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Factors Influencing the Academic Achievement and Success of African American Male Principals in a Midsouth State

Factors Influencing the Academic Achievement and Success of African American Male Principals in a Midsouth State

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Administration

by

Roy C. Turner, Jr.
Southern Arkansas University
Bachelor of Science in Education, 1990
Henderson State University
Master of Science in Education, 1993
University of Arkansas
Educational Specialist, 2003

May 2014
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendations to the Graduate Council.

Dr. Carleton R. Holt
Dissertation Director

Dr. Jules K. Beck
Committee Member

Dr. Benny L. Gooden
Committee Member

Abstract

A consistent pattern of academic failure among African American (AA) males in our nation's schools has generated a great deal of interest among educational researchers and practitioners. In fact, some studies show that AA males have been labeled as an endangered species. In an effort to reduce this dangerous negative trend, more research needs to be conducted to uncover those factors that contribute to AA males' academic achievement. This study will investigate factors (motivation, parental involvement/family and peer influence, environmental, or social factors) that may have contributed to the academic achievement of AA male principals who have achieved success by obtaining academic credentials beyond the bachelor's degree. To give educational stakeholders more insight into what factors contributed to their academic success, data will be collected to identify the factors that motivated AA male principals to become successful, with the hope that this information may also provide educational stakeholders with more insight on how to increase the academic achievement of AA males in the general population. This study will show how it contributes to the field of education by enlightening students, parents, teachers, educational advocates, legislators and policy makers at the federal, state and local levels on the success stories of six AA male principals. This study will further add to the field by highlighting programs designed to help meet the needs of AA male students.

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Dedication

The dissertation process has been one of my most challenging endeavors. I know that God has been with me and continues to be part of my goal to obtain the doctoral degree. I am true believer that I can do all things through Christ. I have prayed for him to put the right people in my life during this process and have accepted to put in hard work toward this achievement. I am so grateful to have a God who creates opportunities for those who believe.

I would like to thank my parents, brothers, and other family members for their continuous support as I set out to work on my doctoral degree. Their words of encouragement gave me the strength that I needed to pursue a meaningful goal. Sometimes, it takes loved ones to give you that extra boost that you need to pursue a goal. That is what my family did for me.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Our nation is faced with ensuring that schools are held accountable for successfully educating all children regardless of ethnicity, culture, or economic background. Although many participants in our nation's public schools manage to achieve a viable education, postsecondary degrees, and successful careers in the workforce, African American (AA) males continue to lag behind other groups in academic success and achievement (Kirp, 2010). The gap has taken place since AA males were in kindergarten and instead of decreasing it has grown wider (Kirp, 2010).

The underachievement of AA males is due, in part, to a lack of emphasis on African American history and culture (Kafele, 2010). If AA males are to succeed in academics and life, factors impacting academic achievement need to be identified and closely examined to determine how they contribute to academic success. Kafele (2010) recognized this disparity and called for measures that would empower AA males to close the gap.

One measure was to change how AAs are being taught, by teaching them about their culture. To increase student achievement for AA males, Kafele (2010) believed they need to be aware of their identity from a historical and cultural standpoint. As a principal, Kafele contributed to the academic success of AA male students, and to the knowledge of their own culture. This approach included learning about AA history and how it related to their lives. Kafele believed by training teachers and providing relevant professional development, students were motivated and empowered through culturally responsive instruction.

Of 360 school districts in Arkansas, AA male principals make up a small percentage. According to the Arkansas Department of Education (2012a), the statewide longitudinal data system revealed a total of 29 AA principals employed in Arkansas public schools: eight AA male

principals in the elementary grades, six middle school principals, nine high school principals, one charter-school principal, one academy principal, three magnet-school principals, and one college-preparatory principal throughout the state. If AA males are to obtain principal positions in the field of education, serious attention may need to be given to how to increase the number.

Other Arkansas school statistics show that in 2012–2013 there were 1,166 public schools, 569 elementary schools, and 347 high schools in the state (Educationbug, 2013). With an educational system as large as Arkansas, it appears there should be more AA male principals employed in schools across the state. Because there are only 29 AA male principals in the state, understanding the factors that contribute to their success is essential.

Amato (2005) suggested that family plays an important role in the well-being of children, and that the type of parenting in place is a predictor of how a child will develop emotionally and cognitively. In one study, Young (2007) pointed out that AA males who attended an Ivy League University felt that family played a significant role in their academic success. Furthermore, a greater emphasis was placed on the mother as being the key reason they were able to excel and be successful in school.

To assist AA male students, the expectations of parents and teachers must be high and the requisite peer and academic support must be in place (Wynn, 2007). A parent's role is to provide support by creating a culture designed to celebrate and recognize their academic achievements (Wynn, 2007). Parents should help AA males develop physically and socially, and that the culture of the household should focus on spiritual beliefs and a priority that focuses on academic achievement (Wynn, 2007).

Teachers should provide consistent learning opportunities to address the style of learning for AA males and work to better understand the needs of their parents (Wynn, 2007). Despite

the literature that shows that AA males struggle academically in today's schools, more research need to be conducted to identify those factors that will bring about success in schools for students in Grades K–12 and college.

AA males were exposed to negative subliminal messages about themselves in their early years of schooling before they reached fourth grade (Polite, 2000). Polite believed these messages were derived from AA males feeling they were being treated unequally when receiving an education. AA males felt that they were a problem group, such as referrals to special-education classes at a higher rate when compared to those who were selected for gifted classes (Polite, 2000). In addition to that imparity, disciplinary referrals and expulsions were consistently higher for AA male students than for others, which could affect self-esteem and contribute to academic failure.

The practice of installing Afrocentric curriculums in some urban schools served to increase the self-esteem of AA males (Coleman & Lipper, 2011). The curriculum addresses the academic needs of at-risk AA males and is designed to improve academic achievement. Afrocentric curriculums focus on the heritage, culture, and experiences that are of value to African Americans (Nobles (1990). Scholars in the social science and legal arenas believe that Afrocentric curriculums would increase the academic success of students who were viewed as at-risk. If such programs are shown to increase academic achievement of AA male students, it becomes imperative for parents, educators, and policy makers to examine if these programs should be implemented in other schools.

Background of the Study

Over the years, AA males have experienced a continued interval of academic failure in schools (Polite, 2000). Unless there is an emphasis on making sure that AA males make it

through Grades K–12, higher education would not be a part of their future (Polite, 2000). Many AAs display a cycle consistent failure (Powell, 1990). They begin to think of their abilities as less intelligent and that mindset becomes part of what they believe about themselves; this observation has been referred to as learned helplessness (Powell, 1990). Yet, some AA males have managed to beat the odds by becoming school principals.

Jones (2003) showed, through interviews with AA male students, that parental involvement was one area that promoted academic success. Having this knowledge would allow educators to focus on establishing parent-support programs to involve them in their children's education. Although the focus of this study is on AA males, the information obtained from participants could create a gateway for educators to help other ethnic groups that struggle academically.

AA males could have success in schools if the following were used as a guide for assistance: (a) place the most qualified teachers in preschool and first grade; (b) recruit Black male teachers for urban schools in preschool and first grade; (c) reduce the size of prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade classes; (d) create a pool of teacher aides at each school to assist prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade teachers; and (e) expand information programs and classes to assist parents with helping their children (Gary & Carter, 1988). Although these five actions will not solve all problems that AA males face, it could pave a road for future success.

An inadequate education is a major challenge that AA males face in present-day society (Lee, 1991). The lack of quality education creates difficult challenges for students, inhibiting their ability to achieve school success. These challenges can be linked to the negative attitude that restricts their desire to pursue academic excellence.

To eliminate these negative factors and improve academic skills, there needs to be more school support from those who teach AA males. Due to the possibility of similar experiences and a common way of life or heritage, Jordan and Cooper (2003) supported the recruitment of AA male teachers. They believed that these male teachers could help develop or model acceptable behavior. Also, school support from adult staff has been associated with increased school competence in a positive manner (Cauce, Hannan, & Sargeant, 1992).

Active involvement in students' lives must be part of the process of ensuring that the AA males reach their full academic potential. Counselors should play a vital role in leading change that would promote initiatives geared toward helping AA males achieve high levels of success in schools (Lee, 1991). Educators and counselors could use strategies to empower students. Lee believed it is important to help AA males develop pride by assisting them with learning about their heritage, exposing them to successful AA male role models, and showing them ways to promote acceptable behavior. Lee (1991) advocated that empowerment experiences through group counseling on the elementary and secondary levels should assist in helping students develop positive attitudes toward academic achievement. The results of this study could lead to improved decision making on how to best address the educational needs of struggling AA males and allow them to achieve in all areas of the curriculum, by being more fully engaged in academic pursuits.

According to a report from the Center on Education and the workforce, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018* (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010), there is a decrease in how much a person can earn if they do not graduate from high school. In reference to the AA male, earnings over their lifetime would be average. If these

projected trends continue, the report insinuated that the future life successes of AA males would be limited.

For the AA male, the report may implicate the possibility of losing out on quality employment opportunities due to an inadequate education. In another report, *Yes We Can: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males* (Holzman, 2010), researchers found that AA males were not ready for the work place. The report also showed that during the 2007–2008 academic school year, 47% of AA students graduated from high school. Though this shows promise, there are 53% left who are not receiving high school diplomas. This report suggests that these students are at risk and their chances of succeeding are less than those who graduated and are prepared for the workplace.

According to Goodlad and Keating (1990), a controversy seems to exist when trying to determine the definition of "at risk." To arrive at solutions to help at-risk students, the researchers are clear that understanding the definition is a first priority. The two researchers believed that at-risk students were those individuals who were considered educationally disadvantaged and whose way of life was different from the appearances and values of a White culture that was considered to be dominant. They believed that if the meaning of at risk was understood, solutions could be developed that would help these students with their problems.

From a historical standpoint, the AA family structure of at-risk students, their way of life, beliefs, and communities were different and did not match those of students from White cultures (Hixton & Tinzman, 1990). These students will continue to perform at low levels if their deficiencies are not addressed. Levin (2004) viewed at risk as those students who have great risk of failing to achieve lifelong goals, due to some event from past or present experiences. Despite the definition, it is clear that AA males fit this meaning of at risk.

Following are five reasons why AA males are at risk: (a) in general curriculum subjects, AA males' total average scores fall below those of other ethnic groups; (b) AA males are less likely to be placed in gifted and talented classes, but more of them may be assigned to special-education classes or classes that have developmentally delayed students who are educable; (c) the path for AA males is generally placement in trade or basic-educational classes rather than academic courses; (d) AA males spend longer periods of time out of school due to regular suspensions; and (e) AA males' graduating rates fall below those of AA females (Reed, 1988).

The home environment had a significant correlation with neighborhood safety and quality, and if boys came from neighborhoods that were safe in nature, they had a stronger support base (Reed, 1988). When focusing on safe and quality neighborhoods, parents normally held high academic expectations for their boys. Ramsey (2007) found a significant relationship between safe/quality neighborhoods and high academic expectations.

The social hurdles and other economic factors these students face often have a negative impact on their ways of life, as they progress through school. They face numerous obstacles in their attempts to achieve academic and personal success (Lee, 1991). Obstacles include living in areas with prevalent drug activities and high-crime rates. These challenges can negatively impact AA males trying to improve their lives (Thompson & Lewis, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

AA males continue to struggle academically in schools across the nation. In much of the literature, researchers describe AA males as at risk of academic failure. The widespread lack of school success in this demographic presents a consistent and disturbing trend. It is important for educators to identify the needs and provide the requisite support that AA males require to develop into strong academic students.

Theoretical Framework

McClelland is noted for the human motivational-needs theory (Chapman, 2009). In this theory, McClelland believed that people are motivated by needs for achievement, power, and affiliation (Mind Tools, 2013). McClelland generalized that the need to achieve drives a person to be successful. In this need, a person is not afraid to take risk to achieve goals, insist on being provided with consistent input about accomplishments, and prefers to pursue endeavors alone. The need for power motivates a person to impact the lives of others by being in a leadership role, have a desire to have the last word, winning a competition is very important, and the person strives to be the center of attention. The need to affiliate is based on one's desire to belong and feel important to others. Persons attempting to affiliate feel the need to be a part of a group; agree with members of the group in order to be liked; focus less on competition, but more on interacting with others; and prefer to be sure of things and not take risk. It is hoped that this study will demonstrate how McClelland's human motivational theory helps reveal factors that influence AA male principal's academic achievement and success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to identify factors that contributed to academic achievement and professional success of AA male principals. Literature has indicated that AA males are having academic success in some schools across the United States. There is a need for more research to identify which factors facilitate academic achievement in AA males. Using McClelland's achievement motivation-needs theory, this study will ask participants to examine their experience as to whether one of the three factors (achievement motivation, authority motivation, or affiliation motivation), as well as other factors that may be unknown before the study, had a great influence on their academic success. It is hoped that the study will reveal

some of the factors that contributed to these AA male principals staying on the right track and obtaining academic and workplace success.

Significance of the Study

It is a goal of this study to provide students, parents, educators, and policy makers with insight from the voices of AA male principals regarding how they attained success in their academic and professional pursuits. The outcomes may also shed new light on what avenues should be taken to close the achievement gap that exists today for AA males. There is a disparity between the number of AA male principals and White male principals employed across the state in Arkansas schools.

To determine the impact of success for AA male principals in academics and the workplace, variables such as motivation, family and peer influences, environment, and social factors will be examined. It is hoped that the findings from this study will prove enlightening to the field of work by other researchers and educational advocates regarding factors that contribute to academic attainment for AA males. Literature has indicated there is a need to provide information to parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and educational policy makers on what needs to be done to enhance academic success for AA males.

This study will provide insight on the historical academic failures of AA males and how participants sustained success by breaking free of the barriers that hindered their achievement. As a result of the resulting insights, educators and policy makers would be able determine how to best meet the educational needs of AA males, as well as those of other ethnic groups.

Research Question

The key question to be answered in this study is as follows:

1. What factors shape academic achievement of AA male principals?

Sub-questions

1. What factors shape career success of AA male principals?
2. What challenges limit participant's success?

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to a small subgroup of African American male principals in a Midsouth state who have achieved academically and received educational attainment beyond the bachelor's degree. Of the many occupations with successfully achieving AA males, this study will only involve participants in the field of education. These participants are individuals who work with parents, students, teachers, counselors and other educational professionals whose goal is to improve education.

Definitions of Terms

African American male: is an American of African ancestry (Pickett, 2005).

At-risk students: Those individuals who were considered educationally disadvantaged and whose way of life was different from the appearances and values of a White culture that was considered to be dominant (Goodlad & Keating, 1990). "At-risk" students are defined as "one whose past and present characteristics or conditions are associated with a higher risk of probability of failing to obtain desired life outcomes" (Levin, 2004, p. 2).

Inadequate: Not adequate; unequal to the purpose; insufficient; deficient; as, inadequate resources.

Intact family: The type of family in which a child is raised in an environment or home where both parents are present (Durham, 2010).

Nonintact family: Type of family where a child is raised in an environment or home where only one parent is present (Durham, 2010).

Socioeconomic status: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory defines socioeconomic status for a family, based on the educational level of parents, household income, social status, and type of employment held by family members (Croninger & Lee, 2001).

Summary

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and insights into the background, statement of the problem, theoretical framework, purpose, and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with information on the research question that will guide the study, sub-research questions, limitations of the study, definitions, and a summary.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 includes an overview of the literature review. The literature review includes information on African American males' failures, successes, studies showing past research to assist this group of males in their educational endeavors, theoretical framework, and summary. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology, research and sub-research questions, researcher's role, assumptions, selection of participants, site selection, instrumentation, data-collection procedures, data analysis, trustworthiness and credibility, triangulation, member checks, audit trail, and summary. Chapter 3 explains the procedures that were used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 4 gives an overview of data gathered for the study. Chapter 5 is my report of the findings, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter 2 is the literature review for factors that influence academic achievement and success for African American (AA) male principals. The literature review starts with the search strategy for the literature review and includes an explanation of how articles were found. Then, I present a brief background for the study. Next, struggles to obtain educational achievement will be described, followed by factors that contribute to those struggles based on the literature. Those factors include family influences, motivation and expectations, peer influence and the environment. I make a few final comments about the ongoing struggles for AA males trying to achieve academic success. Finally, the chapter is summarized.

Search Strategy

In using research for this dissertation, electronic databases served as an instrument to provide relevant information. I worked with the University's research librarian to determine the prime key words that focused down to meet the main research question. Eric and ProQuest databases were part of this endeavor. When the data base was searched for key words in this study from ProQuest dissertations and theses, 6,820 potential related topics were available. I kept narrowing the search down until there were 348 topics. Narrowing of the research continued until 75 topics were reached in which relevant information was obtained for the study. Other search tools used for this study were educational journal articles, Internet sources such as Google, books, educational abstracts, and state reports. I reviewed hundreds of educational journals and educational abstracts in order to determine if the literature connected with my dissertation. Numerous hours were spent using Google and searching the Eric database to find

pertinent information in order to create the literature review. Additional research hours were spent on narrowing down the multitude of information obtained from my research. This research strategy allowed me to use key findings that would strengthen the review of the literature. University librarians provided pertinent information on how to use databases for this qualitative dissertation. The research question that is used to guide the study was determined by a plethora of literature made available to me that would produce new information for the field of study.

Background

To understand why educational experts are trying to uncover factors that influence academic success, attainment, or achievement for AA males, it is important to examine what prompted the search for solutions. There are many stories of AA males failing in schools while educators struggle to find ways to address this crisis. This literature review highlights the causes for poor performance as well as those factors that facilitate academic success among AA males. It is the goal of this study to provide students, parents, educators, and policy makers with insights from the voices of AA male principals regarding how they attained success in their academic and professional pursuits.

The 11 Best and 13 Worst Performing States for AA Males (2009–2010)

It is important to look at the best and worst performing states for AA males so that a review might display some patterns that emerge showing why AA males have trouble succeeding. Table 2.1 provides a look at the literature that was reviewed to help explain the gaps that exist for AA males and their poor graduation rates.

Table 2.1

Graduation Rates

Office for Civil Rights, 2012	Report	Statistics	Presented information on gaps in opportunities and unequal access for college and career readiness courses for African American males
Ramsey, 2007	Dissertation	Literature review	Presented how predictors of achievement correlated with one another
Holzman, 2010	Report	Literature Review	Provided an overview of states with best and worst graduation rates for AA males
Washington Informer, 2012	Article	Literature review	The U.S. Department Education Secretary confirmed the need to solve the educational gap that exists for African American males

For schools throughout the United States to have an impact on improving the academic struggles of AA males, it is essential to observe what others states are doing. In one study, the Schott 50 State Report of Public Education on Black Males (Holzman, 2010) listed the 11 best and 13 worst states for AA males' graduation rates. For clarification purposes for readers, the Schott report used the term Black males. To stay consistent with the terms, I will be using the term AA to represent Black males.

The report showed that Maine, Arizona, Vermont, Utah, Idaho, Oregon, Alaska, Minnesota, South Dakota, Oklahoma and Rhode Island had high graduation rates for AA males. Maine showed the highest with a graduation rate of 97% for AA males and 86% for White and non-Latino males. These are surprising numbers based on the history of graduation rates of AA males. Of the 10 states, AA males graduated highest in four states (Maine, Arizona, Vermont, and Utah). These statistics indicate that some states are having success with AA male students.

It becomes important for educational advocates to examine what those four states are doing to be successful in graduation rates for AA males and pattern or develop the same or

similar framework for their states. The Schott Report (Holzman, 2010) implied that when AA male students are attending schools that are not under resourced and have access to the same opportunities as White male students, they perform better in the academic arena. Some of those opportunities included being placed in gifted-and-talented classes, college-preparatory classes and having highly qualified instructors. The report stated that when conditions are created for AAs to learn, they can excel and educational outcomes are achieved.

The 13 lowest performing states were New York, District of Columbia, Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio, South Carolina, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, and New Mexico. Of the 13 states, the highest graduation rate (49%) for AA males were from Georgia, where White and non-Latino males had a graduation rate of 65%, Indiana (49% for AA males and 80% for White and non-Latino), Louisiana for AA males was 49% and 63% for White and non-Latino, and New Mexico with 49% for AA males with White and non-Latino males at 62% (Holzman, 2010).

The Schott report (Holzman, 2010) also identified the 10 best performing districts for AA males' graduation rates as well as the 10 worst districts (Holzman, 2010). It is important for educational advocates to examine why these 10 state's graduation rates are low. By doing so, they might gain insight into factors that cause low graduation rates of AA males and ensure areas are addressed and improved in their respective states. The report suggested that AA males perform low in these states due to a lack of available resources and opportunities that are not provided to them, but are provided for other students.

It is clear from some of these numbers that AA males continue to show poor performance in schools today. According to a study by the Office for Civil Rights, the Civil Rights Data Collection (2012) revealed that some of those gaps in opportunities pertained to a lack of

resource equity for minority students. Elementary schools that served the majority of Hispanic and AA students were paid considerably less than teachers who served the fewest of the same ethnic group. The study identified a need for college and career-readiness courses (calculus and physics) as opportunities not provided to a third of Hispanic and AA students when they were the majority population. Other unequal access to college and career-readiness courses showed a disparity in upper mathematics, such as Algebra II and science.

Discipline was another area of an opportunity gap highlighted by the study. When compared to their White peers, the data showed that AA students were dismissed from school three and a half more times, due to expulsions or suspensions. One can conclude that the more a student is out of school, the less opportunity the student would have to learn. This exclusion from school may contribute to poor academic performance. The Civil Rights Data Collection (2012) gave insight to the performance of American schools (pre-Kindergarten–12th grade) and revealed whether they are closing opportunity gaps for students that would allow them to compete in the job market of the 21st century.

It is evident from this study that a gap continues to exist in America's schools for AA students. The U.S. Department of Educational Secretary Duncan acknowledged that this problem needs to be solved with urgent action and asked community members how to solve the problem (Washington Informer, 2012). In reference to AA males academic success, Duncan highlighted problems of their poor performance and pointed out that they not only fall behind other American students, but students of other nations (See Table 2.2).

Table 2.2

Poor Performance Problems for African American Males, Described by the U.S. Department of Educational Secretary Duncan

Poor performance
(a) Disparities in the equality of highly qualified or effective educators and administrators (teachers and principals)
(b) Lack of equal access to schools with a safe environment
(c) Lack of classes with rigor that prepares students for college
(d) Disparities in school discipline
(e) A disproportion of referrals to special-education classes
(f) Low graduation rates
(g) Higher rates of incarceration

In a study by Ramsey (2007), the author addressed the issues that continue to be a part of AA males' struggles. According to Ramsey's research, more AA males are placed in special-education classes, a low percentage of these students are placed in gifted and talented classes, they are retained and drop out more than any other group of students, and they are suspended or expelled at an enormous rate when compared to other ethnic groups.

The 10 Best and 13 Worst Performing Districts for African American Males (2009–2010)

This section provides information on which school districts have high graduation rates as well as those with low graduation rates for AA males and what can be done to address the problem. Table 2.3, Performing Districts, lists the literature described in this section.

Table 2.3

Performing Districts

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
Kafele, 2012	Journal	Literature review	Gave input on how to provide educational opportunities for African American males
Holzman, 2010	Report	Statistics	Provided information the best and worst graduation rates for school districts
Holzman, 2012	Report	Literature review	Gave information on the graduation increase for African American males compared to White males

The Schott report revealed that Montgomery County (MD), Newark (NJ), Cumberland County (NC), Baltimore County (MD), Guilford County (NC), Fort Bend (TX), Wake County (NC), Palm Beach County (FL), Prince George's County (MD) and Virginia Beach (VA) had the highest graduations rates for AA males (Holzman, 2010). Montgomery County (MD) had the highest graduation rate (74%) rate for AA males compared to 91% for White and non-Latino males, whereas Virginia Beach (VA) had the lowest, with 54% of AA males graduating compared to 72% of White and non-Latino males.

To provide AA males with opportunities for success, Kafele (2012) asserted there is a male role-model crisis that must be addressed. The author suggested that this crisis could be improved by exposing AA male students to successful role models who would provide leadership, counseling, and avenues to better help them improve their chances of excelling in life and education. Due to wanting role models in students' lives, Kafele developed a young men's empowerment program aimed at giving AA males an opportunity to succeed in school and teaching them about how to be men. Although, this was a male-based program, female students

could also participate. AA male students were required to dress in a professional fashion on Mondays and were given the opportunity to hear from AA men from the local community.

In Kafele's (2012) program, students had an opportunity to discuss how to set goals, start a business, speak publicly, and parent. Opportunities such as these could be an avenue to help other schools that are having problems with AA males' poor academic struggles. Kafele believed that to help AA male students become more successful, the program had to be geared toward what they viewed as interesting (See Table 2.4).

Table 2.4

Components of Kafele's Program to Help African American Males Succeed

(a) Group sessions with no fewer than three and no more than 10 students, led by AA men.
(b) Face-to-face tutoring for students with a need to be counseled by an AA male adult.
(c) Exposing students to a college atmosphere with opportunities to meet other AA male college students.
(d) Access to AA men who were employed in businesses in the community.
(e) Opportunities to meet AA male politicians at the students' school as well as the worksite of participants.
(f) Opportunities to dress in attire looked upon as being professional.
(g) Opportunities to engage in activities in which they showed interest during male study groups that took place after school.

Districts with the lowest graduation rates were Norfolk (VA), Jackson (MS), Cleveland (OH), New York City (NY), Richmond County (GA), Chatham County (GA), Philadelphia (PA), Clark County (NV), Detroit (MI) and Rochester (NY). In Norfolk (VA), AA males had a graduation rate of 32%, whereas White and non-Latino male rates were at 52% (Holzman, 2010). The lowest graduation rate (9%) for AA males was in Rochester (NY) where White and non-Latino male's graduation rates were at 31%. In comparing my residential state (Arkansas) to

other states, data from the Schott report (Holzman, 2010) showed that the graduation rate for AA males in Arkansas was 59% for AA males and 73% for White and non-Latino males.

These unsuccessful graduation rates could be attributed to lack of available resources and educational opportunities. In a newer report, *The Urgency of Now: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males* (Holzman, 2012) showed a 3% increase in AA male graduation rates when compared to White males. The data for graduation rates were included in the literature review to clearly show that there are alarming gaps in education for AA male students. Therefore, it is essential for low graduation rates in the United States for AA male students to be addressed on the local, state, and national levels.

The purpose of the section on graduation rate gaps is to inform educational advocates and policy makers that more initiatives and research are needed to find solutions to the graduation problems that have existed for AA males. Collaborating on this issue with educational supporters, students, parents, teachers, and community patrons could be essential in helping AA males succeed. Programs could be designed that would support and improve academic achievement and success for AA males or other ethnic groups.

Struggles to Obtain Educational Achievement

This section highlights the struggles that exist for AA males as they try to obtain educational achievement. Table 2.5 displays the literature reviewed for the background of the study.

AA males can overcome academic failure. A case study of an AA male (Caire, 2009) revealed a high school grade-point average below a 2.0, low test scores, and a ranking near the bottom of his class (413th of 435 students). There was a lack of attendance in school and he spent time in a prison. After being cleared of all charges, he met a woman who later became his

wife; he enlisted and served in the Navy for 3 years, attended Hampton University and later the University of Wisconsin.

Table 2.5

Struggles for African American Males to Obtain Educational Achievement

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
Caire, 2009	Journal	Case study	Provided an African American male's journey from academic failure to success
Carter & Gary, 1988	Paper	Document	Gave the status of dropouts and expulsions of African American males
Dornbusch, Ritter, & Steinberg, 1991	Journal	Literature review	Presented information on how socioeconomic status affects African American males
Evans, 2004	Article	Literature review	Gave suggestions on how children are affected by socioeconomic differences
Kunjufu, 2005	Book	Literature review	Discussed that suspensions and expulsions are contributing factors for African American males' academic failures
Ramsey, 2007	Dissertation	Literature review	Presented how predictors of achievement correlate with one another
Watkins & Kurtz, 2001	Journal	Literature review	Highlights the overrepresentation of African American males' referrals to special education

While at the University of Wisconsin, the man decided to change his major to Urban Education so he could be helpful to Black youth in his community. A factor that influenced his academic success was changing his peer group and seeking to make the educational system better for other AA males. He noticed, upon returning to his community from prison, that many of his Black male friends were either on crack, jobless, not attending colleges or pursuing an education, in jail, and had no plans for a productive career path or future. He then became interested in showing how the educational system did a poor job in assisting AA males to graduate from high school. He took an interest in wanting to shed the light on low graduation

rates for AA males and sought the help of a researcher to help him make others aware of this problem (Caire, 2009).

From his point of view, the educational system was failing AA males and he wanted to know if there was any benefit for them in a K–12 educational system. Due to his desire to become successful and see other AA males become successful, he is now president and CEO of an organization that focuses on preparing AA males for life and success beyond high school. His organization is called Next Generation Education Foundation and also prepares students for leadership and college (Caire, 2009).

As early as 1983, there was a report by a committee to study the status of the AA male in New Orleans Public Schools (Carter & Gary, 1988). The report showed AA males accounted for 45% of dropouts, 80% of expulsions, 65% of suspensions, and 58% of those being held back a grade. These statistics make it essential for educational experts to focus on factors that have led to academic success for AA males. Although many AA males obtain some degree of educational achievement, many others experience prohibitive challenges, often becoming frustrated, losing hope, and ultimately dropping out or being pushed out of school (Carter & Gary, 1988).

Socioeconomic status is an important predictor of school success. A disproportionate percentage of AA males come from the lowest socioeconomic classes, which leads to the expectation to do poorly in schools (Dornbusch et al., 1991). If low socioeconomic status is an indicator of failure for some AA males, this is an area that needs to be addressed by better equipping families to support their children's academic success.

Evans (2004) believed that when children come from a background of low socioeconomic status, they are not as stimulated equally to children who come from a higher socioeconomic status. However, this does not mean that every student from a low

socioeconomic background will fail academically. Somehow, educators must solve the dilemma of AA males failing in schools.

One of the problems that need to be addressed is the disproportionate number of AA males being referred to special education (Kunjufu, 2005). Kunjufu (2005) believed that these referrals, as well as large numbers of school suspensions and expulsions, are contributing factors to the failures of AA male students in their pursuit of academic success. According to Watkins and Kurtz (2001), overrepresentation of AA males in special education is a pattern that has been continuous in the last 30 years. They noted that AA males are placed in classes that deal with behavioral issues, speech problems, specific learning disabilities, and visual and physical impairments. Classes for mental retardation are also an environment Watkins and Kurtz revealed that AA males experience in their educational career. If the disproportionate number of special-education referrals for AA males is a factor that leads to failure, educational advocates could make a difference by ensuring that this trend ends.

There seems to be more research on AA academic failure than on AA success. Ramsey (2007) set the background for a study by acknowledging the struggles that AA males have had over the years. Their problems included incarceration, homicides (the leading cause of deaths from ages 15 to 24), social pressures, the low number of AA who attend college, and the increasing dropout rate of AA males. Ramsey's research showed that AA males' neighborhoods had the potential to negatively impact student achievement if they were exposed to violence. In contrast, the researcher believed that quality neighborhoods without violence could have a positive impact on struggling AA male students. However, the Ramsey (2007) study showed that some AA male students rose above their circumstances and that family, neighborhood, and school influences played a role in their success, with the greatest factor being attributed to AA

males from a home environment that focused on academic success. According to Ramsey's study, these students usually achieved more and the home environment was a key element creating a case for additional study.

Family Influences

This section provides information on the impact of how family could impact student achievement. Table 2.6 lists research involving AA-male success and family influence, showing the relevant literature described in this section.

Table 2.6

Family Influences

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
Arkansas Department of Education, 2012b	Handbook	Literature review	Gave guidelines for schools to establish ways to involve parents in children's education
D. F. Bailey, 2003	Journal	Literature review	Presented information on how African American males could achieve success
Barnard, 2004	Journal	Literature review	Discussed the importance and implications of parental involvement
Cordry & Wilson, 2004	Journal	Literature review	Provided information on how parent involvement helps students' academic performance
Davis-Kean, 2005	Journal	Literature review	Provided a perspective on the importance of the home environment and parent education
Educational Leadership Constituent Council, 2011	Standards	Literature review	Provided educational standards that are essential to student achievement
Harper, 2012	Report	Literature review	Presented information on successful experiences of African American males in college
Herbert, 2010	Article	Literature review	Gave an account of the problems facing African American males in education
Hofferth, 2006	Journal	Literature review	Presented information about how children's achievement levels are based on the type of family they come from

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
Howard, 2008	Study	Literature review	Provided information on how African American males felt that race played a part in their educational journey
Jabulani, 2008	Dissertation	Literature review	Compared ethnic instruction between Black and White students
Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009	Journal	Literature review	Presented literature on how children's achievement is related to a parents' educational attainment
Lamb, 2010	Dissertation	Literature review	Provided information on how motivation caused African American male students to continue academic success
Malburg, 2012	Article	Literature review	Gave information on the purpose of Title 1 funding as it relates to educating children
Marcia & Corcoran, 2001	Journal	Literature review	Examined the impact that family structure had on student behavior
McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan & Ho-Ho, 2005	Journal	Literature review	Provided information on how fathers impact student achievement
U.S. Department of Education, 2003, 2005, 2007 & 2009	Assessment	Statistics	Included information on fourth-grade mathematics and reading gains in certain cities
U.S. Department of Education, 2003, 2005, 2007 & 2009	Assessment	Statistics	Included information on eighth-grade reading gains in certain cities
Nellum, 2011	Dissertation	Literature review	Explored if coeducational or single-gender schools were influenced by parental involvement
Ramsey, 2007	Dissertation	Literature review	Presented how predictors of achievement correlated with one another

Factors that might lead to academic achievement for AA males may include family influences, parental involvement, motivation, expectations, peer influences, and environmental factors. Ramsey (2007) showed that students from two-parent homes with involved fathers did better in school than students with only one parent. The study revealed how well AA male students did in school when fathers were involved versus when fathers were absent from the students' lives. The author concluded that the family impacted academic success among AA male students.

In a study by Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009), the authors found that the educational level of parents had an effect on their children because parents' expectations were high and value was placed on in-school and outside educational activities. In addition, the home environment helped children become successful in school because parents promoted the importance of work, the value of education, establishing good relationships, and being mentally healthy (Davis-Kean & Saxon, 2009). Further, Davis-Kean (2005) suggested that AA children were more successful when parent behaviors focused on reading and warmth of a caring home environment.

Expanding research has shown that parental involvement is a critical factor and could lead to improving student achievement. In reference to AA males, Toldson, Harrison, Perine, Carreiro, and Caldwell (2006) believed that when collaboration between children and parents is evident, the existence of such interaction could determine success. Family influence seems to be a determinant of success or failure according to the level of involvement. Harper (2012) showed that many AA males' families had high expectations for them to be successful and go to college. Participants from the study were successful because parents stressed that college was the only option, once they graduated from high school.

To improve the achievement gap, the Arkansas Department of Education (2012b) required schools in Arkansas to follow Title 1 guidelines or state requirements to develop a parental-involvement plan. Those requirements hold schools accountable for creating a plan that would ensure and create avenues for families to become more involved in the education of their children. According to the Arkansas Department of Education, Title 1 was designed to close the achievement gaps that exist in today's school for minority and nonminority students. The objective of Title 1 is to provide opportunities for every student so that they can receive a quality education by meeting proficiency levels on state assessments, based on academic standards that

are taught in the classroom by teachers (Malburg, 2012). This literature review shows that AA males are not performing as well as other ethnic groups. Title 1 provides opportunities for parents of those children to become involved through the parental-involvement plan.

A parental-involvement plan should be developed by the student's family and school. This puts accountability on both parties as they work together to create increased student achievement (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012b). Schools districts are responsible for developing policies by involving parents in the creation of parental-involvement plans. The district then holds each individual school accountable for developing these plans in a joint effort with parents. To improve student achievement on the school level, schools are required by the Arkansas Department of Education to meet six requirements in building capacity for parental involvement. Table 2.7 shows a list of the six requirements.

Table 2.7

Requirements for Parental Involvement

Promote and give parents information that would help them understand the monitoring process of a child's performance.
Ensure that materials are accessible for parents to help their children.
Train school staff on how to collaborate with parents about the importance of parental involvement.
Develop programs to involve parents at the school.
Provide clear communication with parents about what programs are offered at the school.
Give parents opportunities to share their ideas as to what type of programs they may want for their child.

The literature highlights ways to involve parents in their child's education. It then becomes the parents' responsibility to get involved. Parental involvement helps students' academic performance as well as the teachers' morale because it gives teachers a sense of support (Cordry & Wilson, 2004). To further involve parent in the planning of the parental-

involvement plan, the Arkansas Department of Education requires Title 1 schools to work together to create a parent compact. The compact is designed to give educators in the school, a student's parents, and the student an opportunity to share in how the school and home relationship will be developed to improve student achievement.

The Arkansas Department of Education requires that all school districts and schools make the parental-involvement plan available by putting it on the districts' or schools' websites. To ensure the plan effectively impacts and improves student achievement, increasing the level of parents participating in school activities and eliminating barriers that decrease parental involvement, it is evaluated on an annual basis (Arkansas Department of Education, 2012b). Further, the information should be shared with parents and they must be involved in the planning process to make any necessary changes that will better assist students to achieve academic success.

One study on how parental involvement affected AA males' achievement at a single-gender and coeducational middle school showed that parents were supportive and involved in their children's education despite their socioeconomic status (Nellums, 2011). Although the study showed that AA students had academic success in single-gender and coeducational schools, they still did not perform as well as white students when assessed in literacy and mathematics on the Arkansas Benchmark examination. AA students represented a larger population rate in both the single-gender and coeducational middle schools. The researcher (Nellums, 2011) showed that students in the coeducational middle school outperformed those who attended the single-gender middle school. It should be noted that the coeducational middle school had better resources (a gifted-and-talented program and more-advanced-degree or highly

qualified teachers). Previous literature from this review suggested that these are resources that have caused disparities in the AA male pursuit of an equal, fair, and quality education.

When comparing children from intact and non-intact families, one researcher noted that children from ages 3 to 12 from intact families have higher mathematics scores than those from non-intact families (Hofferth, 2006), whereas children from ages 6 to 11 performed better in reading (Marcia & Corcoran, 2001). This is significant because there is hope for AA males to achieve in school when families are involved in the educational process.

Jabulani (2008) looked at the mathematics performance levels of ethnic groups and found that AA students were rated in last place when compared to Asian, Caucasian, and Hispanic students. No clear reasons were given as to why AAs were in last place, but the researcher suggested that the mathematics expectations of the family and their socioeconomic status could be a contributing factor. In a study of motivational factors influencing the academic achievement of adolescent AA males, Lamb (2010) suggested that when parents placed emphasis on education, it contributed to academic success.

In recent history, the U.S. Department of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009) showed that fourth-grade males made mathematics progress in cities like Atlanta, Boston, District of Columbia, and New York City, whereas eighth-grade reading gains were made in Atlanta, Boston, Charlotte, the District of Columbia, and New York City. Despite the gains, this does not compare to the large number of AA males who are failing. NAEP suggests that this group of males can be supported if larger cities network with one another to mentor families.

A key to mentoring families could be to ensure that parents understand their role in the educational activities of their children. The father's role is critical and has been attributed to

higher achievement in the child's academics (McBride et al., 2005). When parents were involved, children had a tendency to move toward higher educational goals such as graduation from high school. These levels were higher than their school peers who did not have parents involved in their education (Barnard, 2004)

D. F. Bailey (2003) focused on holding AA males accountable for their success by providing empowerment and intervention programs that fostered students' success. Bailey's intervention program (Gentlemen on the Move) was created to enhance social excellence with an emphasis on academics and nurturing AA males' success. The program was discussed with students and leaders created a collaborative relationship that involved family members, the community, and school staff.

Research continues to show parental involvement as a key element in student success. Howard (2008) pointed out that it is important to not alienate parents when they show up at the school. Instead, partnerships should be established to make parents feel welcome. By doing so, parents would feel important and play an active role in ensuring that the school is successful (Howard, 2008). For administrators, interacting with families and building relationships with the community are essential for student achievement (Educational Leadership Constituent Council [ELCC], 2011).

In an article by Herbert (2010), the author highlighted the importance of the family being together to protect the child against life obstacles. Herbert believed that it was through the family that children could feel safe and believe that marked success was possible in life. Herbert suggested that AA men should take on the responsibility of being in the home environment and supporting their children so they do not have to face life struggles. Further, community members should get involved to aid those children who face continuing barriers.

Motivation and Expectation Implications

Motivation and expectations among AA males is an important factor to understanding whether an AA is successful in school. Table 2.8 displays the relevant literature about how motivation and expectations are important for AA males in their quest for academic achievement.

Some AA males have had success in school and it is important to find out what motivated that achievement. According to NAEP (2009), reading scores for AA males ranked sixth in the nation when compared to other schools in the country. These findings could be an incentive for educational experts to consider what successful states are doing to get such impressive results. By doing so, a blueprint for success could be created so that other struggling ethnic groups would be the recipients of continued academic achievement.

People are motivated to achieve for different reasons and it may not be the same for each individual. In McClelland's motivational-needs theory of achievement, authority/power, and affiliation, the theorist believed that people could exhibit more than one of these characteristics to be successful (Chapman, 2009). The theory states that when people are motivated by achievement, their families expect them to be able to take on responsibilities earlier than families who feel their child is not ready for expected tasks (ACCEL, 2013).

Table 2.8

Motivation and Expectations

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
Anderson & Rohs, 2001	Journal	Literature review	Provided information on which motivation need were affiliated with agricultural students
Boykin & Noguera, 2011	Book	Literature review	Promoted moving away from poor strategies that did not close the achievement gap
Educational Leadership Constituent Council, 2011	Standards	Literature review	Provided educational standards that are essential to student achievement
Fisher, 2000	Book	Literature review	Discussed ways to improve minority achievement
Hall, 2013	Book Review	Literature review	Provided information on how quality student and teacher relationships could close the achievement gap
Mansfield, 2006	Book	Literature review	Investigated motivational needs of principals to determine their effects on student achievement
U.S. Department of Education, 2009	Assessment	Statistics	Provided the ranking of African American males' reading scores in the nation, compared with others in the country
Miller, 2001	Article	Dissertation review	Discussed how expectations could affect student achievement
Sergiovanni, Kelleher, McCarthy & Fowler, 2009	Book	Dissertation review	Provided insight into how schools work in relation to governance and administration
Turner, 1996	Journal	Dissertation review	Discussed how students perceived motivational needs

An older study geared toward determining what motivated agricultural students found that of all ethnic groups, more AAs selected McClelland's need for achievement and power

(Turner & Herren, 1997). Although, the findings did not specifically name AA males, it did show what motivated the ethnic group. In one study of McClelland's theory, principals from North Carolina were investigated to find out which of the three motivational needs (achievement, power, and motivation) had an effect on student achievement (Mansfield, 2006).

The findings revealed that each principal from elementary and secondary grades showed a greater need to be in power over a need for affiliation. In comparing elementary to secondary principals, elementary principals favored a need to achieve more. This may be significant for AA males because the elementary level is where their educational journey begins. Further, the study showed when principals displayed a need to achieve, their students performed better. In this regard, the principal could be the key to whether a student has academic success or failure. The principal's role as the school manager or instructional leader is crucial to the school-improvement process and is responsible for promoting goals for all students (Sergiovanni et al., 2009).

Although all people can be motivated to achieve, the challenge is how to motivate them to achieve in the academic arena. Miller (2001) noted that students increase in achievement if they are expected to do so, but support is also necessary. Further, the opposite could occur if expectations are lowered for people (Miller, 2001). In a school, the building leader plays an important role in ensuring that expectations are held to a high level. The leader has the role of influencing teachers, motivating, supporting, and creating a culture in the organization that is going to foster student learning and overall teacher effectiveness (ELCC, 2011).

One study showed that for teachers who displayed academic expectations for urban AA students, a positive classroom atmosphere developed between the teacher and the students. They felt that their school experiences were meaningful because teachers showed a genuine interest

toward them as people (Fisher, 2000). This type of relationship could be an essential element in motivating AA males to achieve in school. In a book review by Hall (2013), citing the research of Boykin and Noguera (2011), students of color (AA and Latino) responded to teachers who engaged them in the learning process by creating a positive teacher–student relationship. The responses led to an increase in students' academic performance. Further, Hall discovered that a quality relationship between the student and the teacher created an opportunity to close the achievement gap for students of color. Table 2.9 provides information on how AA males were able to become academically successful.

Table 2.9

Success for African American Males

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
Council of the Great City Schools, 2010	Report	Literature review	Provided information on how schools help children achieve
Noguera, 2012	Journal	Literature review	Focused on how to meet the challenges of African American and Latino males in education

According to the Council of the Great City Schools (2010), several males seemed to have been influenced to achieve from successful schools that offered the necessary umbrella of support. Of those students, one young man set high standards for himself and was determined to be successful. Through his endurance, he was accepted by four top colleges in the nation. A second achieved by displaying consistent work habits and being excited about education. His determination was rewarded by being accepted by five top colleges.

A third young man was driven to achieve because he felt that education was the only path for success. Although, he faced many obstacles in life, the young man had an opportunity to enroll in one of six universities of his choice. A fourth young man seemed to fit McClelland's

affiliation-need theory, due to being involved in many activities where he displayed the ability to influence other people. Through his desire to be successful, he was accepted by five colleges. Despite coming from low-income environments such as the South Bronx and Harlem in New York City, AA and Latino males have achieved success and high graduation rates (Noguera, 2012). The research showed that academics such as Frederick Douglass, Thurgood Marshall, and Eagle were instrumental in success because their focus was on learning and building positive relationships between students and teachers.

Peer Influence

Peer influence has been a consistent factor in the success or failure in the African American culture. Table 2.10 provides a listing of the literature relevant to how peer influence impacted academic success.

Peer pressure has different affects on people and could cause them to react in different ways. Fryer (2006) explained that minority students who achieved academically were looked upon as acting White by their peers. Harper (2012) found that AA males who did not come from a background where they were motivated to attend college or focus on academics were just as capable as their peers who performed well in school. According to successful AAs, their parents valued setting high expectations; experiences that were unavailable to low-performing peers.

Making good grades could have a negative impact on AA males. Ramsey (2007) pointed out that AA males were often ridiculed by their peers when they made good grades. Intelligent AA males were viewed as having traits associated with girls when they made good grades. Furthermore, Ramsey pointed out that high-performing AA males usually felt pressure from their low-performing friends who saw them as acting White because of the success they were achieving in academics.

Table 2.10

Peer Influence

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
Fryer, 2006	Journal	Literature review	Defined acting White when minority students made good grades
Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998	Study	Literature review	Examined the value of middle school students' achievement
Harper, 2006	Study	Literature review	Showed that achieving African American males were supported by their peers
Harper, 2012	Report	Literature review	Presented information on successful experiences of African American males in college
Howard, 2010	Book	Literature review	Described the importance of peers as students grow and develop
Ramsey, 2007	Dissertation	Literature review	Presented how predictors of achievement correlated with one another
Young, 2007	Study	Literature review	Provided information on how interacting with peers has a positive impact on achievement

In past literature, AA males were considered to be popular when they made poor grades and displayed inappropriate behavior (Graham et al., 1998). However, in one study on the academic success of Black males (Young, 2007), participants were viewed as being part of the group, due to interacting and establishing a positive relationship with others while joining a student organization. If the development of positive relationships in an organization promotes academic success for AA males, educational advocates should focus attention on organizations that brings such results. Lamb (2010) found contributing factors to AA males' success in school. Those factors are listed in Table 2.11.

Table 2.11

Factors Contributing to African American Males' Success in School

(a) Having peers who had similar interests.
(b) Viewing school experiences as enjoyable.
(c) Interacting with individuals who they could look up to and having support from people in their environment.
(d) Being involved with activities outside the school day and church functions.

It would be appropriate to say that peer influence could either have a negative or positive influence on students while they are in school. Because negative peer influence does exist, Howard (2010) suggested that negative influences could be hindered and turned to positive if educators focused on preventive measures that would eliminate negative peer influence. By doing so, students could have positive experiences in school that could lead to academic success.

Howard (2010) believed that peer groups were a necessity, as students continued to develop as they got older, and educators should encourage good decision making when students interact with their peer group. Further, Howard (2010) noted that peers spend much time with one another where security and identity are built. Lamb (2010) found that peer influence contributed to academic success for AA males, due to having similar influences. If students have common interests, identify with others, and develop positive relationships, outcomes for AA males could lead to continued academic achievement.

In a study by Harper (2006) on AA male undergraduate college students, AA males contributed their successful college experiences to peers who were of the same race and were regarded as high achievers. Each AA male was academically successful, with grade-point averages ranging from 3.2 to 4. Unlike some earlier research in this literature review, in which AA males were viewed as acting White when they displayed academic success (Fryer, 2006) or

being seen as having female traits when they make good grades (Ramsey, 2007), in Harper's study they supported one another and built positive relationships. AA males from this study were not criticized or excluded from their peer groups due to being successful. Instead, they were able to display their leadership and gain recognition from the small population of AA men and women on campus. Membership in campus fraternities also contributed to successful peer-relations and support because members of the fraternity encouraged and recognized one another's success. Students felt that it was important to be around other AA men who had goals and had a positive outlook on a successful future. If this type of peer collaboration is effective, support groups such as fraternities could be key factors in creating a path for AA men to achieve in a college or university environment.

Environment Factors

One factor that may contribute to the success or failure of academic success in AA males could be the environment. Table 2.12 focuses on the importance of environment and organizations designed to help AA males excel in academics and life; the table shows the literature reviewed in this section.

Ramsey (2007) found that one's home environment had a significant correlation to neighborhood safety and quality. If boys came from neighborhoods that were safe in nature, they had a stronger support base. When focusing on safe and quality neighborhoods, parents normally held high academic expectations for their boys. In fact, Ramsey found a significant relationship between safe/quality neighborhoods and high academic expectations.

Table 2.12

Environmental Factors

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
African American Images, 2007	Article	Literature review	Reported the historical perspective on change.
Heath, 1983	Book	Literature review	Discussed how ethnic groups viewed their language as being incorrect
Howard, 2008	Article	Literature review	Gave insight on how African American males felt race impacted their education
Katz & McClellan, 1991	Eric	Document	Presented the importance of instilling social development at a young age
Ramsey, 2007	Dissertation	Literature review	Presented how predictors of achievement correlated with one another
Schott Foundation, 2012	Report	Literature review	Provided information on the Black Male Engagement Initiative

The Black Male Engagement (BME) initiative was piloted in Detroit, MI and Philadelphia, PA. The program is designed to promote and build stronger communities for AA males so that they could be successful in life (Schott Foundation, 2012). The BME program focus on AA male achievement and role models met together to discuss and celebrate their accomplishments in a public setting. The strength of the program is to engage with other AA males such as community leaders, AA males from the business sector, students, coaches, and community members.

By meeting and being engaged with one another in the community, BME gives AA males an opportunity to recognize achievements in a public setting that may otherwise go unnoticed. Mentoring and creating businesses are also part of the BME (2013). The program is composed of the three guiding principles: (a) AA males are recognized for being engaged in their community to highlight how AA males are strengthening and making their communities better.

Members record videos and show others how dedicated they are to enhancing their environment. (b) AA males are reinforced on a social level; men make connections with others in a collaborative manner that brings about respect. (c) Resources are provided to their cause. Money is not a driving force in this program, but it was funded to take on projects that would strengthen the community by involving other people. The projects included making veterans feel welcomed as they came back to the communities, creating an opportunity to create a garden in vacant parts of the community, engaging parents by providing them with strategies on how to parent, and working with families who have a special-needs child such as autism (BME, 2013). If these programs are working in Detroit and Philadelphia, other states could pattern this initiative and put it into action. Programs such as these could make the difference in AA males' achievement in school or life, making positive contributions to society and their respective communities.

An AA male's environment could give them an avenue for academic success if programs are put in place to help. One such program in Chicago, IL is called Chicago's Urban Prep Academy. This program is designed to assist AA males from low socioeconomic backgrounds and poor neighborhoods in going to college (L. Bailey, 2012). Urban Prep Academy is a charter school for AA males and has been successful in making it possible for each senior in high school to attend college. The program has been successful in this regard from 2010 to 2013.

To ensure that AA males stay on task and are kept abreast of the obstacles they may face, a department composed of alumni members of Urban Prep Academy meets with the students. Alumni members also speak to students two times a month by calling them on the telephone, sending out e-mails, and contacting them on the Internet network, Facebook (L Bailey, 2012). The Urban Prep Academy's elements for success consist of a curriculum that focuses on

members' experiences in their communities and culture. The four components of the program are called the Arcs: (a) academic arc prepares students to be competitive in college courses and focuses on literacy and mathematics; (b) service arc develops character and leadership skills while requiring high school students to engage in activities and projects with other students to help improve their communities; (c) professional and college arc engages students in internships that expose them to the business world, and various colleges and universities offer real-life college experiences to help student better understand what college will be like; and (d) activity arc makes it mandatory for all students to participate in a selected extracurricular program. To satisfactorily complete the activity arc, activities must be completed yearly (L. Bailey, 2012).

The Urban Prep Academy has three successful schools and could serve as a model for other states to follow to improve the academic success of AA males. Of the many factors that AA males face in the United States, environment plays an important part in obtaining an education (Howard, 2008). Some communities have the proper resources in educational systems for students to become successful, whereas many AA male students come from neighborhoods with unsuccessful schools that lack the proper resources to bring about academic success (African American Images, 2007).

Another educational resource for AA males is the Guide Right Program from Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity (2012). The program is designed to expose AA men to successful career-oriented AA men who give guidance to students by helping them choose careers of interest. The foundation or backbone of the Guide Right Program is called the Kappa League. Kappa League is part of a leadership program that assists AA male high school students by providing mentors who guide them to achieve realistic goals that contribute to their respective communities in a leadership capacity (Kappa Alpha Psi, 2012). The fundamental purpose of the fraternity is

achievement. Educators who wish to close the academic achievement gap between AA males and other groups of students may be guided by components of this program.

The way AA males communicate or use a certain language may be belittled as inappropriate because others in society may have problems understanding their culture, thereby creating a cultural gap (African American Images, 2007). According to one researcher, AA males were socialized in their environment, causing them to be more animated and emotional in their conversations (Heath, 1983). Heath (1983) spent 10 years focused on gaining a clear understanding of learning problems from White and Black communities in Piedmont, North Carolina.

It was clear from Heath's (1983) research that the two communities perceived language in different ways. The White culture viewed the Black culture's language as incorrect or artistic in nature simply because they could not make a connection to its meaning (Heath, 1983). What may be normal at home or in Black communities may be viewed as negative to the classroom teacher. According to one study, some behaviors are learned and could be adjusted or changed with the correct type of intervention (Katz & McClellan, 1991).

Heath (1983) considered Black cultural language usage to be correct and any attempt to disavow it was considered counterproductive. Heath's research revealed that understanding a student's background would help that student achieve and that cultural heritage could be integrated into the school's standards of academics. More importantly, familiarity with a student's background could bring about a better understanding of the proper way to use language, by incorporating their personal style of speaking, which was derived from their culture (Heath, 1983).

Problems Summarized

There are several problems that AA males have when trying to reach academic success. Table 2.13 highlights the literature that describes problems AAs face in today's educational system and name initiatives that are designed to assist AA males, as well as all students (See Table 2.13).

Table 2.13

Summary Review of Literature

Author	Research	Methods	Conclusions
D. F. Bailey, 2003	Journal	Literature review	Presented information on how African Americans can achieve success
Educational Leadership Constituent Council, 2011	Standards	Literature review	Provided educational standards essential to achievement
Kafele, 2012	Article	Literature review	Presented information on how to empower African American males
Kunjufu, 2005	Book	Literature review	Discussed how suspensions, expulsions, and special-education referrals contribute to African American males' academic failure

There are numerous studies about the academic failure of AA males. This issue is not isolated to one particular area or region. Kunjufu (2005) attributed the academic failure of AA males to high rates of suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to special-education classes. The 2010 and 2012 Schott 50 state report on public education of Black males (Holzman) showed a disparity in several states in low graduation rates for AA males. The Schott 50 state report also addresses concern for AA males' high rates of suspensions.

This common theme is reflected throughout the literature review. Despite the low-achievement levels of AA males, there are some initiatives, like Kafele's (2012) empowerment

program, D. F. Bailey's (2003) Gentlemen On The Move Program, the BME (2013), and the Urban Prep Academies (2012) that are designed to assist the AA male in being successful in school and in life. More programs such as these are needed and could be a way to close the achievement gap for AA males that exists in today's schools.

The studies described in this literature review clearly show a need for educational advocates to take an active role in closing an achievement gap that has existed for a long time. Because parental involvement is important to a child's success in school, the Arkansas Department of Education has been instrumental in ensuring that school districts and individual schools in Arkansas develop a parental-involvement plan to involve parents and community members in the education of the state's students.

If schools are to play an active role in ensuring all students are successful, it becomes important for school leaders to embrace and carry out Educational Leadership Constituent Council standards (ELCC, 2011). The standards are designed for school districts and schools to improve academic performance of students. The six standards are as follows: (a) districts and schools should involve all stakeholders in creating a vision that is shared by all; (b) school cultures must be designed to enhance a student's learning; (c) school programs should be evaluated to ensure student success and the management of the organizations must be proficient; (d) consistent effort must put into ensuring that students, staff, and members of the community are involved in the school's programs; (e) all members of the school organization should display good ethics, honesty, and consistency in ensuring students are achieving academically; (f) member schools must become familiar with changing trends in society that affect learning, be familiar with educational laws, understand the different cultures of students and their families, have knowledge of how the economy impacts education, and how politics plays a role in how

schools are managed; and (g) the building leader should have an internship experience that prepares the leader for building-level management and daily operations of the school. If states hold schools leaders and staff members accountable for these standards, the outcome could result in academic improvement for AA male students and set the stage for helping other ethnic groups achieve.

Other researchers in this literature review offered possible solutions to the problem of AA males' underachievement. Kunjufu (2012) presented a plan that could assist AA males from dropping out of schools. Schools should (a) decrease the turnover rate for building administrators and school teachers, (b) provide students with highly qualified staff, (c) expose AA males to classes that focused on single gender, (d) give attention toward increasing grade-point averages, and (e) promote school safety as a priority. Communities should (a) make it a goal to create academies that would meet on Saturday's, (b) have local organizations such as churches adopt schools, (c) collaborate to promote safe environments in the community, and (d) provide AA mentors for AA males. Kunjufu (2012) encouraged parents to be actively involved in the lives of their children and for students to take the initiative to put forth effort in completing their homework and reading on a daily basis.

Conclusion

The educational problems that AA males have faced and continue to face have been examined by researchers described in Chapter 2. They gave several reasons why AA males continue to struggle in their quest for educational success. Despite the continuing struggles for AA males, the literature reflects some initiatives and programs that are working. It then becomes essential for educational advocates and policy makers to put in place programs that are proven to

help AA males succeed. By doing so, it may be possible that more AA males would graduate from our nation's schools.

Chapter 3

Research Design

Introduction

Chapter 3 describes qualitative methods that were used to answer the research question, identifying factors that contributed to academic and professional success for AA male principals. Chapter 3 begins with the theoretical framework of the study followed by a statement of the research problem and the research question and subquestions. Next, I described the research design for how the research will be conducted and the timeline. Then, a description of the research design in conjunction with research methods gives the reader more information about what leads to success academically and professionally for a group of AA men. After that, there is an explanation about depth versus breadth that will further clarify the scope of the research and use of qualitative methods.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors which contributed to academic and professional success for AA male principals. McClelland's human-motivational-needs theory was used as the theoretical framework of this study. In a qualitative study, the researcher has the opportunity to engage with participants through observation, questionnaires or analysis of the content, and interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Although these methods are useful in obtaining information from participants, Marshal and Rossman (2006) believed that researchers should be neutral during the study and guard against any bias.

Theoretical Framework

McClelland's human-motivational-needs theory was used as a theoretical framework for the study. In this theory, McClelland believed people are motivated by needs of achievement, power, and affiliation (as cited in Mind Tools, 2013). McClelland generalized that the need to

achieve drives a person to be successful. In this need, a person is not afraid to take risk to achieve goals, insist on being provided with consistent input about accomplishments, and prefers to pursue endeavors alone. The need for power motivates a person to impact the lives of others by being in a leadership role: having a desire to have the last word, winning a competition is very important, and the person strives to be the center of attention. The need to affiliate is based on one's desire to belong and feel important to others; this person feels the need to be a part of the group, agrees with members of the group in order to be liked, focuses less on competition but more on interacting with others, and prefers to be sure of things and not take risks. This study might demonstrate how McClelland's human-motivational theory helps reveal factors that influence AA male principal's academic achievement and success.

This study fits McClelland's human-motivational-needs theory. The goal was to determine which factors influenced the academic achievement and success of AA male principals in a Midsouth state. The research question helped determine what motivated AA males to become successful. Through interviewing the participants of the study, I will might able to determine from transcribed data if they were motivated to become successful by one of McClelland's needs: achievement, power, or affiliation. The principal takes on the role of a manager over teachers because it is his role to manage the organization to help students become successful (ELCC, 2011). When discussing motivation and a need to achieve, McClelland and Burnham (2003) stated that psychologists believe some people's need to achieve made them behave in such a way that they do not always display effective management.

McClelland (1961) believed that people who had a need for power should be given an opportunity to manage other individuals. As an AA male principal, my need to achieve success was greater than a need to be affiliated with a group or have a need for power. By using this

framework, I was able to discover which AA male principals from the study were motivated by McClelland's three motivational needs (achievement, power, and affiliation). McClelland (1961) asserted that the three motivational needs develop over a period of time through the life experiences people encounter. I used this framework to collect data to interview AA male principals because it presented an opportunity to interact with participants. More importantly, the interviews opened avenues to answer the research questions.

Through the interviews, I was able to collect in-depth data to find out what factors influenced principals' academic success. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) viewed the interview process as a way to extract information from people. They focused on the need for a researcher to look into the experiences and feelings of participants. This process may reveal the factors that motivated AA males to achieve. I would be able to observe behaviors that clarified how leaders involved others in decision-making processes or wanted to maintain control in this process.

The data was collected by audio taping interviews. The recorder gathered the voices from participants that were used to transcribe for accuracy. I also used member checks to ensure accuracy. As the participants responded to the research questions, they revealed their feelings and attitudes. This framework was used to collect data and enhance the study through triangulation. This process involved interviews, member checks, and analyzing themes and sub-themes. Patton (1990) supported the notion that when conducting research, the researcher should use more than one method to collect data. By using several methods of collecting data, the information from the study would be stronger and more credible to the reader.

To give readers a clear picture of the demographics of AA male principals, Data was collected on their level of teaching experience, total years of administrative experience as an assistant principal and principal, and what grade levels they supervised. The demographics

provided additional information about AA male principals that would enhance the reader's understanding.

Problem Statement

AA males continue to struggle academically in schools across the nation. In much of the literature, researchers describe AA males as at risk of academic failure. Some of the reasons for academic failure cited in Chapter 2 include family influences, motivation and expectations, peer influence, and the environment. The widespread lack of school success in this demographic presents a consistent and disturbing trend. It is important for educators to identify AA male students' needs and provide the requisite support they require to develop into strong academic students.

There continue to be disparities in the equality of highly qualified or effective educators and administrators (teachers and principals) for AA males. Other problems facing AA males in their quest for success are the lack of equal access to schools with a safe environment, lack of classes with rigor that prepare students for college, disparities in school discipline, a disproportionate number of referrals to special-education classes, low graduation rates, and higher rates of incarceration (Washington Informer, 2012). The main focus of this study was to investigate AA principals to determine which factors contributed to their success.

Research Question

1. What factors shape academic achievement of AA male principals?

Sub-questions

1. What factors shape career success of AA male principals?
2. What challenges limit participant's success?

Research Design and Timeline

Researchers attempt to seek information that lends insight into the lives of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and researchers should remain unbiased. The current study will use the following procedures: (a) face-to-face open-ended interviews aimed at gathering information on factors that directly impacted the participant's academic and professional success; (b) member checks; and (c) analysis of themes and sub-themes.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that ensuring trustworthiness requires prolonged engagement and persistent engagement. Prolonged engagement means staying in the field with participants for a prolonged period. Persistent engagement means continuing to stay in the field to look for inconsistencies. Studying AA principals over a period of time will be important to enhance trustworthiness of the study. Once approval was granted from the dissertation committee, the university Institutional Review Board would be asked to approve the study. Once consent was granted by the Institution Review Board, superintendents of the school districts in which the study was to be conducted were contacted. I called the superintendents by telephone, introduced the study on AA males, and informed them that during the process each principal would need to be interviewed for a minimal of 90 minutes. Superintendents were asked to grant me permission to conduct the study on AA males in their respective school districts. Each principal to be interviewed gave me informed consent to participate in the study, with the right to withdraw at any time.

Site and sample selection. Schools in a Midsouth state were chosen. The interviews took place at the employment site determined by the participants in this qualitative study. Due to attending several workshops with principals around the state during the academic school year, additional site selections may take place at administrative meetings. These sites were selected

due to a high probability of making contact with participants in the profession at these different places. The sample selection includes elementary and secondary principals.

Selection of participants. For this qualitative study, I used the dialogue of six AA male principals located at public school systems in a Midsouth state. The participants in this study were able to provide valid feedback on the factors to be examined through semistructured interviews. The AA male participants were able to add validity to the study by sharing information on what factors influenced them to become successful in the academic arena and their profession. In this qualitative study, interviews are a way to obtain the data needed to answer the research and sub-research questions.

Lambert and Loiselle (2008) stated that an interview is a tool used to obtain information from individuals who are acknowledged as participants in a study. They believed the role of participants were to share their experiences or views about a certain topic established by the researcher. In this interview process, the participants of the study were asked a question or set of questions that elicited responses giving them an opportunity to share their beliefs. Interviews are important because they allow participants to let their voice be heard concerning a certain topic and in a semistructured format.

Participants are allowed to tell their own story as it relates to the research topic (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). As people go through life, they create life experiences. Personal experiences are not normally divulged to others. However, it is through interviewing others that the researcher or interviewer has the opportunity to discover those life experiences (Schultze & Avital, 2011). There is a reason some AA male principals have had academic and career success. Through an interview format, I was able to ask research questions in which each participant had an opportunity to tell their story. The interviews were important because it gave

the me an opportunity to find out what paths each participant took to achieve success in their profession. The data from their stories allowed me to obtain meaningful information on how AA male principals became successful.

In-depth interviews are crucial to a study because they give the researcher insight into the thought process of the participant on the topic that is to be studied (Boyce & Palena, 2006). Therefore, in-depth interviews provide an avenue me to gather the necessary data without having to interview a large number of people. This interview format calls for interviewing fewer participants and in an environment such as the participant's worksite, where they would interact and answer questions more comfortably (Boyce & Palena, 2006).

As a researcher, it is important to receive truthful information because the study could make a difference for other AA males who may have aspirations to become a principal. Further, it would make the study more credible to receive truthful information. It was important for me to establish and build rapport with participants because it offered an opportunity for AA male principals to get to know more about me as the researcher. I believe that this type of collaboration generated a sense of trust from participants. From the perspective of a neopositivist, it is assumed that the participants in a study who are interviewed would tell the truth and provide information that is important for the study (Schultze & Avital, 2011). I had the same assumption and believed in the importance of interacting with honest professionals who would be excited to share experiences related to the interview questions.

Rabionet (2011) used semistructured interviews with a group of junior researchers because Rabionet could select a solid topic. She asked participants questions to discover themes that were aligned with the research. In Rabionet's research, the voices of participants were important, warranting the time spent setting up the interviews. The semistructured format is

essential for this research because it allows questions to be asked and offers participants an opportunity to answer research questions, from which themes would be developed that were aligned with the dissertation topic.

Rabionet (2011) also used the semistructured format because it allowed me to ask additional questions, to discern information that was not brought out in the interviews. To obtain successful outcomes from the interviews, I believe this would be an effective format because it presented an opportunity to ask additional questions in order to achieve quality responses related to the research. Careful consideration was given during interviews to ensure participants' responses are not influenced. I adhered to the interview method of collecting data because research shows that it adds credibility to a qualitative study (Brekhus, Galiher, & Gubrium, 2005).

Further, Brekhus et al., 2005 believed that rich data could be derived from inquiry that was qualitative in nature. This was due to participants of a study having an opportunity to give detailed information about experiences and events for the phenomenon that was under study. In this study, the phenomenon of interest was an attempt to discover factors that influenced academic achievement and success of AA male principals. Through interviewing AA males, they were able to share what motivated them to succeed, what transpired in their lives to keep them going, and the direction they took to make it happen. Similarly, Brekhus et al. (2005) discussed that rich data from qualitative studies involves how participants were motivated, what events happened during their life experiences, and how relationships caused them to take action based on those events and life experiences.

Depth versus breadth. The interviews allowed me to obtain the necessary data by questioning participants to answer the research question that guided the study. This type of

inquiry is referred to as depth because it creates a focused awareness of the context and opportunities experienced by all participants in the study (Patton, 2002). For breadth, Todres and Galvin (2005) described this process as an open-ended inquiry and a broad way to look at a phenomenon of interest. Here, the experiences of participants may not be as transparent as would be depth in a qualitative study. Todres and Galvin (2005) viewed depth as a way to look more deeply into participants' life experiences, so that rich data could be discovered. The information received was detailed as I engaged in an opportunity to be immersed in the data. To add richness and detail to the study, it is important that depth was pursued rather than breadth.

Through interviewing participants who took part in the study, there was a deep search into their experiences on factors that contributed to their success. To gather information that helped develop themes from the research questions, it was important to make participants feel comfortable and gain their trust. I presented myself in a professional manner, displayed a friendly attitude, and paid attention to detail. This was an essential key in getting them to be more forthcoming during the interview. A meaningful dialogue is important and I expected to gather interesting and uninteresting information. However, I believed that all conversations and information received from the interviews were valuable.

"There is no such thing as a worthless conversation, provided you know what to listen for. And questions are the breath of life for a conversation" (Miller, 1965). Based on the research question from the study and interviewing AA male principals, it was my goal to seek descriptive information that would contribute to the field of education and help other AA males create a path of success. The experiences of how they became successful are an important key that reflects back to the research questions of the study.

> While concepts provide a common language for discussion and give organization structure to the findings, it is the descriptive details that add the richness and variations

> and lift findings out of the realm of the ordinary. It is depth of substance that makes the difference between thin, uninteresting findings and findings that have the potential to make a difference in policy and practice. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 306)

"Thick, rich description provides the foundation for qualitative analysis and reporting. Good description takes the reader into the setting being described" (Patton, 2002, p. 437). People experience success in different ways. Discovering how AA males succeeded and became principals could allow others to look more deeply, examine their stories, and find hope to follow similar paths. To gain the attention of the reader, it was important to go into depth and describe AA male principals' life experiences toward success and highlight transparent descriptions of their successes, explaining how they got to a certain level of achievement. From the life experiences of AA male principals, I wanted the reader to understand how each participant's path was shaped and hear the detailed voices of how they were able to obtain success through their experiences. "Qualitative studies share the capacity to open up a way that we can understand the phenomenon studied and draw our own interpretations about meaning and significance" (Patton, 2002, p. 438).

Data-collection procedures. Superintendents were called by telephone seeking permission to conduct the study in their districts. I spoke with each of the six AA male principals who participated in the study. The study and forms needed for signatures were explained. Their questions were answered, rapport was established with participants, a tentative schedule for interviews was created, visitation dates on their worksites were planned and collecting data was all a part of the procedure.

For participants in the study to better understand how their confidentiality would be secure, I informed them that they would be required to sign a consent form that explained my study and gave them an opportunity to decide if they wanted to participate. I informed each

participant that the study was approved by the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board, their participation was voluntary and no risks were involved. Before participants agreed to participate in the study, they were informed about the confidentiality agreement. It was explained to each participant that the signed agreement would ensure all identities, schools, and school districts would remain confidential. It was explained to each participant that data would be kept confidential to the extent of the law and University policy, coded, and stored in a secure area. Participant's interviews were transcribed, and themes and common trends were identified as part of the data-collection process.

Data analysis. Through transcribing the participant interviews, themes and common trends emerged from the data. Each participant's interview was recorded and transcribed word for word to give the reader a clear understanding of all participants' responses. The document collection could highlight that participants' responses are similar in nature and yield commonalities of what success they experienced in school and their professions. As a guide or roadmap for data analysis, I used the structure of open coding designed by Marshall and Rossman (2006). The purpose in using this design was to look at what similarities participants shared to achieve success. Having an opportunity to visit the participants' work site created an avenue to interact with each of them through interviews. During this process, I related to and understood their journey based on my experiences as an AA male principal. Open coding presented an opportunity to understand their lives more fully, through face-to face interviews. From this process and analyzing the data, I was able to recognize common themes as participant shared some of the same ideas on factors that allowed them to become successful.

Researcher's Role Management

Creswell and Miller (2000) acknowledged that the researcher is the link to providing data others can view**.** Creswell (2003) stated, "inquirers must explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal interests about their research topic and process" (p. 184). Creswell (2003) believed that by presenting the audience with previous experiences involving data, they would have a better understanding of the importance for the topic, site and participants. He thought it was essential for a researcher to show the interaction or connection between the researcher and participants of the study. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) refer to backyard research as a method where the researcher has an opportunity to study their own work atmosphere, the organization in which they are involved with and their friends.

Creswell (2003) viewed the collection of data as being a simple process that was convenient for the researcher. Further, he believed this process had the potential to cause problems because data could be incomplete and contain biases once findings were reported by the researcher. In order for the reader to view the findings as being trustworthy and accurate, Creswell (2003) believed that the outcome of backyard research should be validity.

Although, biases, personal experiences, and influences were kept out of this study, I anticipated that AA male principals would share some of the same factors that contributed to his success as a principal. I was curious to find out if the participant's journeys were similar to his and if some of the same barriers were encountered. The level of participation for this study involved me speaking with superintendents of AA male principals to obtain consent for interviewing participants that were going to be part of the study. The research site of each participant was visited. As a principal, I was interviewed at his work site on a continuous basis by students and teachers who are taking college classes. Most of the teachers seek an

administrative degree, whereas students are enrolled in educational undergraduate classes. Their purpose was to interview and observe the principal, gather data on his type of administrative style, and answer questions about the role of teachers, establishing a positive school culture, improving student achievement, and curriculum matters. Further, students and teachers interviewed and observed me at my worksite, which made the interviews more personal and the observations more meaningful.

During this experience, I established a positive relationship with the individuals through this process. As the researcher, remaining objective was important because I am an AA male principal who interviewed AA male principals in this study. Remaining neutral when participants were interviewed was essential because I wanted to ensure that he did not play a role in influencing responses in the interviews and observations.

The assumption was that I would have had similar and different experiences in obtaining educational and career success to those of the AA principals in the study. Due to this assumption and as the researcher, there was a management of eliminating biases so that transparent and detailed information could be obtained from participants' experiences. My bias was that principals should seek to employ the best teachers and staff members for students. I valued individuals who put students first to create an effective school culture of learning for every student in the building. I placed value on ensuring that students are equipped with the necessary resources that provide opportunities for learning.

As a principal, when I was interviewed and observed by teachers and students, it was important that responses from interviews were in direct line with what I was doing as a principal at the school. Through past experiences as a former teacher and assistant principal, it has been my observation that AA male students' academic success continues to fall behind other

subgroups nationwide. Through this experience, I have collaborated with other educators about AA male's in education, that there is a consensus that this group of individuals are failing in the educational system and many of them are not graduating from high school or going to college.

Some AA males overcome the obstacles and became principals. As a current principal, it is my role to find out what factors contributed to the academic and professional success of AA male principals. By visiting the work environment of these individuals and interacting with them through interviews, I made a connection with participants so they could recognize the importance of this study and the impact their leadership would have on AA male students as they progress through school. Through this process, my role as a researcher was to collect the information through interviews, transcribe data from interviews, and look for common themes and sub-themes to make this a valid study for the field.

Assumptions. Based on the literature review, there are a number of factors that influence academic achievement and success of AA males, and positive school experiences could provide opportunities for success. It would be realistic to assume that motivation, family, peers, environmental, and social factors play a key role in how AA males perform academically in school. Participants in this study are assumed to have similar paths to academic and professional success.

Interviews. The main research question and subquestions for this study are to be answered through interviewing participants. It is important for readers to know that some of the same questions were used during this process. The interviews used in this research were informal conversational interviews, standardized open-ended interviews, and a few closed fix-response interview questions.

Careful attention was considered for what type of interviews should be administered to participants to answer the main research question. Patton (2002) listed four types of interviews: informal-conversational interviews, guide-approach interviews, standardized open-ended interviews, and closed, fixed-response interviews. When the researcher is not familiar or does not know what happened, they use the *informal-conversational interview* method because they can ask what happened during the observation. The method of interviewing makes information transparent and adds clarity for the researcher, especially if something is not clear. During this interview, the researcher has the opportunity to ask the participants why they did something. A second method of interviewing is called the *interview-guide approach*, which keeps the researcher's interview tasks on track and entails a list of topics. The third type of interview is worded with extreme care. It is called the *standardized open-ended interview*. During this phase of interviews, participants are given an opportunity to respond in any way they would like when answering questions. This method gave me an option to compare responses with those of other interviewees. Further, to assist in obtaining common themes or trends for data analysis, questions are worded and in the same way and the same order. Finally, to gather demographic data from participants, the *closed fixed-response interview* is used. This interview process is in a survey format.

During qualitative research, observations are an essential source of data and give clarity to what was happening (Charmaz, 2006). To understand what is going on, observations must be focused on how individuals interact with one another, behaviors that are routine in nature, and places in which actions are present. The social organization is important for the observation because the participants of the study may be more relaxed or comfortable. Qualitative researchers often choose to change their focus to understand other points of view.

Trustworthiness and credibility. I used the triangulation method to add trustworthiness/validity to the study by providing access for peer reviews, administering member checks, audit trails, peer debriefing, observation of field notes or transcripts, research reflectivity, and multiple sources of data. Interviews and searching for themes and sub-themes were part of this process. Triangulation is an essential element in obtaining credibility for findings from the study (Merriam, 2009).

Biases will be addressed by ensuring time was spent at the research site of all participants in the study (persistent engagement). Sufficient time was spent on interviewing and establishing meaningful relationships (prolonged engagement) with participants to develop trustworthy data in the field. When a large amount of time is spent with research participants, they less readily feign behavior or feel the need to do so; moreover, they are more likely to be frank and comprehensive about the information they impart (Glesne, 1999, p. 151).

Trustworthiness of the data is important because the soundness and credibility of the research must be able to show the audience that the findings in the research were "worth paying attention to and worthy to take into account" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). When collecting data, it should be gathered carefully and in a precise manner. Data should be analyzed properly, make sense to the reader, and account for many perspectives and curiosities in a certain period of time (Patton, 2002). During this process, many perspectives and curiosities and what is realistic over a period of time will be reported.

To carefully weigh the quality of research for trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. During an investigation of participants, credibility will be used to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to be represented by being identified and by explaining information to the reader in

an accurate manner. Transferability refers to the ability to infer or compare research to something else that may be similar to what is being studied. Eisner (1991) used coherence, insight, and instrumental utility as other elements that can be used in qualitative research to make it more believable. Coherence and insight are a way to persuade readers by obtaining information from participants, rather than using a statistical format. Eisner believed instrumental utility could be used in a study to help the reader understand something they may have had problems interpreting. Secondly, instrumental utility could be used to help the reader anticipate what may happen in the future.

Dependability is used by the researcher to adjust to any circumstances that may have changed during the study, such as the site of the research or the participants in the study. Confirmability shows that data is the proof of the findings and implications from the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the reader, the information from the study would be viewed as trustworthy and credible. In the book, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) listed six methods for the researcher to curb biases and establish trustworthiness. They are prolonged engagement, persistent engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and an audit trail.

Prolonged engagement. To establish credibility and trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Swartz (2002) named prolonged engagement as the most effective instrument that should be used. Prolonged engagement is spending sufficient time interviewing and building relationships. Through prolonged engagement, I spent enough time on the research site of all participants to obtain adequate amounts of data from interviews, observations, and document collection**.** The process will take place during the fall of 2013 to ensure prolonged engagement during this study. It is possible to collect data from the participants of this study at professional

meetings and professional-development workshops. Spending time in the field to develop a relationship of trust with participants is crucial to the study (Patton, 2002). By collaborating constantly and staying engaged with participants, I was able to become more familiar with their actions and certain behavior patterns they display at the research site. Through sufficient interactions and conversations, participants begin to better understand how their confidentiality would be entrusted and secure. Prolonged engagement gave me an opportunity to answer any questions participants have about interviews, collected documents, and observations, as they relate to the confidentiality of their information.

Persistent engagement. Through persistent engagement, information can be obtained by acquiring enough depth to get a solid understanding of the data (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). Persistent engagement entails addressing bias and ensuring that all data is reevaluated or rechecked. Negative case analysis is needed to acquire meaningful data and eliminate those things that are normal and expected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, it was necessary for me to access the quality of the data that was being sought. Through persistent engagement, information can be obtained by acquiring enough comprehensive information to get a solid understanding of the data (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). It may be possible for participants to be dishonest with me. According to Douglas (1976),

> Sure, people tell the truth most of the time in their everyday lives, at least as they see it. How often do people bother to lie about the weather or where the salt is? But the outsider trying to find out what the truth is about the things that count most to people, such as money and sex, must look upon all their accounts about those things as suspicious until proven otherwise. (pp. 55–56)

Persistent engagement calls for the researcher to spend sufficient time interacting with and observing participants to obtain accurate information (Mertens, 2010).

Peer debriefing. During this qualitative study, I communicated with doctoral students from his cohort group at the University of Arkansas and students from the cohort group who had obtained their doctorate degree. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined peer debriefing as a process in which the researcher communicates with individuals who had no direct experience or affiliation with the study and those who did have knowledge or prior experiences with the study. For a different perspective on the study, I communicated with colleagues from his workplace who had no affiliation with the study and also spoke with individuals who had knowledge about the study and answered their inquiries about his research.

Triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Patton (2002) described triangulation or comparison. The qualitative researcher and a surveyor have something in common as they identify boundaries in their respective fields. To grasp an understanding of the boundaries and components for a study in qualitative research, the qualitative researcher makes sense by using different types of data and triangulation, whereas a surveyor makes sense or identifies the boundaries of properties by making comparisons to different types of readings.

There are four types of triangulation methods: methodical triangulation, data triangulation, researcher triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. Efforts were concentrated in the area of data triangulation. I collected interview data through transcribing. I collected transcripts of interviews, letters to superintendents requesting permission to conduct a study in their school districts, consent forms from participants, personal notes, e-mails, Institutional Review Board forms, and recordings of interviews. It was my decision not to triangulate by researcher method and theoretical methods because they were either not useful with this particular case study or were not appropriate to use in a case-study dissertation format.

Member checks. I followed up with the participants to review the interview transcripts by telephone and verified the accuracy of their original responses. The member checking confirmed whether the participants were comfortable with their statements and that transcripts reflected an accurate account of the collected data from the study. An opportunity was given to participants to make any corrections and provide accurate feedback from their interview. Participants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts or listen to the audio tapes; they were able to make any necessary changes from the interview.

Audit trail. For the purposes of securing and maintaining data such as analyzed themes, an audit trail was part of the collecting process. Information was stored on a flash drive and personal computer for me to retrieve at anytime during the dissertation process. Any audiotaping and hard copies of data were secured in the privacy of the researcher's home. Information from this audit trail included interview documents with transcripts and interview questions, responses from participants, and any other relevant data for this study.

Erickson (1986) named five evidentiary inadequacies to be used from analytic strategies and the collection of data. In a descriptive case study, Ramey (2008) used Erickson's five evidentiary inadequacies to show the relevance of maintaining quality and integrity for a study. Erickson's (1986) first evidentiary inadequacy is inadequate amounts of evidence. Erickson's research highlights the importance of maintaining quality through data analysis and collecting data. In research, there may not be enough evidence to verify essential assertions. This was accomplished by spending sufficient time in the schools or worksites of participants during 2013.

The second of Erickson's inadequacies is the inadequate variety in kinds of evidence. I approached this inadequacy by ensuring that all participants would be interviewed and given the

opportunity to verify their responses, once they were transcribed. The collection of data was part of the process to validate important assertions.

Erickson's third type of evidentiary inadequacy is the interpretive status of evidence from the collection of data. The interpretive status of evidence could occur when there is insufficient time spent in the field with participants. It was important for me to revisit each participant from whom the information was retrieved and have them verify the credibility of the data as being valid and reasonable (Merriam, 1998).

Erickson's fourth type of evidentiary inadequacy is inadequate disconfirming evidence. I was careful not to focus on findings that were thought to satisfy his own biases and beliefs. Much effort will be made to engage persistently. Persistent engagement entails addressing biases and ensuring that all data are reevaluated or rechecked, because it may be possible for data to have inconsistencies. Negative case analysis is needed to acquire meaningful data and eliminate those things that are normal and expected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The final step in Erickson's evidentiary inadequacy is inadequate discrepant-case-analysis evidence. It was important to interview each participant by asking them all questions in the same order and not comparing the disconfirming or confirming instances that might have been derived from the data. Interviewing in depth and observing participants at their worksites created an adequate discrepant-case analysis.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview and purpose of the qualitative study. The research design of how data would be collected was given along with an explanation of my role as a researcher. Other information included in this chapter is follows: (a) problem statement, (b) research question, (c) subquestions, (d) research design and time line, (e) site and sample

selection, (f) selection of participants, (g) depth versus breadth, (h) data-collection procedures, (i) data analysis, (j) researcher's role, (k) assumptions, (l) instrumentation, (m) trustworthiness and credibility, (n) prolonged engagement, (o) persistent engagement, (p) peer debriefing, (q) triangulation, (r) selection of participants, (s) member checks, (t) audit trails, and (u) this summary. Chapter 4 provides data analysis and findings obtained from the participants in the study. Chapter 5 presents the interpretation of the data, recommendations for future research concerning the dissertation topic and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 4

Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors which contributed to academic and professional success of AA male principals. In this chapter, AA will represent African American. The factors were discovered through interviewing six AA male principals and transcribing the data to discover themes and sub-themes. To code the data, open and axial coding were used for keeping the data organized.

The goal was to capture voices of AA male principals through interviews in order to determine what made them successful and if there were challenges. The process was completed by asking questions that would answer research and sub-research questions. Member checks were completed to confirm if participants were comfortable with their statements and that transcripts reflected an accurate account of collected data from the study.

Chapter 4 includes an analysis of key findings from this qualitative study. The primary source of data used in this study to address research questions and sub-questions was obtained through interviews, analyzing transcriptions and member checks. Following the introduction, the chapter contains audience, transcribed interviews, audit trail annotation, presentation of axial codes, descriptive matrix, analysis of the data and summary. The following research questions and sub-questions were addressed:

Research question

1. What factors shape academic achievement of AA male principals?

Sub-questions

1. What factors shape career success of AA male principals?

2. What challenges limit participant's success?

Audience

The participants in this qualitative study included two elementary principals, one middle school principal, two high school principals and one charter academy principal. I am an AA male principal and selected the participants of this study because they were in the same field; I wanted to discover what factors contributed to the success of AA male principals. It was also important to know if there were any challenges that limited their success. It is a goal of this study to provide research for an audience including students, parents, educators, community members and policy makers on the insight from the voices of AA male principals regarding how they attained success in their academic and professional pursuits.

The outcomes may also shed new light on what avenues might be taken to close the achievement gap which exists today for AA males. This study will provide insight on the historical academic failures of AA males and how participants sustained success by breaking free of the barriers that hindered their achievement. As a result of the resulting insights, educators and policy makers could determine how to best meet the educational needs of AA males, as well as those of other ethnic groups.

Transcribed Interviews

I interviewed six AA male principals and recorded and transcribed the findings. All AA male principals seemed comfortable and willing to share how they became successful and if they had challenges that limited success. They all expressed an interest in knowing what the results would be from this qualitative study. The interviews of the elementary principals, middle school principal, high school principals, and charter academy principal took place at their schools in the office. Each AA male principal's years of experience in the educational field varied as a

classroom teacher, assistant principal, and a principal. Table 4.1 shows the years of experience in each area.

Table 4.1

Experience in the Educational Field

Principal	Years as a Teacher	Years as assistant Principal	Years as Principal
P1	3	2	20
P2	7	1	4
P3	2	3	15
P4	4	25	5
P4	4	25	7
P5	10	5	3
P6	17	4	7

When transcribing interviews, I made sure that he recorded the exact words of interview with accuracy of their comments and statements. The participants were coded in order to preserve the confidentiality of their identification.

Audit Trail Notations

Audit trail notations from interviews are represented in Table 4.2 below and show the coding as it related to the identification of each AA principal. The notations are to ensure confidentiality of the participant's identification which was coded by using letters and numbers. The letter P represents the principal and the number represents which principal was interviewed. The second number that will be mentioned later in the chapter will represent the page number of the quote for each principal (P1/1). For example: P1 through P6 were used to represent

principals 1-6. P1 represented principal one, P2 represented principal 2, P3 represented principal 3, P4 represented principal 4, P5 represented principal 5 and P6 represented principal 6.

Each AA male principal was interviewed at his work site, which is represented in Table 4.2 along with the type of school at which they were employed. I used an audit trail to maintain a record of all data (Merriam, 2009) which was safely stored on a flash drive and locked securely in his home. This included transcribed comments and statements, IRB forms, and interview questions. I used the interview transcripts to search for common themes that kept occurring from the comments of each AA male principal.

Table 4.2

Principal Identification Code

Notation	Participant	Site
P1	Principal 1	Elementary School
P2	Principal 2	High School
P3	Principal 3	Elementary School
P4	Principal 4	High School
P5	Principal 5	Middle School
P6	Principal 6	Academy Charter School

Presentation of Axial Codes

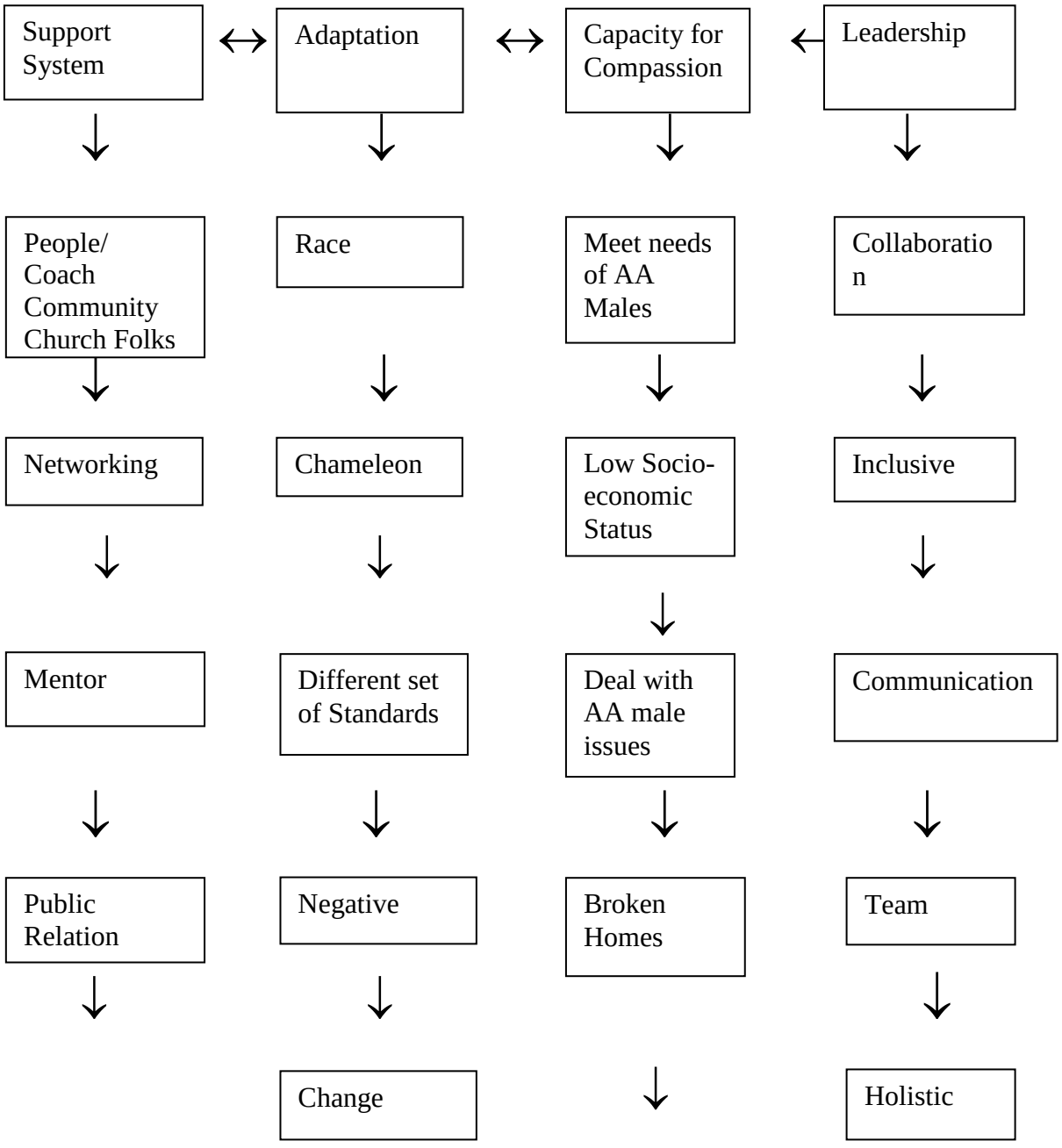
Due to the process of open coding, axial codes or themes began to take shape from the transcriptions of AA male principals. Seven themes emerged from organizing and analyzing open codes that fit the axial codes or themes. Themes that emerged from the data and analyzed were, (a) support system, (b) adaptation, (c) capacity for compassion, (d) leadership, (e) ethics, (f) quality, and (g) relationships. Table 4.3 displays seven axial codes or themes at the top and

various open codes under each of those themes. This data was collected through interviewing AA male principals and transcribing those interviews.

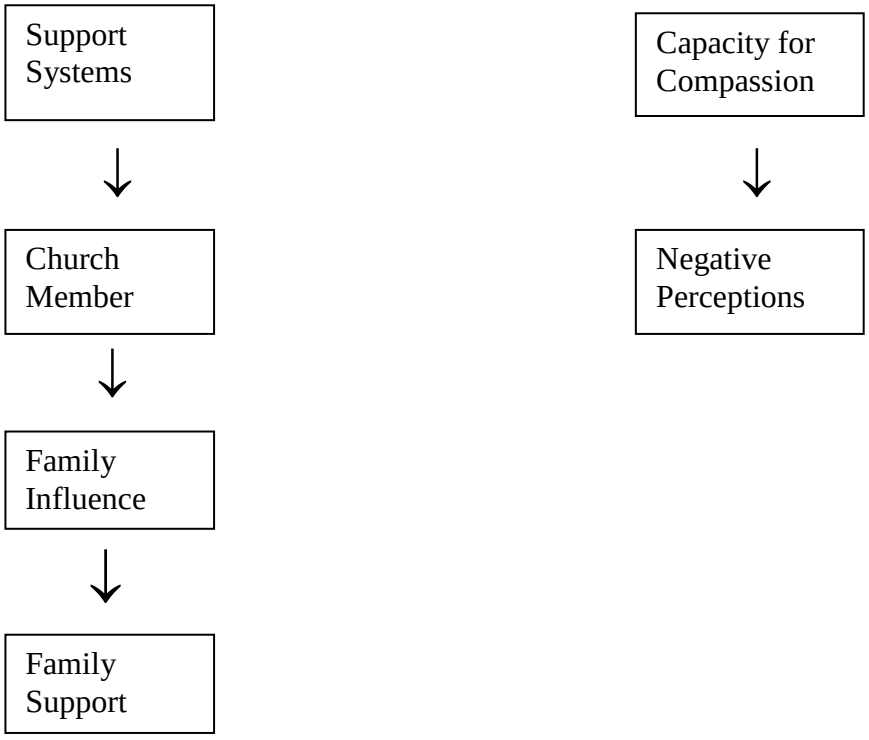
Table 4.3

Axial and Open Codes

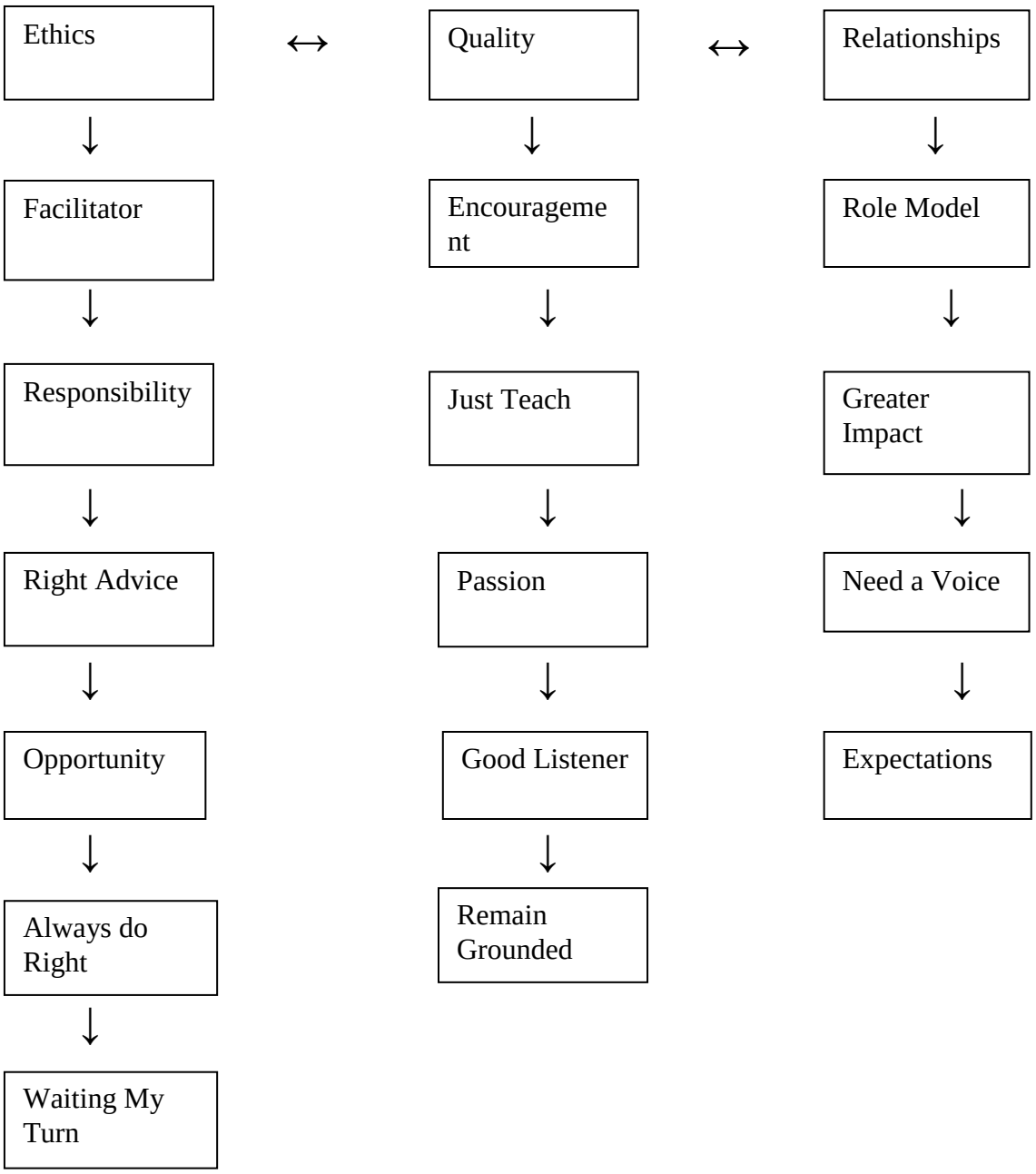
Axial and sample of open codes of AA male principals



Axial and sample of open codes of AA male principals continued.



Axial and sample of open codes of AA male principals continued.


Ethics
↔
Quality
↔
Relationships
↓
↓
↓
Facilitator
Encouragement
Role Model
↓
↓
↓
Responsibility
Just Teach
Greater Impact
↓
↓
↓
Right Advice
Passion
Need a Voice
↓
↓
↓
Opportunity
Good Listener
Expectations
↓
↓
Always do Right
Remain Grounded
↓
Waiting My Turn

Descriptive Matrix

A conceptually clustered matrix is displayed in Table 4.4. The matrix shows axial codes or major themes of the data that was collected from the six AA male principals. Data is represented from the transcribed interviews of each principal and was collected to support major themes for each conceptually clustered matrix.

Table 4.4

Descriptive Matrix: Axial Codes (Major Themes) of AA male principals

Principal	Support System	Adaptability	Capacity for Compassion
P1	My spiritual life I think set the foundation for it all without a doubt.	It varies from day to day.	To me it's a great fear (children from broken homes).
P2	Several people and I have some mentors within the district and outside the district.	You have to be able to work with people and be a public relations person.	One of my goals here has been to change negative perception of this school to a positive one.
P3	It was principals caring about principals and wanting to see each other be successful.	You have to be like a chameleon.	We are responding to community, family, staff and personal needs.
P4	6 black administrators pulled me to the back of the media center and shared their wisdom, knowledge, and longevity.	AA male principals have to live up to a different set of standards and deal with salary differences.	High expectations bring about high achievement.
P5	I think in high school I had some great role models.	It's a tough job the changes and evolves every day.	We need more AA role models for our students that come from a lot of broken homes and students who don't have parents in the home.
P6	My high school coach guided me through the initial process of what I really wanted to do.	Being in the mid-south it's there because the old south there are some of those attitudes and those attitudes are not gone.	My greatest joy is to see the young people as they grow from where they from when they first entered the school until they graduate.

Principal	Leadership	Ethics	Quality	Relationship
P1	I think being humanistic... just thinking of others. I believe in a strong sense of collaboration.	If I have a strategy that is working for me I share with them and vice versa.	We expect our teachers, principals and staff to continue and grow.	I think it's it a great opportunity to touch lives.
P2	I have a holistic view and remain grounded in what's actually happening in the school.	It's making sure that I'm who I am supposed to be at all times.	Being prepared by having the needed educational credentials.	I wanted to make sure that there was a voice for all students.
P3	You have to allow people to grow and build capacity within your building.	I tell my staff all the time that I take all the blame and none of the credit.	We provide the training and the necessary resources for them to be successful.	I'm not just a role model for AA students, but for all students.
P4	My leadership style is one that is viewed as inclusive.	I don't believe in nepotism or the bubby system.	One mission, one goal is to turn out the best product.	Academic achievement is a family affair and they know when I say they that they are part of the family.
P5	I believe giving people a range of expectations of what to do.	You have to be able to simply make good decisions in order to be a successful leader.	It's very important for that black male to see positive black male role models in the	It's a big responsibility where you help teachers or students who cry on your shoulder.
P6	I have always communicated in a way that would get the best out of people.	My dad always told us to do right.	It's a great opportunity to see the new teachers grow from a young spring teacher to a veteran.	The thing that I always pride myself on was building relationships.

Support System

Once the interview process was under way, it was obvious to me that themes began to develop due to the AA male principals' responses from the questions.

Through viewing open coding and analyzing data, one axial code or major theme that was consistent throughout out all interviews was that each participant felt people, supported, encouraged, and contributed to their success. The theme support system developed when AA male principals were asked about being an educator and a leader. Although, each AA male principal responded differently, their responses had commonalities and set the stage for the development of themes.

Principal 3 attributed his success to involving others and hiring smart people. He thought it was important to give people opportunities that would allow them to grow and make the school more successful. He shared that other principals helped him become successful by sharing information and collaborating. Encouraged by others, principal 3 mentioned that people contributed to his career and academic success. He shared a personal story that I felt was significant to the research question and sub-questions of this qualitative study.

One asserted,

> I have a good family support. A lot of people that I looked up to growing up were either in education or valued education. Of course in my family, you didn't go to the family reunion without your report card or the expectation that you were going to make the family proud. So, education was always pushed. The people in my community and church who looked after the young people were in education. I will never forget Mr. JM in the community who would take time off his job and to go the school with every young person in our church. He would pull us out of class, talk to our counselor asking how where we and how we were doing. He knew our grades before we did. He always pushed us. He even pushed me to the point where I was going to Fayetteville. He called me over to his house and he had filled out an application for Morehouse and had me to sign it. He had a dream for me that I did not necessarily have for myself, but I did end up going. My family of course, mother, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, but that extended family, church family, and community with the expectation that you was going to do something with yourself and not being another statistic. (P3/21)

This AA principal was able to describe how several people were involved in his journey to success. I was able to make a connection with the principal due to his own experiences in having a family support group. Principal 3 continues by saying,

> Mr. JM was a deacon in my church and when you saw him coming, you know he cared. He was not only engaged in the academic side, he supported athletics as well, but he wanted all young people to succeed. I grew up around a lot of people like that and they put the word in you that you were going to be successful and that is what they expected. Just hearing that and knowing that you did not want to let them down and they were going to ask you every time they came home how your grades were and how you were doing. They were going to check in church. Not so much that I was a pleaser, but I didn't want to have to deal with the ramifications of not being successful. I think back to when I first start teaching I had people who attended my church (a father and his daughter). He was a retired principal and she was an assistant principal at the time. After Sunday school they pulled me to the side and said, you know, you are going to be a principal real soon, and the daughter said as a matter of fact, you will probably be a principal before I become a principal and she had already been a principal for 16 years. (P3/21)

During the interviewing process, it became evident from the responses of each AA male principal that I began to notice how support system was an occurring theme. When the data were analyzed, it became clear that each participant mentioned people as being a major contributing factor to their academic and career success. After the data were transcribed, it was easy to view this theme as it related to the main research question and sub-research questions.

Harper (2012) showed that many AA males' families had high expectations for them to be successful and go to college. Participants from the study were successful because parents stressed that college was the only option once they graduated from high school.

The data indicated that support system was the main factor that contributed to the success of AA male principals. One principal asserted, "I was fortunate to come from a line of educators who provided a foundation" (P1/10). He added, "My spiritual life I think set the foundation for it all without a doubt" (P1/10).

Principal 1 believed in giving back and helping others. He stated,

> When I think about my success, I feel successful when I know that we helped a child to achieve and to grow and when they come back and say thank you. Because many times as I mentioned, those who had a positive impact on my life, you don't realize how your presence, touch, smile, and just speaking to the individual student how it will make their day. It is rewarding when they come back and tell you thank you and the same with the staff. (P1/11)

Principal 1 shared that he had had a good support base. He said,

> I had some great mentors in my life and I'm very fortunate you know starting at home with my mom, dad, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, Godfather, friends through this whole process. I am fortunate that I had a very good support base. So, I can call on, even with my colleagues today we often time work as a team to work on new projects as we are reviewing. If I have a strategy that is working for me I share with them and vice versa and so, yes, it is wonderful when you have a strong support system. I like reading. I have had the opportunity to serve on a lot of national and state committees within that and it affords me the opportunity to be on the cutting edge of finding out about new curriculum items, instructional strategies and just networking with other people and seeing how the school systems work. One of the committees that I served on presented me with an opportunity to travel abroad and just seeing how the cultures there and the educational system worked within that and it gave me an opportunity to bring back some instructional strategies that I think have been beneficial to us. (P1/11)

Principal 2 shared that mentors guided him in education. He explained,

> Several people and I have some mentors within the district, outside the district and then an executive coach that the school has contracted to work with me to focus our priority issue or priority areas and to have that person to bounce ideas off of. So, but definitely my mentors who I stay in contact with who has served as principals and who have been faced with the same obstacles I have been faced with, but have had the same drive that I having in being successful in the educational sector. (P2/18)

Principal 3 credited his former female principal for encouraging him to become an administrator by giving him opportunities to display leadership. He stated,

> Her goal in life was to always of course to see her students achieve and she pushed from day one and through me into a lot of leadership opportunities and roles. Even before I started teaching, she sent me to trainings. The summer prior to me beginning teaching opened up the door so that I could be able to teach in a leadership role with this program with great expectations the following year after my first year of teaching. Then she let me lead the after-school program. I was a site director for an after-school program as a first-year teacher. I think having those opportunities and by her pushing me and me

> seeing something in me that I didn't see in myself set the stage for me becoming an administrator. (P3/18)

Principal 4 informed me that his success was guided by being inclusive with people. He believed that an unforeseen force motivated him to do what he was doing in the field of education. Principal 4 called the force spiritual. He spoke of six administrators that gave him the tools to be a successful administrator. He said,

> At my first principal's institute, there were 6 black administrators that spoke with me during my first meeting. There were other black administrators there, but these 6 administrators wanted to meet with me during my first break. They shared with me the keys to be a successful administrator. They welcomed me to administration said that if longevity is what you seek in administration, these are the things that you must do. (P4/25)

When he was in his third or fourth year of teaching, Principal 5 shared that his principal inspired him to become a leader as well as other people. He also mentioned his high school basketball coach as being instrumental in his development toward the career as a principal. He explained,

> I had several mentors that had been around that I looked up to and talked with about administration. They were instrumental in sharing with me what the position was like and what to expect once I became an administrator. (P5/29)

Similar to the previous principal, Principal 6 mentioned that his career path and educational path came from the encouragement from his basketball coach. He stated,

> He was a teacher at the high school and basically I wanted to be like him and he took time with me along with my track coach and he influenced me in terms of me getting a scholarship running track. I pursued that and I wanted to go back and take his job. (P6/34)

Principal 6 also believed that interacting with staff and students was a part of what made him a successful principal. During the interview, he referred back to his coach and principal as individuals who influenced him. He mentioned other factors that contributed to his academic and career success. He stated,

> The family that I come from, the family relationship, the family strength and a strong father figure in the house are additional factors. My father didn't have an eighth grade education and my mom didn't graduate from high school, but she made it to the eleventh grade, but they instilled in us when we went to school that we were going to do the very best we could. I think they always wanted us to do more and better that what they were. I think that strong family background, the family influence, and the relationship with God and the church in a black community. Of course in the black community, the church is such a strong influence of so many lives. (P6/3)

Adaptation

Being able to adapt to situations as they arose at school was another theme that from the interview transcripts. Principal 1 believed that the role of a principal changed and varied on any given day. He stated,

> As a whole, I think it is a lot of responsibility. I think it's a position that you have to take serious. That means and what works for me is that you got to find a way that is as stress-less as possible in the sense because there is a lot of demand in this position. (P1/12)

In reference to adapting and dealing with change, Principle 2 was clear that since he wanted to see change take place immediately. Through interacting with his colleagues, he learned that problems did not happen overnight and, therefore, success will not happen overnight. Principal 2 believed that in order to address situations that may occur, his skills in decision-making has improved because he now thinks ahead of time. He commented,

> Some situations reoccur with different teachers, different parents, and different students, but you already know based on your past experiences and you have to be a problem solver at that second and also there's an expectation that you have to turn off certain modes at the drop of a hat or the drop of a dime so to speak. (P2/18)

He then added,

> "It is mulit-faceted and you have to be prepared for any situation at all
>
> times and any crisis (positive or negative) that you have" (P2/18).

Principal 3 referred to being a principal as a juggling act and that you have to do more than the daily administrative task. He mentioned that the job changes each day and it sometimes

required him to be the custodian or a passenger on the school bus if needed. To do the job, Principal 3 mentioned that a person must have balance. In order to adapt to the daily changes, Principal 3 stated,

> It's more like a chameleon because you have to change colors depending on what the circumstances or situation is. It's not as glorified as some people think. They think we sit in our ivory tower and give out orders and bark commands. We are covering for our building, our kids. We are responding to community needs, we are responding to family needs, staff needs personal needs and so you can be a counselor one day, minister one day, a doctor one day and someone days you can be all of those in a matter of minutes. (P3/20)

In reference to adapting to the changes as a principal, Principal 4 said there is a lot of pressure and that principals have to "monitor and adjust" (P4/26). In order to adapt and be a successful principal, he mentioned that AA male principals have to be good at handling those changes. Based on his administrative experience he asserts,

> The expectations are high and I know that we exceed or meet the expectations because if not in our district and as far as AA males you, will not be around very long. They will demote you quickly. Whereas, I have to be better than my colleagues and my colleagues are those that are not AA. The standards are higher. I must get in the hallway, I must be visible and I enjoy being visible. I have colleagues who never walk out of their offices and their doors are closed. So, I say that to say this. There is a different set of standards and the standards are higher compared to my non-AA colleagues. We have to put up with salary differences. Believe it or not, there is supposed to be a salary scale. They are supposed to bring you in on this point. I mean there are a lot of differences. You have to understand what I am saying. There are different standards for the same goal. The district's goal is that they want high-achieving scores, but some of the standards and pressures for black administrators are different, a lot different from my non AA colleagues. (P4/26)

In terms of how a principal have to adjust or adapt to the daily changes on the job, Principal 5's comments were similar to other participants of this study. He added,

> It's a tough job. It's very tough and it changes every single day. It's a big responsibility where you are helping teachers or some student who is crying on your shoulder. Something is happening every day and you must be able to deal with any given situation. It evolves every day and that's why the job is attractive to me. It's never boring and there's something different every day. You must be ready to meet the unexpected challenges that take place during a normal school day. (P5/29)

> In order to meet the demand of the job and be successful, Principal 6 felt that he always had to be better at his job due to the being in a competitive field.
>
> He stated,
>
> I always felt that because of who I am, I had to be the extra and better than anyone else. That has been somewhat of a challenge, but also somewhat of motivator. It is important to be the very best in your field regardless of your skin color, but I think because of that it can play a part in terms of what can happen and how high I could possibly go in this field. (P6/31)

Capacity for Compassion

Each AA male principal spoke of students and teachers. They all expressed a genuine interest in working with people. As a principal, this was a characteristic that you must possess if you are working with students, teachers, parents, community members and other stakeholders (ELCC, 2011). Compassion was another theme that emerged from the interviews and transcripts.

Principal 1 was very passionate about his job throughout his interview. I could sense that he enjoyed his role as an administrator. He stated, "I thought about other professions, but I made full circle always coming back to teaching because I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children" (P1/10).

Principal 2 also was sincere about influencing students and cared not only about students of a socioeconomic group, but all students. He wanted to be able to give back to others. He displayed compassion about the educational profession and stated,

> I think I definitely decide on the right profession. I enjoy it. It keeps me, I feel youthful it makes me sometimes feel older than I am due to the level of stress and things that come with the principal's job, but I've enjoyed being a principal and enjoyed interacting with the students and with the teachers. (P2/17)

As administrators, Principal 3 added, "we are responding to community needs. We are responding to family needs, staff needs and personal needs" (P3/20).

Principal 4 was compassionate about involving his staff in decision making and giving them opportunities to perform their daily task. He was compassionate about being an effective principal, proud of his spiritual life, and happy to be the principal of the high school for a reason.

Principal 4 explained,

> I was a preacher's kid and my mother taught me how to pray. So, I believed in me and through the grace of God I am here. My story is different because exactly 20 years later from graduating from this institution, I returned as an administrator. (P4/25)

Principal 5 focused on being compassionate on increasing the number of positive role models for AA males because he felt they needed to see more AA males in those roles. It was in his opinion that, "It is crucial to their success" (P5/28). As he presented himself as a role model, Principal 6 states, "It keeps you on your toes and keep you aware that you live in a fish bowl glass house where everyone is observing and sometimes more than other" (P6/32).

To further show compassion for his job, he stated,

> I love education. As far as the path my life has taken in the educational field, I love every path and every step that I have made. I've been to the high school level, the middle school level, the junior high level and I loved every area and every level. I can't really honesty say there's anything that I will change in the path to get where I am today. I am very pleased as how things have worked out. (P6/32)

There are challenges for AA males as mentioned in the literature review. Each AA principals were asked what challenges limited their success. Principal 1 believed one of the biggest challenges was seeing more students coming from broken homes where parenting was inconsistent. He believed that laws mandated how much instructional time should be given to students, but they did not provide answers on how they were to complete the task of providing the time. He states, "That poses a problem without us extending the school day" (P1/11).

Due to time constraints, he added,

> We are trying to crunch that and I think it sometimes impedes the process of getting our best when you look at that and so, those are probably the two greatest things that I think

> impedes us from moving forward. It's just that time element of how we get everything in. (P1/11)

In reference to challenges, Principal 2 wanted to see immediate change when issues came up. He stated, "Our students are dealing with neighborhood issues" (P2/14). He believed that he needed to learn to be patient because problems do not change overnight.

Principal 3 asserted, "the Teacher Dismissal Act impeded success" (P3/18). He further claims, "It's hard to get rid of bad teachers. Our appraisal system that we have in place and the due process piece makes it hard to get rid of bad teachers" (P3/18).

He also stated that principals should have an assistant principal to help with the management of the building. Principal 3 felt his time as an instructional leader was limited due a busy and changing role of the principal. Principal 4 did not state anything that limited his success, but he shared that there are challenges out there for AA male principals.

Principal 5 explained,

> I think society has played a big role in holding me back. I've heard this before that you have to pay your dues to get where you want to be in a certain area or field in education. Also, it is believed by some that you have to stay in the field (classroom) for a period of time before you get an opportunity as a principal. I remember that I was turned down because I did not have enough classroom experience. So, I think that society has played a role in me achieving that. (P5/28)

Principal 6 said, "I don't know of any challenges that have impeded me, but we all go through the struggles and challenges just because of who we are" (P6/30).

Leadership

Leadership is essential for creating a culture in the organization that is going to foster student learning and overall teacher effectiveness (Educational Leadership Constituent Council [ELCC], 2011). From past experience, from anecdotal communication with principals, and from asking pilot questions from the study to AA male principals who are not part of the study, I

found that some principals enjoyed the power of managing other people. To clarify, this does not mean principals were negative leaders or leaders who abused their authority. The first theme that appeared when analyzing the data was leadership. The term leader and leadership were mentioned throughout each interview.

Principal 1 stated,

> I think the leader just kind of transcended and it just happened. I enjoyed teaching and I knew all along that I wanted to teach when I went to college. I think it was naturally developing or it may have been something that I was born with. As far as saying I wanted to be a leader or superintendent, it had not been a thought. It just kind of transformed easily. (P1/10)

Principal 2 commented on leadership by saying,

> Basically, the same time that I decide to become an educator because when I entered the educational program, I went in knowing two things. One, I wanted to teach English on a high school level, but also to become a building level principal and a district administrator quickly thereafter teaching, and so those were my goals going into the educational program. (P2/13)

The same principal added,

> When I started, when I was in high school, I worked with a summer camp for a non-profit and I realized that I enjoyed working with students and being the facilitator of working with different activities. When I actually entered college, I pursued a business degree because my parents wanted me to. I went to school at UCA with my twin brother and they wanted both of us to be business majors. I quickly found out my first two years of college that business what not my area so, I had to do some soul searching on what I was really passionate about. So, my sophomore year, I started taking a few educational classes and realized that it was my niche. As I started taking more, I realized that English educations was the subject area I wanted to teach, but also the game plan was to actually become an administrator because I wanted to be able to influence the mass of students and not just the students who entered my classroom. As I reflected on my educational experience, I realized that all minorities whether it's racial or socioeconomic, they needed a voice and so I knew that I could have influenced those students who enter my classroom, but I wanted to make sure that there was a voice for all students in that particular setting as a mass, as a whole. So, I decided at the same time to become and educator and that I wanted to become an administrator as well. (P2/14)

Principal 3 shared his views on when it was determined that he wanted to be a leader. He stated,

> I think it has actually always been in me. In elementary school I was class president in my six grade class. So, it has always been there and I didn't want to run with the crowd because I wanted to be ahead. I don't think it was a decision that I made that I wanted to purposely be a leader, but I think that is was always in me to say that I want to be out front and not in the crowd. (P3/17)

The same principal went on to say, "This year is my first year ever to have an assistant principal. I think that every building should have an assistant principal to support the leadership" (P3/19). Principal 4 shared a personal story of how he was motivated to become a leader by negative comments made to him by his school counselor. His comment on leadership was personal and he commented,

> Well, the answer to that question when did I determine that I wanted to be a leader. At the same time during a conference with, which was April of 1973 after a conference with my counselor, I decided I wanted to be a leader. (P4/23)

He made this comment because he said that his counselor stated, "not to, do not, do not go to college. You only have a one in ten chance to go to college. Don't go to the military, but find a common laborer's job. You can't pass that test item" (P4/24).

Principal 4 informed me that those comments encouraged him to become an administrator. Principal 5 decided to become an educator during his junior year of college. In terms of when he determined to become a leader he added,

> Everyday day that I wake up and I don't believe that people just say that they are leaders. Leaders are born every day and it's in the way that you carry yourself and the things that you do and the problems that come about. You have to be able to simply make good decision in order to be a successful leader. I knew that I had the ability to display leadership skills and that is one of the reasons that I went into administration. (P5/28)

If reference to his leadership style he added,

> I believe giving people a range of expectations of what to do. I believe in giving out information and allowing them to use it the best way that they can while guiding them and not trying to be a dictator. (P5/28)

Principal 6 believed that his leadership began during his teenage years and he modeled his leadership after his former high school principal and assistant principal. When talking about his two principals he shared, "I took a combination of what they did that I thought was good and used those leadership skills and it became part of what I do" (P6/31).

Ethics

All members of the school organization should display good ethics, honesty, and consistency in ensuring students are achieving academically (ELCC, 2011). A third theme to develop was ethics. Each AA male principal responded honestly to the questions, were of good character and grew up in families with strong values. Principal 1 explained,

> I moved into administrations fairly quickly as compared to others and so it was a lot of hard work and determination and trying to do the right thing. I still follow that philosophy that I always put my best foot forward and do what's right so that when I go home at night then I can rest just knowing that I did what I thought was right based on what I thought I knew. (P1/12)

In reference to being successful and making good honest decisions, Principal 2 stated, "networking, knowing people, and getting the right advice from the right people can put you in position for the next job" (P2/16).

When dealing with students, he felt it was very important to be fair and consistent in the area of discipline and that principals should not administer the same consequence for one student out of anger due to the inappropriate actions of other students. Principal 3 believed that all of his students were in the same socioeconomic situation. I believed Principal 3 acted in an ethical manner by stating,

> Our socioeconomic income is very low and we are all on free and reduced lunch together. No one's better than anybody so this conversation is for everyone. So, hopefully, I'm not just a role model for AA students, but for all students because they need to see the positive things in life that you can have a respectful life without the other confusion that comes with the choices we make. (P3/21)

Principal 4 displayed his ethics when describing how to treat students. He commented,

> They told me to be firm, fair, and consistent when you deal with students regardless of what color they are, their last name or how much money they may have. Always be firm, fair, and consistent. They told me that I would have different types of students from different areas and that I should always remember to be firm, fair, and consistent with each student. (P4/25)

He further stated,

> I believe in dressing for success. I believe in looking the part. I believe in ethics. I believe in being morally straight. It's all about image, being visible and I believe what the AA male see is what they will be. (P4/26)

Principal 5 believed in doing the best job possible while in the eyes of people due to being in a leadership role. When asked if he was a role model, Principal 5 displayed ethics in his response by stating,

> Someone is watching you all the time and being a black male myself, I have a responsibility to do the best job possible. Not only for AA, but for those who are watching and they can say hey, I want to be like him or I want to be in that position. (P5/29)

Principal's 6 statement on role models was similar to Principal's 5 in that they both believed that someone was always watching and wanting to be like their role model. Ethically, he wanted to make sure that he did everything right and always made good moves. Principal 6 shared with the me that his dad always told him and his siblings to do the right thing. He said, "My dad always told us to do right" (P6/32).

The same principal went on to say, "That was his main rule. He told us to just do right wherever we go in life and if you do right, good things will happen to you" (P6/32).

Quality

School programs should be evaluated to ensure student success and the management of the organizations must be proficient (ELCC, 2011)

Quality emerged as a fourth theme that principals felt was important in their profession. Being prepared for the position was important as well as getting embracing the training to make teachers more effective. Quality meant producing the best students and teachers while providing opportunities for teacher and themselves to grow professionally. Principal 1 stated,

> When students come in parents are sending us the very best that they have and in doing that we have to take students were they are and it's our goal and our responsibility being good stewards to try to move them forward. (P1/10)

Principal 1 wanted to make sure that he was choosing a field where he could influence students his classroom. He commented, "I had to do some soul searching to see what I was really passionate about. One of my goals here has been to change the negative perception of this school to a positive one" (P2/14).

Principal 3 asserted, "Success is measured by the day. We've had our successes and we've had our failures. I say we because I think to be a successful principal you will have to think in the context of we" (P3/18).

Buying into the mission of the school to develop the best quality out of students was a belief of Principal 4. He expressed, "one mission and one goal are to turn out the best product that we can possibly turn out and graduate from this institution" (P4/25).

Principal 5 believes in exposing AA male students to quality people. He added,

> A lot of students don't see AA male role models until they get through high school and by that time they have already graduated. It's very important for that black male to see positive black male role models in the school and it's crucial to their success and I think it helps our society. (P5/28)

Principal 6 believed in having a quality school environment. He stated,

> I have always liked working in a safe an orderly atmosphere where everyone is respected and appreciated. It's essential that you try to get the best out of your staff and your students and that can happen if the school climate, culture and atmosphere are pleasant. (P6/34)

Relationships

A second theme I found in analyzing the data was relationships. Each principal expressed the importance of working with people in their profession. It was evident that they knew that their role as a principal involved working with others on a daily basis. A study on the academic success of black males showed how interacting with peers had a positive impact on student achievement (Young, 2007).

Principal 1 shared,

> I probably had a natural instinct to help others even as a young man growing up, but at that point, I knew I wanted to help others to be a leader. I wanted to assist people in learning and to better themselves and therefore, it started early on when I was a young man in elementary school. (P1/10)

Principal 1 added, "I think when you work as a principal you know the day has long sense gone that you are just strictly just dealing with instruction" (P1/10).

He was referring to the fact that a principal act more as the parents of students today.

Principal 2 commented,

> Also being a parent, now and realizing the parent's perspective of having a student in the school system and their past experiences of interactions to make sure that I have a holistic view and remain grounded in what's actually happening in the school setting, classroom setting and not just what I'm dealing with on an administrative level. That has been successful for me. (P2/14)

Each AA male principal discussed what made them a successful principal and it always involved interacting with people. When working with others Principal 3 said,

> I don't want to say that it's a laid-back approach, but it is a feeling that my staff have that I would give them the latitude to make decisions without questioning them as long as they have the data to support what they did what they did. (P3/18)

Principal 4 believed in being inclusive with people and not having an inner circle;

he did not embrace nepotism or the buddy system. He commented, "my leadership style is one that is viewed as inclusive rather than exclusive. I believe in inclusion instead of exclusion" (P4/24).

He further explained,

> High expectations bring about high achievement. I stand on those things. They know I stand on and for those things and I've been successful. This high school is an achieving high school because of my leadership of style of being inclusive instead of exclusive. (P4/24)

Principal 5 attributed his success to one of his coaches. It was evident that he had built a positive relationship and today he gives back to others and considers himself a role model. He went on to say,

> I think in high school I had some great role models. My high school basketball coach taught math and I looked up to him as a role model and I followed him in his footsteps not really even thinking about it, but when I look back at it probably one of the most major points in my life as far as shaping my life. I think he shaped me into what I am today because of the way he carried himself. He was a role model to me because I looked up to him and I don't even think he realized it. (P5/29)

Principal 6 also considered his high school coach as being a great influence in his life.

> He had a good relationship with his coach and wanted to be just like him. He stated, I think of the things that I always pride myself on was building relationships. I have always liked working in a safe an orderly atmosphere where everyone is respected and appreciated. It's essential that you try to get the best out of your staff and your students and that can happen if the school climate, culture and atmosphere are pleasant. (P6/30)

Summary

The data in this chapter are representative of interviews from six AA male principals. Once the data were transcribed, it was transparent me that major themes developed which related to people. Each AA male principal attributed people as a reason why they were successful in their academic pursuits and careers in education. The seven axial codes or major themes that

emerged from the data were: (a) support system, (b) adaptation, (c) capacity for compassion, (d) leadership, (e) ethics, (f) quality, and (g) relationships.

Summary of Chapter 4

Interviews were the primary source that was used to obtain data from the participants. Triangulation was a method used and it involved interviews, analyzing data for themes and sub-themes and member checks. The study was extensive, and transcribed data from AA male principals' interviews allowed me to discover axial codes or major themes. Analyzed open-ended interview questions produced a plethora of useful data.

Axial codes were put into tables to make it clear to the reader which major themes occurred from this study. Once the interview data was transcribed and analyzed, seven major themes were developed. The 7 axial codes or major themes obtained from this study were: (a) support system, (b) adaptation, (c) capacity for compassion, (d) leadership, (e) ethics, (f) quality, and (f) relationships.

From the analyzed data, there was a development of selective codes or major trends. The identified selective codes supported and answered the research and sub-research questions. In Chapter 5, I presented an introduction, theory one, theory two, theory three, summary of the findings, interpretation of the data, research question, sub-questions, recommendation to the field, recommendations for further research, and conclusion.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that contributed to academic and professional success for AA male principals. Participant educational experience ranged from 3 to 20 years as a principal, 2 through 25 years as an assistant principal and 2 through 17 years as a classroom teacher. The methods used to conduct this study included interviews, transcriptions, and identification of themes and sub-themes. Each AA male principal's participation was essential during this qualitative process. To determine the factors that contributed to their success as principals, data were collected through interviews and analyzed. The findings are shared below.

I gained a thorough understanding of the data through a process which included: (a) interviewing, (b) listening, (c) audio recording, (d) consistent review of the audio, (e) transcribing, (f) analyzing the data, (g) member checks, and (h) identifying themes and sub-themes. Due to this extensive review, I feel that I have knowledge of the data and an in-depth understanding of the findings.

After the data were collected and analyzed, seven axial codes or major themes emerged and three selective codes became transparent to the researcher. The axial codes or major themes were: (a) support system, (b) adaptation, (c) capacity for compassion, (d) leadership, (e) ethics, (f) quality, and (f) relationships. Support system, leadership, and relationships were the three selective codes that were obtained from themes in the transcribed data of six AA male principals. Through the process of transcribing and becoming immersed in research, data were clear enough to produce essential information that was critical in answering the research and sub-questions.

Discussion theory 1. The major selective code to come from the transcribed and analyzed data was support system. Support system involved people such as students, parents, grandparents, coaches, teachers, principals, mentors, and others. Throughout the data, all principals kept mentioning how people were involved in their lives and played a role in their success at it related to the research question and sub-questions.

During the interviews of each AA male principal, it was evident to me that they felt that people in their lives encouraged, motivated and inspired them to become successful. As early as the first interview, an AA principal began to speak of how the educators in his family and teachers were his role models and how much he was impressed with everyone.

The six AA male principals from the study mentioned that they had mentors and someone to guide them through the process of becoming successful. The data reflected the importance of people in their lives and how AA males told their stories which connected to the research question. To provide AA males with opportunities for success, Kafele (2012) asserted there is a male role-model crisis that must be addressed. The author suggested that this crisis could be improved by exposing AA male students to successful role models who would provide leadership, counseling, and avenues to better help them improve their chances of excelling in life and education.

Principals commented about AA role models and felt that it was important that they were models for other AA male students. Each of them was compassionate during the interview about this topic. They felt that there was a great need for more AA males to be in the field of education. One principal felt that he was not only a role model for AA male students, but for all students who could benefit from his help. To provide AA male with opportunities for success, Kafele (2012) asserted there is a male role-model crisis that must be addressed. He suggested

that this crisis could be improved by exposing AA male students to successful role models who would provide leadership, counseling, and avenues to better help them improve their chances of excelling in life and education.

The general consensus was that there are always people watching and that AA male principals had to set an example or high standard for AA male students. Another principal believed that AA male educators are becoming extinct, as AA males are moving into other professions. Yet another principal stresses the importance for more males to join the profession because young AA males need to see them in that particular role. He further implies that visibility is crucial to their success and helps our society. He credits a mentor for his success in becoming a principal. Data indicated that several people played a role in guiding all six of the AA male principals through a process that lead to them becoming an educator and a leader.

As a collective group, AA male principals named mentors, parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, a Godfather, coaches, college professors, church family, community, principals, administrators, and other people as helping them along the way in their path to success. In an article by Herbert (2010), he highlighted the importance of the family being together to protect the child against life obstacles. Herbert maintained that is was through the family that children could feel safe and believe that marked success was possible in life. He suggested that AA men should take on the responsibility of being in the home environment and supporting their children so they do not have to struggle in life.

Working with people in their schools and outside of school allowed AA male principals to make connections and network with other people. Getting the right advice from people was mentioned as a way to be successful along with putting the right people in the right position

when hiring someone. Data showed that looking up to people who were in the field of education or valued education was a factor that contributed to their success.

Throughout the data, it is transparent that a support system was a key factor that contributed to the success of six AA male principals. During all interviews from the protocol interview sheet, I became aware of the fact that all AA male principals consistently mentioned people as factors that contributed to their success.

To be successful and have longevity in the field, Principal 4 acknowledged that six administrators held a conference with him during his first principal's institute. He said that they were helpful in making sure that he knew the keys to success in administration as they saw it. As I became more immersed into the data, he continued to see evidence of family influence or support that supported the research and the sub-research questions.

AA male principals mentioned that their spiritual life was a factor along with a relationship with the church community. A strong father figure was mentioned along with the strength of the family and family relationships. These support groups were contributing factors and AA male principals felt impelled to give back to others as did one principal who mentioned tutoring AA male interns and administrators.

Discussion theory 2. A second selective code to surface from the data was leadership. In the field of education, leadership plays a key role in a school setting and it's important to have the proper management skills. A building leader should have an internship experience that prepares the leader for building-level management and daily operations of the school (ELCC, 2011).

The AA male principals in the study viewed leadership as an element for being successful in their job responsibilities. Leadership was described as something that they were born with and

evolved because the skill had always been present throughout their lives. In their daily role as a building principal, they displayed leadership skills by involving people in the daily operation of the school and giving students and teachers an opportunity to be successful.

As a building leader, the need to be inclusive was an important element of leadership style. It gave teachers the ability to give input based on trust from the principal. The concept of being inclusive was to build trust with teachers and let them use their talents and skills to support the mission of the school. The principals often spoke about giving teachers the latitude to make decisions that was supportive of the school data and what was best for students. By doing so, this leadership style allowed others to enhance building capacity. This type of leadership yielded high expectations for everyone and presented a team concept of WE rather than an individual one.

The leadership of the principals was characterized by shared responsibility which involved others in good decisions that contributed to them becoming a successful leader. While doing so, principals believed in building relationship with others. Principals often viewed mentors as people who contributed to their success at different points of their lives. One principal took different combinations of leadership skills from his mentors and felt that it contributed to his success as principal.

As a leader, principals believed in acting in an ethical manner, treating people right, caring for others and being a good listener. Remaining grounded and knowing what was going on in the school setting was viewed as being important. For some principals in this study, they assumed the leadership role before they became principals. One principal took on a leadership role as early as elementary school and others during their teenage, middle school, high school and college years.

As a leader, it was evident that each principal had a grasp on how to collaborate with their students, teachers and other educational advocates. One principal mentioned that his leadership began as a little boy because he had role models in the community that set good examples. In addition to that, he came from a long line of educators who set the foundation. Overall, leadership was a contributing factor in how these AA male principals were able to make it into the field of education and have success as a principal. Collaboration was viewed as people working together to achieve more.

Discussion theory 3. Relationships were the third selective code to emerge from the data. All principals acknowledge that it was important to interact and build relationships with people. Part of building relationships involved communication as being a contributing key to being a successful principal. Instead of principals being isolated by themselves and working individually, a holistic approach was valued because it involved students, teachers, parents, other educators and community members.

Communication was viewed by one principal as the biggest part of his job because you have to be able to relate to people. In addition to establishing relationships with others, collaboration was as equally important. Principals reflected back on mentors as being people who they had built positive relationships with when they were younger. Because of those relationships, they were encourage and motivated to become successful in becoming a principal.

Humanistic is a term used by a principal when describing the importance of establishing relationships with students, teachers, and parents. Building relationships meant to one principal having students to come back as they get older to say thank you. This statement was reflective of the relationships that he had built with people who had made an impact on his life.

Principals wanted to be an influence to students and one spoke of students needing a voice, which meant he wanted to have a positive impact on someone's life. Building relationships meant giving back to others like his mentors had given to him in his path to success. Each principal mentioned having a mentor a factor that encouraged them on their journey. For one principal, building relationship with people meant setting high expectation for students, teachers, parents, community members, and guiding them through the process of helping to create an achieving school.

Relationships can be either negative or positive. All principals spoke of the importance of working with people. However, once principal pointed out that negative relationships could sometime have a positive impact on people. A negative comment from a school employee motivated and encouraged him to become the principal that he is today. Overall, the data reflects that relationships from an early age to adulthood were a factor that influenced academic and career success for AA male principals. The data also showed that principals were involved and embraced a team concept. There was no evidence that principals wanted to run the show or let people know that they were the boss. They all were conscious of the fact that it takes everyone working together in order for success to happen. It was clear in the data that AA male principals held working with students and teachers to a high level and that building relationships was part of what they liked doing.

Summary of Findings Selective Codes

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that contributed to academic and professional success for a particular group of AA men in the field of school administration (principals). Data reflect that three selective codes emerged during the transcribing and analysis process. Those codes were (a) support system, (b) leadership and (3) relationships. Through

triangulation, interviews, member checks, and field notes, these codes were supported with axial and open coding. It was a process in which I felt that all data was relevant to the study.

Summary of Findings

Presentation of research questions. I interviewed six AA male principals, transcribed, engaged in member checks and thoroughly analyzed the data to discover seven major themes. In order for the research question and sub-questions to be answered, selective codes or major trends had to emerge from the data that supported those questions. Based on the data through axial and open coding, the data indicated that three selective codes or major trends have answered those questions. The selective codes are: (a) support system, (b) leadership, and (c) relationships.

After the interviews were transcribed, I looked for axial and open codes. During this process, themes begin to develop and it was transparent to me that codes were emerging. It was essential that the selective coding matched the data that would support the research question and sub-questions. After a thorough overview, the selective codes were chosen. Each of the three codes focused on working with people. Since the AA male principals were in an occupation in which they interacted and collaborated daily with people, the codes revealed the essence of their experience.

Support system emerged as a selective code and was one of the major themes. From the data, the evidence showed that there were a large number of people involved in the success path of each AA male principal. Each participant of this study shared information about people who influenced them on their route to becoming an educator and a leader.

Leadership was another selective code that involved AA male principals displaying their leadership skills as they managed and operated the school in which they worked. These leadership skills were modeled after past mentors of the AA male principals. In a school

environment, being a leader involved interacting and collaborating with students, parents, teachers, other administrators and community members. Some of the AA male principal's were influenced to a point where they wanted to be like their mentors. As a leader, principals felt it was important to work as a team instead of being a dictator. People working with principals knew their expectations and were allowed to work as long it supported the school's programs.

Relationships were another selective code that was important because it involved interacting and networking with people. AA male principals highly felt that being a role model for AA male boys were important. It was a way to assistant students who may have been dealing with critical issues and came from broken homes.

Because someone had served as mentors for them, principals looked at role modeling as a way of influencing others and they wanted to give back to someone who would benefit. AA male principals remembered that someone had served as a positive role model in their lives and it set the stage for them being where they are today as principals.

Data from transcribed and analyzed interviews indicate that a support system was a major factor that influenced the success of AA male principals. Family influence, family support, parents, mentors and other several other people were consistently being mentioned throughout the data as individuals who influenced AA male principals to excel in education. Overall, support system, leadership and relationships were key factors in determining their success.

Research question. What factors shape academic achievement of AA male principals?

Data indicated that the following selective codes shaped academic achievement:

1. Support system involved several people who engaged and supported them on their journey to obtain success. The data indicate that people shaped academic achievement.

2. Leadership shaped academic achievement. This leadership was also influenced by people in their lives that they admired. Some AA male principals started on their path to leadership in elementary school, high school and college. AA male principals felt that they were either born with leadership skills, it developed naturally, transcended, just happened or evolved and that it has always been in them to be a leader.
3. Relationships shaped academic success. AA male principals had a support base that allowed them to be successful. Early in life, they mentioned family support, coaches, teachers and principals as people who supported them in their efforts to be successful. As they progressed through school and the college years, the support base increased with more people becoming involved.

Sub-question one. What factors shape career success of AA male principals?

Data indicated that the following shaped career success.

1. Support system shaped career success. In the career of these principals, there were many people involved in shaping their career success.
2. Leadership shaped career success. AA male principals had opportunities to work with students, teachers, principals, parents, other administrators and community members. The process involved collaborating and communicating with people.
3. Relationships shaped career success. AA male principals were able to develop and build relationships with a large number of people.

Sub-question two. What challenges limit participant's success?

Data indicated that the following as limiting the participant's success:

1. Limited instructional time in the day
2. Neighborhood issues

3. Teacher Dismissal Act
4. Demanding role of the principal without an assistant principal
5. Society and staying in the classroom too long before an administrative opportunity
6. Challenges of being an AA male.

Recommendations to the Field

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors which contributed to academic and professional success for AA male principals. Based on the findings of the study, discussions, and conclusions, it is recommended that programs be developed to help the AA male to be more successful in public schools, college and careers. In order for AA male students to achieve academically, they need teachers who care and people who are going to offer safe, positive, and supportive environments.

It is recommended to the field that AA male students become engaged in family and community support and empowerment interventions such as the Young Men's Empowerment Program, Afro-centric Curriculums, the Urban Prep Academy, the Guide Right Program, the Gentlemen on the Move Program, and The Black Male Engagement Initiative through the assistance of counselors to promote black male empowerment in developmental initiatives. A description of these programs and initiatives are located in the literature review.

It is important that AA males be provided with opportunities to analyze the image of the black man. By doing this, the African American male students will be exposed to black role models who could help in the development of cultural and heritage pride (Lee, 1991). It is important that AA male students see positive black men in professional roles and be exposed to more black teachers. Unless efforts are made to help the young AA male students, they may continue to face problems and challenges in schools.

Recommendation for Further Research

Based on findings from this study, I recommend that further research studies be administered to determine what other factors could contribute to AA male student success. A grounded theory may result from additional studies. Furthermore, I recommend that educators and policy makers investigate what other states are doing to assist with this problem and gather information on programs that have proven to be successful in helping AA males achieve.

Once this has been accomplished, it is hoped that AA male students would be able to attain academic growth, career, personal, and social success in this changing society. By doing so, it may be possible that more AA males would graduate from our nation's schools. Finally, it is recommended that further research be implemented to shed new light on what avenues should be taken to close the achievement gap that exist today for AA males.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors which contributed to academic and professional success for AA male principals. This qualitative study was conducted in the host site of each principal. I have been interviewed before by students and individuals outside of the school system. He always found more pleasant to interview in a familiar setting.

Having been through the same experience, as a participant I was able to read expressions and body language of each AA male principal and concluded that they were comfortable being interviewed. The face to face interview at the host site provided an atmosphere which seemed relaxing to everyone. By being relaxed, it called for a pleasant interview between the participants of the study and myself who was there to gather data. Through interviews, audio taping, and listening, I was able to analyze a plethora of data that would set the stage for finding axial codes or major themes. From seven major themes, three selective codes emerged that

allowed for the research question and two sub-questions to be answered. The three selective codes immersed in the data were: (a) support system, (b) leadership, and (c) relationships.

In a school setting, principals operate and manage the building daily by engaging in each of the selective codes. It is part of their role as an administrator and codes are a reflection of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council. (2011).

Contribution to the Field of Education

This study has contributed to the field of education through the insight of six AA principals about the factors that contributed to their academic achievement and success. The data that emerged from the interviews would give students, parents, teachers, principals, and other educational advocates an avenue to follow that would assist AA male students as well as other ethnic groups in becoming successful as they pursue their educational and career goals.

Legislatures and policy makers at the federal, state and local level could use information on successful programs that were mentioned in the literature review of this study to hold educational institutions accountable for establishing some of the same programs in schools. This study adds to the field of education through the plethora of information on programs that have been proven to better meet the needs of AA male students. The study has revealed these paths to success as it highlights the voices of AA male principals who discovered for themselves the factors that contributed to their academic achievement and success.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX **C**

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

October 30, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Roy C. Turner, Jr. Carleton Holt
FROM:	Ro Windwalker IRB Coordinator
RE:	New Protocol Approval
IRB Protocol #:	13-10-189
Protocol Title:	*Factors Influencing the Academic Achievement and Success of African American Male Principals in a Mid-South State*
Review Type:	☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB
Approved Project Period:	Start Date: 10/30/2013 Expiration Date: 10/29/2014

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 6 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

APPENDIX B

Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct Study

Superintendent
Mid-South State School District

Dear Sir/Madame:

My name is Roy Turner and I am a doctoral student at the University of Arkansas located in Fayetteville, AR. I would like permission to conduct my dissertation study in your school district. The title of my research is entitled, Factors Influencing the Academic Achievement and Success of African American Male Principals in a Mid-South State.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify factors which contributed to academic success for a particular group of African American men in the field of school administration (principals). The main research question to be answered from this study is: What are the factors that shaped academic achievement and success of African American male principals?

It is a goal of this study to provide students, parents, educators and policy makers with insight from the voices of African American male principals regarding how they attained success in their academic and professional pursuits.

It is hoped that outcomes may also shed new light on what avenues should be taken in order to close the achievement gap that exists today with African American males. Educators and policy makers would be able determine how to best meet the educational needs of AA males as well as other ethnic groups. If you have any questions about the dissertation or your role as a participant, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Roy Turner
University of Arkansas at Fayetteville

CONSENT STATEMENT

By signing the form below, I agree to allow schools in my district to participate in the study that is mentioned above. Also, a letter with your school's letterhead stating the same will be appreciated.

_____ _____

Signature of the Superintendent *Date*

APPENDIX C

Invitation to Participate in a Dissertation Study

Dear Colleague:

My name is Roy Turner and I am a doctoral student at the University of Arkansas located in Fayetteville, AR. I am excited about my research topic entitled, Factors Influencing the Academic Achievement and Success of African American Male Principals in a Mid-South State.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify factors which contributed to academic success for a particular group of African American men in the field of school administration (principals). The main research question to be answered from this study is: What are the factors that shaped academic achievement and success of African American male principals?

It is a goal of this study to provide students, parents, educators and policy makers with insight from the voices of African American male principals regarding how they attained success in their academic and professional pursuits.

I am writing to ask if you would participate in this study. Part of the process is to participate in a one hour interview at your worksite or a place convenient for you. This is a voluntary study and you may withdraw at any time. Results from this qualitative study may be published, but information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. All names, schools and school districts will be coded to protect the identity. All research obtained from this study will be kept in a secure and locked location by me and destroyed after two years.

It is hoped that outcomes may shed new light on what avenues should be taken in order to close the achievement gap that exists today with African American males. Educators and policy makers would be able determine how to best meet the educational needs of AA males as well as other ethnic groups.

If you have any questions about the research study or your role as a participant, please feel free to contact me.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

Title: Factors Influencing the Academic Achievement and Success of African American Male Principals in a Mid-South State

Researcher:
Roy C Turner, Jr.
Doctoral Candidate

Faculty Advisor:
Carleton R. Holt, Ed.D
EDLE Graduate Advisor
Associate Professor
College of Education & Health Professions
Fayetteville, AR 72703
(479-575-5112)
cholt@uark.edu

IRB Compliance Officer:
Iroshi Windwalker,
Compliance Coordinator
University of Arkansas
210 Administration
(479) 575-2208
(479) 575-3846
irb@uark.edu

Purpose and Description: You are being asked to participate in a research study on Factors Influencing the Academic Achievement and Success of African American Males Principals in a Mid-South State. The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify factors which contributed to academic success for a particular group of African American men in the field of school administration (principals). The main research question to be answered from this study is: What are the factors that shaped academic achievement and success of African American male principals? In order to collect the needed data, interviews, observations and document collection on how African American male principals achieved success will play a major role in this study.

Duration of Interview and Observation: The time frame of the interview is for one hour. The observation time will be at the discretion of the participant as he may have unforeseen situations that may arise while the researcher is at the worksite.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks to participate in this study. The benefits of this study would provide students, parents, educators and policy makers with insight from the voices of African American male principal's regarding how they attained success in their academic and professional pursuits. The study is beneficial because outcomes may also shed new light on what

avenues should be taken in order to close the achievement gap that exists today with African American males. Educators and policy makers would be able determine how to best meet the educational needs of African American males as well as other ethnic groups.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

Confidentiality: Prior to any research, permission from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville's Institutional Review Board will be sought in order to conduct the study. Participants will be informed of the name of the qualitative study. In order for participants to better understand how their confidentiality would be secure, they will be required to sign a consent form which explains the researcher's study and give them an opportunity to make a decision if they would like to be a participate or not. Each participant will be informed that the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board and that their participation was voluntary and no risk were involved. Before the participants agree to participate in the study, they will be informed about the confidentiality agreement. It will be explained to each participant that the signed agreement ensures that they would remain anonymous and their identities, schools and school districts would remain confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Further, participants were informed that they would be observed by the researcher of the study, documents would be collected, a research journal would be kept and all data would be confidential, coded and stored in a secure area for two years. It will be transparent to each participant that all stored data would be destroyed after a two year period.

Right to Withdraw: You have the right to withdraw from this qualitative study at anytime.

Statement of Consent:

The researcher has explained the study and I fully understand the contents of this informed consent form. My signature verifies that I am consenting to participate in the study.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide

1. When did you determine that you wanted to be an educator?
2. When did you determine that you wanted to be a leader?
3. When did this idea occur to you?
4. What made you a successful principal?
5. What challenges impeded your success?
6. Did you have anyone to guide you through this process?
7. What is it like to be a principal?

APPENDIX F

Interview Guide

Additional Research Questions Approved by Dr. Holt

8. Do you view yourself as a role model for AA male students?
9. Are there any other additional factors that contributed to your career or academic success?
10. Where there any barriers for you becoming a principal?
11. If you could start all over, what field of study would you go in?