make speeches; oh, I love making speeches. Any time I could get up in front of an audience, it had to be a large audience [though], [with a] small audience, just, I'm awkward. Where a small audience

is maybe 10, 15 people, I'll get nervous. But large audiences I can blur people out and I love it. So anytime I got to give speeches or just do something in front of large crowds that was fun. We had a lot of PTA events in elementary school. We got to do [some art], and they're still up there now; I went back not too long ago. We got to do, not murals, they're murals, but they're on canvases. If you cut, I'll just say in half, if you cut [a] projector screen in half, there're about 1 2 3 about 8 of those throughout our elementary school. [It was] my fifth grade year when we painted them. Oh there is a mural, there's a mural in the cafeteria that we got to paint. [It] was an art slash performing arts school. So, which was hard for the transition cause you go from this school that's almost entirely hands on, to this sit down, shut up, I'm the teacher, you're the student [kind of school.] I've always had problems with authority. I'm sorry, I digress. But yeah, I want to just say all the elementary schools, but I don't think I had any problems in elementary school. I snapped at the librarian one time and that was the only problem I had in the elementary school. She told my best friend to get out of the library. And I wasn't having that!

[My favorite subject is] English, I adore English. All my favorite [teachers were English teachers]. When I was in high school, like when I used to get in trouble, like I got sent to the principal office, why did I get sent there? Oh, [I remember,] the lady that called me out, when she, after she took me off the announcements, I was in her class for English. [She] raised Cain almost every day and then one day she just got on my last nerve. [This is what happened,] I was ashy, so I was putting lotion on, and she said "You don't groom yourself in the classroom." We hadn't even started class yet, don't come for me. So I finished rubbing my lotion in and she told me to get out and go to the principal's office. So I went into the principal's office, and the principal and I had got in

an argument about numerous things before that. And I was like I'm not talking to you until Ms. Sims or Ms. Gorn came in, too. I preferred Ms. Sims, but Ms. Sims and Ms. Gorn were both English teachers. If they weren't in the office, they were like my lawyers. If they weren't in the office, I wasn't saying a word. But I always gravitated towards English teachers. My grandmother is an English major, and my dad was an English major. I did not major in English, I refused, but I just always gravitated towards English teachers and the subject of drama.

Coming to Chess

I'm going to guess, but I think I was about four when I learned how to play. I don't remember the exact first experience. But my dad taught me how to play, and my uncle plays, well, his uncle, my great uncle, plays as well. To my knowledge, they're the only two people that I know of at least in my family that can play, well, that could play chess at that time. Dad and I would just play, a lot, especially after he first taught me. When I saw my uncle, he would play. He never had a problem if I asked him to play a game with me, he would play as well. He was, they were, my first experiences, but [around] there, a little after four, my dad encouraged it. I wasn't sportsy; I wasn't, well, I played baseball, but I eventually came to hate baseball. It was too hot and you had to wear wool socks in the summer. But within my time of playing baseball, I was sportsy at that time, but I still played chess throughout this. And it was encouraged because my dad would sign me up for chess tournaments in the community, and I was also a part of the, I think it's USFA, the United States, no, USCA, no, USCF- United States Chess Federation. I was a member of that growing up and I would participate in chess tournaments. My dad [was patient], chess tournaments can last from, like [a] minimum

[of] mostly like 4 hours and plus. So my dad didn't play in the chess tournament, so he [was] just sitting there while [I played.] Usually you play four games, it depends on the tournament, but usually it's a minimum of four hours, minimum of four games. They usually give each game an hour. He would just be sitting in the lobby with the other parents while I was playing in the chess tournament. And that had to be dedication because who wants to just sit for four hours? I can't recall if he did anything in that time span, but whatever he was doing, it still involved just sitting. So there was, there was encouragement for me to play chess. After the tournaments, I always did well in the tournaments. First I would just get medals, then medals turned into trophies the more I played in the tournament. I eventually, early on, taught my sister how to play. She doesn't play today, but that was, that's a part of my first experience; one of my first experiences with chess. [When I taught her, I know I was] not past 8 or 9 [years old], I know that. Somewhere in between there. I kinda stopped going to the chess tournaments in middle school, so 6th grade might have been my last chess tournament. And then I don't think that I've participated in another one as a USCF member.

[To get better at chess,] I start off, with, well, some people, when they want to get better at playing chess, there are so many chess books out there. And there are actual strategies, with real fancy names that you can actually learn to block your opponent or to have this type of opening or that type of closing type thing. Those are some things that you can do. I like chess; I love chess; but I'm not about to memorize strategies to increase the performance of my game. Kinda one thing that I did, what stuck with me when I started teaching chess to others was, you just have to play people [that are better.] Seek out people that are one better than you or at least on kind of an equal playing level

as you. When you play people that are, for lack of a better word, on a level below you in chess, [then] the whole game is just, why am I playing this, I've already won. But when you play people that are equal level to you or above, that's where the thinking comes in and that's how you get better. For instance, like, you have to play consistently.

Consistency is almost, I think, the most essential thing with chess. When you, when you start playing chess, if you stop, no matter how great you were, you're going to fall; like it's going to decrease over time. But it's like a muscle, the minute you start playing again, those, your similar actions come back in. Things of that nature kind of come back into play the more you begin to play chess again and your strength will come back over time. I was consistently playing chess especially with the tournaments. I didn't want to play in things called opens, opens are unrated chess tournaments, and usually, not always, but usually in unrated sections, those are more beginners. I usually played in rated sections which, I don't remember what my rating was back then. Opens were unrated and rated was where I played. Even though I knew everybody in rating, especially the first turning out, everybody in the rated section was probably going to be better than me, that was fine. Because even back then, my uncle and my dad taught me that's the only way, well, that's one of the best ways you're going to get better, is by playing people better than you. It pushes limits; it makes you go past your own personal limits or boundaries. So that's how I personally got better. I'm not a book reader; I'm a book reader, [but] I'm not a chess book reader. Have you seen a chess book? Nothing but blocks and chess notation, and that's not fun. Besides that, to each, his or her own, I just can't.

[I like chess. And I know] I'm so corny. [I like it because] it's fun. People think chess is all, all like seriousness, no fun, and it's a game. It's legitimately a game! It's a chess game. And I don't know, people, I guess within the chess world, when you're, I call it chess vision where you can see moves ahead, and you can see what your opponents going to do, and you can already have your moves planned out. When I used to teach chess, in undergrad, the kids called it counting cause while in chess, I would go, "one, two, three," and that was me planning out the moves. But that was just chess vision coming into play. But it's fun. It's like when your chess vision kicks in, and you just start laughing, and they know that you know what they're going to do, it's funny. And it, I mean, that's one of the fun things about chess. It's like, yeah, I got you. Or when they're just so into the game and you just knock them off their little high horse. They're like, what, I didn't even see that! You're like, haha. So, I don't know, chess is, and it's indoors mostly. There's air! The humidity [outside is horrible!] But yes, I mean, it's a fun game. And I think, when you can play chess, and it's usually one or the other, if you can play checkers, if you can play checkers well, you might not be able to play chess that well. But if you can play chess that well, then you lose at checkers. I don't know if that dynamic is true or not, it's just in my experience, people that I've met, you can either play checkers great or you can play chess great. So I couldn't play checkers; my aunt, my mom, those people played checkers, and I couldn't do that with them. After I was done with baseball, I was not doing anything else in the heat. We played [chess].

Well when I got to middle school, I was in the gifted program. Well I was in the gifted program in elementary school; and they, well, gifted is something in Mississippi where they stopped it at 7th grade. They cut out gifted for 7th grade, and then they

brought it back for 8th grade. But some days in gifted we would have free time. I can't remember who I would play with, but we would pull out the chess. Some of us would pull out the chess boards, and it did continue in middle school, it just wasn't tournaments. At one point and time in middle school we did, have an activity period where if you were a part of a club, you could go and play or do whatever that club's activities were. So there was a chess club that I was a part of then, but that didn't last long though.

[Chess is] a fun game, and it never disappeared. There was always, in my younger years, there was always someone to play with. In high school, I don't think I played chess. Even though that's more recent than some of the other things, I can't really recall high school that well. But I'm pretty sure I didn't play chess that much in high school. There was no one to play chess with. [In] college there was chess club, but I didn't join that until junior year. The first two years, we didn't have anybody to have chess club and nobody knew where the boards were. But they found them junior year, [and] brought back chess club. I played then a little bit. Also, in undergrad, even though, I didn't play that much at the school [college], I did start teaching chess at the local middle school freshman year. I think I got involved with that within the first two to three weeks of starting school. I guess [chess has] just always been there, and with chess, there are 32 pieces, 64 squares. No game, practically, is going to be the same; if it is, nobody's memory is great enough to remember, oh, I played this game six years ago on blah blah blah blah blah. So it's new, it's, where, checkers is slide slide slide, I think it's the same thing throughout the entire game. And everybody had different rules [in checkers] about this piece and how many pieces you can jump and how you can move backwards. Chess is straight to the point, and this moves like this and I don't care what you say, this is how

this goes. So that's a part of the consistency as well, [chess has] never left. There have been gaps, but it's still, of course I could go online and play, but I don't know, it's not the same when you, when it's right there, versus when you move a mouse.

[When you play chess, you want to get better.] Well, to improve it, it's [important] to keep playing and to play people better than you. That's the only way that I did it; and I don't know too many ways to do it. I'm guessing that of course, you can get chess tutors. You can get the, the literature on chess, you can, play people that are on equal par as you; other than that, I can't really think of too many ways to actually increase your game. It wasn't that high [of a priority for me]. I don't know how universal this is, but just in my experiences the more priority you give to chess, the more likely you are to read those kind of books. And it's not, in no way [did] I ever disliked chess, cause I have never disliked chess. It's just one of those things that just falls out of the grain when you got other things going on. Even for the kids, in undergrad, when I was teaching chess, I wasn't, I taught some of the time. But mostly the middle school kids that I worked with already had the foundation for chess. It was just about getting them tournament ready and things of that nature. When I first started my freshman year, some of the 8th graders I worked with I kept working with throughout undergrad, so by the time it was my senior year, they were in their junior year of high school. So it's time for them to apply to colleges and things of that nature. Chess doesn't give you scholarships to college [that I know of.] So when they, when it was time for band, or time for sports, or time for academics, then you just kinda push chess to the side because chess can't really give you access to any type of assistance for college. Band can when you're playing in the band, you get band scholarships. When you're playing sports, you

get basketball, football scholarships, things of that nature. So it, chess, I think, kinda prides itself on being a leisure activity. Like you can make money, you can become one of these grand masters [like] the lady that I worked for in Millview; her son was a FIDE master [Fédération Internationale des Échecs, or The World Chess Federation (Gobet & Campitelli, 2006)]. I honestly don't know all the different titles, but he was Jake Kleiman. He was the, I guess something master for the, for the mid south region. [He] might even be something for the United States because I know he played [against some grandmasters.] We had a grandmaster, Yudasin [not a pseudonym] come in. Yudasin was, either, I think he was 4th in the world for blitz chess and 6th for overall, something like that. But Jake and Yudasin [played, and] Yudasin I think beat him, but it was by a hair. So Jake is probably up there with the world something too, I just don't know what.

[There are some games that are favorites.] Any games that I had with the high school kids, those were fun; except for one of the high school kids. I [will] say any games I had with two of the high school kids. One of them was just like me, so any game we played, I enjoyed it. And for another one, he was more of a brainiac kind of person. His games were fun, but he thought much too long for my patience level. One of the other ones, he, I liked his games, but I really knew he had the potential to be better. And one of them, just, I never played. But two high school kids, those are some of my best, my favorite games. You didn't know if you were going to win or not. You knew that anything you did, he could probably counter it. We didn't have many females in the chess club. We had one, but then cheerleading came along, so she went to be a cheerleader. But they were my favorite because you didn't know if you were going to win or not. These were guys who could beat you, could spring traps on you. Chess is

only fun if you can spring traps. If everything is planned out to a tee, then it's checkers. I've never actually thought about what made chess fun. Or what made games enjoyable. This is enjoyable, I, and I just had a recent [experience.] The barbers at my barber shop always joke about, "hey chess amateur" and I'm like, I'm pretty sure I can beat you, but he never [would play.] I keep a board in my car; that's so nerdy, but, I'm always like "I can go get the board out of my car and we can settle this now." But there was one guy one day that just happened to be in there and overheard this conversation, so I went to get the board and we played. And one of the [best parts,] aside from springing traps on people, it's when they make that move, and you're like oh "beep", and you just sit there. Chess is like poker, you can't make any faces. If they see that face, they're gonna be like, okay, he did something that he doesn't want me to see, I have, I need to find it. And I remember with this particular game, I moved my queen, and I don't know which one of his pieces could have taken it, but she was directly in the line of fire. I just sat there, and in my head, I was like, don't make any facial expressions. And he missed it; and it was funny cause it was like, ha, you could have gotten my queen, but you didn't. So I just move her out the way, and let her get on with her business. But that's fun about it. I guess I'll name three things, I'll [say] spring traps, people missing what you are doing, [and alternate versions of the game.]

Some people like, even though chess, the actual game of chess is strict in its rules, people have come up with alternates- Bug House, Take It, Fox and the Goose, [and] there's another game, I don't know the name of it. But [in the one I don't know the name of,] you only have your king and the other person has all their pieces, but the king can move like any piece on the board [except the knight, and he only moves one square.] He

still maintains king rules, so he can't be by the other king, [or] he can't put himself in check, but he can move like any piece, and the object of the game is to checkmate the other king. The first time I actually played that, I beat the guy that was kinda teaching me about it and I was like, haha. Yeah, so another fun thing, you can turn chess into a team game like with Bug House, so that's fun. Take It, [is] okay, but the last one I was talking about [that I don't know the name of,] that's more to test somebody's thinking processes. Take It is where white still moves first, and then the other person moves; but throughout the game, if any of your opponent's pieces are in range of any of your pieces to attack, then you have to take it. The entire game is based off of forced capture. And it kinda just trickles from there. Cause usually with chess, especially towards the beginning, if you take a piece, then that puts your piece automatically in the firing range of other pieces which makes them [vulnerable.] And when you have the last piece on the board, you basically win. When all your pieces are gone, of course you lose. [With Fox and Goose,] that's where, I think this came from checkers, but basically, how does that go? You have one piece and your opponent has, I want to say like 5 pieces. I can't remember how many pieces the opponent has. But you have to get your pawn from one end of the board to the other while his pieces are coming after you, but I think he has all pawns too. Well, they're coming this way [gesturing across the board], and your pawn's going that way, but it can't get captured. Something like that. These are those ones where the rules aren't strict, so I'm not 100% sure. So, yeah, that's about all I can say for that one. I know, and now I'm thinking it might be one fox and five geese, but, I don't know about that one.

[My favorite part about playing chess, is] I guess thinking. Expecting the unexpected maybe. I think traps, personally, probably are my favorite things- traps and chess vision. If I can see what you're doing and block it, [wait], no, I know what my favorite thing about chess is, I love queens! And, if you are in any way, slightly, I don't want to use this word, but I'm going to, weaker than me at chess, then I will rack up on some queens and we will destroy you. And I hate it when people knock over their king cause that means they forfeit, so I don't allow kings to be knocked over. You just have to sit there, and you just have to let my queens, just, what's the word I'm looking for, I'll just say rain down on you till you're unable to pull through. So, yeah, that's my favorite thing.

[As far as chess impacting my life,] in undergrad, a few times, I think maybe less than five I know, chess was just something, if you didn't know somebody, it was a way to meet [people.] Aside from chess club, somehow chess might come up in a conversation and the person you're talking to will be like, "Oh, you play?" And you're like, "Yeah," and I might have to sit down to have a game. And it's kind of a way to, I hate to turn it into a business thing, but it's kinda a way to network, almost. Cause you play a good enough game and that might impress the person that you're playing against, and then that becomes a networking opportunity. And this is new to me; I never thought about it like this, partially because, fortunately I didn't grow up in an environment where I think this type of chess perspective was needed; but when working with a lot of low income males, I've noticed that there's this [negative] perspective of patience, and thinking strategically. When Black males are growing up in low income areas, there's this aggressive nature and this need to react to things. Chess comes in and chess says, well, instead of reacting, hold

on a second. Think about what just happened, and try to look at it different. I don't know, corners, I'll just use the board, look at it from different corners and see what else you can do in this situation rather than just react. Cause, if you, if you're playing chess and you just react to what your opponent's doing, you're gonna lose because there's no strategy behind it; you have to have strategy to come out on top. But personal, I mean, I never needed that, but I think that's one of those good teachable moments in chess; especially depending on the population that you're working with. I have no patience, kind of, I can be patient for certain things. But, other things- actually this might have come from chess- I have no patience for dumb things. And chess is not, chess is an intellectual game, and if you're playing chess with somebody, it's a serious fun game. So now, like when I'm sitting in class and people are just talking about stupid things, I have no patience for that, cause that's checkers. I guess, just personally, that's, I don't know, chess was just always a leisure thing for me. I didn't know there could be a, I didn't know there were teachable moments in chess until I started teaching chess.

I want to emphasize the cultural shift that is needed within the Black community for Black males to not only learn chess, but to [change their situations.] You can't promote [chess as a tool, I mean] chess won't take them out [of their situations] by itself. It won't relieve any type of stressors or anything like that by itself. There has to be a complete cultural shift around chess and the categories, and the category that chess falls under, the entire category of things that are passive needs to change. Actually, Jeffrey Cannon has a chess program in his Harlem Children's Zone. But, cause he has created this environment from, he calls it, from, not cradle to college, [but something else]. He gets the mothers and the parents, or [finds] the mothers pregnant with the child, and then

follows the child all the way through college. And he has had amazing success as far as young Black males are concerned. His Harlem Children's Zone, HCZ, it's in Harlem. I remember [when] he started, it wasn't too long ago. He has had amazing success with it. I look at things from both the cognitive, like, the environmental perspective, but at the same time, how you live life. You can be influenced by your environment, but how you process that is gonna be different for each individual. I think he has had amazing success because he has, he hasn't taken these young guys out of their environments completely, but in some cases, he has. There are, I think, residential facilities for some of the young guys. Plus the tutoring, plus the vibrancy of the [program.]

I can't describe in enough detail the difference between the low income schools in Millview and the middle and upper income schools. You walk into middle [or] upper [income schools], lights are bright, floors are a bright yellow color, paintings, drawings all along the walls. You go to the low income middle school the windows are boarded, not boarded, have those little screens on them. The front, the front door to the school, those have been nailed over with metal and you have to buzz your way in. The middle income school, I don't know [if] it's a safety hazard, [but] I just walk right in, like "Hey, how ya'll doing?" just kept on my way. [Lower] income school you have to get buzzed in, floors are gray, nothing's on the wall [except], just district policies, things of that nature. So, I don't know, [a] chess [program] is going to need a lot of help if it tries to come in by itself, it has to come in with a lot of help.

Playing Chess

I don't really play it [as much anymore.] I haven't really had an opportunity to play it even though the middle school I interned at has a chess club. They meet on

Tuesdays and I'm not able to meet [with them.] I'm not driving from west Rockridge to east Rockridge on Tuesday afternoon [to sit] for an hour in 5:00 traffic just to play chess games. But I have, the most recent time I've played was two weeks ago at that chess club, but before that, no telling. There's just not, and honestly I haven't sought opportunities to play chess. But as far as presenting themselves, there aren't that many opportunities to play chess. I played with Jeremy [another participant] when I first got here, in August. We played a quick game, but then we didn't play any more after that, and then he had his big tournament in February or something, January, yeah, he had it in January, and I helped with that. I played a few games, but I don't think I finished any games at his tournament, but I played a little bit.

[The hardest part of a chess game is the] opening for me. I can close, I can end all day long. I can open too, depending on who I'm playing, but when you're playing one of those people who reads those books and has all these openings memorized and they can just counter every little thing you do that's so annoying. So opening for me is the most difficult. And it's vice versa, some people ending is hardest. But I can take out a game easily it's that opening, that opening [that is hard for me.]

[With new opponents, you have to] feel'em out. There are certain things, kinda like, when you don't, when you're playing a new opponent and you don't know their skill level. One of the first things that I do, I test them with fools mate. So when you move out, when you move that pawn in front of the king out two spaces, usually what your opponent's supposed to do is counter with that same exact move. Some people don't do that, and chess players, depending on their skill level, they might have other plans, but usually you'll counter. And then, I'll, most of the time I'll bring my queen out, I just go

on and bring her out. You're not supposed to, but I just go ahead. This is all a part of the gauging process. Or sometimes I'll just bring out the bishop and I'll bring it down to where it, [should go for] fools mate. Okay, I'll bring the bishop out, and this coupled with how far I bring this bishop out should say, this person is about to perform fools mate. And an experienced chess player, somebody who knows what fools mate is will either bring this pawn on this end of the board forward or bring this knight out. And that lets me know, okay, so they at least got that down. Then from there I'd probably just bring my bishop back one and develop it from there. But that's probably one of the first things I'd do when playing new opponents.



(Four Move Mate, n.d.)

Figure 5. Diagram of four-move checkmate.

All these different names, some may call it four move check mate, fools mate, queens raid. But also, some people just, just give away [their ability level] when they move those pawns on the [end.] Oh goodness, when they move those two pawns on the very end two spaces up to let that rook out, you're like, "Oh, I got this. You're mine now." I'm like, no, I'm not saying [anything,] my poker face is just [on.] So yeah, some things like, it depends on who the new opponent is and kinda those signals that they give you for

their skill level. There have been times in games, I'm like, "Oh shit! That move, I've never seen this kind of crap before. They're about to take me down!" but you just play it out.

[My mantra is, if] I'm gonna lose a piece, you're gonna lose a piece too. That's a part, once again, I'm more of a chess player than just offence. The best defense is a good offence. If I can trade you for every single piece that you're trying to take from me, and I know I'm going to lose, I'm going to get as many pieces of yours as possible. It's weird, when you're, I used to call them inevitable loss; when you're in an inevitable loss game, it's just, I'm not going down without a fight. Like, most people can beat me if they take my queen. I become a baby without my queen. I can play without her, but I just prefer not to. So from there, if they take my queen first, I go after their queen. And I will spend the entire game chasing it, their queen especially if my queen's gone and I know I'm gonna lose. You might beat me, but I would have won that game personally if I get that queen before the end of the game, and that'd be my personal victory. So I'm playing a more challenging opponent, I guess for me, it's just they snatch a piece, you snatch one back because, there are, and look for [them to make] a slip up. I've played more challenging opponents that make that one fatal flaw or move and I'm like "Thank you".

I have time [to play chess,] I just don't have people to play. I would play at the barber shop, but they don't play. I never had a good friend that played chess. Even the other Black male friends that I've had, I think I was the only one that played chess. They were checker players- [whispers] I hate checkers- I think I was the only one that played chess. I don't think any of my friends have played chess.

I think all young Black males should play chess; it just depends on the environment. Middle class, upper income, Black, young Black males are going to [learn to play chess.] Probably, if they're not already exposed to it, the opportunities to be exposed to it will 1) probably come up at some point, and 2) they'd be welcomed and encouraged. Whereas just in my experiences teaching, and just from my own personal research with young Black males and academics, chess falls under the same category as, as like reading [and] doing homework. Where all of that is passive, and low income Black male communities [see] being passive is, is to be feminine, and that's a no. That's just a no. You have those rare occurrences, like when I taught, or interacted with low income Black males back in Millview. I don't know what it is, I don't know what they experienced that made chess okay, but majority of the time, it's, it's a thinking game. And because there's this stigma attached to being smart or intelligent, I don't know if "cool pose" culture has come up, but it's better to look sharp than think smart. And chess is all about thinking, so you can't do it. If you do it, you're a wimp, you're a geek; maybe a sissy. "Man, I don't do that stuff," like, I think, I think it should be, I think all young Black males should learn how to play chess, granted they want to. I would never want to force it on anybody. Granted they want to, I think they all should learn. But, before some of them can, there has to be a cultural shift in the way that chess and other quote-unquote passive activities are viewed. [There has to be a shift in how] academia period is viewed [as well as how] problem solving is viewed.

I fluctuate between wanting to be there [to help young Black males,] and just giving up. A guy- I don't know how true this is, I've never actually looked into it myself- but the guy was actually telling me that, more Blacks that try to help Blacks

usually burn out before any other ethnic or racial group that tries to help Blacks. I don't know if that makes sense. And I personally know for myself, like, I'm sitting here fighting the same systemic things that you guys are. I don't have time to sit here and keep preaching the same thing over and over again when I still need to help myself. And there was a time where I felt guilty about there being kind of this selfish act on my part, but now I fluctuate between being over it and being this sentimental [person.] Like right now I'm in my "I'm over it," [phase,] and that's because of the middle school I'm mentoring at. It just, the cultural shift is 1) needed, but 2) way away.

Teaching chess

I do it differently from most people. I clear the board and go piece by piece until you get it. And we start with the knight cause that booger right there, most people can't get him for about 2 weeks. We don't do anything, it's not really fancy, but we don't do any en passant; we don't do any castling; we don't look at chess notation; we don't do any of that until the basics are done. And the most basic thing, the two most basic things, the three most basic things for chess are: the orientation of the board, queen always sits on her color, and how the pieces move. And if you can get those three things, then everything else is good to go, cause you can't learn how the pieces move and then have the board turned the wrong way. And you can't have the board turned the right way and know how the pieces move, and [then] put your queen in the wrong spot. Cause the queen and the king are in the wrong spot, then the whole game is invalid. So those are the three things that I start with. Then of course, the knight, after that, after the knight, every other piece is just whichever one they want to do next. Then after they got the basic moves down, we just play. I'm sure some chess books have some procedure as to after

you've done this, do this, and this and this. Once again I don't read those books, so I don't know if there's a better way to teach chess. But I just, we go over the basics and then we just play. And what I'm trying to do, my hope is that we're on some type of crash course for chess vision. To, develop within this young player's mind, cause once you got chess vision down, you can basically strategize from there. If you can't see what's coming next, then it's not- if you can't see what's coming next in chess, you'll probably lose. And it's not the entire game that you're playing, you know exactly [what moves you will make]; cause then there'd be no fun in it. But just knowing that, in certain situations, this is going, when you do X [or] Y, it's going to happen. So that's what I'm trying to develop as soon as possible at least while I'm teaching. When I was teaching, I haven't done that this semester. I don't think, but I haven't done it this year [either], I don't think.

[When I'm teaching chess, my level of enjoyment, well,] it depends. Some people catch on immediately, and you're like, thank God [whispered], and some people you're like, oh, we gotta go back. And it's months later, and it's like, we have to do this again, maybe chess isn't for you, which, it's not. I mean, I'm not for everything; I'm not for outside activities. To make, sometimes chess is just not for some people, but there are some people who catch on immediately. And you're like, oh my God, you're a little prodigy. Those are the people that despite what you as a teacher feel, you're like, ooohh, I hope they read the books; I hope they do this cause their potential is limitless, and you hope it doesn't fall out of the wood works with them.

I think, don't quote me on this- I think, I can't remember the article to a T, but two black males, I think one was, they were both high school. Cause I remember one of

them being extremely young, maybe like 16 and 18, they just became like chess masters, or something like that. I [may have] the ages wrong, but yeah. I remember looking and telling my guys, “Look at this, look at this! Ya’ll are a little older, but this could totally be ya’ll.” So it’s definitely encouraged. I would [say], not Jake, but there was another guy; I don’t know how to spell his name, Alphy, but it’s not. They pronounce an L, but there’s no L in it. He was the best chess player for his age range in Millview. And when I played him, I remember thinking to myself, I wish I had developed my skills to be, like, to be where this guy is. I wish- I had these fantasies about him being- well, he was the best chess player for his age range in Millview. But I had these fantasies about “Oh, if I had kept my game going, I could have been the best chess player for Mississippi.” Then we could have been butting it out, but he was a fourth grader, that’s where we differ. He would [also] carry the book with him.

I just think everybody should play chess, and I have no idea why, cause I’m sure baseball players think everybody should play baseball, but I don’t want to. Then it depends, cause if you have one of those great checker players, they’re like, no, I play checkers cause I don’t get how those pieces move. I actually have an experience for this. I had my best friend in undergrad. She came with me one time to one of the, I think I was going to the middle school. Not the low income middle school, [but] this was the middle upper income middle school where I taught it too. She came with me, and I was like, “you should set a table and learn how to play, I’ll have one of the kids teach you.” It was more so that I wanted one of the kids to teacher her so their understanding would become better as they are [teaching the game.] This young girl, Dannica, she already had the foundation for it. She was an excellent budding chess player, but I wanted to see how

she understood it by teaching it to someone else. Iris must have sat there for 15 minutes before she was like, “I give up.” So, I’m not really sure how to convince other people to [want to play chess;] I think, the earlier you start, the better. You have to pique someone’s interest at an early age, and you have to make sure that they understand that losing is not a bad thing. And that if they don’t get something right, that’s okay as long as it’s not abundant. But definitely the earlier, the better.

[There is also a part that is problem solving.] The first thing that comes to mind is that whatever we’re problem solving must be difficult because problem solving entails that it can’t just be, it’s not an automatic answer. Okay, so when I think problem solving, I’m thinking it has to be something complex or else it would have been figured out and it’s going to take a few steps to get there, maybe. [In chess it looks like,] when you’re stuck, you’re problem solving, you’re counting. I do this, he’s gonna do that, then this, then that, then this, then that, and it’s complex. Cause usually the farther you get into games, the more squares that are dominated by some piece’s capacity to move. So it’s definitely some situations [where you use] problem solving.

[I think I figured this out pretty early.] I’m gonna guess, but it had to be early, early on. Sometime around those first few years when I was learning it. When you’re first figuring out chess and you have a desire to continue to play chess, [there will be times] when you get stuck. You want to figure it out because you want to get better than the person that’s teaching you. And I refused to let my dad continue to beat me over and over and over again. And my uncle was better than my dad. It was even worse [when I played my uncle because] I got a worse whippin. And also, it kinda depends on the teacher. Cause, like, people can tell when young players are stuck; and I’ve often, and

now that we're talking about it, I remember [something that happened.] My uncle [was] saying, and my dad [was] occasionally, saying "Just wait. Figure it out. What am I about to do, and what are you going to do about it?" And I'm just gonna guess that that was when the problem solving, I guess techniques, started coming.

[I would say] I was six. Cause even though they would ask me these questions that was still within the phase of me learning chess. And after you've been asked that, there's no point in getting asked twice cause now you know that this is about the whole game, not just this one little situation that you're in. Oh, I haven't thought about this since, before, and even now, like, the more I would play, my dad would say the same thing. Where, I was like, look, I got this, I don't need you like in my ear, or I would say, "Sssshhh, chess is a quiet game; don't talk to me." I was five or six, but that was me saying, "I already know I need to figure this out, you can stop, ya'll can stop telling me to figure this out; cause I know, like, dude, I'm beating you almost." So maybe, I'm going to go up a little bit more, maybe [I was] 6, 7, 8. No, not 8, that's too late; I was way, I was good before then. Cause this is when, around that time is when we started playing in Wide Windows which was our gifted [program] in Bellbrook, in elementary school. So I had to have figured it out within the first three years of learning. [I was] 5, 6; something in there, I don't know. And you see kids, they figure it out too. I taught, it was one of those combined schools, elementary, middle, [and] high school, [and it was] also middle upper income. It was a private school in Millview, young young kids. Let me see, I think the youngest I had might have been 6; a young Black male named Jerry [pseudonym]. I'm just using him as an example, but he had it [problem solving] and he was 6. Jerry basically almost had chess vision down. Like [he said one time,] "I know

you're about to do this, so I'm going to do..." It was then, too, [that I realized he knew about problem solving in chess.] So I'm just going to say [I was] 6, cause Jerry was 6, but he turned 7 sometime, but when I knew Jerry, he was 6.

[To learn and play chess,] you need patience. Depending on the person, practice is definitely needed. You, in some weird kind of way, you have to be a little competitive, just like with any sport. You've got [to] be open mind, no, I don't want to use open minded. You gotta be willing to take the bad with the good. Like you can't expect to win every single chess [game.] I don't know any one person that's won every single game unless you play those people on Yahoo who reset their scores after they lose one game. Yeah, competitive, willing to take the good and bad, those are, I'm guessing, essential skills. If you're gonna play it and you're gonna continue to play it. Of course problem solving, [too.] If you can't figure things out, and if you react too quickly to moves, then chess might not be for you. And I would suggest, though it's not [required,] I would suggest consistency. You have to keep, you have to have that desire to keep playing. Or you're going to embarrass yourself later on when you have to play a game as a part of research and you haven't played in a while!

But yeah, [I can relate some of those to real life, like] patience. Like when we were talking about a few minutes ago, when I sit in class and I'm like, you idiots! But I don't say anything and I keep my poker face on; like I'm not thinking anything, I'm just in class with idiots. I just sit there and I smile and I nod. [Even in the world of chess] there are varying types of chess players. I'm an all out, go for it, best defense is a good offence type player. There are people who are the exact opposite of that. [They] will defend until the end of time, and it kills me. But even though I'm patient when dealing

with certain types of people, I'm also aggressive in the sense where I'm not going to put up with this [talking in class.] And there have been times where I'm just like, stop talking, or I'm not listening to this. Or [I might say] I'm out. Which it's not the reacting part of chess, it's more so, I went for the kill. Chess is not, chess is about thinking, and taking time, but it's not about wasting time. Because when you waste time with chess, that clock comes out. I hate that clock. And when the clock gets put on you, some people, not all, some people love the darn thing. But when the clock gets put on me at least, I get, not jittery [or] fluttery, [but] I'm just like, I will start to make mistakes, things of that nature cause that tick tick tick time is running out. I cannot stand [it].

So I don't like wasting time so that's where my aggressiveness comes in. I have this class now where I'm like, why am I sitting here? This serves no purpose; I am wasting time and that is annoying to me. And I can see how that relates to me when I play chess. Like when I'm playing- if I'm not teaching somebody- and I'm just playing someone whose level is significantly lower than mine, I will say why am I here? I need to go ahead and end this game. Sometimes I have a good heart, and I'll take my time and let them think they have a chance. The two things really that I use most from chess are: I can have patience and a poker face with some people, but at the same time, that aggressive don't waste time kind of nature; I definitely have those two halves. And problem solving, but I keep thinking that's redundant.

Daniel's Story

Daniel was intriguing from our first meeting. He is 32 years old and married, expecting their first child. Daniel has a second wife and wears two wedding rings on his left ring finger. He wore glasses and had his hair braided back; his appearance reflects

that of his profession, a Hip Hop musician. He spoke with confidence and assurance; Daniel was very aware of his intellectual abilities.

Growing up

[I'm 32 years old, and I grew up in here in Rockridge.] I have 23 brothers and sisters. [I also have] 39 aunts and uncles plus; well, actually it would be 23 plus brothers and sisters. We don't know exactly how many children my dad had, we stopped counting at 23. I grew up here; my mom was a very strict Southern Baptist woman who, pretty much engineered me to be a geek. Which I still am. She is very educated, very strict, [and] very verbal. [She is also] very, what's the word I'm looking for? Driven. Her biggest thing she would tell us repeatedly was that nobody would ever call us the "N word" and it be true. By Webster's standards anyways. People love to say that word doesn't have you know, the hostility and anger and aggression and intent that it has behind it, but it does. There's nothing any person can say to unsay that word once they say it, you know. I constantly hear the battle between Niga and the N word and there's a huge difference to me. To African American men mostly. The "e-r" on that, it immediately arouses hostility and aggression and ignorance and anger. And I'm not going to say that I'm the person that, you know, is better than that; cause if I hear it, I get hostile and violent, you know. I don't like it. But my mom worked extra hard on make sure that we were intelligent and articulate and had genuine morality. But none of that shit work with me. She gave me the intellect and she gave me the articulation, but the integrity and morality got thrown out the window when I caught my pastor having sex with my 12 year old girlfriend at the time.

So I said “Fuck it all,” and then my mother ended up giving me away because I reminded her too much of my father who was a very angry abusive violent man. And she fed me to the state and when I became of age to no longer have to be in state, I was in rebellion mode and I grew up with a lot of hippies [and] square rats, for the most part. [Square rats is] just a local term. It's what we used to call ourselves back when you could sit on the corner downtown in front of The Diner and smoke a blunt and not be bothered by the police and hacky sack and get drunk by the train tracks and stuff like that. It was a group of us back then, but they made sure that we didn't thrive too long. Our favorite Friday event was beating up Frat boys and get drunk.

[When I think about my mom, and her education,] I don't know at all. As weird as it sounds, I don't even really know my mother like that. She, I've known her my whole life, but I don't know her. [I still have contact with her, I] talked to her today, [but] I don't really care to know her, [and] she don't really care to know me. It's weird, but it is what it is. I learned a long time ago to accept everybody for what [or] who they are, as long as it's them. I don't care how you are as a person, long as it's who you are; as long as you don't come at me and try to deceive me as someone that you're not. Which lately, that's been happening a lot because of the fame and the attention that I'm getting through my music. We got a lot of fake people come[ing] up to me and want to be friends and cool, and then do slimy back stabbing snake shit right behind my back. We literally had this happen three days ago. A guy joined the group for all of five hours. [He] did a song with me called “Second Chances” about how life gives you second chances and how people will try to destroy you and talk to you like they're cool with you and then turn right around and stab you in the back. And he literally did that to me five minutes after

we did the song. And I, it's weird because, in the song, I literally prophesied that this thing would happen, and then five minutes later after the song was recorded, it happened. But such is life.

[My school career was short. I dropped out of school in] 9th grade. [And my elementary school and middle school were] miserable. [When I was in school,] I was skinny; I was nerdy; I was extremely smart; very shy, very quiet and a lot of the Black kids hated me for that very reason. I didn't have many friends. I had maybe three friends, Egan, Marc, and John. Marc died when I was 12, no, not 12, I forget the age. I think I was 16, yeah, [Marc] got killed in a car accident, and John moved to NY and we never saw him again and Egan became a traveling hippy, might see him once every five years. [Those were my three best friends, and most of my friends were] white. I had one Black friend. John was Black, he was mixed actually, but yeah, I pretty much have White friends. I guess cause, they, the average young Black male, has no desire to educate themselves. And the way our society is engineered to, especially for the African American culture, you know, they grow up with the belief that they're going to be rich and famous one day. They'll be famous rappers and gangsters and drug dealers and they gonna make all this money, but they don't understand that you have to do shit to get that money, you know. That you have to have some kind of solid background and discipline, there's a song called "I'm a Geek." [The lyrics are] "now a days, I can't, Now a days the world ain't the same about the academics, Mathematics and Spellin don't seem to be appealin, Zombified for hours in front of the television, distorted perceptions of reality alter the truth make them numb to the violence they see on the news, they wear their skin color they feel inferior, teaching the belief that Caucasians are superior, turn them against

each other, raise them beside the track, before they pick up a pistol and learn to use a gat, before they contemplate a job, they start selling crack, make education a feeling hard to attain, we take pride with the way we behave in the streets instead of being a gangster, I'd rather be a geek.”

[In middle school,] I was only there for a year, but for some reason I was popular. I don't even understand it really. Oh, yeah, I remember, because I was crazy. I used to do things like jump out the windows in the middle of class and back flip off the walls and fight four or five kids in the middle of class. I went, I'm a Pisces, so I go from extremes. So I grew up this nerdy, geeky kid then I turned into this monster. I finally found balance though, you know. My favorite subject was Spelling and English [and] Science. On the weekends I would get with my friend Egan and we'd spar or play soccer or go on adventures into the woods and not come back until Sunday and take a tent with us and chill. We were geeks. I know I did not have, I still don't, but I never had the mind of an average kid, and I definitely don't have the mind of an average person. So I don't think like other people. I grew up with a best friend whose father was a Sensei. And while other kids were doing video games, which we did sometimes, but while other kids were doing normal things, me and him be in the woods meditating or sparing with bow staffs blindfolded at [age] 9 or 10. So I grew up really weird. Then my teens, I used to catch trains and go to rainbow gatherings and hang out with hippies in the forests, ride around the country, well, mostly the east coast, staying in the city, until we get tired and go somewhere else. I have had everything but a normal life, which makes for very interesting music.

[In] 2005, I got sent to prison for assault on police who shot and killed my cousin. I retaliated and caused some serious bodily injury to them, and it was not my first time being incarcerated. I'm OCD [Obsessive Compulsive Disorder], and very fickle about things being outside of my spectrum of rationality. I studied psychology in prison. I got nearly, or practically a perfect score on my GED having not been in school for 10 years. The only thing that I failed at was Math. I got a 600 on Math; I'm terrible with numbers, but I got the highest essay in the state. My Social Studies, Science, Spelling, and Reading scores were perfect. The only thing that I slacked in was Math. I barely passed it, but I expected to fail it and I didn't, and I exceeded what I wanted. I wanted a 410 and got a 600, so I was pretty good with that. I've always done bad with Math.

Coming to Chess

I guess [my stepfather] felt the need to teach me about [chess]. He said it would be good for me to learn. He said it would be a good thing to teach me how to think, and strategize; think outside of the box. I grew up with martial arts and chess, and comic books and video games. So I was pretty much a geek. [When he taught me, we] sat down across from each other on the board. I started off playing with him mostly. And then when I got a little bit older, I started playing with kids at camp. [So, like I said,] I was taught, originally from my step father, and then I began playing [chess] with the kids outside of my stepfather playing [chess] with me. He kept killing me. That began my affinity for chess. [I have] a chess game I play every morning.

I began playing chess [with other kids] at 9 years old. My mother, instead of daycare, opted to enlist us in an institute called YMCA. [All the kids there,] we were all the same age relatively. The camp I was in was pretty much you hung out with kids in

your own age group. So there was time when 8-10 year olds hung out, 12-14, 15 year olds, so I was in that group of kids and I would play [chess] with whoever knew. [There weren't that many that knew how to play chess, [or] not that I recall. I remember playing with one kid, one white boy. He used to beat me for like the first two or three weeks. But I started paying attention to what he was doing, cause he would always do the same thing. I started beating him, then he couldn't beat me. Which should[n't] be the case. I think it comes from my beginning, my playing chess, that I learned to pay attention to how a person moves. How a person makes their moves; how they think while they're playing. It tells me about that person. Not only with just chess, but with video games, fighting, martial arts, even the instrument, the music game; I learned to look at that and immediately compute.

For instance, if I saw somebody take the queen pawn and move it up two spaces, I would automatically estimate that they were going to do the same thing; I would do the same thing behind them. Then the next move would be this [certain move.] [If that person makes a move like a bishop, I] can slide in or they would do this, then I would just go from there. Sometimes, if somebody did something like that, then I would come and bring my queen down; come in and then try to checkmate him that way, or slide my queen out get a quick check.

When I first started off [playing chess], I wasn't that great. I played my stepdad probably for six or seven months before I ever played with any other kids. I knew the moves, and I knew like basic strategy, but I never ever have developed strategy at playing which makes it real hard to play me cause I never play the same way twice. But I'll always do the same start; the same first six or seven moves, and then I'll go anywhere I

want to. And I will not give you any way to figure out where I'm going. So I always learned to play chess in a way that would keep anybody I played with thrown off. [So I start with those six or seven moves,] and then after that, it's, my stepdad was always telling me to try to castle within six moves and not to move my queen. Cause the minute you move your queen on [the] board, it becomes a chase for the queen. So I try to reserve the queen last, but lately, now when I play, I just try to do random stuff just to have fun and see what I can come up with. But when I sit down with someone who actually plays really well, I stick to what I was taught from the beginning. Like if I was to sit here and play with you right now, I would stick to what I was taught, move my queen piece up, back her up, move my knight piece up, bring my bishop in, castle, and then I'd go. And I do that anytime I play.

[When you play chess, you just want to get better. One way to get better is by] playing better people. I did martial arts at the same time [I was learning chess,] so my favorite thing to do was to test myself. So if I was fighting or sparing against somebody that was equal with me, that would only last for about a week before I would get tired and bored with it. And then I'd go find somebody that was way better than me and try to match them. I was like that with chess. If I'm playing chess with somebody that I could easily beat, then I wouldn't even play them no more. I felt like it would destroy my game, so I would go get somebody that was far surpass me.

Like when I was 17 and 18 years old, I met a guy named Mr. Teasley, 60, 70 years old in my neighborhood; [he was a] massive chess [player, and,] I never beat him, never. He died like a couple years after I met him, but we played chess pretty much every Friday. I never beat him, I never even came close, not one time. He just, anything

I did, he would just [counter it, and] sometimes he would do it without the queen being on the board. He'd just take her off and whip me without a queen. He was, he was amazing, like, he would just break you down and put you back together; and then what was worse about it is he'd tell you he'd do it. He was like, I'm about to whip you young blood. He'd give it to me. But it taught me, like at first, to be resilient; always go for it no matter how many times you lose. And the best thing that it taught me, even if you lose, you can still come in close, you could still get a close second. So it taught me not to always feel like you had to be first place because sometimes second place is just as nice, you know.

[I stick with playing chess because of the] concentration it takes. I've always been quite a chaotic person as far as my life, around me, and things that occur with me. And often chess is a way for me to center myself and to just literally sit there and be focused on one thing, on one goal, one objective. And normally in my life, I have twenty to thirty things going on at one time. Like right now I have this group, I have two wives, - my first wife is pregnant, my second wife has not had her daughter in seven months and she's coming back today. I have one of my singers in jail, my best friend just went to jail, another one of my friends went to jail, two of my members of my group are having issues that I'm having to help them deal with, [and] with the exception of Casper and Bruce, everybody else is pretty much relying, [and] depending on me to live. So, and that's not even a tenth of what's going on. I'm just telling you like, simple stuff. [With all that,] I see [chess] as meditation.

[I still play chess all the time.] Me and my wife play pretty much every day. Lately we haven't been into it so much because of how busy I've been with my music, but

I know we've been together three years and the first two [years] we played chess every day. She can't beat me though, [and] she hates it. She despises it, and she's a sore loser too; so she gets really mad when she loses [But if I think about it,] Montel and Jeremy [participant #1] are probably my two favorite people to play cause there's never a guarantee who's going to win and it's never easy. It's literally like we have to sit there, and we go to war. I don't know, I look at chess like - I look at chess like I'm a soldier in a battle field, and I look at the king as my wife or something that I got to protect her, and the pawns are my kids. And I'm sending them out to do my jobs, and I gotta make sure that they don't get killed in the process. And I got to figure out which one I can spare and which one I can't. I think about it. That's how I [think of it.] When I sit down, I'm going to war.

[There are things that drive you to get better at chess.] To say the least, prison is a place where you definitely learn to develop better chess game. People take things like that very seriously. I've seen people get killed over it. I've seen some pretty violent things happen about some pretty simple stuff. You know, the average person would not get extremely angry or hostile about somebody beating them in chess, but I've seen somebody that broke [bones] on numerous times. You'd be amazed at the things people do in prison. But in prison I learned how to play even better, and people take chess as a right of bragging, you know. For instance if you go to a different prison, you may encounter 10 or 15 people that normally play and each one of them says they're the best. So immediately you must sit down and test who's the best. And for the most part, I would normally win; every now and then I would encounter somebody who would whip me senselessly. One of those guys was Gus Pate. I don't know where he's at; I don't

know nothing about him, but he reminded me of Mr. Teasley. He was actually about the same age as me, but he was White. We played 365 days. I did four years, and I played him a year straight and I only beat him one time. But he told me when I sat down, "if you ever beat me, if you ever beat me, I'll give you \$100, and you'd have a reason to feel good." He did, he gave me \$100 when I beat him, but it took me two or three [games.] We would start games, [and] sometimes the games would end in three or four hours [and] sometimes they might end in two or three months. I can't tell you how many games we played, but it wasn't really that many. I'd say maybe 20 or 30 in a year's time. I played him every day; we would play every day, but that didn't mean we started a new game. He had a photographic memory so we could actually play a game, put the pieces away, and he'd set it right back up the way it was, out of his mind.

[When I think about my progression in chess, I think of it on a ten point scale. At age] 12 I'd say [I was a] three. I wouldn't even think about [age] 16, [but] I'd say [at age] 18 I was probably [a] six, [and at age] 22 [or] 24 I was probably a seven. Now I'd say I'm a nine. I don't know how you get worse. I hope you don't get worse. I don't know; that's another thing I think is awesome about chess. It's one of those things you can't get worse at it, and you can't really digress. [If someone gets worse,] that's because they hadn't really learned it then. That's what I believe. If they've gotten worse, it's only because they haven't learned it fully. And I realized when I tried to teach some people, some people just don't get it. Some people do not really understand the mechanism behind chess because, what I personally think, is that in their brains or in their minds, they can't think outside the box. So they can't get the concept of having something you're totally in

control of and it's totally your responsibility. Cause that's what it is. If you lose, it's nobody's fault but your own. If you win, it's all you.

You deal with people in life, and [when bad] things happen, the first thing they say is "I'm sorry," and then they think things are better because they say I'm sorry. But that's not how it works. Sorry don't mean shit. Sorry is a word, just like love is a word- I love you. I could tell you that all day long because there's nothing to substantiate that; it means nothing. So chess is something that you can't say I'm sorry, it doesn't, there's no sorry there. You either do or you don't. You either make a good move or you make a bad move. I like playing on the computer sometime because you can look at what you've done. [Then] go back and undo it and be like, I see why that was stupid. That's not real in life. In life if you make a dumb move, you're screwed. And I've made some dumb moves before and I've been screwed. Chess at the time of my life when I was young- I didn't ever apply it to my mentality in my youth. I never looked at it as it being something that could really mould and shape me, you know. I work with Jeremy (participant 1) with some youth up there on Hawk Street, and I taught them chess. Me and Jeremy would teach them chess. I would play with them, and I will tell them that this can be used and implemented as something that can help you look at things you're doing in your life. I wish somebody had done that for me. I wish somebody had told me, hey, this game can really mold and shape you. But, nobody did.

I consider chess to be war for the most part. One time in 2004, I was on drugs really bad. I had an addiction to cocaine, and I had stole something from someone. Because of that action, somebody else that had something missing from them accused me of stealing that. I ended up having to fight seventeen people by myself. I would apply

that to my life, cause even though I had done wrong somewhere else, I hadn't [done] this specific thing, [and] I wouldn't back down. You know, I could have ran, or I could have- whatever, I don't know what else you could do cause I don't believe in crying and begging and you know, none of that. It wasn't pride, it was just my spirit saying I'm going to stand up for me being me. [I know] I didn't do that [steal what was missing.] I might have done something else somewhere else, but this I did not do. [I said in my head,] so if you're going to beat me for it, then you're going to beat me and I'm going to go down fighting. I went down fighting about three times, but every time I went down, I'd get back up and back up until I couldn't get up no more. I look at that like chess, and immediately when I walked into the neighborhood, like in chess, I was immediately aware of everything that was going on. But I also noticed that there was no way for me to get out, so I stood my ground. And that's how I feel like [in] chess. In chess, if someone takes your queen, that's like you being in a situation where you can't get out. So you got two choices, you give up or you go hard. And I chose not to give up that night. Eventually they got tired of me getting up, and left me alone after realizing that I wasn't going to stop. And I got a couple of good licks in before it was over with to be honest, but I still got whipped really bad. I had to go to the hospital.

Another thing I do is, I use chess [to learn other skills]; I think chess has helped me to observe. I'm very very very observant. I cannot be looking at you and seeing everything that's going on. Like right now, down to how your watch is turned off to [the side on] your hand and everything. I learned to look like that. I learned to pay attention to everything around me so that when I'm stepping into a scene or an environment, I'm aware; I'm not left dumbfounded. And chess has taught [me] to focus. Even when you

don't know I'm focused, I'm watching you. I'm seeing [things] while I'm not looking at you, but prison also taught me that, too. [One way I used this was when I was] sleeping with a knife in my hand for four years, [with it] duct taped around my hand with boots on. And [I had] a can in front of my door that if it moved I would wake up so nobody could kill me. Taught me to be observant, and chess played a very vital part in my life, but I never would have said that five years ago or ten years ago. In my youth I never would have had any idea that that was the mechanism behind my madness.

After my last prison bid, I was in a prison, in Ranger Prison in Georgia, north GA, and it's fun[ny] how people say racism's not really, you know, alive or anything anymore. That's some serious bullshit cause I spent a year and a half in a prison where I was called the "n word" every day. I had rocks thrown at me; I was beaten repeatedly; even the warden would harass me and bother me and I couldn't fight back or lay a hand on the person. I had to literally think my way out of situations. I played chess every day. When I was released in 2011, March 31st, I made a decision in my spirit- in my soul- I would never ever ever ever go back to prison no matter what happened. When I met my wife and we began playing, I started thinking about how everything that I've done in my life has been a chess game. And I made some pretty bad moves, and I started applying my life and things I do to chess. I think I tell [my band], pretty much, you got to be careful in what you do because there's always consequences, and that's chess. No matter what move you make, good or bad, there's gonna be, there's going to be a response; a reaction to it whether it's good or bad. But it's up to you depending on the moves that you make, and that's life. Any move you make in life- I can flick a bugger across the room and hit somebody or whatever and they whip my butt; it's my fault. I did it, it's an action. Or I

could go hold the door open for an elderly woman and she'd say thank. You know, everything we do has a positive or negative effect or outcome, and you have to be very cautious of the things that you do. Chess I really believe teaches that.

Playing chess

I look at chess like war, and I look at chess like life. You know, when I'm playing somebody really good and they take my queen, the initial response is "Screw you dude! Just got my queen, I'm mad!" But then, immediately afterwards, I've learned [other ways.] I want to say I used to be that way, back when I was growing up. I'd get mad and throw the chess board, but I've learned to be like, okay, this guy is good, I gotta be better, so what can I do to handle that?

[My favorite part about playing chess is] the victory, that's it. I haven't thought about [what that means.] Winning doesn't mean all that to me, but when I do- and I've actually fought a good battle- then there's an elation that I feel. [The elation is] symbolic to like thinking of a new song that I know somebody feels in their soul. It's not a prideful type of thing, like, yo yo, I kicked your butt, it's more like, I did it.

[Problem solving is a part of chess. Actually,] how do I think about problem solving in chess? That is chess. That's not a very detailed answer, it's what chess is. You have a problem, and the objective is to solve it. The problem is you got some guys on the other side of the board that are about to kick your butt. And they want to kill you so you got to kill them first. [So you are trying to get better, I mean,] I think that's a given, I think if you're playing chess and you're not trying to get better, then you just stop playing.

Anytime I play somebody new, my first thing is I set up the board like I've been doing since I was nine years old. I go with the same strategy that I've always went with from the beginning. The first thing I learned were the steps and I never change it. That's where I start, but once I start that way, anything goes. I could come up with anything. I might let you kill my queen just to use my knights to come get you. [I've] learn several strategies, and can't tell you off hand because I'm an instinctual chess player. I don't think about nothing. I think the first six or seven moves and after that there's not [a] plan. There's no plan, no nothing; I go with what I see and what I know and what you're doing. I go off of all that. So if I'm sitting down with somebody new, I'm really testing their level of experience because there's certain tricks you can do in chess to tell if somebody knows what they're playing. For instance, if you move your queen pawn up, and the opponent moves their rook pawn up two places, that person doesn't know what they're doing. That's not a good move; that is retarded. Or if you got your queen pawn up and they got their queen pawn up and bring [their queen] front street immediately, that's also not a smart move cause I'm going to attack her immediately. I'm trying to knock her off. So that means you're automatically trying to go to war with me but you haven't taken time to analyze me and how I play; so that means you're a rookie. There's ways to tell about who you're playing. So normally when I play somebody, I tell them off the bat I'm not going to play you one game. Now I let people win the first game. I don't even play a person one game. If I sit down I'm going to play at least three games. Now in the last couple of years, I let everybody win the first game just to see how they play. I mess with them a little bit, test their limits, let them win, then I come back and beat them like seven or eight games straight. I do that deliberately; I do that with everything. I'll let you win a

match, especially fighting games, except Tekken, I won't let anybody beat me in Tekken. Cause I'm the master of it. I've been playing 15 years and I will not let you beat me. But that's how I like to play and test my opponent.

There are people who help you improve your game. Jeremy [participant 1] is definitely one of those people. We have been battling for years, you know, since 2004. We've played many, many matches, and we always went back and forth. I'll win one, he'll win one; I think it's actually been exactly like that for the whole time. I think he'll win a game and a couple of months go by and we'll meet up and play a game that I'll win. Then maybe a year'll go by and we'll meet up again and then he'll win, so that's just [how it's been]. Me and Montel play[ed] practically every day or every other day from 2003 to 2004 and he was another guy that was not an easy defeat. I'm not sure if I ever beat Montel, I can't remember, it's been a while.

I didn't stay in school much. My mom gave me away when I was 12 years old and I spent my teens in foster homes, JDCs [Juvenile Detention Centers], but I played [chess] there [too.] They would always have games and chess was one I liked to play. I'll always have a love for chess, I love it! I have a marble glass board at the house right now. My first thing that I would tell [someone learning to or interested in playing chess] is structure and discipline. To learn how to sit still and find something that's constructive that will teach you how to manage not only your decisions but your time adequately for a positive result. Even if you lose a game, you're gonna get better. The more you play chess, you're bound to get better. [Chess is also] like riding a bike, you don't forget- you don't forget chess. Cause I went, well I can't say that; I can't say that- it'll be a lie- cause I don't think I ever went really long without playing since I started, so I can't say that. I've

always played chess, since I was young I've played chess at least once a month every year, every month.

Teaching chess

I totally agree with [chess] being an example for kids to increase their learning, increase their ability to think, to be intuitive, to be instinctual, to be random, spontaneous, [and] even a little chaotic. Chess has a little of all those things; to be very strategic, to be very by the rule, then in a split second it'll be just the opposite. They'll be no form or shape to it. It'll be the exact opposite of everything you were taught and learned. A blow will come and you're like, what just happened? That's why I love it! You never ever know. I would play chess before I'd sit down and play PlayStation. I think chess is the most, one of the most amazing tools of teaching kids how to not only be patient, to be driven, to be focused, but also to be able to come up with something on the spur of the moment. When somebody takes your queen all of a sudden, whatcha gonna do? Give up? Quit because you lost your queen? Or are you going to try to figure out a way to counteract that defeat? And that's how life is; sometimes you get thrown for a loop and sometimes you get a major setback. You have the option of saying, you know, "Screw it, I give up," OR [think] let me figure out how to work with what I got to overcome what just happened.

[To teach someone chess,] I would start with telling you what the pawn is, what the pawn does, where the pawn belongs, how to move the pawn, [and] how to kill with the pawn. Then I would start with teaching you how the castle moves, how it kills. And then the knight, the bishop, then the queen, [and] then the king. Teaching somebody to

play the basics isn't hard. The strategy I don't think you can teach. First you have to teach somebody how it moves and then let them take off. Let them figure it out on their own, cause I've tried a thousand times to teach people [the strategy, but] it's never really worked. Some people either get it, or they don't. I think you have to have the mind for it. You have to have the mind to say, you know what, I'm in control of this. I can do this anyway I want to; now I know how it works, and I know what the objective is, and that's what I'm going to do. I know I'll be able to teach my kids for sure. If they're anything like me, they'll be good at least.

[Some reasons to teach someone chess is to help them] to learn patience first- to learn how to be patient. To learn to think before you do, [and] to learn to think before you speak. Speaking of, I need to go teach my girlfriend, or my second wife how to play chess. She has issues with that. I haven't even thought about teaching her. I'm too busy. I would teach them that chess definitely shows you how to be responsible for your actions because at the end of the game, like I said earlier, you can't blame anybody else if you lost. If you know how each piece works, and you know the objective and you know the goal and you don't meet that objective and you don't meet that goal, it's nobody's fault but your own. So I can't [blame anyone else.] I can [get mad and] throw the board all I want, [but] it ain't going to change the fact that I lost. I say that often to people in general because so many people in our society today think sorry is a proper response for a screw-up. Or they think that they can do something bad and that there shouldn't be repercussions because they're sorry. I think chess teaches you subliminally, if not consciously, that anything you do has a result. And based upon what you do, will be the result of [what you did,] or the consequences. So if you steal my queen and manage to

defeat me, that's a positive result that you did. I don't know how to [describe] that any further.

[There are also skills someone needs to have to play chess. I would say they need] the ability to think ahead, patience, discipline, and creativity. Creativity because you can't get lackadaisical; you can't get predictable. You have to be able to switch up the- to swap tactics. You'd probably [let your king] die cause if you're playing 10 games and you keep doing the same thing, somebody's going to whip you. It's not going to take a good person that knows how to play chess [long to defeat you.] It's only going to take two games for them to figure out your strategy. After that, you're not going to win nothing else, so you have to be prepared to switch tactics. That would be the creativity. Discipline [is like this,] you encounter somebody that's really good; you're going to have to take time to sit there and look at what's going on. [You have to] observe the board then make a move and make sure the move you make is not going to cost you the game. That would be the discipline. Concentration, you can't be distracted by outside things, otherwise you won't pay attention to what's going on in the board.

Emil's Story

Emil is a tall, athletic undergraduate student who was in advanced math classes throughout Junior High and High School. He seemed shy at first, but opened up quickly when we began to talk. Emil was purposeful in his comments and descriptive.

Growing up

[I grew up in] more of a small town, country area. Like, also, we're not too small town, but we're not some metro Baymore. We have two Wal-Marts, a few, there's a mall and everything, but it was kinda a small town, or a smallish town. It wasn't too small; we

have a bunch of high schools in the area, Cott County. It was not a poor county but not as rich and elaborate as Baymore. It's kinda middle class where you were fine living there, but you always wanted to do better. So I believe that whenever you have the ability to excel yourself, you took advantage of that.

[I lived with] Mom and Dad and little sister. Dad was always at work. Mom was at work as well, but she would always be home to take me to games. My dad thought it was, my dad believed his main purpose was to provide the family with the ability financially to be active. And my mom thought it was best for her to be able to get me to my activities; me and my sister, to get us to our activities. So my dad thought as long as he had the bacon, as many people say, he was doing his job. I mean there would have been times that I wanted him to be home more, but I understood he was out working and I was just happy that my mom wasn't out working as much as him, [or with] his schedule. My sister, her and I would always be involved in sports. That was one thing, they always wanted us to be involved, they wanted us to be more involved in activities than on the street with our friends. Because, I mean, it's not bad to be on the street, but it's better to say you were doing something productive with your time than just out in the streets just walking around, just doing who knows what in the street. So their thing was to always make sure we were playing a sport or in a club or some kind of organization.

[In school,] I was kind of always the smart guy, but I would always try to be cool with the people, [like] in middle school I was always social. I was always the thin guy who was known by people. We'd always have a little kickball group, and I always liked to be with the cool kids and at the same time, I liked to get my school work done. It wasn't until I was in the 5th grade and I got into the GOALS [acronym for a gifted

program] program, like every year I might be selected for it, and every year I'd be one question short of making the GOALS program, so it wasn't until my 5th grade year when I finally breached that barrier and got into the GOALS program. [GOALS] was the gifted program for elementary school kids and that just allowed me to show, to broadcast my talent in elementary school.

So middle school was advanced [classes], just like GOALS. I think it was like, a bridge to high school from middle school. In high school, I started out taking two advanced courses, just, I believe Math. And once you showed your ability to take one advanced course, they allowed you to take more. So from, just, I believe it was 6th grade, you could take one or two advanced classes. And if you did well in that, then they allowed you to take up to 5 core classes. So 7th grade I believe I was taking 5 or 4 advanced classes and in 8th grade I was taking all 5 advanced classes. So once you showed your ability to take one advanced class, it showed them that you could take more. Then after that you could take additional advanced classes. Also I was again starting to get involved in sports in middle school, so baseball all throughout high school and middle school and also recreational basketball. I didn't try for the Junior Basketball team until my 8th grade year and I was involved in my Junior Baseball program. So I always played baseball. Then eventually I succeeded.

[I had about 250 [people in my high school graduating class.] [While I was there, I] continue[d] the same, AP classes, advanced classes, honors class all throughout high school, varsity baseball, [and] varsity cross country. I still did the recreational basketball and numerous clubs, [and] volunteer hours. Then I [had a] job my senior year. So it was like, this other bit of the [plan]. I believe the more you stay active, the more you become

productive because you have the ability to develop the ability; or you're more developing yourself for the real world, cause in the real world you're not just going to have one activity, you're gonna have work, community services, and have to be active. You're going to be active in the real world, so I believe the more you're active the more you're able to get yourself ready for the real world.

[Weekends] in Elementary school I was involved in a Pre-K program, or a day care, so weekends weren't that special. Middle school, weekends were devoted strictly to baseball. We'd have practice Monday through Saturday, and I believe, not Sundays. [So,] Monday through Saturday was baseball, Friday and Saturday we'd have a game. Sometimes we'd go over to each other's house to hang out [or] play basketball around the neighborhood. Then in high school, again, it became practice for baseball. [That was everyday,] Monday through Sunday; so after church, we'd be back at the baseball field on Sunday. I didn't even work in high school during my school year on Saturdays. [I would] work two or three days a week, practice 6 days a week to 7 days a week, and school work 7 days a week as well.

I love math and I love baseball. Those are two things that I always have good memories about, especially baseball. We, I mean my junior year we made it to the playoffs, and that's something our school never did for at least 11 years. That was one experience that I loved and the fact that I started most of the games, or played most of the games my Junior year. Me and my friends had that ability [to play well, and it] just made me feel good about myself. I pitched a lot of the games; I was very influential in a lot of the games that put us in the playoffs. The fact that my coach like, put me in to start in

our first playoff game in 11 plus years just made me feel even more special about the game.

With math, entering high school, they took me out of the advanced program. And that was one thing that was different for me. I was always used to be[ing] in advanced, and they took me out because they didn't think I had the ability to do it. So I even went to my mother, literally in tears, telling her I want to do this. Like, I don't want to feel like anyone's better than me. And she put me back in the program, I mean back in the advanced class. I ended up getting a B in the class and I just felt a sense of accomplishment knowing that I got a decent grade in a class that they said I couldn't do. Knowing that some of my friends ended up doing worse in the class than I did [also helped]. So people that they said were able to do it, got a lesser grade than I did. And I was one of those that they said couldn't do it, so it just made me feel good about myself. That was one of the things that always pushed me forward [in] my accomplishments. Just having people say, or people believe that I can't do something and I prove them wrong.

Coming to Chess

In high school, or middle school, I can't remember which one, where I started, but, we used to always play checkers. And checkers, they don't require much thought process. So I believed with us, we were there to play, and there was chess. So chess allowed me to use a little bit more of my thought process, a little more of scheme and, just cognitive ability. And it's more of a thinking game and a game of like, a game of strategy to win. There wasn't [the idea of] just, I can move this piece here, I can jump this piece there; it was actually, the pieces could do different things. So it's not just, you

can go forward you can go backward, you can choose a piece [that] has this task, this piece has this task, this has this importance, so it's a lot more thinking that was involved. And it just kinda made me feel a little, it made me stand out a little bit cause not everyone knew how to play chess; so it made me feel good to know that I have that ability.

We [were] just in the class, [and] we just started getting free time a little extra cause we were a little ahead in our curriculum. They would bring out board games and someone yelled chess and they just started, a few people started playing chess. It wasn't interesting playing checkers anymore, so I went to observe them playing chess and I was like let me play, let me play, let me play and they said okay, you can play the next game. So one of my friends sat me down beside them and told me [how the pieces move.] [He] started walking me through the game, like, I'm gonna go here. And they kinda like, they kinda told me why they did that move, but had to kinda understand myself, okay they did this for this reason. So it was just my friend, sitting down beside them and kinda like, walking, like in a way, walking through the game, cause we were all middle school students here, so we don't understand completely how to play ourselves. He couldn't, I don't know if he had the ability to explain it to me while he was playing the game, but he kinda explained it to me while he was playing.

I believe [I was in an advanced placement class when I learned,] cause all of high school and middle school I was in advanced placement classes. So, it was class that other intelligent individuals, I'm not sure which class it was, it might have been English or actually, Social Studies. We literally had free time at the end of class cause it was [the] last class of the day. She literally had a chessboard at the back and students would just take [it out.] It might actually have been middle school, but she would have a chess

board and individuals would just take it out and start playing. So that's probably where I started. Actually a fun fact: My nephew, he's in, middle, [no,] elementary school and he literally knows how to play chess. I go over there and he offers to play me a game of chess. Of course he loses, but he actually puts up a good battle, like he knows the game of chess at a 4th grade level. So, that's very interesting to see that when parents get their children involved at an early age.

I played [chess] with my peers, I played online, [I] didn't get in tournaments, but it was mainly just recreational. I don't really think my parents [played,] just mainly peers and classmates. I'd say [I played more often] probably late middle school to early high school. Cause it was actually starting to become a popular game then. So like whenever we have free time, instead of Apples to Apples or other common board games or Monopoly, we'd pull out the chess board and get to it. [In] early high school and middle school, whenever we have free time, we'd just play. [It was] like once a day, once a class period to four times a day. [It became a] common thing, almost second nature. [Our teachers] gave us time and we just did it. I think if they didn't have the chess boards available then we wouldn't have played, so I think it was like more of them, like having the ability and having the resources, the tool there; it fostered our desire to want to play.

[I liked chess because] it was a competitive sport. The fact that it was something that not everyone could do [also made it] something that we all enjoyed. [Once I learned with my peer, I wanted to get better.] I used personal knowledge, I used my peers, I also looked at the box, the directions to see what piece probably do what; so just mainly like I said, a visual learner, or kinesthetic learner. I just put the pieces around and realized, okay, this piece can go up three over one, this piece can go diagonal, and this, whatever I

was trying to do to get the other person's piece, so just, trial and error, kind of. [To learn something new,] I just go online. I do remember one time, I just remember [thinking to myself], this is what I did last time, I can build upon that by, well, how can I build upon what I did last time? So I'm like, okay, I lost because I moved this piece there, so what do I need to do next time to not get beat the same way; or what can I do next time to not have this piece taken next time? Like just a personal [thing about me], I'm not one to ask [for help in everything.] I'm one to ask other people for help up to a certain extent, [but] I'm more of a do it myself.

[Thinking about my moves is something I did] in the middle of a game and after a game. Like, I'd think it over in the middle of the game, if I'm gonna lose, I slow down a little bit. I slow down a little bit so I can start to understand what I did wrong and try to come back in the game. But my main thinking is done after the game; I go over what problems I did have in the game. [I think about] like what I can work on the next game. And then at the beginning of the game, and throughout the whole game, I'm like, okay, I made this mistake last time, what I need to do this time so I don't get that problem? Or, okay, now I have a new problem, like what do I do now to make sure that I can try to get myself back on track to get the win. In my head, I try to, based on what it might be, and be one step ahead. So if I think they're going to move here, I'm going to try to counter that before they do that so I know, what I need to do to make sure that I am prepared for their move.

[I still play chess, and one reason I do is because I like that I have] the ability to say [I] can do something someone else can't do. And like also, I'm kinda competitive. And it's actually a lot of fun [to play chess.] I just compare it to baseball. If you're

playing it, it's very interesting, but if you're a spectator, it might not be as interesting because you don't know what goes into it. Being [in] it, having that skill [is great.] In the middle of a chess game, you want, you are like feeling this intense feeling, you know it's more complicated than any other game, so you know personally that you're doing something special. And not that [many] other people can do it all. It's like a feeling of personal enjoyment, personal satisfaction, knowing that, you can pat yourself on the back; just knowing that you have some kind of sense of accomplishment.

My current roommate, we went to high school together, and we had an internship at a hospital, so we had a little free time and we're always competitive against each other. We are always competitive, so we were sitting there one day and we played chess on one of our tablets. He'd make a move; I'd make a move. The first game he won. So I was like, okay, let's [play again]. I don't want to lose again, so the second game I won. The third game, it was a draw. [But] there was an undo button, [and] he was trying to press the undo button. I was like, oh, no, no, no no! This is an intensive tie. He was [winning], it was bad, cause he [was winning bad], but then I got it to a tie, so that was a draw. Cause he's actually very good at chess, like he's been playing for a while. He would like, play online, like actual competitive websites and do very well. So I felt a real accomplishment saying I beat him. [To be able to] say I came up [against] a guy who's played [like that], and kind of competitive. That was just this past year, senior year in high school. We were just sitting there finding a way to keep us entertained and playing a game of chess is how we kept ourselves entertained sometimes.

Actually in high school, there was a game where, I was just; I had no doubt I was going to win. I had the person down to a few pieces, and somehow they came back and it

was so defeating because they ended up, I was hoping for a tie, at the game, but they ended up getting the W. I got like most of the pawns and I was going for the queen, [but] then they got their pawn to my side of the board, so they got their queen back. [When] you get someone's queen, you feel like some great accomplishment. And they ended up getting their pawn to my side of the board and they got their queen back. So I was like, please no, and they ended up winning the game, cause they had their queen. I didn't have focus. They ended up moving that queen around just one piece at a time taking me out until they got to my king. So, you can't always get that W. I felt so defeated.

[To get better, I used] repetition. I would just play games on the computer every night. I know on Windows, in the start button, you can games and options. There was solitaire, spider, and chess, so I would sometimes just play chess on the computer to get my ability up for when I play my friends [so] I could have a better understanding. Win, win, win. That was my goal. I don't like losing, so, whenever I can, I just like to win, so winning was my main goal.

[I feel I was] definitely immature [with my chess game] at first. I actually think I was better in high school than I was now because I used to play all the time. So I probably progress to like amateur [at first.] In middle school, I was very competitive with the sport. I was, between amateur and sub-pro, like someone between, I would probably participate in a tournament and get like, an honorable mention, but [I would] get past the first round at least. But now, I'm still in the sport, but not as skilled. So I consider myself a degree less than I was in high school. Just for that fact that I haven't played as much anymore. [I'm not playing as much because of] school work and time.

Now, when I do play, it's usually like I said, on the computer. It's not really as common, I've noticed, as it was in high school. In high school we used to at least play every once in a while in class, but in college there's not really [a time in class.] When you're in class you are just there to study and lecture. Outside of class, we usually are studying or partying in [town] and hitting the gym. So it's not really a common thing I've noticed, not much since I've been at college. Like I said, it's more of an online thing I've noticed. When I go back home, I play it often with family or friends. Cause whenever we go back for holidays, friends are there, so I mean, it's kinda a thing that [at] least when others are playing, or when I play with my cousin. [I also have] my uncle, he plays too, so family, relatives, friends back home.

[Chess relates to other things, too. Like] it relates back to, how to act with other people. In chess you, think at least one step ahead of where you currently are and think about what your opponent's going to do. I think of it like if I'm trying to talk to a girl, or talking to somebody, a female, [that] I'm attracted to. I think about what I can do to make her more, or see if she likes me back, or if she doesn't like me back, you know, what happens if I do this. If I say something or show my attraction to her, she's going to do one thing or the other. So, in chess you can make a move and your opponent can make another, and whatever they do depends; that also affects what your next move is going to be. That also goes back to everyday world. Also a friend, in the game of basketball or baseball, you base what you're going to do based on what you think your opponent's going to do. It's just thinking ahead of your opponent so you can stay one step ahead, and also how you can stay one step ahead of yourself sometimes to make sure you get the task done.

Grocery shopping might be an example. When you go to a grocery store, you have to have a list; you don't just go to the grocery store [without a plan.] You go prepared for what you gotta do. Going into college you have to have a game plan. I'm going to go to college, and I'm going to study this. I'm going to, like this is my time to study, I'm going to take these classes. Just thinking ahead of yourself, make sure you don't fall behind.

I believe [that] chess [is] such a competitive and complicated sport that it will improve my thought processes and improve my ability to play and see things. Like, I would already see myself looking ahead; I'm always a person that looks ahead. I believe that just thinking ahead when I was simply in middle school and high school, like, that was just another way [or] another outlet that allowed me to start developing my ability to be a person that didn't go on a whim. [I am a person] that didn't just do things just for the fun of it, just for the fact of doing it, but actually does, like I currently do things for a purpose. Like I have a reason behind what people do. And I believe that chess had a role in that.

[Chess is different from other games, like with] the level of competition. With chess, it's not one of those where you can just pick it up or get lucky. In chess you have to actually put some thought behind what you're going to do. In checkers you can just move a piece and you can get lucky, and say it's luck. But in chess you have to actually think about what you're going to do. Next [you have to] think about what your opponent's going to do and then again, think about what your opponents going to do while you are already making a move. While you're just making your first move, it has a lot to do; a lot can depend on your first move. It kinda depicts what the rest of the game

is gonna look like. So a move early in the game can decide how you do later in the game. It's just a matter of like that, it's like this one game incorporates something that [is a part of] a lot of other activities or sports.

I would [encourage young Black boys to play chess.] I believe it is another way to stand out and be distinct, a distinct individual. Like I said, not a lot of people, or not everyone knows how to play chess, so with that ability, it definitely allows you to stand out and also, it's a way to develop your mental and thinking process and your cognitive abilities. So he would, build your brain muscle; your brain is a muscle so when you build your brain it's always a good thing. I believe everyone should know how, at least learn how to play the game. I believe at times there's more of an emphasis in the African American population because they're a minority group, so they feel like they should propel themselves, in as many ways a possible. So I believe that's another outlet for, another outlet for the element, I don't know the word. But [it's] another way for minorities to, to improve themselves.

Playing chess

I understood that chess was a thinking game when I was observing. Like I had seen other people playing and I would think to myself, back before I even got [the game,] if this person moves this pawn up, then the other person's going to move a bishop or something like that to this location to prepare to get that piece on the other side of the board. At least part of the time, before I played the game, I was thinking the other person would do what I was thinking, then either opponent would do, so I was like, okay I'm starting to get a nice understanding of the game. So even before I got the ability to play, I was understanding that it was a game that you had to think ahead of the other person to

understand what you should do. While playing chess, I saw it as a puzzle in a way. With the pieces constantly changing, so, during chess, the opponent would throw a problem at me, and I would do my best to kinda solve the puzzle and maneuver my piece into where it would kind of make the board look more correct. So, you could say it was, in a way, a problem and I had to solve it by rearranging my piece to make the board seem correct. So I [saw] it as kinda a puzzle.

[There are some skills used in chess.] You [should] have a quick thought process; you need to have the ability to think ahead. You need to have the mental capacity to think on your feet. [You also need an] understanding of the game of chess. [Maybe have an understanding of] why, possibly why [do you] play chess, or do you just think it's a game of entertainment? [If that is it] then you probably don't understand the concept, the reason behind the game of chess. [These skills are used in other areas too. Like in] baseball. I know, I played baseball all my life as well, all my life, since I was like five. So all the time, [in] baseball, I'm a pitcher, first baseman, and outfielder. So I'd always say, this is a left handed hitter, he's more than likely to pull the ball because he, of all batters [left handers] are more likely to pull the ball. Whenever I played or whenever I pitched, I say okay, he's gonna try to pull the ball, so I'd pitch the ball outside. [I was using] cognitive ability, that's thinking ahead. So I know [if he will] pull the ball, pitch it outside. So it'll be a ground ball and that's gonna make it easier on my team. Or if I'm hitting and I know the pitcher's been throwing a lot of fast ball, I know when I get to bat, I should get a fast ball. Or depending on what part of the line up you get, if you're the number 3 hitter or the number 4 hitter, which are your power hitters, you're not gonna expect fast balls. You're going to expect off sleeve pitches. So when I'm pitching to the

3 or 4 hitter, if they're thinking they're getting off sleeve, then I'm gonna throw a fast ball. If they're expecting a fast ball, I'm going to throw off some pitches. I'm going to try to stay ahead of my opponent to make sure that I can stay a little bit ahead.

I can't say I [think about how chess relates to other things a lot, but] thinking back on it, but now that I'm thinking currently like this, I'm like, oh wow, that's, that did really go together, I would not, back then, I didn't realize that. Well, actually, like in high school, I didn't think like, oh [I'm using chess skills.] I would think like, I'm using thinking ahead, [but] I ever equated it to chess, that I'm doing the same thing here.

[When I think about the most challenging part of chess,] honestly, I say the first move is one of the most challenging. Because you think of the best first move and you think okay, if you're actually the first person to move, then what's this other person going to do? Also, when you can't move your pawns anymore and you have to start using your own secondary pieces, like, okay, move this here, what should I do? And also, when you're at the time when you have to start sacrificing your own pieces to make advantages towards possibly getting someone's king, so you have to make small sacrifices early in the game to get the win in the game. So just trying to decide what pieces you can let go, sacrifice, in order to win the game. It's like you lose a few battles in order to win the war.

It's never the same [game. Different opponents have different strategies.] Some may be more aggressive; some may come out with all guns a blazin' trying to make the best moves towards your pieces. Or it might be a slow game where they might take it slow and one step at a time try to make their way to your side of the board. So it all depends on how aggressive or how, aggressive the person is you're playing. [I]consider

myself nonaggressive, like I like to be the person who counters someone else's aggression. If they want to come out, come at me strong, I like to be the kind, I don't like to have people counter my move. I'm more of an okay, if you do this, then I'm going to do this. I don't like to have to reevaluate my move to think about what they're going to do next, so I'm more of a non-aggressor than an aggressor. Yes, I'm more of a reactor to what they do instead of a I'm going to go here and hope, hope they move here. I'm more of an okay, if they move here, I'm going to do this. I don't like being the person where I move here and hopefully they do this to make it easier for me.

I'm more of a, in any game, I try to intimidate my opponent, like even in sports. Even in like baseball [or] basketball, I'm trying to get into the head of my opponent. Kinda be quiet about my actions and have them think I'm, I am having to think, but that I'm having to think more than I am. Like have them try to, like have them second guess their self. Possibly, second guess their actions, cause the more nervous a person is the more inclined they are to make a mistake. [I do this when I make my moves.] I [move] one of my front pawns, front four pawns. I'm not like a corner pawn person. Maybe like after I make a move, and like, in a nonaggressive manner, but with like make a move with not emphasis, but I know, I know what I'm doing. [I'll] make a move on purpose, like, after they make a move, make a move right after them where they, like where it seems like I was thinking of that move before hand so they think I was thinking of it before hand so they're kinda like oh, so he's already expected that. Like, why did he expect that? So kinda gets into their head a little. I think things a lot slower in a tough game cause I know every move is going to be, have an importance, I know every move's going to affect the outcome of the game. So I mean, with an easy opponent, I can think a

little faster because, they'll be like, oh dang, he did this faster than me, he knows what he doin'. But with a skilled opponent, I'm thinking a lot slower so I make sure whatever move I make will, whatever move I make, I won't regret.

Teaching chess

[To teach someone chess,] I'd start with what the pieces [do and,] which move the piece can do. Cause I believe you have to start from the bottom and work your way up. Actually, I might start them [with] where the pieces [go and,] how the board is set up. [I mean] where the pieces go at the beginning of the game. And then describe what piece can move where. And after they fully understand what piece can move where, then you can get to the strategy of it. Cause I can't, [I mean,] if you just tell someone like, okay, at the beginning of the game, just use this as a strategic move, they don't even know what to do after that. So I believe once you first get an understanding in their mind of what pieces can do what, then they can start possibly putting together themselves. [They could say,] okay, if this piece can do this, and I see the person move here, then they can start to develop the understanding. [They could think] that, okay, if I put like, $1+1=2$, I know I'm going off on a tangent here, but If you understand the concept, then you can start manipulating in your own way an idea that best makes sense to you. I believe that if you give them the information that they can put together and say what best fits their way of learning the game. So first giving them a general understanding and then start to develop their ability to manipulate the game into the best option.

I more than likely would sit down across from them and tell them like step by step. Okay, I'm moving here, if you were my opponent, you might decide to move here and tell them why. Like not just show them, but give them a description of why a piece

would move there, and why they would move a piece there as a reaction of what I [did.] [I would tell them] why I would move my piece there so they understand. [I hope they would think,] okay, well, if he moved his piece here, this is why he did that, so I'm going to move my piece to another location for a reason, not just to move it. So look for an understanding of why people move a piece where. [I would tell them chess is] a very, very, very complicated and mature game. Like I said before, a lot of intelligent people who were in college, a lot of people who are in college can't play chess. I believe it's a game that requires a lot of strategy and cognitive ability, so just to be an individual that has the capability of playing chess, I believe, puts you at an advantage.

I don't believe everyone can play chess. Honestly, cause the time and the cognitive ability, or the capability of the thought process that goes into playing chess might not be for everyone. [Here's an example,] I have friends who can watch someone play [a game of cards] like 100 times and they still won't understand the concept. So, I mean, this is chess. If you put someone in front of a chess board to watch you play a thousand times, if they don't understand and they are not going to understand the concept, then they are just [unable to or] won't pick up on the game. [But,] I believe if you have a true desire, and you put an extreme amount of thought process and desire, and as long as the desire was extreme, they might have the ability, but they wouldn't have the ability to become very skilled, they would just have the ability to move their piece to the correct place and make a move. But as far as thinking two or three steps ahead, they might not have that ability in order to get a win.

Jeremy's Story

I met Jeremy, a 36-year-old social worker, at a conference that he organized that was focused on chess and building community. Jeremy has an easy-going personality that invites conversation. His dreadlocks add to his persona; he is a poet and a philosopher who values thinking.

Growing up

I grew up in the, they called it the murder 80s. I grew up in that time in New York when it was out of control. I would say that the community I grew up in was more [like the] parents work together. Even though there, the outer world appeared to be chaotic [like on the] news. We looked at the news [and] the killin, all this and this, but it was like we go outside and play every day. We, I mean, it didn't mean much to us cause we all see it. Even though it was there, you would hear gun shots and all that, I never really engaged in it in that way. But I grew up around [all of this.] It was very like a community type environment where they really wanted to cut, to get the kids together, work together, learn a different language. Just things like that to work together as a community. And I think that's what helped to develop my idea of what a community supposed to look like. So when I see these communities [I work in today, I'm like], these, nah, it's not supposed to look like this- how can I make it better? Well, through chess, maybe we can teach the kids to make it better. So, but [when] I came down to Georgia, you know, it was a big, it was a shock. You know, coming from New York to Baymore, there was like, okay, I can get this, then to Cliffmont, I was [like] whoa! I was probably about 17, 16-17, and it was just like whoa, it was a different big change. Then from there, [we] went deeper into the south, to the rural Farmville Boarding College,

Farmville, Georgia. It was just like WHOA, and I was like, maybe 20-21. Then from there, I came to Rockridge, to Rockridge University. [I've] just been here since.

My dad was like a big piece in my life. He was there, you know, and at times he wasn't, but I got six brothers, so it was a big family. Even though they would play chess, they was never really into it. I'm like the third oldest in the hierarchy. So it was, you know, mom, a caring mom, a loving mom; dad, very philosophical, very community oriented, and on top of that [I had] a lot of different uncles. So I was always around some strong males, some strong Black males who had their identity. Who understood who they are. Who wasn't too damaged from history and you know, the drug culture that has plagued our community. I was around some really, really strong African American males who gave me what's called knowledge of self – to get me to understand myself, to understand why, to understand my role in a community. I think that helped a lot. But it was mom, dad, a lot of my brothers, then that strong community. I got three, six brothers and three sisters. It was at some point like [I also had a] step dad, he had another [step-siblings], so it has – it's a strange dynamic, but six brothers, three sisters.

[In school,] oh, man, how can I say, the best way to do it is- this is gonna sound crazy- the first language I learned to speak was Arabic. Even though I was born and raised in America, the first language I learned to speak was Arabic because my father, they were part Muslims. I grew up in a Muslim household. So, the language I learned to speak was Arabic. Where we had, our father would have these, like, he would pay different teachers like from Sudan and Morocco to teach [Arabic.] So I learned that first, then when I went to elementary school, it was kinda like, Arabic goes from right to left whereas English goes from left to right. So, my frame of thinking was always like, you

know, just always looking at things [like that.] That's what makes the poetry so easy. Because you can look at things from so many different perspectives. From, you know [what I] mean, [almost like] dyslexia I think, I started looking at words that way. Like, it says "is land", why you telling me it says island? It's is and land, but it's called island? Like, you know, I didn't really understand. But elementary nice, cool, I can remember my favorite teacher, Mrs. Roberts. Just Black woman, tall, just [a] beautiful spirit. And I could tell she, like with anything, a kid can tell when a teacher loves and generally care about them, and I could tell she was one of those teachers.

When I got into Junior High, it's like; it was it was a war zone. You know, between [elementary and] high school, it was the fights. A lot of gangs around the area, so that was that point where you began to you know it was a different ball game. We'd be in the classrooms and the teacher be teaching, [there would] be a group of kids in the back playing cards, and we was just like no one cared. Why should you? So Junior High School, they call it middle school, but in New York, it was Junior High. I don't think I learned anything, you know, but then again there were some strong, I remember my social studies teacher, Mr. Climb, [a] strong Black man. He was loud, spoke loud, authoritative. My mom would say that there was this one teacher that said, "Your son's gonna be something. He has something." He saw something in you, whereas the other teachers was just like, well, you just became part of the pack mentality. Even though I was never a troublemaker or any of that, I was just in class and nothing happen.

In high school, my moms, she try to get me to a high school that was a high school outside of Brooklyn because the area I was in in Brooklyn was really, really rough. So she try to get me to a school in Manhattan that taught like a trade and this and

that. But even going to that school, it was crazy cause it was like kids would come in there from all over. Like kids were coming from Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and it was almost to the point where every day we would get checked before you go to school [by metal detectors.] Every day, every morning. So the people with, you know, there wasn't ever [any one to] care if you was tardy to class. So again, that is [what] my foundation [was] like.

[My education was not all in school.] Whereas whatever I learned, I had to learn here and there. And most of my learning came from like, I'm not going to say self taught, but most of my learning came from more streets. Whereas street scholars would say like, you know, like the brother, Elder [who was a retired Air Force guy. He would always tell us,] "Read a book, here read this book." You know what I'm saying, learn about the world, learn about life, this and that.

Whereas a lot of stuff at school, like writing, and I was a horrible writer, but as far as the concepts and ideas, creative writing [goes], the thoughts and creativity was there, but the written structure and the grammatical [things are what I was horrible at doing.] I was terrible and you could tell cause it was like when I came south, I understood all of the work, like the work was easy, but it was just writing the paper. The idea, developing the ideas, when I came south, I think I began to [get better]. I remember one teacher from high school. She really, she really cared. She was like, "Wow, you are a phenomenal writer." And I was like, come on, like, stop. And she'd be like, "No, you are a great writer. The way you think." She was like, "It's unique." And I had a couple of teachers who would tell me, "You have a very unique way of thinking. You just need

to really get the grammatical part.” She was trying to encourage me to like, write about this and get into essay competitions.

We had to write an essay and what really brought me to the forefront was we had to write an essay about something creative and I wrote an essay called “The Spell of 1, 2, 3” in high school. And I was still breaking down how the world was set up into sets of three- the rich, middle class, and poor, the three little bears, the three little pigs, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and just designing and breaking down how the world was set up in threes. But I was telling that the three kinda represents a level of balance in some way where if there was only twos, then those twos would be at war with each other, but three helps balance. But the concept, I ended it like, you know, let’s get into 5, 6, and beyond. The 5, you know, and that’s when she was like, “I’m moved. I’ve never read anything in my life.” She was like, “You need to write more. You need to read to the class.” And I was like, no, I’m not try[ing to] read to the class, I’m not trying to do all that. So even when I went to high school, when I first went to Lake Side College. I graduated from high school, [after] I dropped out [and] went back. I graduated from high school [later] cause I was back and forth between New York and Georgia. I came to Georgia and was like, I can’t do this and went back to New York. To the same environment, and I was like I can’t do this!

[Then] I came back to Georgia, so it was like back and forth. I graduated from high school about 20 [years old]. And I would say, I had to get on academic probation to get into college. I don’t know what my GPA was, I don’t even know who my school counselor was. It was like, because no one cared, so I didn’t care. Or, I didn’t care, so no one else cared. So it was kinda a two way sword, whereas, if I just had one person to say,

“Yo, look. Know who is your counselor.” So that’s what I do with the kids. Who is your counselor? Talk to them, that’s what they get paid to do. [They get paid] to teach you what colleges you can go to and [things like that.] So, how I missed out, and those kids that I see who are in my situation, [and they] were at that way of thinking, I try to take them under the wing and try to develop them in creative aspects. So, that’s kinda what my childhood [was like]. I graduated from high school at 20. I still had a baby face, so no one could tell. Then seven years later I end up getting my Masters at Rockridge University. So I always tell people, look, it’s not how you started, man, it’s how you finish the race. So I would say just, a lot of the foundation helped to really develop that. How I was raised, [or] how I was raised to see [the world.]

[After school and weekends were,] at the times, Nintendo [to] play Techno Bowl, but growing up when we was younger, it was always like in New York, we had, it was more of an outside culture. We would go play football on the block. We would, you know, weekends we would just go play basketball; we did things together as a group. And when you got older, you wanted to explore and see. [You] got into girls, and you want to go to Manhattan cause you got a girl that you talk to and you got her number, and you know, take her out. It became, there was so much to see in New York, you know, [so] you just jump on a train and go anywhere you want. It’s like you give a kid options like that, whereas the after school programs [were not like that.] After school, we get the train and we see girls, people coming from, at that time, all the other schools in New York City was coming out. So you see a train that’s filled with all kinds of people, from homeless, to... It was just a life experience in New York when you see any and everything you ever wanted to see.

[Being in New York was good,] but when you get older, it's like, I enjoyed it, but I don't want to live there. It's a different mentality that come with that. Maybe as a kid, I would want my kid to experience that. These kids are going to schools, catching trains and at young ages, so you learn to develop and understand the world early from a whole different perspective. Responsibility. Whereas, sometimes it's like, [it's a different kind of responsibility. In the country,] if more kids had ideas just to run up to the river, [to] go fish. I wish I would have had [that opportunity.] I used to look at TV and I was like, man, I want to have a tree house cause it looks fun. Kids riding dirtbikes and [get to] climb trees. Ain't no trees in our neighborhood! Just buildings, [and I would think,] where do they do this stuff at? Whereas you see kids down here, man, I want to go there [to New York]. I'd be like, no you don't. So it's like the grass is greener on the other side.

So, it was no after school programs [for me, but], it probably was there. But [for us,] the task was to get back home because you were so far away. And by the time you got back home [through] rush hour, sometimes it was either dark or [almost the time that we were told to be home.] [Our parents were like,] be back home by this time, and we was like, okay. Whereas when I was in Junior High School, it was easier. You had your peers and we could just go play ball. We go into parks and play hand ball, basketball, so it was always like something to do. Then you come home and just play the video games whereas everything is video games. [I remember that] handball is a game, a sport where they have a wall, literally a wall with gates around it and you get a little ball and you just kinda like boom, boom- [hit the ball against the wall.] Like tennis but with your hand. [The ball, well,] it's just called a hand ball. You bounce it, it's real bouncy. It's about

this big [a little smaller than a tennis ball, but larger than a golf ball]. You just hit the wall, then they hit it, then you, then use the left hand, then it's killer. You just jzu jzu jzujzu jzu, like we've mastered all kinds of different styles of doing it. We were kids, then baseball, but we didn't have no streets, I mean we didn't have no parks or nothing and it was more like, we played on the streets. We just played wherever was available. Then you come to the court and it's packed. Sometimes people get in a fight, and then it's the question, "aww, man, you wanna go?" If we go, we gotta go there seven eight deep in case one get a fight, so it was always like enjoying life, but at the same time survival. Knowing what was going on, you know, that's what brother [Elder] always told us, you know, with chess. Know what's going on. Know your environment. Know how things work, think before you... I'm coming up [in a rough area], but it was always like, protected in some ways.

Coming to Chess

Okay, me and chess- growing up, I know it was like a group of us. It was like a group of young guys, I'm not gonna say we were a boys home, it was more like our parents had a lot of young teens and young guys from my community. We would come together and we would engage in different programs and there was an older gentleman there who's from the Air Force. He was an older Black guy, and his thing was more so, he was like, I got to teach ya'll chess, that was, I want ya'll to learn to play chess. And he would have us competing with chess. Sometimes we would do boxing, or we could karate against each other, but it was always more so, where the whole concept of it takes a village to raise a child. To really give us different skills that he felt was strong, [and] would help us long term. So, of course, the fighting, the boxing was self defense, Karate

[was] discipline. Then chess was the game he always felt would help us with long thinking, critical thinking, so I would say [I was] probably 13-14, when I really first began to play chess. Did I really understand the game? No. To me it was just, it was just cool. A whole bunch of pieces move on the board. So I wouldn't say that I was one of the best players, I was just the guy that would play because everybody else would play around me. So the minute it was time for me to lose it, I lost it. Cause it was like, chess wasn't really my thing. You know, I mean I was more into other things, but chess wasn't it. [I would] stop playing, and even to the point of if I didn't have to do it, I won't do it. It's not like I took it home and practiced it and studied it and learn about the grand masters. I didn't, that didn't come till later.

But when it was time for me to lose it, meaning that, okay it was there, it was just another thought. I know how to play this thing. I know how the pieces move. I didn't know how the strategies [worked.] I didn't know how to put the strategies in place, and I couldn't really explain the game to anyone, but I knew it from the point of, this is how the pieces move, but whenever we stopped, I stopped. I stopped playing and I just went on with my life. So that's how I first, that's my memory of chess in this early stages.

[The man who taught me was in the Air Force and he was an Elder in the community.] He, he was a really [important] man [in my life.] He was a, you know, he's one of them guys that you wish that if I could go, if I could find him, I would. You know, I mean, to thank him. He's one of those type of guys. He was always trying to get us into reading. He was always about teaching us. Sort of like the things that I do now. But he was that. He was always about introducing us to different books. "Read, you gotta read. You have to read, open your mind." He would [share his life.] He had a fish

tank and he was always tellin' us about different kind of fish, like this is the gold fish, this is the Oscar, this is the Jack MC. He was, this is how you feed the fish. So it was more of like, wow, I would say he was an educator in his own rite. Where his thing was, he really cared about the direction of, he really bought into the concept of it takes a village to raise a child. Because he recognized we, you know, I grew up in New York, so it was, you know the crack, 80s, you know. I'm coming up in the 80s when crack first came on the scene in New York. How it decimated our communities you know, people, robberies, and crime was out of control, but he was one of those older guys that said, look don't focus on none of this stuff, this is what you focus on- discipline, Karate, you know, learn to box, learn to play chess or read. He was one of those type of gentlemen. Last thing I heard, he worked at a library in New York, and I actually went and looked for him, but I was never able to find him because I didn't know his real government name. I used to always call him, like, like people call me a nick name. He always had one of those names, but I couldn't, I can't find him. But I wish I could and I hope I do one day. The last time we saw him, one of my friends said he saw him at the library, and I went there and I couldn't find him.

[I learned with him teaching, and] it was mostly with my peers. I think more so, like, this is how the piece moves, this is how this move, this is how this move, and from my memory, he used to just have us kind of playing and when we'd make a mistake, he'd tell us no. And here's another trick he used to have, he used to have these, Little Debbies, you know, in New York, [they were] 25 cents. And he would just put it in the middle and whoever win, get a chance, you know what I mean, you can get the Debbies. We were like, awww; we would play because we would want that Little Debbie. I can't

really recall how he taught me, but I can say that it's almost as if he taught it and he taught it in a way that he was telling us [as we played.] Don't [make that move], this is, try to move this one. This is how the queen moves. This is how this moves, this is how that move. And I think, you know, children learn by observation. This is why I have my problems with the education system where everything is kinda just read to them, and they are [not] taught to read and understand when most children do learn by observation. I was the type, that type of learner. If I saw it, if I saw this is how the game went, then I can pick that up and I was able to mimic that.

The other aspect of the game was the more you play, the more you study, the more you master it, the better you get. But I didn't really care for the game that much so I never really took it beyond what he taught me. I would just play because I respected him and I loved him as a father figure because as an older gentleman, out of respect. At the same time, he cared about us and you saw that, so I would engage in the games and play, but I didn't really care about the game. Like the boxing and other stuff, I was like okay, I was more into that kind of stuff, but chess wasn't really, and I wasn't really into it like that. [I played] because he wanted me, because he said it was right. Because he said it [is] a good game and it was a game that I needed to learn, so I wanted to learn.

Because he said it, you know.

[The other guys I learned with are scattered.] Some of them I do [keep in touch with, so] some of them I do, and a lot of them [I] don't. That's why when they see [me and what I do], they be like, man, you doin this with chess? Remember, they like, remember how Elder used to have us play chess? And it's like, yeah! Now I'm taking it to another level. Now I'm doing what he taught me, and they like, man, I forgot how to

play. So a lot of them forgot, because you know, we were kids. It was New York, and in New York, the distraction of New York City, you know. It was like, you know, a lot of them, we stay in touch. We didn't really play much other than when we was with him [Elder], but outside of that, we didn't really go out. We didn't go to central park and play chess with the, I mean, in central park or nothing. Even though we knew it was there, we never really took or engaged in that. Let's say I was on my way to school, and I would see older people on the block in neighborhoods playing chess, I would sit there and watch the game, but I couldn't pretend [I knew] what was happening. I knew, okay, aww man, he moved there, and he moved there, [but] I didn't know chess enough to say, wow, this is how he's settin up the board. I would just watch the game and I would think about, you know, how I learned it and I would just go on my way. I would go to school in Manhattan, so sometimes I would take the train and I would go by a park and I would see different people who would play chess. I would sit there and watch the game for a little bit, and then I would just go on my way. It was always like, okay, I always came back to chess at some point, but only to keep going.

Believe it or not, I think I got back to chess, I would probably say from probably around maybe 99-2001, [or] 2002 when I really began to council and work with kids. And I would see where a lot of those kids were, and I said wow, you know, when I was that age, what helped me to just kind of stay on track? And [I remembered] it was like, okay, we had boxing and we had programs, [and] chess. And I was like, okay, let me try to teach some of these kids chess. Let me begin to introduce chess into some of these kids' lives. And I would just you know, try to teach these kids chess. And in the beginning they were really like that's not my game, I'm not into it, you know, they were

into video games and such. So in the early parts of 2000 or 2001 when I begin to work with some kids, I remember one of my kids I was working with. He was a kid out of Baymore by way of Grover, Ohio. I was like, have you ever played chess, and he was like, man, I love chess! And I was like WWHHAATTT! So you know, we would [play.] And for those kids who enjoyed it, we played chess and I'd go buy them a board for \$5 or \$1. I'd give them a board so they can use. But [this kid was different because] he was like, I love chess, and he was a really good chess player. He was playing me and he would really, he would beat me sometimes. It was a way of me playing chess with them and getting a way for them to kinda open up cause with chess, you know, we would talk. You can talk about things and talk about life. So I incorporated that as a method for me to really engage with the kids. That's when I really got back into it and then I started playing it a lot more. Then I started to read on it a lot more. Then I started to really try to understand the game and try to understand, more so, a way of teaching, a way of incorporating chess into let's say counseling, or mental development or cognitive development. You know what I mean, that's when I really began to focus on chess at that level and began to just [build my] skill. Work on my approach to chess. So that was in the early, let's say 2000s, 99-2000, around there. I got a chance to go to Israel and I think while there, I really [understood the power of chess.] You know, by then I'm learning. I watched a movie. I started to begin to watch different movies where chess was incorporated. I was almost like, okay, I need to incorporate that and let the kids see this movie. Like this movie called *Fresh*. You know, I mean, there's another movie, I forget, what's it called? One of my favorite movies, [*Revolver*, with], Andre 3000. [It was about a guy and] his cell mate was a chess player. [It's a] really good movie.

Phenomenal movie and everyone will call me and say Jeremy you need to watch this movie. It'd probably have to be somewhere in 2000s, [like] late, 2008 [when it came out.]

So, anyway, I got a chance to go to Israel, and when I was in Israel, that's when I really began to understand the power of chess. Here I am, me, a Russian, [and] an Israeli. We don't speak the same language, but we're engaged in this game, and we're kinda communicating with each other through like, our spirits, like [using gestures to say] good game, good move, you know. When it was like, you know it was like, we felt each other, but we didn't know each other's languages. I think it was at that point that I realized like, wow, chess can really be used as a tool that can transcend even [when] we don't speak the same language. We can engage in the game of chess and we can use it as a tool to diplomacy. You know what I'm saying. It can be used as a tool to, even if you're playing somebody that's deaf. You don't understand, they can't, they're unable to speak, [but] you can still play a game, the same game and you can really enjoy it, you know. So, from that 2001, I played a lot with different [people]. [Like] my friends, and we go to different places and we just sit down and we play. We get an hour or two, we just engage, we just play. And I started teaching a lot people from, you know, females I knew, to just different friends and we would just play. I would teach everybody how to play chess, so I just really got into it. Then it developed further, you know.

Chess only enhanced [my desire] to get me to really understand now. I got to understand how policies and politics and this game [of life] in the world is set up like a chessboard. So let's learn to play chess. It's not set up like checkers, it's set up like a chess board where you got every piece that coordinates. [Where] you're the pawn and

you know [what I] mean, just don't be used for something negative, but you can always graduate into something, you can always become something great, you know. So understanding those philosophies I began to really incorporate it. I just know that chess works differently, where you know, someone can take the game and they can apply it for the wrong thing. So, say, it's a chess game, let's go into a community, and let's figure out how to move drugs, you know [what I] mean, that's, you know, plot, strategize. You know [what I] mean, but I was always encouraged to use it for good, you know [what I] mean.

I didn't [really set a lot of goals for myself in chess.] Cause I would meet some people who play chess and they were, they were really like, anal. Like, if they lose a game, it would crush them, their whole world. I was like, "Yo bro, it's just a game." So to me, chess was always just a game. I would be like, you play chess? [And they would] be like, "Man, I'll kill you. I'll destroy you in chess." And I'd say, "I just want to learn from you." You know what I mean, where to me it was kinda like, I just really enjoy the game. Win or lose, you know, the concept was, that if you play better people, you get better. So I was always trying to play other people, more people so I could get better. But there wasn't a goal like I want to be the next chess grand master. I did get a chance to play a grand master, and man, he put a whoopin on me! And he allowed me to realize, like wow, some people really see this game and understand this game from a totally different perspective and that's when I started really getting into the Bobby Fischer [story]. [I would] get the books and read about some of the strategies cause I learn that people really like different opening moves. [There was] this move, and that move and, you know, four mate- checkmate in four moves and, you know. I was like wow, and I

started to really get into it a lot more, but never from the point of I want to one day be a chess master or grand master. I want to make hundreds and millions of dollars off of it. It was always something from the point of, how can I teach chess, you know what I mean? How can I, cause I'm more so with, like if we can't apply it in real life, then [how] do we plan for? You know? So my thing was always, how can you apply chess in your day to day life? How do we apply, how do I teach chess from the point we can apply this thing to impact a child, or impact a community, impact, you know what I mean, just life. So chess was never really a competition thing with me. But I would get people who would compete and they want to play. I'd be like it's a good game. Just keep it moving. It was never a goal set, but it was, I would want to put on little chess tournaments. I looked at chess as something that can really impact a lot of kids in our community. Because of the strategies, a lot of our kids, they fall victim to just reacting whether it be negative thinking, negative behavior, somebody said something and they react. So entire industries were built around this reaction. You know, where, I would say chess is always, it teaches pro-action. Think before you act, think before you move. I was always saying, let me incorporate that into what I'm doing. It was never, my goal was from there, to try to teach a lot of kids how to play chess. But not from a personal I want to be a grand master. It was more from teaching.

I participated in a few tournaments in my life. I did okay. Like it was, you know, some people really take chess to a whole other level and I realized that. And the atmosphere was like, you know, I never got it to that point. But [some] tournaments I did participate in were tournaments where I brought kids from Rockridge to them. And then while the kids are playing, I would engage and we would all compete, but never enough,

no high ranking, top of the line. You know, I mean I never really got it to that level. I mean I think I would do well. I would do okay. I still get smashed by people in chess, but I never competed at national or international or region champions. It was more with smaller chess tournaments that would take place in different communities and different areas. I would go and play and enjoy and engage.

My skill level has changed a lot. Now I'm to the point where I can see, I can see probably about 6-7 moves ahead now whereas before it was [less.] I could even get to the point where I could see 10 moves ahead. Whereas before, it was more so like, react. You move here, I'm gonna move there. Like a lot of the kids I teach now. So my skill level has gotten better. I mean, as you get older, as you study, and I learn, and I'm still learning the game, you know. I could never say I've mastered chess. I'm still learning the game, and I'm still learning about different [names of moves.] A lot of things I used to do, then people's like this is called this and I was like, oh, oh, I didn't know. I was just doing that because, you know. So I wouldn't consider myself a master or a grand master, but I would consider myself, I could give them a run. I don't have, I haven't gotten to the point where I rate myself. I've tried to play, about 50-60 different people and I've only lost once. It's like the skill level, some people it's a good game, others, but I've never rated myself and came in and said this is my chess rating. Maybe I need to. You know what I mean, so I could see where I'm at. Like I said, I'm a participant, I enjoy the game and I enjoy getting more people engaged in the game.

The tournament that I got together was using chess too. Cause everything in there was pretty much chess and how I developed it was using a chess model. Putting the whole thing together, even from the way of getting sponsorship. I got the King's package

\$25,000, the Queen's package, the Knight's package, the Bishop's package, the Castle's package. You know, I didn't want to put a Pawn's package cause you don't want, nobody wants to be a pawn. So that was kinda like how I set it up and you got some people say, I want the king's package. So I developed a whole model around chess and even used chess strategies to be able to get the conference off the way, the way I did it. Of course with a lot of help and a lot of support.

Playing chess

[Games are good if you have to fight for them.] I could show you, yeah, there were a bunch of games like that. Where it came down to the wire and it was a really good game. There were a bunch of them. Some really good games. What's unique is, when you play chess with people, you immediately learn, what, I don't mean immediately, but you can kind of see what they're like. So let's say I'm getting ready to play chess with a person and the person would be like, "Aww man, I can't wait to, you know, me, I'm dangerous with my queen." When a person says I'm dangerous, I set up the board where immediately in the early part, we exchange queens. Then it's saying, okay, now let's play. If this is a piece that you claim you love, then we gonna play without her. Because when I teach a lot of my youth to play chess, I always take the queen off the board. I learn how, I have to learn how to play without my queen, so that way, if I ever find myself in this situation, so okay, let's get our queens out the way. [If you like to castle, then] your king is now, you're not able to castle. I got the king where I want the king, now let's play. Know what I mean, whereas, so it was always interesting as I play different people, you see that some people who are, they like to coordinate, let's say the knights, and you know, the knight and the queen together.

There was one game where a person was like, really strong with the queen and the castle. They were just bringing the queen up and the castle. See I look at it as more, like, you know what I mean, like wow, I like the strategy. That the person would move and he would always move the pawns with the queen. As the queen was moving the pawns were moving. It was like, whoa, and the pawns were slowly locking up the board and all the other pieces were behind in case any of the pawns get picked up. The other pieces were defending and it was just attacking. So I was like, wow, that's a good strategy. You know, whereas other strategies, the person was just with the knight and the bishop. The knight and the bishop coordinate so, it was just different games. I wouldn't say that I remember like, aww, my favorite game of all time. I couldn't remember it like, cause I play so much and win or lose I enjoy the game. But I know I've had some really good games and to the point that we would talk to each other and say, awesome game, good game. And sometimes, what you don't like about chess is, when I know I'm about to lose, I fight it to the end; whereas somebody is about to lose, they just say, they just quit. Resign. And I'd be like, because you lost your queen, you resigned? Like come on, continue to play even though you lost your queen, you continue to play. I may make a mistake, you know.

When I play [a new opponent], I always see how they open the game. Cause a lot of times, people move with the pawn that's in front of the king and when they don't know you, they move with the pawn that's in front of the king two moves. They bring the queen, they bring the bishop cause they want to finish the game in four moves. You know what I'm saying, so I see that and a lot of times I pretend like I don't see it. To me, chess is a game of psychology, you know [what I] mean. When I would make a move on

the board, I would bring my knight out [and make it face differently than forward-turning it towards another piece or side of the board.] Well, on computers you can't do that, you know [what I] mean, cause it's just a game. I would bring the knight out and I would face the knight, you know [what I] mean, where the person be like, man ["What's he doing?"] Now I got their attention. Like, but then in their minds, they're like, okay, is he just setting me to look this way, or is he trying to attack to the left, to the right? So it becomes a game of psychology. But I just, I move, and I face the knight a certain way, and, and to see what is going on in that person's mind is like, to me becomes just funny; because it's a game of psychology. Where the knight is not even important, it's just a distraction. But then, you face it a certain way, as if I'm coming for your queen right now. Some persons begin to move the queen, those who fall for it, and just fall right into another trap that I'm laying. It becomes, you know, you see what their opening moves are and sometimes it works, sometimes it don't work. I mean, I've had some people handed my butt to me, you know, and I've given some behind whippins. Some games, with chess, and I tell people, sometimes you can see it clearly, and other times you can't see nothing. So, when I get a new opponent, I just see how they play, you know, I see how they open a game and I say, let me try to challenge my opponent this way cause this is how they opened it.

Early 2000, when I really began getting into it with the kids, then I started playing regularly by myself. Where I would just call some of the boys and say, hey, let's meet up and play chess. Or sometimes we just get a little drink, and we just get sit down and we just play chess. Then I get online and I would play computers, or different web sites, playing chess. I would get my but whipped; get whipped, give whippins, you know. I

would say, probably like the early, early 2000s is when I really began to just kinda play for myself, to really grasp a better interest in the game. You know, where, I would, I wouldn't necessarily say, okay, I'm going to make time every day; no, it was more so, like right now, I could just put the game on [my phone], and I got a couple of different people waiting on me to make my move. I would make a move, you know [what I] mean, then get back to work. So I would find a way to read or play. And I tell the kids, make sure you try to play every day. But, I try to make time. I taught my wife how to play, so it's like, you know, she likes the game and I was like yes! I would encourage her and I was, I think one day you just gonna beat me. So she wanna play more so she's playing a lot more cause I, I enjoy the game. We can sit down, we play, you know.

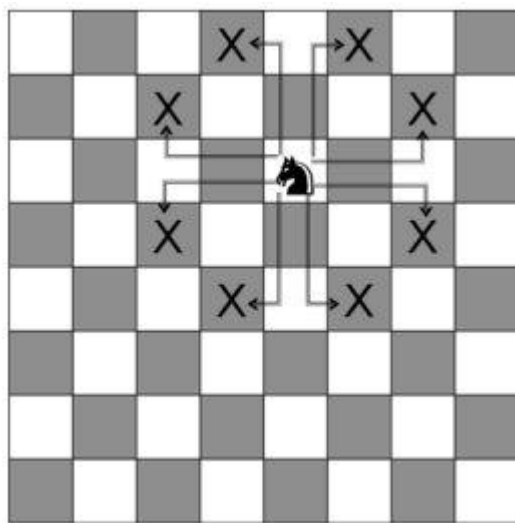
I got my wife into Chess with Friends and we play sometimes and she's even online playing with different people with chess. But she said she likes chess computer better than the sit down. And I was like no! That's because that's how she really learned it. You know, I would teach her, but she was, "what? I don't get it." But when I began to teacher her; when I began to let her see me play chess online, and that's when she said I get it. I really like this game, but as far as sitting down, it's like, to be honest with you, it's like me trying to find time in a day. That's just me and time right now; just trying to get to know each other a lot more because I don't really have a lot of time. However, that's the best way that I do it, but I do try to at least, if I can call a friend, or bring a chess board out and engage in a good sit down game once [in a while.] I try to do it at least once or twice a week if I'm able, but I'm usually on the road driving a lot. Or even when I do my poetry shows, that's one thing that I do. I bring my chess board and I tell people, yo, I got chess, and after the show I sit down with, you know, just, you know,

different people. They want me to come to Florida to do a show, I'll bring my chess board and afterwards, I just play. In Virginia, I just bring my chess board and I'm playing chess with people. I lose sometimes; sometimes I win. But just to encourage that, and get the people sometimes [to] brag say, "Oh, man, I beat him at chess." It's all good, you know, we play again, we play another one whenever. I play that with me, I take the chess board. I always carry my chess board with me, always, see my little chess board; it's always there with me.

Teaching chess

When I began to really understand chess, not just from the game aspect, I'm a, I'm a poet. I'm a quote-unquote philosopher. So I like to look at the game and say this represents what in real life? I mean, how can I apply this in the real life? So when I teach my youth to play chess, I teach them that from that strategy. What does this represent to you in your life? Pawns, you got 8 pawns, you know, 8 friends. What are those friends? Good or bad, you know, to guide you in this direction? These are the pawns. What is the queen mean? How is the queen in your life treating you? Be your girlfriend, your mom, you know. The castle, keep the castle straight, you know, keep your castle straight, keep the community straight. Keep the community straight. Keep your way of thinking straight, you know? The bishop represent the police force, protection, you know [what I] mean, or the internal community protection. You know, the bishops represent the churches that intervenes in the neighborhoods, you know [what I] mean. The king representin' the father that's you know [what I] mean, when the father's gone, how, it's so easy, to, you know, the game is gone, it's over. When the castle is done, it's easy to get a person. The castles representin' the foundation.

And I would teach it from that point [of view,] and I would see when I began to implement it, or teach the kids from that point, the kids were able to grasp it a lot easier than how I learned it. This piece just move there, there, there, there, there. You have to show how the piece makes sense in a kids life and then that kid will be able to say wow! So that way when a kid think about it, he be like yeah, this moves like this because he knows how the L, you know [what I] mean, the lord, the L the upside down 7, the L. He moves, the horse moves like the L, the lord of war. You know [what I] mean, so think of the L, the 7, you know.



(Knight move, n.d.)

Figure 6. Knight moves in and L or 7.

So different things will help to get the kids to think, and maybe even think of it from a math perspective. Each move is worth a certain point. And it helps with memory.

Remember your last move, now tell the kids, stop, what did you do? Show me the last three moves that you just did. You know [what I] mean, to help improve memory, and then we say okay, I mean, I come at it from a lot of different ways and teaching the kids depending on where I see their needs are.

[When teaching chess,] I think, I always tell the kid, once you learn, the horse, the game is good. You know how to play. I always say, the knight, once they understand how to move the knight, then, you know, the game, then I can teach them how to develop a game. How to open up a game to your advantage. It's difficult, depending on who you play. You could make a move and another person makes a move that just throws your whole move out. So people say you got to have an opening game and an end game. You know, and the middle game, so people, just play for, I'm just going to play for your mistakes. Or I'm just going to attack whatever piece you cherish; I'm going to take it. Taking everything and then we gonna come down to a pawns game. And whoever has the most pawns, I go to the end, and I get stronger [by promoting my pawn to a queen] and I finish the game. So there's different ways of people, of coming at it. And like different strategies; development, the early development of the game, like, to control the middle. I think that's a lot of times the most difficult, but then when the game is locked, like, you know, that's when I just tell the kids, when it comes to a point where you, you don't see something [like a mistake, what will you do?] I don't play for a person's mistakes, because if a person doesn't make a mistake, then you're in trouble. It becomes difficult from an early stage because I'm getting kids who never, who have never played chess before and I'm getting them in to learn to play chess. And I always tell them really, the knight is what teaches long, long thinking, thinking ahead. I believe that is that piece. The other piece is a small one, two three, or you can move a couple of pieces, but the knight is so unorthodox, you know. Sometimes you got to take two steps back in life to move forward. I can use the knight to incorporate a lot of like small wisdom to them, you know.

But chess really helps with, in chess you have to think ahead. And I would tell them, look, the difference between me, you, and sometimes I show them. This is what you saw when they make a move, why did you move there? They like, “ahhh, I just moved it cause.” No, I said, you just move, if this is how you look at it, I’m just moving because it’s a move, then you will never get a chance to understand this game. Why did you move it? Do you think there’s another option? Do you see another way to do it? You know, and that’s why whenever I teach the kids, especially, with the horses, [I’ll] says, okay, in three moves, I want you to take this pawn. And the kid, boom, he thinks it through, boom, boom, boom. Good, now I want you to do it, but use another three moves. You know [what I] mean so they can know, now you understand that there is infinite options to how you can go about something. You know, then I apply it to the real life.

You find yourself in this situation, you know [what I] mean, you have options. I bring back a scenario [they have shared with me like,] the kid got into a fight, or whatever. Let’s really recall that whole scenario in your mind. Now how would you go about doing this different? How, what do you thought you could have done without looking like a punk? Without looking like this? Without, how could you have resolved this thing in a way where... So I take the same strategies that we use from the game and I apply it, or imply it to, you know, that kid’s actuality. Not theory, but actuality. And then, it’s like okay, how do we fix this situation? You want to go to college, okay, this is how you will get there. What are the steps you gonna put in place? You know [what I] mean, how you gonna... So when I began to really implement it from that point, it became really effective with a lot of kids that I work with because they would, they

understood it. Then they would play chess. And I was like, now join a chess team at your school. They were like “nah, man, I’m not, I’m no good with the nerds man.” I mean, you have opportunities to win scholarship, get money, and this and this and you’re worried about running with some nerds? It’s gonna be hard for you to really understand life. So, you know, that’s how it works.

When I would play the game, it was more of just like I was enjoying the game. When I began to look at chess as a cognitive development, of building [skills, I was older.] It’s crazy, cause it’s like, I didn’t go from the point of learning to play chess, became a chess master, and then develop a chess curriculum. I kinda went from the point of learning to play chess, then saying whoa. This game can be used to really impact this juvenile population now. I think when I began to teach, that’s when I began to look at chess from more of problem solving, like okay, now, this is how, let’s try this. It became problem solving when I taught it. I tell the kids all the time, you become, you wanna learn how to become a better chess player? Teach your little brother. Because if you have the patience to teach your little brother and then you play with your little brother, the more you do it, the more you’re going to begin to see your mistakes. What you can do better, how you can become more effective. And that’s how I try to help the kids like to really develop it. To the point where they can understand the power of chess. But until then, sometimes it’s like, they don’t really understand it.

Some of them begin to understand the strategy. I teach them openings, closing, how do you finish the game. Let’s finish the game, show me how to finish the game. The kid, you know, I just put the king and two castles and I say give me check mate, not just run them around the board. The kid would be like, “Come on man” and I say you

gotta think about it. Think about it, you know [what I] mean, limit my movements, you know, and then the kid's "okay" and then the kid's like "I get it now." And I love it when the kid's like, "Oh, I get it, I get it. Oh, I see." So I say, see this, I said that set you up and you fell right into the trap. And a lot of times I see the kid running, and I'm teaching them with the pawns and the kid's running all down there and I tell the kid, You got beef in Greene? And he like "Yeah." I say, would you go to ball, would you go to Greene by yourself? He be like, "No, I bring my boys with me." So why you running down here by yourself on this board, you know [what I] mean. Where's your help? He'll like "oh" you know. When I began to teach chess, it became easier to really observe it from a problem solving. But when I was playing it, it never really call it [problem solving.] Like, okay, I'm solving, people were like, oh, you play chess, wow. I was just like, man, chess players are thinkers and you know. So I was all cute and so, but it was more like, I really understood it when I began to teach it. When I began to show younger people how to play it; that's when I, the love for it became so much more deeper.

[The skill that is needed the most is] patience. Number one, patience. I won't say the game ain't for everybody. I won't say that because I've taught kids that I thought would never get it, and they understood. And I always empower them like, man, you made that move. They'd be "yeah" and you see them, like, when they hear the positive feedback and encouragement, they want to do it again. Whereas others you taught, and they don't have the patience, they were like, you know, looking around. They were [answering with], "um hmm" [I would say,] no, does the pawn move there? "Nah" I'll tell you what, every time you make a move like that, you gotta give me a pushup. You know, then they say "okay okay" the kid gets a lot more serious and he makes a bad

move, I'm like, alright, give me a pushup. Every time you make a wrong move, a move you're not supposed to do, you got to give me a push up because that's showing me you wasn't paying attention. And you got to pay attention. This is a game that requires you to stay focused and pay attention. The kid need to develop a level of patience and focus.

Skill is something you develop, I think. It's like, you know, you can't, because people would say what age? Because I have people say, "Man, my son is 5, can you [teach him]?" Nah, I like to, I like 'em a little older only because, you know, I want at least the kid to understand a certain idea of how responsibility work. How the world work. A little bit, you know. [They] don't gotta understand what are the three branches of the government. You don't gotta go that deep, but I want you to really just have a really, have an understanding of, you know, who takes care, who's the care giver? Who takes care of your home? How important is she in your house? Why is she important? Do you like the community you in? How can you make the community better? Understand some of those ideas, and then when the kid shows that he or she understands that, then it's like, alright, let's play some chess. Let me teach you chess because once there's a foundation in place in the kid's mind, then it's easier to build on the foundation. Versus just coming and bringing out the chess board and play chess. A kid will play chess with just moves all day, but if they don't have an understanding of their foundation, you know. Then there's a way that I teach chess. A way that the kids really get it. You know [what I] mean, they can really grasp it easy. [They can] develop a foundation for life. If you can understand, because chess is a mirror of life in a lot of ways. You know [what I] mean, so, if you can understand how chess works; if you can understand chess, [and] how to move the small pieces in chess, then you will be, it will be easy for you to

understand how to move certain things in life. Because it would just be about, [like] I'm a poet, and I said,

I taught him how to play chess, I taught him the rules of chess. Showed him how to use his mind. Once the rules was clear, I turn the chess board into a drawing board and I drew him into the design.

And that's the concept where, once I can teach you the concept of the game, then I remove the game and I put your life in front of you and I say, now okay, now play chess with your life. Because the judge [who is over your juvenile case] is playing chess with you right now. You know [what I] mean, the lawyers and the police officers, they're building prisons over there; how are you gonna think your way out of that? You know [what I] mean, aww, man, you in the hood, you in the ghetto, you in this, okay- all dandy, how you gonna get out? What's your move? What's the next move? So, I teach it from that point [of view] where I try to make a game become something that they can, because some kids like "Man I get mad, I just go play chess. I get mad, it's like Yo, Jeremy, man, let's play chess man. I'm angry, ain't nobody around to play chess and just a lot of things on my mind right now. Let's play it." I sit down and play with them and help them pull whatever it is off their minds. Other's play because, it's like yo, how, you know, I just enjoy it. I enjoy the fellowship, we get together [and] we play.

Problem solving [is] identifying what a problem is and then you develop a solution for that problem. Like everything that I was saying, that's what, that's exactly how I use it. Look at your environment and say okay, how do we, how are you doing to solve it? How you gonna get out the situation? You got in, how you gonna get out? Sometimes you're born into this, but how are you gonna strategize your way out of this

mess? So [that's what] problem solving is, and chess teaches that. Chess teaches that- to look at the situation, but I like to look at it from all aspects. I tell them, you got to think outside the box, you know [what I] mean. Chess got 64 squares, and you jumping from box to box and you just get so trapped in a box. I told a kid yesterday, a kid made a move and I said, so that's a good move for the bishop? And he was like "Man, you can't get that bishop," he's like, "Look, nothing you move." I said okay, then move the pawn. Then he moved the pawn and I said, okay, now what bishop you think I was talking about? Then he looked and he was like "Aww, I didn't see that." I said, see, because you got trapped in looking at the board from this point [of view.] When you look at something, when you too close to the picture, you ain't going to be able to see nothing. When you step back, you begin to see the entire battle field; then you can see all the pieces.

So I teach them to play in a way where you can see all the pieces. Look at the whole board. Don't get trapped with one piece; don't just get trapped in one way of looking at it. So, problem solving, you know, it's important because chess teaches, again, forward thinking. Thinking ahead; thinking before, you know, not just reacting. If I just smacked you in your face, you goin, you know what I mean, you're goin to react. That's impactful, [and] with chess, we take it off the board, that means you locked up [in jail.] You know [what I] mean, I put it to real life; you locked up. Now you got a chance to earn that back; you got a chance to make it to the end and graduate. You finish college and you can graduate and become something. You know [what I] mean, but you need to go through these different steps and it's not gonna be easy. So problem solving, this is what's in front of you, [and] these are the options; how do you want to deal with it?

What option would you choose that's best? You know is it A, B, C, or D? I could trap you into an idea of thinking these are the only way out, or you can expand it and say okay, you develop a way out of this. But let[us remember], as you jumping out of this situation, every move, there's a reaction. And some kids that like basketball, I incorporate it into basketball. You got to think offence and defense bro. Don't just think defense, don't just think offence. It's offence and defense and kids get it, "yeah, just like basketball." That's why I think it can be used for chess. It can be used for football players, basketball players, especially with those teams. And it can be used and it can only make whatever they do better. Boxing, you know [what I] mean, precise. He's a left paw, up, down. It's like chess can help strengthen whatever game is there because it teaches to focus, to know what you want, and to develop a strategy to get it. You gonna lose some in the process, you gonna get hit, but just make sure that when you get hit, that's not the hit that knocks you out. You know, that's not some situation that gets you killed or that gets you to be incarcerated for the rest of your life. That's how I come at the kids with it.

Chapter Summary

This chapter shared the stories of each of the five participants, and discussed their lives as they were growing up. The role of chess for each participant was also explained, as well as the impact teaching chess had in their lives. The stories of the participants ended with a discussion of the impact of playing chess. The participants verbalized their enthusiasm for the possible implications of this study, and the potential impact on Black males being identified for gifted programs.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FINDINGS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The purpose of the study was to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess. In order to address this purpose, three research questions guided the study.

1. How do Black males come to play chess?
2. What cognitive skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?
3. What affective skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?

Within the scope of this study, there were four major findings that highlighted the participants' perceptions of the benefits of playing chess: (1) *coming to chess*, expands on how the participants were introduced to the game and encouraged to continue to play; (2) *the challenges of chess*, including cognitive and affective challenges, build on the foundation set by the first finding; (3) *meeting the challenges and developing skills*, expands on the participants' experiences of overcoming the challenges, as well as demonstrates the importance of the skills the participants attribute to chess; and (4) *seeing life benefits*, allows for the participants to connect their involvement in chess to their lives and the lives of the youth they work with. Each finding is supported by quotes from the participants' interview transcripts.³

³ To identify quotes, data chunk numbers were used and designated as (DC# ???). The transcripts do not have line numbers due to spreadsheet analysis format. Thus data was chunked together in small segments, but not always lines or sentences

Coming to Chess

The first finding focused on how the participants came to be involved with or drawn to chess. Each participant shared his introduction to chess; as a child he learned chess from another person. With the exception of Emil, the participants learned from a respected adult male authority figure, in the participants' cases, a Black man. The discussion of learning chess revolved around the chess teacher and the encouragement from the teacher, family, and/or friends. The participants expressed vivid memories and stories that highlighted the importance of their first crucial step towards succeeding in chess.

Respected Authority Figure

Four of the five participants became interested in chess when a respected authority figure shared their time and expertise. The participants relayed stories of their first experiences with chess, and four of them began by discussing the man, or men, who taught them to play. The role of the chess teacher was more than just an instructor in all cases. The participants had different levels of respect for their chess teachers. Three of the participants who learned chess from an authority figure had previous relationships with their chess teachers, either familial or community. Two of these participants learned chess from their father figure, Cyrus from his dad and great uncle and Daniel from his step-father. Their relationship to their chess instructors was different than the other two participants who learned from a non-familial authority figure. One participant began a new relationship with the purpose of learning chess. In all four cases in which the participants learned from a respected authority figure, the participants realized the importance of the role the chess teacher had in their lives.

The following examples show how the respected authority figure influenced each participant. Cyrus and Daniel both learned from father figures, while Jeremy learned from a respected community figure, and Alex learned from a chess instructor. The influences and interactions with their respected authority figures were one of the main reasons they chose to play chess.

For example, Daniel remembered, “I was taught, originally from my step father, and then I began playing with the kids outside of my stepfather playing with me” (DC# 4533). He thought about why his stepfather was teaching him and explained, “He said it would be a good thing to teach me how to think, and strategize, think outside of the box” (DC# 4549). Cyrus was also taught by his father and great uncle, “My dad taught me how to play, and my uncle plays, well, his uncle, my great uncle plays as well” (DC# 1417). “And it was encouraged because my dad would sign me up for chess tournaments in the community, and I was also a part of the ... USCF- United States Chess Federation” (DC# 1427).

Alex and Jeremy both learned from males outside of their home, however, their experiences differed. Alex was involved in a program at school where a chess Master was teaching him and other students. Alex’s relationship with his chess teacher grew as the chess Master realized Alex’s skill with the game. He spent more time working with Alex who reported how he got better at the game, “The chess Master, he actually bought me a book about chess, and I just read the book and just the different kinds of moves, like skewers and stuff like that” (DC# 873). Jeremy’s experience differed as he was taught by an elder in his community, “Then chess was the game he always felt would help us with

long thinking, critical thinking, so I would say [I was] probably 13-14, when I really first began to play chess” (DC# 104).

These examples demonstrate how the respected authority figures became a prominent influence in the participants’ introduction and desire to play chess. Whether the respected authority figure was known previously such as Cyrus, Daniel, and Jeremy, or a new relationship like Alex, the fact that a respected Black man took interest in the participants as well as shared their expertise helped build the initial interests in chess. Following their introduction to chess, the respected authority figures as well as others played roles in encouraging them to excel in the game.

Encouraged to Play

In addition to the chess instructors, other factors lead to the participants playing chess and excelling at the game. The participants were put into situations by their parents or community members to enhance their abilities. The encouragement to play would come in different forms for each participant. Two of the participants were enrolled in tournaments by family members as an encouragement to play the game. The time and the money the family spent on traveling to the tournaments and the fees to take part showed the participants the support their family and community had for them to excel. One participant was encouraged by prizes the chess teacher would provide for the winners of the games. Two of the participants were encouraged by peers to conquer the game and excel.

Alex began playing chess at school; furthermore his mom encouraged him to continue after that class:

She was just always there telling me that I needed, even when I went from that, private school to a public school, she wanted me to join the chess team at the public school. I just didn't, I didn't want to. (DC# 911-912)

Cyrus was taught by his dad and his great-uncle, so he has always had support, "So there was, there was encouragement for me to play chess" (DC# 1433). He explained further about how his dad supported him during tournaments:

My dad, chess tournaments can last from, like minimum, mostly like 4 hours and plus. So my dad didn't play in the chess tournament, so him just sitting there while, usually you play four games, it depends on the tournament, but usually it's a minimum of four hours, minimum of four games. He would just be sitting in the lobby with the other parents while I was playing in the chess tournament, and that had to be dedication because who wants to just sit for four hours? I can't recall if he did anything in that time span, but whatever he was doing, it was still involved just sitting. (DC# 1429-1432)

Some of Daniel's recent encouragement comes from his wife:

Yeah, me and my wife play pretty much every day. Lately we haven't been into it so much because of how busy I've been with my music, but I know, we've been together three years and the first two we played chess every day. (DC# 4637-4639)

The encouragement to play chess had different forms, but the participants mentioned feeling supported because of it.

The theme, *coming to chess*, gives insight into how these Black males came to play chess, as well as the importance of the persons who introduced and supported the

game. A primary reason for these males to play chess was the positive influence of a respected male authority figure. Furthermore, the encouragement to play chess came in various forms such as family, friends, and prizes. While the chess teachers and encouragement brought the participants to chess, the participants recognized challenges related to their interests in the game.

The Challenges of Chess

The second finding involved the challenges the participants found in chess. Following the introduction to chess, the participants quickly realized the challenges of the complex game. Each participant expressed different challenges when learning and developing the skills needed to play chess. The challenges of learning chess often dealt with the thinking skills used in the game. The participants were quick to acknowledge the cognitive challenges in playing chess as well as the social challenges they faced because of their interest in the game.

Cognitive Challenges

Acknowledging cognitive challenges was the first thing the participants described in learning to play chess. The participants saw chess as a game that required thinking on different levels. They recognized that high levels of special skills were required in the game. Chess is a game that involves thought, strategy, and competition. The participants described enjoyment in these higher cognitive aspects of the game, and mentioned these as some of the reasons they played chess. For example, Emil explained “In chess you have to actually put some thought behind what you’re going to do” (DC# 2171). According to Emil, “Even college, a lot of intelligent people who were in college, a lot of people who are in college can’t play chess” (DC# 2195). Understanding chess was

different than being able to play the game. Jeremy reported how he felt when he was learning the game, “I didn’t know how the strategies, I didn’t know how to put the strategies in place, and I couldn’t really explain the game to anyone, but I knew it from the point of, this is how the pieces move” (DC# 121). Alex mentioned the difficulty of truly knowing the game, “Cause people can play chess, but they might not be good at it. Like they know the moves, but they don’t really know the strategy, like they don’t really know the strategies of the moves or stuff like that” (DC# 1014).

Alex shared the hardest part about chess “Oh, well, I guess the most challenging part would be to actually checkmate somebody. Cause you can put somebody in check the whole game, but it’s hard to actually, you know, seal the deal sometimes” (DC# 1117-1118). Cyrus elaborated, “If you can’t see what’s coming next, then it’s not, if you can’t see what’s coming next in chess, you’ll probably lose” (DC# 1661). Then Daniel expressed the challenges faced by people learning chess for the first time:

[Chess can] increase their learning, increase their ability to think, to be intuitive, to be instinctual, to be random, spontaneous, even a little chaotic. Chaotic! Chess has a little of all those things, to be very strategic, to be very by the rule, then in a split second it’ll be just the opposite. There’ll be no form or shape to it. It’ll be the exact opposite of everything you were taught and learned; a blow will come and you’re like, what just happened? That’s why I love it! (DC# 4690)

Emil explains, “In chess you think at least one step ahead of where you currently are and think about what your opponent’s going to do” (DC# 2157). These cognitive challenges were accepted and embraced by the participants. The specific cognitive skills are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Affective Challenges

Vinson (n.d.) described the affective domain, “this is the domain that deals with attitudes, motivation, willingness to participate, valuing what is being learned, and ultimately incorporating the values of a discipline into a way of life” (The Affective Domain, para. 1). Affective challenges did not present themselves immediately to the participants. During adolescence, peer group and cultural factors became strong influences. The participants realized that chess was not the “cool” game to play; they were often seen as nerdy or acting white. While the participants viewed cognitive challenges in positive light, the negative attributes peers gave to chess caused discomfort. Several of the participants dropped chess for a while due to these criticisms. All the participants expressed some form of affective challenge related to their desire to play chess. For example, Alex expressed a drawback to his abilities and continuation, “Now, I’m not, I, now I play with the computer the most I guess cause not too many people want to play me in chess,” (DC# 933). Cyrus struggled to find opponents that were not high school students he mentored. He described a situation at his barbershop in which another aspect of the affective challenges presented itself:

The barbers at my barber shop always joke about, “hey chess amateur” and I’m like, I’m pretty sure I can beat you, but he never [took me up on the game.] I keep a board in my car, that’s so nerdy, but, I’m always like I can go get the board out of my car and we can settle this now. (DC# 1580)

Finding opponents was not the only challenge for the participants. Often the affective challenges were based on fitting in with peer groups. Cyrus elaborates, “Even the other Black male friends that I’ve had, I think I was the only one that played chess,

they were checker players- (whispers) I hate checkers- ... I think I was the only one that played chess” (DC# 1818). Emil shared how his non chess peers made him feel:

Okay, and high school, I was in the gifted program as well, but people used to start calling me ‘the smart guy’ and ‘nerd.’ And, just like, [they would say,] ‘you’re trying to get at more intelligence.’ And at times it’d be like [they were saying], ‘Oh, well this guy is too smart, we don’t want to hang out.’ [And] like, sometimes they were like, ‘We don’t want to hang out with him cause he’s so smart.’ Something like that. (DC# 4051-4053)

Jeremy shared his thoughts on challenges with both peer groups, “I didn’t want to just get stomped in the first round, and realize that I was really an amateur. Or I didn’t want nobody to come and say, ‘Aww, man, you play chess, you a nerd’” (DC# 4425-4426). Cyrus felt the challenges of fitting in with peers that were not chess players. He described this situation, “[I] didn’t connect with hardly any of the students. I was still that stuck up White-Black checkerboard boy. Nobody played chess” (DC# 1870-1872). Although there were issues when it came to their peer groups, the participants continued to play chess.

Cyrus explained a perspective non chess players shared with him, “People think chess is all, all, all like seriousness, no fun” (DC# 1479). With those type of thoughts, it is clear how Emil reported feeling, “in a sense, [you] want friends over your intelligence sometimes. Like books and intelligence will get you grades, but what’s enjoyable about having good grades or having friends [only] sometimes?” (DC# 4055).

The theme, *the challenges of chess*, exposes the participants’ thoughts about why they play chess as well as barriers to overcome. The cognitive challenges were seen as

mental challenges that would give the participants more prestige. The affective challenges were more social in nature and focused on the identity of the participants within their peer groups. These challenges both helped to focus the participants as well as revealed their strength of character as they worked toward meeting the challenges.

Meeting the Challenges and Developing Skills

The way the participants met the challenges of chess and developed their skills in the game was the third finding for this study. As their chess skills progressed, the participants met the cognitive challenges presented by mastering the basic moves and incorporating strategies. They recognized and developed skills that were needed in order to play chess such as creativity, critical thinking, memory, problem solving, planning and strategizing, and prediction. The affective benefits of consistency and focus, patience, prospective, and social aspects were identified by the participants.

Cognitive Benefits

In order to meet the cognitive challenges posed by chess, the participants had to acquire several skill sets. The participants expressed many cognitive benefits gained by using skills acquired through chess. The benefits include creativity, critical thinking, memory, perspective, planning and strategizing, prediction, and problem solving. Often the participants used problem solving to describe the other cognitive skills mentioned. Although the participants did not always use these terms, their discussions were richly descriptive in relation to these topics.

Creativity. Throughout the interview process, two participants spoke about creativity. Chess is normally viewed as a strategic game, but creativity is a part of the game or an outcome of the game for the participants. Jeremy spoke about it in his writing

and poetry as well as his work with children, “So, how I missed out, and those kids, that I see who are in my situation, were at that way of thinking, I try to take them under the wing and try to develop them in creative aspects,” (DC# 677). Daniel explained that you have to think differently to understand chess:

And I realized when I tried to teach some people, some people just don't get it, you know, some people do not really understand the mechanism behind chess because, what I personally think, is that in their brains or in their minds, they can't think outside the box. (DC# 4710)

Daniel described creativity in chess:

Creativity because you can't get lackadaisical, you can't get, predictable. You have to be able to switch up the, to swap tactics, you'd probably die cause if you're playing 10 games and you keep doing the same thing, somebody's going to whip you. (DC# 4828-4829)

The other participants did not specifically use the word creative or creativity, but they discussed how they would need to set traps and trick their opponents. For example, Alex described a creative experience, “You think that he got something up his sleeve, cause you know, it's easy to trick somebody in chess cause you'll put a piece right in their face and they're just begging you to take it” (DC# 1145). Emil shared how he tries to trick his opponents:

Maybe like after I make a move, and like, in a nonaggressive manor, but with like make a move with not emphasis, but I know, I know what I'm doing. Make a move on purpose, like, after they make a move, make a move right after them where they, like where it seems like I was thinking of that move before hand so

they think I was thinking of it before hand so they're kinda like oh, so he already expected that. (DC# 2288-2289)

"Chess is only fun if you can spring traps" Cyrus expressed (DC# 1576).

In addition to creativity in playing the game, Cyrus talked about some creative variations on the original game of chess, "Even though chess, the actual game of chess is strict in its rules, people have come up with alternates, Bug House, Take It, Fox and the Goose, there's another game, I don't know the name of it," (DC# 1589). Bug House is played with two boards with four players, Take It is a game in which you are forced to capture, and Fox and the Goose is a game played with each player having a different objective- either capture all pieces for the defender or get a piece to the other side.

Jeremy's description of trash talk is another example of a different kind of creativity:

"you aint nothing, I'm gonna smash you, I'm gone kill you" and I think that kind of talk is what, in one aspect, can really get a lot of the kids excited cause they enjoy that trash talk, especially when the kids play each other, like "come on man, you take a long time to make a move, don't take all that time to move" and they start trash talking, and you know, you catch it before it get to crazy. (DC# 4327)

Critical Thinking and Metacognition. The process of critical thinking was evident many times in the participants' comments, even though they did not often use the term. The participants consistently reported analyzing their games during and after a match to determine new options or where they went wrong. Critical thinking was evident when the participants had to adjust their tactics such as when Emil would get thrown off by an opponent. He talked about critical thinking when he discussed correcting mistakes "Now I have a new problem, like what do I do now to make sure that I can try to get

myself back on track to get the win” (DC# 2102). Alex talked about using critical thinking in chess “Like if something’s not working, then you can probably change your attack or something like that” (DC# 1085).

The participants would use metacognition as they contemplated their thought processes throughout their games. Jeremy talked about how he did this during the elicitation strategy of playing against a computer:

So it was kind of like okay, I had to slow down my frame of thinking and I had to try to bring it to a basic just to try to explain my reasons to the strategy when I’m so used to thinking what I think my opponent is thinking. (DC# 4316)

Not only did the participants think about their own thinking processes, they had to think about their opponent’s thinking processes. Emil described how he saw metacognition in chess:

But in chess you have to actually think about what you’re going to do, next think about what your opponent’s going to do, and then again, think about what your opponents going to do while you are already making a move. (DC# 2173)

The thinking did not always come only from the planning or strategy aspects. Emil continued to explain his critical thinking process:

But my main thinking is done after the game, I go over what problems I did have in the game, like what I can work on the next game and then at the beginning of the game, and throughout the whole game, that’s I’m like, okay, I made this mistake last time, what I need to do this time so I don’t get that problem. (DC# 2101)

Critically analyzing what was going on happened in many games. Daniel explained, “I think it comes from my beginning, my playing chess, that I learned to pay attention to how a person moves, how a person makes their moves, how they think while they're playing” (DC# 4574). When Cyrus was reflecting on his elicitation strategy, he shared how he thinks about a game:

So I couldn't, it was, you think so fast in chess, literally in chess thoughts are instantaneous, it's hard to slow down, well at least for me, cause you, when you're looking at a chess board, and especially when you're playing for quite some time, but when you're looking at a chess board, you don't really see it as one piece, two piece, three piece, four piece, you see the, for me at least, I see the entire board all at one time. (DC# 4298)

Opponents had to be analyzed and sized up before and during games. Daniel describes how he thinks about what his opponents do:

So if I'm sitting down with somebody new, I'm really testing their level of experience because there's certain tricks you can do in chess to tell if somebody knows what they're playing. For instance, if you move your queen pawn up, and the opponent moves their rook pawn up two places, that person doesn't know what they're doing. That's not a good move; that is retarded. Or if you got your queen pawn up and they got their queen pawn up and bring [their queen] front street immediately, that's also not a smart move cause I'm going to attack her immediately. I'm trying to knock her off. So that means you're automatically trying to go to war with me but you haven't taken time to analyze me and how I

play; so that means you're a rookie. There's ways to tell about who you're playing. (DC# 4886-4892)

Each participant had a different experience with critical thinking and metacognition in chess, however, they all shared how these skills were used and built upon with the game.

Memory. Memory as a cognitive benefit was generated from the data and not included in the original interview questions, therefore, not many quotes or discussions reflect memory. If questions had been asked specifically about memory and chess, more information may have been expressed. However, without prompting, participants discussed how chess benefits memory. Jeremy spoke about the skills and benefits of chess when he added, “And it helps with memory. ‘Remember your last move,’ now [I] tell the kids, ‘Stop, what did you do? Show me the last three moves that you just did.’ You know [what I] mean, to help improve memory,” (DC# 370-372). Cyrus mentioned memory, but in a different context. He was discussing how some chess players would memorize moves from a book for openings and end games, but that was not his style, “I like chess, I love chess, but I’m not about to memorize strategies to increase the performance of my game” (DC# 1452). Daniel shared an example of a chess player that had an outstanding memory:

I played him every day, we would play every day, but that didn't mean we started a new game, you know, we would literally, and he had a photographic memory so we could actually play a game, put the pieces away, and he'd set it right back up the way it was, out of his mind. (DC# 4677)

The participants shared their ideas that memory was strengthened by chess and utilized frequently in chess.

Perspective. The participants saw chess as a tool to develop the skill of looking at things from different perspectives or viewpoints. They discussed the importance of looking at the entire board or situation before making decisions in the game and in life. Jeremy discussed how chess helps to teach students to look at things from different perspectives:

Then he moved the pawn and I said, okay, now what bishop you think I was talking about? Then he looked and he was like “aww, I didn’t see that.” I said, see, because you got trapped in looking at the board from this point. (DC# 479)

Cyrus discussed how perspective was important when he decided what to do in different situations:

Think about what just happened, and try to look at it different, I don’t know, corners, I’ll just use the board [analogy to explain], look at it from different corners and see what else you can do in this situation rather than just react. (DC# 1639)

When Jeremy would teach chess, he would use the pieces to explain how they moved. He would incorporate a perspective that the students would understand:

I would see when I began to implement it, or teach the kids from that point, the kids were able to grasp it a lot easier than how I learned it. This piece just move there, there, there, there, there. You have to show how the piece makes sense in a kids life and then that kid will be able to say wow! So that way when a kid think about it, he be like yeah, this moves like this because he knows how the L, you know [what I] mean, the lord, the L the upside down 7, the L. So different things

will help to get the kids to think, and maybe even think of it from a math perspective. Each move is worth a certain point. (DC# 364-3669)

The ability to change perspective or viewpoints was a strong benefit that allowed the participants to move forward with planning and strategizing.

Planning and Strategizing. Planning skills are used in chess from the beginning. Teachers explain the goal of the game is to put the opponent's king in check mate. In order to do this, you have to plan your moves and attacks. This goes closely with strategy, but not exclusively. The participants discussed some of the planning/strategizing processes.

Strategy has a place in chess and in life. Daniel saw decision making as strategizing, "in chess if someone takes your queen, that's like you being in a situation where you can't get out, so you got two choices, you give up or you go hard" (DC# 4736). Jeremy expressed how chess helps to teach strategy:

Look at your environment and say okay, how do we, how are you going to solve it? How you gonna get out the situation? You got in, how you gonna get out? Sometimes you're born into this, but how are you gonna strategize your way out of this mess, so problem solving is, and chess teaches that. Chess teaches that, to look at the situation, but I like to look at it from all aspects. (DC# 476-477)

Alex described his strategy at the beginning of a game:

I normally just move the first, one of the first two pieces in front, pawns in front of the queen and king. But then if somebody moves the pawns in front of the rooks, then I'm like, "aww, I got this guy," cause they don't know what they're doing. You're not supposed to really do that. And if somebody moves the third

one from the right or left, I think that's the one; it's either third or second one. If they move the third or second pawn, then they know something that I don't know. Cause I remember my chess instructor saying that this is some kind of formal so and so. Like, you know, there's the Chinese defense where you use the pawns to go like that, that, that; it's like where, how you set up your pawns when it's just like the Chinese defense. So there's different ways that you can, like set up your pawns to like, that's the form that it is. So you can tell in like the first three or four moves the kind of person that is. And then they move the first, if they do like how I do, then I guess they're kinda like me in a sense cause I just keep it simple like that. (DC# 1122-1129)

Cyrus described the hardest part of planning and strategizing:

I can close, I can end all day long. I can open too, depending on who I'm playing, but when you're playing one of those people who reads those books and has all these openings memorized and they can just counter every little thing you do that's so annoying. So opening for me is the most difficult. And it's vice versa, some people ending is hardest. But I can take out a game easily it's that opening. (DC# 1758-1761)

For Daniel, he had his opening strategy planned out for every game:

Anytime I play somebody new, my first thing is I set up the board like I've been doing since I was nine years old. I go with the same strategy that I've always went with from the beginning. The first thing I learned were the steps and I never change it. That's where I start, but once I start that way, anything goes. I could

come up with anything. I might let you kill my queen just to use my knights to come get you. (DC# 4878-4882)

The planning aspect can look similar to prediction, but does not attempt to give alternatives as discussed below.

Prediction. The participants often shared examples of using prediction in the game of chess. Prediction usually involved looking at alternatives to moves their opponents made. The participants discussed trying to understand their opponent in order to make the best move. Emil shared an example of prediction and analysis, “If I think they’re going to move here, I’m going to try to counter that before they do that so I know what I need to do to make sure that I am prepared for their move” (DC# 2105). Cyrus explained prediction in chess:

I do this, he’s gonna do that, then this, then that, then this, then that, and it’s complex, cause usually the farther you get into games, the more squares that are dominated by some pieces capacity to move, so it’s definitely some situations problem solving. (DC# 1699)

Jeremy shared how he used prediction not only with opponents, but in looking ahead:

Now I’m to the point where I can see, I can see probably about 6-7 moves ahead now whereas before it was [less.] I could even get to the point where I could see 10 moves ahead. Whereas before, it was more so like, react. You move here, I’m gonna move there. (DC# 292-295)

Prediction in chess is a form of problem solving as the participants pointed out. They discussed problem solving in more detail below.

Problem Solving. Problem solving was expressed in many situations with the participants and took different forms. Each participant noticed they were problem solving in a variety of circumstances outside of chess and within chess. The participants shared their definitions of problem solving and examples of their experiences. Cyrus explained problem solving as, “When I think problem solving, I’m thinking it has to be something complex or else it would have been figured out, and it’s going to take a few steps to get there” (DC# 1696). To Jeremy, problem solving is “identifying what a problem is and then you develop a solution for that problem” (DC# 474). Daniel’s response was very different; he said, “If somebody said what do you think about problem solving I would say nothing, I would say when I have problems I don’t think about them, I think about the solutions” (DC#4797). Problem solving was not always thought about, but Jeremy described when he did think about it, “I think when I began to teach, that’s when I began to look at chess from more of problem solving. It became problem solving when I taught it” (DC# 405-406). In relation to chess, Alex shared an example of how problem solving happened:

It’s good to have, you know, three or four different possibilities of that set move cause you might do a move, but if the other person doesn’t do the move that you thought, then you gotta go back and think about what, you know, just, it’s just better to have every, like, not every possibility, you can’t have every possibility, but you know, a good number of possibilities of what could happen. (DC# 1021)

Cyrus explained when he started to notice problem solving with this story:

And also, it kinda depends on the teacher, cause, like, people can tell when young players are stuck, and I’ve often, and now that we’re talking about it, I remember

my uncle saying, and my dad occasionally, saying “Just wait, figure it out, what am I about to do and what are you going to do about it?” And I’m just gonna guess that that was when the problem solving [began]. I guess techniques started coming. (DC# 1705)

Daniel summarized problem solving as:

How do I think about problem solving in chess? That is chess. That's not a very detailed answer, it's what chess is. You have a problem, and the objective is to solve it. The problem is you got some guys on the other side of the board that are about to kick your butt. And they want to kill you so you got to kill them first.

(DC# 4807-4812)

The participants were able to identify specific instances of problem solving throughout their chess experiences. These experiences also had affective benefits for the participants.

Affective Benefits

In addition to the affective challenges mentioned earlier, the participants discussed many affective skills and benefits involved with chess. The affective benefits included consistency and focus, patience, and social aspects. Although these were seen as benefits, one area, social aspects, also had challenges. The participants described how they identify these benefits in chess, and then discuss the challenges.

Consistency and Focus. Consistency and focus are two areas that the participants expressed as affective benefits of chess. The participants agreed that consistency was needed for chess and that chess built focus. Cyrus explains the importance of consistency:

For instance, like, you have to play consistently. Consistency is almost, I think, the most essential thing with chess. When you, when you start playing chess, if you stop, no matter how great you were, you're going to fall, like it's going to decrease over time. (DC# 1456-1458)

Emil alluded to consistency when he discussed getting better at chess, "Repetition, I would just play games on the computer every night, cause I know on Windows, in the start button, you can [click on] games and options" (DC# 1738). Daniel shared an experience that demonstrated his consistency and how he developed it:

He [Mr. Teasley] was, he was amazing, like, he would just break you down and put you back together, and then what was worse about it is he'd tell you he'd do it. He was like, I'm about to whip you young blood. He'd give it to me. But it taught me, like at first, to be resilient, always go for it no matter how many times you lose, and the best thing that it taught me, even if you lose, you can still come in close, you could still get a close second. So it taught me not to always feel like you had to be first place because sometimes second place is just as nice, you know. (DC# 4613-4617)

This view of consistency was observed in other areas of life, not just chess.

Focus was discussed more frequently by the participants. Jeremy shared how chess teaches focus, "It's like chess can help strengthen whatever game is there because it teaches to focus, to know what you want, and to develop a strategy to get it" (DC# 499).

The participants would focus on the game, but on their opponents as well. Alex explained:

You just have your game face on, you're focusing on the, you know, on the game. And you can tell by like, little body language if a person is confident, if he's in doubt, if he's nervous, it's easy to sense that from a person. (DC# 996, 999)

Daniel again explains how his chess skills were used in other areas of life. When discussing his focus, he shared:

I learned to pay attention to everything around me so that when I'm stepping into a scene or an environment, I'm aware, I'm not left dumbfounded. And chess has taught to focus even when, you don't know I'm focused, I'm watching you. (DC# 4743-4744)

Cyrus reported using the focus of chess as a way to relax:

I want to go back and one of the first questions that you asked was what's the number one reason that I play, that we play chess and I think that, I thought it was just because I like chess, but the reason I like chess is because it does take your mind off everything else that's going on around you and for that hour or whatever length time you're playing that game, okay, if you're really playing that chess game, you are blanked out to everything else that is going on around you short of an earth quake or whatever else. (DC# 4268)

Daniel added, "And often chess is a way for me to center myself and to just literally sit there and be focused on one thing, on one goal, one objective" (DC# 4622). For the participants, consistency and focus were affective benefits they gained from chess.

Patience. Patience is a skill that the participants claimed to develop and use while playing chess. The participants discussed how they had to slow down, wait for

opponents, or delay an impulse during their games. Emil shared an instance of his use of patience:

Like, I'd think it over, like in the middle of the game, if I'm gonna lose, I slow down a little bit, if I believe I might lose, I slow down a little bit so I can start to understand what I did wrong and try to come back in the game. (DC# 2100)

Daniel elaborated,

to learn patience first, to learn how to be patient, to learn to think before you do, to learn to think before you speak, speaking of, I need to go teach my girlfriend, or my second wife, how to play chess, she has issues with that. (DC# 4779)

Alex explained how he uses patience to avoid reacting to his opponents while sticking to his original strategy:

And that's why when someone actually tries to attack me, I don't really worry about what they are doing, I try to make my own creation, you know, cause if I focus on what he, if I go off of what he does, then I'm just playing catch up to him, you know. (DC# 1148)

Daniel explained how learning patience helped him, "I'd get mad and throw the chess board, but I've learned to be like, okay, this guy is good, I gotta be better, so what can I do to handle that?" (DC# 4699).

All the participants discussed the importance of being patient and not reacting to their opponents in chess, as well as in social situations.

Social Aspects. Social aspects were discussed frequently by the participants. The discussions revolved around the participants' external identity and their self perceptions. The participants did not use the term identity, but these instances included

how they were identified by peers. Their own self perceptions were a frequent topic discussed in the interviews.

The participants' external identity was their perception of the identity assigned to them by their chess peers. The identity of the participants with a non chess peer group was discussed in the section on affective challenges, but this section discusses the positive affects the participants saw for themselves. For the participants, they had two different peer groups, chess players and non-chess players. Jeremy explained the closeness between him and his chess peer group:

Okay, me and chess, growing up, I know it was, it was like a group of us, it was like a group of young guys, I'm not gonna say we were a boys home, it was more like, our parents had a lot of young teens and young guys from my community.

(DC# 98)

Alex spent time with his chess peer group having fun in different tournaments:

It was, nah, it was cool to go, cause we actually went to a couple of tournaments together like, it was me and maybe like 4 other friends, and we, we went, I remember we went to the Civil Center one time and we played in a tournament there. (DC# 1194)

Emil recounted his memory with chess peers:

Cause it was actually starting to become a popular game then, so we find to, like whenever we have free time, instead of Apples to Apples or other common board games or Monopoly, we'd pull out the chess board and get to it, so like, in just early high school and middle school, whenever we have free time, we'd just play like once a day, once a class period [up] to four times a day. (DC# 2302)

These peer groups helped to establish positive identities for the participants.

The social aspect of chess helped the participants meet new friends and even allowed for networking. Cyrus saw chess as a way to improve his external identity:

Aside from chess club, somehow chess might come up in a conversation and the person you're talking to will be like, oh, you play? And you're like, yeah, and um, I might have to sit down to have a game and it's kind of a way to, I hate to turn it into a business thing, but it's kinda a way to network, almost. Cause you play a good enough game and that might impress the person that you're playing against, and then that becomes a networking opportunity. (DC# 1631-1632)

The participants were able to become closer to their current friends as well as make new friends through chess. This helped to give them a stronger external identity within their chess peer groups.

The participants realized that the social aspects were not based solely on the perceptions of their peers, but on their own perceptions as well. They acknowledged the positive impacts chess had on their lives and shared those feelings openly. Feelings of pride were positive reflections each participant discussed.

With recognition of the cognitive and affective challenges in chess came a sense of pride in their abilities to play chess. The participants felt they had reasons to be proud of themselves for accomplishing something that not many others in their non chess peer group attempted. As an example, Emil enjoyed chess from the beginning as a change from his norm. He sought out the challenges and liked that he was special for knowing how to play chess, "And it just kinda made me feel a little, it made me stand out a little

bit cause not everyone knew how to play chess, so it made me feel good to know that I have that ability” (DC# 2080). He added:

Being it, having that skill, so, like in the middle of a chess game, you want, you are like feeling this intense feeling. You know it’s more complicated than any other game, so you know personally that you’re doing something special. (DC# 2108)

Alex reported something similar, “So you know, possessing a skill that other people don’t have, you feel kind of special I guess. (DC# 1011-1015) In addition to the pride in their ability to understand and play the game, Alex had pride in his skill, “I would have to say, cause I’m usually, usually, I usually beat, you know a good percentage of the people I play, so I guess that would have to be the best part” (DC# 1009). Cyrus demonstrated his pride by trying to control the types of tournaments in which he was involved, “I didn’t want to play in things called opens, opens are unrated chess tournaments, and usually, not always, but usually in unrated sections, those are more beginners” (DC# 1460). The participants knew their abilities and understood their place in a chess peer group as well as in non chess peer groups.

The theme, *meeting the challenges and developing skills*, expressed the cognitive and affective benefits the participants identified in chess. These cognitive benefits, including creativity, critical thinking, memory, planning and strategizing, prediction, and problem solving, helped to overcome the challenges mentioned above. The affective benefits focused on features that are deemed appropriate and necessary in chess and life such as consistency and focus, patience, perspective, and social aspects. The cognitive

and affective benefits lead participants to seeing the benefits from chess in relation to their everyday lives.

Seeing Life Benefits

The fourth finding of this study was how the participants saw life benefits in the game of chess, not only for themselves, but for young Black students. The skills mentioned above all have roles in the lives of the participants. They claim these skills have affected more than just their chess games. The participants were able to relate chess to several areas of their lives including academics, athletics, and relationships. In addition to their own lives, the participants expressed benefits for other young Black males in the same areas.

Benefits for Themselves

The participants felt their lives were enriched by learning and playing chess. Their motivation to continue to play was based on their successes and on the life lessons they feel they learned during their time playing. Participants related chess to their academic achievements and to athletic situations. The participants saw benefits in skills they were able to gain from chess as well as the skills they honed while playing chess. When thinking about the impact of chess, Emil shared, “Like I have a reason behind what [I or other] people do. And I believe that chess had a role in that,” (DC# 2421-2422). Chess taught him to think through his actions. Daniel also learned life lessons from chess:

But it taught me, like at first, to be resilient, always go for it no matter how many times you lose, and the best thing that it taught me, even if you lose, you can still come in close, you could still get a close second. (DC# 4616)

Emil elaborated:

I believe with chess as such a competitive and complicated sport that it will improve my thought processes and improve my ability to play and see things, in that like, I would already see myself looking ahead, I'm always a person that looks ahead, but I believe that just thinking ahead when I was simply in middle school and high school, like that was just another way, another outlet that allowed me to start developing my ability to be a person that didn't go on a whim, that didn't just do things just for the fun of it, just for the fact of doing it, but actually does, like I currently do things for a purpose. (DC# 2420)

The participants felt chess helped to make them successful in some areas of life. Cyrus recalled, "I've noticed that there's this perspective of patience, and thinking strategically" (DC# 1637). Emil discussed how he uses skills he learned in chess, "In my head, I try to, based on what it might be, and be one step ahead" (DC# 2104). The participants noticed these benefits not only in the game, but in life situations. Emil described how it works for him:

When you go to a grocery store, you have to have a list, you don't just go to the grocery store , you go prepared for what you gotta do. Going into college you have to have a game plan. I'm going to go to college and I'm going to study this. I'm going to, like this is my time to study, I'm going to take these classes. Just thinking ahead of yourself, make sure you don't fall behind. (DC# 2163-2167)

Jeremy saw a benefit to his thinking, "I already use chess as a tool to engage forward thinking, to engage thought" (DC# 4099). When I asked Daniel about the benefits from chess he saw in his life, he said, "the ability to think ahead, patience, discipline, and

creativity” (DC# 4822). The participants shared many instances of benefits they gained from playing chess as well as the impact it had on their lives.

Benefits for Black Students

Three of the participants work with students and use chess in their work. They all thought chess would be beneficial to young Black boys as a way to teach skills and open new opportunities. Throughout the interviews, the participants related chess to other areas in life, and specifically when they were discussing their work with youth. They saw chess was beneficial in their own lives, and wanted to share those benefits and how it opened opportunities they may not have had without chess.

Chess to Life Analogies. Some of the participants used chess while working with students. They talked about using chess as a way to diagram certain experiences some of the students had in life. Some of the participants specifically worked with youth in low income areas and youth in the juvenile court system. Cyrus explains how chess could help those students in real life situations:

Black males are growing up in low income areas, there’s this aggressive nature and this need to react to things. Chess comes in and chess says, well, instead of reacting, hold on a second. Think about what just happened, and try to look at it different, I don’t know, corners, I’ll just use the board, look at it from different corners and see what else you can do in this situation rather than just react. Cause, if you, if you’re playing chess and you just react to what your opponent’s doing, you’re gonna lose because there’s no strategy behind it, you have to have strategy to come out on top. (DC# 1637-1640)

Jeremy actually thought about this specifically with his work with children when he would ask them:

‘Now how would you go about doing this different? How, what do you thought you could have done without looking like a punk? Without looking like this? Without, how could you have resolved this thing in a way where...’ So I take the same strategies that we use from the game and I apply it to that kid’s actuality.
(DC# 384)

When Cyrus teaches chess, his goal is to teach prediction, a skill that can be used in many circumstances. He explains:

And what I’m trying to do, my hope is that we’re on some type of crash course for chess vision to, develop within this young player’s mind, um, cause once you got chess vision down, you can basically strategize from there. If you can’t see what’s coming next, then it’s not, if you can’t see what’s coming next in chess, you’ll probably lose. And it’s not the entire game that you’re playing, you know exactly, cause then there’d be no fun in it, um, but just knowing that, in certain situations, this is going, when you do X Y, it’s going to happen, so that’s what I’m trying to develop as soon as possible at least while I’m teaching (DC# 1660-1662)

Alex worked to show the relationship of chess to life. One perspective he brings is from a movie he saw, “You start to think that chess could be, you know, something more than just a game. It could be practice for, you know, future life situations” (DC# 1076-1077). He recounted the theme from the movie:

I remember a movie I was watching called *Fresh*. And his dad was telling him how, life, was, you know, just a game of chess. And how he, how chess was just so important in figuring out what life is all about and stuff like that. And basically, you could draw like correlations of the pieces to people in his life. (DC# 1042-1044)

Emil had a unique experience that he related to chess:

I think of it like if I'm trying to talk to a girl, or talking to somebody, a female, and I'm attracted to [her]. I think about what I can do to make her more [interested], or see if she likes me back, or if she doesn't like me back, you know. What happens if I do this, if I say something or show my attraction to her, she's going to do one thing or the other, so in chess you can make a move and your opponent can make another, and whatever they do depends, that also affects what your next move is going to be. (DC# 2158)

Then Daniel said it very plainly, "I look at chess like war, and I look at chess like life" (DC# 4698). The participants did not only relate chess to other areas of life, but they recognized how chess lead to new experiences.

Chess Opens Doors. All of the participants shared how chess had given them experiences they would not have had if they had not played. They all believed that teaching young Black boys chess would, at least, lead to new and different experiences, if not gifted programs. Statements were often made about the impact and power of chess, as well as how chess was a tool that helped the participants or youth they are working with. Jeremy said, "It's like chess can help strengthen whatever game, [or ability,] is there because it teaches to focus, to know what you want, and to develop a strategy to get

it,” (DC# 499). Alex saw benefits of chess and said he would encourage young Black boys to play chess:

I would definitely encourage them to because it could just open up, you know, doorways for them. Cause I choose not to, you know, join the chess club, but you know, playing chess could maybe win you some money, cause you can actually win cash prizes playing chess. (DC# 1211)

The participants saw many opportunities that surrounded their chess experiences and expressed their excitement for young Black students to become involved in chess. Cyrus even generalized to other Black men that he knew, “I’m not saying that every Black male that plays chess has some success in life, but every Black male that I’ve met that plays chess has had some success in life,” (DC# 4213). The recognition of the success the participants had in their own lives lead to their desire to encourage young Black students.

The theme, *seeing life benefits*, demonstrates the impact chess has had on the lives of the participants. The participants saw benefits in their own lives from academic endeavors to athletic pursuits. In addition, the participants recognized the benefits of playing chess for young Black students. The life benefits extended beyond the game of chess for these participants and encouraged them to give of their time to foster encouragement for young Black boys by showing the doors that could be opened with chess.

Chapter Summary

The findings discussed show the relationships between the experiences of the participants as they came to play chess, identified challenges in chess, met those challenges and developed skills, and identified life benefits from chess. The participants

recognized the respected authority figure who introduced them to chess and the encouragement provided by family and friends as a main reason they became involved in chess. This involvement then introduced the participants to the challenges of chess in both the cognitive and affective areas. The participants were able to meet these challenges and develop skills they identified in chess. With the new skills identified, the participants were able to see life benefits of chess for themselves as well as young Black students. These findings support the purpose of the study which was to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess. Five Black male chess players were identified using a networking sample. They participated in an interview, an elicitation strategy, and a focus group session. The questions guiding the study concentrated on Black men's introduction to chess and the cognitive and affective skills they developed while learning and playing chess. Constructed narrative told the stories of the participants. The constant comparative method was used for cross case analyses. This chapter begins with a summary of the findings which are then discussed within the context of the literature. The implications of future research are addressed before closing with concluding thoughts.

Summary of Findings

The findings presented here reflect the participants' perceptions of the benefits of playing chess: (1) *coming to chess*, (2) *the challenges of chess*, (3) *meeting the challenges and developing skills*, (4) *seeing life benefits*. The perceptions of the participants were collected through interviews, which allowed the participants to share their personal narratives of chess in their lives. These findings offer implications for research and practice in the field of gifted education.

Coming to chess

Based on the interviews and focus group, the participants were introduced to the game of chess by a respected authority figure. The introduction by the respected Black male was the main reason they began and continued to play chess. In addition, the participants were encouraged to continue to play by family, friends, and chess instructors. The encouragement came in different forms for the participants. The participants reported having familial support, monetary support, and material support such as prizes.

The challenges of chess

Cognitive and affective challenges were identified by the participants in their discussions of chess. The cognitive challenges included: learning a complex game, understanding the game beyond moving pieces around, thinking about multiple moves, using strategies, and attaining checkmate. The affective challenges were more social in nature and focused on the identity of the participants within their peer groups. The participants identified affective challenges which included: peer group associations, lack of opponents because of skill level or interests, and identity issues for themselves.

Meeting the challenges and developing skills

Overcoming the challenges identified by the participants was discussed in detail by the participants when they talked about the benefits and skills they observed in chess. The participants identified creativity, critical thinking, memory, perspective, planning and strategizing, prediction, and problem solving as beneficial cognitive skills they gained from chess. Creativity was seen in the formation of traps and tricks while critical thinking was applied when participants were analyzing their games. The participants saw memory as a skill that was strengthened and used in chess when they had to recall moves

that were made and tactics. They discussed the importance perspective when looking at the entire board or situation before making decisions in the game and in life. The benefits the participants saw included planning and strategizing in their games, as well as prediction. The participants would plan their attacks, but would have to predict what their opponent would do in reaction. The last benefit discussed was problem solving, but it was incorporated the most by all the participants. They often used the term problem solving to describe other skills mentioned above such as critical thinking and prediction.

The affective benefits identified by the participants included consistency and focus, patience, and social aspects. The affective benefits of consistency and focus were both taught in chess and strengthened by chess. The participants noted that the consistency was needed in order to improve their chess abilities. Focus was a requirement in the games and tournaments described by the players, but it helped two of the participants relax. The participants explained how they learned patience in chess by having to curb their immediate reaction in order to sustain a plan or strategy they had in place. Three participants shared how chess helped build their patience in other areas of their lives.

The social aspects of chess revolved around the participants' external identity and their self perceptions. The participants' external identity was their perception of the identity assigned to them by their peers. Self perceptions were acknowledged by the participants for the positive impacts chess had on their lives. Feeling pride was a positive reflection each participant discussed.

Seeing Life Benefits

The participants were able to connect their involvement in chess to their lives and the lives of the youth they work with. Throughout the interviews and focus group, the participants related chess to academics, athletics, and relationships. They saw themselves as successful, and this led to their desire to encourage young Black students. The participants thought chess would be beneficial to young Black boys as a way to teach skills and open new opportunities. Statements were often made about the impact and power of chess as a game and as a diagram on which to work out life's problems.

Discussion

The findings from this study contribute to the understanding of Black men's perceptions of the benefits of chess. The underlying goal for this study was to discover if chess could be a platform that allows teachers to observe characteristics that would encourage nomination of more Black boys to be tested for gifted programs. This understanding then impacts the field of gifted education in respect to the under-identification of Black males for gifted programs. The implications of this study affect three areas of focus. First, this study has determined the draw chess has for Black boys and the reasons they want to play. Next, this study identifies skills involved in chess as perceived by Black men. Finally, this study addresses the skills and characteristics teachers look for when nominating students for gifted programs.

As gathered from the interviews and focus group, chess has a unique draw for Black boys. The participants came to play chess because a respected authority figure introduced them to the game and continued to spend time with them. In addition to the chess instructors' time, the participants were encouraged to play by family, friends, and

community members. According to the literature, families and the respected authority figures play a large role in the lives of young Black boys (Bonner et al. 2009; Ford 2010a; Washington, 2010).

The literature reviewed discussed mentors and having a strong racial identity as ways to support young Black males in making achievement gains. Ford and Whiting (2010) found having a strong racial identity development focus for Black males can inspire them to achieve at greater levels. Black males need to feel empowered as a person, a race, and a culture (Ford & Whiting, 2010). The authority figures identified in the interviews demonstrate how these needs were being met.

In addition to the support from family and community, the experiences of playing chess were an important factor in the participants' decision to play chess. The participants enjoyed the cognitive challenges that were presented through the game, and were able to overcome the affective challenges of establishing their identity with their peers. Being able to overcome these challenges gave the participants a sense of pride and recognition. They had both an academic identity (Irving & Hudley, 2008) in which they succeed in school and a social identity (Graham & Anderson, 2008; Whiting, 2009b) in which they share cultural values and experiences with their peers.

Cognitive and affective skill sets were identified by the participants as benefits of playing chess. When discussing the cognitive skills, researchers note the importance of the processes involved (Barbey & Barsalou, 2009; Condell, Wade, Galway, McBride, Gormley, Brennan, & Somasundram, 2010; Horan, 1977; Jonassen, 2005; Okuda, Runco, & Berger, 1991). The participants expressed skills and processes used in chess such as: creativity, critical thinking, memory, perspective, planning and strategizing, prediction,

and problem solving. Identifying these skills and processes support the current literature on chess as Gobet, de Voogt, and Retschitzki (2004), McClain (2005), and Storey (2000) claimed numerous skills are strengthened by chess.

The literature situates self-esteem as an active component of the self concept that is always changing and developing. The social identities are the aspects of individuals' self concepts that come from the social categories in which they perceive themselves belonging, such as men, Black, and chess player (Scholl, 2002). This affective domain was established when the participants discussed their pride in not only being able to play chess, but in excelling in the game (Duncan-Hewitt, Leise, & Hall, 2005). Chess gave the participants an opportunity to raise their self esteem. The participants viewed chess as a tool that helped mold them into the men they are today. They expressed a belief that chess taught them to think differently, be patient, and helped with decision making.

This study impacts the student nomination practices for gifted programs. Siegle, Moore, Mann, and Strulson (2006) identified problem solving skills as a focal area when teachers are identifying students to nominate for gifted programs. The data gathered in this study suggests that problem solving skills are evident in playing chess. The participants described problem solving practices as well as other thinking skills such as critical thinking, metacognition, and creativity in their interactions with chess. Ford (2010a) and Grantham (2002) identified the lack of teacher or parent nominations as a major cause of the underrepresentation of Black males in gifted programs. Chess programs designed to teach students the game, and specifically teach some of the skills mentioned by participants, can provide a platform for teachers to observe characteristics they look for when nominating students for gifted program testing. Teachers with the

proper training for recognizing gifted characteristics can observe young Black boys playing a game they enjoy, thus showing the motivation, problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity they are looking for when making nominations.

Future Research

The research questions for this study were focused on adult Black men to obtain information that could benefit young Black boys. After completing the research, areas for continued research surfaced. Future research should examine the metacognition of young Black boys themselves on their thoughts about chess. A study of young Black boys, their parents, and their teachers could illuminate other skills and processes involved with chess.

It would be beneficial for further research into teachers' perceptions of chess, chess players, and their relations to gifted identification. The underlying aim of this research was to identify a platform to help increase the nomination of Black males for gifted program testing. A study involving homeroom teachers, teachers of the gifted, as well as school psychologists to determine if chess is the right platform may be the next logical step.

Limitations of the Study

The focus for this section is on the limitations of facilitating cross-cultural research, building rapport with participants, time for the study, the participant selection process, and biases of participants and researcher. Historically, according to Ford et al. (2008), research conducted on race has been tainted by the self-interest of the researcher. Thus, it is important for White researchers to be mindful of their research methods, theology, and goals when conducting research on or about Black participants. During the

first interview as well as the focus group, I specifically addressed this issue. Although I attempted to minimize this limitation by direct communication, there is still a limitation as a Black male researcher may have approached things differently.

Two limitations, building rapport and time for the study, can be linked to each other. One issue was the inability to spend more time with each participant before and after interviews. The participants were gracious enough to take time from their hectic end-of-semester schedules to meet, thus, there was a need to respect their time and not ask for additional meetings. Even with the limited time, the participants said they felt comfortable. I feel that if time were not a factor, more interviews could have been conducted to further develop the ideas shared by the participants.

The number of the participants and the way they were identified could be seen as a limitation. As a multiple case study, I planned to identify four to six participants and accomplished the task by finding five willing participants. Because there is not a defined meeting place where Black men who play chess frequented, two participants were enlisted to help identify other potential participants. This limited the participants to Black men known by the first two participants. Within the scope of this research, the selection process and number of participants were appropriate, but it could have been done differently to possibly select a larger variety of backgrounds.

In addition to the participant selection limitations mentioned above, the list of criteria for inclusion in the study lends itself to biases on the topic. Participants were all chess players and have individual motivations for their hobby; but another person who knows chess, but does not value it the same, would offer different insights. In my subjectivities statements, I commented on my closeness to the topic. I was raised playing

chess and seeing others play, so my background could affect my analysis. My participants had the same predisposition to positive comments about chess because of their love for the game. It was rare to hear a negative statement about chess.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter presented the conclusions drawn from the data in the areas of coming to chess, challenges of chess, meeting the challenges and developing skills, and seeing life benefits. The limitations of the study were discussed as well as ideas for future research. As one of the participants expressed, future research should be done on the need, or the perceived need, of a cultural shift for the Black communities. The participants mentioned a need to address and study the implications of participating in “passive” (DC# 1824) activities for Black males. This study would be a basis for more research to help promote the intelligence of the Black communities.

The purpose of the study was to understand how Black men perceive the role of chess in their lives, and how cognitive and affective skills are developed through the playing of chess. The underlying goal for this study was to discover if chess could be a platform that allows teachers to observe characteristics that would encourage nomination of more Black boys to be tested for gifted programs. The participants of this study shared a wealth of information about their personal experiences with chess and in their school careers. During the focus group, the participants were asked about their thoughts on the underlying goal of this study. The participants were all excited about the possibilities for young Black boys. The concern for young Black boys’ success was evident in all the discussions about the participants’ work with youth. It was a passion for two of the participants, and their support for this study has been tremendous.

This study suggests chess as a platform for assessment of problem solving and critical thinking skills which can be used by teachers to identify Black boys for potential nomination for gifted programs. To encourage nominations, teachers need to see Black boys demonstrating the skills teachers look for such as problem solving and critical thinking. The introduction of chess to young Black boys alone will not rectify the underrepresentation of Black males. This study finds that the chess instructor is an important aspect, so respected Black men should be sought as mentors and chess teachers. In addition to the chess instructor, family, friends, teachers, and community members should encourage young Black boys to play chess and understand the strategies of the game. If Black boys can demonstrate their abilities in a form that is more recognizable by teachers, then Black boys will more likely be nominated and tested for the gifted program. Cyrus summarized the purpose of this study:

If chess is going to be an avenue to get Black males into gifted programs, and then more Black males get into gifted programs, then that's going to look better for us. Maybe more Black men, maybe the stigma around gifted programs of just being intellectual will decrease and more Black males will want to be in gifted programs. So I'm looking at this study and chess in general, as an avenue to gifted programs is something that can lead, this is corny, but... like it would be like a flood gate, using chess as something to get Black males in gifted will just flood the Black community with these other opportunities to prove that Black males are equal if not greater intellectually than a lot of other students. Cause I know right now, socially, Black males are really only supposed to be good at sports. And getting more Black males in gifted programs will definitely look

better for us, and I'm thinking it will influence other Black males to want to be more intellectually challenging when it comes to being around their peers. (DC# 4157-4159)

Nomination is the first hurdle in the marathon race to identify more of our gifted Black boys.

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APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1 How did Black men come to play chess?

- 1.1 Tell me about your first experiences with chess.
- 1.2 Tell me about the person who taught you to play and how you related to them.
- 1.3 Can you tell me how you learned the game? Who did you play and when?
- 1.4 What were some of the best resources you used to get better at playing chess?
- 1.5 Can you explain why you stuck with playing chess?
- 1.6 Please tell me about a couple of your favorite opponents. What made them good opponents and why did you like playing them?
- 1.7 Tell me what you did to improve your chess playing skills and what that meant to you.
- 1.8 When you were learning the game, what kind of goals did you have in mind? When you decided you wanted to play more seriously, what strategies did you use to get better?
- 1.9 Tell me about the different skill levels in chess and what it means to you.
Where would you consider yourself when you were 12, 16, and now?
- 1.10 Will you tell me about your favorite games you have played?
- 1.11 Please tell me your thoughts about how chess relates to, or impacts, other areas of your life.

1.12 What is your favorite part about playing chess?

1.13 How would you teach someone how to play chess?

1.14 Explain what you see as the best reasons someone should play chess.

2 What cognitive skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?

2.1. When did you first realize, if ever, you were doing more than playing a game when you were playing chess? Did you ever see or think that you were problem solving?

2.2. When did you realize you were not “just moving pieces around the board,” but were planning ahead?

2.3 Can you tell me your thoughts on the skills needed to play chess?

2.4 Can you recall a time when you have used any of these skills in other areas of your life? Please tell me about these.

2.5 What do you think of when someone mentions problem solving?

2.6 Tell me about ways you tried to get better at problem solving in chess.

2.7 Can you tell me of a time when you realized you were using skills you developed by playing chess in another area of your life? Or maybe you used skills from another area in your chess games?

2.8 What part of the game would you consider to have the most challenges?

2.9 What types of strategies do you use when playing a new opponent?

2.10 What do you take into consideration while you are playing a challenging opponent? Can you talk me through your thinking in a tough game?

3 What affective skills do Black men perceive they develop through chess?

- 3.1 When did you start playing chess regularly/frequently?
- 3.2 Can you share what you remember about why you wanted to play so much?
- 3.3 Please tell me about how you make time to play chess now?
- 3.4 When you first started playing, was there someone who was influential to you wanting to play chess more or less often?
- 3.5 What role do you remember your friends/peers having on your desire to play chess?
- 3.6 Do you currently have friends/peers that influence your desire to play chess?
- 3.7 Would you encourage young Black boys to play chess? Why or why not?

4. Background

- 4.1. Will you please share about where you grew up?
- 4.2. Who did you live with growing up? Brothers/sisters, mom, dad, aunt, grand parents?
- 4.3. What was school like for you? Elementary? Middle school? High school?
- 4.4. What activities did you like to do after school?
- 4.5. When you think about school, what are some of your best memories/subjects/activities?
- 4.6. What did you like to do on the weekends?

APPENDIX B:
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

1. Thoughts on Chess
 - a. How important was chess to you while you were in school?
 - b. Did playing chess help you in other areas of your life?
 - c. What was the number one reason you played chess?
 - d. Did you ever think chess was not interesting, if you did, what changed that for you?
2. Thoughts on my study
 - a. Do you feel there is an under representation of Black boys in gifted programs?
 - b. Do you feel this study has made you think of chess in a different way?
 - c. How do you think this study could help young Black boys?
 - d. Is there something you would have wanted me to focus on that I did not?
3. Thoughts on Interviews and elicitation strategies
 - a. Did the questions I ask help you think about the role of chess in your life?
 - b. Was the elicitation strategy helpful? Comfortable?
 - c. What did you like or not like about our times together? (Be honest, I'm learning.)

APPENDIX C:

RESEARCH PROCESS

Institutional Review Board. I had to submit all the files to the IRB before I could start anything. I was required to submit my plans and all interview guides and even phone scripts for participants I already knew. The process took two months to hear back from the IRB which put me a semester behind in graduating.

Contacting Participants. After getting the approval from the IRB, I picked up the consent forms with the IRB date stamp and made enough copies for each participant to have a copy and a copy for me to keep. Then I emailed one of the participants I knew and asked him to participate and if he knew another man who would be available. While waiting on the response, I called my other known participant and read the script I had written for the IRB. This was not as flowing as it sounded on paper, it was awkward. After my known participants agreed and gave me contact information for other potential participants, I emailed the potential participants and got positive responses from two of the three I emailed. I did not get a response from one of the potential participants that I contacted. I set up the date and time, as well as the location, for each participant during the first contact.

Interviews. I gave the participants the choice of where they would like to meet, but I offered a location in Aderhold as an option to each participant. All but two of the participants chose Aderhold. To ensure the participants comfort, I reserved a quiet room and provided water and fruit during the interviews. I was able to use multiple recording devices which helped a lot because the first one did not record because I didn't test the microphone attached to it before the interview. I tested the recording device, but the

external microphone's battery was dead. I was glad I had two other recording devices for the first interview. My questions did not achieve the desired "story telling" atmosphere, but they did guide the participants to share. I would have liked for there to be less questions and more sharing, but it worked out. The second interview with each participant was an elicitation strategy in which I asked the participants to play a game against a computer. The first participant to do this interview was a learning experience for me. He was more into playing the game than talking out his thinking. I had to ask "what are you thinking?" often to get him to verbalize. The second elicitation interview was problematic because the wireless mouse in the room had a dying battery. I had an extra battery, but couldn't get the mouse open to replace it. I had this fixed for the remaining interviews.

Focus Group. This was scheduled by using www.doodle.com to find a day and time that was good for everyone. I was able to put in several day and time options, and the participants were allowed to say yes, no, or yes if needed for each time. This way we found the best time to meet. One participant knew he would be out of town, but agreed to conference in for the meeting. Another participant had an emergency come up and had to conference in as well. We ended up using Google Hangouts to have multiple videos for the focus group. One participant emailed me about an hour before the meeting saying he could not be there, so our group was small. One participant was in the room with me and two were on the large SmartBoard screen in the room I had reserved. The fifth participant was identified after the focus group, so he was not involved.

Transcribing. In order to ensure accuracy and to begin the analysis, I transcribed all my interviews myself. I used Express Scribe for the first nine transcriptions (including

the focus group) and InqScribe for the last two interviews. While transcribing, I set both programs to play at 60% of the original speed to aid in transcribing. I used a foot pedal to control the playing and rewinding of the programs. I would often have to listen to a section multiple times to try and distinguish what was being said, but there were a few (46) instances where I had to type “(???)” because I could not clearly hear what was said by the participants. While I was transcribing, I was able to make a few memos which started my analysis process.

Coding. My coding process can be divided into four parts. Because I use Microsoft Excel, I had to get my data formatted in the right way so each sentence/chunk would have its own line. The first step was to combine all my transcripts into one document so I could get the formatting for my process. After I had all my transcripts in one document, I was able to utilize the “Find and Replace” feature of Microsoft Word. I was able to search for all periods (this is what I used when transcribing to delineate a sentence or chunk of data), and replace them with a line break. This can be done by holding control and typing f and then clicking on the Replace tab. I typed a period in the “Find what:” box and then clicked on the “More > >” button. At the bottom of the open window were two options, so I clicked on “Special” and then on “Manual Line Break” (you could also type “^l” in the “Replace with:” box). I then clicked “Replace All” and my document was ready to be copied to Microsoft Excel.

- I. Combine Transcripts into Microsoft Word
- II. Microsoft Word Summary
 - a. Find and Replace
 - i. Find all periods

ii. Replace with manual line breaks

b. Select and Copy All

The second step was to get my data into Microsoft Excel, so I copied all the text, including my headers with my time and locations, and opened Microsoft Excel. When the worksheet was open, I clicked in the second cell on the second row, B2, and then pasted my data (control v). I put headers at the top in A1 and B1- “#” for A1 and “Data” for B1. I used the second column, B2, because I wanted to have a way to get my data back in the original order if I moved any of it around. In order to ensure I could do this, I numbered each line of data. To do this, I started in A2 and numbered down to A4. Then I was able to use the feature of Microsoft Excel that allows me to highlight the three cells and click on the small square in the right hand corner of the last highlighted square and drag down to the last line of data. This automatically numbered all my lines of data. During this step, I noticed that I had blank lines wherever I had a manual line break in my original transcripts (by hitting enter). To remove the empty lines, I used the filter tool to get all the blank lines by clicking in B2 and then clicking “Sort and Filter” in the ribbon and on “Filter” in the menu. Then I clicked on the filter icon on column B and unselected “(Select All)” so I could scroll to the bottom of the list and select “Blank”. This left my headers at the top, but showed only the blank rows with numbers. I highlighted all of those rows and deleted them (right click on the rows and click delete). To get back to all my data, I clicked on “Sort and Filter” in the ribbon and on “Clear” in the menu. Then I wanted to renumber my data so I would not feel I had missing parts if I needed them, so I sorted the sheet using column A and repeated my numbering steps from above. This replaced the old numbers and gave me an accurate count of the chunks of data. The last

step in this part was to resize my columns with the numbers and data and wrap the text in column B. I resized several more columns to 4.00 (33 pixels). I like to format my cells with the text going at a slant so it takes up less room, so I did that for all of row 1.

III. Microsoft Excel Summary

- a. Paste Data in cell B2
- b. Make Headers in A1 and B2
- c. Number each row
- d. Filter out Blanks
- e. Renumber each row
- f. Size columns
- g. Wrap Text in column B
- h. Format header rows

With my data formatted properly, I was ready to start part three of my coding process. My process involves reading a line or chunk of data and picking words to use as a code. Often I would use the actual words of the participants, but sometimes it was necessary to name a code differently to get to the meaning. When I assigned a code to a chunk of data, I used the number 1 in the column of the code or codes I wanted to associate with that data. So one chunk of data could have one or ten codes, but each would be marked with a 1. This was done to enable Microsoft Excel to count the data for me and to be able to quickly filter out all data under each code as needed. I was able to filter out data with multiple codes by using features in the “Sort and Filter” ribbon.

	A	B	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	AM	AN	AO	AP	AQ	AR	AS	AT	AU	AV	AW	AX	AY	AZ	BA
	Sentence #	Quotes	never competing	continue to play/stock up Learning/Thinking Chess	age	understand chess pieces/board	chess skill level studying chess / get better	teach	learn	looks	chess teacher observation	Chess and Other Things	Relates to ... movies/TV/pictures	Others and self	peers	community/family control/responsibility	Respect	open mind						
4570	75 codes and 13 categories		53	22	740	110	190	210	154	43	196	105	33	105	29	222	188	42	481	146	299	13	18	18
4571	4570 T: Were there a lot of people that knew?																							
4572	4571 Do not that I recall						1		1															
4573	4572 I remember playing with one kid, one white boy, he used to beat me for like the first two or three weeks, but I started paying attention to what he was doing, cause he would always do the same																							
4574	4573 thing																		1		1			
4575	4574 I started beating him, then he couldn't beat me																							
4576	4575 Which should(n't) be the case (??? I think it comes from my beginning, my playing chess, that I learned to pay attention to how a person moves, how a person makes their moves, how they think																							
4577	4576 while they're playing						1				1			1		1								
4578	4577 It tells me about that person																							
4579	4578 Not only with just chess, but with video games, fighting, martial arts, even the instrument, the music game, I learned to look at that and immediately compute						1								1		1	1						
4580	4579 T: what were your cues? What would they do that you would see																							

In order to ensure I kept each participant's data as his own, I started my codes with my participants' pseudonyms. I typed one participant's pseudonym in each column C through G. Then, as I read each data chunk, I was able to make new codes or assign it to codes already created. When I finished with all the participants, I went back through looking for data that may fit new codes that I developed with each participant. If I got a code from participant 3, such as intelligence, I would go back to participants 1 and 2 to look for data that may fit in that code. The "Find" feature immensely helped with this process by allowing me to search for words like smart, intelligent, intelligence, bright, and dumb. I coded non examples as intelligence so that when I filter out data on intelligence, I can compare the non examples as well.

The last step in my coding process was to categorize and count my data chunks and codes. To begin this process, I copied row one and opened a separate spreadsheet within the Microsoft Excel Workbook. I then right clicked in cell A1 to pull up the menu. By clicking on "Paste Special" and selecting "transpose", I was able to change my row to a column. At this point, I started pulling out codes that I felt were in similar categories, such as problem solving, critical thinking, strategies, and forward thinking were all skills, so the category was built from those and named Skills. I ended up with 75 codes and 13 categories.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Experiences	Learning/Studying Chess	Chess Terminology	Why/Why not Chess	Others and Self	Skills & Strategies
2	experiences	age	grand masters	Why play chess	peers	Focus/ pay attention
3		understand chess	tricks/traps/mistakes	leaving/dropping chess	community/family	problem solving
4		pieces/board	Rules/variations	fun/cool/enjoyment	control/responsibility	patience
5		chess skill level	opening moves	feelings about chess	Respect	Consistency
6		studying chess/ get better/improving	end game/moves	trash talk	open mind	critical thinking/metanalysis
7		teach	check/mate/stalemate	Pride/ better than others	Black	long/forward thinking
8		learn		competing		strategies
9		books		continue to play/stick with it		creativity
10		chess teacher				memory
11		observation				perspectives/ viewpoints
12						resilient/intuitive/instinctual
13						
14						
15	Misc.	Reasons for Chess	Barriers to Chess	Programs/Gifted	Playing Chess	Chess and Other Things
16	Names	chess as a tool	passive/not cool/nerd	under representation	tournaments	Relates to ...
17	self defense	Impact/power of chess	Culture/environment	programs	communication	movies/TV/pictures
18	Discipline	success	Availability to play/boards/opponents/opportunities		aggressive/offensive	
19			Behavior		defensive	
20			Intelligence		reaction	
21		Participation in Study	Educational System		computer/online	
22		my study			win/lose	
23		comfort			opponents	
24					playing/practice	

Then I was able to rearrange my analysis worksheet by the categories and color code the columns. This made it easier when I was looking for specific quotes or data pieces. Finally I inserted a row below my codes to count my codes. I used a formula to add the columns which gave me a total of how many pieces of data went with each code. The last step was to sort my data by multiple codes in order to get a total for my categories. The total of the codes does not equal the total of the categories because multiple codes could be selected, but the category was only marked once.

IV. Coding Summary

- Label Participants' Data
- Read each chunk and code
- Re-read for codes identified later
- Categories
- Rearrange Analysis page
- Counts using formulas
- Count Categories by sorting codes

	A	B	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	AJ	AK	AL	A
	Sentence #	Quotes	Why/Why not Chess	Why play chess	leaving/dropping chess	fun/cool/enjoyment	feelings about chess	trash talk	Pride/better than other	competing	continue to play/stick w	Learning/Studying Chess	age	understand chess	pieces/board	chess skill level	
	0	75 codes and 13 categories	427	104	37	79	184	25	65	53	22	740	110	190	210	154	
2270	2118	He'd make a move, I'd make a move, and um, the first game he won, so I was like, okay, let's, I don't want to lose again, so the second game I won	1				1					1				1	
2271	2119	The third game, it was a draw, and like, there was an undo button, he was trying to press the undo button, and I was like, oh, no, no, no, no, this is an intensive tie	1				1										
2272	2120	He was, it was bad, cause he, but then I got it to a tie, so that was a draw, and then	1				1										
2273	2121	Cause he's actually very good at chess, like he's been playing for a while										1				1	
2274	2122	He would like, play online, like actual competitive websites and do very well, so I felt a real accomplishment saying I beat him, say I came up with a guy whose played, and kind of competitive	1						1	1		1				1	
2275	2123	That was just this past year, um, Senior year in high school										1	1				
2276	2124	T: okay, was that the first time you met him?															

APPENDIX D:
EXCELL SCREEN SHOTS

	Sentence #	Quotes	more than other competing	continue to play/stick Learning/Studying Chess	age	understand chess pieces/board	chess skill level	studying chess/ get better	teach	learn		
1	0	75 codes and 13 categories	53	22	740	110	190	210	154	43	196	105
4572	4570	T: Were there a lot of people that knew?										
4573	4571	D: not that I recall			1	1						
4574	4572	I remember playing with one kid, one white boy, he used to beat me for like the first two or three weeks, but I started paying attention to what he was doing, cause he would always do the same thing										
4575	4573	I started beating him, then he couldn't beat me										
4576	4574	Which should(n't) be the case (???) I think it comes from my beginning, my playing chess, that I learned to pay attention to how a person moves, how a person makes their moves, how they think while they're playing			1			1				1

Figure 1. Data analysis spreadsheet.

A	B	C	D	E	F
<u>Experiences</u>	<u>Learning/Studying Chess</u>	<u>Chess Terminology</u>	<u>Why/Why not Chess</u>	<u>Others and Self</u>	<u>Skills & Strategies</u>
experiences	age	grand masters	Why play chess	peers	Focus/ pay attention
	understand chess	tricks/traps/mistakes	leaving/dropping chess	community/family	problem solving
	pieces/board	Rules/variations	fun/cool/enjoyment	control/responsibility	patience
	chess skill level	opening moves	feelings about chess	Respect	Consistency
	studying chess/ get better/improving	end game/moves	trash talk	open mind	critical thinking/metanalysis
	teach	check/mate/stalemate	Pride/ better than others	Black	long/forward thinking
	learn		competing		strategies
	books		continue to play/stick with it		creativity
	chess teacher				memory
	observation				perspectives/ viewpoints
					resilient/intuitive/instinctual
<u>Misc.</u>	<u>Reasons for Chess</u>	<u>Barriers to Chess</u>	<u>Programs/Gifted</u>	<u>Playing Chess</u>	<u>Chess and Other Things</u>
Names	chess as a tool	passive/not cool/nerd	under representation	tournaments	Relates to ...
self defense	impact/power of chess	Culture/environment	programs	communication	movies/TV/pictures
Discipline	success	Availability to play/boards/opponents/opportunities		aggressive/offensive	
		Behavior		defensive	
		intelligence		reaction	
	<u>Participation in Study</u>	Educational System		computer/online	
	my study			win/lose	
	comfort			opponents	
				playing/practice	

Figure 2. Categories and codes spreadsheet.

	A	B	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG
	Sentence #	Quotes	Why/Why not Chess	Why play chess	leaving/dropping chess	fun/cool/enjoyment	feelings about chess	trash talk	Pride/ better than other	competing	continue to pl...
	0	75 codes and 13 categories	427	104	37	79	184	25	65	53	22
2270	2118	He'd make a move, I'd make a move, and um, the first game he won, so I was like, okay, let's, I don't want to lose again, so the second game I won	1				1				
2271	2119	The third game, it was a draw, and like, there was an undo button, he was trying to press the undo button, and I was like, oh, no, no, no no, this is an intensive tie	1				1				
2272	2120	He was, it was bad, cause he, but then I got it to a tie, so that was a draw, and then	1				1				
2273	2121	Cause he's actually very good at chess, like he's been playing for a while									
2274	2122	He would like, play online, like actual competitive websites and do very well, so I felt a real accomplishment saying I beat him, say I came up with a guy whose played, and kind of competitive	1						1	1	
2275	2123	That was just this past year, um, Senior year in high school									
2276	2124	Okay, was that the first time you met him?									

Figure 3. Total counts for categories and codes.