

THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE PRINCIPALS ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS IN TWO ALL-MALE URBAN SCHOOLS

By

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## **Dedication**

I am grateful to God for this journey and his divine grace that allowed me to complete this journey. Raised in a loving Christ-centered home, I was always made to think everything is possible, that I could achieve anything if I worked hard, received an education, and had the appropriate character, conduct, and commitment to the faith.

To my parents, Abraham and Katherine Washington, thank you for that well-received guidance. Dad, you were and still are my hero. All the lessons that I learned from you have made me a devoted father, husband, and Christian. My wife and children are benefitting from the biblical principles that you both instilled in me. Mother, you are indeed a virtuous woman of God. I appreciate your witness and your willingness to give wise counsel no matter what.

I am indebted to my wife Felicia, without whose love, sacrifices, loyalty, neither life nor fulfillment would be, and I love and thank her for all she has and will continue to be. To my children, Ella Noel and Ava Sophia, I love you two with all that is within me. I am so thankful that God has allowed me to be your father. I am so excited to see the greatness that God has in store for both of you. I hope you both will remember never to let anyone make you settle for less. You are both articulate, intelligent, and outstanding - you are Washington women, and, therefore, you are to outshine the world in any and everything that you do!

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## **Abstract**

### **THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE PRINCIPALS ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS IN TWO ALL-MALE URBAN SCHOOLS**

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African American male principals grapple with the difficulties of the what can be done to increase the leadership behaviors of the African-American principals as they interact with their African-American male students. The U.S. Department of Education report on diversity among educators showed only 10 percent of public-school principals are African-American. The purpose of the case study was to investigate the interactions and relationships that occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals in all-male urban schools. The study was with two African-American male principal participants in two schools, an urban private school and a public charter school in the Mid-Atlantic region. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and student data analysis. Further, the principals participated in qualitative interviews to explore their experiences, perceptions, observations, and career influences. The findings indicate that the African-American principals both had explicit visions for how to best lead their schools, including specific strategies to help the growth of the African

American male students that they lead. In addition, qualitative analysis examined interventions and student performance. The study indicated that African-American principals play an integral part in the schooling of African-American male student, manpower, resources and relationships can severely limit their ability to create meaningful experiences with the African-American male students. The studies main findings ascertained that African-American male principals' impact African-American male students in all-male urban schools by developing meaningful relationships, through making cultural connections, and facilitating reform within their school building. The implications of the study are geared to build stronger student relationships, expand staff relationships, increase mentoring opportunities, use influence to expand school resources and reform changes.

*Keywords:* African-American male, African-American male principal, student achievement, principal, influence, relationships, leadership behavior, education reform, facilitating change, social support, outcomes.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the interactions and relationships that occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals in all-male African-American urban schools. Specifically, the research investigated the leadership impact of the behaviors of two African American principals.

#### **Background of the Problem**

Analyzing the value of interactions, behaviors and relationships is a vital component for the principal in improving outcomes for students from all backgrounds (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006; Johnsen, Haensly, Ryser, & Ford, 2002; Latz, Speirs-Neumeister, Adams, & Pierce, 2009). Ample research calls for action and reform towards better educating African-American males (Bush & Bush, 2013; Gray, 2016; Jones, 2014; Stinson, 2011). Principals open the door to improving the education of the African-American male student. More specifically, a principal's purpose is parallel to overall student outcomes which include taking a proactive part in instructional leadership, via teacher support and training (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006; Johnsen, Haensly, Ryser, & Ford, 2002; Latz, Speirs-Neumeister, Adams, & Pierce, 2009). Furthermore, the Principals' role is associated with impacting the differentiation of teacher instruction (Gooden, 2012; Puzio, Newcomer, & Goff, 2015). The principal impacts a nurturing and goal-oriented school culture that supports and cultivates achievement (Ani, 2013). The principal further develops building staff capacity to meet organization goals (Bennett,

Ylimaki, Dugan, & Brunderman, 2013; Fullan, 2009; Hargreaves & Harris, 2015).

African-American male principals in urban school settings possess the unique perspective of bearing the experiences of the African-American male education as they strive to lead African-American male students to academic success. African-American Principal voices are inherently valuable to the discussion on how to use valuable relationship skills to increase the achievement of African-American males' students. This study investigated the interactions and relationships that occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals when leading all-male schools that reflect school changes facilitating reform for African-American male student achievement.

#### Statement of the Problem

Although African-American male principals aren't the sole reason for African-American male student achievement, research has ascertained that their presence avails attention, retention, and production of African-American male student achievement (Tillman, 2004). The problem addressed by the study was to explore the interactions and relationships of African American principal and their African-American students in all male urban schools. The principal serves a uniquely impactful and influential responsibility school settings, particularly in achieving and maintaining school achievement, with five broad practices being identified as key to effective principalship: establishing and conveying school visions, facilitating a high-quality learning environment, building professional capacity, creating a supportive organization for learning, and connecting and partnering with stakeholders (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The effectiveness of principals in carrying out these practices substantially impacts teaching

quality and student outcomes. Principals' leadership effectiveness has, arguably, the most significant impact (positive or negative) on a school's ability to autonomously function and thrive (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

The role of a principal is of particular importance in high-needs schools where principals are called to lead demonstrative improvements in academic achievement in challenging circumstances, including serving students with heightened economic, social, educational, and health-based needs. However, existing research on principal effectiveness has been criticized for underrepresenting the assessment of quality leadership in high-needs schools (Klar & Brewer, 2013). While context is crucial to identifying the impact of leadership needed to facilitate success in high needs-schools, "relatively little research has focused on this critical aspect of leadership practice" (Klar & Brewer, 2013, p. 770).

There is a need for research on leadership impact in high-needs schools, and specifically the part of African-American principals on African-American male student outcomes. Simultaneously, there is a need for research on best practices in educating African-American males, a group disproportionately represented in high-needs schools. According to a recent report by the Center for Law and Social Policy, Bird (2013) cited that a mere 27.9% percent of African-American males between ages 16-19 were employed in 2013, an 11.4% decrease compared to 31.4% in 1972. Also, approximately 50% of African-American males ages 20-24 were employed in 2013, dropping 23% since 1972. These employment statistics indicated that despite technological advantages and the instructional focus on 21st-century skills, significantly fewer African-American males

are currently employed than their counterparts 40 years prior. Lack of academic achievement in literacy and mathematics negatively influences the employment opportunities of African-American males, and a sense of urgency exists for quickly improving the learning outcomes for African-American males.

Problems in educating African-American males preface their employment woes. “The high school graduation rate for African-American males is dismally behind their White male peers,” according to Maxwell (2012, p. 12). High dropout and expulsion rates, low grades and test scores, and low college enrollment versus other populations are often cited as issues of concern among stakeholders (Maxwell, 2012)

Lack of care for the needs, if not welfare, of African-American males, is a contemporary topic of interest. Resistance to removing Confederate statues may be interpreted as a move to conserve White male historical perspectives in American culture (Racism, 2016). African-American males may also be the victims of test bias, with standardized test content being contextualized in White culture and failing to consider African-American perspectives. Racial disparities may contribute to the standardized test score achievement gap among African-American males (Why, 2016).

African-American principals may result from invaluable input into best practices for educating African-American males. African-American male teachers can provide greater insight into the current state of the African-American male schooling experience while also meeting the need for further research into leadership practices at high-needs schools. Additionally, race and gender have been suggested as possible causes for underachievement among African-American students (Louis, Murphy, & Smylie, 2016).

Observing student achievement in an environment where these barriers are not present may be useful in determining more accurate reasons. I completed a case study using qualitative data produced from interviews and observations; and student data on two African-American principals in urban school settings in the Mid-Atlantic region. The case study allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of the research question to determine leadership impact and practices intended to improve achievement for African-American male students (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). I was able to explore the principal's leadership impact on African-American male success by reviewing relationship impact, instruction, assessment, and discipline. The data gathered may support other urban school leaders and staff on practices to improve and become more impactful in teaching and learning for African-American males.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the case study was to investigate the interactions and relationships that occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals in all-male urban schools. The research described leadership practices and the effect of a connection between the African-American principal and the African-American male student.

According to Yin (2018), the objective of case studies is to assist in the organization of information while giving credence to the study's main findings (p. 219). This research study captured data on the African-American male principals' in an urban school setting to discover any phenomena that occur when African-American principals lead schools that oversee significant portions of African-American males. The data obtained included



any relevant information to depict phenomena relevant to improving the education of African-American males, or the lack thereof.

There is a clear need to identify best practices in educating African-American males as “many of these (African-American) young males continue to encounter poor educational practices in schools that manifest into economic disparities and social indignities” (Tatum, 2014, p. 35). While schools across the country struggle to develop successful strategies to combat the achievement gap that exists in educating African-American males, some schools are exploring innovative methods to overcome the problem. Several theories exist to explain the achievement gap between African-American males and their non-minority peers, with most focusing on deficit theories (Rogers, 2002). Investigating an African-American male’s experiences in his schooling alongside his theories of practice informs the discussion of how to best educate African-American males.

### Research Question

The following research question explored in this study:

What interactions and relationships occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals when leading all-male, all African-American male student schools?

### Significance of the Study

The role of the school leader is imperative in the process of transformative learning: student growth can be deterred if administrators fail (Thien, Lavis, Williams,

Fallin, Barnes, & Fishback, 2016). African-American principals are in a unique position to transform the quality of education for African-American students due to their commonalities. African-American males experience a unique construct in their experiences in school, especially since the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Jordan Russell Davis, and Michael Brown have called the public perception of the value of African-American male lives into question (Haddix, 2015). The stereotyping of the African-American male as a sexual predator, intellectual inferior, and a criminal has contributed to distorted perceptions of African-American male students' identities. Haddix (2015) suggested engaging "a new set of views, knowledge, and understandings concerning the ways we think about, conduct research, and work with African-American male youth," (p.432), this understanding will be applied to an all-male school. Howard (2014) shared this belief, stating the need for further research regarding what instructional strategies enhance African-American males' cognitive capacity, expand their sociocultural knowledge, and increase postsecondary education success.

Identifying strategies that positively influence achievement outcomes for minority male students in an all-male school is an area of concern for school administrators across the country, especially since the current achievement gap illustrates public schools are currently not meeting the literacy needs of most African-American male learners (Tatum, 2006). Research indicates closing the achievement gap for African -American males could have far-reaching societal impacts. Levin, Belfield, Muennig, and Rouse (2006) calculated that the savings resulting from more considerable public investments in the education of African-American males would benefit the United States public through

additional tax revenues, savings in public health costs, and savings in criminal justice costs. Furthering research on practices to improve the impact of the education of African-American males is beneficial if the identified strategies positively influence their educational performance. Noguera (2012) noted that current research reflects a gap in indicating a model of education distinctively for African-American males that shows increased performance, and he stressed the need for further research to demonstrate whether any particular model shows increased success for African-American males as well as to verify which models are ineffective.

The African-American male principal participants in the case study expressed a desire to include research-based interventions and improved teacher training and professional development in their visions for an instructional model that would best serve African-American males if not students in general. Results of the study suggested that perhaps the concern of African-American male underachievement in an all-male school is not one of finding the optimal model, but that of enabling principals with the resources needed to put their selected models in place.

### Key Terms

African-American Male (AAM): relating to Americans of African ancestry, "African-American" is used throughout the dissertation to emphasize black ethnic identity. "Black," which is a racial identity term and is paired with "White" when used in direct quotations or when emphasizing political identity as a racialized and oppressed group (The *American heritage college dictionary*, p.23).

Achievement Gap: the academic performance difference between White students and students of other races and other ethnic groups, which extends to comparisons between English and native speakers, and between students with disabilities and those without disabilities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

Analytic Generalization: a two-step process that first involves conceptual claim and application of the theory to similar situations that might occur (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010, p. 21).

Aspirations: desired outcomes absent of limitations, constraints or resources (Harper, 2010, p. 813).

**At-Risk:** exposure to the chance of injury or loss (*The American Heritage College Dictionary, Online*).

Black: the term “Black” is used instead of “African-American ” in the case of direct quotation or the case when the point is discrimination or stereotype based on racial classification.

Case Study Research: a mode of social science inquiry using case studies as the primary research method; other common modes and their methods include survey research (surveys), experimental research (experiments), historical research (histories), and statistical research (statistical modeling).

Cultural Capital: involving ways of dressing, acting, thinking, or representing oneself. Thus, style, manners, courtesy, language practices, moving, and socializing are all forms of cultural capital” (Kincheloe, 1993, p. 46).

Culture: the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, and all other products of human work and thoughts (*The American Heritage College Dictionary*, p. 337).

Case study: case study whose purpose is to describe a phenomenon (the “case”) in its real-world context. (Yin, 2018).

Disadvantaged: deprived of some necessities or advantages of life, including an unfavorable circumstance or condition that reduces the chances of success or effectiveness (*The American Heritage College Dictionary*, p. 394).

Educational debt: accumulated deficits that are grounded in historical, moral, socio-political, and economic factors that have disproportionately affected the schooling of African-American, Latina/o, Asian, and other non-White students (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017).

Educational deficit: shortfall between the educational experience, the amount of academic achievement a school failed to achieve with a lack of learning over a period of time (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Effective teaching: is the ability to produce higher than predicted gains on standardized achievement tests (Good, 1979, p. 53).

Gender: manner of existence, or sex (male or female, typically used concerning social and cultural differences rather than biological ones) (Yin, 2018).

Learning Experience: any interaction, course, program, or other experience in which learning takes place, whether it occurs in traditional academic settings (schools,

classrooms) or nontraditional settings (outside-of-school locations, outdoor environments), or whether it includes traditional educational interactions (students learning from teachers and professors) or unconventional interactions (students learning through games and interactive software applications (Partnership, n.d.).

Race: refers to a category of people who share specific inherited physical characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, and stature (Barksan, 2012).

Stakeholder: typically refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives (Education Reform, 2014).

Student Engagement: an educational aspect where student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Partnership, n.d.).

## Summary

The problem addressed by the study was to explore the interactions and relationships of African American principals and their African-American students in all male urban schools. The case study used qualitative measures to understand the dynamics by which the African American male student and African-American male principal can enhance or decrease achievement. The leadership behaviors and interactive relationship dynamics were addressed through the use of interviews, observations, and student data

(Yin, 2018). In the last 25 years, the amount of African-American male principals has not grown (Anderson, 2016). “The U.S. Census estimates that 13.4% of Americans, about 42 million, lived below the poverty line in 2017” (Sauter, 2018). African-American children are disproportionately low income and poor (Kobal, & Jiang, 2018). The main characteristics of the study were qualitative to obtain more information to address the problem with African-American student achievement. To understand the issues further, a case study was identified as the best method to use (Stake, 1995). The study used two African-American male principals from all-male urban schools in the Mid-Atlantic. The purpose of the case study was to investigate the interactions and relationships that occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals who lead all-male urban schools. . The study can be used to understand better ways to improve African American male principal leadership behaviors as well student relationships with administrators to improve their students’ achievement. Study findings will benefit African-American principals who lead an all-male or largely African-American student urban school.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

African-American student achievement can be perceived in different ways; studies have shown that the problem scope extends beyond the African-American male student. Research has indicated that immediate entities in their everyday lives play an integral role such as their family, school, and community (McKinsey & Company 2009, p. 6). Student achievement is comprised of many factors, including environmental factors as well as internal factors. The National Association for the Education of Young Children ascertained that economic and social conditions past and present are at the root of the achievement gap (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018). Although African-American male students can be seen as troublesome, research has shown that they do not readily reveal or realize their full potential (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2012, p. 36). Far too often, schools have not served African-American male students well (Casserly et al., 2012, p. 36). Research on urban schools that house the largest population of African-American male students identifies that effective change can occur only in the context of a holistic approach that takes into account the role of the broader community (Casserly et al., 2012, p. 4).

O'Donnell (2019) recognized that when school leaders are African-American, African-American teachers and students benefit. Race/ethnicity has been found to play a part in the social life, personal life, and academic life of African-American males (Rosen, 2018). Rosen (2018) found in research that “having one black teacher in elementary school not only makes children more likely to graduate high school, it also makes them



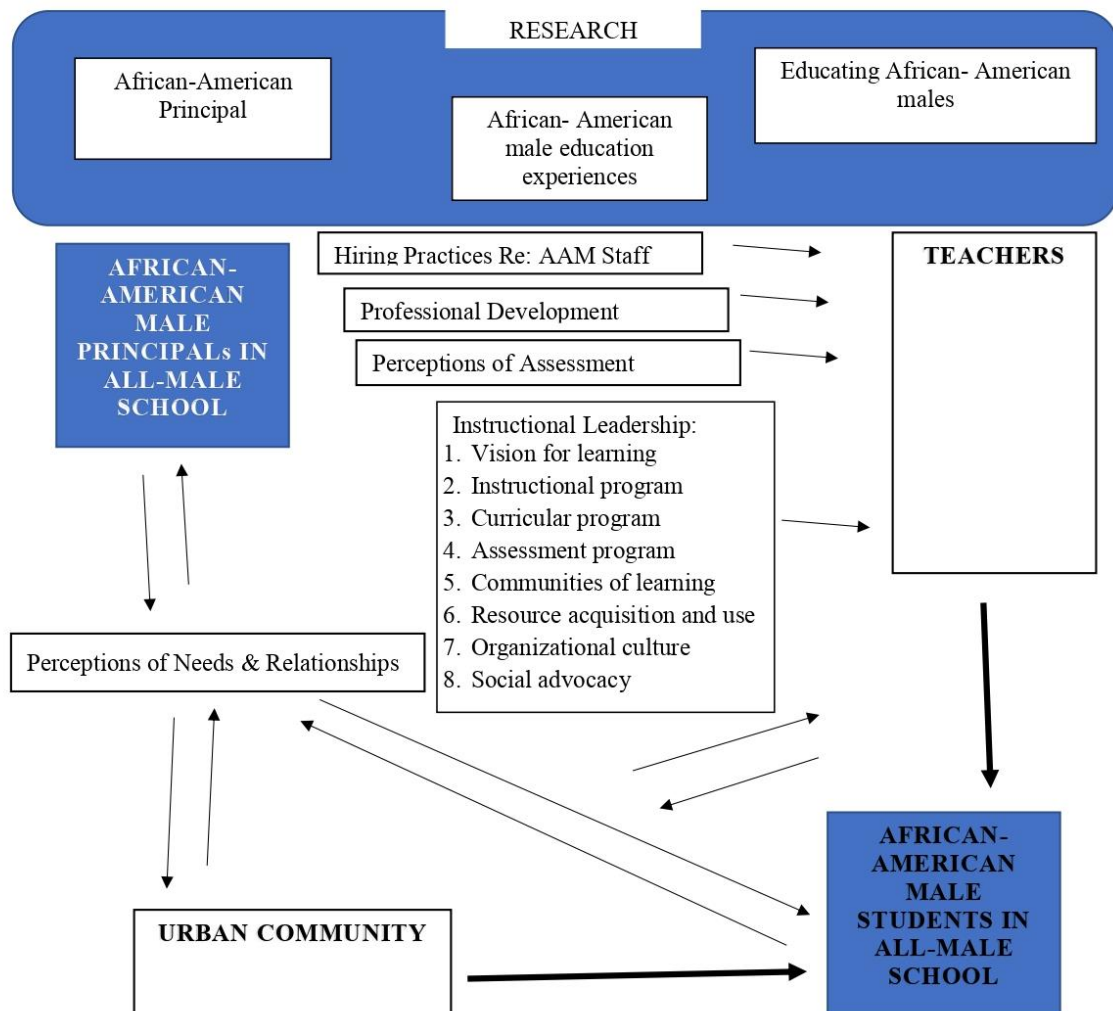
significantly more likely to enroll in college” (2018, November 12). Studies conducted at Vanderbilt University found that in terms of race principal will hire from their race, and the retention of those teachers are of the same race (O’Donnell, 2019). Based on the research at Vanderbilt, schools are encouraged to hire more leaders of color, improve recruitment and retention to adequately prepare students for a productive future and counteract exposure to racial implications (’Donnell, 2019). A review of the history in the achievement gap between African-American students and their white counterparts is required alongside the role of school administrators, particularly African-American principals, as instructional leaders to help understand the low achievement of African American males. Additional topics for research to expand the understanding include gender differences in the learning styles of African-American males, economic and educational inequity among African-American males, the impact of culture and perception on African-American students, and the nature of single-gender schools. Consideration for relationships and contradictions in research is also required. The literature review will synthesize scholarly articles that will help the readers develop an understanding of African-American principal, leadership, issues surrounding the African-American male student, and race as it relates to the African-American male. The literature will include but not be limited to the achievement gap, single-sex schools, principal roles, instructional leadership, inequity, and culture.

### Conceptual Framework

This study proposes a holistic conceptual framework that is used based on an organized layout equipped to build the capacity for African-American male principals to

increase effective leadership behaviors. Researchers identified that school leadership, especially principal instructional and transformational leadership, is monumental to leadership behaviors (Goldring Porter, Murphy, Elliott, and Cravens, 2009). The eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership are: (1) vision for learning, (2) instructional program, (3) curricular program, (4) assessment program, (5) communities of learning, (6) resource acquisition and use, (7) organizational culture, and (8) social advocacy. The framework perspective below arises through the incorporation of environmental characteristics that investigates multiple levels as criteria, sub-criteria, and measures of approaches to improve interactions and relationships of African-American male principals and African-American male students in all-male urban school outcomes.

Stake (1995) asserts “Most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, that the world we know is a particularly human construction” (p. 99). The holistic conceptual framework outlines the pathways to succeed. Below you are able to see the relationship areas, in terms of analysis that interact with the decisions based on leadership behaviors that may be theoretically interpretive to? guide the informed decision of the African-American male principal as he governs the African-American all-male student outcome success. (See Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Conceptual Framework of the African-American Male Principals' Perceptions of Educating African-American Males in an Urban School. Adapted from "Assessing learning-centered leadership: Connections to research, professional standards, and current practices," by Goldring, E., Porter, A., Murphy, J., Elliott, S.N., & Cravens, X., 2009, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 8, 1–36. doi: 10.1080/15700760802014951.

The diagram was used to seek out any phenomenological effects that may exist between the principal and students when both are African-American males. The common thread that both groups share is the African-American male identity and experiences that

come from different angles of being students and school leaders, respectively. The African-American male principal of all-male schools, in his role as a school leader, has the authority to hire and implement practices in regard to hiring, and as a direct result, their position as principal impacts every area of engagement that the students will encounter. This engagement includes hiring practices (ex: African-American male staff), professional development, and assessments. Teachers were not studied and were not participants. Observations were completed by shadowing the principals. Interviews were collected, and a review of classroom practices was analyzed. The principals allowed for the school handbook to be reviewed, which included classroom practices, policies, and procedures. In order to understand the behaviors of African American male student's data collected from teachers (and other school staff) guidance as school leaders were analyzed to determine the impacts of their relationships on student achievement. It is for the aforementioned reasons teachers and their data were reviewed and analyzed.

The perceptions of needs and relationships include the African-American male principals' and students' shared experiences of the African-American male identity. The diagram targets identifying phenomenological experiences common to the school leaders that can be purposeful to student achievement. The phenom seems to relate to the experience of African American males and their student achievement being impacted positively and negatively through relationships. The experiences identified in the diagram identify eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership (Goldring et al., 2009). The information gathered for NVivo coding revealed dimensions analyzed by information obtained through observation and interviews. Yin (2014) stated that

phenomenon and context are not always distinguishable in real-work situations, other methodological characteristics become relevant to the study through the use of multiple sources of evidence and theoretical propositions (p. 17).

### African-American Relationships in Research

Existing research indicates a need for further study of how principals as instructional leaders can help decrease the achievement gap for African-American males (Royle, 2014). Principals clearly set in motion the leadership capabilities of schools that increase student achievement, and African-American male principals may serve a unique stance in that role. As African-American males have historically been unrepresented in American schools, it would be telling to investigate, from a current principal's perspective, whether he or she sees evidence of bias against African-American males in modern schools and what measures he or she takes to assess these issues (Franklin, 1994). Additionally, existing research shows varying indications of whether outcomes are impacted by the presence of African-American male educators in schools serving African-American male pupils. Gathering feedback from an African-American male principal can inform perspectives on the role of African-American males in education leadership. As a key player in hiring African-American male teachers, the perspective of an African-American male principal can inform the perceived value of African-American men teaching in the classroom, including whether the principal believes African-American men have inherent experiences that may benefit teaching African-American males (Franklin, 1994).

In studying administrators' hand in altering student behavior, there are also cultural and environmental factors that can affect students' achievement (Franklin, 1994). Refocusing curriculum to relate to students' ethnic culture alone may not be enough to persuade positive behavior from students, especially those who do not view education as valuable (Noguera, 2003). Furthermore, for behavior to change, it must be understood why the behavior exists, or what factors are encouraging the continuation of the negative behavior.

Risk variables and cultural pressures cannot explain individual behavior (Franklin, 1994). Therefore, deepening our understanding of how individuals cope and respond to their social and cultural environments is important in finding new ways to assist African-American males toward achievement. Because choice plays such a vital role, one must understand the cognitive processes that influence how individuals adapt, cope and respond in order to change behavioral outcomes (Noguera, 2003). Thus, efforts to improve the academic performance of African-American males must start by understanding the attitudes that come with their perception of schooling and academic pursuits (Noguera 2003). When educators are aware of the social and cultural pressures exerted on students, the need to choose between one's identity and academic success can be eliminated. Studies of several schools in California found that those which had a predominantly minority population that was high achieving and had closed the achievement gap, shared several factors in common: (a) a clear sense of purpose, (b) core standards within a rigorous curriculum, (c) high expectations, (d) a commitment to

educate all students, (e) a safe and orderly learning environment, (f) strong partnerships with parents, and (g) a problem-solving attitude (Fashola, 2005, p. 68).

What makes some male students rise above their circumstance to attend classes, adhere to the formal rules of the school building, and achieve academically, while many others fail to realize the importance of an education to their future success as adults? There are success stories of certain schools nationwide that have been able to decrease the achievement gap and improve test scores for particular minority populations (Noguera, 1996; Parson & Kritsonis, 2006). Yet, the challenge remains of how to best handle the personal and academic problems that seem to constantly barrage students in urban schools. The problems these male students confront outside the classroom cannot and should not be ignored in the educational setting (Brockenbrough, 2018). African-American males may feel unmotivated to learn when they do not perceive academic success as influential in their reality outside of school. The challenge is in figuring out how administrators in particular can play a more instrumental spark in motivating African-American males to achieve. Administrators can help these students to follow an expected course of academic success through attendance, adherence to school policies and participation in classroom learning (Noguera, 2003). However, to accomplish this, administrators must incorporate additional methods in their reform. Thus, motivating at-risk African-American males to improve their attendance, improve their behavior and increase their academic achievement are grounded in the relationship between recognition, interventions and mentoring.

Too many of the programs and strategies aimed to help African-American adolescent males achieve at a higher level academically focus solely on Afrocentric educational methods, or the notion that in a suburban school setting the achievement gap could be closed by introducing an African-American teacher or teachers to the faculty (Noguera, 2003). The rationale seems to be that if low achieving students see a working professional of the same race or ethnic group modeling appropriate work behavior then the students will follow suit. This argument ignores many of the social and psychological forces that reinforce low achievement for many students. Improving the academic achievement of African-American males is especially significant when one understands the public costs and benefits. In theory, few Americans would state that ensuring the adequate education of adolescent African-American males is unfavorable to the future of our nation (Brockenbrough, 2018). Nonetheless, when arguments are made as to why schools should or should not receive sufficient funding for particular intervention programs to target this demographic group that is precisely what is happening. The future of America is adversely affected when the large numbers of African-American males who drop out of high school have long stretches of unemployment and possibly participate in criminal activities that may lead to prison time.

The social and economic costs of African-American male underachievement justifies further study into closing the achievement gap. As schooling is perhaps to the most controllable means of targeting African-American male underachievement, it has been and should continue to be a setting for research (Brockenbrough, 2018). This is particularly true because schools serve as a merging of the many factors that impact



African-American male success, such as high-quality instruction, gender influence, culture, and socio-economic status (Brockenbrough, 2018).

### Achievement Gap

The achievement gap in performance among select subgroups, including African-Americans, is a frequent topic of study in academic literature (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Hanselman, Bruch, Gamoran, & Borman, 2014; Ikpa, 2004; Rowley & Wright, 2011). Regardless of the cause, African-American students in the United States are frequently targeted as a subgroup in the “Achievement Gap.” A National Assessment of Educational Progress report indicates that African-American students in grades 4-8 showed significant score gains in mathematics and reading between 1990 and 2007 (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin-Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). The research also indicated that scores still lagged behind White students, with achievement gaps existing in all 46 states for which math data were available and all 44 students for which reading data were available (Vanneman et al., 2009).

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the White-African-American achievement gaps in math and reading did not change significantly between 2011 and 2013; however, the African-American achievement disparities in the subjects at the fourth grade narrowed between the early 1990s and 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). African-American males are statistically underrepresented in gifted education programs and overrepresented in special education programs (Schott, 2008). In their study of Arizona public schools, Sullivan and Artiles (2011) noted that as minority enrollment increased within a local education agency,

minority students identified as at risk of being recognized for special education services also rose. Sullivan and Artiles stated that the current understanding of the complexity of disproportionality between minority students and identification for special education remains “incomplete and imprecise” (p. 1527).

Achievement gaps in American education are historically rooted. Gaps in school funding for children of color are even more significant than the spending gaps for children living in poverty, a continuation of the inferior funding and resources available compared to White schools in the era of segregation (Ani, 2013). Eurocentric values inflicted by a European American worldview continue to sway American school culture (Graham & Erwin, 2011). This worldview’s perseverance of the boy-of-color as “thug” may indicate why males of color are disproportionately given discipline referrals by teachers and assigned punitive disciplinary consequences versus their White peers (Gray, 2016).

The achievement gap between African-American males and the general population is a target of improvement for both schools studied. Research frequently connects factors outside of schools, including community safety, access to basic needs such as affordable housing, and increased vulnerability to trauma, as playing a part in the achievement gap. The research did not offer suggestions on how to analyze the impact of outside influences on the achievement gap, and frequently noted the difficulty of measuring the impact on the ability of schools to decrease the achievement gap. The trend of difficulty measuring effect to analyze data and suggest strategies for improvement appeared in other areas related to the study of African-American schooling,

including whether and to what extent single-sex schools may be an effective means of decreasing the achievement gap.

### Charter Schools

Charter school literature is included in the research one because one of the principals studied serves in a charter school. It is important to recognize the structure of the school to support and to understand the dynamics of the school. Charter schools are defined as an autonomous public school created by a contract between a sponsor, as a local school district or corporation, and an organizer, as a group of teachers or a community group, often with a curriculum or focus that is not traditional.

(Dictionary.com, n.d.). Charter schools can be governed by nonprofit boards; however, not all but some charter school buildings are privately owned by the charter's founders, by an affiliated private company, or by a private trust (Mathis, & Welner, 2016, p. 4).

Private schools, unlike charter and public schools, are subject to transparency laws, "charter schools are operated by private EMOs, and key decisions are made at corporate headquarters, which are often out-of-state" (Mathis et al., 2016, p. 2). Researchers Scott, Allen, & Lewis (2014), sought through research to dispel the myth that charter schools can't be a success. Their studies did find that failure of charter schools has a large number of students who are suspended and expelled, and approximately 33% are African-American males (Scott et al., 2014, p. 2). "The research identified that discipline and policy revisions played a major acceleration in the positive behavior changes in the charter school" (Fenning and Rose, 2007). At every level the charter schools used a tiered system and interventions that were required at the school administrative level; "however,

they failed to provide recommendations on ways to increase the social and emotional capital of students in these situations" (Fenning and Rose, 2007, p. 548).

### Private Schools

Private school literature is included in the research because one of the principals studied t leads school. It is important to recognize the structure of the school to support and to understand the dynamics of the school. Private schools are defined as a school founded, conducted, and maintained by a private group rather than by the government, usually charging tuition and often following a particular philosophy or viewpoint. (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Private schools have teachers that hold valid teaching certificates. Private schools have autonomy in their curriculums, common school decisions such as uniforms, and discipline policies and procedures. With autonomy, private schools have the ability to employ religion in their schools that are otherwise forbidden by the U.S. Government (CAPE, 2013). Private schools have shown an increase in the academic achievement of their students (CAPE, 2013).

### Charter and Private Schools

Charter schools and private schools are schools. A consistency found in all schools is that they can enroll students from all backgrounds. Schools are much like a business; they need design and planning. As simple as it seems, they are institutions of learning designed to educate the children and prepare them for the future, as all schools are. A successful school is built on the same principles as all others, and these components are student achievement, safety, and staffing (Scott, Allen, & Lewis, 2014).

The inconsistency of it all is that charter schools and private schools have more autonomy in that decision, whereas public schools do not have a choice at all (Network for Public Education, 2019). Research consistently shows that the difference between charter and private schools is funding (Cohodes, 2018). Despite the original purpose of differentiating the schools, in the current state of schools today, they are all indebted to similar issues. When compared, private, standard, and charter schools all share lofty goals of better local and state testing, educational practices and behavior concerns, These components have been overshadowed with the same issues that lead back to equity in school funding (Cohodes, 2018).

Cohodes (2018) indicated that the research showed that "charter school growth is constrained by a cap on the percentage of district funding that could be allocated to charter schools." Research has also shown that "10 percent of U.S. students attend a private school, and 3 percent are homeschooled" (Cohodes, 2018). Although the characteristics of charter schools are similar to "charter schools and their effects on students, has been a large part of the education policy conversation in the past two decades" (Cohodes, 2018). Many years ago, parents were able to choose their child's learning institution (U.S., 2015). Today, parents, especially African-American parents of male students, are looking for an alternative to a crowded unequitable classroom that will tend to the needs of their child with cultural norms embedded into every aspect of the learning experience (Cohodes, 2018). The U.S. Department of Education, 2010, has shown that the highest underfunded schools are schools in urban communities. These urban communities consist of the highest population of African-American students, with

a larger portion of the students being males. Looking at the facts, parents must make sure that the school they have chosen for their child meets their needs and not rely on the name because each school will have its challenges. Both charter and private schools share a variety of students with different races, disabled and non-disabled, and various learning abilities. Charter schools do not necessarily outperform private schools and vice versus (Network for Public Education NPE, 2019).

The Network for Public Education (NPE) which completes research to assist and strengthen the knowledge of schools and improve education indicated the following results about school privatization; (2019)

Privatizers believe:

- Charter schools are better than public schools
- Charter schools are popular because they're better than public schools
- Charter schools give parents more options for their children
- We need more high-performing charter schools

Charter schools believe:

- Charter schools are not better than public schools but do have the enrollment flexibility to appear to do better
- Charter schools are popular because they have better marketing than public schools
- Charter schools have more options to serve the students they want

- We need high quality, well-financed public schools that serve all students

(NPE, 2019, p. 2)

The NPE was able to visually display information that helps all stakeholders make an informed decision. on the bottom line of the advantages and disadvantages of schools and how funding public schools, lowering class size and using research will increase the achievement of students (p.2). Charter Schools and private schools have autonomy in their curriculum, hiring practices, student types without reprimand; therefore, the limits to what can and won't happen are contingent on what the administration dictates (Mathis, 2016).

#### African-American Males and Single-Sex Schools

An essential aspect of any intervention strategy is that it does not marginalize African-American males compared to their classmates. Noguera (1996) critiques how the low achievement of African-American males is framed and acted upon in the formulation of intervention strategies. Through his research conducted at a California high school, Noguera recommends that programs created to meet the needs of African-American males avoid marginalizing those targeted for help. Rather than focusing exclusively on race and gender to understand social problems affecting these students, there must be a refocus on the influence of class and geographic location. Structural factors, rather than cultural ones, must guide intervention strategies. Structural elements include mentoring, job training programs, and rites of passage programs that prepare students for manhood and fatherhood. In African-American, all-male schools, these initiatives are best handled

through specialized efforts targeted at them, even if it means isolating them to apply the intervention (Noguera, 1996).

Stinson (2006) notes that though the body of research on the cause of African-American male underachievement is growing, the need for research is still in demand. Gender differences common to all males is a frequently cited cause for underachievement (Anfara & Mertenenes, 2008; Bracey, 2006; Mead, 2006). According to Anfara and Mertenenes (2008), the outcomes of single-sex schools remain unclear. While there is evidence that single-sex schooling may help girls and minority students, there is no definitive evidence that this type of education makes any difference to White male students. Furthermore, there are few studies in the U.S. that have even researched the effects of single-sex schooling outside the environment of private and Catholic schools. Even then, most research on the topic has been done overseas in England and Australia, among others. Lack of research may be partially rooted in critical and legal claims that public-funded single-gender schools are a denial of equal protection (Brunette, 1977). This is in part or because all-male and all-female schools are not and cannot be equal to each other in all ways (Brunette, 1977).

Some researchers argue that single-sex schools help close the achievement gap; lessen distractions for African-American males in the classroom; and help to accommodate the biological differences between the sexes and resulting learning style differences. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2005) targeted areas for those seeking to solve the "boy crisis." The "boy crisis" is characterized by lower scores by males on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, higher dropout and



suspensions rates for males, higher incidence of classified learning disabilities, and lower test-taking rates on assessments such as the SAT and ACT (Mead, 2006). Husband (2012) suggests that the lack of focus on male preference for practical, analytical, informational, and directional readings combined with prescribed curricula that neglect the cultural needs of African-American students contribute to African-American male underperformance in reading ability. Bracey (2006) adds that single-sex schooling relating to males provides increased attention to pedagogically significant gender differences and controlling the behavior of males of all races. Okopny (2008) counters that the "boy crisis" is a myth and that the differences between male and female brains are overemphasized by researchers such as Kindlon and Thompson (2000). In their analysis of the "boy crisis," Husain and Millimet (2009) note that only the lowest-achieving males lose ground in reading ability over the first four years of schooling.

Chadwell (2012) claimed that African-American students displayed the highest levels of increased performance in single-gender classrooms; however, this testimony is based on student survey data and not academic performance data. Schools implementing a single-gender instructional approach have variations in the structure, student demographics, instructional strategies, and other components that make it difficult to discern if results can be attributed to the single-sex format or other factors. Salomone (2006) noted that most of the research on single-sex schools originate from studies on private and denominational schools and schools overseas. She argues that the research is inconclusive and anecdotal in that it lacks scientific rigor. Authors Anfara and Mertens (2008) argue in support of Salamone. Anfra and Mertens (2008) believe that in the efforts

to find definitive evidence, research has shown that the nature and benefits of single-sex education are "highly contextual" (p. 57). They further identify as many variables that can affect student achievement, including school characteristics, teaching styles, instructional practices, and curriculum (Anfra, & Mertens, 2008). The students' backgrounds, needs, and abilities, along with what one is seeking as the desired outcome, all affect findings on single-sex education. A multi-year study on coeducational to single-gender format reading instruction actually revealed a statistically significant adverse impact during the first two years of single-gender schooling for males (Dwarte, 2014). The all-girl reading class demonstrated significant improvements for every year following the conversion (Dwarte, 2014). Notably, for males, scores increased after the first two years and surpassed the coeducational scores by the sixth and final year of observation.

Additionally, a study by Berry (2005) documents evidence of successful outcomes for African-American males being educated in a single-sex environment. The study provided an in-depth analysis of two mathematically successful African-American male middle school students. Five broad categories in research participants' school experience were reported: (1) students were exposed to preschool education materials and had positive math experiences in elementary school; (2) students were prepared by parents to understand and lessen the effect of individual discrimination; (3) students were supported by family members who made the expectations of school success explicit; (4) students were involved in church, academic and extracurricular athletic activities; and (5) students engaged in positive self-definition and were motivated to succeed in math and school.

The lack of single-sex schools with significant African-American male populations to study is an obstacle. Lack of is especially a concern as those schools may have significant deviations in their approaches to decreasing the achievement gap. As noted in the literature, if patterns emerge in single-sex schools, regardless of student population dynamics, it is difficult for researchers to determine if single-sex schooling or other factors are the cause. As in achievement gap-centric research, there is a need, if possible, to assess what factors are most likely to inform methods to increase African-American male achievement.

#### African-American School Administrators

The role of the African-American school leader has been the topic of study as of late with the focus on instructional leadership. Many African-American school leaders cite the purpose of their personal history in urban environments played into them becoming school leaders (Hargreaves & Harris, 2015). The African-American school leader has a particular responsibility to possess leadership experiences that will assist in both working to provide professional development to staff and to serve underserved student populations. The experiences include:

- Dreaming with determination, including having a dream of a significantly more desirable future, confronting and overcoming one's fears, challenging forces of resistance, and pursuing the dream with relentless determination.
- Taking Innovative Pathways, including identifying opportunities that others have missed and turned one's greatest weaknesses into significant triumphs.

- Building Collaboration and Community, involving establishing creative teams and engaging in friendly rivalry.

- Securing Success and Sustainability, by making a coherent connection between short-term improvements and long-standing success so that resources are not squandered, and people do not become burned out.

Quality African-American administrators are particularly needed to meet the unique needs of African-American males. African-American administrators have been identified as potentially advantageous in their ability to meet the needs of African-American students due to overlap in cultural and racial backgrounds. The connection is particularly significant among African-American males. In fact, Bush and Bush (2013) have suggested a unique, comprehensive theory to address African-American men and males, African-American male theory. The theory recognizes the impact of African heritage and pre- and post-slavery experiences as having shared, significant effects on African-American males' spiritual, psychological, biological, social, and educational backgrounds and identities.

Notably, research in African-American school leadership is not necessarily gender-specific. Much academic literature on the subject address's issues impacting both male and female African-American school administrators and the experiences ascribed to them. Because of their historical oppression, African-American administrators may feel more compelled to embrace a social justice component related to their instructional leadership practices versus other administrators (Reed & Johnson, 2010). Historical

linkage to the Civil Rights movement and the social justice leanings of African-American churches play a contribution in fostering this assumption.

Still, American public schools continue to embrace mostly Eurocentric perspectives.

These perspectives leave African-American administrators torn between the perpetual decades-old paradigms that pervade public education. These perspectives also cultivate contemporary pressures to represent and serve the particular needs of African-American students, as well as the needs of other populations. In a study of aspects of African-Americans serving as school administrators, Hodges (2014) described the juxtaposition as a potential asset: "African-American school leaders' voices are privileged. European perspectives are used solely as a frame, thus moved to the margins and silenced in the field" (p. 6). However, not all researchers identify the duality as advantageous to African-American school administrators. Gooden (2012) points out that regard for the voice of African-American administrators is a twenty-first-century innovation. Gooden also notes the pressures placed on African-American administrators with heightened, and sometimes unrealistic, expectations to serve as saviors, warriors, and heroes in communities still reeling from the lasting impact of racist oppression.

In evaluating the motivation of African-American males, one must also consider the influence of administrators. Although most low student achievement results from what students may or may not be doing to help themselves academically, various adults also hold some responsibility for why students have inferior performance. Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, & Giles (2005) used a two-part framework to analyze their data, which included three core leadership practices by Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and three

principles they developed to "enable leaders to translate their core practices into school success" (607). The belief that relates to my research is the caring principle, which is interconnected with the leadership practice of developing people. The principals in the study influenced and inspired their teachers, students, and parents when they created caring relationships with them. Caring facilitated the development of people, i.e., the connections and positive relationships developed between principals and students, teachers, and parents made the latter groups want to participate more in the learning process (Jacobson et al. 2005). This connects to my research because, in many cases, African-American males have been able to thrive when they have a support system motivating them to succeed (Jacobson et al. 2005). The caring principle is fundamental when developing a system to assist at-risk African-American males.

African-American administrators play an especially important aspect in educating African-American males because African-American administrators are more likely to lead urban schools, an environment that tends to have a disproportionately high percentage of African-American students. Researchers suggest administrators of color may possess an asset in providing a culturally relevant education because they represent multicultural backgrounds. (Carter & Larke, 1995). Also, administrators of color can serve as exemplars of multicultural success as well as serve as models of multicultural leadership, even if the school the administrators serve are impoverished and underserved regarding community resources (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Often times, it is assumed that administrators of color, by their position alone, have achieved both academic and career success. African-American principals may serve as exemplars of how diverse populations

can produce high achievement, promote pride in one's own identity, and promote extrinsic and intrinsic high expectations.

As noted, there is a significant lack of research on the role African-American male administrators play in diminishing the achievement gap (Irvine & Armento, 2001). The majority of research on African-Americans in the principalship is not gender-specific. Unlike the study of the achievement gap and single-sex schools, the study of whether African-American administrator gender representation is an integral impact of the African-American male achievement may be easier to identify. African-Americans of both genders are more likely to serve the African-American male student population, which, unlike single-sex schools, provides a significant base of participants to study and compare. However, if a trend of African-American male administrators outperforming their female peers regarding African-American male student achievement were to emerge, that information would be of limited practical application as male preference in hiring practices is both unethical and illegal.

#### Roles of School Administrators as Instructional Leaders

Gulcan (2012) identified five significant roles of the school principal as instructional leader:

1. Identifying the vision and mission of the school
2. Programming and administering education
3. Staff development
4. Monitoring and assessing the teaching
5. Creating and developing a positive school climate

Several studies have confirmed that administrators—particularly, school principals—play a substantial and robust aspect in supporting instructional differentiation (Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006). Research also indicates that school administrators who are committed to transformative approaches to instructional strategies can increase student standardized test performance at the schools they serve (Day, Gu, and Sammons, 2016). Administrator investment in teacher coaching, evaluation, and developing educational programs is a reliable predictor of schoolwide positive achievement gains (Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013). Principals who focus on the improvement of select teachers with specific needs in conjunction with large scale improvement approaches can produce especially impactful changes in instructional practice (May & Supovitz, 2011). Principals also play significant roles in mentoring teachers (Johnsen et al., 2002; Tomlinson, 1995) and administering policies that promote instructional inclusion and diversity (Brighton, Hertberg, Moon, Tomlinson, & Callahan, 2005; VanTassel-Baska, Avery, Little, & Hughes, 2000). Unfortunately, despite research on the role of the principal in teaching and learning, the research has only provided vague overviews of the parts principals play in the vital role of instructional differentiation. Additionally, the current research has rarely analyzed the role of the school leader in documenting school-wide improvement in literacy differentiation, and even less exists on investigating the role school leaders play in improving literacy differentiation and outcomes for African-American males.

Current research is available that suggests the principal plays a central part in the school-wide change in general (Berends, Kirby, Naftel, & McKelvey, 2001; Manouchehri & Goodman, 1998). The principal's role as an instructional leader has recently placed



increased attention and weight on the effect that learning-centered leadership and policy can have in inciting school change and increasing student success (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2009). Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, and Porter (2006) stated that the principal's influence in implementing systems of support, focus, and leadership team communication substantially impacts school change and identified eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership:

1. Vision for learning
2. Instructional program
3. Curricular program
4. Assessment program
5. Communities of learning
6. Resource acquisition and use
7. Organizational culture
8. Social advocacy

Research reflects principals may have the effect of facilitating organized school management and communicating school vision to increase teacher instructional achievement (Lynch, Smith, Provost, & Madden, 2016). Principals play a particular contribution in how a public school's instructional effectiveness is achieved, or not achieved, via management of data-driven instructional practices (Thompson & Cook, 2014). The design of how assessment data will be used to transform instruction and achievement primarily falls on the heads of principals and the administrative team they supervise (Park & Datnow, 2009). As multiple studies indicate, non-White children are

more susceptible to being taught by underprepared teachers, making the role of principals as instructional leaders for African-American males of particular importance (Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Theorson, 2001).

Additionally, the role of administrators in recruiting, hiring, and retaining African-American men to fill educator positions is frequently noted in existing literature. As of 2010, only 2 percent of American teachers were African-American men (Bell, 2017). African-American male college students frequently cite perceiving their elementary and secondary school years' inadequacy in meeting their needs as a reason why they do not choose to become professional educators (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011). African-American principals in urban schools have repeatedly described themselves as being in the "fringe" compared to other school administrators (Gooden, 2012). Though African-American teachers' and African-American principals' respective roles in meeting the needs of African-American males are often cited in existing literature, research regarding the impact of African-American male principals' relationship with African-American male teachers are lacking and in need of further study.

Regardless of whether schools are located in an urban, suburban, or urban environment, school principals play a vital component in school performance (Cooley & Shen., 2003). Underperformance of school administrators in caring and nurturing the needs of African-American males is manifested in their roles of instructional leaders to teachers and for failing to ensure teachers are equipped with the policies, practices, and resources required to educate African-American males, as well as all other students

(Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1998). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), performing the task of managing instructional leadership, providing what teachers need to enable their students to succeed, and overseeing day-to-day school operations is challenging and may leave administrators overtaxed. Still, school leadership is an imperative cause and effect in the success of school learning (Saskin, 1998). If educating students is a true priority, schools must facilitate the principals' abilities to serve as effective instructional leaders (Saskin, 1998). Qualities needed for principals to successfully lead schools to academic success include the ability to define a clear and high-quality school vision, the ability to determine goal targets to achieve that vision (including the abilities to leverage school resources, clearly communicate goals to school staff, and enact policies that enable the school to reach its goals), and maintain and/or leverage school staff as resources to obtain and maintain access to resources needed to achieve school goals (Fullan, 2009).

Additionally, principals set the tone for school climate. Whether or not a principal maintains positive experience with students has a direct impact on student outcomes. Notably, positive experiences do not only include direct positive relationships with students, but also establishing a positive school climate and managing the school to ensure school operations run smoothly (Heck and Marcoulides, 1993)

As in other topics in the study of African-American male achievement, the impact of instructional leadership is difficult to discern from other factors. As African-American male students are more likely to attend schools with fewer resources, it may be difficult to evaluate the weight of instructional leadership versus access to resources to enable

administrators to execute instructional leadership. Additionally, the ethical and legal ramifications of gender-based hiring inhibit study of school administrators' perceptions of the impact of African-American males. This is further complicated by the fact that research frequently notes African-American males are proportionally less likely to choose a career in teaching. Those African-American males who do elect to teach are de facto unrepresentative of the general African-American male population. If possible, a study of differences between African-American male teachers and African-American men choosing other careers could be informative in studying this particular dynamic of school leadership, hiring practices and the population of teacher applicants.

#### Gender Differences and African-American Males

Mead (2006) notes that the “boy crisis” cited by many education researchers is actually only a crisis among males who are African-American, Hispanic, and/or from low-income households. Sadker and Zittleman (2005) maintain that though demographic factors including racial, ethnic, and socio-economic status are linked to achievement gaps, gender in itself creates gaps: “Girls outscore males on most standardized achievement tests, receive better report card grades, and are much less likely to be behavior problems” (p. 19). Most researchers agree that there are clear differences in how males and girls tend to learn. For this reason, some researchers have suggested single-sex schools as a viable option for increasing student achievement (Bonomo, 2012). Reichert (2015) states positive relationships between males and their teachers is a major indicator of favorable outcomes and can be particularly effective in reaching males at the bottom of the achievement gap. These positive relationships are described as cooperative

partnerships in which both teacher and student are actively engaged and invested in learning achievement.

James (2007) stated that current elementary and primary classroom structures are not suited to males' learning style. Likely due to differences in the rate of brain maturity, girls usually outperform males in reading ability during the early elementary school years (Bonomo, 2012). The biological “head start” on reading ability combined with traditional public schooling’s structure places males at a disadvantage. Males tend to respond to confrontational, direct instruction with explicitly stated reasoning (Sax, 2005). Males stay more engaged when the teacher actively and purposely moves around the classroom during instruction (Gurian & Ballew, 2003). In comparison to girls, males have a stronger preference for non-fiction, mainly non-fiction that is action-oriented (Sax, 2005). Because there is a research-based body of methods suited to males’ literacy learning styles, many researchers theorize single-sex schools are an advantageous choice (Hart, 1999; Jensen, 2005; Sax, 2005).

African-American adolescent male students face many challenges from societal expectations placed on them, social pressures from peers, and a collective struggle to close the achievement gap. With such conflicting expectations, it is not surprising that African-American males, particularly those in urban schools, struggle in their motivation to succeed academically. While many have studied the dilemma of how to improve the overall academic achievement of African-American adolescent males in urban school, my focus is to add to research on the motivation of these students. What makes some male students rise above their circumstance to attend classes, adhere to the formal rules

of the school building, and achieve academically, while many others fail to realize the importance of an education to their future success as adults.

There are success stories of certain schools nationwide that have been able to decrease the achievement gap and improve test scores for particular minority populations (Noguera, 1996; Parson & Kritsonis, 2006). Yet, the challenge remains of how to best handle the personal and academic problems that seem to constantly barrage students in urban schools. The problems these male students confront outside the classroom cannot and should not be ignored in the educational setting. African-American males may feel unmotivated to learn when they do not perceive academic success as influential in their reality outside of school. The challenge is in figuring out how administrators, in particular, can play a more instrumental piece in motivating African-American males to achieve. Administrators can help these students to follow an expected course of academic success through attendance, adherence to school policies and participation in classroom learning. However, to accomplish this, administrators must incorporate additional methods in their reform. Thus, motivating at-risk African-American males to improve their attendance, improve their behavior and increase their academic achievement are grounded in the relationship between recognition, interventions and mentoring.

Gender differences in African-American male learners overlap with the study of leadership practices. As previously noted, there is need for the study of differences among African-American males who elect to be teachers as this career choice is not indicative of the general African-American male population. Further study could determine if and whether their own schooling played a factor in their career choices and

further inform the dynamics of influences that impact African-American male schooling and achievement.

#### Economic and Educational Inequity among African-Americans

The U.S. census estimates that of the 14.5% poverty rate in the United States, African-Americans are more likely to live in poverty compared to the general population (Sauter, 2018)). African-Americans are at a poverty rate of 23% (Sauter, 2018). “African-Americans are more than twice as likely as whites or Asian Americans to live in poverty” (Sauter, 2018). African-Americans earned 66 cents for every dollar earned by Whites in 2011, and the African-American unemployment rate averaged 11.6% between 1963 and 2012, more recently data showed that one in eight Americans are African-American, but African-Americans are more than one-fourth of the nation’s poor population (Sauter, 2018; Fletcher, 2013). Using the methodological and analytical framework of critical race theory, Horsford (2010) explained:

“The adverse impacts of school desegregation on African-American families, educators, and communities in the US are now well documented in education research. Educators, legal scholars, and historians have countered the narratives that portray the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 as the great equalizer in public education and offered extensive examples of how the *Brown* decision was a noteworthy but empty promise of educational equality and integration (p. 58).”

*Brown* versus the Board of Education, dubbed as the “great equalizer” in public education, failed in its assumed promises of desegregation and equality as African-

American students continue to be served by inferior schools. Not long after the Brown decision, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. also voiced concern that the decision would not be as impactful—at least, not in the immediate future—as the actual language of the decision might suggest. In his 1956 “Desegregation and the Future” speech before the National Committee for Rural Schools, King advised the audience to be cautious and remain vigilant as the Brown decision was not an instant cure for the inequities of American education as cited in Orfield & Lee (2004) :

But even if it had been possible to provide the Negro with equal facilities in terms of external construction and quantitative distribution, we would have still confronted inequality....in the sense that they would not have had the opportunity of communicating with all children. You see, equality is not only a matter of mathematics and geometry, but it's a matter of psychology....The doctrine of separate but equal can never be....(Orfield & Lee, 2004, p.5).

King’s concerns were not eased during the decade to come. Ten days before his assassination, during one of his last public appearances, King noted the persisting duality and inequity between African-American and White lives, including the remaining differences in quality in African-American and White schooling and housing. (Orfield and Lee, 2004, p.3).”

In *Learning in a Burning House: Educational Inequality, Ideology, and (Dis)integration*, Horsford (2011) cited lack of resources, including lack of access to quality teachers, as one of the several disadvantages African-American students encounter in public schools. Other obstacles cited by Horsford included,



“overrepresentation in special education, increased likelihood of being perceived as discipline problems, increased probability of being placed in low-track courses, and increased risk of failing to graduate” (2011, p. 17).

Haberman (1991) described the pedagogy of poverty as a potential explanation for performance deficits among poor students and characterized it as "routine teaching that includes the acts of giving information, asking questions, giving directions, giving assignments, monitoring classroom work, reviewing assignments, giving tests, reviewing tests, assigning homework, reviewing homework, settling disputes, punishing noncompliance, marking papers, and giving grades" (p. 291). He identified four syllogisms (deductive arguments) to support the pedagogy of poverty, concluding:

(a) Students and teachers are engaged in different activities; (b) When students follow teachers' directions, appropriate behavior is being taught and learned; (c) some sort of ranking is inevitable so some students will be at the bottom of the class while others are at the top; (d) directive pedagogy must be used to ensure youngsters are motivated to learn basic skills (p. 291).

Haberman concluded that the pedagogy of poverty does not work as students do not attain the required skills needed for success. Bush and Bush (2013) have suggested, in lieu of poverty-based lenses, framing educating African-American males through the perspectives of current political and sociological movements. Through this perspective, the authors contend, attention will be better paid to issues of “sex-role development, masculinities, and specifically male experiences” (p. 2).

Additionally, the teacher-centered classroom atmosphere creates resentment that leads to disengagement and behavior problems for students and frustration for teachers. The pedagogy of poverty may have a lasting negative influence on not only the student as an individual, but on the society as a whole (Haberman, 1991). Contemporary regard and addressment of the need for increased attention to the needs of African-American males in society and public education were communicated in President Barack Obama's presidency. On January 28, 2014, President Barack Obama highlighted this area of need in his State of the Union Address. "I'm reaching out to some of America's leading foundations and corporations on a new initiative to help more young men of color facing especially tough odds stay on track and reach their full potential," President Obama said while explaining his agenda to provide education initiatives that provide all young people with the opportunity to succeed in the workforce (President, 2014). Research indicates that efforts to support workplace readiness among African-American males are long overdue. According to a recent report by the Center for Law and Social Policy, 20 percent of African-American males ages 16-19 were employed in 2013, down from 31.4 percent in 1972. Just over half of African-American males ages 20-24 were employed in 2013, dropping 23 percent since 1972 (Bird, 2013). Problems in educating African-American males preface their employment woes. These problems present themselves at the K-12 level in areas directly related to classroom management and instruction, including high incidences of behavior problems, dropout rates, and expulsion rates, and low grades and test scores versus the general population (Gewertz, 2007).

Hargreaves and Harris (2015) note instructional leaders in socio-economically deprived environments face an added area of assessment from principals in schools located in more affluent neighborhoods: the assessment of contextual performance. Contextual performance is the assessment of whether the school leader can prompt student success, including school turnaround, despite lack of resources—especially compared to schools experiencing a similar lack of resources. Caines and Engelhard (2012) state that lack of resources likely factors into African-American test takers’ underperformance compared to their White counterparts, alongside possible biases in the test itself, and perhaps even designating pass “cut scores” that label schools with significant African-American populations as underperforming while failing to factor achievement aligned to access to quality education.

There is clear overlap in the study of socio-economic factors in African-American male achievement and other factors of influence. In research, poverty has repeatedly been attached to student underperformance regardless of race. This calls into question whether decreasing the achievement gap among African-American males is so much a matter of schooling as it is a matter of socio-economics as a whole. Also, African-American males are more likely to attend schools with fewer resources, and research on instructional leadership points to the need for the ability of school leaders to access resources. Synthesizing these areas of academic literature suggests that decreasing the African-American male achievement gap maybe tied to increased economic equity among American schools.

## The Impact of Culture and Perception on African-American Students

In *It's Not 'A Black Thing': Understanding the Burden of Acting White and Other Dilemmas of High Achievement*, it is theorized that African-Americans may disparage high academic achievement because it is considered pretentious (Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). The idea of the burden of “acting white” had previously emerged in Cookson and Hodges’ 1991 study of African-American male experiences at an elite prep school. The authors argued that African-American students at prep schools are caught between two cultures and doubly marginalized, causing emotional and practical difficulties. The “burden of acting white” is met with the “the burden of acting upper class” in many instances. The clash of academic success against the desire to conform to what may be perceived as cultural norms is also identified by Ferguson (2007). Ferguson explained that though youth value academic achievement, they also value peer acceptance, and the desire for social acceptance can reduce student commitment to excellence. In the general literature on academic achievement of African-Americans, perceptions of academic aptitude and identifying as a “good student” are continually points of concern as researchers try to identify factors which account for academic motivation and which separate school success from school failure. (DeSantis, Ketterlinus, & Youniss, 1990). Ogbu (2004) contended that African-Americans in contemporary society respond to the pressure to assimilate to “White Americans and their institutions” (p. 228) in varied ways. According to Ogbu, some African-American parents send their children to private schools so their children can learn to “talk White.” Others deny

engaging in African-American cultural and dialect frames of reference in professional and academic settings.

In *Transforming High Schools*, Noguera (2004) cited “anti-intellectual peer climates” as undermining efforts to raise academic achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Steinberg, 1996). Stereotyping African-Americans as anti-academic may also be perpetuated from outside the African-American community. Stinson (2006) discussed the discourse of deficiency as the shared belief among educators that African-American male students are incapable of attaining schools' predetermined goals because they lack the behavioral and social skills and life experiences to be academically successful.

While there is a limited amount of research on high-achieving African-American students related to what services are needed to help them reach their potential, there is strong evidence that indicates mentoring is extremely important. Research by Freeman (1999) indicates that students perceive a good mentor to be one who provides “trust and encouragement”, “causes you to think bigger”, and is “like a second mom or dad” (p. 22). Mentoring for African-American males could provide these students with additional support both academically and personally, perhaps helping to fill in a gap in their home life. Also, mentors could provide additional accountability and role modeling to students who may not have positive examples of educated adults in their lives.

Intervention programs can be instrumental in changing the behavior of African-American males when the programs deal with comprehensive issues. Martin, Martin, Gibson, & Wilkins (2007) assessed how effectiveness of after-school programs during a two-year period to improve behavioral issues among African-American males and the

effect it had on their grade level achievement. The intervention program included tutoring, individual and group counseling, social skills training, cultural and recreational activities, and nutrition. The results showed that there was an improvement in attendance, fewer discipline referrals, and no suspensions or expulsions with at least a two-grade increase in basic skills. This study indicated comprehensive afterschool intervention programs can be effective in increasing student achievement and in decreasing negative behavior among African-American adolescent male students.

In dealing with behavioral issues, many schools use suspensions and expulsions as means to handle continuous disruptive behavior in the school building. Consequently, many African-American males are recognized for their disruptive behavior rather than their potential to contribute to classroom learning. Mendez & Knoff (2003) examined out-of-school suspensions in a large school district according to gender, race, school level and infraction type. The purpose was to see what types of infractions resulted in suspension for students of various demographic groups and how suspension rates varied across gender and racial groups. They found that African-American males were suspended the most across all racial groups and infraction types.

However, the problem does not just lie in the number of suspensions given, but one must evaluate how the suspensions affect the psyche of those receiving them. In contrast to consequences, suspensions are given to punish an already-committed, inappropriate act or behavior and rarely have a functional or instructive connection to the offense. Repeated suspensions have been linked to a variety of negative outcomes for students, including academic failure; negative school attitudes, grade retention, and

increased school dropout rates. The goal in understanding the implications of the data in this study is so school leaders will be able to develop and execute more positive and effective school wide behavioral support systems to decrease suspensions significantly. Unfortunately, suspensions are used more as a strategic intervention than as a last, reactive option. The widespread use of suspensions can and most likely does discourage male students from working toward academic success. Excessive suspensions present school administrators as one more barrier in these students' lives (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019).

As in other areas of literature related to African-American male achievement, it is difficult to discern the degree of impact culture has on achievement. It is also difficult to discern how culture relates to socio-economic status, the impact of African-American male teachers and administrators, and response to instructional leadership methods and models. There is definitely a "chicken or egg" nature to culture's role, of whether culture is the cause or result of other factors. Research on culture frequently points to institutionalized racism and socio-economic inequity as causes of negative and/or self-deprecating aspects of African-American male culture. However, these arguments are frequently made through the use of critical race theory as a framework and not so much as a topic of study itself.

#### Theory in African-American Schooling Practice

Research on African-American schooling frequently attempts to describe the African-American student experience, identify categories and differences among student experiences, and put theory into practice to examine to what degree education practice

initiatives can improve student outcomes. For example, Herbert and Reis studied a culturally diverse group of high-achieving students from an urban high school who experienced circumstances inside and outside of school that would be classified as inhibiting to academic achievement. The student participants were successful despite the negative aspects of their urban environments. The author identified factors that made these students successful: belief in self, supportive family members and adults, network of high-achieving peers, extracurricular activities, challenging classes, and personal characteristics like motivation and resilience. They argued their study justified why urban high schools should provide enrichment and extracurricular activities and advanced placement and honors courses.

Weber (1993) argues that alternative schooling methods should be sought for children in failing schools, including the use of various styles of pedagogy. The continuing problem in single-sex schools research, according to the author, is deciphering whether these schools improve student outcomes because of gender or due to other factors at the school. Subsequently, researchers have continued studying the impact of single-sex schooling and its relation to improving outcomes for at-risk populations. Herr and Arms (2004) studied the impact of implementing single-sex classes in a public-school setting. The authors did an ethnographic study that illustrates how accountability measures negatively influenced the implementation of gender equity reform at one California public middle school serving low-income students of color. The Single Sex Academy, a collection of single-sex classes throughout the school, became the largest public-school experiment with single-sex schooling in the U.S. However, pressure to



raise its standardized test scores diverted the school administration's attention away from the exploration and implementation of gender reform. The Single Sex Academy was a product of the then newly issued No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and its call to relax Title IX standards, increase the numbers of public single-sex classes and schools, and its requirement of accountability standards and testing. In a related study, Hubbard and Datnow (2005) completed a two-year ethnographic study of low-income and minority students who attended experimental single-sex schools in California. Their thesis is that single-sex schools are successful in providing a system of social supports that address the pressing needs of the students. Their findings show that the success of these schools was due to interrelated school organizational characteristics, positive teacher-student relationships, and additional funding these schools received.

In an extensive test of Ogbu's oppositional culture theory, a theory frequently cited in discussions on the achievement gap, Harris (2006) tested the proposition that African-Americans resist school more than Whites, and that this difference increases with age. Analyses were conducted across 24 outcomes and revealed two major findings related to race and school achievement. First, the five major tenets of the theory were not supported, which challenges the existence of a prevalent oppositional culture among African-Americans. Second, there was minimal impact on White-African-American differences on the outcomes after grade 7.

Morris (2004) argued that all-African-American schools can be as successful as they were under segregation if the same factors supporting the school and its students were put in place. The author, in response to the lack of studies focused on successful

African-American schools, investigated two predominantly African-American elementary schools in low-income communities that are well-known for successfully educating their students. His research tries to answer the question: Does anything good come from urban African-American schools or from the communities where they are located, the research determined that yes good can be found. Morris (2004) identified that the legacy of African-American culture can be a strength needed for children because culture can propel them to have a stronger desire to reach their goals and be praised by their community.

Scott, Allen, and Lewis (2013) provided a broad review of the ways schools of choice can advance the academic outcomes for its students through charters, college preparatory programs, and single-sex models. They discuss how three school models have demonstrated success and common programs. Of special relevance is their study of Urban Prep Academy in Chicago, Illinois as an example of a single-sex, college prep charter school model with successful student outcomes for its mostly African-American male student population.

Stinson (2006) applied a theoretical approach to analyzing African-American schooling practices. In his review of important historical and current theoretical perspectives regarding the schooling experiences of African-American students, especially males, Stinson organized around three discourse clusters: the discourse of deficiency, the discourse of rejection and the discourse of achievement. The author suggested researchers move from the discourses of deficiency and rejection to one of achievement when developing educational theories and classroom policies in an effort to

eradicate the achievement gap. His work documents the African-American male students' perspective of those who were successful in school mathematics and discussed the sociocultural factors that affected their schooling and math experiences. Stinson's arguments explore and explain theories regarding African-Americans and math achievement within the framework of the discourses of deficiency, rejection and achievement, and provide a basis for why single-sex schools for African-American males could help change the attitudes and behaviors associated with many of the theories posed and evaluated.

In addition to examining broad trends among African-American students, researchers have also attempted to study intrinsic factors that make African-American students successful. Somers, Owens, and Piliawsky (2008) studied five sources of student social support and six educational attitudes and behaviors, finding that educational intentions and personal persistence were the strongest contributors to proportion of variance in achievement. The limitations were the small sample size, GPA was the only means of academic measurement, and the absence of cross-cultural research to see if student outcomes were specific to African-American urban student populations. African-American students in the United States are frequently targeted as a subgroup in the "Achievement Gap." A National Assessment of Educational Progress report indicated that though African-American students in grades 4-8 showed significant score gains in mathematics and reading between 1990 and 2007, scores still lagged behind White students, with achievement gaps existing in all 46 states for which math data were

available and all 44 students for which reading data were available (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin-Anderson, & Rahman, 2009).

Researchers have also explored the impact of supplemental programs outside the traditional classroom setting. Holland (1996) studied a mentoring and academic support program model for African-American males that relied on male role models from the community to teach or tutor African-American male elementary students. This community-based program provided adult male role models for African-American male students and offered assistance with academic subjects, comradery, and guidance. The primary goal was to provide African-American elementary school males with stable, positive African-American role models that they would otherwise not have the opportunity to interact with at home or in their communities. This program has been successful in improving students' socialization and academic performance.

In order to meet the needs of African-American students and other at-risk populations, contemporary public schools in the United States frequently refer to preparing students to be globally competitive as an institutional aim (Miller, 2010). In order to complete this goal, research indicates that reaching the needs of all learners is a necessity (Miller, 2010). Miller (2010) calls for more teacher training to meet students' diverse needs, particularly the needs of English language learners. According to Miller's survey of new teachers, only 39 percent felt they were prepared to respond to the needs of an ethnically diverse classroom.

A contemporary schooling practice frequently used to improve outcomes for African-American males and other student populations considered part of the

achievement gap is cultural proficiency training. Cultural proficiency is the condition of an individual and/or institution being adequately equipped to meet the cultural needs of the clientele served (Colombo, 2007). The call for cultural proficiency is rooted in the achievement gap, the perceived gap in academic achievement and outcomes identified in student subgroups. It is assumed that meeting the cultural needs of these subgroups, particularly African-American students, may decrease the achievement gap.

Problematically, the definition of “cultural proficiency” and how to train teachers to adopt this attitude-and whether the attitude can even be adopted through training-is unproven. Existing methodology on training teachers to be culturally proficient includes cultural sensitivity training, methods of accommodating needs for students who are not proficient in English and building connections to students and their families (Dillon, 2007). Cultural proficiency training for students with disabilities may target accommodating and improving school staff understanding, decreasing bias regarding linguistic differences during instruction and instituting culturally sensitive methods of teaching student’s behavior management.

The call for cultural competence in schools is not limited to training for improved instruction. A study by Annandale, Allen-Heath, Dean, Kemple, and Takino (2011) concludes that cultural proficiency training is needed to prepare school crisis plans. Sue and Sue (2007) explained individual participant responses in crises situations are, in part, culturally-based. As African-American students are more likely to live in crime-heavy populations such as lower-economic scale urban communities, cultural competence regarding emergency situations is relevant to not only African-American schooling, but

responses to community-based occurrences as well. Annandale et al. (2011) stress the importance of providing signage for emergency response as a means of accommodating diverse communities, but stress that the need for cultural proficiency in school crises management goes beyond signage. Training on cultural differences to the psychological impact of crises and how to respond to mental health needs following significant crises is required for optimal outcomes and minimization of survivor trauma. Cultural proficiency training is also recommended for non-instructional staff providing student services. Armour, Bain, and Rubio (2004) suggest those providing the training be social workers experienced in working with a diverse community of clientele to prepare them for meeting the needs of culturally diverse student populations. Harmon, Kasa-Hendrickson, and Neal (2009) perceive cultural proficiency training in a more staff-centered light, with the assumption that lack of cultural proficiency is causing staff to be less responsive to their student needs, thus impacting the quality of services provided. It is argued that teachers of culturally diverse students would be more effective if trained on methods of culturally sensitive classroom management and response to support needs.

Cultural proficiency training may not only equip staff to best meet the needs of culturally diverse students in crises situations but may also prevent culturally diverse students from being misplaced into special education programs in the first place. As African-American students, particularly African-American males, are disproportionately prone to be placed in special education programs, cultural proficiency training can be instrumental in decreasing such placements by training school staff to differentiate true signs of disability from cultural differences. Vincent, Sprague, and Tobin (2012)

completed a statistical analysis of data across schools for an unidentified northwestern state. The data revealed that students identified African-American, Native American, and/or Hispanic were disproportionately identified as having a learning disability. Secondly, the data revealed those students were disproportionately likely to be disciplined, particularly discipline that resulted in being removed from class and hence missing instructional time, for behavior relating to not following rules. Increased time out of school due to disciplinary infractions is one of the reasons cited for the underachievement of African-American males in public schools. Hence, cultural proficiency could support decreased disciplinary responses resulting in placement out of school for African-American males, therefore producing increased time participating in instruction. Bottiani, Bradshaw, Rosenberg, Hershfeldt, Pell, and Dednam (2012) suggest training staff on a culturally proficient response-to-intervention model to both provide the most effective instruction and to provide students with the highest amount of instructional time possible. This training model includes teaching staff cultural sensitivity and methods of building staff-student relationships.

What makes this possibility particularly significant is that research indicates cultural proficiency training may have a lifelong impact on student outcomes, particularly considering that African-Americans and Native Americans have the highest rates of disability (Taylor-Ritzler, Balcazar, Dimpfl, Suarez-Balcazar, Willis, & Schiff, 2008). Taylor-Ritzler et al. define cultural proficiency as “individual examination of personal biases, increased knowledge of the factors that impact cultural diversity, skills and practice,” and add that institutional commitment to cultural proficiency is essential to

achieving optimal individual outcomes regarding individuals achieving the aims of cultural proficiency. Taylor-Ritzler et al. point out that it can be difficult to distinguish outcomes of cultural proficiency training as attitudes/states of individuals before cultural proficiency training are frequently ill-defined or not defined at all. This lack of definition indicates the criteria for analyzing a student's disability status is highly subjective and prone to the influence of cultural bias and, as a worst-case scenario, opens the door to overt individual and institutional racism.

Still, research calls for cultural proficiency training as a means of responding to the needs of culturally diverse students with disabilities. As African-American males are disproportionately likely to be identified as having a disability, this means that African-American students erroneously identified as in need of special education services may benefit from staff cultural proficiency training. Cartledge et al. (2008) call for more training on culturally sensitive methods of teaching students with disabilities behavior management techniques, stating that students improving their own behavior management will result in increased classroom time and, hence, improved academic outcomes. Additionally, as African-American males are sometimes perceived to be more aggressive or "dangerous" than their White counterparts, they have been statistically subject to a disproportionately high rate of disciplinary consequences, including suspension and expulsion, compared to White male peers. Though the racism-tinged implications behind this trend are unjust, focusing on improving behavior management for African males, as with all students, may decrease disciplinary responses and increase time exposed to instruction. Exposure to increased time in class cannot be underestimated as a means of



improving multiple aspects of the African-American male achievement gap, as increased time exposed to instruction would likely result in increased buy-in to learning, improved secondary school success, improved attendance, improved test scores, and increased participation in post-secondary learning opportunities including increased completion of college degrees.

As is the case in the study of African-American male culture, the study of African-American male schooling is frequently framed in critical race theory. There is also emphasis on quantitative studies similar to those frequently cited in socio-economic studies, particularly regarding evaluation of data on discipline issues and school response, test scores, and degree completion. The issue of African-American male schooling is arguably the most difficult to break apart as it umbrellas a wide range of factors identified in other areas of study, such as access to resources, instructional leadership, and cultural proficiency. The study of whether cultural proficiency training can be used to offset problems within the factors that diminish African-American male achievement is still in its infancy.

## Summary

Prior and current research has shown that African American male principals are lacking in schools (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007). It is extremely important for African American students to see African American males in leadership positions. Students, especially male students, should see themselves in those who lead them. Research has shown that in terms of leadership, although not in high numbers, African American women are more likely than African-American men to be principals and placed

in urban schools that are high need with a larger number of African American students (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Understanding the history of African American males as principals is important to the future of African American male students.

As illustrated in this literature review, the impact of culture and perception on African-American students, and the nature of single gender schools, affects their achievement and thus effects the achievement gap (Braun, Chapman, & Vezzu, 2010; Hanselman, Bruch, Gamoran, & Borman, 2014; Ikpa, 2004; Rowley & Wright, 2011). Concerning achievement, the principal does not necessarily assume that every reason for achievement delays is the fault of the principal(s). Literature indicates that relationship values can be a cause of outcomes of student success as it relates to academic achievement (Stinson, 2006). The low achievement of African-American males can increase and be impactful if approached and guided by a formulation of intervention strategies (Noguera, 2006). The literature outlines factors that contribute to success and failures of the African-American male, and the need for more of an African-American male presence in all male schools (Chadwell, 2002). Studies have shown that single gender schools' instruction to be negative in impact during shorter terms of enrollment (Dwarte, 2014). Berry (2005) noted that same sex schools that have common gender and racial outlines prove to have a higher lasting efficiency. Literature further indicated that the race of the school administrators give rise to both a positive and negative relational value in student success (Hargreaves & Harris, 2015). This was derived from training and development of success, sustainability, community, and determination (Hargreaves & Harris, 2015).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Method**

This chapter presents the details and rationale for the research design utilized for this study. The study examined the impact of the relationship between the African-American Principal and African-American male students in all-male schools using a case study design. To examine that relationship, one must examine the dynamics, interference, and relationships that come between them. The study used a qualitative case study methodology. The study utilized multiple data sources that included interviews, observations, and student data. The research approach, method, data collection, research sample, and data analysis processes used in the study are addressed in this chapter.

Smythe and Giddings (2007) contended, "Qualitative research always seeks to find the issue or concern in its everyday context and utilizing interviews, observations, and additional data sources to hear the voices of those involved" (p. 37). Through addressing the research question via principal interviews, observations, and additional data sources, I gathered input on the African-American male education experience from both administrator and student experiences. I used NVivo coding, that would investigate and address the how and why of the research question. I understand that further investigation is needed to identify if a phenomenon exists fully. However, the research question helped me understand the situations that expand the understanding of leadership impact and relationships matters between the African-American Principal and the African-American male student achievement.

## Participants and Setting

Case studies commonly involve discriminating the various perspectives of myself, the case, the participant, and others, which may or may not converge (Yin, 1994). The participants of the case study were two male principals, coupled with interviews, observations, and student data sources. Patton (1990) stated that qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples, even single cases" (p 169). The participants for the study were chosen through "purposive" sampling due to the need for obtaining the most information from a school with which I am not affiliated. Patton (1990) further identified that " purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" (p. 169). For the sake of confidentiality, both the schools will be identified by school (a) and school (b). For the purpose of this case study, I selected two accessible urban schools, located in two different school districts. School (a) and (b) house all male students with the largest population of students being African-American. African-American male principals lead school (a) and (b). Students' race and demographics vary geographically within the two schools.

The participants were selected by completing research on schools that were all male in urban areas. The compilation of schools was then narrowed down by principal ethnicity. Upon compiling a list of schools, I made a phone call to two schools to speak with the principals. During separate telephone discussion(s), I informed the two principals of the study. The principals agreed to participate, and permission was requested through the telephone. Later, a face to face meeting was completed and in which the principals signed permission forms agreeing to participate in the study.

Principals of school (a) and (b) are both African-American males and have received both bachelor's and master's degrees.

### Demographics

The settings for the interviews included two schools located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the country; school (a) private school and school (b) charter school. The population of students served in both schools is all male. The population of students consists of general education and special education students.

School (a). School (a) is a private school that serves students from kindergarten through grade six. School (a) houses 100% African-American male students. School (a) is located in an urban area within the Mid-Atlantic region. The school employs a staff of about 20 teachers. School (a) was created in response to data indicating that the majority of males living in the community surrounding the school were performing below grade level in reading, writing, and math. Males living in this area are almost three times more likely to face school suspension than females (Loveless, 2017). According to school (a)'s goal statement, it is the vision to alleviate potential behavior and academic problems by targeting the needs of African-American males. School (a) is designed as a response to the problems "males from low-income urban families" face, including but not limited to high dropout rates, disproportionate representation in special education programs, declining college enrollment, and an increased presence in the criminal justice system. School (a) plans to expand increasing capacity to 160 students in grades K-8 in the 2020-21 school year; the school has added a grade each year since its implementation in 2008,

and though initially intended to offer its full range of grade offerings in the fall of 2019-20, during the 2018-19 school year, the school was only resourced to serve grades K-6.

School (b). School (b) is a charter school that houses Grade 4 through 8. School (b) houses over 97 % of African-American male students. School (b) vision is that every boy attending the school will become as simple? and powerfully equipped as David. School (b) will help the male students develop five virtues: Integrity, Wisdom, Courage, Compassion, and Resilience that will unlock their path to success in life. School (b) is a school designed exclusively for a continuous academic program. School (b) is inspired, developed, and organized by the Board of Trustees of a non-profit educational institution committed to transforming a generation of males and young men in urban cities with world-class educational opportunities. School (b) has a plan to expand in both directions. In the fall of the year 2020, the School (b) will expand to grades 9-12. School (b) is adding lower grades one year at a time starting at grade 3 and ending at Pre-K (Our Impact, 2017).

#### Researcher Identity

Maxwell (2013) defines this as "the selection of data that fit the researcher's existing theory, goals, or preconceptions, and the selection of data that "stand out" to the researcher" as a bias (p. 126). The theories or the pretenses of one's value cannot be eliminated as researchers? (Maxwell, 2013). According to Maxwell (2103), subjectivity is needed to reduce the appearance of bias (Maxwell, 2013). As the researcher, I am an African-American male, I am a college graduate, and I work as an assistant principal in a school system that is not the same as the research participants. I do not have any male

children, and the school in which I work is 89% African-American. Among my school's student demographics female gender students hold the highest percentages of the African-American population. My professional experiences as a school administrator have shown me the importance of taking the time to learn your student base. When you take the time to get to know your staff and students, you can build the necessary rapport to increase student engagement. It has further shown me that honest conversations about improvements can sustain relationships. My personal experience as an African-American male has shown when teachers share a common attribute, such as race, achievement becomes more attainable. Sharing the same race makes African-American male students more comfortable and more likely to strive to reach the highest possible goals because that is how I felt when I was in grade school.

There are no relational or familial connections between the participants and me. Understanding my background as the researcher gives greater context to how I dealt with biases elimination during the study. Issues that needed to be looked at during the study included reactivity to some of the material. As a researcher, I do not have control over the participants in the study. One of the largest issues is that the researcher has no control over aspects of the study. In particular, the researcher can only work with the participants as available; as it stands, there is a lack of African-American principals, because school systems have a small number of them currently serving in schools (Amber, 2018). To eliminate the appearance of any bias that could be represented from me as the researcher, I transcribed the interviews verbatim. The principals in the study gave their consent for data collection (interviews and observations). The interviews and observations were

collected, and the data were transcribed. The principals were able to review the transcribed data before the analysis occurred in NVivo to make sure that their words were recorded accurately. Once the participants were allowed to verify and found no errors in the transcription, the data were then analyzed. The participants did not indicate that any correction(s) were needed. The participants assisted to eliminate researcher bias by a) making sure that the composite picture of all informational sources was accurate, and b) ensuring that the picture painted of the strengths and needs of the school was captured in the overall study.

### Research Design

A case study method captured the experiences of the African-American male principal that enhance student achievement, relationships, and stakeholder confidence. participants of the case study were two male principals. Patton (1990) stated that qualitative inquiry typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples, even single cases" (p 169). The case study methodology that was used to explore the research question was through qualitative measures (Yin, 2015). Yin (1994) identified that the case study method "is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context." Furthermore, the case study method offers a conceptual framework for obtaining and analyzing data from multiple sources with real-life context (Yin, 2003, p. 14). As such, the case study is defined by the interest in individual cases, which are the object of the research (Stake, 2005). The case study included two principals of all-male schools in the Mid-Atlantic region with the same context for the collection of data from multiple sources. Although no systematic coding has been identified for case study



designs, the design is likened to how, why, and what questions seen in qualitative studies (Yin, 2018).

According to Baxter and Jack (2008), qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. The case study characterized a series of events and analyzed the data for coding. The case study data (qualitative) used personal information in the details to obtain relationship information (Yin, 2018). The construction of verbal descriptions with categorized behaviors and or experiences provided a high level of detail that gave new insight into a phenomenon. The descriptions detailed experiences, processes, and perceptions which had not yet previously been suspected. Case studies are conducted to capture the phenomenon in specific places or at specific times (Dresch et al., 2014).

The study looked for an impact on overall student achievement, which included personal dimensions, social dimensions, economic dimensions, in conjunction with academic dimensions. The assessment of the impact of the principal further included the effect of the principal's leadership behaviors on the relationship between the principals and the African-American students. In order to examine that relationship, one must examine the dynamics, interference, and dealings that come between the two. The analysis does not focus primarily on the principals, but the relationships that inform a wider perspective of the impact which supports the methodological approach and data from interviews, observations, and additional data sources (student grades, test scores, video, etc.) collected.

## Ethics

I established standards within the study that ensured trustworthiness of data and safety of the participants. The use of semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, informal observations and student data analysis (both teacher and school data) allowed me to collect the data in an efficient manner for analysis. The questions used in the interview protocol were my original creation guided by best practice in case study research methods and guided by the problem, purpose and the review of literature. High levels of confidentiality were followed; I will keep all data secured for five years and the documents will be destroyed via shredding; all recordings will immediately be deleted following the study. I also allowed the participants to review their answers obtained from the interview before transcribing the interview data. Demographic data were taken indicating gender, age, race/ethnicity, years in a senior leadership position, and type of position in the organization. In addition, each interview was audio recorded for accuracy and interview notes were preserved for review and data analysis (Yin, 2009).

## Data Collection Instruments

This case study explored the impact of relationships. Qualitative data consisting of interview responses, observations of principals, student grades, test scores, anecdotal teacher notes, and student demographics were collected from the September 2017 to March 2018. Interviews and observations were completed in the same day, during the observations I was allowed access to review student data as indicated above. All interactions occurred in the participants school. The data was collected so that a full picture could be painted of the participants, their student demographic and an overall

comprehensive assessment of the schools, its triumphs and needs. This data is important in a qualitative study so that the details can be conveyed in way that the researcher and the audience can understand the importance of the study and the impact of the study. The instrument used in the study was a qualitative interview. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions to allow the participants to share their beliefs, practices, relationship values, and overall experience without prompting responses. This study included interviewing the principal of each school and additional visitation for a period of three concurrent months and three interviews. Follow-up interview questions were also presented to assist with more data to answer the research question. Follow-up interview questions were formatted as the interview questions but worded differently to gather more information from the participants. Three principals not associated with the study reviewed the interview questions to provide feedback and additional questions that may or may not be needed (Merriam, 1998).

### Interview Questions

Qualitative studies are commonly based on open-ended interviews. A body of study data can be built on brief but frequent interviews (Yin, 2016). The following interview tool was used to collect data on the principal's experiences and perceptions in relation to the study's purpose. During interviews, follow up questions were used to allow the principals to elaborate on questions that did not provide a high level of clarity. This also provided the interviewer with a broader understanding of the participants and their personalities and behaviors as it relates to their principal position. Related interview questions were used to additionally collect data to expand the experiences further while

exploring the participants' feelings and responses to African-American student achievement (Stake, 1995). Below you will find the interview questions used to answer the research question:

Table 1: *Interview Questions*

Interview Questions
1. Describe any steps you have taken to recruit and/or hire African-American male teachers.
2. Describe the professional development you have offered to suit the needs of African-American males.
3. Should there be a specific pathway distinct from the public school "norm" for educating Black males?
4. What factors compose a high-quality education for African-American males?
5. How do learning opportunities differ for African-American males versus other populations?
6. Is there a need for more African-American males in the principalship and teaching? If so, what benefits would be derived?
7. What is the principal's role in promoting the achievement of high academic expectations?
8. In your role as a school leader, how do you account for discipline program structures for African-American males?

9. Is there a distinct relationship that occurs between African-American male principals and African-American male students? Can you provide examples?

10. Why do you believe African-American males statistically underperform on standardized test assessments?

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### Observations

The two principals, as participants, were interviewed. Secondly, the principals were observed. Observations were conducted with each interview in the principal's instructional capacity with teachers and students. The interviews were for approximately fort-five minutes each with a twenty to thirty minute observation period. The interview period and observation were no more than one hour and a half per school visit which consisted of a total of three interviews and three observations. The observations were for a 45-minute period within the school building. The observations of principals were primarily conducted in classroom settings. This allowed for further data to be obtained and to further gauge the interactions and to observe any leadership characteristics and relationship norms that would be useful for understanding the dynamics between the principal and the students. Lastly, I reviewed all applicable data before processing the results of the case study. Observations were conducted weekly at the sites. The classrooms where the principals would allow me to observe were not disclosed to me until I arrived on site. I used open notes to collect all observable data without boundaries.

## Design and Procedure

The study used a qualitative case study methodology. The design of the study followed a plan to indicate the case study, design plan in preparation for the data, collect the data, relate the data to the design, and analyze the data with qualitative methods. Data were collected at the school sites over a three day period in May. Follow up interviews increased the impact of obtaining additional information on principal leadership behaviors that impact African-American male student achievement. Principals were provided with a transcribed copy of the interview and a summary of the coding. Yin (1994) identified that the case study method "is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 1). The NVivo coding used, helped to investigate and address the how and why of the research question and summarized against the eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership. Combining the methods with the impact of leadership dimensions highlighted the analysis of the African-American male principal interactions and relationships as a direct result of leadership behaviors as they lead all-male African-American male students.

## Data Analysis

A qualitative method format in research design allows for "evaluating, interpreting, and explaining social phenomena" (QSR International, n.d.). The larger drawback of qualitative research is that it is not statistically represented; therefore, analyzing can be limited to the opinion and interpretation of the researcher. One other large risk is the instrument used (interview questions) can be seen as regarded with little meaning (Maxwell, 2005). By infusing an umbrella of contextual reference of leadership

behaviors that are regarded as effective, various perspectives are highlighted through analyzing the impact of African-American male principals. Each identified coded experience addressed specific areas related to the interview questions, which addressed high levels of credibility and rigor in answering the research question. Glesne (2011) admonishes the researcher to address any appearance of their own personal bias, to ensure the reliability of the study. The researcher's identity addresses authenticity, which refers to a reflexive awareness of the researcher and personal bias (Glesne, 2011).

Technology is frequently used to track data collection in education research (Merriam, 1998). The study used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software. The collection of data imported into the software consisted of five interviews and three observations. NVivo coding captured the essence of the imported data (Interviews and observations), gathered the references for the themes (the term experiences will be used to identify themes in chapter 4), and lastly, horizontal reconstructive analysis. Coding does not necessitate finding meaning in every piece of interview data reflecting on select components for patterns of repeated occurrences. The NVivo QDA coding includes the following: exploring, coding, query, reflecting, visualizing, and memos (see figure below).

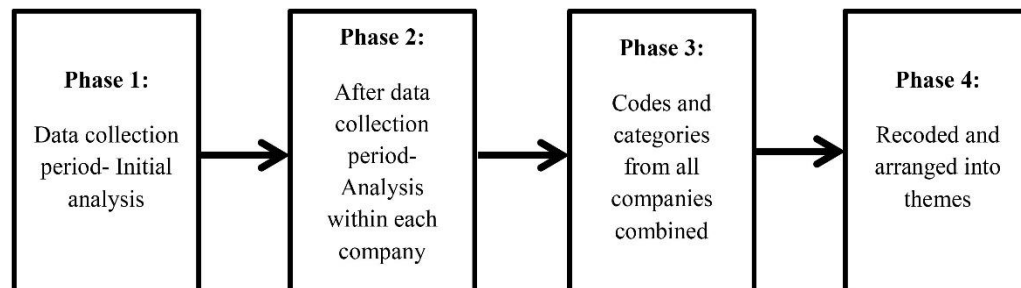
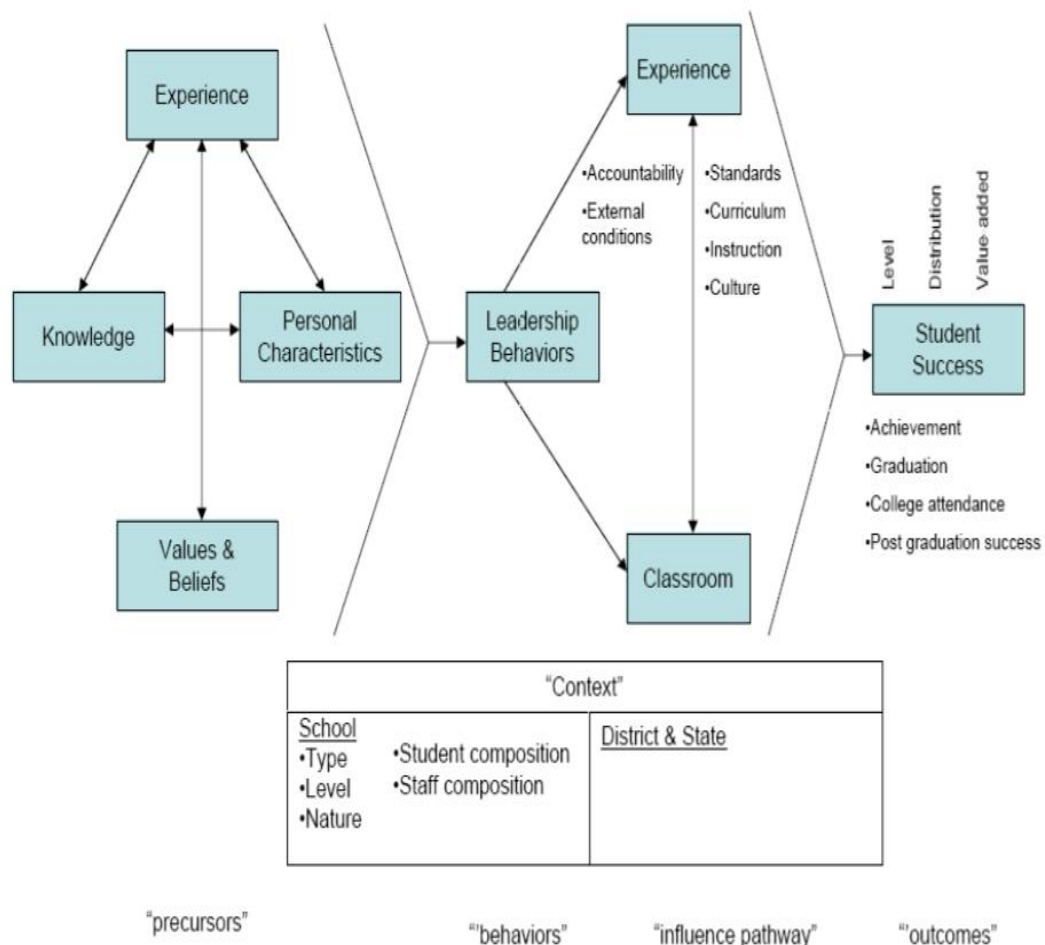


Figure 2. NVivo coding steps. Reprinted from “Creative Commons,” by unknown author. Retrieved November 22, 2019, from Creative Commons.

In the diagram presented below, the researchers identified that the key element to increasing educational success in schools is the principal and their ability to increase the impact of African-American principal behaviors that influence interactions and relationships as the central ingredient to their success (Goldring et al., 2009). Additionally, the diagram shows the emphasis on the leadership behaviors of the African-American male principals as they interact with African-American male students.





*Figure 3. Leadership Relationship Behaviors, and Interactions. Reproduced from " Learning-centered leadership: A conceptual foundation," by Murphy, J., Elliott, S.N., Goldring, E., & Porter, A. C., 2006, Learning Sciences Institute, Vanderbilt University Online. Retrieved November 24, 2019, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505798.pdf>*

The data was analyzed among the following themes: (1) vision for learning, (2) instructional program, (3) curricular program, (4) assessment program, (5) communities of learning, (6) resource acquisition and use, (7) organizational culture, and (8) social advocacy. The software analyzed the data that was framed to reflect the dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership, and as a result the level 1 and 2 coding was developed.

Three interviews and observations were conducted monthly for three months. The interview times varied depending on the depth in which the principal answered the questions. The interviews were recorded (audio and video) to transcribe them for analyzing effectively. Interview questions were expanded based on a need for further information to fully connect with the interview question after the initial interview. This increased the interviews with a total of six interviews. In chapter four, charts will display the follow-up interview information/questions used to supplement the need for additional information. Interviews were collected twice a month after the initial interview and observations were completed, and I used any dialogue from the setting as additional interview research question notes and recorded them in compliance with the data collection methods and to avoid the appearance of any bias.

To assist with any overlapping categories and or more relational data, I reviewed student data, which included data that indicated the behaviors of the students that

included check sheets, transcripts, attendance, discipline records, and anecdotal teacher notes. The data included in the coding provided by the NVivo software included interview and observation data only. Data from student data was used for qualitative purposes to expound upon the personal, social, and economic needs that the African-American principal encounters in the all-male school. Following the in vivo coding stage, the codes were reviewed to identify category codes. Category open codes were identified by analyzing in vivo coding results for repetition, unusual factors, statements that verified or contradicted other statements, and data that clearly connected to existing research. Evolving from in vivo codes to categorical codes facilitated identifying factors that illustrated holistic codes that contained important and practical aspects, concerns, and conditions of the principal's role and relationships at the site (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

### Validity

Maxwell (2013) argued that the credibility and validity of case studies are dependent on the accuracy of the collected data. I used principals to pilot test the interview questions to provide feedback and additional questions that may or may not be needed (Merriam, 1998). Member checks were conducted to make sure that the accuracy of the transcribing was without error (Stake 1995). Member checks were conducted after each data sample was completed weekly and monthly. Member checks were completed to validate data that had been gathered and to remove any appearance of bias or collusion. The process for gathering, validating, and analyzing data was obtained from Stake (1995) as it is explained below: (pp. 52-54)

- Make observations, interview, debrief informants, gather logs, use surveys, etc.
- Keep records of inquiry arrangements and activities. Select vignettes, special testimonies, illustrations: Classify raw data; begin interpretations:
- Redefine issues, case boundaries, renegotiate arrangements with hosts, as needed.
- Gather additional data, replicating or triangulating, to validate key observations.
- Review raw data under various possible interpretations.
- Search for patterns of data (whether or not indicated by the issues).
- Seek linkages between program arrangements, activities, and outcomes.
- Draw tentative conclusions, organize according to issues, organize the final report.
- Review data, gather new data, deliberately seek disconfirmation of findings.
- Describe extensively the setting within which the activity occurred.

The principals were asked to consent to participate in audio and video recording of each interview and observation. The use of media other than writing in the generation and collection of notes is a useful means of collecting accurate information (Fetterman, 2009). The subjects were asked to participate in member checks following data collection for each interview to verify accuracy (Yin, 2016); there were no notable objections to accuracy. Questions were re-asked to verify accuracy following each interview, this included rechecking notes for accuracy (Pelto & Pelto, 1978). Video recording was used for a portion of the observations and audio recording for all interviews to increase the validity of both modes of data collection. The observations allowed the review of data

that may have otherwise been overlooked in technology-free observation. Additionally, the use of video recording allows the review to ensure data are properly worded for coding.

Due to student privacy constraints and ethics, student data were not shared specifically in the study. Student testing results were used to ascertain the achievement levels academically for the students; however, these results were from student data and not direct testing. Both administrators were able and willing to provide feedback on primary data from student testing that they have reviewed. The data reviewed were not incorporated into the aforementioned data collection, coding, and analysis procedures due to the schools' liability of release, which does not allow for student data to be disseminated without expressed parent permission and school Board/District approval which is not available and violates the ethics of the IRB. However, "through the control of validity and reliability, positivistic research tradition aims at capturing or discovering an accurate or approximated knowledge about the case under scrutiny" (Yazan, 2015, p. 125).

### Limitations

The study investigated the interactions and relationships that occur through leadership behaviors of the African-American male principals; however, boundaries exist. Limitations will exist in all research with both positive and negative findings (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The study limitations related to a case study, in particular this study, generally include but are not limited to the sample size, population, auto coding,

statistically unsubstantiated, difficult to replicate, time consuming, and subject to researchers' feelings that may influence the study (researcher bias) (McLeod, 2019)

### Delimitations

Delimitations of the study are, but not limited to, the study having been conducted in schools from two different categories, public and private, rather than one focused type of school. Additionally, the study does not focus on a particular academic core subject, as the case study focused primarily on the principal role as it relates to the relationships shared with the student. Moreover, the study does not delineate the differences between the grade level data due to student privacy constraints and ethics.

### Summary

In this chapter I gathered qualitative data to obtain rich description of the case study, with data drawn from multiple sources. The data provide detail for analysis about the leadership behaviors of the African-American male principal as it relates to their governance over the student success of African-American males in their all male school. This approach afforded me an opportunity to have a case study in which the “process or record of research is detailed development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time” that exemplifies the meaning or context of observational results (Yin, 2014, p. 123). Because the study focused largely on experiences that can inform perspectives of understanding of African-American male student achievement which can include knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for their achievement, indirect variables of the school environment are included for better understanding. This chapter

included information of limitations and assurances to the participants as well as ethical obligations for the researcher. The participants selected in the study are African-American male principals, the study used student data to emphasize the bigger picture. The bigger picture recognizes the fact that the students are not the study and that the data used will ultimately support the leadership behaviors that can benefit student achievement in the areas of personal life, social life and the economics of their life. In chapter four, I analyze the findings of the case study data, review the analysis and report the results.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

The purpose of the case study was to investigate the interactions and relationships that occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals in all-male urban schools. Prominent methodologists indicated that in a qualitative case study, use all available data to reflect best-practices as well as making decisions within the context (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). As a direct result, I used two schools located in different areas with different types of school structures. The following research question was used to guide the study: What interactions and relationships occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals when leading all-male, all African-American male student schools? During in-depth interviews, the participant described their interactions, relationships, and leadership behaviors as well as observations and student data collection to make informed decisions. The participants also used their findings to improve outcomes for African-American males as well as school outcomes. The results of the research in this chapter are based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews and observations within School (a) and (b). Information from interviews, observations, and additional data (student data, recording, videos, etc.) were compiled and analyzed to answer the research question. The study findings may be beneficial for urban schools with an all-male African-American male or all-male population to increase the leadership behaviors of the principal to drive school outcomes.

## Background

The participants of the study were two African-American male principals of all-male urban schools in the Mid-Atlantic Region. The male principals' ages range between 30 and 50 years of age. Both principals have bachelor's and master's degrees and have ten or more years of administrative experience. School (a) is a private school, and School (b) is a charter school. Both schools have an African-American male population of over 98%. Both participants are collectors of school data, which includes teacher and student data. At the time of the study, both schools were and remain in the process of adding grade levels to their current school roster. During the interviews, both principals noted the need for increased interactions with the African-American male students.

Both participants contributed a wealth of information for the themes that will be detailed in narratives and charts. The participants spoke at length about subjects, regardless of their level of information provided, each principal equally contributed information, and collectively their voices are represented in this study.

## Study Findings School (a)

The data obtained from interviews and observations was paired against the conceptual framework to understand the impact of practices as they relate to each dimension through holistic coding (Murphy et al., 2006). The eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership which are: (1) vision for learning, (2) instructional program, (3) curricular program, (4) assessment program, (5) communities of learning, (6) resource acquisition and use, (7) organizational culture, and (8) social advocacy. The results are published below using the methods for a qualitative case study research finding. Through



data analysis, patterns of reemergent related statements were noted and synthesized into an analysis table. Reference Table 2 below.

*Table 2: The Impact of the Framework and Eight Dimensions of Quality Learning-Centered Leadership*

<b>Dimension of Quality Learning-Centered Leadership</b>	<b>Holistic Themed NVivo Coding</b>
Vision for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student academic outcome expectations</li> <li>• Student behavior expectation outcomes</li> <li>• Expectations for college and career outcomes</li> </ul>
Instructional Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff involvement in developing instructional program</li> <li>• Preference for outsourcing instructional programs versus building in-house</li> <li>• The role of student cultural and racial representation in instructional programs</li> </ul>
Curricular Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff involvement in developing curricula</li> <li>• Reflecting on quality of curricula</li> </ul>
Assessment Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of test scores in staff performance evaluation</li> <li>• Role of test scores in informing instructional leadership</li> <li>• System of assessing school performance</li> </ul>
Communities of Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing school culture</li> <li>• The role of acknowledging African-American identity to build community</li> <li>• Student and staff relationships</li> <li>• Staff and family relationships</li> </ul>
Resource Acquisition and Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available resources</li> <li>• Resource needs</li> <li>• Community partnerships</li> <li>• Service and funding donations</li> </ul>
Organizational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building staff morale</li> <li>• Structure of school organization</li> <li>• The degree of authority afforded to principals</li> </ul>

Social Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School performance as proof of ability</li> <li>• Connecting families to resources</li> <li>• Self-promotion (on behalf of school) as an expression of social advocacy</li> </ul>
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The information in the chart above (see Table 2) is derived from the analysis of the interviews and observations and was summarized for better understanding of the African-American male principal interactions, relationships, and leadership behaviors. As a result, high and low inferences were obtained through coding. These inferences obtained information that speaks to the hierarchy of importance the participants viewed for that leadership dimension. The table below outlines those inferences with details that speak to the African-American male principal sorted dimension regarding their leadership behaviors, relationships, and interactions within their school building. The chart indicates the low and high level impacts of the coding found in the analysis of the interview and observations paired against the eight dimensions.

Reference Table 3 below.

Table 3: *Low and High Levels Coding Impact*

<u>Level 2 (High Inference)</u>	<u>Level 2 (High Inference)</u>
<b>Vision For Learning</b>	
Expectations are a necessary part of establishing a vision for learning.	Though the administrator serves as leader, establishing a vision for learning is a collaborative process.
<b>Instructional Program</b>	

Components of an instructional program must be clearly identified and purposefully targeted.	African-American males face unique struggles in accessing instructional programs suited to their needs/identity.
<b>Curricular Program</b>	
Curricular program design is teacher-led and standards-driven.	Clearly defined and designed curriculum guides are keystones to establishing a sound schoolwide curriculum.
<b>Assessment Program</b>	
Assessment is a crucial part of communicating academic achievement to both students and staff.	The needs of African-American boys in urban schools drives assessment programs, including incorporating identity into the assessment program and setting and measuring achievement of goals aligned to high expectations.
<b>Communities of Learning</b>	
Communities of learning exist among both students and staff.	Communities of learning are fluid entities that fluctuate in their structure and goals based on student, staff, and community needs.
<b>Resource Acquisition And Use</b>	
Administrators are in need of additional funds to serve student needs.	Structured programs, for both intervention or professional development, are a frequently accessed resource.
<b>Organizational Culture</b>	
Humanism impacts school organizational culture.	Staff relationships impact the quality of school organizational culture.
<b>Social Advocacy</b>	
Social advocacy is a consideration of school administrators.	Social advocacy in schools concerns both the intrinsic purpose of the school and external efforts to connect the school to the community.

The participants reviewed and finally approved the information presented to ensure quality assurance of the data captured. The information obtained overlaps with the eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership coded against the holistic coding of recurrent themes/experiences. The tables below represent how the African-American principals' leadership abilities, are enacted or displayed?. It further represents their beliefs that as African-American male principals, they have the ability to effectively preside over their African-American male students. Their leadership abilities also impact? their schools' mission and vision but is not limited to the hiring of faculty and staff, school resources, and school programs. "In particular, they make certain that (a) assessment data related to student learning, (b) demographic data pertaining to students and the community, and (c) information on patterns of opportunity to learn are featured in the leadership process" (Murphy et al., 2006, p. 9). Reference Table 4 below.

Table 4: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Vision for Learning*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
School principals exercise at least partial responsibility in establishing schoolwide vision for learning.	Establishing and communicating a clear school vision impacts student achievement.	School principals should communicate and facilitate a schoolwide vision.	My role as principal offers authority over the process of establishing schoolwide vision.

The table below identifies the importance of teaching as it relates to working with African-American male students and teachers in both formal and informal settings. Research indicated that highly effective programs have a strong affinity for teaching and learning (Murphy et al., 2006). “In the area of pedagogy, they are knowledgeable about and deeply involved in the instructional program of the school and are heavily invested in instruction, spending considerable time on the teaching function” (Murphy et al., 2006, p. 13). Reference Table 5 below.

Table 5: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Instructional program*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
Culture and community impact instructional programs.	Integrating student population-based components of culture and community improves instructional program outcomes.	Instructional programs should integrate culture and community to lead student achievement of rigorous expectations.	I value my role in promoting high student expectations.

The table below shows how learning centered leaders involve themselves in the programs, as well as define how rigorous the curricular programs is and whether or not it speaks to the enhancement of the African-American male students’ success and growth. The African-American male principal has the authority and final say of levels and phases of programming across departments and among teachers. “Curriculum alignment also

means that all special programs (e.g., cultural pedagogy/education) are brought into the gravitational field of the regular program” (Murphy et al., 2006, p. 14). Reference table 6 below.

Table 6: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Curricular Program*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
Standards drive curriculum guides.	Designing curriculum guides around commonly used standards will increase student outcomes versus a less-structured format.	Curricula should be standards driven.	I value standards-driven curricula design.

The table below identities the need for African-American male principals as involved participants of practices, classrooms, resources, funding, and assessments to build true stakeholder relationships. Knowledge of assessments and practices shows personal involvement in leadership that fosters stronger relationships with all stakeholders. “Through personal modeling, they promote a serious attitude about data-based decision making among their colleagues” (Murphy et al., 2006, p. 15). Reference Table 7 below.

Table 7: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Assessment program*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
Assessment data can be used to illustrate achievement and growth to students.	Sharing assessment data with students promotes increased achievement regarding learning goals.	Assessment data should be frequently shared with students to indicate progress.	I value assessment as a tool for communicating learning awareness and expectations for students.

The table below identifies the ties that are built with the community to uphold the mission and values of the school. African-American male principals benefit from being the first and highest supporter of vigorous promoters of advancement growth. African-American male principals play are “active participants in planning and evaluating specific staff learning activities and the overall professional development system of the school” (Murphy, 2016, p. 18). Reference table 8 below.

Table 8: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Communities of Learning*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
Multiple types of learning communities coexist within schools.	Learning communities should be established	School principals should work to encourage establishment of	I value learning community capacity to

among both staff and students.	learning communities among both staff and students.	improve student outcomes.
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The table represented below describes the experiences of the African-American male principal and their means to provide conditions that will build the school morale and increase efficiency. The goal is to provide a place that fosters culturally appropriate physical and emotional resources for African-American male students and staff. Not only does school funding provide physical appropriateness, it promotes appropriate staffing for the school as well. “Leaders are religious about hiring quality teachers and then zealous in assigning teachers to the best advantage of students, as defined by their academic success” (Murphy et al., 2016, p. 22). (Reference Table 9 below)

Table 9: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Resource Acquisition and Use*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
Funds are required to access most resources, and choices must be made to decide how to best allocate funds.	Increased funding for resources will increase student achievement.	Schools need additional funds to access the resources students need to succeed academically.	I would like to have increased access to funding to purchase more resources for my school.



The table below shows an accurate depiction of culture in action. Action is presumed to look various ways; such as, accountability, continuous improvement, and personalizing the African-American male student experience (Murphy et al., 2016). African-American male principals should “regularly communicate a concern for and interest in staff performance and student achievement” (Murphy et al., 2016, p. 24). Reference Table 10 below.

Table 10: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Organizational Culture*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
Organizational culture is impacted by the dynamics of human behavior.	Promoting positive relationships and clarifying roles in organizational culture improves outcomes.	School principals should promote positive relationships and clarify roles.	I believe promoting positive relationships among staff and clarifying staff roles will have a positive impact on organizational culture, and, ultimately, student outcomes.

The table below identifies the substance of social advocacy and what it looks like in schools. “The central dynamics of leadership in schools where students flourish is one that is defined in terms of moral agency and social advocacy for youngsters and their

families” (Murphy et al., 2006, p. 29). Social advocacy is described and defined by the leadership behaviors of effective African-American male principal which include “four overlapping domains/environmental context, diversity, ethics, and stakeholder engagement” (Murphy et al., 2006, p. 27). Reference Table 11 below.

Table 11: *Reconstructed Horizon Analysis: Social Advocacy*

Possible Objective Validity Claims	Possible Subjective Validity Claims	Possible Normative- Evaluative Validity Claims	Possible Identity Claims
Social advocacy is a common component of schooling.	A successful school serves the community directly (community service) and indirectly (positively serving students).	Social advocacy should be promoted as a means of establishing positive community ties.	I believe schools serve a purpose in promoting social advocacy.

#### Findings School (a)

##### School (a) Principal/Participant Leadership Behaviors

The participant leads with a demonstrated awareness of the roles of instructional leaders, particularly in their roles of establishing and promoting school vision. The participant actively targets schoolwide goals and strategies for African-American male students’ achievement and leveraging staff and resources to optimize student outcomes. The participant invests a significant portion of time on school management and discipline. The participant shared that he felt community socio-economic circumstances impacted scores, and shared that he believed the school’s emphasis on behavioral

interventions would, in later schooling, result in improvements that would translate to increased test scores.

#### School (a) Principal/Participant Interactions

The participant interactions, both physical and verbal, consisted of interactions with the students, schools' administrative team, including administrative support, teachers, and staff. The participant had verbal correspondence with teachers related to school event scheduling, and school calendar issues. The participant handled student affairs, as well as communication with parents and students regarding disciplinary issues. The participant was observed attempting unsuccessfully to contact the upper level management regarding a school funding issue(s).

#### School (a) Principal/Participant Relationships

The participant considers the cultural relationship value of the African-American male needs when making choices regarding school operations and policies. The participant being an African-American male principal puts forth best efforts to apply personal and pedagogical knowledge of African-American male identity to guide instruction as well as school policy(s) and culture within the all-male school. The participant shared that school improvement can increase through relationship values if opportunities were provided.

#### School (a) Interview Coding

Interviews were conducted and the leadership experiences were categorized according to quality leadership behaviors. The table below is a display with real life

responses from the participant during the interview(s) and paired against the coding category in summary form. School (a) participant identified that the leadership behaviors he exhibits to increase interactions and relationships with African-American male students include: facilitating change that includes transparency; teacher participation, being present with community, exploring interventions, and social interactions with students and parents. School (a) participant identified that relationships are built in interactions and conversations with the members of the community. The participant believes that being a social advocate of the African-American male students must begin in the school and the community in which they reside. The participant understands and makes attempts to build rapport with the community in order to increase awareness of the need of the African-American male students and the school's impact to increase funding and recruitment of more African-American male staff. Each section relates to areas that are encompassed in the research question and aligned to the eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership.

Table 122: *School (a) African-American male principal Interview Coding*

<i>Leadership Experience: Vision for learning</i>
<p><i>Quote:</i> I need to be able to be very clear with staff about what, the work, they are expected to be doing here. And I need the freedom to do what I see fit. Without going along with someone else. A lot of it has to do with personalities. It has to be something that everyone can get along with. And everyone has to know who is responsible for what. But I want to be able to have more autonomy.</p>
<i>Leadership Experience: Instructional Program</i>

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*Quote* I want to change, implement it in a different way. How we do things here is very intentional. How we present things in the classroom, how we present things instructionally. It's been a struggle, historically and traditionally, because people don't expect our males to do well. Sometimes they bring resentment and defiance.

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*Leadership Experience: Curricular program*

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*Quote* We really look specifically at our curriculum. And I think, as we started, we allowed teachers to, based upon common core standards, to create their own maps. That worked for some teachers and not for others. We learned we were overworking our curriculum by having them do the curricular work. Whereas [administrators] could make their work easier by choosing curriculum for them and have them work on refining their teaching.

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*Leadership Experience: Assessment program*

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*Quote* As a student here I know I'm going to get assessed at least every two weeks on what I've learned. I won't feel the anxiety I'd feel if I were only getting tested twice a year. So, we built it, so our males constantly know they are constantly being tested, constantly being evaluated, to know where you are. You don't want to over test African-American males, but I think our males are very competitive and interested in knowing where they are.

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*Leadership Experience: Communities of learning*

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*Quote* A few years back, someone asked me, what are you reading. At the time, you know, I wasn't reading anything. But after I heard that, it made me think, I want to ask our males what they're reading and stay on top of that. So, I always ask the males what they're reading. With staff, with communities of learning, I think I've done a good job building a reading community, a learning reading community. But also, I have to work on, not just reading, but keeping more and your staff inspired.

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*Leadership Experience: Resource acquisition and use*

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*Quote* What we've done with our Title One money is on Read 180 and interventions. We've seen academic gains through that. Academic interventions have to meet students where they are. We spend a lot of time and resources developing interventions based on their actual needs. We could use funding for more.

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*Leadership Experience: Organizational culture*

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*Quote* I think in an organizational culture, everyone wants to feel valued. Supported and valued. Structurally that's an area we could do better at it. We spend so much time on the males that we don't focus on the staff. That's something we've been looking at. I want it to be more seamless. I want it to be ingrained in what we do.

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*Leadership Experience: Social Advocacy*

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*Quote* I think a lot of social advocacy is just being here and being successful. Advocacy on their behalf is being here and being able to do it well. We advocate, we [school staff] advocate by being present. We are in the moment. That, you know, for student success, that is a must for achievement. We are a community presence. Commitment to excellence. That, that is social advocacy.

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## Findings School (b)

### School (b) Principal/Participant Leadership Behaviors

The participant felt that it's best to lead targeting the academic needs of the African-American male students. The participant believed that based on preliminary results of test data he had viewed, students performed at the equivalent level as peers attending other schools in the same area. The participant shared that students were projected, based on preliminary data, to outperform public school students in the same socio-economic categories due, per the participant, to the school's emphasis on reading intervention strategies.

### School (b) Principal/Participant Interactions

The participant actively uses school advocacy as a means of interacting and connecting with the African-American students to improve relationships with community stakeholders. Through positive student outcomes, the participant perceives the school as a positive asset in the community and a pillar of light for its stakeholders and African-

American male students. The participant believes in the positive impact of the African-American students on their communities which promote social advocacy is reciprocal. The participant believes that the community benefits from students and students benefit from community interaction.

#### School (b) Principal/Participant Relationships

The participant shared that he believed the relationships of the African-American male principal ultimately result in decreased placement in the “prison pipeline” and, ultimately, increased investment and completion of schooling. Conversely, the participant was more invested in making best use of available funding resources to invest in research-based literacy interventions that would boost student reading performance in readily visible ways via standardized test score performance. The participant shared that he believed behavioral interventions would result in tangible improvement and would increase the means of developing deeper relationships resulting in stakeholder investment, including financial support, for the school.

#### School (b) Interview Coding

Interviews were conducted and the leadership experiences were categorized according to quality leadership behaviors. This table is displayed with real life responses from the participants during the interview(s) and paired against the coding category. After review of the data in summary, School (b) identified that behaviors he exhibits for facilitating change, include increasing academic awareness with reading programs, increasing rigor through teacher interactions and cross subject teaching, and

using the curriculum guides to align assessments to meet the needs of students. Each section relates to areas that are encompassed in the research question.

Interviews were conducted and the leadership experiences were categorized according to interactions and relationships between the African-American principal and other others in the school and community. This table is displayed with real life responses from the participants during the interview(s) and paired against the coding category. After review of the data in summary, School (b) identified that relationships are the essence of interactions. As a direct result, he prides himself on consistency in communication, group think tanks that allow everyone to have a voice, and service learning through community involvement. School (b) principal like School (a) principal understands the value of his presence in the community and makes attempts to build rapport with the community in order to increase awareness of the need of the African-American male students. Such awareness should lead to increased school funding and recruitment needed to make changes for better success. Each section relates to areas that are encompassed in the research question and aligned to the eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership.

Table 133: School (b) *African-American male principal Interview Coding*

<i>Leadership Experience: Vision for learning</i>	
<i>Quote</i>	One of the things that we have done is try to solidify our foundations around our current reading program and give our males more time to practice their reading and fluency skills. We've tried to do more experiential learning. In science and social studies what are some hands-on things students can do. For



	the vision, teachers have to know what we are looking for, for students to have for this in math and this in reading and other subjects.
	<i>Leadership Experience: Instructional Program</i>
<i>Quote</i>	Talking to teachers about rigor. Talking about the cognitive load on students. We started having some really important conversations about student behaviors and helping students deal with trauma. Working on kids coming in with something that has absolutely nothing to do with school. Yes, we say this is what you have to do in math, this is what you have to do in reading. But you have that other piece too.
	<i>Leadership Experience: Curricular program</i>
<i>Quote</i>	We have spent a critical amount of time working on curriculum guides. It is teacher driven, which I think is important. We've been doing pacing maps. We align it with standards. Is it aligned with what we want kids to get? We get feedback from our partner schools where our kids will be going to know what they need to jump to the next level. But that curriculum map is super important.
	<i>Leadership Experience: Assessment program</i>
<i>Quote</i>	I decided to do, and the leadership decided to, an identity standpoint saying what assessment looks like. We used standardized tests to inform our assessment to some degree. Our goal is for 80 percent of our students to read on grade level. But we want consistency with the standardized tests.
	<i>Leadership Experience: Communities of learning</i>
<i>Quote</i>	That is giving teachers feedback to the need for consistency in our program. But we have also talked about making changes budgetarily to have outside voices who are experts conduct training for our bedrock programs that we consider to be part of our identity, the responsive classroom, the cultural piece, the writing workshop. We are not consistently where we need to be.
	<i>Leadership Experience: Resource acquisition and use</i>
<i>Quote</i>	This school has traditionally, from a budgetary standpoint, said two percent is for professional development. I don't think that's enough. I don't think it's smart or prudent. There's that inconsistency that impacts us.
	<i>Leadership Experience: Organizational culture</i>
<i>Quote</i>	It's that group tank thinking that really hasn't worked in the past. It gets compounded when you have a teacher who leaves and has the trainings that you deserve and find someone else to fill that void. It's not a business model. All organizations institutionalize some behaviors. It just needs to be more money.

Institutionally, it was important to me that kids get out into the community. Students have to complete a community service project. The idea that service is what it is to be human...one of the things I have tried telling kids is your worth is what you give to your community. But some African-American males think success is how well you dribble a basketball, how many women you sleep with. All these things of how we think of ourselves as African-American men. My message has been your worth is what you can provide to the community.

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### Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the study. The study included 10 interview questions. Questions that were varied for the second and third interviews were used as interview extensions, this was used as a strategy to increase the understanding of the African-American male principal leadership behaviors. The data analysis process was generated with eight themes/experiences: 1) vision for learning, (2) instructional program, (3) curricular program, (4) assessment program, (5) communities of learning, (6) resource acquisition and use, (7) organizational culture, and (8) social advocacy. These themes/experiences are connected to the research question, to namely: (a) identify leadership behaviors (b) identify leadership interactions, and (c) identify pathways to cultivate relationship outcomes with African-American male students. Primarily the findings of the study were based on the analysis of interviews and observations that took

place in the school building. There are three parts to the findings that addressed the research question that emerged from the data. The first part included information on the background of participants. The second part of the findings focused on the combined holistic coding analysis and the eight category dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership. Lastly, the findings were additionally broken down by participants. In conclusion, the eight categories provide a course of action to guide African-American male principal leadership behaviors that occur as a direct result of interactions and relationships with African-American male students in all-male urban schools.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the impact of the relationship between the African-American male principal and African-American male students in all-male student schools. Research has indicated that the race of the school administrators plays both a positive and negative influence in student success (Hargreaves & Harris, 2015). This study included interviewing the African-American male principal of two schools for three consecutive months. The problem with African-American male principals' ability to create meaningful experiences with the African-American male student in all-male schools is directly related to their leadership behaviors, interactions, and relationships. The leadership needs mentioned above are not exclusive to the schools within the case study; however, same-sex schools that have common gender and racial outlines prove to improve African-American male student outcomes (Berry, 2005).

The study was limited to two schools in the Mid-Atlantic. To mitigate limitation issues, information about the study was disclosed to only the participants and my committee. Both participants are African-American males who are African-American male principals of an all-male school. Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants, and a qualitative framework was used for the case study to identify authentic trends in participants' viewpoints and responses. As a direct result of the information obtained, seven themes/experiences were used for the overarching research question of

the study. This chapter includes information on the study's implications of practices, and future study recommendations.

### Findings

The study led me to the conclusion that African-American principals desire to have a greater connection with their African-American male students, as well as their staff. It further identified that African-American principals use their influence to gain resources for their students and staff to not only increase their relationship value but to help improve conditions within their school. The study showed that African-American principals have worked on and or desired to build better curriculums, cultural values, and equity. The findings indicated that the steps to achieving the milestones, as mentioned above, are there but have not yet been reached. I am not surprised by these findings, as there is a small number of African-American principals. The data to support successful African-American principals is needed to ascertain the effectiveness of their leadership traits that aid them in being good leaders. It is, therefore, my assumption that a lack of African-American principals may be an indicator of the need to have more, as their presence can directly relate to building the bonds to increase the success of the African-American male student.

### Research Question

What interactions and relationships occur through leadership behaviors of African-American male principals when leading all-male, all African-American student schools?

## Practice Implications

The results of the study indicated that the participants believed that the rapport built between African-American male students and African-American male principals could be beneficial to increasing student achievement. African-American male principals can increase student success through practices governing policies, procedures, staff hired, and the curriculum. The portrait painted by the two African-American male principals showed that African-American male principals have control over factors that can make schools sustainable for African-American male students. Culture and race are essential factors in urban schools, and they also lead the way in and among the academic success of students, especially male African-American students. Education explicitly designed for students of color should incorporate cultural norms. Interactions should be based on personal relationships and interactive learning that impart knowledge and skills.

The results of the study showed consistent favoring of the hypothesis that indicated accountability of the behaviors presented on behalf of African-American male principal leadership is best effective when building rapport with the students. Additionally, creating positive interactions within the community and building relationships to enhance the investment in the African-American male student are key leadership behaviors. The results further indicated that a consistent focus on African-American male student achievement should not be presumed to be an automatic occurrence. Both African-American male principals in the study asserted that accountability is directly tied to implementing systems that promote performance, participation, and student learning.

The results showed face to face leadership can, but not always, mainstream the connections needed for African-American male student achievement. Each African-American male principal indicated that African-American male students in their school have a difficult time with achievement. The African-American male principal stated that building relationships with school staff, lack of learning, and behavioral issues to increase trust and their student voice due to lack of investment from stakeholders. By observing the African-American male principals, I felt strongly about mentoring as a positive impact all stakeholders can take part in to increase African-American male student achievement. The African-American male principals in the study asserted that their efforts to be more of a presence in these students' lives are compromised due to the lack of assistance and the lack of additional African-American males in the building to assist with building more vital relationships.

School (a) African-American male principal: In conclusion, the interview/observation summary indicated that the African-American male principal believed that leadership behavior helps African-American male students succeed. Leadership behaviors leading to success, include providing clear expectations, restructuring instructional programs, clearly aligning curriculum with norms that include cultural pedagogy, and removing the abundance of over-testing. The African-American male principal believed that community learning could build bridges to increasing academic achievement. They further believed that organizational structure is neglected due to managing student behaviors, and advocacy is best served by being present and

knowledgeable of the needs of African-American male students and how to obtain remedies for high need areas.

School (b) African-American male principal: In conclusion, the interview/observation summary indicated that the African-American male principal believed that leadership behavior that helps African-American male students succeed. African-American male students can use programs that incorporate core academic content to increase academic success. Content that increases rigor but at the same time aligning the material to help with behaviors. Moreover, using collaboration to make sure curriculum guides are geared for African-American male grade transitions. Also, making sure that students are assisted with areas that assessment measures indicate are below grade level. The African-American male principal believed that consistency impacts the relationship with stakeholders, more effort needs to be made in community endeavors, student interactions should be infused with the community, and budgeting needs to be more practical to make the investment into the futures of African-American male students more impactful.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The qualitative case study allowed for the framework to identify trends authentic in participants' viewpoints; the case study was significant in revealing responses not aligned to my expectations. The data received indicated perceptions related to the African-American male principal as well as the African-American male student. This highlights the ability of the case study to highlight trends schools may be unaware of before studying and promotes the use and replication of this qualitative study design to



illustrate circumstances that impact African-American male student outcomes authentically.

Conducting further case studies with other African-American male principals could illustrate whether there are noted phenomenological experiences expressed in the study that are prevalent in other schools. In this particular study, I did not find that such a phenomenon existed; there were no data to support its existence. This is in part due to the participant and delimitation issues. This does not mean that there are not any phenomenological experiences; however, the study did not confirm or deny if they exist or do not exist. This is important because, in some urban schools, phenomena may exist. Additionally, using a holistic framework can allow for successful outcomes of African-American male principals who practice relationship building with African-American male students to indicate the areas of student achievement they have seen. I believe the case study brought to light issues that can be addressed through the use of practicing these dimensions to improve academic outcomes, and to increase the effectiveness of African-American male student achievement. I do not assert that these results are the only issues pertinent to the African-American male student achievement but can be contended that nonetheless, it is an issue in their advancement. It is possible that using the eight dimensions of quality learning-centered leadership can increase African-American principal leadership behaviors and improve other areas of their leadership performance (Murphy et al., 2006). Another avenue for generating information on how African-American male principals impact the education of African-American male students would be extending the study over time and chronicling student outcomes. This could

either be done with the subjects presented in this study if the participants are willing or with other students with comparable demographics.

## Conclusion

The study investigated the impact of the relationship between the African-American male principal and African-American male students in all-male schools. I completed a case study using qualitative data, such as interviews and observations on two African-American male principals in urban school settings in the Mid-Atlantic region. Using a case study allowed for a wider exploration of the research questions to determine leadership practices intended to improve achievement for African-American male students (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This research study captured data on African-American male principals' leadership behaviors. The observations were geared to capture any phenomena that occur when African-American male principals lead schools that oversee significant portions of African-American male students in all-male schools. The research did not find any phenomenon, nor did the information of any emergent or relevant findings. This chapter provides a summary of the study, followed by a brief discussion for impactful practices, and recommendations for future research.

The findings from the study indicated that there is a need for more African-American male principals in school systems where there is a large population of African-American male students. In addition, there is a need to implement organizational learning changes that clearly outline culture values and norms that African-American male students understand and can use to be successful in their classes and relationships within the school building. Building culture norms further indicates that building relationships with

the students is pivotal to their success and relationships with their African-American male principals.

Conclusions regarding leadership behaviors appropriate for the African-American male principals based on the interviews include building successful models or rapport, being visible to students in the school, providing a level of mentoring for all students, and implementing enrichment for academic success for all students. Building success isn't a completed model, but it first begins with rapport, and rapport starts with being visible to the students. Both of the school leaders should ensure that time is set aside in the school day to build and enhance relationships with students. Individual and group mentoring sessions help foster a sense of belonging (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010). Students are empowered to stretch their learning in new ways to achieve their maximum potential. An essential element of the relationship building that was examined in the interviews was African-American male principals taking the time to show that as leaders, they care about student progress and talking with the students about it (Kirtman & Fullan, 2015).

Student progress can be elevated by participating in or even leading an academic enrichment and remediation program (Kirtman & Fullan, 2015). As a part of the mentoring program, professional African-American males tutor and work with students. It is important to establish a positive relationship with African-American male students. Strong relationships with the students and the community can build a system that empowers all stakeholders intellectually, socially, emotionally, culturally, and responsibly. Developing relationships with African-American male students create bonds that will yield student success and academic achievement.

## Appendix A

### IRB Approval Letter



#### Office of Research Development, Integrity, and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030  
Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9590

DATE: May 14, 2018

TO: Robert Smith, PhD  
FROM: George Mason University IRB

Project Title: [1220693-1] Impact of African American Male Principals on African American Male Students: A Study of Two African American Administrators in All-Male Urban Schools.

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: May 14, 2018  
EXPIRATION DATE: May 13, 2019  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited review category #7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form unless the IRB has waived the requirement for a signature on the consent form or has waived the requirement for a consent process. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the IRB office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent Form

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

##### RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to investigate how an African American male principal's experiences in his own schooling alongside his theories of practice informs the discussion of how to best educate African American males. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to consent to three 45-minute interviews and 3 1.5-hour observations which, with your consent, may be audiotaped and videotaped.

##### RISKS

The foreseeable risks or discomforts include time lost to interview participation.

##### BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in best practices in educating African American males.

##### CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Your name, place of employment, and specific location will not be indicated in the final study. In the final study, you will be identified as an African American male principal employed by an urban Mid-Atlantic school. Written data will be held in PI Robert Smith's office, a secure location, for five years and then destroyed via shredding. Audio and video recordings will be deleted following the conclusion of the study. Only Robert Smith and Tharon Washington will have access to the data.

##### PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

##### CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Robert Smith and Tharon Washington at the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University. Robert Smith may be reached at 703-993-5079. Tharon Washington may be reached at 571-243-7281. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

##### CONSENT

I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature



Project Number: 1220693-1  
Date Approved: 5/14/18  
Approval Expiration Date: 5/13/19

IRB: For Official Use Only

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## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Questions**

- 1.** Describe any steps you have taken to recruit and/or hire African-American male teachers.
- 2.** Describe professional development you have offered to suit the needs of African-American males.
- 3.** Should there be a specific pathway distinct from the public school “norm” for educating Black males?
- 4.** What factors compose a high-quality education for African-American males?
- 5.** How do learning opportunities differ for African-American males versus other populations?
- 6.** Is there a need for more African-American males in the principalship and teaching? If so, what benefits would be derived?
- 7.** What is the principal’s role in promoting achievement of high academic expectations?
- 8.** In your role as a school leader, how do you account for discipline program structures for African-American males?
- 9.** Is there a distinct relationship that occurs between African-American male principals and African-American male students? Can you provide examples?
- 10.** Why do you believe African-American males statistically underperform on standardized test assessments?

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## **Biography**

Tharon Washington received his Bachelor of Science in 1999 and his Master's in Education in 2004 from Cleveland State University. He has 17 years' experience in public education, including experience as a teacher and administrator. He currently serves as Assistant Principal at Woodlawn High School in Baltimore County, Maryland.