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EDUCATING BOYS IN JAMAICA: IN SEARCH OF A NEW LENS

by

Marcia Sharon-May Chin

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2018

Dissertation Committee

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## ABSTRACT

The need for innovative solutions to enhance educational outcomes for Jamaican high school male students is evident. For over two decades, national exam results demonstrate that these students have consistently underachieved. Using a qualitative research design, this study explores the possibility of scaling up a student leadership educational model, developed by one U.S. school that has proven successful in educating an inner city minority male student population, to a similarly placed Jamaican high school. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with stakeholders at an all male Jamaican school and with administrators at the Ministry of Education, to understand their perceptions regarding the benefits, challenges and feasibility of the U.S. model for Jamaican high school male students. While participants' attraction to the model was very strong, the possibility of transferring it was perceived to be low. Although Jamaican educators found aspects of the model helpful, they felt the need to construct their own model of education to respond to their contextual and cultural needs.

This study offers two levels of analysis. First, it contributes on a macro level to the larger body of literature on scaling up educational reform, demonstrating the need to take into account the structural, cultural and agentive factors that co-construct and define the importance of context. This study shows that successful scaling up requires a high level of alignment with the educational goals, aspirations, beliefs, values and practices of the target school context. Second, this study contributes on a micro level to a greater understanding of the specificity of the Jamaican educational context. By examining the potential transferability of a student leadership educational model to help address high school male students' academic underperformance, this study highlights how Jamaican

educators' deeply ingrained historical values, beliefs and practices, shape opportunities to reform education. In order to bring about meaningful change, successful transferability relies on sensitivity to school culture, as well as attending to stakeholders' beliefs and practices regarding the education of male students.

## DEDICATION

To my parents, for the unique ways in which they influenced my life and shaped my  
value for education.

To my children who are inspirations for my life.

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I am deeply thankful for my doctoral journey and grateful to all who have supported me along the way. It was an incredibly challenging, but profoundly enriching, meaningful and rewarding journey.

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## CHAPTER ONE:

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

#### **Organization of the Dissertation Chapters**

The dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study by providing the background on the problem of male students' educational underperformance in Jamaica, followed by the basis and justification for the study and the questions that guided the research process. Chapter Two presents the literature review and the theoretical foundation that supports the study, which includes research related to male students' underachievement and underparticipation in school, both in Jamaica and the United States, as well as literature on education reform, and the transferability and scaling up of education reform models. Chapter Three details the methodology used to conduct the study, and explains the rationale for the qualitative study approach. It also outlines the way participants and sites were selected, the tools and process used to collect the data, how the data was analyzed, and the actions and precautions taken to assure credibility of the study. Chapter Four provides a comprehensive report of the findings that emerged from the data analysis process, supported by participants' quotes. The dissertation ends with Chapter Five, which presents the discussion on the findings and concluding points.

#### **Background of the Study**

##### **A Crisis: Educating Boys in Jamaica**

The academic struggles of high school male students in Jamaica have been a growing concern for the Jamaican public for over two decades. Annual reports on literacy rates and national exam results have consistently demonstrated that they have

been underachieving and under-participating (Campbell, 2013; Davis, 2004; Francis 2015; Management Systems International (MSI)/EQUATE, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2013, 2014, 2015b, 2015a, 2017a; Reid, 2012). In addition, many of the male students have been disconnecting and dropping out of the school system before completion (Chevannes, 1999; Figueroa, 2004; Miller, 1986; Ministry of Education 2016; Parry 2000). Furthermore, the 2012 *Report Card on Education in Jamaica* rated education gender equity a D (unsatisfactory) and stated that gender equity was trending downwards due to male students' consistent academic underperformance (Sewell-Lawson, 2012). The report concluded that young men were underserved by the Jamaican education system.

Participation and achievement statistics for the years 2013 and 2015 on the terminal examination [Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC)], which is taken at the end of grade 11, indicated that female students are outperforming male students on both measures (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2015b). Sixty-four percent of the students who took the 2002/2003 CSEC exams were female and only 36% were male (Government of Jamaica, 2004). Ten years later the results revealed a similar trend, with high school female students leading male students in the CSEC results for years 2012 to 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2015b). In addition, the majority of the top-performing secondary level educational institutions were all-female schools (Francis, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2013, 2015b). Reports also showed that female students were outperforming male students in the traditional male-dominated areas of science, as well as mathematics (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2015b). Over the years, these results



have led to an increasing public concern about the dismal implications for the functionality and productivity of the future Jamaican male workforce.

Newspapers have been flooded with public pleas to “help our boys” (Francis, 2015, para. 1), prompted by the concern that Jamaican male students are moving towards illiteracy and crime (Green-Evans, 2002). Between 2002 and 2016 Jamaican newspaper headlines included:

“A Deepening Crisis for the Jamaican male.” (Green-Evans, 2002)

“Wanted - More Men in the Classroom.” (Cooke, 2010)

“Change Teaching Approach for Boys.” (Hill, 2011)

“The Next 50 years – Save our Boys.” (Reid, 2012)

“We Need to Rescue our Boys. School Boys: Special Focus on Them Needed.” (Campbell, 2013)

“Save our Boys.” (Malabver, 2016)

Furthermore, officials in Jamaica have passionately spoken out for a long time about the problem of educating males. In 2002, a forum called Dialogue for Development was held to discuss the status of Jamaican men in the society and their likely contribution to Jamaica's development. At this event, Claire Bernard, head of social security and welfare research at the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), said:

Males are in serious trouble...we are building a society with more academically qualified females than males... Part of the problem facing the society, it seems, is that boys drop out of school more, and earlier, than girls, and don't re-enter the system. (Green-Evans, 2002)

Similar comments and expressions of concern continue today. In January 2016,

Mark Malabver (2016), head of the Social Science Department at Charlie Smith High School and chairman of the Inner-city Teachers Coalition, wrote:

The issue of the underperformance of our boys in the Jamaican education system, if left unchecked, will lead to serious sociological problems in the near future, some of which we are already experiencing. It has implications for social justice, crime and violence, the economy, equity, and even the distribution of social benefits. (Malabver, 2016, para. 2)

Not only are educators concerned about the problem; they also want answers. The evidence, in fact, suggests that they are clamoring for novel and creative approaches to teaching that will capture the imaginations of male students (Francis, 2015). The president of the Jamaica Teachers' Association recently stated, "We really need to do some investigation in an effort to create some balance, as our boys are in need of urgent help" (Francis, 2015, para. 13). A quote from Dr. Carol Gentles, Jamaican educator and teacher trainer, sums up the current state of affairs with educating male students in Jamaica:

We are not teaching the boys according to the ways that boys learn best. We have been talking about it, but I don't know if we have been doing enough to correct it.

("Target Teacher Training," 2016)

### **The Crisis Elsewhere**

The problem with male students educational underperformance is not unique to Jamaica. In fact, this is a crisis that has gained increased attention in other parts of the world in the last two decades, as nations seek to understand and attempt to find answers as to why male students are under-participating and underachieving in school (Gosse &

Arnocky, 2013; Gurian, 2010; Hartman, 2011; Hitchens, 2009; Kleinfeld & Andrews, 2006; Kleinfeld, 2009; Parry, 1997; Viadero, 2006; Whitmire, 2010; Younger & Warrington, 2008). This concern is not limited to underdeveloped, developing and poor countries such as Jamaica. Gosse and Arnocky (2013) pointed out that highly developed and affluent countries like the United States (U.S.), Canada, England, and Australia have similar academic achievement problems among their male students. However, these countries have greater resources and can invest more in research and interventions to try to solve the problem.

### **An Important Caveat**

We know, of course, that not all male students are at risk of failing academically or dropping out of school before graduation. But for those who do, factors related to structure, culture and agency within school communities, the education system and in society at large, often contribute to their underperformance and eventual disconnection from the school system. Some of these factors include, but are not limited to gender, race, social class, parenting practices, geographical location, politics and subcultural norms (Bodovski, 2010; Commonwealth Education Hub, 2016; Kleinfeld, 2009).

### **Local Intervention Efforts by the Ministry of Education in Jamaica**

The Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) has undertaken several measures over the years aimed at improving student performance. This includes various attempts to rectify the problem of male students' underachievement, but these have had, at best, limited success. One reason for this is that most of the initiatives to improve male students' academic attainment and participation focused on the overall development of the primary level of education in Jamaica, with strategies directed to both genders, which

largely ignored issues at the secondary level and arguably may have diluted the focused attention needed to improve male students' education (Davis, 2004; Dye et al., 2002; Lockheed et al., 2005; MindBloom Consulting, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2012, 2014; MSI/EQUATE, 2005; USAID, 2014). Only one major initiative - the *Advancing Education of Boys Project* - was launched in 2013 to directly address male students' underachievement at the secondary level in Jamaica (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013, 2014a, 2014b; Smith-Edwards, 2013; Universal Management Group, 2013).

The historical context for education in Jamaica is also an important factor in explaining the underachievement of Jamaican male students. After Jamaica achieved its political independence from Britain in 1962, a new vision for the nation and goals for the social mobility of the Jamaican people brought about initiatives designed to create a new future for the nation through the education of its people (Davis, 2004; Evans, 2001; King, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2012). Deficiencies as a result of the colonial legacy on the nation and the need to eliminate the class based education system shaped the early educational initiatives and the way forward. To provide equal educational opportunities for all children, many of whom were formally excluded based on class, race and gender, the government of Jamaica first placed emphasis on increasing educational access and equity, focusing on early childhood and the primary level. This emphasis has continued throughout the years, with the goals and targets of follow-up initiatives determined from evaluations of preceding programs.

Eventually, the focus of successive initiatives expanded to include improvements in the overall quality of education, with special attention to male students' education (Davis, 2004; Evans, 1999, 2001; MSI/EQUATE, 2005). Over the past four decades, the

Ministry of Education's (MOE) stated agenda and goals have been to attain universal primary enrollment, improve students' achievement outcomes and assure enhanced transition of students from primary to secondary education (Evans, 1999; Davis, 2004; Dye et al., 2002; Lockheed et al., 2005; MSI/EQUATE, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2012). Important supporting goals included adjusting the school curriculum to make it relatable to the Caribbean region, and infusing it with strategies that support the advancement of male students' school attendance, academic achievement and social performance. Also essential was the expansion of teacher training to enable the improvement of the delivery and quality of education. The overarching goal has been to increase student enrollment and the quality of education at all levels (Davis, 2004; MSI/EQUATE, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2012, 2014; Watson-Williams, 2013).

Evaluation reports based on completed initiatives continued to affirm the MOE's overall focus on developing early childhood and primary levels of education. Over time, these reports revealed positive trends in student enrollment, attendance and performance outcomes at the primary level. But the gender disparity in performance persisted, particularly in literacy levels, and also in the transition of students from the primary level to the secondary level, where results showed females outperforming their male peers (Davis, 2004; Dye et al., 2002; Lockheed et al., 2005; MSI/EQUATE, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2012, 2014, 2017a, 2018; Watson-Williams, 2013). For example, the national data for the 2011- 2012 Grade Four Literacy Test, when broken down by gender, reveals a significantly higher percentage of males underachieving in literacy than the percentage of females. Of the total female students who sat the test, 81.6% attained mastery, and of

the total male students who sat the test, only 61.5% attained mastery (Ministry of Education, 2014; USAID, 2014).

Other reports revealed the overall impact of these initiatives at the primary level over time. A summary report of the MOE's education transformation plans for the years 2004-2015 showed that the overall achievement goals in literacy and numeracy for students at the Grade 4 primary level were unmet. For Language Arts, the goal was to have 85% of students achieve mastery, however only 77.4% (from a baseline of 52%) achieved mastery. Also, with the goal to have 75% of the students achieve mastery in the Grade 4 numeracy test, only 58% (from a baseline of 38%) achieved mastery. In both cases, female students outperformed male students throughout the years (Hastings, 2015).

The related World Bank report on Jamaica's education transformation project praised the gains made in the universal enrollment of children at the early childhood and primary levels up to grade nine at the secondary level, despite the country's economic hardship and financial constraints (MindBloom Consulting, 2015; World Bank, 2015). At the same time, the report pointed to the need for the MOE to address the shortcomings in teaching and learning quality, equitable educational access for all children (as generally the higher performers are enrolled in private institutions), enrollment at the higher levels of the secondary system and sector governance.

The MOE's response to the downward trend in the academic achievement levels of male students at the secondary level took place within the context of seeking to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Educations for All (EFA) goals (Universalia Management Group, 2013). Jamaica was made the lead country for the intervention of a regional strategy - the *Advancing Education of Boys Project* -

established in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Nations (countries that were mostly territories of the former British Empire), to address the problem of male students' underachievement in schools for the Caribbean region (Universalia Management Group, 2013). The basic purpose of the initiative was to enable high school male students across Jamaica to achieve their full potential.

The *Advancing Education of Boys Project* directed for male students at the secondary level was not a developed, established or tested educational model. It was an initiative with broad objectives that required the creation and implementation of an intervention strategy from scratch. The objectives included addressing factors relating to school management, developing the school intervention strategy, setting out a cycle of actions and coordinating the implementation of the developed intervention strategy at selected schools. The eventual intervention strategy design, as an entrepreneurial program, was piloted in 15 of the over 300 high schools in the system, with projections for later expansion (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013, 2014a, 2014b; Universalia Management Group, 2013). The participating schools were coeducational and the strategies were focused on low achieving male students.

As this initiative was the MOE's first attempt to directly address male students' underachievement at the secondary level, the undertaking was new territory. The scope of the problem was unknown, but given the avid attention to the lower levels of education, and the stark need for a response to the educational needs of high school male students, the initiative presented an opportunity for positive change for these students (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013). Planned funding and support for the project for the period May 2013 to December 2015, provided by the Commonwealth, enabled the

project to proceed (Universal Management Group, 2013). Project reports outlined program plans and activities for each participant school, given the schools' varying structures and needs (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013, 2014a, 2014b). However, the reports indicated start up delays due to late funding and the vastness of the project.

A final report submitted to the Commonwealth by the Jamaican Teaching Council described some strategies and activities that were in progress and others that were planned for implementation in the future, but the report did not include information on any achievement outcomes for the participating male students (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2015). Attempts to obtain a formal evaluation or current report regarding the impact of the initiative on male students' achievement at the participating schools were unsuccessful, and reference to the project was not found in other MOE reports on education transformation.

No other specific initiative to address the underachievement of male students at the secondary school level has been reported or implemented by the MOE. Nonetheless, other MOE strategies aimed at the overall development at the secondary level of education are planned, and some are in progress (Davis, 2004; Hastings, 2015; MSI/EQUATE, 2005; Ministry of Education 2012). These include increasing secondary level school access to students through the expansion and improvement of the infrastructure of some schools by giving priority to those in most need of repairs, and those that need an upgrade in order to accommodate more students, plus reorganizing and decreasing the number of schools that operate on a double-shift system, and re-accommodating the students in these schools. Other strategies in progress relate to school management and involve professional training of principals, school board



members and teachers. Strategies geared toward students focus on extending course offerings at some schools to facilitate students having an array of options to gain skills and competencies with courses in technical and vocational training. Most recent, in 2016, was the launching of a new curriculum for grades one to nine, intended to improve methods of teaching and offer a more student-centered approach (Ministry of Education, 2016c, 2017c).

The 2017 reports on the national CSEC exams results for students at the secondary level in the public school system revealed higher levels of performance for female students than male students in both participation and achievement (Ministry of Education, 2017a). Specifically, more female students sat the CSEC exams (56% F, 44% M) and attained grades 1-3 in English (58% F, 47% M), grades 1-3 in Math (36% F, 31% M) and grades 1-3 in at least one subject (89% F, 85% M). Additionally, more female students passed five or more subjects, including both English and math (28% F, 21% M), which are required for students to matriculate to post-secondary education, and also increase their potential for higher level employment in Jamaica. These results indicate the need for improvement of the quality of education for students at the secondary level, with specific attention given to male students' participation, learning and outcomes.

Overall, these reform initiatives, implemented at the direction of the Ministry of Education (MOE), have had varying implications for change in the Jamaican educational paradigm and schooling process, as they seek to meaningfully address the educational needs of students, and more specifically, the problem of male students' underperformance in school. The MOE's commitment to positive outcomes for students is evident in its continuous pursuit of the educational agenda. But attaining the desired

increase in male students' academic performance seems to be greatly challenged by the scope and depth of the problem of male students underachievement, which is related to the historical, social, economical and cultural factors that cause systemic issues in the society and the education system (Hastings, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2012, 2014; MSI/EQUATE, 2005; Watson-Williams, 2011).

### **Conclusion**

Based on the historic and current participation and achievement statistics regarding Jamaican high school male students, and the fact that intervention efforts thus far have not achieved the intended turnaround in their performance, it seems that the current educational model for secondary education in Jamaica is not adequately addressing the needs of male students in order for them to succeed academically and be productive citizens of the nation. Achieving a solid secondary education not only provides students with more options regarding job, career, higher earnings and pursuit of higher education, it also serves to enhance individual and collective consciousness, elevating self-leadership and social relations. The inevitable problems for society when large numbers of former students become unemployed and unemployable because they do not have the necessary educational qualifications might be mitigated by more people becoming educated and gaining new ways and choices to direct their lives, which is an important goal for the Jamaican society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The educational intervention strategies implemented by the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) thus far do not seem to be working sufficiently and in a timely manner to improve the educational outcomes with high school male students in Jamaica. Except

for one main initiative at the secondary level, other intervention strategies have been focused at the early childhood and primary levels of education, geared towards both genders, focused chiefly on literacy, and were implemented at only select primary schools and grade levels (Davis, 2004; MSI/EQUATE, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2012).

Although the MOE's bottom up approach of directing their principal efforts at the early childhood and primary levels of education, under the assumption that there will be a ripple effect on higher educational levels, has merit, the hoped for positive impact at the secondary level, especially with male students, has not been adequately realized (Hastings, 2015; MindBloom Consulting, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2017a). In addition, while the gender-balanced approach to implementing the strategies might have secured attention to female students as stipulated, it may at the same time have limited the type of attention that was essential to addressing the underperformance of the male students. Furthermore, what was a long overdue strategy and seemingly promising response for the male students at the secondary level - the *Advancing Education of Boys Project* - seems to have had a short tenure (2013 -2015) after the project's funding from the Commonwealth came to an end.

The intractable situation with Jamaican male students' underachievement seems to demand something more or different from what has been done so far. Low performance will continue to exacerbate the high unemployment rates of males between the ages of 15 and 24, and set up conditions that foster illiteracy, crime and violence. Recent actions by the MOE to take on some responsibility for crime prevention by directing resources to help parents and guardians become more positive influencers in

their children lives, further evidences the concern for male students' underperformance in school (Ministry of Education, 2017b). Since lack of education is perceived to be a major driver of crime and political instability in Jamaica, and given that this age group of males is reported to be the main perpetrators and victims of crimes in Jamaica, it is past time for their underachievement to be addressed (Harriott & Jones, 2016; USAID, 2004, 2013). Overall, resolving this problem of low performance of high school male students in Jamaica is critical for the male students themselves, and by extension, to successful nation building.

As Jamaican high school male students fail to keep pace with female students in educational participation and achievement, and generally continue to underperform, the critical question becomes: How do we engage Jamaican male students in the educational process and help them achieve academic success? Unfortunately, there is not yet a clear direction regarding promising strategies to increase the likelihood that these male students will be successful both in school and after they have completed their high school education. However, given that the prior general approach taken by the MOE has failed to adequately resolve the problem, an approach that includes direct and gender targeted initiatives to address male students underachievement at the secondary levels emerges as a likely option to pursue at this time.

This will require identifying innovative educational strategies that have proven successful for male students in other contexts and can offer new ideas for transforming the academic outcomes for Jamaican high school male students. One way this can be done is to explore successful models and programs for high school male students in other countries, and ascertain the feasibility of implementation, in whole or part, in Jamaican

schools. Adopting and adapting an established and tested school model could reduce the amount of time and resources needed to develop a model from scratch. However, the issue of transferability - whether successful strategies found in one context can be transferred to another context and achieve the same success - is an important one. Research suggests that scaling up or transferring one reform model to another context suffers from multiple contextual challenges (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002).

Despite possible challenges, examining successful programs related to male academic achievement in any context could be a helpful endeavor in attempting to address the needs of students in other contexts who are academically underachieving. Jamaican educators have demonstrated interest in identifying some useful practices established in other contexts to help set a stage for further exploration towards finding a solution to their problem with educating males. At the very least, exposing these key Jamaican educational stakeholders to successful models, and offering them the opportunity to determine the feasibility of transferring strategies, might enhance their ability to construct a model for academic success for their own high school male students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to explore ways to improve the educational outcomes of Jamaican high school male students by investigating Jamaican stakeholders' perceptions regarding the relevance and supportiveness of a successful U.S. educational model, and the feasibility of transferring and applying it to the educational needs of Jamaican high school male students. The two main objectives of the study were: 1) expose Jamaican educators to a U.S. student leadership educational model with strategies that could potentially improve education for male students, and allow them to

both identify the strategies that they felt might best support their male students, and also identify factors that they perceived as likely or unlikely to transfer due to the context specific nature of Jamaica; and 2) examine the larger issue of how factors related to context affect reform efforts in secondary education when the transferability of educational models are being considered.

Interviews and focus groups were used to inquire into Jamaican stakeholders' reactions to the U.S. educational model in order to obtain their views on the merits, risks, challenges and viability of implementing this externally developed educational school model in Jamaican schools. The study sought the perspectives from a variety of Jamaican stakeholders involved in education at both the school level and the top governing educational level. At the school level, one secondary institution was used as a case study, and is referred to in this study as *the Jamaican school* for privacy reasons. The case study approach allowed close examination of how the U.S. educational model might or might not work in one specific Jamaican school, offering very concrete data from various stakeholders in the school community, which included school leaders, students, teachers, and parents. The study participants were able to speak to both the suitability of the model for educating their male students and the possibilities of implementing the strategies based on their particular school context.

At the top governing educational level, stakeholders were administrators at the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE), who are involved with policymaking and are influential in the decision to adopt a new model of education in the Jamaican education systems. They offered more general perspectives regarding the new model based on the broader educational context. Having a diverse group of stakeholders in various roles and

functions in the Jamaican education system as participants in the study offered the opportunity to acquire a wide variety of perspectives in the exploratory process.

The U.S. educational model used in the study was one developed and used by St. Benedict's Preparatory school in Newark, New Jersey. St. Benedict's student leadership educational school model was selected for the study because of its significant success in educating their minority male students, who are mostly African American. St. Benedict's is a Catholic, inner-city, all-male high school, overseen by the St. Benedictine monks, spanning grades seven through to 12, with a total enrollment of 550 students who are mostly from low-income Black and Hispanic families. The school overseers' commitment to the success of their students led to the development of a unique strategy of using an experiential student leadership approach to carry out their educational process. Their school model is seen as an innovative and effective response to the educational needs of their students.

The Jamaica school selected for this study was also a Catholic all-male high school, overseen by the Jesuit community. It was chosen for two important reasons: the school leaders were seeking new ways to better educate their male student population and improve their educational attainment and participation and were interested in the strategies used at St. Benedict's; and because the school shared similar features with St. Benedict's. In addition to being a faith-based, all-male high school, it too is located in an inner city area, has grades spanning seven through to 13, with students who are mostly from middle to low-income Black families. One demographic difference is that the Jamaican school has a total enrollment of approximately 1400 students, which is almost

three times that of St. Benedict's. See Appendix B for a summary of the similarities and differences between St. Benedict's and the Jamaican school.

In exposing the St. Benedict's educational model to various Jamaican stakeholder groups in education, the research sought to shed light on the structural arrangements and cultural dynamics in the school community and in the overall education system, plus elucidate the issues related to educating male students from the various stakeholders' perspectives. The study explored Jamaican stakeholders' beliefs and values about the schooling process and the education of male students in relation to the following: their views and concerns about the responsiveness of the different aspects of the model to the needs of their male students; the aspects of the model they deemed could work or not work; the strategies they believed would be acceptable practices for their school context; the aspects of the model they felt could be implemented; and the modifications to the model these stakeholders felt would be needed for successful implementation in their school. In general, by exploring various angles, the goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the factors related to the problem of Jamaican male students' underperformance in high school, to ascertain whether the strategies of the St. Benedict's model offered Jamaican stakeholders any answers to the problem; and if so, how any perceived beneficial strategies could be adopted and adapted in the Jamaican school context.

### **Issues Related to Transferability**

While there are important similarities between students at both school sites that support the benefit of this study, the educational and social experiences of Jamaican male students and U.S. African American male students, as a whole, are not identical. For



example, although both have African ancestry, African American students are still embedded in the historical context of racism in the U.S. and their lives continue to be impacted by racial bias, stereotyping and profiling, which is not the case for Jamaican students. With a population comprising people primarily of African descent, the social atmosphere in Jamaica is racially and culturally more inclusive than in the U.S., and the population overall holds a common national identity of being Jamaican, not having a race marker attached to their identity as is the case with African Americans. Furthermore, Jamaican male student educational experiences do not typically have this added element of racial bias, which permeates and negates the schooling experience of African American males. The fact that St. Benedict's school model is successful with African American male students under these socially biased circumstances speaks to the robustness of its strategies.

Nonetheless, the success of the St. Benedict's model in the United States does not guarantee it will have the same effect with Jamaican male students. Furthermore, differences between the sites may not support the application of some of the strategies in the Jamaican setting. At the national level, the resources, as well as the economic and social infrastructure of a large major country such as the U.S., are much more extensive and complex than those of a small developing nation as Jamaica with under three million people, and hence create a totally different life context, culture and opportunities for its massive and diverse population.

These macro factors have some impact on the specific school sites and student experiences. For example, in the U.S. school setting, because of the social infrastructure and a supportive community framework, tolerance is exercised for students' differing

social identities, including sexual orientation, which is opposite in the Jamaican society that is considered to be homophobic. In addition, the U.S. economic structure provides school leaders with more possibilities for financial support and other resources to enhance their school operations and educational delivery in order to attend to their students' needs. These economic advantages are not readily available in the Jamaican school context.

In sum, this study was designed to examine the extent to which St. Benedict's student leadership educational model could provide support for the improvement of educational outcomes for Jamaican high school male students. Although St. Benedict's educational model offered the potential for transferability to the Jamaican context based on the similarities across the sites, there were contextual differences to be taken into account, as issues of transferability and scaling up were considered.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question for this study was: How relevant and transferable is the St. Benedict's school model to the selected Jamaican school based on the perceptions of students, parents, teachers, administrators, school leaders, educational leaders and educational policy makers in Jamaica who participated in the study?

The qualitative study was guided by these specific research questions:

1. What aspects of the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model are perceived by Jamaican stakeholders as potentially beneficial in helping to improve the education of Jamaican high school male students?

2. What are the risks and challenges to implementing the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model in Jamaican schools as perceived by Jamaican stakeholders?
3. What modifications to the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model are needed for successful adaptation in Jamaican schools as perceived by Jamaican stakeholders?
4. What can we learn from key stakeholders in Jamaica about the general process of scaling up successful educational reform models designed to support high school male students when the process requires the transferability of education from a U.S. context to a Jamaican context?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to the body of literature on Jamaican male students' underachievement and underparticipation by investigating the perceived merits and challenges of transferring and implementing a successful educational model from one context to another. It also offers new explanations and insights into the perspectives of Jamaican educators regarding what strategies and practices are most supportive of educating Jamaican high school male students to improve academic outcomes. To that end, it could be a first, small step toward addressing an urgent need to improve education for high school male students in Jamaica.

The strategies used by St. Benedict's are unique and different from the traditional approaches toward educating Jamaican male students, and they cover multiple domains in a student's educational life. The experiential student leadership educational model and the socialization process for its students are innovative ways to educate adolescent males.

Understanding St. Benedict's success encouraged an investigation of the potential for reform transfer. As such, this study is significant in that Jamaican school leaders were able to identify some of the strategies that they consider useful for implementation in their context; what would work in their context and what would not work based on their educational structure, culture and teachers' practices. With the new knowledge that emerged from this study, administrators and educators have the opportunity to design and implement a contextually fitting intervention. In addition, this study sheds new knowledge in how parents, educators, and educational leaders might be encouraged to develop new outlooks and behavior towards raising the academic achievement of high school male students.

The study is also valuable in that it offers new data, broad and deep interpretations from Jamaican stakeholders that may potentially provide new ways of solving the problem of male student underachievement. The hope is that the results will provide new insights and spur new ideas for Jamaican stakeholders, who in turn will have new knowledge to take action towards advancing the improvement of male students' academic participation and attainment in Jamaica.

With the many and varied factors that influence academic participation and success, this study also makes important contributions to the field of education in the area of scaling up educational reforms, particularly in the secondary all-male context. By exploring how to transport the isolated example of success in St. Benedict's educational model for minority male students to another context, a Jamaican high school, this study exposes how beliefs, values, and culture, as well as educational policies, practices and paradigms construct what educators do and are willing to do to bring about change in the

educational process. It uncovers the views held by members of the school community and educational leaders regarding roles, expected behaviors and responsibilities, and how these views influence actions, interactions and relationships. Thus, the findings of the study provide new knowledge on some of the important contextual issues that must be considered as schools attempt to scale up or transfer successful educational programs from one school context to another.

CHAPTER TWO:  
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Background**

Given the body of research that shows Jamaican male students academically under-participating and underachieving, it seems apparent that the educational paradigm and the pedagogical approach to educating Jamaican male students need to change (Campbell, 2013; Davis, 2004; Francis 2015; Management Systems International (MSI)/EQUATE, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2013, 2015b, 2016a, 2017a, 2018; Reid, 2012). Since gender disparity in literacy rates and academic achievement in the Jamaican national exams first captured the nation's attention from media reports in the 1990s, concerns over male students' academic performance have grown with each annual report. Prior to this, male students seemed to be academically excelling over female students, but this was mainly due to the limitations placed on females attending school during those times (Parry, 2000). As the playing field for both genders began to level in the education system, over time, the education reports on student achievement started to reveal females consistently outperforming males in school (Brown & Chevannes, 1998; Davis, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2013, 2015b, 2016a, 2017a, 2018; Reid, 2012).

In 1999, literacy reports showed that 26% of Jamaican males were illiterate compared to only 14% of Jamaican females (Reid, 2012). In the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index report for Jamaica, the literacy rate was 92% for females and 82% for males (World Economic Forum, 2013). Although literacy rates have increased for both genders over time, reports indicate that the gap between male and female students is growing in areas of school enrollment, graduation rates, and academic achievement at the primary,

secondary and tertiary levels of education (Davis, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2015a, Reid, 2012). Furthermore, the 2012 Report Card on Education in Jamaica rated gender equity in education a D (unsatisfactory), stating that this was trending downwards due to male students' consistent academic underperformance, concluding that young men are underserved by the Jamaican education system (Sewell-Lawson, 2012).

Since the late 1990s, response by the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) to address the educational underachievement of male students have had various foci, with only one direct intervention implemented for male students at the secondary level. Given that even this intervention did not produce lasting change for high school male students, there seems to be justification to explore innovative programs that have the potential to transform how male students are being educated in Jamaica, with the goal of enhancing outcomes.

Even in identifying what might be workable solutions, it will take time to see whether or not these will adequately address the complex roots of Jamaican male student underachievement. Jamaican scholars attribute the causes of the problem to the continuation of policies that originated during Jamaica's colonial subjugation (Miller, 1986; Samuda, 1966) and gender socialization, in particular, male identity issues (Chevannes, 1999; Figueroa, 2004; Parry, 1997, 2000). These systemic factors led Miller (1986) to suggest that the problem of male student underachievement must be addressed by an overall cultural shift in Jamaican society.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on male students education, particularly in Jamaica, to better understand their chronic underperformance in high school. The discussion begins with a global snap shot of the underachievement dilemma

with male students, followed by the slavery-education nexus in countries with historical slavery. The past social structural system of racialized slavery seems to be the root of the contemporary educational outcomes for Black males in the U.S. and Jamaica. Following this will be a brief history and evolution of the Jamaican education system leading up to the current state of affairs, along with intervention attempts by the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) to address the problem of Jamaican male students' underperformance in school. This discussion then moves to the educational trends for males in the U.S. with a focus on African American males. The similar history and ancestry between Jamaican males and African American males, albeit different contexts, is an important factor that influenced the choice of the case for this study.

The discussion will then turn to some educational approaches used in the U.S. that have had some success with African American male students, including the one chosen for this study, raising the question as to whether the selected approach might be applicable to the Jamaican education system for high school male students. From here follows an exploration of research on transferability and scaling-up that present issues that are inherent in implementing an external reform in a new context. The review concludes with highlighting the need for more research and programs that will aid with enhancing the educational life and outcomes for Jamaican high school male students.

### **Global Trends in Male Student Underachievement**

The phenomenon of male student under-achievement and underparticipation is global and not exclusive to Jamaica. Many countries over the past two decades have been grappling with an array of academic achievement problems (and their consequences) among their male students (Gosse & Arnocky, 2013; Gurian, 2010;



Hartman, 2011; Hitchens, 2009; Kleinfeld, 2009; Kleinfeld & Andrews, 2006; Parry, 1997; Viadero, 2006; Whitmire, 2010; Younger & Warrington, 2008). Gender disparity reports on education highlight that the problem is not limited to poor or developing nations; it is also present in highly developed and affluent countries like the United States, Canada, England, and Australia.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) report on gender disparity in 2017 stated that in 2014, across their 35 member countries, females continued to surpass males in both educational attainment and proficiencies at the secondary level, and more females than males obtained tertiary qualifications (OECD, 2017). While these are broad findings and the problem is contingent on each country's context, they reflect the overall global state of affairs with male students' educational struggles and the need for countries to attend to this impactful dilemma on their countries well-being and economic growth and stability.

A study by Bertocchi (2015) reveals critical understanding regarding the relationship among slavery, racial inequality and education outcomes for North America, Latin America and the Caribbean regions. In some of the countries explored, racial education inequality increased with historical slavery. Put in context, past colonial and racialized slavery systems and structures created economic, social and educational inequities that underlie Black male academic underperformance (Bertocchi, 2015; Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012).

The key findings revealed: (1) a negative relationship between slavery and current educational outcomes; (2) that racial education inequality has been decreasing over time but is still persistent; (3) racial education inequality can be traced to the legacy of

colonial slavery; (4) colonial slavery affects current income inequality and its racial component via the channel of education; (5) evidence of the relationship between slavery and current educational outcomes is plentiful for the U.S., but less so for other regions; (6) Latin America is characterized by persistent income and educational inequalities, but country experiences differ with respect to historical slavery; (7) slavery can be associated with a lower level of education; but evidence on its differential effect across races is scarce; (8) the influence of additional institutional factors (development of mass education and a more assimilationist approach to the integration of former slaves) can limit the effect of slavery on inequality (Bertocchi, p. 1).

Generally these findings provide useful information showing the relationships between past social structural systems and current phenomena and serve as a substantive measure that gives perspective to male underachievement in countries with historical slavery, such as Jamaica and the U.S., where discrimination is at play in various degrees and ways. Key findings 4 and 5 (noted above) are relevant to the U.S. and shed some clarity on educational disparities. Key finding 8 is relevant to understanding some of the differences in education behavior and outcomes in Jamaica, relative to the U.S. Whereas racial mixing eventually occurred in Jamaica, racial segregation has been a greater trend in the U.S., leading to different educational experiences for the Black and male student population in each country.

While the education and experiences of Jamaican and American male students are not identical, there are similarities in ethnicity, race and historical trajectories between the two groups. However, because the U.S. male student population and their context is much more diverse than in Jamaica, the following review will offer a brief general lens,

and then focus on the parallel educational experiences and outcomes of Jamaican and African American male students, who share more demographic factors with them than the general population.

### **The Jamaican Education System and Jamaican Boys Education**

The country's colonial history functions as a kind of intervening variable in the educational lives of Jamaican male students. Jamaica was controlled as a colony, first by Spain from 1494 to 1655, and later by Great Britain from 1655 to 1962. Both European powers imposed slavery and racism on the people of Jamaica, which shaped their consciousness and behavior (Black, 1983; Nettleford, 1984). Even after the abolition of slavery in 1834, the British sought to maintain a docile native work force. The colonial legacy along with current overt and subtle practices of discrimination is still pervasive and is evident in Jamaica's social structures (e.g., class, race, economy, family, and religion) and systems (e.g., governmental, political, legal, educational, and cultural), which developed out of the British system. Miller (1986) asserts that the current gender roles, in particular, originated in Jamaica's colonial past.

Prior to the establishment of the educational system in the 1830, what schooling existed served the small White elite, as planters opposed the education of slaves (Miller, 1986). The educational structures that were initiated in Jamaica after the abolition of slavery segregated Black and White students. The educational structures that eventually emerged for Black males and Black females also differed. These institutionalized policies of segregation greatly impacted the Jamaican education system and continue to have far-reaching impact on student achievement, as will be seen next.

## **History and Development of the Education System**

The Jamaican education system, first established in the 1830s, was shaped initially by slavery, and shifted radically at several points afterward. Early on, two paths emerged - one for White and light-skinned persons, and another for ex-slaves, both of which were supported and controlled through separate means. This dual system continued into the twentieth century, maintaining the segregated social structure between Whites and light-skinned, and the largely Black working class (Miller, 1986).

After the abolition of slavery in 1834, education development in Jamaica was focused on making suitable provisions for educating the large Black population of ex-slaves. As the education of ex-slaves was not supported by the local representative assembly of the British Crown who governed the island, basic education was first provided by missions - Moravian, Baptist, Methodist, Wesleyan, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian - that utilized the direct subsidy (the Negro Education Grant) from the British government in 1835. The focus of these missions was on establishing adequate facilities for schools, teacher training, and curriculum development for the ex-slaves. These were the dominant endeavors and approach for education development in Jamaica, which continued until the 1960s. The missionary basic schools that were started by these groups later became part of the public education system in Jamaica (Miller, 1986; Samuda, 1966).

From 1834 to 1899, provisions for elementary education were made for both males and females. Elementary schools for liberated Black children were established from funds directed specifically for the education of the “negro apprentices” by the Mico Charity in the United Kingdom (Samuda, 1966). The elementary schools for White and

light skinned children were set up from endowments by wealthy citizens of the colony, and children of former slaves were barred from attending. The dual system of education endured into the twentieth century under the tight control of a Board of Education that was established in 1842 and overseen by the still planter-dominated Jamaican assembly (Jamaican government). When the British education subsidy to the missionary groups come to an end in 1846, the Board took over the support and control of education on the island. Instead of supporting the educational endeavors of the missions and the charities, the Board of Educations' focus remained on manual training for the Blacks (Nettleford, 1984; Samuda, 1966). A build up of frustration within the Black population from the representative assembly's continued refusal to orient themselves to the new liberated social system led to an open revolt by the Blacks with the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. After an imperial inquiry into the situation by the British Crown, Jamaica reverted to Crown colony government in October of the same year. Thereafter, the Jamaican education system fell under the control of a newly established department of education (Samuda, 1966).

Near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the school system continued to expand, the need for more teachers increased, and thus teacher-training institutions were established by the efforts of private agencies, churches and the government (Nettleford, 1984; Samuda, 1966). These teachers' colleges were primarily for men, and served not only as teacher training programs, but also as the secondary level of education for the Blacks by the additional academic subjects that were offered (Miller, 1986, 1990; Samuda, 1966). Thus, the teachers colleges enabled Blacks to gain a high level of education and functioned as the "Black man's secondary school" (Miller, 1990, p. 57).

Secondary level education for the middle class (Whites, and light skinned) was offered through English secondary grammar schools, staffed by expatriate teachers from Britain or White or light skinned Jamaicans (Miller, 1986, 1990). These private high schools required tuition and were only attended by a small token number of Blacks that were offered free-places (Graham, 1975).

The government's entry into teacher education was intended both to raise teachers' academic standards and help staff the growing number of schools. This educational pathway for the Blacks - through the teachers college - of first being trained as a teacher, became the main avenue for upward mobility for the Blacks. It graduated students that rose to prominent positions in society (Miller, 1990).

### **Institutionalized Gendered Educational Structures**

However, this teacher-training educational pathway for Black males changed drastically in 1899, when, in response to the recommendations of the Lumb Commission a year earlier, the government shifted policy in favor of training Black female teachers, while redirecting Black males into industrial and agricultural work after elementary school (Miller, 1986, 1990; Samuda, 1966).

The British Crown appointed the Commission to investigate the Jamaican education system after the economic depression in 1895 that was triggered by the collapse of the sugar trade. From the report, the Crown Colony administrators made a decision to prepare Black females as teachers instead of Black males. The government reasoned that Black males should be taught agriculture and trade, which it deemed more appropriate for their station in life. Legislators argued that secondary education would cause Black males to become contemptuous of trade and agriculture and make them idle

and vicious, since policy was now to deny them jobs in higher positions (Miller, 1986). They also argued that women were honest and better teachers who would run schools more efficiently and at a higher level than male teachers.

Miller (1986) posited that although there were efforts in the Lumb Commission to improve conditions for the Black population, the secondary intent was to prevent the Black population from gaining political power. This was done by pitting the Black woman against the Black man, and simultaneously reducing expenses by paying a lower wage for female teaching services (Miller, 1986, Samuda 1966). The actions of the Crown Colony administrators appeared honorable to women who were gaining new educational and employment opportunities that were once designated for men, while men were freed for industrial and agricultural employment after elementary school (Miller, 1986). Not allowing Black males' access to teacher training impeded their social and economic mobility due to the loss of secondary and higher education (Miller, 1986).

The educational policy changes from the Lumb Commission recommendations in 1898 were incorporated in the Code of Regulations for the Jamaican elementary education and teacher training in 1899. This led to the closure of some male teacher colleges and the establishment of female teachers colleges, and thus, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were three institutions for female teacher training and only one remaining for males (Samuda, 1966).

These changes in the education system resulted in Black women replacing Black men as the teaching force for primary schools in Jamaica from 1900 to 1956. The regulations did not change again until 1956, when teacher-training institutions became co-educational (Miller, 1986). In short, the effect of the Lumb Commission was not only

the limitation of educational opportunities for Jamaican males, but also their consignment to manual labor that continued over six decades. This in turn influenced the way males and females were socialized in the Jamaican society (Miller, 1986).

### **Post-Independence Educational Structures**

This subjugation of Jamaican male education did not shift until 1962 when Jamaica gained its independence (Miller, 1986; Samuda, 1966), bringing about a focus on education and the improvement of academic performance, as a literate population was seen as key for national development. New education policies expanded the educational system, making all levels of education available to both males and females, and not just for those who wanted to be teachers. The Education Act of 1965 focused on the development of a more inclusive and equitable system, and a second Education Act in 1980, stipulated four levels of education for the public education system: early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary.

However, it is often easier to make policy changes than to transform cultural norms and social behavior. The structure of the Jamaican education system post-independence continued to resemble the traditional British system. The system remained socially stratified, and the ownership of the schools continued to be between the government and the denominational groups - now Roman Catholic, Anglican, United Church, and Methodist. Also, the financing for the schools continued to be through trust, fees and government aid (Miller, 1986, 1990).

By 1983, women made up 87% of teachers at the primary level and 66% at the secondary level (Miller, 1986, 1990). Attempts to create some balance between the number of male and female primary school teachers were challenging due to the small



number of male students enrolled in high, technical, or agricultural schools. There simply were not enough male students from which to recruit teachers (Miller, 1986). Miller contended that the expansion of the educational institutions from the 1960s to the 1980s, and attempts to make teacher training and education equitable for males and females, were not adequate endeavors to increase the enrollment levels of males in school, as these actions did not take into consideration the earlier institutionalized gendering. He asserted that because the bias toward females was due to deliberate actions of the past, remediation also required deliberate actions in order to overcome the legacy of exclusion males experienced.

### **The 1990s Onward and Current State of Affairs**

The new education policies expanded the educational system, equalized opportunities for males and females, and tracked the results through annual national examinations. The disparity in gender achievement and participation at all levels of the education system soon became evident. Females outnumbered males in both private and public schools (Miller, 1986). In addition, more females than males were still enrolling in the upper and post-secondary levels. Not surprisingly, the male literacy rate was below that of females in the 1990s and onward (Reid, 2012). The 1994 National Literacy Survey reported that the literacy rate for persons 15 years and older was 81.3% for women and 69.4% for men.

Since then, data continue to show that overall, female students outperform male students as well as maintain higher enrollments, and more male students disconnect and drop out of the school system before completion (Campbell, 2013; Chevannes, 1999; Figueroa, 2004; Francis 2015; Miller, 1986; Parry 2000; Reid, 2012). For example, more

female than male students took the 2002/2003 secondary-level Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), with females accounting for 64% compared to 36% for males (Government of Jamaica, 2004). More recent results for the years 2012 to 2014 of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), showed that the majority of the top-performing educational institutions are all-girl schools (Francis, 2015), and that on average the all-female high schools were outperforming the all-male high schools in mathematics and English language.

Nonetheless, although females' educational participation and achievement has trended higher than that of males, males' earnings generally surpass those of their female peers (Bellony, Hoyos & Ñopo, 2010). The Global Gender Gap Report 2017 for Jamaica shows the literacy rate as 85.9% for females and 74.1 % for males, but generally females earn approximately 61 % the salary of males (World Economic Forum, 2017). In terms of employment, more males are self-employed, whereas more women are in dependent work relationships both in the public and private sectors of the labor markets. Furthermore, there is occupational segregation, with higher number of females represented in the professional sector and in elementary level sales and service jobs, and more males in the agriculture, mining and construction sectors as skilled workers (Bellony, Hoyos & Ñopo, 2010).

But education remains an important factor for the Jamaican society; with the country's plan for nation building articulated in its Vision 2030 document, and the need to assure an educated population (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009). Accordingly, the chronic academic low performance results for male students and the gender disparity with their female peers over the decades have led to concerns and public outcries at the dismal

implications for the continued functionality and productivity of the future male population, with constant pleas to “help our boys” (Francis, 2015, para. 1). Educators are also very concerned and are seeking to find answer to the problem and identify novel and creative approaches to teaching that would engage male students in their school life. The president of the Jamaica Teachers’ Association recently stated, “We really need to do some investigation in an effort to create some balance, as our boys are in need of urgent help”(Francis, 2015, para. 13).

### **Contributing Factors to Male Student Underachievement in Jamaica**

The gender difference in adolescents’ academic pathways established in Jamaica’s colonial past influenced the way males and females were socialized and parented over the years, and thus impacted the development of the Jamaican male identity (Bertocchi, 2015; Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012; Chevannes, 1999; Evans, 1999; Figueroa, 2004; Management Systems International (MSI)/EQUATE, 2005; Miller, 1986; Parry, 1997, 2000; Samuda, 1966). Jamaican scholars have introduced two main theories to explain Jamaican male student underachievement: the marginal theory, and a theory of gender socialization. The main arguments of each follow.

**The Marginal Theory.** Miller’s (1986) assertion that British colonial policies institutionalized the suppression of Black males by the deliberate alteration of educational provisions in favor of females in response to the Lumb report is foundational to his Marginal Thesis. He argues that part of the legacy of the 1898 Lumb Commission was to embed cultural norms and institutional structures and systems that did not adequately support successful educational outcomes for Jamaican males. These actions contributed to shaping Jamaican males’ attitudes and beliefs about themselves and their

role in society, and this process of marginalization has become a permanent operating feature of Jamaican society within family, school, church, work, and employment (Miller, 1986).

Miller (1986) theorized that because Black men's labor was the chief means for generating the wealth of the ruling power, they could not afford for the large population of Black men to become empowered and potentially overthrow the power structure. He concluded that, "...the institutional arrangements had to be so organized to keep them on the fringes of wealth, power and status, that is, marginal" (p. 5). While the Whites' foremost fear after emancipation was that Blacks, through superior numbers, would seize political power, at the same time, Blacks feared that slavery could be re-introduced. The Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 acted to confirm Whites' fears.

To suppress future Black uprisings, the Jamaican Assembly restricted Blacks' ability to vote and obtain classical education. The Assembly confined Blacks' educational opportunities to industrial and agricultural training and blocked denominational schools' efforts to elevate them through education. Seeking liberation and upward mobility, Blacks resisted the manual training offered to them. The formation of the Jamaica Union of Teachers in 1894 by Black male teachers, to defend against discrimination by the Department of Education, further signaled to the Assembly the possibility of a rise of Black political power.

Fearing that the Black male teaching force would become active and militant, Whites changed primary teaching from a masculine to a feminine occupation, eliminating the threat of an educated Black male faction taking power (Miller, 1986). This also served to maintain Black males as a pool of cheap labor and raise Black women's social

status, while lowering the salaries of teachers. Black females' gaining opportunity for further education and employment created a parallel shift in the socialization of males and females between 1900 and 1956, and Black females began to achieve more educationally than males (Miller, 1986). While Black women were innocent beneficiaries of the decisions made by the White power structure in 1899, Miller asserted that "... the decision to change the balance seems to have come about as a result of a concatenation of circumstances."

**Gendered socialization.** Other Jamaican scholars have discounted Miller's (1986) marginalization account as the explanation for the current underachievement of males in the Jamaican education system, pointing instead to gender socialization as being responsible for the plight of Black males in Jamaica. This argument is rooted in a theory of "male privileging" (Figueroa, 2004), the under-participation of male students in schools (Chevannes, 1999), and the incompatibility of the male macho image with male students' educational interest (Parry, 2000).

The "historical male privileging" theory proposed by Figueroa (2004, 2010), ascribed the academic underperformance of male students to socialization practices that gave boys free rein to do as they pleased, resulting in skill deficiencies that led to failure in school. Boys' freedom, in comparison to girls, resulted in their having little exposure to tasks and activities that built self-regulation, time management and process skills. Girls, on the other hand, have been monitored more closely and were expected to do chores that build these skills, which were an advantage in the rote school system that required students to sit still and listen. Furthermore, boys have been viewed as naturally

bad, and girls naturally good, such that mischief was expected from boys, while girls were expected to follow the rules (Figueroa, 2004).

Thus, male students came into a system that had gendered values and norms, which they encountered from the start. And, since they were used to roaming freely, they faced the challenge of confining themselves to sitting and listening and pleasing their teachers. The rote educational system in Jamaica requires students to sit still and listen regardless of interest and to do what the teacher wishes to be done rather than what one desires to do. Male students are ill prepared for these demands (Figueroa, 2004, 2010).

Another contributing factor, according to Figueroa (2004), has been the societal gendering of professions. Females are traditionally paid less and work at lower levels in the professions than males. In addition, men get higher pay for the same work even while women are required to be more qualified for the same position. This illustrates the male privileging that Figueroa speaks to. At least in the world of work, males seem able to do as they please but still come out on top. Therefore, male adolescents may not see school achievement as a factor for success later in life.

In contrast, Chevannes (1999) ascribed the cause of male students underachievement to their under-participation in the education system. Although Chevannes shared similar views with Figueroa (2004) on gendered socialization, he shifted some responsibility for male students underachievement from socialization to both male identity and behaviors. He asserted that young male education behavior is not isolated but linked to the social construction of the masculine identity in the socialization process. Much of the socialization of children in Jamaica occurs in the home and the streets. From as early as age five, Jamaican children have been socialized into division of

labor, activities and roles along gender lines in the home (Chevannes, 1999, 2001, 2002). Emphasis has been placed on early preparation for independence and self-reliance later in life. Females and males have been designated particular tasks that would enable their respective success in the future. The socialization process of performing outdoor chores that involved heavy and tough work, receiving severe punishment, and taking on work related to household economy, created a male identity capable of endurance and toughness. On the other hand, females, who were more protected and assigned caregiver tasks, developed a nurturing identity. As a result, taboos on what is “female” versus “male” work have emerged, especially for males who are averse to be doing anything associated as “female” activity (Chevannes, 1999, 2001; Plummer, 2010).

In addition, the inner city communities are home to role models that fulfill boys’ macho image of maleness. While they see few male teachers, the men in the communities, where the boys spend more time, often display the macho attributes that represent success to them. The exposure to these community role models has increased as the mother entered the workforce, leaving children more frequently to fend for themselves. Chevannes contends that this socialization process led to the gendered identity that affects the decisions and behaviors of Jamaican male and female students.

According to Chevannes (1999), the differential rates of attendance between the genders, as well as the gender bias in academic subject selection, are a result of this socialization process. His review of ten cohorts of students for from 1982 to 1997 showed consistently higher attrition rate for males versus females throughout the primary and secondary levels of education, with even higher attrition rates in rural schools. Therefore, male students’ representation in education over the years diminishes at higher

levels (Chevannes, 1999). From Chevannes' perspective, it is only logical that lower enrollment and attendance rates in the key institution designed to prepare one for life, would naturally lead to performance problems for the students and result in poor performance levels in educational reports. For the male students who dropped out, re-entering the education system and being successful later on is difficult, given the skills needed to take the national exams at the transition points between the educational levels. Even with re-entry into technical programs, these male students would have lost academic ground. This is an explanation for the cadre of young males roaming and hanging out on the streets in Jamaica trying to fend for themselves. A review of the tertiary level performance in the 1990s shows the continuation of gender gaps at this level. Chevannes claimed that the educational offerings of the tertiary levels were not sufficiently appealing to male students to motivate them to remain in school (Chevannes, 1999, 2001, 2002).

Taking a similar approach, Parry (1997, 2000) focused on the school as a socialization agent that represents a hard and anti-education image to male students. She posited that male students who drop out of school identify with this anti-education image, viewing education as effeminate and nerdish, as it does not synchronize with the "macho" male identity to which they subscribe. The male identity seems to encapsulate a rejection of any feminine notions and apprehension about being seen as sensitive or frail by male peers (Parry, 1997, 2000). Some male students thought that male students who studied hard were odd and that being serious about school did not lead to the popularity and respect they wanted among peers (Chevannes, 1999). Figueroa (2004) and Parry (2000) also asserted that the school environment itself contributes to affirming the macho image.



As the education profession is female dominated and carries a relatively low status and salary level, male students associate school as a “woman thing.” Further, male students deem certain subjects, especially those that require reading and those taught by females, as “feminine” (Parry, 2000). Therefore, male students’ school attendance and taking certain subjects is negatively affected by their resistance to participating in this seemingly effeminate environment that does not fit their male identity of being macho (Chevannes, 2002; Evans, 1999; Parry, 2000; Plummer 2010).

Research on Jamaican schools indicates inequality in the treatment of students, as male students are viewed as harder to manage and female students as more compliant. Generally, there have been factors such as gender stereotyping in teacher-student interactions (more strict for male students), academic expectations (lower for male students), punishment (more harshly for male students), behavior expectations (more unruly for male students) and other aspects of school life (Evans, 1999; Gayle, 2002; Younger & Cobbett, 2014). This favoritism was illustrated in the teachers’ selecting female students in the majority of cases for exam preparations, with the claim that female students were generally more academically eager, performed better, and showed interest in more subjects than male students (Evans, 1999).

Inside the classroom, male students were observed to respond differently from female students to lessons and teaching methods. While female students settled down and carried out academic task more readily, male students’ attention or interest in class was dependent on the subject and the topic under discussion. They were more inclined to enroll in activity-based subjects that had intrinsic appeal or call on their knowledge and experience (Evans, 1999). Male students indicated in survey responses that they stayed

away from classes because lessons were dull (Evans, 1999). They were observed out of their seats and walking around the classroom, joking around, talking amongst themselves, doing activities unrelated to schoolwork and giving “a lot of trouble.” To get male students to be quiet or attentive, teachers used shaming and negative language. Often, instead of getting training in self-discipline, they were dealt harsh punishment to make them conform, since teachers viewed their behaviors as “bad” (Figueroa, 2004; Parry, 2000).

As indicated in Parry (2000), this kind of male behavior was typical of the masculine culture and incompatible with the behavior required in academic studies. Even in attendance to homework male students operated differently. Where female students were usually required to be home and complete homework, male students stayed late at school to play and after coming home late, drop their bags and may do a little work, returning to school the next day to repeat the cycle. This is a cycle that makes male students lose out over time, and hence they gradually fall academically behind female students.

So, is the male underachievement in Jamaica a consequence of male marginalization from institutionalized structures, or Jamaican gendered socialization and societal practices? Could it be that both dynamics contribute to the problem, and that, in fact, the institutionalized structures of the colonial past set in motion unconscious societal practices that propagated gender socialization patterns that seem to now be unrelated? Whilst this may be the assertion by Miller (1986, 1990), and is suggested in the research on the slavery-education nexus by Bertocchi (2015) and Bertocchi and Dimico (2012),

one is left to ponder how pertinent this distinction is in addressing the performance problem with the Jamaican high school male students.

A 2005 gender analysis on student educational achievement in the Jamaican system supported earlier theories that gender-based socialization, male privileging and male marginalization have been operative throughout Jamaica's history, and that these past practices have become normative behaviors in the society and are related to Jamaican male student underachievement (MSI/EQUATE, 2005). Overall, the report states that traditional gender roles and expectations for males and females are extended from the home into the school community and perpetuated in the broader society. It also noted that gender socialization and stereotyping impact the educational experiences, expectations and outcomes of both genders, and thus demonstrate the need for targeted interventions to address the resulting gender disparities in educational outcomes (Davis, 2004; MSI/EQUATE, 2005).

### **Intervention Efforts by the MOE 1999 - 2016**

With the educational reports during the 1990s bringing attention to the consistent low performance of male students, the MOE extended its focus and has made various attempts over the years to improve male students' academic attainment and participation. However, most of the initiatives have focused on the overall development of the primary level of education in Jamaica, with strategies directed to both genders. Only one major initiative was implemented to directly address male students' underachievement at the secondary level. Overall, the results of these initiatives do not indicate a positive impact on male students' educational outcomes, nor do they indicate that the career prospects for male students' future have improved as a result (Davis, 2004; MSI/EQUATE, 2005;

Ministry of Education, 2012, 2014, 2015a, 2017a, 2018). The major initiatives are briefly outlined below.

**MOE gender initiatives at the primary level.** In conjunction with the MOE, from 1999 to 2016, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded four major educational projects for the development of the Jamaican primary school level, focusing on grades one to three (Ministry of Education, 2012). These USAID-funded projects were: the New Horizon Project, 72 Schools (1998-2005); the Expanding Education Horizon Project, 72 Schools (2005-2009); the Jamaica Basic Education Project, 250 schools (2010-2013); and Education Partnership for Improved Reading Outcomes 450 schools (2013-2016) (Ministry of Education, 2012; USAID, 2013, 2014, 2015). With each consecutive project, the attention to gender disparity increased, with some attempts made to raise the performance of male students at the primary level. However, while the evaluation reports indicated overall success of the projects, there was no indication of any increase in the achievement levels of male students (Dye et al., 2002; Dye et al., 2008; Lockheed et al., 2005; Lockheed et al., 2006; Midling et al., 2013; Ministry of Education, 2012, 2016b, 2018). The reports primarily served to inform the actions for the next initiative.

Although reports of male students' underperformance at the high school level did not abate, the MOE's focus on early childhood education persisted, due to recommendations from a gender analysis conducted in 2005 on the educational achievement of male students and female students in the Jamaican educational system. This USAID/Jamaica gender analysis report stated that, at the primary level, although male students were lagging behind female students both in participation and achievement,

a high number of female students were also underachieving. In addition, the report indicated that systemic inequalities and wide variations in the education system in human resources, quality of instructions, leadership, and the physical and social setting at the school level, contributed to poor academic performance for both male and female students, depriving them of the opportunity to realize their full potential (Davis, 2004; MSI/EQUATE, 2005).

Even given the report's data regarding underachievement of male students, it contained cautions against focusing on their needs at the risk of ignoring or compromising the needs of female students. Instead, it recommended a gender-equality approach to any planned intervention. In addition, the report suggested that it was better to invest in the earlier years of schooling to avert the negative outcomes that had been occurring at the secondary level (MSI/EQUATE, 2005). Finally, it recommended an academic emphasis on reading and literacy, as these subject areas were viewed as important to life skills (MSI/EQUATE, 2005).

Putting these three foci together - early childhood education, attention to both genders and academic emphasis on literacy - the USAID/Jamaica's initiatives thereafter were linked to gender training modules and focused on improving literacy for the early childhood years, grades one through four, for both males and females, at targeted primary schools (MSI/EQUATE, 2005). While the move to address the educational needs of both genders seems fair and reasonable, the question arises as to the effectiveness of this uniformed gender approach versus a more focused one to correct the gender imbalance and improve the performance levels of male students.

Reports from the most recent USAID/Jamaica project - Education Partnership for Improved Reading Outcomes (USAID, 2014, 2015) - which ended in March 2016, indicated an overall development of the support system for improved educational delivery at the targeted primary level schools, but there was no information related to the change of achievement levels of students, or improvements in gender disparity (Angus, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2016a). The project outcomes in the report that were related to gender included a gender manual and gender-sensitivity training of teachers, with associated teaching/learning strategies (Angus, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2016a). These project outcomes appeared to be important first steps in the course of addressing the literacy deficit and gender disparity at the primary level.

Perhaps with requisite continued support from the MOE, the intervention strategies of the USAID/Jamaica projects in the targeted schools will be sustained, and in the long run, the efforts will produce improved academic participation and attainment levels for the students. But the question remains: when will the interventions expand to the other primary schools; and when will they take effect and create the snowball effect necessary to affect male students' education at the secondary level? In the meantime, the problem at the high school level persists, as secondary level male students are transitioning out of school annually, with or without the necessary academic credits necessary to pursue higher education or enter the workforce.

**MOE gender initiative at the secondary level.** At the secondary level, the only major attempt to directly address the problem of high school male students' underachievement in Jamaica was in 2013. The opportunity arose from the Commonwealth of Nations (countries that were mostly territories of the former British

Empire), which offered a regional initiative to address the underachievement of male students in the Caribbean region (Universalia Management Group, 2013). The Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) responded to the call and became the lead country in the Commonwealth regional initiative (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013; Smith-Edwards, 2013). This initiative seemed to be a good opportunity for Jamaica to get funding and support to try to resolve the underachievement of high school male students, and help improve their performance in and engagement with schools.

This initiative was launched in Jamaica on May 2, 2013, as the *Advancing Education of Boys Project* (Universalia Management Group, 2013) and was piloted in 15 of the over 300 high schools in Jamaica. The basic goal of the initiative was to enable male students in Jamaican high schools to achieve their full potential (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013). To capitalize on Jamaican male students' proclivity for earning money, the focus of the initiative was on implementing a livelihood approach (i.e., an entrepreneurial-oriented educational program) to engage male students in their school life and provide them with the skills to set up their own businesses (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013).

Attempts to locate a formal evaluation report of the *Advancing Education of Boys Project* regarding the educational performance of the male students in the participating schools proved unsuccessful. An evaluation report would be useful, as findings from this project could serve as learning points and a stepping-stone to planning for the next stage of this likely long course of change. It would be important to ascertain whether or not this project is likely to address the complex roots of Jamaican male student underachievement. A final report submitted to the Commonwealth by the Jamaican

Teaching Council described some strategies and activities that were in progress and others that were planned for implementation in the future. But the report did not include information on any achievement outcomes for the participating male students (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2015).

In this researcher's attempt to understand the project's progress, she conducted a modest independent evaluation at one Jamaican school that was part of the *Advancing Education of Boys Project*. The school selected was one of the 15 participating co-ed schools in rural Jamaica. The study focused on the extent to which the entrepreneurial program (EP) implemented in the selected school affected the academic performance and engagement of the male students. The EP at this school was a daily class with a pre-selected cohort of 45 male students, led by one teacher. Findings suggested problems with the conceptualization and methods of addressing the problem. There was minimal engagement and participation of the selected cohort of students in the entrepreneurial program (EP), and inadequate support and resources provided by the MOE in the implementation of the project in the school (Chin, 2015).

A number of underlying reasons outside the scope of the study may have contributed to these disappointing findings. Forty-five male students started the program in Grade 9, but there were only 28 of them left in the program in grade 11; most of the male students dropped out of school, four were expelled from school and two were transferred to other classes due to disinterest in the EP class. Moreover, only two of the 28 remaining students were actively engaged in the EP class. These two male students stated that they liked and participated in the program because they were actually



interested in, and excited about gaining the knowledge they would need to have their own business when they leave school.

The attitudes of the disengaged male students were much more negative. They reported feeling that the EP class had a stigma, as they perceived that the program was set up for “dunce” students, and they did not want to identify with that label; they were not interested in owning their own business; they did not find the class interesting; they did not want to be in an all-male class. In addition, the teacher for the EP class reported that she was not told what to do when she was given the role to lead the EP program in the school. She made it up as she went along. This in itself shows that the model was likely not appropriately conceptualized, nor properly implemented. No conclusions could be drawn about the viability of the planned curriculum. While this is admittedly only one school, the findings suggests that there were serious problems of implementation with the *Advancing the Education of Boys Project* in the Jamaican high schools, and hence it seems like the project got derailed from its intended goals.

**MOE other gender initiatives.** Another effort by the MOE in 2011 to support schools in working more effectively with male students was a mandatory principal development program. This training was carried out by the National College for Educational Leadership, an arm of the MOE, and was required for all school principals in Jamaica. It offered gender sensitivity training that covered the differences in learning styles of female students and male students, along with related teaching and learning strategies. However, it was optional for school principals to apply the information in their local school setting, as each school had its own particular set of circumstances to consider. Leaving the decision to implement the gender sensitivity program to the

discretion of the principal arguably minimized the impact that it could have on the male students' achievement and their dropout crisis. However, the training may have provided a good foundational start for the heads of schools to gain awareness about gender learning differences and the specific needs of male students.

The hope is that more principals will eventually opt to implement gender sensitivity strategies to give focused attention to addressing the educational needs of male students. A formal evaluation of the impact of this initiative on the educational attainment for male students in participating schools may be worthwhile in order to ascertain whether this initiative could be utilized to advance male students' education more assertively, with the guidance and support of the MOE and through the head of the schools.

### **Conclusion to the Background Discussion**

Given the legacies of colonialism that disparaged Jamaican male formal education, the historic and current participation and achievement statistics on Jamaican high school males, and the limited progress made from the intervention efforts by the MOE, it can be argued that their educational needs and interests have not been (and still are not being) served by the Jamaican education system. It seems that the current educational model for secondary education in Jamaica is not adequately meeting the requirements of Jamaican male students in order for them to succeed academically and be productive citizens of the nation.

In short, scholars attribute the causes of the current problem of academic underperformance of Jamaican male students to systemic factors that originated in Jamaica's colonial history of racialized slavery systems and structures that led to racial

education inequality (Bertocchi, 2015; Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012), the continuation of the policies that originated during Jamaica's colonial subjugation (the Lumb Report), which contributed to institutionalized marginalization of male students (Miller, 1986; Samuda, 1966), gendered socialization, male identity issues, and the feminization of the education system (Chevannes, 1999; Figueroa, 2004, 2010; Parry, 1997, 2000). Other studies point to the role of parenting and poverty (Engle & Black, 2008), and more recent studies indicate that Jamaican males from an early age have a great desire to earn money, preferring a more direct path to earning rather than taking the traditional educational path, which to them is seemingly irrelevant (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013).

The advent of the technological age adds more fodder to the concern for academically underperforming male students. As the world continues to advance technologically, and educational performance is increasingly being tied to occupational placement, completing education at the secondary level is a virtual prerequisite for getting a good job after leaving school. Working class Jamaican males' proclivity towards manual roles such as construction worker, mechanic, farmer, or factory worker (Bellony, Hoyos & Ñopo, 2010) may soon be disrupted, because such jobs are increasingly being taken over by machines. Thus, education is even more critical to better prepare Jamaican male students with the critical thinking skills and creativity they need to meet the future world that is unfolding (Farrell, 2011).

The implications of this trend of low performance of some Jamaican high school male students continue to be a grave societal concern. In particular, given the crime reports on Jamaican males between the ages of 15 and 24, there is fear of the consequential risks of illiteracy and unemployment, and the probability of these students

falling into a negative trajectory and becoming perpetrators and victims of crimes and violence, (Green-Evans, 2002; USAID, 2013). Viewing the educational scenario for Jamaican male students through this lens presents a real national problem that calls for a focus and mission that intentionally shifts the way male students are being educated in Jamaica, and explores new ways to properly educate them for success.

### **Similar Trends: The Male Student Crisis in the United States**

Despite its first-world status and more abundant resources to direct towards research and intervention programs, a review of students' academic statistics in the U.S. shows a similar trend as Jamaica regarding male students' underachievement and the gender-gap. The 2012 Nations Report Card for the U.S., issued by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), traces the gender-gap and male students' underachievement from 1971 to 2012, by examining the academic progress in reading and mathematics for elementary and secondary school students ages 9, 13 and 17 (NCES, 2013). In reading, female students scored higher than male students at all three ages. In mathematics, there were no significant differences between scores for female and male students at ages 9 and 13; but at age 17, male students scored higher than female students. However, this gender gap narrowed between 1971 and 2012 because female students made gains over time, while 17-year-old male students did not. In sum, the report points to the female students' consistent success and pace in reading scores, as well as their increasing gains in mathematic scores over males (NCES, 2013).

Disaggregating the data on male students in the U.S. along racial and ethnic lines indicated that African American male students seem to face a greater educational crisis (Bristol, 2015; Fergus, Noguera & Martin, 2014; Howard, 2013; Kirp, 2010). Compared

to their White counterparts, Black and Latino male students are more likely to obtain low grades and test scores and hence less likely to enroll in college, and by these educational indices they are considered the most vulnerable populations of students (Fergus, Noguera & Martin, 2014). Kirp (2010) lamented the educational plight of African American males, positing that their attainment levels have not moved appreciatively in 30 years, despite reforms in the educational system, noting that “by almost every measure of academic performance and achievement, Black males are on the wrong side of a staggering divide” (p. 54). His conclusions arose from reviews of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) progress reports on academic performance over the years, leading up to the 2008 report that continued to demonstrate the underperformance of African American male students. In support of Kirp’s argument, a recent report from the NCES on Black-White achievement gaps, based on schools’ student composition, showed that academic achievement for Black male students relative to White male students was lower in schools, regardless of Black student density, and that the Black-White achievement gap was larger in the highest density schools than in the lowest density schools for males, but not for females (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman & Chan, 2015).

However, academic results are only one indicator of the problem with male students in the United States. After reviewing various educational, psychological and sociological studies, Kleinfeld (2009) concluded that relative to female students, male students have other struggles beyond their lower literacy rates in school. Specifically, they have lower engagement with school, higher dropout rates, and higher rates of placement in special education. They also score higher in terms of suicide, premature

deaths, injuries and arrest. And, yet again, even on these same measures, Black male students in the U.S. are reported more likely than their peers to be placed in special education classes, labeled mentally retarded, suspended or expelled from school, or become dropouts and be absent from honor and gifted programs (Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014; Holzman, 2010; Howard, 2013; NEA 2011).

Further, less than half of American Black male students graduate from high school on time, although many eventually complete a GED (NEA, 2011). Some of this may be attributable to contextual factors, since 42% of Black students attend schools that are under-resourced and performing poorly at the aggregate level (Holzman, 2010; NEA, 2011). From her research and work with male students, Kleinfeld (2009) asserted that class and race amplifies the levels of the problems with male students, putting Black male students particularly at risk.

The American Association of University Women (AAUW), which promotes education and equity for women, refutes the male students' crisis in education, asserting that it is a myth. Nonetheless, the AAUW proffered that if there is any crisis, then the real crisis is with minority students, stating that "the crisis is not specific to male students; rather, it is a crisis for African American, Hispanic, and low-income children" (Corbett, Hill & St. Rose, 2008, p. 4). Kleinfeld (2009) maintained that although male students and female students suffer from distinctive problems, the issues with male students span more areas and are more serious, and that these issues with male students have been neglected.

### **Contributing Factors to Male Student Underachievement in the U.S.**

A host of studies have sought to identify the reasons for the male crisis in

education in the United States (Bodovski, 2010; Corbett, Hill & St. Rose, 2008; Farrell, 2011; Gurian, 2010; Kirp 2010; Kleinfeld, 2009; Sax, 2009; Watson, 2014; Whitmire, 2010). For example, Sax (2009) proposed five factors related to male students' underachievement: (1) feminization of education; (2) video games; (3) increased prescription of psychotropic medications that affect the motivational systems of the brain; (4) exposure to endocrine disrupters; and (5) lack of heroic role models. In addition, Farrell (2011) asserted that crisis components for male students were: deficiencies in the school system and curriculum, pressure to fit the male role, and absentee fathers.

Other research attributed the underperformance problem with male students to socialization (Bristol, 2015; Davis 2006). Before formal schooling, socialization begins at home, where children, through interactions with family and the ways in which they can play, are molded into socially constructed expectations of how males and females should behave and interact in their environment. At school, male students tend to display frustration as teachers make efforts to acculturate them to the mores of sitting and listening, which is typically different from what they learned at home (Mills & Keddie, 2007). Consequently, some male students are later seen as disruptive and deemed to be rule breakers by their teachers. As a result of the tensions this produces in teacher-student relations, behavior towards them becomes biased, and academic expectations are lowered (Dobbs, Arnold & Doctoroff, 2004; Wood, Kaplan & McLoyd, 2007). These effects, plus continued disorientation in their schooling experience, increase the likelihood that male students will disconnect from the learning process, start declining in school performance and eventually drop out at the secondary level (Davis 2006).

Some other reports on the underlying factors related to male student

underachievement in the U.S. point to issues surrounding race and poverty, based on data showing that the most academically disadvantaged groups of male students are minorities, particularly those attending public or inner-city schools, with parents of lower socioeconomic status (Corbett, Hill & St. Rose, 2008; Kleinfeld, 2009). For African American males in particular, the racial discrimination, which exists in some public school systems, negatively impacts their educational advancement (Watson, 2014).

### **Contributing Factors to African American Male Students' Underachievement**

There is a legacy of educational inequities in the U. S. for Black students arising from the country's historical racialized slavery systems (Bertocchi, 2015; Bertocchi, & Dimico, 2012). Both structural and cultural factors influence the educational and life outcomes for Black males, and the current conditions have likely been determined by what has taken place in the past (Howard, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Noguera, 2003). Those in the south did not even experience universal secondary school until 1968 (Anderson, 2002), making their academic achievement gaps and educational challenges foreseeable (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Howard (2013) argues that Black males have been disadvantaged by the structural arrangements in the U.S. from the advent of slavery onward, asserting that, "The outcomes that are witnessed by Black men and boys are a by-product of the historical legacy of slavery, economic and educational exclusion, and political disenfranchisement" (p. 3). Schools have fallen short in providing the appropriate structures that could maximize the performance of Black males. Thus, their school experiences and outcomes are a function of deficits in policies, programs, practices, and curricula, as well as educators' ideologies and attitudes regarding Black males and their education.



Much earlier writings by Woodson (1933) and Du Bois (1935) attested to the long reign of a disadvantageous dual educational system that differentiates Blacks and Whites, leading to an extended duration of negative educational experiences and outcomes for Blacks. These scholars asserted that the type of education that Blacks received confined them to the lowest social level, with indoctrinations that fostered inferiority complexes, leading to a drain on self-knowledge, self-confidence, and self-respect. On the other hand, the education system did well for Whites as it was configured to meet their needs. Woodson and Du Bois, along with other scholars (Carruthers, 1999; Chinweizu, 1987; Fanon, 2008), viewed this approach to educating Black Americans as a *mis-education* (brain-washing), *deculturalization* or a process of *colonization of the mind*, whereby the worldviews and culture of Black Americans were systematically replaced with a European world view and culture for the purpose of maintaining White dominance. This took place primarily through the education system. The goal of reversing this through the *decolonization of the mind*, which is aimed at reframing thinking patterns and content, underlies some of the efforts to create new and more successful educational pathways for African Americans (Spring, 2016).

Although there has been some progress and integration over the years, the intrinsic racism and oppressive systems against Blacks in the U.S. continues to negatively impact their social conditions and educational experiences (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017; Harper & Williams, 2014; Howard, 2013). Being viewed and treated as a *problem* from early on (Du Bois, 1903), Black males who strive for social, economic and political inclusion, must overcome culturally embedded and pervasive negative images that project them as violent, unemployed, uneducated, and uneducable (Howard, 2013;

Ransaw, & Majors, 2016). As Ransaw (2013) notes, “Unfavorable perceptions of Black males are so persistent that the way they walk, talk, and even their names can be barriers to them in school” (p. 1). Coping with implicit and explicit bias, discrimination, micro-aggression and racial disparities, school discipline and poor teacher-student relations compromises Black male students’ identity, self-esteem and academic self-concept, and ultimately their educational outcomes (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017; Howard, Douglas & Warren, 2016; Lewis, Butler, Bonner III, & Joubert, 2010; Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges & Jennings, 2010; McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Ransaw, & Majors, 2016).

The structural arrangements related to institutionalized racism and discrimination also present serious challenges for Black males in both the home and community (Howard, 2013; Noguera, 2003, 1996). They face an inordinate number of problems and hardships due to continuing inequities in income, employment, housing and social services, which impacts their economic well-being and social circumstances (Maloney, 2015; Noguera, 1996, 2003). Factors such as social class and geographical location have resulted in Black Americans being three times as likely to live in poverty than White Americans, as well as have the highest unemployment rate (Maloney, 2015). The social issues of crime, violence and drug trafficking are prevalent in poverty stricken urban areas, wherein community institutions are weak and there is general environmental degradation. This negatively affects the development of achievement motivation and academic performance, as well as suitable friend selection, which helps prevent risk behaviors and promotes academic competence (Toldson, Harrison, Perine, Carreiro & Caldwell, 2006). Furthermore, lower-income and minority students generally attend

schools in poor communities, with dilapidated conditions, limited course offerings, and under-qualified and inexperienced staff. These *opportunity gaps* (Ladson-Billings, 2013) are contributors to disparity in educational achievement. These environmental realities influence the way in which Black male students enter, experience and perform in school (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Noguera, 2003).

Howard (2015) acknowledges that historical, community and home factors pose serious hindrances that Black males must overcome, but posits that the challenges that confront them in education goes beyond their communities and social class, and are instead directly related to school structures and class instructions. He asserts that achievement problems for Black males students are present across school location and social status, and are “directly located in the classroom, the lack of racial awareness and cultural ignorance among school personnel, apathetic teacher attitude, and the poor quality instructions that they receive” (p. 18).

### **Other Explanations for Male Students’ Underachievement: Biological Differences**

The intense search for answers to gender disparity in academic achievement has led to studies exploring the biology of the genders. Scholars who rely on brain science contend that there are inherent differences between the male and female brain that contribute to gender-gaps in educational participation, performance and outcomes (Gurian, 2010; Gurian & Stevens, 2005). These differences are rooted in the structural development, types and amounts of chemicals and hormones, and the overall functioning of the brain; and as a result, males and females do act, live and learn differently (Gurian; Gurian & Stevens). Claiming the discovery of approximately 100 structural differences between the male and female brain, scholars posit that the female brain develops faster

than the male brain, leading to maturity differences as high as a year apart at varying stages of development (Gurian; Gurian & Stevens). Males are wired for more spatial-mechanical functions, which explains their proclivity for math and science and the need for movement. Females are wired for verbal-emotive functions, which explain their verbal and reading strength, and their ability to sit still for longer times (Gurian; Gurian & Stevens). More recent research supported the gender disparity in non-cognitive skills (behavior) at an early stage in life, and posited that these behaviors influenced teachers' assessments of students (Cornwell, Mustard & Van Parys, 2013).

Others, of course, have challenged this brain research, contending that it encourages essentialist views that ignore the social construction of inequality (Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard & Lintz, 1996). Although the concept of gender learning difference due to biological make-up may be useful, there is need for caution in ascribing the problem to the learner only, when strong external societal drivers may well override these internal factors. As schools align with the cultural norms of the majority population, they tend to reflect that social system, which is designed to promote those in power and serve the middle class and the wealthy (Bourdieu, 1983).

Given the external and internal contributing factors, the situation with Black male underachievement is complex, contextual and nuanced. It is symptomatic of several dynamic factors in society, educational institutions and family life in different nations and populations. Pinpointing causes is compounded by factors such as globalization and the ever-changing technological landscape.

Surely, not all male students are at risk of failing academically or dropping out of school before graduation, as some have the requisite support structures, and others do

well despite constraints (Harper & Williams Jr, 2014; Howard, 2013). But in summary, those who do fail or drop out are often impacted by factors relating to structure, culture and agency, which are dynamic forces in the school communities, the education system and the society at large. These factors including gender, race, social class, parenting practices, geographical location, politics and subcultural norms, in interaction, likely account for male students' underperformance and eventual disconnection from the school system (Bodovski, 2010; Commonwealth Education Hub, 2016; Kleinfeld, 2009).

The complexity arising from the multitude of interrelated factors at play in the phenomena of male students' underperformance in school implies a multi-disciplinary lens and approach to finding solutions. Studies on the dilemma have offered insights and some ideas that have generated a range of strategies and efforts aimed at making positive changes in how males experience school and attain success. The section below discusses different theories, approaches and strategies that apply to males in general, and then those more specifically for Black male students in the U.S. and Jamaica.

### **Successfully Educating Male Students**

Brain science based approaches have become popular in addressing the male student crisis, leading to an array of different teaching strategies for males and females, including incorporating movement, relevance and novelty to engage male students in their school life (Gurian, Stevens & King 2010). More specific strategies that focus on male students and ways to advance their success are: single-sex classrooms; more male-friendly curricula and readings, more male teachers, special pre-school classes to improve male students' social skills, extra recess for boy-play, and more boy-engaging schools (Kafer, 2007; Kleinfeld, 2009; Sax, 2005; Sommers, 2013).

At a White House Conference on Helping America's Youth (Kleinfeld 2006, Gosse & Arnocky, 2013), Kleinfeld (2006) offered five strategies for connecting male students to schools. These are: educate teachers on gender differences in development and learning; start school at a later age for slower developing boys; create "focus" schools that offer nurturing, personalized education; connect male students in groups with caring adults; and respect male students.

In a proposal for a Council for Boys and Men, Farrell (2011) outlined what he considered to be critical components to focus on in addressing the problems with male students. In educating male students, he advocated for the creation of boy-friendly programs and the proper preparation of male students for the job market. In addition, he highlighted the problem of fatherlessness in the U.S. and the need to focus on this, as data indicates that children do better with significant father involvement. Further, Farrell proposed attending to male students' physical and emotional health to increase their quality of life and life span, as they suffer from pressures to fit the male role and are more likely to commit suicide.

### **Successfully Educating Black Male Students**

Many studies have focused on understanding the social and educational crisis facing male students of African descent, both in the U.S. and the Caribbean, and attention has been increasingly put on shifting the academic and life trajectory for these student populations to more successful outcomes. Because of the history of colonization, slavery and racism in countries like Jamaica and the U.S., and the lasting legacies of supportive policies and practices to segregate and denigrate Blacks during that era (Bertocchi, 2015; Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012; Du Bois, 1935; Miller, 1986; Samuda, 1966; Woodson,

1933), educating Black male students for success takes more than just the standard schooling elements provided to their non-Black counterparts who have had the privilege over the years to gain foundational competencies (Anderson, 2008; Chevannes, 1999; Fergus, Noguera & Martin, 2014; Harper & Williams, 2014; Howard, 2013, Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Historical, economical, sociological, psychological, and epidemiological factors have impacted the lives of Black males over their lifespan, and institutions and public and social policy have fallen short in providing them a realistic chance for life success (Anderson, 2008; Harper & Williams, 2014; Howard, 2013, Ladson-Billings, 2006). Jamaican and American scholars alike have published works on the trends, directions and schools of thought regarding how Black males learn in school, in an attempt to solve contemporary problems with performance, as well as inform policy and practice to improve their education.

**Successfully educating Jamaican males.** Research on male students' education by Jamaican scholars such as Miller (1986) and Samuda (1966) focused on the institutionalized structures in Jamaica that have disadvantaged males, particularly Black men. Miller (1986) believed that the education system still holds re-shaping potential for society. He proposed that having an open and equitable education system through which the entire population passes, provides a path for re-socializing the population and restructuring the social order in the Jamaican society. Miller along with Brown and Chevannes (1998), concurred that restructuring the social order for male students requires modifying their socialization during their upbringing and education in schools, and that

overcoming the effects of oppressive structures requires an array of interventions to target key socializing agents of the young.

Although Figueroa (2004) does not support the male marginalization theory because it casts men as victims, his recommendations are similar to Miller's in addressing the socialization of males and females. Instead of offering further allowances for males (which he thinks is already happening and should not be perpetuated), the problem should be addressed by equalizing the tasks and activities for both girls and boys at home and in the community. He asserts that this will provide male children the opportunity to build the skills necessary for success in schools and also help remove their taboos against "female" activities or work.

Brown and Chevannes (1998) supported Figueroa's approach, stating that attention must be given to altering the structural division of labor to achieve gender equality. Parry (2000) also recommended an egalitarian approach to addressing the male underachievement problem, believing that females suffer their own discrimination in the occupational arena. Her recommendations also point to changes in pupil/teacher classroom interactions and in educational policies to remove gender biases and improve teaching. Figueroa (2004, 2010) also asserts that the educational structure and pedagogical methods that demand passivity and conformity from students and focus on test taking, are not suitable for the student outcomes to which they aspire.

Taking a more philosophical approach, Chevannes (1999) proposed reframing education as a "function to make us more human" rather than as "the means to the end of upward mobility" (p. 42). He stated that focusing on changes that can be structured within the school could create a new ambiance that evokes an alteration in attitude, not



only in male students, but also in society, opening a realm of possibilities.

Acknowledging and recognizing education as a part of the socialization process to make us more human, and as the transitional system to adulthood, may enable male students (and female students) to better embrace and engage with their educational process. This reframing may also help education leaders to adjust the system to align structures with the revised perspectives and needs. Furthermore, this approach may transform gender relations over time and address male marginalization as defined by Miller (1986), without making new exceptions within the education system that would benefit males only, as is cautioned by Figueroa (2004).

Chevannes (1999) asserts that the enhancement of the human state that can arise from this “educational rite” of education would elevate choices and motivate students of both genders to achieve their goals. This rite of passage approach to education is already taking place in the early basic stages of education in Jamaica, and therefore, extending it to the secondary level would place a greater opportunity for male students to stay the course and complete secondary level education. Chevannes offered three suggestions for enhancing and advancing male students’ performance in school. First, that teachers view their role as mentors and guides to help male students with transitioning to manhood. Second, that education leaders broaden their concept of education to include training and development in areas that will contribute to defining manhood through curricula and co-curricular education. These areas include, but are not limited to, leadership and responsibility, accessing personal power, grooming, home-making, and responsible sexuality and gender relations. Third, solicit the concurrence of parents and the wider

society in supporting the notion that male students should attend and complete school at least to the secondary level before they are conferred the status of manhood.

**Successfully educating African American males.** Recent literature (Harper & Williams, 2014; Howard, 2013; Howard, Douglas & Warren, 2016) encouraged a reframing of the Black male experience in school towards a more asset-based orientation. Howard (2013) called for a “paradigm shift in how Black males are taught, studied and discussed” (p. 18). These scholars acknowledged the necessity for educational statistics on African American students, but believe that both failures and success stories should be exposed and constructively applied in conversations designed to enhance the success of the Black male educational experience. Howard (2013) and Harper and Williams (2014) asserted that concentrating only on failures, repeating the same old narratives, and recycling the same type of statistics about Black males is a deficit perspective that needs to shift, focusing instead on their resilience and persistence in succeeding against tremendous odds. Howard, Douglas and Warren (2016) affirmed this argument, adding that Black males do not enjoy failing, but care about their schooling and want to be educated.

In addition to being culturally sensitive, Bristol (2015) argued that a gender relevant approach to teaching is necessary, particularly for the success of Black and Latino male students. This could help improve learning outcomes for disengaged and underperforming male students by creating a gender-sensitive curriculum that would facilitate learning objectives. A gender relevant pedagogy requires a more reflective approach to teaching, as teachers would need to become cognizant of their gender views and responses to male students (Reichert & Nelson, 2012) and be able to observe and

uncover how their own biases influence the way they teach and its impact on students' learning (Bristol, 2015).

Student voice is also a focus in the new approach to educating Black males. As part of the paradigm shift towards a strengths-based education for Black males, Howard (2013) proposed that students' voice and perspective be allowed in education to place students at the center of their educational experience and give them the opportunity to speak to their own experiences and needs. Allowing student voice opens the way for students' development and reframing of themselves (Reichert & Nelson, 2012), and also the inclusion of alternative and diverse viewpoints in the conversations that could help to dismantle monolithic constructions about any one group (Howard, 2013). Much research has gone into allowing student voice in school as a means to their development, academically and personally, and to enabling meaningful educational change. In real practice, students' voice allows collaboration with adults to address problems in school and also help teachers improve teaching and learning in classrooms (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2014; Rudduck & Flutter 2000).

Attention has also increasingly focused on the social-emotional well-being of African males. The need for them to have outlets and ways to process the effects of their experience with societal conditions, discrimination, poverty, marginalization and gender bias has been recognized as important for their success in school (Ransaw & Majors, 2016; Uwah, McMahon & Furlow, 2008; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000). While counseling and mentoring are not new features in school, they are strategies that are encouraged for males (Reichert, Nelson, Heed, Yang & Benson, 2012), and in particular African American male students, as a way to develop a sense of belonging and support

from their school, which has been found to have beneficial effects on participation and attainment (Uwah, McMahon & Furlow, 2008).

Earlier studies by Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard and Lintz, (1996) argued for the construction of schools that would provide successful education for African American male students by reforming the school structure to make them more empowering and effective. Howard (2013) aligned with this position, pointing out that school structures and classroom instructions are the main factors affecting the academic achievement levels of African American male students.

The following section unveils three approaches used to address the male student crisis in the U.S., each employing a more recent strength-based lens and innovative ideas to reshape conceptions and outcomes. These share the same underlying principles, although their overall approach and strategies differ. Because these are at varying stages in the change process, they have also had different results with students. The approaches include: (1) Expanded Success Initiative in 40 schools in New York; (2) Coed public school district in California focused on African American male students; (3) St. Benedict's School - All-male preparatory school focused on inner-city minority male students in Newark New Jersey.

***Expanded Success Initiative.*** To address the underachievement of Black and Latino male students using asset-based reframing orientation, the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) was launched in 40 schools in New York as part of the 2011 Young Men's Initiative (YMI) campaign. This was a comprehensive effort in the city to improve the outcomes for young men of color, with a primary purpose of improving the college and career readiness of Black and Latino male students by focusing on changing

the school culture. Using strengths-based strategies, this approach sought to produce a paradigm shift in educating Black and Latino males. From 2012, the schools were provided with financial resources and professional development to help put innovative systems in place to support young men of color.

The focus on cultural factors in the school was designed to challenge and confront institutionalized beliefs, norms, traditions and practices, with a view to problem solving and making changes that support the success of Black and Latino male students. Since the cultural background of students of color is usually different from what they encounter in school, creating feelings of alienation, the intention was to deliberately develop a school culture that was more supportive and to help young men of color feel embraced by their school. This was based on research evidencing the correlation between school culture and student achievement (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014), and the relational way in which male students learn through culturally responsive care, empathy and love (Jackson, Sealey-Ruiz & Watson, 2014; Reichert, & Hawley, 2014), indicating the importance of making relational teaching central in a male student's school life.

The ESI schools employed four main strategies that they each applied according to their context: (1) develop culturally relevant education (make the lessons more relevant to students lives to increase their engagement and help teachers address their own biases about these students); (2) adopt restorative approaches to discipline (alternative approach to reduce removal of students from school); (3) promote strong in-school relationships (create opportunities for students and teachers to get to know each other); (4) and provide

early support for students' post-secondary goals (create a college-going culture to ensure students' readiness for college) (Klevan & Villavicencio, 2016).

An evaluation of the progress being made at the 40 ESI schools with faculty indicated various levels of positive change with students (Klevan & Villavicencio, 2016). The authors cautioned that although the ESI strategies were based on empirical research and the fact that some ESI educators were reporting positive changes with students, there was need for ongoing evaluations to assess the translation of these strategies into measurable academic gains.

To obtain the perspectives of the students' at the 40 ESI schools concerning which factors contributed to their success, Harper and Williams (2014) conducted a study with 325 Black and Latino male students. In keeping with an anti-deficit approach, they focused on the students who were excelling in order to explore what factors enabled their achievements. Overall, the study affirmed the importance of school and classroom experiences in these minority students' academic success.

More specifically, the study revealed structural and cultural factors related to school and teachers that the students attributed to their academic success (Harper & Williams, 2014). Students shared that they felt school provided them a sense of family, safety and belonging, and that they liked the school being small, with very involved faculty and the principal, and also that everyone knew each other. They also appreciated that they could stay late at school to receive extra tutoring and help with homework, get immunity from gangs, escape the chaos and family problems at home and socialize with peers. In addition, the school fostered a college-going culture by operating like a small

college with rigorous academics, offering AP and college courses as well as SAT preparation, plus providing college information and application support.

Students shared that they liked that the teachers were experts on their content, and confident in their delivery, genuinely caring and supportive of students' learning, and made extra effort for students to understand lessons and calm students during anxious times of exams. They felt they had good teacher-student relations, even on a first name basis. While teachers had high expectations of students, were strict and pushed students, they also made learning fun.

Harper and Williams (2014) presented other factors that the students reported as important to their success. These included categories of family (high expectations, strict parents, structured home life; inspiration, support and guidance to do well), community (free from crime, safe, quiet and having a good community spirit), and their own aspirations for a better life, which was driven by the clarity they had about what they wanted for their future.

***Oakland Unified School District, CA.*** The Oakland Unified School District in California oversees the operation of 137 public schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools in Oakland, California. After the release of students' academic and behavioral statistics in 2010, which highlighted what appeared to be the consequence of institutionalized discrimination against African American males, it launched an initiative to improve these students' outcomes (Brown, 2016; Watson, 2014). At the time, African American males in OUSD were chronically absent, missing overall 19.87% of the academic year and accounted for 42% of the suspensions annually, even though they comprised only 17% of the student population. Further, of the 517 students arrested on

campus, 75% were Black. In terms of academic achievement, only 28% of African American males scored proficient on the California Standards Test for English, and only 30% for math.

As a result, OUSD took an audacious stance to establish systems, structures, and spaces that would advance the success of these students, launching the Office of African American Male Achievement (AAMA). With the mandate to improve academic outcomes for African American male students in Oakland, this became the country's first department within a public school district with this focus. Although it began unofficially in 2010, it was not made official until 2012 when the district signed an agreement with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

The AAMA implemented the Manhood Development Program (MDP) in 2010, a course intended to "rewrite the pernicious script of racial inequality, underachievement and lack of opportunity for African-American boys" (Brown, 2016, p. 1). To create a new type of school experience for the Black males at OUSD, brotherhood was the central theme of the MDP. The intent was to create a nourishing environment through building and fostering camaraderie and community among the male students, and make them accountable for each other, as their brother's keeper. On this foundation, they believed that educating the male students could be pursued more successfully.

The MDP class was a full-credit elective, titled, Mastering Our Cultural Identity: African-American Male Image. The executive director of the Office of AAMA stated that the number one strategy of the initiative was to reduce discipline issues and elevate the academic pursuits of the male students through engaged instructions and brotherhood. The plan was to target numbers of expulsions, absenteeism and suspension, by having



male students in school attending to their academic achievement and matriculating to college.

The MDP course now forms part of the daily curriculum at 20 schools throughout the district, and is tailored to age appropriateness for third to 12th graders. The course is offered five days a week during the day for a cohort of 25 male students with a mix of academic abilities—one-third high-achieving, one-third average and one-third under-achieving. The idea is to have a diverse group of male students who will bring different experiences to each other. At the lower grades the course focuses on the stories, legacies and images of Black people. At the high school level, the course goes deeply into African-American history and culture, spanning the time period from ancient civilization to the civil rights movement to contemporary media. All the classes are taught by Black male instructors, who provide multidimensional understanding from their own experiences and perspectives.

The MDP course has grown over the years and students are on the waiting list to get in. The course has shown some success in the last two years with a drop in chronic absenteeism and suspensions in the district, and increase in college attendance for more than half of the first graduating class of 52 students. In addition, the honor roll for Black students had an increase in the percentage of young men moving from 16% to 25% over the past three years.

The mission for the Black male students of Oakland district includes other initiatives such as peer mentoring, student leadership council and conferences for role models and students. In addition, other Afrocentric courses have been introduced in English language, arts and history. Furthermore, a career academy for African American

male students is being planned that will offer courses in entrepreneurship, social innovation, and civic engagement.

OUSD was structured to sustain Black male students through an embedded accountability and supporting framework among the schools. Also importantly, the AAMA Executive Director sits on the OUSD Cabinet, providing both access and a voice for African American males at the highest level of district administrative leadership.

*St. Benedict's School, Newark, NJ.* The two prior examples relate to initiatives implemented in different school districts to address the underperformance of African American male students across many schools and which were headed, supported and led by district heads. This example relates to a student leadership educational school model developed by the leaders in one school in Newark, New Jersey, who shifted their educational paradigm to find ways to successfully educate their student population of primarily African American males. As an independent school, they utilized their operational freedom to design what worked for their students and sought financial support for their mission.

St. Benedict's is an all-male Catholic high school located in Newark, New Jersey, with an enrollment of 500 primarily African American students (SBP, 2015). After the White flight in 1971 from Newark, when its student population started to shift to increasing numbers of African American students, St. Benedict's chose to revamp its school operations and develop new structures based on the philosophy of school as a family. The school's operational structures were developed to build and foster community and student leadership. As an all-male school, efforts could be centered on

one gender.

What differentiates St. Benedict's approach from other approaches used with young men of color is its system of student leadership strategy. St. Benedict's provides students with real opportunities to develop their leadership abilities by having them run many aspects of the school. This experiential approach to teaching young men of color about leadership is considered by St. Benedict's leaders to be one of the most successful aspects of its model. With approximately 100 % graduation rate, and 98% of its students going on to college, the school model has proven its success with African Americans.

Other structures were created to support student leadership development, such as the amplification of student voice. Student voice opportunities occurred in student leadership roles regarding not only the daily operations, but also matters such as student admission, teacher hiring, and handling discipline with a view toward student development.

Supportive structures were created to support the building of community. Most significant was the grouping system that organized students in groups that were headed by student leaders. A culture of brotherhood was fostered among students to form a caring community, and student leaders had to account for each group member on a daily basis. To address students' emotional well being, counseling was a major component of student life. Individual and group counseling were structured to provide emotional support and outlets for students, which could also extend to include family members.

Another distinct feature of St. Benedict's was its 11-month school year calendar. The idea was to have their students spending as much time as possible engaged in activities for their development. While the fall and winter terms were applied to the usual

college prep curriculum, the extra months that made up spring and summer terms were used for the wider development of the students. The school program during the extra months comprised non-academic courses (that could include a photography class), other project based courses to build problem solving skills, training of new student leaders, freshmen orientation for new incoming students. A major activity in the spring term was the mandatory end-of-year hike up the Appalachian Trail for freshmen, which upon completion (along with other measures) earned them full membership into the St. Benedict's school community.

The school leaders were able to bring about this integrated and school wide change over 40 years ago because of the opportunity that was afforded through the exodus of students and the need to attend to a new profile of students. Through collaboration with the surrounding community and parents, as well as open attitudes of school leaders who wanted to do what was right for the students, new ideas were spawned and implemented through trial and error. The total revamping of the school structure allowed a natural *reculturing* (Hargreaves, 2007) of the school, where a completely new philosophy and outlook for men of color were crafted to respond to their needs. (More details on St. Benedict School model are presented in Chapter Three.)

In summary, although there are ways for families and parents to appropriately support their sons' educational journey, these schooling approaches seem to place most of the responsibility for male students' academic success on the education system. Even the nurturer role - traditionally played by families - is now being assigned to the school. There is no denying the role that family and community play in male students' success,

but, given that these traditional structures often are missing and/or dysfunctional, the responsibility for support and solutions falls on the education system by default.

Despite some differences between the African American male students and Jamaican male students (country context, more racial social systems and structure in the U.S.), the core similarities shared in their historical heritages (African descent, countries with historical slavery), educational experiences (socialization incompatible with school norms, teachers' bias and low expectations) and life circumstances (many parents in middle to low socioeconomic levels), as well as the resulting struggles in school and poor academic performance, suggest that successful educational strategies for one group may be useful for the other group. Since there are far more studies, interventions and investments into changing the educational trajectory of African American male students, some answers to educational struggles for Jamaica male students may be found among the strategies employed with their counterparts in the U.S.

Exposing Jamaican educators to school models proven successful with Black male students could present an opportunity where they could both identify strategies that they felt might best support their male students, and also identify factors that they perceive as unlikely for them to adopt due to the context specific nature of Jamaica. Even though the differences across the sites would naturally pose difficulties to adopting and adapting the new strategies, an exploration by Jamaican educators of successful strategies could be useful to providing new ideas and insight into the problem with Jamaican male students' underperformance in school, and help design a new way forward in how they are educated.

### **School Reform Considerations and Transferability Issues**

When the usual way of doing things in schools has not met intended goals, it is a signal for the need to change the way things are done. Critical problems and the unmet needs of Jamaican high school male students have put pressure on educational leaders to find new ways to effectively educate them. Junctures such as these can open the door for educational reform, offering educational leaders the opportunity to identify areas for improvement and plan ways to change the way the system or school functions, as well as its administrative processes and teaching methodologies (Bodilly, 2001; Murphy & Datnow, 2003).

However, finding suitable educational reform that is both effective and can be successfully implemented, is easier said than done (Hargreaves, 2007; Hargreaves, Lieberman, Fullan & Hopkins, 2014). The Jamaican Ministry of Education has discovered this as they have sought to implement new school models in order to enhance the male student's performance levels at the secondary level. As Fullan (2007) has highlighted, educational reform pursuits are plagued with obstructions that include: complaints from schools feeling bombarded by various initiatives; reports of teachers' resistance to change; parents questioning the need or relevance of the interventions; educators thinking that intervention activities are a distraction to the teaching and learning process. Failures or abandonment of interventions plans thus occur for a variety of reasons.

Although initial attempts often fail, Fullan (2007) advocated for educational systems to continue efforts at reform, given the changing needs based on modernization, globalization and technology. Even without these incentives, ignoring or not making

necessary changes to address chronic problems in the school only delays the inevitable, as the *forces of continuity* (Hargreaves, 2007), such as resistance to change and contextual constraints, will endure, and in turn maintain the status quo, the undesirable results and the problem.

Schools have the option of finding solutions to their problems on their own through trial and error in order to bring about necessary change in their schools, or they can choose from a variety of reform designs that offer them a packaged solution to suit their needs (Bodilly, 2001; Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Sizer, 1986). Starting from scratch may be appealing to schools as it ensures solutions will be contextually suitable. However, depending on the problem being addressed or the improvement that is desired, this approach might take longer to achieve results. The process is also at risk of failure or abandonment, once initial adopters leave the school. Thus, despite the risks and challenges involved, adapting a pre-packaged school model that includes successfully established structures, components and strategies presents a practical option in saving time and costs. At the very least, exploring relevant models may provide a new lens to view problems and new ideas for addressing them that might not have otherwise surfaced.

Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan (2002) suggested that adopting a new school model is not uncommon, pointing out that even with the inherent challenges, this practice is prevalent in the United States, with some models also being transferred and implemented in other countries including Canada, Australia, South Africa and the United Kingdom. As the demand for school improvement continues, the number of school reform designs are increasing. The designs span a continuum from highly specified to much more

general, and differ in focus, which suggests various theories of school change and action (Bodilly, 2001; Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). The reported high level of demand for and adoption of new school models suggests that there might be more pros than cons in choosing this approach to school improvement.

The variety of reform designs to choose from is encouraging, yet identifying the right school model to adopt is not a straightforward venture and creates many questions (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). For example, would a more specified, pre-packaged reform design, outfitted with implementation and development plans, organizational models, and curriculum and lesson plans make the implementation process smoother, or would it require too much change in the local setting? Would a less specified model that only provides guiding principles and calls for a higher level of local involvement, where renewal is locally driven, be preferred? Should reform be comprehensive in that it attempts to change school structure and culture, or be directly focused on pedagogical practices? Answering these questions and more, as they relate to the needs and improvement required in the target school, is key in the exploration process of selecting an appropriate reform.

Not only should the selected model meet the needs of the school, but it should also be one that is both favorable to the majority of people at the school and aligns with the views on change held by the educators in the school. Datnow (1999), in discussing various theories on how schools choose a new reform model, stated that “Ideally, schools would choose particular reform models based on informed decision making about the fit between the reform and the schools’ functional needs” (p. 3). In addition, schools should obtain enough information on the various school models to make an informed decision,



which would increase the likelihood of the selection of an appropriate model. Yet, even with a highly attuned selection process for the new school model, transferring the innovation across both the school and country context brings layers of complexity that impact the adoption decision (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Hubbard, & Mehan, 1999).

Transferability of a school model refers to the extent to which an externally developed model that has been successful in one context can be transferred to another context or setting and have similar levels of success. Scaling up of these transferred models occurs when they are adopted and implemented in many other school locations (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). Contextual challenges are inherent in the transference of school models and scaling up in new locations. The challenges escalate when the original context of the preferred model differs from the target context. Also, greater differences between both contexts cause a high demand for change in the local setting, which might thwart the adoption decision (Glennan, Bodilly, Galegher & Kerr, 2004). This situation is exacerbated in transfers of models across countries, such as from the U.S. to Jamaica. Factors related to a country's culture and history, as well as local politics and the economy, arise in consideration for both the adoption decision and the implementation process in the local setting.

These contextual factors make the decision process for adopting and adapting a new school model difficult, and the complexity of the process increases with the interrelatedness of the structural and cultural factors. Datnow (1999) points out that even in the stages of selecting a model, "Choices for reform are likely to be the product of a dynamic relationship among structural constraints, culture, and peoples' actions in many

interacting sites and settings” (p. 6). Further, Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan, (2002), expanded on this point, positing that structure, culture and agency are co-constructing forces at play during the implementation process of externally developed school models in new contexts, and which act as enablers or create hindrances to the transferability of the model.

The literature on educational reform discusses many of the structural, cultural and agentic issues involved with exporting an externally model from one context and adopting and adapting it into another (Datnow, 1999; Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2007; Helsby, 1999; Hubbard, Mehan & Stein, 2006).

Structures are defined as the organizational arrangements, the rules, policies and practices that dictate how things should be done, as well as the capabilities and resources to getting things done in the schools or education system. Culture involves power and entails the attitudes, customs, and belief system that influence the actions taken by the various actors in educational settings. Agency is the capacity of these individuals to take action and change the existing state of affairs.

From the co-constructive perspective, structure, culture and agency mediate each other, which means that within each one, the other two are operating. For example, as active agents, educators both help shape and are shaped by the cultural and structural features of the school and society. Amidst the co-constructing force, the fate of the transference of a new school model is contingent upon and results from the complex and dynamic relationship among structural constraints and enablers, the culture of the school, and the actions of multiple stakeholders in the connected educational sites and settings (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Helsby, 1999).

Important structural factors that impact the transferability of an external model in a school are the policies (or lack thereof) that govern model adoption and the school change process. Such policies dictate the procedures for pursuing school change, and likely include the decision making process, the information required for the proposed reform model, and the purpose, goals and expected effect of the new strategies. As such, these guidelines might function as major initial hurdles to cross in the model adoption decision. In tandem with this factor is the relationship between the school and its governing educational ministry, which may determine the span of autonomy allowed at the school level, and the type of support the school receives for its operation, funding, resources and school improvement initiatives (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2007).

Cultural factors that support or impede model adoption and implementation are related to the overall educational paradigm in the new educational context, the organizational politics and power relations, and the varying perspectives of the different stakeholders (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Fullan, 2007). The educational paradigm of educators is underpinned by their beliefs and ideas about how schooling is to be carried out, which is reflected in the prevailing customs and practices in the school, and also in how decisions are made and followed up. Significant among the normative patterns of behavior is how power and authority is viewed, distributed and applied in the local context. Dependent on their position and social roles in the school system, groups' and individuals' perspectives and interpretations of a new reform will differ and influence their perceived role, sense of ownership and authority in bringing about change in their school.

The actions of all the actors in the target setting impact the entire transfer process, and whatever takes place at each stage critically impacts the next stages (Fullan, 2007). Therefore, how the changes will be initiated, whether or not they are implemented, how they will be implemented (actually put in practice), and how they become institutionalized and sustained, will be contingent upon the actions of the stakeholders in the selection, adoption, and adaptation process of a new reform (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan (2002) offered that because reform is a co-constructed process, it is to be anticipated that a new model will undergo changes from its original form. Also, changes to its original form will occur from making modifications to satisfy the local contextual features and needs, which can arise from practical circumstances, such as constrained resources and educational regulations and policies.

Undoubtedly, the inherent difficulties in taking on educational reform can dampen school leaders' motivation in taking on a new model, and analyzing the merits of transferring a reform from one context to another is not easy (Hubbard, Mehan & Stein, 2006). Nevertheless, Fullan (2007) offered that even given the structural and cultural factors that come into play in the transfer of a new school model, and the inherent complexity and messiness of the process, there is increased clarity being gained from continued studies about what factors need to be addressed and how to address them; as well as greater competency in planning and implementing new models, whether they are specific innovations or more complex reforms.

## Chapter Two Conclusion

Globally, many countries are facing and making attempts to address the phenomenon of male student academic under-achievement and underparticipation. The specific nature of the problem is contingent on each country's context and history, with studies pointing to a number of factors that affect male students' schooling experience, leading to their low levels of academic performance and outcomes. In some areas, a critical factor is gendered socialization, in which it is normative for boys to roam freely and be active, putting them at odds with the mores of a feminized education system that expects a more passive orientation from students. In addition, the construction of the male identity places pressure on young men to fit a role that is largely designated as the provider, causing them to privilege work over education. Another factor is related to a theory based on brain research that proposes that structural biological differences between males and females create a need for pedagogical approaches that are gender sensitive to facilitate success.

For Black males, the slavery-education nexus provides an empirical frame of reference to anchor and support studies addressing the chronic dilemma of their low academic performance. The legacy and influence of slavery on education for countries such as Jamaica and the U.S. offers a lens that can help deepen understanding of the contemporary problems in educational experience and outcomes for Black male students in both countries. The emerging picture of the roots of racial inequality, and the ways in which racism has fueled unequal access to education, reveals the poor structural arrangements, policies, programs, resources, conditions and more, that have limited

Black's economic and social mobility. This has perpetuated racial inequality in human capital, education and income.

Although Jamaica shares similar features with the U.S. in relationship to the slavery-education nexus, key actions by colonizers and past leaders in Jamaica helped to minimize racial separation over time, and enabled the education of Black people overall, creating openings for social mobility. Most impactful was Jamaica's independence from Britain in 1962 that led to Black men leading the country, and educational policies allowing equality in access and quality for all people in the nation. But with a focus on education based on the broad needs of the population, little attention was given to prior and current gendered socialization, an issue that research suggests influences male students' views, learning styles and connection to their educative life. Traditional paradigms about the schooling process have endured, along with gendered views of how males and females are to act, and an educational system that, despite much intervention, is challenged with meeting the needs of its students, and in particular, male students.

African American male students have faced similar challenges, and championing the cause for a more positive life trajectory for them has meant not only identifying issues related to their underperformance, but taking action by making long-term investments to shift the structures and cultures that perpetuate the past. Circumstances, experiences and outcomes for African American males have taken place through the commitment of key players, adequate financial backing, strong leadership and vision; all structural driving forces for a new landscape for these students. Employing a strengths-based approach to the process, objectives have been to re-image the individual and collective views of Black males (to build their self-concept); to infuse history lessons with the work and success of

Black people (to build their self-knowledge and self-respect); to create opportunities for them to have a voice and be involved in leadership (to build their leadership capacity); and to create culturally responsive teaching that diminishes teacher bias and negative narratives towards Black males.

Although at different stages of implementation and duration, the school models and strategies presented above have proven successful in varying degrees. St. Benedict's school is an example of a model that has demonstrated great success with these cultural and structural elements, and the success of the other three examples seem promising. Continued progress along this path with all the schools, plus an expansion of this movement for young men of color, projects a positive vision for change in the educational experiences and outcomes of African American male students.

Although transferring other successful school models to Jamaica will undoubtedly engender difficulties, it may be worth the challenge for Jamaican educational leaders. Starting from scratch has its own problems, as was highlighted with the MOE intervention effort at the secondary level for male students - *Advancing Education of Boys Project*. In addition, while research related to the problems with Jamaican male students has been available for some time (along with educational reports that point to continuing achievement gender gaps), it has not led to the same level of action in Jamaica as has been seen in the U.S., for a variety of reasons. It is likely that more research on approaches to improving the outcomes for Jamaican males will need to take place before any action is possible. An asset-based approach to research, as advocated by the pioneers of the Expanded Success Initiative in New York, which seeks to draw the factors that supported academic success from successful Jamaican male students, may surface new

and useful findings for Jamaican educators and educational leaders; hopefully motivating action.

As a developing nation, Jamaica faces great financial and resource restraints, but surely those who championed Black education in the U.S. have faced similar dilemmas. While the opportunities might be more challenging for Jamaica, it seems imprudent to continue as things are, if improvements in the educational outcomes (and the consequential impact in the society) for high school male students are expected in the short-term and beyond.



CHAPTER THREE:  
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

**Introduction**

This study investigated a new approach to addressing the problem of high school male students' underachievement in Jamaica. It utilized a qualitative research design (Patton, 2002) to explore the relevance and transferability of one U.S. school's student leadership educational model, St. Benedict's, to the Jamaican high school context. A qualitative approach was chosen to engage a more customized, personalized and exploratory process rather than using quantitative research methods that would not fully capture the perceptions and nuances of stakeholder's opinions regarding the new model. This exploratory method was particularly critical for a thorough understanding of the transferability issues from the St. Benedict's school model to the Jamaican context. The methodology was designed to furnish a detailed account of each participant's views regarding the school model, and the viability of adapting the St. Benedict strategies for use in Jamaican schools. Furthermore, the use of two qualitative data collection methods - interviews and focus groups - provided the benefit of getting feedback from both small groups and single participants, which added breadth, as well as depth to the results. The opportunity to dig deep through this interview approach enabled the capturing of detailed reactions and responses from participants.

This chapter begins with an overview of the two research phases, and then outlines the specifics for each phase, including site selection, participant selection and data collection procedures. The chapter concludes with a section on trustworthiness of the findings, as well as the limitations of the study.

### **Overview of Research Phases**

In the first phase of the study, the goal was to review St. Benedict's school model and to ascertain its fit and application for the second phase of the study. It was important to first establish whether the model could be presented to stakeholders in Jamaican education for exploration as a potential approach to addressing the academic struggles of high school male students. St. Benedict's school model was showcased on CBS News 60 Minutes program on March 20, 2016, highlighting its success with educating at-risk youth (Pelley, 2016). Based on this CBS documentary and a preliminary review of the school's website, it was clear that the student leadership model that St. Benedict's school leaders were utilizing was viewed as central to their success with their all-male minority student population. A site visit to St. Benedict's was deemed necessary to validate the information about the school and ascertain whether or not the school model would be useful for this study.

The second phase represents the major research focus of this study. The goal at this stage was to investigate Jamaican educators' perceptions regarding the transferability of St. Benedict's model to the Jamaican schools. I conducted interviews with key Jamaican stakeholders, during which they were shown the CBS documentary video presentation of St. Benedict's model. Using the interview and focus group guide, the reactions of Jamaican stakeholders regarding the school model were captured in order to answer the research questions:

1. What aspects of the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model are perceived by Jamaican stakeholders as potentially beneficial in helping to improve the education of Jamaican high school male students?
2. What are the risks and challenges to implementing the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model in Jamaican schools as perceived by Jamaican stakeholders?
3. What modifications to the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model are needed for successful adaptation in Jamaican schools as perceived by Jamaican stakeholders?
4. What can we learn from key stakeholders in Jamaica about the general process of scaling up successful educational reform models designed to support high school male students when the process requires the transferability of education from a U.S. context to a Jamaican context?

### **Phase I: United States – Reviewing St. Benedict's Preparatory School Model**

In the first phase of the study, the focus was on making sense of St. Benedict's school model and examining the main factors that support students' success at the school. This review phase of St. Benedict's school model culminated with decisions on what and how to proceed with phase two of the study.

### **Phase I: Site Selection of St. Benedict's**

Purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select St. Benedict's Preparatory school as the case for this study because of the school's noted success with their inner city, minority, high school male student population. It educates grades 7 through to 12, with a total enrollment of 550 male students who are mostly from low-income African

Americans and Hispanic families. The evidence indicated that St. Benedict's was highly successful in educating students from underrepresented groups in the United States; groups whose students normally do not do well in school. Statistics in 2015 for St. Benedict's showed an annual 2% dropout rate against a 30% dropout rate for the city, and a 98% graduation rate, with 85% of the graduates going on to college and earning a college degree (Pelley, 2016; SBP 2015).

These statistics were unusual for a secondary level institution with a population of primarily low-income African American and Hispanic male students. It appeared that St. Benedict's had made significant adjustments to the normal education process, which enabled their students' success. Given this, and the fact that their student population was similar to the Jamaican student population in terms of ethnicity, race, history, and socio-economic status, it was determined to be worthwhile to explore St. Benedict's school model, and evaluate whether it might offer new ideas and solutions to male students' underachievement in Jamaica, and also to make a general assessment regarding the potential transferability of St. Benedict's strategies to the Jamaican context.

To see St. Benedict's school model in action, and to gain a deeper understanding and insight regarding its operation through observation and conversations with faculty, staff and students, a site visit was made, spanning two weeks for the period of July 23 to August 6, 2016.

### **Phase I: Participant Selection at St. Benedict's**

Participant selection for the study at St. Benedict's was purposive. The aim was to gather facts, clarify information and obtain different perspectives, views and experiences from various participants regarding the factors that seemed to contribute to

St. Benedict's effectiveness with educating minority male students. After three days of observations and informal conversations, participant selection was made focusing on individuals that appeared to be important contributors to the education process.

The first participant selected for an interview was the headmaster, Fr. Edwin Leahy, as he appeared to play a dominant role in the daily operations, as well as being the primary leader and visionary for the school. The next participants selected for an informal group interview were five senior student leaders who could provide insights and understanding of the student leadership process and the socialization of freshmen from their perspectives. Other participants selected for informal interviews were four faculty members, the admissions director and the soccer coach, who altogether provided information, from the perspectives of faculty and staff, about the daily school operations, their roles and involvement, and their views on their students' school life.

### **Phase I: Data Collection at St. Benedict's**

An IRB proposal was submitted and approved to cover data collection during the visit. While on site at St. Benedict's, observations were conducted on the school activities, with particular focus on the socialization process of incoming freshmen, which only happened at that time of the year. These observations provided the opportunity to view student leaders in action. Personal observations, informal conversations, school documents and website reviews, as well as formal interviews, were conducted (Kvale, 2008; Patton, 2002; Rapley, 2008).

The documents reviewed included school publications, two documentaries, and the school's website. These included the following: St. Benedict's school publication describing their school model called, *Creating a Successful Urban School Culture*, which

presents a summary of principles, programs and practices (SBP, 2015); the CBS documentary titled, *The Resurrection of St. Benedict's*, a 14 minute video clip of the school model in action (Pelley, 2016); and a documentary film by Bongiorno Productions titled, *The Rule*, a 90 minute film on St. Benedict's school (Bongiorno & Bongiorno, 2014).

During daily observations, informal interactions were carried out with members of the school community. Patton (2002) refers to these events as *conversational interviewing*. Longer, more extensive interviewing was conducted with student leaders, school administrators and faculty. These participants were told about the study and invited to voluntarily participate. After reviewing participants' right to confidentiality, they were asked to sign the informed consent forms that allowed for conducting the interview, as well as audiotaping it (See Appendix M, N and O). The interviews were conversational, with open-ended questions emerging from what was observed at the school and from what unfolded during the conversations. Consequently, an interview guide was not employed. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were later transcribed for data analysis.

### **Phase I: Review and Documentation of St. Benedict's Model**

The site visit to St. Benedict's provided an understanding of how they approached educating minority male students. The data collection process described above provided the vehicle to gain requisite clarity and insights about the success of the model. Being able to observe the operations of the school, hearing about the school's history and daily life directly from the students, faculty and staff, and evaluating the year-to-year student outcome statistics, helped to determine the potential of St. Benedict's model for phase

two of the study - taking it to Jamaican educators. From the review of these data sources, the following description of St. Benedict's model emerged, which informed the crafting of a diagram of the model that was approved by personnel at St. Benedict's and was used in Phase II of the study (See Appendix A).

**Description of St. Benedict's model.** St. Benedict's student leadership educational model was developed over a period of 40 years by the school leaders and is structured to build and foster their school foci of building community and student leadership, based on the idea that school is a family. It is a comprehensive and integrated approach to the schooling process, designed specifically for their primarily minority male student population, and takes into consideration key elements considered important for creating competencies and preparing them for life beyond high school. The main aspects of St. Benedict's model are: 11-month school year; the system of student leadership; student group system; freshmen orientation; focus on the three A's (Academics, Athletics and Attitude); daily convocation, Appalachian hiking trail at the end of the freshmen year, earning system (transitioning from beginners to members); and the counseling and residential programs.

St. Benedict's school leaders assert that minority students need added elements in their school life to be successful, through a schooling process that prepares them not only for graduating high school, but also for their future life. The rationale is that, given their students' minority profile and life experience in the U.S., particularly the effects of racism and the related negating biases, and the trauma and hardships from challenging life circumstances, many students needed a real opportunity to learn to be leaders, take ownership and responsibility for their lives, and look out for each other (Bongiorno &

Bongiorno, 2014; Pelley, 2016; SPB, 2015). In addition, their students needed a sense of permanence and predictability in their life and the support to combat the emotional noise that many of them face (SPB, 2015). Therefore, although St. Benedict's is strong on academics, the overarching thrust of the school leaders is on building community and student leadership, and providing a nurturing and safe environment for their students to have voice, autonomy, and a sense of belonging. The school leaders advocate that building community life and student leadership is the means through which their minority male student population better engage in their school life and are able to achieve academic success.

Therefore, instead of the usual academic focus on classroom practices or courses of study to directly address students' academic challenges, St. Benedict's school leaders concentrated on non-academic elements for their school model, which they believe to both "improve their students' chances for academic success and form their students' values, attitudes and character traits, such as perseverance, responsibility, grit, self-confidence, generosity and openness to others" (SBP, 2015, p. 3). In addition, there is much emphasis on caring for their students' emotional and mental well-being by making efforts to address the personal issues that may be interfering with students' learning, through working with students, parents and family. The faculty and staff believe that "the only way for students to succeed academically is if they are happy and stable emotionally" (SBP, 2015, p. 27).

A cultural element in the school that St. Benedict's leaders consider as an important mediating variable for their students' success is what they refer to as the "hidden curriculum," (SBP, 2015, p. 3). This relates to the numerous subtle unspoken



messages conveyed daily that the leaders believe influence students intellectually (ability to learn), emotionally (ability to form a positive sense of self) and morally (establishing a set of values). Because of the leaders' focus on students' positive and constructive development in these areas, careful attention is paid to the non-verbal communication that can occur in the way authority is exercised, the quality of personal interactions among teachers, administrators and students, and the aesthetics of the school (SBP, 2015).

St. Benedict's leaders acknowledge that their experiential student leadership approach to schooling is not typical or traditional in many ways. But, as educators who view teaching as a calling rather than a job, they assert their commitment to meeting the needs of their particular students, and to remaining open and willing to finding new ways to equip them with requisite knowledge and skills for better life outcomes. By always seeking to answer the question, "What is good for the students?" (SPB 2015, p. 3), they focus on creating an educational environment based on their core philosophy of family, leadership and excellence, which includes elements beyond the academics, to collectively help their young men "grow into well-educated, happy and responsible adults" (SPB 2015, p. 3).

### **Overview of St. Benedict's School Operation: Structure, Culture and Agency**

St. Benedict's, Catholic, inner-city, all-male school in Newark, New Jersey is overseen by the Benedictine monks, and is currently led by headmaster Father Edwin Leahy. With their mission of "establishing a school for the Lord's service" (SPB 2015, p. 7), St. Benedict's school leaders' focus is on educating the students entrusted in their care. Their structures and facilities enable them to better able to carry out their mission

and champion for their students. The school is located on the grounds of the Benedictine monastery, enabling the monks to have a 24-hour oversight of the school and similar availability to their students. Furthermore, these monks take a *vow of stability of place*, which is their promise to live and serve where they are assigned for the rest of their lives. This monastic commitment contributes to the sustainability of the school, their mission and continuous championing for their students.

St. Benedict's is established as an independent school, which allows the leaders the freedom of function in their school, enabling them to experiment and adjust their operational model to meet their students' needs. In addition, being an independent school makes them responsible for taking care of their own funding. They charge tuition, which at the time of the study was \$12,000 per year, but 80% of the students pay half the amount, and the gap in budget is made up by soliciting alumni, business corporations and the philanthropic community. To be admitted into St. Benedict's, students are required to take an entrance exam, after which successful candidates are in school for an 11-month school year.

St. Benedict's leaders' on-site structural arrangement and the school's functional independence help to facilitate the 11-month school year calendar, which was put in place to provide, in addition to academics, enrichment courses to allow broader development of students. Three terms make up the school year: summer; fall/winter; and spring. The summer phase entails: 5 weeks of non-academic courses for continuing students in subjects such as astronomy, oil painting and drama; leadership training for new student leaders and; freshmen orientation led by student leaders for the incoming students. Fall/Winter phase spans September through to April and provides the normal college prep

courses. During this phase, student leaders run the daily operations and hold group meetings to assure development and support of the student body with focus on the three A's (Academics, Athletics and Attitude). The spring phase is a five-week period that covers the entire month of May. During this phase, freshmen carry out their end-of-year backpacking project on the Appalachian hiking trail; and the continuing students participate in non-academic courses that are also experienced-based, but are on site and involve the design, management and production or presentation of some end-product.

St. Benedict's system of student leadership is the core of their school model. With their goal to create community and develop student leadership, and with the ideas and guidelines taken from the Boys Scout Handbook, the St. Benedict's monk leaders crafted a structure and process to include their students in the leadership of the school. It entails a team of student leaders, who are appointed through an election process with members in the school community, who then oversee many aspects of the daily school operation in relation to student life. In tandem with the student leadership structure is the student group system, through which the students are all connected and led. Connecting male students in groups with caring adults is advocated by Kleinfeld (2006) as an important school structure to support male students' engagement and success in school. In the group system, the entire student population is organized in groups that are made up of students in varying grades. Each group is assigned a leader, and all groups are connected in a hierarchical structure that has a senior group leader at the top of the structure. Through this connecting structure that links students together and in groups, they are able to be supported and accounted for by their peers on a daily basis, within the caring family atmosphere and supportive container of the school community.

New students are introduced and connected to the system of student leadership and group system through the incoming freshmen program. St. Benedict's leaders believed it vital that new students get immediately oriented with St. Benedict's school philosophy of community and student leadership. Thus, through the structure of the incoming freshmen program, students participate in a variety of training workshops, including boot camp style activities intended to help build their school knowledge, individual stamina and group camaraderie. The headmaster, Father Leahy, points out that the approach used in the freshmen orientation is no different in principle than the activities found in any other boot camp or in street gang initiations, and is meant to get students on the path of becoming a full member of St. Benedict's community.

To achieve full membership into the St. Benedict's community at the end of their first year, freshmen are required to complete the rigorous and challenging four-day, 55-mile hike along the Appalachian Trail. Structured to be more like a transformative journey and seen as a rite of passage, students embark on an experiential learning process during which they gain knowledge and skills from experiences in group collaboration, problem solving, risk-taking, discipline, leadership and more. It is anticipated by the school leaders that by the end of the process, each student will have the experience of having accomplished something harder than they imagined they could ever accomplish. By completing this hike successfully, along with other requirements, students earn the right to wear the black hoodie, fashioned after the monk's habit, to symbolize their true membership to the school.

Building a strong sense of community within the student body is as important as building student leadership at St. Benedict's. This value is reflected in the school motto:

“Whatever hurts my brother hurts me.” With this goal, the school leaders place emphasis on building trust and a sense of belonging among the student population, wherein brotherhood and camaraderie are central themes. One major strategy used is a daily convocation, which entails gathering the entire school community of 550 students every morning in the school hall where they engage in activities aimed at creating and sustaining cohesion, togetherness and a strong school spirit. The central theme of brotherhood is reinforced through the process of accounting for all students each day. It is a major activity at the start of convocation, and is accomplished through attendance reporting by group leaders of their members. Unaccounted students’ names are noted and group leaders take follow-up action. Student bonding and team spirit are strengthened through prayer and singing, and by ending the convocation with the recitation of the school motto and the affirmation: “You can be any good thing you want to be. Go and conquer.”

Another area of importance to Benedict’s school leaders is the emotional health of their male students, an area of student life that research highlight as important for their success (Farrell, 2011; Kleinfeld, 2006). The school invests in providing the services of a psychologist to carry out intensive individual and group counseling sessions with students. The counseling office service also extends to the students’ community and home if associated factors get in the way of students’ well-being and learning. The residential program is an option that is explored to take in students who are in concerning situations. Once students are accepted in the school, the school leaders make every effort to assure students’ continued attendance, relying on the daily tracking of attendance during convocation.

As a college prep high school, St. Benedict's offers a rigorous academic and athletic program. Doing well at St. Benedict's requires more than just having good grades. Students are tasked with maintain good standing in three key areas, the three A's (Academics, Athletics and Attitude), which are stipulated by St. Benedict's leaders as important success factors. This requires getting good grades in academics, participating in two sports each term, and maintaining good attendance, punctuality and conduct records. To support students in attaining success in these areas, the three A's are the foci for the organized student groups in their daily meetings. Groups are ranked each term on each of these measures based on the average grades of all student members in each group. This competitive structure helps to motivate and drive students to help each other do well. Here again the central theme of brotherhood is continually fostered.

Overall, this approach to teaching and learning at St. Benedict's offers a new way to integrate personal and professional development in the academic process. Altogether, the male students are gaining leadership skills and capacity, building character and being prepared for life. It seems to offer a novel, active, engaging and relevant experience, which are the core ingredients for getting male students connected with school (Gurian, 2010). The annual 2% dropout rate against a 30% dropout rate for the city, plus a 98% graduation rate, with 85% of the graduates going on to college and earning a college degree, is evidence that St. Benedict's has been able to put in place suitable structures for their students' success.

Essentially, the model's structures were created from the school culture based on the school leaders' philosophy of school as a family and everyone is expected to help everyone. The agency of the school leaders, underpinned by their faith and commitment,

continually fosters their foundational values of community and student leadership in the school culture, and the intentional co-creation of structures that sustain their mission for the well-being and success of their minority male student population.

Information about St. Benedict's school and its student leadership educational model is referred to in applicable sections throughout the dissertation chapters.

### **Phase I: Products Generated from Phase I for use in Phase II**

Phase one informed the second phase of this study in three ways. First, it helped determine the appropriateness of the selection of St. Benedict's school model as a case for the study. Second, it led to determining the means and ways to effectively familiarize participants in Phase II with the St. Benedict's school model. The approved diagram of the school model (see Appendix A) provided an ideal one-page snap shot of the model, an easy visual for participants, which they could make reference to during the interviews. The CBS official documentary of the school (Pelley, 2016) was already an approved and public presentation of the school, which showcased the various aspects of the school model, and thus suited the needs of the study.

Further, Phase I brought attention to the need to ensure the most accurate representation of the St. Benedict's model to Jamaican stakeholders. It was determined that having a St. Benedict's representative present the model in Jamaica and be available to answer questions would add credibility to the information about the model and also bolster the study. As such, an invitation was extended to and accepted by St. Benedict's for one of their personnel to make the presentations to stakeholders in Jamaica. A planning and coordinating session with this representative was done by phone and email to finalize arrangements. Plans were made to include as many participants in Jamaica as

possible within the time allotted by the St. Benedict's representative. Participants unable to attend the presentation sessions with the St. Benedict's representative would be familiarized with the school model from the CBS documentary video and the school model diagram during the interviews and focus groups.

The third function of phase one data was that it helped with the generation of the questions and structure for the generic interview protocol and the focus group guide used with Jamaican stakeholders in Phase II (see Appendix Q and R). The interview guides for Jamaican stakeholders comprised a list of twelve questions, along with prompts. The questions were formulated and configured to answer the research questions and focused on stakeholders' perceptions of the different aspects of the model, their reasons for believing that these may or may not be acceptable practices in the Jamaican context, and the transferability of the strategies. The focus group guide entailed similar questions as the interview guide in order to maintain consistency with the data collection agenda.

### **Phase II: Jamaica - Transferability of St. Benedict's Strategies to Schools in Jamaica**

Phase two was the principal component of this research study. The focus in phase two of the study was to explore and capture the reactions and responses of the Jamaican stakeholders to St. Benedict's school model, and to obtain their perceptions regarding the potential workability and transferability of the features of the new school model to the Jamaican context. The stakeholder groups in Jamaica were selected from two different sites - a Jamaican high school and the Jamaican Ministry of Education. The descriptions of the site selections, participant selections and data collection procedures are outlined in the sections below.



The positionality (Lather, 1986) of the researcher as a Jamaican citizen and Jamaican educator facilitated the selection of the sites in Jamaica. The researcher's knowledge and familiarity with the Jamaican education system and the schools, in particular the selected school, helped to accelerate the site selection process with the ability to obtain pertinent information and make characteristic distinctions among the schools. Furthermore, the researcher's affiliation with the Catholic faith and the leaders in education were helpful factors to aid access to the Jamaican school and also to the Jamaican Ministry of Education. The researcher's Jamaican heritage, understanding of the culture and the ability to relate to the people and their customs, also provided a unique insider position that was useful for garnering rich data during interviews and focus group sessions with Jamaican stakeholders. The researcher's positionality statement is presented below under the section on Ethical Consideration.

## **Phase II: Site Selection of Jamaican High School**

Purposive sampling was used to select one high school in Jamaica as the site for the study. It was chosen for two important reasons: the school leaders were seeking new ways to better educate their male student population and improve their educational attainment and participation; and the school shared a number of similar features with St. Benedict's Preparatory School in the United States. The Jamaican school was similar to St. Benedict's in terms of location (urban, downtown, inner city), composition of student population (all-male, African descent), and faith based (Catholic).

Important differences between the two schools included the type of Catholic religious order (Jesuit versus Benedictine for St. Benedict's), school control (public versus independent for St. Benedict's), schooling paradigm (academic focus versus

building community and student leadership for St. Benedict's); and number of students (1400 versus 550 at St. Benedict's). In addition, while the Benedictine monks made a *vow of stability of place*, it is the opposite for the Jesuit order whose members take a *vow of no stability* as a promise to go where they are required to serve. See Appendix B for a summary of the similarities and differences between St. Benedict's and the Jamaican school.

Even with these differences, the similarities between the schools made the selection of the Jamaican school advantageous. Any other school in Jamaica would have had more significant differences with which to contend. The idea behind the selection was that the similarities between the two high schools would help to minimize the number of variables to consider in the study, plus enable stakeholders in the Jamaican school community to more easily relate to St. Benedict's school and be more receptive to their model. Although differences between the school sites signify likely challenges to transferring the external school model to the Jamaican school context, the schools' similarities, the desire of the school leaders at the Jamaican school for new ideas to educate their students, and their interest in St. Benedict's strategies offered reasonable grounds to explore the feasibility of transferring the model to the Jamaican school.

There were also both similarities and differences in the student populations at the sites that could enable or hinder transferability of the model. It was important for the study that any school model being considered for transfer to the Jamaican school context would demonstrate success with a similar population of students, not only in racial lineage, but also life circumstances, personal and educational struggles. Both schools have an all-male student population, and the majority of students are of African descent.

Like the students at St. Benedict's, the students at the Jamaican school come from challenging homes and communities, have complicated family dynamics and parents or guardians in the low to middle socio-economic status. The students are also exposed to crime and violence and gang related activities. These factors potentially hinder the academic progress of the students by limiting functional resources and impacting their emotional and psychological well-being. These key similarities in the student populations suggested that the strategies of St. Benedict's model could offer useful ideas that could be applied to the students at the Jamaican school.

The differences in geographical location and school context present different social and educational experiences for each of the student populations. For the minority students in the U.S., both Latino and African Americans, historical social factors such as racism, is still an intervening variable in their social and educational experiences, but this is no longer a pervasive issue in the more inclusive Jamaican culture. Racial bias and narratives are added elements in the daily life experience of the minority students, which St. Benedict's leaders constantly try to counteract with strategies to assure a sense of family for their students and an inclusive and supportive school culture.

Also, at the macro level, the social infrastructure and economic resources of the U.S. creates a different life context and experience for its vast and diverse population than a developing nation such as Jamaica with a population of under three million people. Economic opportunities in the U.S. opens up more financial prospects for St. Benedict's leaders to pursue funding on behalf of their students, which is not the case for the Jamaican school. Also in the U.S., while there is great tolerance for varying social

identities including sexual orientation, this cultural openness is not a practice in Jamaica where the society is generally characterized as homophobic.

These differences between student populations suggest a thorough exploration of the strategies of St. Benedict's model to see which ones might work in the Jamaican setting. Yet, the similarities between the student populations are compelling enough reasons to explore St. Benedict's model, particularly since its success is based largely on school leaders tackling issues that are related more to the students themselves, their family and school community, which has a direct impact on students' academic progress and educational life.

A request made by letter to the school board chairman to have the local Jamaican high school participate in the study was met with enthusiasm, as the school leaders were interested in finding out how St. Benedict's strategies could benefit their male students. The school agreed to be the site for the research through an approval letter from the principal. The school assigned one of their department heads as a contact person for the research to help support the administration of the study and the data collection process on their school site.

## **Phase II: Site Selection of the Jamaican Ministry of Education**

Purposive sampling was also used to select the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) as a research site because of its governing role in the education system in Jamaica. Stakeholders from the MOE were included in this study because of the legal reporting relationship between the schools in Jamaica and the MOE. All public schools in Jamaica fall under the jurisdiction of the MOE, and as such are required to follow the education policies prescribed by the MOE. Because of the financial and structural

constraints and subculture in different parts of the Jamaican society, different schools have varying needs and concerns. As a result, the MOE uses its discretionary powers to provide support and permit independent activities at different schools that promote the well-being of the particular school community. It is useful for the Jamaican public schools to keep the MOE in the communication loop regarding changes they may be considering in order to ensure the MOE's support, if needed, as well as to enable the MOE to keep track of new ideas and best practices that might benefit other schools in the education system.

As the selected Jamaican school fell within the jurisdiction of the MOE, the letter submitted to the MOE sought permission to conduct the study at the Jamaican school, as well as a request to interview relevant MOE personnel for the study. The MOE granted the approval for both requests, and thereafter, follow-up communication continued with the MOE to identify participants and finalize interview arrangements accordingly.

### **Phase II: Participant Selection Procedures in Jamaica**

Participants for phase two of the study in Jamaica comprised various stakeholders in different roles of the education system and in society. Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan (2002) have argued that scaling up or transferring ideas and strategies from one context to another is problematic, due to the dynamic relationship among structural constraints, culture, and the agency or actions of the individuals involved. To best examine these factors it was important to obtain a variety of perspectives from a diverse group of stakeholders involved in education at both the local and top governing levels. The stakeholders in the school community offered perspectives on what plays out on a daily basis in the school operations, while stakeholders from the Ministry of Education (MOE)

offered a macro level and systems view of education in Jamaica, all important for the purpose of this study. Selected participants included stakeholders of the educational system involved in improving the educational attainment of Jamaican male students, as well as those who might influence the decisions regarding what educational reform models would be deemed supportive for the Jamaican context. Having a participant pool of individuals and groups that functioned at different levels of the education system and played different roles, offered greater opportunity to collect rich and varied perspectives.

Selection of all participants for the study employed a maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton, 2002), to the extent that this was feasible for this study. Specifically, within each stakeholder group, an attempt was made to identify participants with different profiles, with the view that they each might hold a range of ideas and attitudes about school and the education of male students. This sampling strategy provided opportunities for some degree of comparative analysis across the stakeholder groups within Jamaica.

**Selecting participants: Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE).** Given that one of the goals of this study was to assess the transferability of a new model to the Jamaican context, it made sense to include individuals in the participant pool who held positions of formal authority and had positional influence on the educational model adoption decision. Given the governing role of the MOE for the Jamaican schools, the responses of MOE administrators who played such significant roles were important for the aims of this study.

The relevant study participants from the MOE were identified with the assistance of the contact person in office of the Permanent Secretary at the MOE, where the

operation of the local schools is overseen. Stakeholders selected from the MOE were at the executive level, administrators dealing with policy and leadership at the ministry who directly impact decisions and actions regarding the implementation of a new educational model in the schools. This included: Minister of Education, Permanent Secretary, Director of Policy Analysis and the Director Regional Education Services. Given their unique and distinctive roles, interviews with these individuals were deemed to be a most appropriate data collection strategy. Interview arrangements with these study participants were organized directly with their particular administrative assistants.

**Selecting participants: Jamaican School.** To ensure that study findings included a range of perspectives within the school community, efforts were made to include key stakeholder groups at the school and to have a meaningful sample size. As with the participant profile for the MOE, it was important to have participants who held positions of formal authority with positional influence regarding school reform. With assistance from the school board chair, key school administrators were identified to participate in the study. These administrators formed the school leader stakeholder group and included: Leader of the Religious Community, School Board Chair, and the Principal. Also due to their distinct roles, I conducted individual interviews with these school leaders. With the assistance of the school secretary, individual interviews were arranged for each of these school leaders.

Identification and selection of the additional study participants from the Jamaican high school were conducted with the assistance of the school contact assigned by the school to support the study. The other stakeholder groups were: students, teachers, and parents. The decision-making process for student participation included discussions with

each grade level supervisor. Student groups of ten each from grade levels 9 to 13 were identified for inclusion based on the assessment of their willingness and ability to participate and offer varying views, given their own school experience and academic performance. To include teachers in the study, the principal and vice principal decided that a presentation of the study would be made at their next teachers' meeting, after which invitations would be extended to them to volunteer for participation. To obtain parent participation in the study, the president of the parents association for the school was called on, and after being introduced to the study, he assisted with arranging for seven parents to form a focus group.

**Recruitment process.** Recruitment for study participants from the MOE was done indirectly after the MOE gave approval for the study. Through the office of the Permanent Secretary, participants from the MOE were identified, selected and confirmed. Related study documents were forwarded to help with recruitment. In addition to the overview of the study, the created diagram of St. Benedict's school model and the online URL link of the CBS video presentation of St. Benedict's school model were sent for review by potential participants. The generic interview guide and the informed consent forms were also emailed to the liaison personnel on behalf of participants. The consent forms were signed and collected at the interview from each participant.

Recruitment for study participants at the Jamaican school was done directly with the majority of the stakeholder groups. For the leader of the religious community, similar to the MOE administrators, participation in the study was confirmed through a series of email communication with attached files, and the study consent form was signed and



collected at the interview. With regards to parents, recruitment was done through the president of the parent association, and parents signed consent forms at the focus groups.

Recruitment for the other participants in the school community was done after presentations of St. Benedict's school model were made to different stakeholder groups: school administrators, teachers and selected students. The presentations at the school were done in conjunction with the St. Benedict's representative who travelled from the U.S. to the Jamaican school. As hoped, the presence of the St. Benedict's representative offered a more in-depth and relatable presentation of the St. Benedict's school model to the local Jamaica school community. Attendees also had the opportunity to get very specific concerns and questions addressed during the presentation. After each presentation, attendees were invited to participate in the study.

To finalize participation from the school, follow-up communication was done both in-person and by email. Consent forms were given out accordingly, and students under 18 years of age were given parental consent forms to have signed and returned. See Appendix M, N and O for examples of the consent forms used. Eventually, all participants were confirmed and organized for data collection accordingly. The 29 student participants were arranged in focus groups by grade, with one group of student leaders. For the 10 teachers who confirmed, both individual interview and focus group sessions were arranged based on teachers' individual availability. Individual interviews were arranged for the school board chair and the principal. See Appendix C for demographics and role descriptions of the five different stakeholders groups.

## **Phase II: Data Collection Procedures in Jamaica**

An IRB proposal was submitted and approved to cover data collection from Jamaican participants in this phase of the study. Data collection was conducted between November and December 2016, with 53 participants. The data collection procedures involved 12 individual in-person interviews and eight focus group sessions with key stakeholders in Jamaica, using interview and focus group guides (See Appendix Q and R). Signed consent forms (See Appendix M, N and O) and a completed Demographic Form (See Appendix P) were collected from participants after presenting an overview of the study, reviewing participants right to confidentiality, and confirming participants' voluntary participation in the study. The interview and focus group sessions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were audio recorded.

Interviews and focus groups with the stakeholder groups at the school were conducted on site at the school. Sessions with students, teachers and parents were done in a designated private space, approved by the school principal. Interviews with the three school leaders and the three MOE administrators were carried out in their respective offices.

Both data collection methods were conducted after participants viewed the media presentation on St. Benedict's school model. Although some participants from the school community had attended a prior presentation of the school model, the school model video was replayed as necessary to refresh the information for the current discussions. The diagram of St. Benedict's school model (See Appendix A) was distributed to each participant and used for reference to the specific aspects of the school model during the sessions.

**Interviews.** An interview guide (see Appendix Q) developed for the study was used to conduct the 12 individual in-person interviews. Using an interview guide offered a less structured approach than one that uses a highly prescribed set of questions that are asked in the same way with all interviewees (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). In following the interview guide, the interviewer builds a conversation with spontaneous questions to focus on and illuminate the topic of interest in order to gather the relevant data. In this case, it allowed more of a semi-structured, conversational interview, whereby the interviewer asked questions that explored and probed deeper.

The interviews for this study were conducted using this conversational approach with participants. Questions were asked to elicit participants' thoughts and views about St. Benedict's school model, and what strategies they thought would (and could) be transferred to Jamaica, as well as the rationale for their opinion. The interview guide was used as a roadmap to keep on track during the interview process, and functioned as a checklist to ensure that all relevant data were gathered to answer the research questions. The protocol helped to maintain a similar structure for each interview, but still provided enough freedom to adapt and add questions suitable to each individual interviewee (Glesne, 2011).

**Focus groups.** A focus group guide (see Appendix R) was also developed for the study and was used to conduct the eight focus group sessions. It had the same questions as the interview guide. The main differences between the focus group approach and individual interview approach were the number of people in conversation at the same time, and the procedures involved for the different participant composition and setting. Furthermore, questions emerged from the interactions among group members, resulting

in varied discussions among groups. The questions on focus group protocols were adapted and streamlined to help ensure that the unique perspectives and experiences of each stakeholder group were captured and that the data were applicable and sufficient to answer the research questions.

### **Phase II: Data Analysis**

The objective of the data analysis process was to fulfill the purpose of the study by finding answers to the research questions noted at the beginning of this chapter. The overall aim of the data analysis process was to explore Jamaican stakeholders' perceptions regarding the relevance and supportiveness of St. Benedict's strategies to the educational needs of Jamaican high school male students, and the transferability of the school model to Jamaican schools. The processing of collected data, along with the analytical memos and reflexive journal, allowed for a greater understanding of the problem of Jamaican high school male students' underachievement and underparticipation in school, and the contributing underlying factors that hindered making positive change.

Creswell's (2007) approach to processing qualitative data was followed: (1) preparing and organizing data; (2) reducing the data into themes through a process of coding; (3) condensing the codes; and (4) representing the data in various forms such as charts, figures, tables or discussions. To analyze the data, a general inductive approach was employed that involved identifying patterns in the data that could be linked to the research questions, allowing for the reduction of the large amounts of data collected for the study and provided a focus for the analysis (Thomas, 2006). In carrying out rigorous cycles of reading and coding to condense the extensive and varied raw data, the process

allowed findings to emerge from the significant themes inherent in the raw data, with clear links to the research objectives. The general inductive approach “provides an easily used and systematic set of procedures for analyzing qualitative data that can produce reliable and valid findings” (Thomas, 2006, p. 237).

To prepare and organize the collected data, the researcher first transcribed the recorded interview and focus group data. Some coding was done during transcriptions, but the primary data analysis process was done with the text data, carried out in many stages with the use of excel spreadsheets and word processors. This involved breaking up participants’ responses, condensing and summarizing data with codes and categories, and distilling themes along the broad domains of the research questions, which included: benefits of the model (first impressions and preferred aspects), challenges to implementation (structural and cultural barriers), and proposal for implementation (preferred aspects that could be potentially implemented).

The coding process focused first on the individual stakeholder group cases, using content analysis strategies to examine the data (Merriam, 2009). Then triangulating techniques were used to examine cross-case patterns among the stakeholder groups, and between the data collection methods (Patton, 2002). The first cycle of coding involved repeatedly listening to the recordings and reading the transcripts for the researcher to capture first impressions of the data, to generate initial codes and organize them in the respective domains of the research questions. Simultaneously, descriptive coding, process coding, emotion coding and In Vivo coding was done with text segments of the data to discern and label categories, according to the needs of the inquiry, in one word or phrases (Saldana, 2015). While this initial coding phase allowed for new codes to

emerge as the analysis process continued, the descriptive coding summarized the main ideas of text excerpts; process coding noted participants' consistent patterns of action and behavior; emotion coding labeled the emotions of participants as they shared their reactions; and In Vivo coding captured the participants' voices by using their direct words (Saldana, 2015).

Repeated cycles of coding followed the initial phase that entailed more coding, the creation of more categories in order to group similar concepts and patterns, and continuous and rigorous refining of the categories to progressively eliminate overlaps and redundancy (Saldana, 2015; Thomas, 2006). The reflexive strategies of analytical memos and reflexive journal writing were continued throughout the entire data analysis process, and the entries were used to increase understanding and generate insightful interpretations of the data.

The data analysis process yielded a number of dominant categories related to the domains of the research questions, representing the commonalities and differences among participants' responses and stakeholder groups. Major themes for the overall study were drawn from further analysis of these categories, with the goal of answering the research question and fulfilling the research objectives. A comprehensive report of the findings and the major themes are presented in chapter four, and the discussions on the significant themes are presented in chapter five.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study complied with the legal and ethical guidelines established to protect participants in the research study. Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was gained from the University of San Diego to conduct the study. As guided by the IRB

procedures, safeguards were implemented to minimize risks to participants by using the required informed consent. When recruiting participants for the study, they were made aware that their participation was entirely voluntary; and that even if they chose not to participate, their choice in no way went against them. Furthermore, those persons who volunteered to participate in the study were informed that they could withdraw from participation at any time.

Before commencing interviews or focus groups, the informed consent form was reviewed with participants, and their right to confidentiality was fully discussed. Ethical standards of confidentiality were applied to protect the participants' identities as much as possible, with the removal of references to them, and security of all research related data, which were only accessible to researcher. However, there were some limitations to offering full confidentiality that were addressed in ways to maintain as much participant protection as possible. For the research sites, name reference was removed for the participating Jamaican school, but not for the Jamaican Ministry of Education, due to its uniqueness to Jamaica, and its value to the credibility of the study. Further, for some participants, particularly those in official leadership roles, there were limitations to offering them full confidentiality. Given their unique positions and roles in their respective institution, it was important to ascribe a quote or other information about them to use as evidence for the findings of this study. As such, there were limits to their confidentiality and they were therefore asked to waive partial right to confidentiality. This agreement stated that, when referring to these participants or in using their quotes, their titles or stakeholder group categories would be used rather than their names. This

was an acceptable arrangement for the official leaders, and also for some of the other participants.

### **Establishing Trustworthiness**

To establish credibility and trustworthiness of the study findings, a variety of strategies were employed. Purposive sampling, data source triangulation, methodological triangulation, extensive coding, analytical memos and reflexive journaling was used to help produce a comprehensive report of the findings and credible interpretations of participants' perceptions about the relevance and transferability of the new model to their context and its ability to improve high school male students' educational outcomes.

Purposive sampling of sites and participants for the study was supportive of the aims of the study. Rather than aspiring for broad generalization or representativeness, using a purposive sampling approach helped to ensure the inclusion of key stakeholders whose feedback provided data that illuminated the issues involved in the phenomena under study. The way in which participants were selected for this case study aided the creation of a diverse sample of stakeholder groups offering a variety of perspectives and reactions and providing rich data sources for comparative analyses. Using this specific sampling method produced high quality, rich and pertinent data and increased the likelihood of establishing relevant and credible findings and interpretations, enhancing the validity of the study.

Triangulation was used to check for consistency across the qualitative data and to bring out both similar and varying viewpoints of the different participants (Merriam, 1995; Patton, 2002). This was done using source triangulation and methodological triangulation. These strategies helped to present a broader and more meaningful view of



the findings. During the analysis stage, related feedback from the stakeholder groups (source) was compared to determine areas of agreement as well as areas of divergence. Source triangulation was suitable for this study design due to the use of different stakeholder groups - MOE administrators, school leaders, teachers, students and parents - and their interest in the study focus.

Methodological triangulation was possible with the findings from different methods: document analysis of the material from St. Benedict's and the sites in Jamaica, observations at the sites and from the interviews and focus groups. Comparison of findings from each method during the analysis yielded similar results and findings that supported each other. That some of the findings also aligned with other related research (discussed in chapters two and five) was supportive of the credibility of the results. The triangulation methods added rigor to the data analysis and interpretation process, strengthening the trustworthiness of the findings and thus increasing the internal validity of the study, and in turn increasing the study's utility.

To further enhance the trustworthiness of the results of the study, added rigor was employed in the data analysis process with extensive coding and recoding of the data (Merriam, 1995). Extensive coding expanded the concepts and patterns in the data, enabling the emergence of new codes and categories, illuminating themes and brought clarity to the interpretations. Recoding helped to reorder and condense the categories and subcategories, reduce redundancies and lead to the emergence of the major study themes. The many cycles of coding called for deeper reflection during the analysis process in order to identify patterns, while meticulous attention to unearthing the salient features and meaning of the qualitative data all helped assure worthwhile and credible findings.

Writing analytical memos was a useful strategy employed by the researcher to manage data processing and researcher subjectivity, given that the researcher was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis for the study. Analytical memo writing gives qualitative researchers an opportunity to step back from the work in the field to capture reactions in the moment, to work out problems and review interpretations, and to get creative insights to move forward (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). During data collection, completing analytical memos allowed for regrouping moments to make sense of the interviews and focus groups (Patton, 2002), and help set the conditions for continuous rigor with the data collection process to obtain relevant and quality data. Accordingly, for this study, analytical memos were primarily used throughout the data collection period, particularly to capture and record initial interpretations and insights from interviews and focus groups. It was a useful strategy to summarize main ideas and learning points, and to use them to inform and refine the plan for following interviews and focus groups. Analytic memos were also used during transcriptions of interviews and the coding and interpretation stages to record emerging patterns, categories and themes (Saldana, 2015), facilitating better understanding, interpretation and conceptualization of the study data. Using analytical memos promoted the trustworthiness of the data and findings.

A reflexive journal was another strategy used to address the researcher's own trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was a beneficial reflective practice for the researcher to maintain awareness of her own positionality, locate biases and manage subjectivity in order to add rigor to the qualitative inquiry (Morrow & Smith 2000). As a medium to express reactions, experiences, assumptions,

and explore biases and attitudes about the research process, the journaling activity sharpened the researcher's awareness of researcher bias, and brought attention to counterbalancing partialities and assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Journal writing provided an opportunity for the researcher to examine blind spots and gaps in knowledge and understanding of what was going on, and to explore feelings of ambiguity and skepticism, connection and delight. The resulting increase in openness and objectivity on the part of the researcher helped to mitigate the influence of subjectivity during the various stages of the research process and on shaping the findings of the study. This reflective orientation helped sustain the quest to ensure the credibility of the work.

Transparency, consistency and credibility of the data collected and of the findings in this study was important in order to correctly inform decisions and actions as to the way forward for the many and varied agents involved in the reform process. For this study to be meaningful and useful to the educational system in Jamaica, the researcher maintained a strong sense of responsibility to ensure the trustworthiness of the study findings, and its ability to be defensible to the readers. Thoroughness was applied to the study, providing details on all stages of the research process, and a comprehensive report of the findings that led to the conclusions, in order to facilitate scrutiny of the credibility of the study (Merriam, 1995).

### **Researcher Positionality**

Researcher positionality refers to the influence that the researcher's worldview and background may have on the research process (Lather, 1986). According to Foote and Bartell (2011), it can impact all stages of the research process and the eventual outcomes: "The positionality that researchers bring to their work, and the personal

experiences through which positionality is shaped, may influence what researchers may bring to research encounters, their choice of processes, and their interpretation of outcomes” (p. 46). Accordingly, this researcher acknowledges the influence that her positionality could have had on this study, with the potential for researcher subjectivity and bias due to her heritage, background, values and beliefs, assumptions, as well as professional and social identities.

The researcher’s interest in studying the phenomenon of Jamaican male students’ underachievement and exploring possible solutions arose from her background as a Jamaican citizen and an educator in Jamaica, who hoped to contribute to addressing the problem. Having primarily lived and worked in Jamaica, she has a natural understanding of the local culture and customs. Furthermore, through her work and faith, she is affiliated with the educational community and the Catholic faith community, which attributed to her familiarity with the research sites selected for this study. With this background, she holds associated cultural and contextual assumptions and expectations that could have impacted this research study. Further, participants may have been impacted by her current identity as a Jamaican female and educator, carrying out research studies at a university in the United States.

With the awareness of the subjectivity that comes with researcher positionality, the researcher took extra care in proceeding with this study. As explained above, reflexive techniques were used to build and sustain openness and objectivity with the data collection and data analysis process. Also, rigorous data analysis procedures were used and care was taken to utilize the words of participants as much as possible to accurately reflect their reactions to the inquiry in the themes and findings.

On the other hand, the researcher's insider position offered some efficiencies and convenience to the study, with accelerated selection and ease of access to the research sites. Also, for data collection, her understanding of the culture and inherent ability to relate to the people and their customs enabled her to ask unique contextual questions and also gain participants' trust, in ways for them to be more open and forthright in sharing their experiences. With intentions for this study to have meaning and utility to aid with addressing the issue under study, the researcher paid meticulous attention to conducting the study with as much objectivity and reflexivity as possible to produce credible outcomes, recognizing that the researcher is always an instrument in research (Merriam, 1995).

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study. First, it is focused exclusively on faith-based schools, particular Roman Catholic institutions. This faith component is one of the stated major factors in the success of St. Benedict's, as it forms the foundational rules of the school. These rules include the usual Christian values, but particularly stability, as the school is on the campus of the church and the monks live on the campus. The school and the Benedictine overseers are accessible to students 24 hours every day. These are very unique qualities of St. Benedict's. Although the strategies of the St. Benedict's school model could be viewed as a guiding set of principles, the religious biases of educational leaders may affect openness to the model. In addition, the idea of students having 24-hour access to the school and overseers may be impracticable for many school contexts in Jamaica, even if the school is religiously based and has a stable community.

A second limitation is that the study was conducted with stakeholders from only one Jamaican school and thus it cannot be assumed that stakeholders in other Jamaican schools would feel similarly about the St. Benedict's model. As such, findings may be relevant to the participating school only, and also cannot be generalized to high school male students as a whole in Jamaica.

Third, this study is limited by the purposive participant sampling. The data from the selected participants was unique to each site, and together, their perspectives may not adequately reflect the several and varied perspectives about schooling for the male students in Jamaica.

Another limitation was the particular nature of the reform model that was being investigated for potential transfer to Jamaica. Aspects of the St. Benedict's model, specifically the socialization process for freshmen, was deemed by some to be militaristic, and by implication, not the ideal model to be transferred. It could be argued that this militaristic style is a default way to treat minority male students because of built-in racism in the strategies that are employed based on assumptions about what these male students need. It could also be argued that this socialization process for freshmen at St. Benedict's is unhealthy for some male students. The headmaster insists, however, that the school model and strategies evolved over time as they learned how to better address the needs of the student population they were serving. They came to recognize that they had to employ stringent strategies to shift the mindset of the male students and have them engage as full members in the St. Benedict's community. Even with this reasonable perspective, the issue may still be problematic for some, making the model a limitation.

Limitations are inherent in the differences between the national and specific site contexts of the two schools (previously discussed above in the sections on site selection), which contribute to transferability issues that must be considered in the process. St. Benedict's is situated in a major developed nation, endowed with extensive resources, social infrastructure and financial opportunities that offer an advantageous setting for St. Benedict's leaders to pursue their mission for their students. But such prospects are not so readily available to the Jamaican school. Furthermore, there are differences in the social and educational experiences for both student populations arising from enduring racism in the U.S. culture and acceptance of varying social identities in the U.S. society, both of which are not part of the Jamaican culture. Differences in the school sites themselves also raise questions about the transferability of the model from a U.S. school to a Jamaican school regarding the type of Catholic religious order, religious vows, school control, educational paradigm and the number of students. See Appendix B for the summary of the main similarities and differences between St. Benedict's school and the Jamaican school.

However, it is important to remember that this school model was chosen due to its success with a similar population of students as those at the Jamaican school as well as the similarity of both school sites (detailed above in the sections on site selection). Moreover, the leaders at the Jamaican school were seeking new ways to educate their male students more effectively to enhance their achievement and participation levels in school and were particularly interested in exploring the St. Benedict's school model. Altogether these reasons, despite the seemingly challenging differences, offer meaningful grounds to investigate the relevance of St. Benedict's school model to the Jamaican

students, and the feasibility that the model could be transferred, whether in whole or part, to the Jamaican school.

Indeed, there are limitations in attempting to analyze the merits of transferring a reform from one context to another (Hubbard, Mehan & Stein, 2006). There are complexities in the decision-making and change process of adopting a new model that arises from the interplay of the local context and the everyday interactions of the people involved in the process (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002). The fact that the educational model being explored for transferability requires a transfer from one country to another adds additional layers of complexity grounded in cultural, political, economical and historical factors that must be considered in the process. While this study sought to uncover the salient issues in transporting a new educational model to the Jamaican school system, there are limitations that arise from the complexity of pursuing reform and the way in which the findings will be confined based on the sampling and sample size for this study. Follow-up studies will surely be necessary to further examine various key issues before the actual implementation could take place.

Finally, there is the limitation to the researcher's own positionality, as outlined above. While the researcher's positionality provided overall positive factors, it is possible that participants' view of the researcher and background may have affected their participation in the study, such as their openness and candidness, which, along with researcher biases, would impact the findings of the study. While efforts were made to manage researcher subjectivity by employing reflective techniques of analytical memos and journaling during the research process (explained above), it is still a limitation worth noting.



Although there are considerable limitations and the results of this study cannot be generalized in the traditional scientific sense, it will hopefully provide some new explanations and insights into educating Jamaican male students more effectively to improve their educational outcomes.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This qualitative study focused on exploring the perceptions of Jamaican stakeholders regarding the relevance, adaptability and transferability of a new educational model to their high school educational context. This new educational model developed by St. Benedict's Preparatory School in the U.S., uses an experiential student leadership approach as a strategy to engage and improve the educational outcomes of minority high school male students in the United States (see Appendix A for a diagram of St. Benedict's model). Based on the success of this leadership development educational model with the male student population at St. Benedict's, this study examined both the extent to which the approach might help to improve the educational outcomes of Jamaican high school male students, and the feasibility of implementing the key strategies and practices to the Jamaican context. The study primarily assessed the leadership components of the educational model and explored whether or not Jamaican educators would consider the strategies acceptable practices.

Four primary questions were developed to assess the Jamaican stakeholder's perceptions regarding adaptability of the model to their context. Three of these research questions examined their perceptions regarding (1) the different aspects of the student leadership development model and its likelihood to improve male students' education in Jamaica; (2) the risks and challenges in implementing such a model; and (3) the modifications to the model and the local adaptations that they deemed necessary for it to contextually fit and be successful in Jamaican schools. A fourth research question

addressed the general process of scaling-up when transferring successful educational reform models from the U.S. context to the Jamaican context.

Data for this study was collected through interviews and focus groups with Jamaican stakeholders from one all-male high school, as well as the Jamaican Ministry of Education. See Appendix C for stakeholders' demographic information and brief role descriptions, and Appendix Q and R for the interview protocol and focus group guide. At the high school, focus groups were conducted with students, teachers and parents, and individual interviews were conducted with three members of the school leadership team, who are also members of the school board: Jesuit Superior, School Board Chairman and the Principal. Four individual interviews were conducted at the Jamaican Ministry of Education with the Minister of Education, The Permanent Secretary, the Director of Policy Analysis, and the Director of Regional Educational Services. The interview and focus group data were analyzed and coded for key categories and themes. The coding process generated the themes that led to findings for the research.

The key findings are presented in the following sections, highlighting the themes that are associated with the first three research questions. The findings are discussed in detail and include supporting data from the analysis of interview and focus group data, including participant comments. Findings for the fourth research question emerged from the first three research questions, and will therefore be part of the discussion in Chapter Five.

### **Key Themes and Findings**

This study illustrates the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the merits and challenges of transferring one student leadership development educational model,

designed to educate African American high school male students, from the U.S. context to the Jamaican context. The key findings indicated that while the Jamaican stakeholder groups generally were favorable to the student leadership school model used by St. Benedict's Preparatory, and cited many benefits and opportunities of having this model in their school, there was no wholesale embrace of the model. Despite stakeholders' early enthusiasm for the U.S. school model, on closer inspection of the strategies used in the model and the implementation projections, they expressed reservations about the model working in their context without modifications that reflected Jamaican culture and educational structures. The stakeholders identified many challenges and risks that they thought would impede implementation of the model in their local school. To address some of these impediments to implementation, stakeholders proposed ways to overcome the foreseen challenges and adapt the strategies of the model to their context. Even so, the proposed modifications were viewed as not likely to sufficiently support the implementation of the model in their school for varying reasons. This chapter reports the Jamaican stakeholders' reactions to the model, and details the key findings in three main sections: (1) what stakeholders liked about the model and its benefits (See Appendix D, E, F and G); (2) challenges to implementing the model in the Jamaican context (See Appendix H and I); and (3) stakeholders' proposals for model implementation in the Jamaican school (See Appendix J and K). The chapter ends with a short summary, and the discussions about the findings follow in Chapter Five.

### **What Stakeholders Liked About the Model and its Benefits**

In their review of the St. Benedict's school model, all stakeholder groups lauded the model and thought that the strategies would be very beneficial to the educational

experiences and the outcomes of the male student population in the Jamaican school. This section starts with stakeholders' initial reactions after watching the video presentation of St. Benedict's school model. The brief outline of stakeholders' first impressions is followed by the benefits and opportunities of the model that stakeholders identified (See Appendix D, E, F and G). The section ends with the related aspects of the model that stakeholders found most appealing.

### **Stakeholders' First Impressions**

After watching the presentation of St. Benedict's school model, the stakeholders were moved by what they saw. In the first moments ensuing, there was an atmosphere of wonder and awe, and participants in all stakeholder groups made exuberant and positive comments such as: "Great model;" "Lovely;" "Awesome;" "I love it." Overall they thought that St. Benedict's school model was an "ideal school model" that reflected a very positive and strong school culture and generated great student success.

In focus groups conducted with students, they all appeared delighted with the model and showed great enthusiasm to implement it immediately. Of all the focus groups, these were the most vocal. Referring to the U.S. model, one student said, "At St. Benedict's, the encouragement, motivation and affirmation given to the students are impressive!" Another student said, "What made the most impact on me was how loving all the boys were to each other." Some adjectives students used to describe their first impressions were: "uplifting," "outstanding," "touching," "amazing." Some students said they had "never seen anything like that before;" and that "something like that is like magic." They also said that the model was the "best education method;" and that St. Benedict's was a "good school with exceptional results" and they would like to have that

model at their school. One student said, “I don’t understand how it would work, but it would be pretty neat if it could work for my school.”

The other stakeholders appeared equally as fascinated and captivated by St. Benedict’s school model. Parents referred to it as “lovely” and were so keen on the model that they immediately followed-up with inquiries about how and when it would be implemented in their school. Teachers said that the model was an inspiring story of student success, which they wanted for their students. One teacher said, “I think a model like this will help our students.” They were “impressed” with the caring environment and the togetherness of the students, and felt that the model “could work” in their school. The school leaders also expressed admiration for the success of St. Benedict’s model in educating male students, and one leader said, “The model excites me. Any model that looks like that and has success like that is exciting.” Another leader said, “This is what we want our school to be.”

Administrators at the Ministry of Education (MOE) also had very positive first reactions about St. Benedict’s model. They expressed excitement about it and hailed it as a “great model.” One of the MOE administrators said, “I think it’s a great story... a great success story. I thought that they [St. Benedict’s overseers] assessed their environment very, very accurately, and were able to come up with strategies that were able to reach the whole person.” One other MOE administrator said, “We are trying to do the same thing. This is the kind of culture that we are trying to promote,” a school culture where “the student is the focus and the target.”

## **Benefits and Opportunities of the Model**

The reported primary benefits of St. Benedict's model surfacing from the interview data included: (1) fosters a caring and supportive school community; (2) develops students as leaders; (3) enhances the teaching and learning environment; and (4) helps parents with developing their sons. A discussion follows below regarding each benefit of the model that emerged, and some reasons why stakeholders liked them. The discussion concludes with the stakeholders' top four most favored aspects of the model. A summary of these findings is captured in Appendix F and G.

**Fosters a caring and supportive school community.** The first benefit of St. Benedict's model that stakeholders identified was that it builds and fosters a caring and supportive school community, creating a vibrant school spirit and an environment in which students see and treat each other as brothers. Participants highly favored what they perceived as the underpinning values of brotherhood and community that the St. Benedict's school community fostered, and hailed the resultant sense of belonging, trust and connectedness that the St. Benedict's students shared.

Jamaican students in particular expressed their desire to have a similar strong sense of community and brotherhood as they saw in St. Benedict's. As one student noted: "I love the fact that all the boys come together in the mornings, and the fact that they might not be biological brothers, but they all love each other." Another student said, "The unity between the boys is to be admired. They work collectively and build each other. They do not compete and fight against each other." Also important to the students was the opportunity to have a strong school spirit, as they felt concerned that the school spirit at their school was too weak. They all admired the respect that the students at St.

Benedict's school showed for each other. One student said, "It is rare to see students so unified," and would love to have the same. They felt that a strong sense of community and brotherhood among the student body would contribute to improving peer-to-peer relations and, in effect, boost their school spirit. Overall, the students felt that it would be beneficial to have St. Benedict's model at their school so that they might experience the same level of "unity," "love," "trust," "connectedness," "equality" and "brotherhood" as they saw illustrated in the presentation of St. Benedict's school.

St. Benedict's philosophy of building community was also a core fundamental principle in the educational process for the leaders at the local Jamaican school. One school leader, the Jesuit Superior, who oversees the religious and spiritual life of the school, shared that he found St. Benedict's model appealing because community was "built in" the educational process. He said, "I like the community orientation ... working to build community comes from my understanding of my own faith ... the building of community is a central action." The chairman of the school also favored St. Benedict's model for its "holistic" approach to education with the "focus on fulfilling the needs of all the members in their school community." The Jamaican school leaders saw this holistic approach as one that provides extra support to students and would help to mitigate early problems with students and better aid their success. The Jesuit Superior explained that building community was very helpful to members as it enabled them to "create bonds with each other" which "provided the human support that helps with emotional issues." This type of supportive environment, he felt, would be one in which many of their student population would respond very well. The school principal agreed with the Jesuit Superior, adding that it would also help their students with learning how to



better function in community. He said, “A lot of our students are socially inept. They are so poorly socialized it’s frightening. They have no concept of how to build or maintain social relationships. This [community component of the model] will help them in that respect.”

Similar to the school leaders, teachers felt strongly that building community in school would offer great benefits to the student population. One teacher said, “It would be very good for Jamaican boys, as it would help create a teamwork structure that would help support them.” The teacher explained, “It would be of great service in our schools,” and especially helpful to those male students coming from the ghetto areas, where “there is nothing really positive happening around them” and who “display a lot of negative behavior,” and could do well with this type of supportive environment. The teachers believed that the sense of community and belonging would be good for students, aiding them with their general emotional well-being and personal development. One male teacher felt strongly moved about the caring and loving benefits that the model could provide to their school community. He shared:

It’s a system where the unloved can feel loved, the spoiled can realize that they don’t need to be spoiled; that it’s okay not to get everything you want; those that are mean will learn that sharing is caring, and that it also benefits others around you.

The community and brotherhood aspects of the model were also very appealing to the parents, who thought it really extraordinary that, as part of students’ community relations, students will look out for and account for each other on a daily basis. The daily reporting of attendance and follow-up for each student was a winning factor of the St. Benedict’s model for parents. They liked the idea of a system in the school that would keep track of their sons, because they felt that it would be an added support system to aid

with keeping their sons on their educational paths. These parents thought the daily tracking of students was a very useful strategy to “catch the students that are falling behind at the early stage, so that something could be put in place to get that child back in order earlier than later.” One parent referred to her days as a child, with the adage, “it takes a village to raise a child” and felt strongly that, “The system [of community] needs to come back; because if it does not come back, we are going to lose our boys ... we are going to lose the children.”

Building brotherhood and community was also highly valued by the administrators at the Ministry of Education in Jamaica (MOE). One shared that he believed in the merits of having a strong sense of brotherhood and community because of his own personal experience and the benefits he gained from belonging to a community of Boy Scouts. During his time as a Boy Scout, he said he “learned about camaraderie and also developed survival skills from an early age.” He believed that these skills helped him to successfully maneuver through life. In addition, he said, “Even when you leave, the brotherhood never ends.” He expounded that his scout leader from his youth, whom he was not in contact with for over 25 years, “sent him a congratulatory note when he was promoted to his current position with the MOE.” He felt that this act by his scout leader was a testament of how brotherhood and community transcended place and time. Another MOE administrator thought this aspect was also useful in helping mitigate parenting deficit. She said, “Bringing in the communal support will help to bridge the gaps for students as it provides other layers of support to facilitate student development and deal with their emotional hurts.”

**Develops students as leaders.** The second benefit of the model identified by stakeholders was the development of students as leaders, and its apparent effect on improving students' level of discipline, responsibility, and accountability for their school life and academic success. Stakeholders' positive reaction to this aspect of the model was not surprising given the increased emphasis in Jamaica on incorporating leadership development in schools to better prepare students for success in this global village and technologically advancing era. The novelty of St. Benedict's leadership model was its experiential approach to teaching leadership, in having students run the school, by empowering them to make significant decisions in the operations of the school. St. Benedict's school leaders believed that this direct hands-on approach by students, carried out in a supportive environment, creates a better learning experience for students to develop true leadership skills and abilities that they can apply in other aspects of their lives.

However, the real attraction for Jamaican school leaders, teachers, parents and MOE administrators to St. Benedict's leadership development model was not the means used, but the potential opportunity to improve their students' discipline, responsibility, and accountability. They felt it most important for their students to develop these qualities in order to address their concerns regarding students' deficiencies in these areas. These stakeholders considered these qualities most beneficial to their students as functions of good leadership and felt that aspects of St. Benedict's approach might help in this regard.

Discipline was considered by Jamaican stakeholders as a very important quality for their students to develop. One teacher stated her opinion: "The main thing is

discipline. Boys do not have any discipline, and that is the main thing we have to deal with when it comes to boys.” Some students accepted this teacher’s viewpoint but offered explanations. One student explained, “Boys turn to other things because they have been denied self-expression.” Another student offered that, “Students want to be independent and be their own leader, and not have teachers be their disciplinarians.”

Stakeholders also liked the opportunity to improve students’ level of responsibility. One teacher felt that, “The model is good to teach them responsibility, because that is what we need for these young men. Some of these boys ... they don’t know how to do anything at all.” The school leaders also believed that St. Benedict’s leadership strategies might help to teach male students to be more responsible. They appreciated how St. Benedict’s approached the development of their students’ leadership abilities by having them take on more responsibility in their school community. St. Benedict’s approach of giving students responsibilities as a teaching tool was similar to the local school’s faith-based guidelines on providing a well-rounded education for students. The school chairman said, “Our guidelines states clearly for us that how we form our students is by giving them various responsibilities; not to overburden them, but to give them responsibilities to assist them to assert themselves as individuals.” However, he explained that while their educational model included leadership development for students, “it was not for their [students] own benefit, but for the benefit of the community.”

In terms of the benefit of St. Benedict’s leadership strategies in building students’ accountability, one teacher said, “I really like the accountability factor. Accountability is a strong change force for discipline. Accountability could help to stem the disciplinary

issues.” He felt that in applying the strategies with their student leaders to play a more active part in student matters, it might alleviate the burden from teachers needing to handle so many disciplinary issues with students. He stated, “What I find here, everything here [at the school], is done by teachers. Everything! But yet still we have student leaders in place. So if there are student leaders in place, what are their jobs?” The teacher proposed that “since students relate better to each other,” perhaps allowing their student leaders to help with handling some of the disciplinary issues might help to curb the problem and at the same time build the accountability skills of their student leaders. He asserted, “It could make the student leaders really be accountable. Students see us [teachers] as slave masters; as rule implementers. This should not be. They themselves should be the rule implementers.”

The benefit of the model to develop students’ accountability was also seen as valuable by the administrators at the Ministry of Education (MOE). One MOE administrator felt that in increasing students’ accountability for their school life, it would enhance their performance, as from his experience he recognized that “people perform better when they are made accountable.” He felt that for students to become good leaders, accountability was an important skill for them to develop, to help them make good decisions for their lives.

From their observations of St. Benedict’s student leaders in action, parents felt that St. Benedict’s student leadership strategies would have an overall positive impact on their sons. One parent pointed to the confidence that the St. Benedict’s student leaders portrayed and said, “The leadership strategies seem to empower them. They actually know their roles and carry out their duties responsibly.” Seeing this demonstration of

students exercising leadership was inspiring to parents. They felt that using these strategies to train their sons to be leaders would make their sons “more disciplined and responsible” and would help them to “take charge of their lives,” all of which parents wanted for their sons, and thus considered these great benefits of the model.

However, the autonomy given to the student leaders at St. Benedict’s was the key ingredient that the Jamaican students loved and found most exciting about St. Benedict’s student leadership strategies. They described it as the “way to go” and noted that it presented to them a “chance for change,” to “groom them into proper grown men.” The students liked the model because they believed it would empower them, which is something they have yearned for but have never had. They felt that the teachers have always been the leaders and they, the students, did not have a say in their school life. The students emphasized that they would like their voice included in their school life. They saw the model offering them an opportunity to “share and use their own ideas,” and that given the “generation gap,” their “solutions may be better” to resolve their problems than solutions proposed by the teachers and leaders in the school.

The students were weary of the adults’ focus on improving students’ discipline, responsibility, and accountability. Students have long felt “discouraged and torn down” by teachers’ words and behavior towards them. One student complained, “A student would have a very good idea, but it would be turned down just because it’s from a student.” So these students welcomed this new approach used by St. Benedict’s where students’ ideas and voice have value, and they can be included in the running of their school. It would be an “affirming” and “uplifting” experience for them. Hence the idea of students running the school (as advocated by the St. Benedict’s leadership model) was

a real winner for them. One student said, “I like the fact that they make boys feel like men to run the school like that.” The students wanted this autonomy that the St. Benedict’s leadership strategies offered in order to “help teachers out and make their school better.” One student said he felt “frustrated with the problems and waiting on teachers to solve them.” He explained, “Problems are brought to teachers and authority figures, and nothing is done about it. Therefore, it’s about time [for students] to start getting involved in solving them.” They thought it a practical solution to have an organized group of student leaders to help run the school and oversee student matters. One student felt that since their school only had a few people to run it, “It makes sense for students to help run the school instead of teachers going out of their way.” In addition, “For teachers, it is their job, but for students, it is their life.”

Students also foresaw the benefit of St. Benedict’s student leadership development approach positively impacting peer relations as “students would work with each other versus work against each other” as was currently happening in their school. They saw it as an opportunity to “turn peer pressure into a positive light.” Students also pointed to the far-reaching effects of the experiential leadership practice component of the model. One student defined it as a strategy to “fashion people [students] for the future” as it would help “make them better persons and help them to transfer these skills into the real world.” Furthermore, there would be a ripple effect on others as, “They [students] will be a part of the development of others and [also] help them to succeed.”

**Enhances the teaching and learning environment.** The third benefit the stakeholders identified was the enhancement of the teaching and learning environment resulting from teachers having more productive class times and less stress due to students

taking more ownership of their learning and schoolwork. The teachers felt that the model provided an opportunity for them to have the freedom to focus more on teaching. With the strategies of the model focused on building students' accountability, discipline and responsibility, teachers welcomed the break from the behavioral distractions so they would be able to pay attention to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in class.

The overall approach of the St. Benedict's model of fostering community, brotherhood and student leadership in the school community was considered the foundation for enhancing productivity in the local school community. As these elements encourage students to build togetherness, one teacher felt that with students working together as one, and pulling in the same direction, the prospects were encouraging, "Teamwork is best. Working together helps all achieve more." With the expected growth of constructive dynamics among students, and the broad increase in the ownership for their schoolwork and in achieving results, stakeholders believed these productive behaviors would extend into the classroom. They shared that they have been struggling with having their students act responsibly towards their schoolwork and behave well in class. One teacher gave an example, "You give 30 students homework, you come the next day, and only three have done it." Teachers find this a stressful scenario, as the follow-up actions amount to "a lot of waste of time." In seeing the possibilities available in the strategies of the new model, one teacher said, "Students' developing responsibility, leadership, and accountability will improve use of class time. I think a model like this will help. It would also be less stress for the teachers."

With students holding each other accountable for their behavior, the expectation was that student discipline would improve. Teachers felt that students might respond



better to each other, and thus teachers would get to recapture class time that has been eaten up with them handling too many disciplinary problems during class. Students agreed. One said, “The boys here react badly to instructions given by teachers, as they are easily influenced by their peers. So, a student can tell his friend to quiet down, and they would [do so], rather than listening to a teacher.” Overall, having students taking charge of themselves would not only help students, but also enable teachers to get their class time back. One student confirmed this view and said, “It would be easier for the teachers to just teach and not deal with the disciplinary problems.”

Employing the peer-support feature of the model to help with academics was also seen as beneficial to increasing productivity in class time and reducing teachers’ stress. Given the large class sizes (about 45 male students per class) and mixed academic abilities in this Jamaican school, one school leader pointed out, “It is difficult for teachers to reach all the students.” One teacher shared, “In any one classroom there are so many issues that we are unaware of. Boys talk to each other, but will not come to the teacher out of fear of judgment.” Another teacher bolstered the point by adding that, “Boys have a way of relating to each other in ways that adults can’t reach. Their peers can reach them more than others.” Therefore, in employing the peer-support structure, teachers agreed that, “it will work” in the classroom to allow students to help each other.

Administrators at the Ministry of Education also advocated for the use of St. Benedict’s model to help improve the teaching and learning environment in the school. One administrator stated, “Since teachers want students to take responsibility for their work and for their learning, this model offers this opportunity for that to happen.” She felt that it was advantageous for teachers to share teaching and learning responsibility

with students as, “The system of accountability would be stronger for both teachers and students.” She felt that as teachers adjusted to this new way of relating with students they would reap the benefits of the model.

**Helps parents with the development of their sons.** The fourth benefit was related to the aid parents would receive in the development of their sons. Parents were very concerned about their sons’ future lives, given the projected negative trajectory for high school male students in Jamaican society. Again, they saw the model as an opportunity for their sons to “become more disciplined and responsible,” as they believed that these behaviors would better assure their sons’ success in school and life. Seeing the St. Benedict’s students operating as leaders, achieving academic success, and graduating from high school with plans for college represented the very things that these parents wanted for their sons.

Indeed, other stakeholders felt that parents would react positively to many aspects of the model because it offered a framework that provided the support, development and accountability that they desired for their sons. Most students projected that their parents would feel, “elated,” and one student said, “Parents would love the idea of their sons’ being their own leader, and that students are looking out for one another.” Students felt that their parents would be happy with these benefits for them, and feel proud that their sons were learning to “be responsible and disciplined,” and were also being trained to become “leaders in society.” Teachers felt that with these elements, parents would also experience less stress and worry over academics with their sons. One teacher offered that, “In Jamaica, where parenting could be better, having the boys taking responsibility for their schoolwork takes the pressure off both parents and teachers.”

One very popular aspect of the model for parents and other stakeholders was the daily roll call that was conducted at St. Benedict's every morning during convocation (school assembly) to account for every student in the school community. At St. Benedicts, if any student cannot be accounted for, there is a team that follows up, including contacting the missing student's parents. The mothers that were interviewed felt that this strategy of the model was valuable for parents, as it would help to assure them of their sons' safety and attendance at school, as most students travel to school on their own. So parents welcomed the idea that their sons would be accounted for and tracked by their peers each day. Even students appreciated the daily reporting of students' attendance. One student said that he thought it "very touching" that "if they don't see you, they will call your parents or go and look for you."

Many stakeholders felt that St. Benedict's model would be helpful to parents in instilling discipline in their sons and fostering greater engagement in school. After observing the militaristic approach used with incoming freshmen at St. Benedict's, one school leader said, "Parents will love the militaristic approach for boys to build discipline as many fathers are missing and mothers are not able to control them." The parents agreed with the school leaders, as discipline was a high concern for them with their sons. The parents felt that this stern, militaristic approach was helpful in getting male students directed in the right way for success in school. One parent said, "Some of them need it. It sets the tone for serious business from the start." Parents projected that the discipline that their son's would gain from St. Benedict's strategies would make them "more civil," and that overall the strategies would help produce, "better men, better leaders, better school, better community."

In all, the very positive reactions of stakeholders across the board to St. Benedict's student leadership educational model, indicated that the model resonated with them, and that there were many aspects of the model that made it very compelling for each of the stakeholder constituents. Each group, depending on their role in education, and their related needs and aspirations, found important elements of the model appealing, and they all envisaged many positive possibilities for their educational context. Students felt that the model would provide them a way to get involved and be empowered in their school life, and help them to develop their confidence and leadership skills. Teachers saw the model as offering them the freedom to focus more on teaching, rather than on discipline. Parents saw the model as an opportunity for their sons to become more disciplined and responsible. School leaders saw the model as a way to create a caring, supportive and harmonious school community. The MOE administrators saw the model as a way to develop model citizens and future leaders. One teacher at the Jamaican school summed it all up by saying, "If we can get that [St. Benedict's school model] into our school system, other than making the teachers' job easier, I believe that academically, everything, every area of school life, will be positively affected." See Appendix E and F for a summary of stakeholders' perceived benefits of the model with selected quotes from participants.

### **Most Favored Aspects of St. Benedict's Model**

There were four aspects of the St. Benedict's model that were favored by all stakeholders. They are: (1) the group system with leadership structure; (2) the focus on academics, attitude and activities (the 3 A's); (3) daily attendance taking; and (4) the freshmen orientation program (See Appendix G). A discussion of these follows.

**Group system with leadership structure.** The aspect of St. Benedict's school model that was most favored by all stakeholders was the group system with the built-in leadership structure. The group system represents the core structure for St. Benedict's school leadership model, and it is the main medium through which students run the school operations, build community and brotherhood, and take responsibility for their school life. It entailed arranging the male students in groups of peers across classes and grades, and assigning group leaders, as well as assistant group leaders and faculty moderators. The group system forms a connective network for the entire student population led by tiers of elected student leaders with specific roles, and which functions as a means for the male students to work together in groups and to lead themselves. In this process, the male students are encouraged to see and operate with each other as brothers, and consequently build strong bonds, and gain a sense of belonging and community.

All the stakeholders found the structures and functions of the group system very appealing because it "gets everyone connected with each other." Basically, all the benefits of the model that stakeholders shared are generated through the group system because the connected configuration enables students to have the "unity," "peer support," "sense of belonging," "teamwork," and "accountability" that they wish for in their school experience. One student's take of the short and long-term benefits of the group system was:

I think it is really important to get male students involved for them to feel that they are a part of something. This way, you get more out of him than when he is just being there as a regular person. [...] When you are in a group, you are no doubt stronger; you are unified. [...] If you look at it, in a gang, no one is left out. In the military, no one is left out. [...] So, with the group system, our social skills would get better, grades will go up, and everything will go up, because we will have this

unity coming up together. So when we leave [high school], we are better people, as our [school] mission statement says. It has to start here. So when we go out there, our productivity will be a lot higher, which will lift our country's economy and would increase things like marriages and interpersonal relationships.

The sentiments of this student were similar among stakeholders. They believed the group system would help build stronger connections among their student population, and offer the supportive and accountable systems to aid their students' growth and development.

**Focus on academics, attitude and activities (the 3 A's).** At St. Benedict's student groups meet every day during scheduled sessions to support each other with improving their academics, school attitude, and school activities (the 3A's). The individual groups within the group system are assessed and ranked each term for their groups' aggregate scores in the 3A's. Having the 3A's as the central focus within groups met the approval of the Jamaican stakeholders as these elements represent the key schooling areas on which students are assessed. One Jamaican student confirmed, "These are very important to the school. They must be followed." Focusing on the 3A's indicated the constructive function of the group system, and the purpose behind scheduled group meetings each day. In addition, the attention to these measures are promoted and fostered as groups are ranked each term on these measures, which act as an incentive for the groups to work hard and ensure to get their members achieving at their highest levels.

**Daily attendance taking.** Stakeholders welcomed the idea of a system to keep track of the students on a daily basis. They believed that the attendance taking process carried out daily during convocation at St. Benedict's was a useful strategy to account for each student each day. One student said, "I found it amazing that they actually looked out for one another to ensure that everyone was at school and not on the streets."

Teachers felt it would also be a good way to motivate students to come to school on time, which might help them resolve the punctuality problem they have with students. One teacher said, “Some students are late because they don’t care. So, the peer-to-peer accountability would help them.”

**Freshmen orientation program.** The other aspect of St. Benedict’s model that was favored by the stakeholders was the freshmen orientation program because it was seen as expedient in getting the incoming students oriented and on board with the new school model from the start. One MOE administrator said, “It is key to what is done at the entrance. You set the stage. Thereafter, it is a matter of managing the process and the output.” Students also believed that the freshmen orientation was important, as it was necessary to “train new students about the rules, regulations and system of the school so they can get used to it.” Furthermore, stakeholders felt it was important to implement the freshmen orientation program as designed by St. Benedict’s so that new students could learn and understand the philosophy of community and brotherhood, including how the members in the school worked together in groups.

Stakeholders also liked some other aspects of the model, such as the hiking trail, the counseling program, and the earning system. Ultimately though, the most favored aspects of the model - group system with leadership structure, the groups’ focus on the 3 A’s, daily attendance-taking and the freshman orientation program - were the major ones that all stakeholders found most advantageous to start. They felt that these strategies would likely make a fundamental difference to their school and provide them the most benefits to enhance their current situation.

## **Section Summary**

This section detailed stakeholders' various reactions to the St. Benedict's student leadership model, highlighting their first reactions to the model, the benefits and opportunities they saw for themselves, and the specific aspects of the model they found appealing and helpful to their student population. Stakeholders' strong optimism for St. Benedict's model indicated their aspirations for a different or more enhanced school experience than what they currently have. Stakeholder's various reactions to the model showed how the model responded to stakeholder groups' particular needs and interests, and also highlighted how each group's support for a new educational model can differ based on their unique roles in education. The overall high enthusiasm and the strong support from administrators at the MOE indicated possible positive support for model adoption. See Appendix D, E, F, and G for a summary of these findings with quotes.

### **Challenges to Implementing the Model in the Jamaican Context**

Despite the many perceived potential benefits and opportunities for Jamaican male students and the school community in adopting the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model, various challenges and risks surfaced from the respondents that suggested there would be obstacles to implementation. The foremost risks and challenges that emerged related to the structural and cultural norms and practices within the Jamaican society and the education system. The findings revealed the difficulties of shifting the beliefs and thinking of individuals in a system that resists changing how things have normally been done. All these findings highlighted some of the major barriers to transferring and scaling up an educational model from an American school context to the Jamaican school context.



The structural and cultural challenges to implementation that emerged were interrelated. In the literature on educational reform, structure, culture and agency are formulated as co-constructing forces because of the interplay that occurs among them in efforts to implement an externally developed school model in a new context (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). Structures are the organizational arrangements, the rules, policies and practices that dictate how things should be done, as well as the capabilities and resources to getting things done; culture involves power and entails the attitudes, customs, and belief system that influence the actions that people take; agency is the capacity of individuals to take action and change the existing state of affairs.

From a co-constructivist perspective, structure, culture and agency mediate each other; meaning, in each one you can see the other two operating. As active agents in the educational encounters, the actions of educators help shape and are shaped by the cultural and structural features of the school and society. Barriers to model implementation are created from the complex and dynamic relationship among structural constraints and enablers, the culture of the school, and the actions of multiple stakeholders in the connected educational sites and settings (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002).

The barriers to implementation identified by the Jamaican stakeholders are presented below. Although the challenges are embedded in the interrelatedness of structural, cultural and agency features, the explanations will be grouped according to their point of emphasis on either structure or culture, with agency in the background. The primary challenges are presented as: (1) structural barriers to implementation, and (2) cultural barriers to implementation. Given the unique roles and positions, viewpoints and interests of each stakeholder group, some of the potential implementation barriers were

particular to each group, and other barriers were across groups. See Appendix H and I for a summary of the structural and cultural barriers to implementation with related quotes from the stakeholder groups.

### **Structural Barriers to Implementation**

The structures or organizational arrangements that characterize the Jamaican educational system created some barriers to implementation of the St. Benedict's school model to the Jamaican school context. Five main themes emerged: (1) lack of clarity regarding who has the power and authority to bring about change; (2) limiting financial-structural arrangements that affect model adoption decision; (3) policies and practices that constrain getting the right teachers; (4) high demand on school for sustained academic outcomes; and (5) ability to sustain a long-term commitment to change. See Appendix H for a summary of these findings along with related quotes from stakeholder groups.

**Lack of clarity regarding who has the power and authority to bring about change.** The first structural barrier to implementation is related to a lack of clarity in the educational policy about who has the power and authority to bring about change in the Jamaican school. The centralized Jamaican public education system overseen by the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) maintains a hierarchical structure and power relationship between the MOE and the schools. During the interviews, the MOE administrators indicated that they had bestowed more power and authority to the schools to enable school administrators to have more autonomy in their school operations. They shared about transformational efforts by the MOE for the past 12 years to modernize the educational system, which has led to a slow shift in the power and authority boundaries

between the school and the MOE. But such changes have not been officially communicated or restated in policy by the MOE to the schools.

Therefore, accountability lines between the MOE and the school on specific issues were still unclear. Based on stakeholder interview discussions, it was not a straightforward process to pinpoint which group definitively had the power and authority to bring about change in the Jamaican school. There seemed to be a mixture of opinions about who should authorize the implementation of the model in the school – clearly a structural constraint. In an initial conversation with one of the school leaders, he stated that the final decision to go ahead with the implementation of the St. Benedict’s school model rested with the administrators at the MOE. He explained that a change from their school model to the St. Benedict’s school model would need approval from the top officials, especially because the school model was so different from the norm.

However, during interviews with the MOE administrators, they declared that the decision to implement St. Benedict’s model rested with the school, with the final decision being in the hands of the school board. One administrator stated emphatically, “It is not the ministry. It is the school board. We are not set up for that. The ministry sets the overall vision and the policy framework.” Another administrator said in agreement, “The schools have the power. They just need to call on us as a resource.” However, when this feedback from the MOE was shared with the school leaders they seemed perplexed, and one response was, “That’s what the ministry says.” There was some cynicism by the school leaders about the MOE’s position because of a past experience, whereby the school’s proposal to implement another similar school model was not supported by the

MOE and hence did not move ahead. The current school leaders held the viewpoint that the MOE was “not supportive of innovative ideas.”

Nonetheless, the MOE administrators had been unequivocal about their position on where the decision-making for the model implementation laid. They stated that, “The ministry gave the flexibility and relinquished some authority to the school boards for the daily operation of the school.” Additionally, in response to further inquiry about the possible need for their permission to implement a school model that employed a totally different approach to education than the norm, one MOE administrator clarified the situation and said:

There is no legislation of sorts that prevents this kind of creativity. Every school has its own identity. The ministry has never prescribed that a school can't do this or that. The ministry has a framework, but regarding the creativity that this model is about, the ministry has never said that the school cannot do it.

It was proposed by one MOE administrator that the school leaders should have discussions with their school board members about the new model, as the school board is the guide in setting the policies of the school to achieve required objectives. The power tensions between the MOE and the school, and the variance in perspectives on the ownership of model adoption, highlighted the power application in a hierarchical albeit ambiguous structure, and the disagreements over meaning and action that can occur in change efforts.

One explanation for this particular dispute could be the recent change in leadership of the MOE due to a change in political leadership of Jamaica in 2016. Specifically, the Minister of Education that was subsequently appointed interpreted and enacted policies differently from his predecessor. In the organizational structure in the Jamaican education system, the school board is the reporting link between the MOE and

the school, and school board members were used to the traditional authority role of the MOE administrators. The school leaders stated that the MOE exerted considerable influence over the school operations, and sometimes, the politics “gets in the way” of school administrators’ efforts to exercise authority in their schools. Thus, the seemingly sudden extension of autonomy that the school was now being granted was uncharacteristic of the MOE, which might explain the perplexity of the school leaders.

This back and forth between the leaders of the MOE and the school about their distinct roles and responsibilities regarding the decision to move ahead with a new school model exposes a real structural challenge to the implementation of the U.S. model in the Jamaican school. With the introduction of a new model of education, it requires a partnership arrangement that is based in policy and clearly delineates the execution of responsibilities. This study reveals that there is confusion between the MOE and the school administrators about their roles and responsibilities regarding the introduction of a new model of education; and this structural confusion would undoubtedly challenge the implementation of the new model. Both parties would likely need to jointly review what is outlined in the operations policy regarding roles and responsibilities and how the policies relate and apply to the introduction and implementation of a new model of education.

**Limiting financial-structural arrangements that affect model adoption decision.** The second structural barrier to the implementation of the model was the limitations of the financial-structural arrangements between the schools and the MOE. In assessing the St. Benedict’s model, the financial realities and status of their own school was the foremost consideration for Jamaican school leaders. It could seem liberating for

the school to be able to make the model adoption decisions, but the reality was that the structural arrangements between the school and the MOE posed major constraints for the school to freely move ahead. The school leaders explained that although their school is a denominational school, it is grant-aided by the MOE, which pays all the salaries of the faculty and staff, as well as some of the operational expenses. With this financial-structural arrangement, the school has to operate within the educational regulations, legislation and policies of the MOE, which has rules that block and limit many of the activities and resource expenditures of the school.

The school leaders shared that they were operating on a deficit budget and there was insufficient funding to tackle their basics and their long overdue infrastructural repairs, much less take on projects that would require additional funding, which they do not see coming their way. To illustrate the extent of their fiscal restrictions, one school leader explained that they were operating at such a basic level that, “Right now, we are begging to keep the lights on.” Furthermore, they were trying to figure out how to adequately provide for the increasing levels of students from the inner city who needed additional supportive elements for their schooling that called for more financing. Thus, they had to take a pragmatic approach in reviewing the model. The costs associated with implementing the proposed U.S. model was named as one of the major drawbacks that played into the school leaders saying they were “not ready” to move ahead with implementation. They were naturally very wary about being too excited by a prospect that could potentially escalate their expense budget beyond what they were currently supporting in their present educational paradigm.

The school leaders indicated that although many aspects of St. Benedict's school model might produce a positive "turnaround" for the male students at their school, the upfront cost of implementation could be a deterrent, as "money talks." One school leader said that it would be more conceivable to move ahead "especially if the model can be implemented without huge financial inputs." Some of the main expenses they anticipated in implementing the model would arise from: visits to St. Benedict's by school leaders and others to observe St. Benedict's school operations; training of their staff and faculty; the possibility of having an 11-month school year; and also hiring an additional staff member who would be in charge of student affairs to drive the new agenda in the school, as well as manage and monitor the project implementation. These activities would create additional strain on the school leaders' already overrun budget. The chairman said, "The restraint for me is that I can get excited; but the reality is that we would need financial resources to implement this model." The school leaders felt challenged by the economical position of the school and the foreseeable limitations on its income.

**Policies and practices that constrain getting the right teachers.** The third structural barrier to implementation is the educational policies and teaching practices that constrain hiring new teachers. School leaders felt it was important to obtain a teaching cohort that would be more compatible with this new school model, but given the financial-structural arrangements between the MOE and the school, achieving this objective appeared basically impossible. The chief barriers were the confining educational regulations and policies that govern the hiring and firing of teachers, as well as the power of the teaching association. The governing rules were very constricting to school leaders' efforts to acquire the right team. To illustrate, the school leaders stated

that not only does the MOE “pay the salaries of the faculty and staff,” it also “makes the final decision on the appointment of the school principal,” which is a critical role in the school operations. The principal in a Jamaican school is the “chief person who sets the tone of the school.” Further, they shared that the current education code protects appointed teachers from being fired, even if they are underperforming. The school leaders were therefore not confident about ever being able to revamp the teaching force in their school to have the types of teachers that they think would likely work with this new model. One leader said, “With the power of the teaching association, our options are limited.” Another leader said, “We do not have such autonomy in who we hire, and who we fire.” He said that changes to faculty can be attempted, but “it’s a process that is not so easy.”

Most stakeholders, including some teachers, agreed that it would require a new approach to teaching and learning for this model to work in their school. The more student-centered approach of the St. Benedict model was opposite to the teacher-centered approach that was the norm in the Jamaican school system. The school leaders and teachers believed that the model needed teachers who “see teaching as a vocation rather than a job” because the model would demand for them to “come outside of their comfort zone.” But as one teacher stated, teachers are “not up to changing.” He said, “You would have to recruit a new generation of teachers,” as teachers are the “hardest adopters and adapters to change.”

One school leader said that from what he sees of the model and similar ones that are successful in schools, they “demand a lot of commitment from teachers” because they require a “different type of energy.” They demand a “longer school year.” The school



leaders also pointed out that with the Jamaican education system very focused on preparing students for exams, the teachers “do not have the energy, space or time to make the change,” especially with a student/teacher ratio of 42:1. He said that he would expect faculty to have mixed reactions where “some would be excited” and others would say “no way,” and those teachers are the ones who might “just come and do their classes.”

Another school leader asserted, “We would need to start from scratch if we want to do this” as the teaching force is important for changing the school culture. He believed that for the new model to work it would require a “staff renovation” as it was best to “start from scratch.” He explained, “Getting new staff and putting them in place with the new system will work, as they [the teachers] will know from the onset what they are getting into, and can then choose [to work at the school or not].”

But in light of the governing regulations and legislations pertaining to teachers, the school leaders were skeptical about supporting the model. They felt that even with approval from the MOE to go ahead with the model adoption, the major review and revision of the school’s teacher cohort that would have to be undertaken might not be feasible. The teacher challenges to the new program implementation are nuanced and entangled in the overall structure of the education system. Perhaps if the need for a new teaching model was justified, then the adequate teaching staff would be found and address the “right” type of teacher needed for the model’s success. The findings showed how change in a school’s model could impact the activities and relationships of teachers within the school.

**High demand on school for sustained academic outcomes.** The fourth structural barrier to implementation is the pressure placed on schools to keep up students’

academic achievements, which consequently creates a schooling structure centered on student assessments. It relates to the fact that the Jamaican culture places an enormous emphasis on academic achievement for upward mobility (Foner, 1972; Vickerman, 2001). Indeed, the stance on students' academic achievement was unambiguous at the MOE. During the interviews about St. Benedict's school model, MOE administrators stated that they had no problems with the schools using the model, because regardless of the school model used, students' academic levels must be maintained. One of the administrators reiterated, "Yes, the ministry is big on academics. Once we see that the students are passing, that's high on our agenda."

The academic focus in Jamaica is on achieving high scores on standardized exams that are taken during the final grades at the different educational levels, and the results are critical to the future prospects of the students. At the high school level, standardized terminal exams are prescribed and regulated by the examination board in the Caribbean, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) exams are taken in Grades 11; and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) exams are taken in grades 12 and 13.

For these exams, students are urged to achieve as many subjects as possible (five or more) with the highest scores (one's or two's). Policies, curriculum, lesson plans and schedules are set to meet this academic demand. But the pressure is also on schools to keep up their students' achievement levels, as the results from these terminal exams are the measures by which schools are academically ranked in Jamaica.

Given the focus on maximizing students' academic achievement, stakeholders were sensitive to the impact that the new model would have on students' academic

outcomes. So, although Jamaican stakeholders liked the more holistic approach to educating students that is used in St. Benedict's student leadership model, they were concerned that the element of student empowerment and the added responsibilities it places on students, may distract them from sufficiently attending to their academic requirements. One school leader shared that although he is in favor of student empowerment and leadership development, when he saw how involved the student leaders were in running the school at St. Benedict's, he had doubts about the suitability of these strategies for his school. He said, "On another level it makes you wonder how much time these boys will have to devote to academics." With students gaining extra responsibilities and duties if St. Benedict's leadership strategies were fully applied in their school community, school leaders feared that students' time for schoolwork would be constrained due to "extra meetings and activities to carry out leadership responsibilities." They were doubtful that students would be able, at least at the initial stages of the model, to amply incorporate their new leadership roles in their schedule, and also manage their time and academic responsibilities.

Accordingly, there were high concerns about the impact on the student leaders' time and attention to preparing for terminal exams and achieving high results. One school leader expressed, "I would not want it [student empowerment] to happen here with our students. At least, not to the extent that St. Benedict's has it. Our system does not allow for that." He felt concerned because their students, "are doing standardized exams, and that [the exam preparation] is very pressuring" as the results of these terminal exams taken in Grades 11 (CSEC) and grades 12 and 13 (CAPE) are very impactful on the next steps for students after graduation.

Teachers and parents had the same concern. One parent shared that she would like her son to get the benefits of the leadership development, but not at the cost of his academics. She said, “I do not want my son’s academics to go down because of the extra responsibility he gets as a leader.” She explained that although the leadership development is valuable, the school model would be new to the school community, and hence it will take some time for things to be integrated and get settled. Hence, during the “teething stage” she would not want her son’s academic achievement to be negatively affected as, “academics are priority.” Teachers agreed that, “academics comes first” in order for their students to do well according to the educational mandates. In response to inquiries about also developing students’ leadership abilities, one teacher offered that, “Major exams are to blame” for the academic focus. The Jamaican teachers’ attention was focused on completing the curriculum for their subject matter in the required time, and ensuring that students are prepared accordingly. Once teachers had assisted students in preparing for the terminal exams to reach their desired achievement levels, they felt that their job was accomplished. Consequently, the “focus is not on developing the other aspects of students.” Another teacher summed up the situation and expressed that, “it is really CXC exams that runs the school; it is the value.”

In terms of the overall academic pressure on students, one of the school leaders shared, “It is not just about passing CSEC and CAPE. But also the fact that, right now, the kids are overburdened.” He explained that in addition to school, parents also have their children attending after-school exam prep classes (extra lessons) in an attempt to assure them attaining the best grades. He explained that extra lessons became a “cultural norm in Jamaica” that emerged due to concerns over the varying quality of education

delivered in schools, and the need for students to attain and compete for high academic results to successfully move on to higher education or work opportunities. But the school leader further explained that the intensity of academic competition is so high that, “Even if a child is doing well in school, the mother doesn’t trust the school,” and therefore, the child will still be sent to extra lessons after school, to “Mr. X to get extra help.” Therefore, along with other stakeholders, this school leader was extremely concerned that adding more responsibilities to their students’ already busy school life could potentially compromise the students’ time for exam preparations and readiness, and in turn negatively affect their exam results.

Even though they have to follow the educational mandate, the school leaders had “misgivings” about the academic focus of the high school system in Jamaica and “what it does to the quality of education.” From their faith perspective on education, the school leaders felt that, “Education without formation is useless,” and were concerned about the concentration on having students “maximizing on CXC’s, with the belief that more subjects mean better chances.” They were concerned that the linear approach to educating male students, by just focusing on academics, results in male students who “have the academic subjects, but no sense of self.” One teacher said it this way: “We mix up doing well in school with doing well in society.”

Given their perspectives on education, the school leaders acknowledged the merits of the strategies of St. Benedict’s school model, and conceded that it would help provide a higher quality of education to their students. The board chair affirmed that he does “believe in forming our students into leaders,” but the issue for him is “how much time should we spend doing that” relative to academic preparation. The board chair

advocated that, “A balanced time is needed for each [leadership and academics] so that students can have time to prepare and pass exams but also learn how to assert self as individuals.” He advocated that to achieve this balanced approach they would “have to be strategic and intentional” about implementing St. Benedict’s model so they are “careful not to overburden them [students].” He would not want to jeopardize the academic achievements of the students.

The singular focus on academics and how it takes precedence in the structure and routines of the Jamaican school limit the extent to which the new model could be taken up, as stakeholders saw some strategies of the model as a risk to an important goal and to the established way things are done in their school. The non-negotiability of some structures in the new context speaks to the need for new school models to be responsive to educational mandates and policy demands in the new context.

**Ability to sustain a long-term commitment to change.** The final structural barrier to implementation was related to factors that would thwart the continuation of the model implementation process, thus impeding its progress and the incorporation of the intended changes in the school. Important factors were the need to structure enough time for the changes to take effect and for results to be manifested, and also the need to secure long-term commitment to assure this end.

Given that St. Benedict’s created the educational model from scratch, and it had evolved over a period of 44 years, stakeholders felt that they too would have to adopt a long-term outlook for change at their school. The principal felt that with the vision of creating a school community such as St. Benedict’s, it would take a long time because, “Sadly, there is a lot of work to do.”

Teachers also believed that a great deal of time would be required to effectively adapt the model in a way that supports the educational demands. One teacher said, “It would have to be a special project funded for at least 10 years to change the system.” He felt that a 10-year timeline would enable a piloting of at least two cohorts of students through the process, which would provide some data for assessment of the effectiveness of the program. Students saw it the same way as the teachers, that it needs at least “5 years to try it out,” based on beginning with one set of incoming freshmen and following the process with them throughout their high school tenure.

With these timeline projections, the stakeholders felt that a long-term commitment was necessary. To move ahead with any implementation plan with hopes for success, the school leaders felt that, “there has to be like a 20-year [assurance of] stability,” and “there has to be a driving force” to maintain the efforts and attention on the mission. They believed that St. Benedict’s continued success might be attributed to the fact that the very same monks who started the mission 44 years ago at St. Benedict’s are still the same ones currently in charge of the school.

For the Jamaican school, the school leaders were not confident that they could ensure such a long-term commitment to transform their school. A structurally significant difference for them is that the Jesuits who oversee the mission of the school “can leave at any time,” as they “do not take a vow of stability,” as in the case of the Benedictine monks. Thus, the Jamaican school leaders were concerned that any change in the overseers of the mission before the new model took hold, might disrupt the continuity of the program and threaten the sustainability of the transformation.

Furthermore, long-term commitment from the rest of the school community was also not assured. Faculty and staff could also leave at any time; and since the price and prospects for change would be daunting for members in the school community, they might choose to leave during the course of implementation. Without a long-term commitment from at least the overseers of the school to support the adaptation time of the model until it reached a stable point, it would pose a challenge to moving ahead with implementing the new model.

### **Cultural Barriers to Implementation**

The culture of the Jamaican school and the wider society, deeply held beliefs and values about schooling, as well as power relations in the Jamaican school community, create some barriers to the implementation of St. Benedict's school model in the Jamaican school context. As explained above, the cultural challenges are mediated by structural constraints and the actions of people in context, but the cultural features are foregrounded in this section. The primary cultural barriers to the implementation of St. Benedict's school model in the Jamaican school fall under four major themes: (1) giving students voice is not culturally normative; (2) a teaching culture that maintains power relationship over students; (3) teachers' beliefs and concerns that cause resistance to change; and (4) a homophobic Jamaican culture that hinders model adoption for all-male schools. See Appendix I for a summary of these findings with related participants' quotes.

**Giving students voice is not culturally normative.** The first cultural impediment to implementing the model is that giving students voice violates cultural norms. Other than the students, stakeholder groups were resistant to the strategies of St.



Benedict's model that empowered students to have voice and be included in the leadership of the school operations. In St. Benedict's process of developing their students' leadership capacity, the headmaster said that they want their students to learn that their voice makes a difference, and that it matters for them to speak up, as in doing so, they have the opportunity to change the way people think (Leahy, July 2015).

However, in the Jamaican school culture, student voice is not promoted. One administrator at the Ministry of Education explained, "Giving the students voice? That's a hard one in Jamaica. That is not a part of the Jamaican culture."

This cultural norm of not giving students' voice stems from the wider society in which children are to be seen but not heard. One of the school leaders explained how this plays out: "We do not listen well [to our students]. Adults pretend to know it all. And that affects how we engage them. When a student does something wrong, we have the answer before it's fully investigated." Furthermore, in the student-teacher relationship, "it is about teachers being the source of the answer." Essentially, there are no real opportunities to actively solicit and consider students' opinions and ideas. It is no surprise then, that with these paternalistic/maternalistic beliefs and practices in the Jamaican school culture, all stakeholders, with the exception of the students, were not in favor of this leadership development strategy employed in St. Benedict's school model. While educators and parents desired for their sons to develop as leaders, they were overall averse to St. Benedict's experiential approach to students' leadership development and the level of autonomy and voice given to students in the process.

The students at the Jamaican school were however, supportive of giving students voice. They shared their frustration with not being heard in their school community.

One student said, “On numerous occasions, students have good ideas, but they [the ideas] are usually turned down without valid reasons.” Even student leaders had similar complaints. They felt that they “got a badge” that identified them as a leader, but they had no “proper leadership development or empowerment.” The student leaders shared that they were given duties to perform that were mainly limited to the monitoring of students to adhere to school rules, but these responsibilities did not call on, or utilize their voice or ideas to meaningfully impact the school operations.

Many of these student leaders shared that they felt “frustrated” in their roles and felt “powerless” to make any changes, as the school administrators do not utilize their suggestions, and that they, the student leaders, need permission to get anything done. Another student leader expressed, “It is really, really annoying” to operate as they did. Students welcomed the chance to be treated with respect and valued as members in their school community, similar to the way they saw St. Benedict’s students being treated during convocation in the video clip (<http://www.sbp.org/60Minutes>) of the school. One student explained how inspired he felt when he saw how “teachers and headmaster are just there to watch and keep a consistent role of governance, and the students’ leaders are heard and not defied.”

Over their many years of developing their school model, St. Benedict’s overseers have seen that giving students voice and including their input in their school life has been a key strategy in helping them to develop their leadership capacity (SPB, 2015). Making this adjustment in Jamaican school culture would be a challenge.

**A teaching culture that maintains a power relationship over students.** The second cultural barrier to implementation of the model follows on from the Jamaican

cultural aversion to giving student voice. It relates to the power relationship between teachers and students, wherein teachers maintain their power over students. Given the authoritarian and top-down leadership style that is exercised in the Jamaican educational system, giving students voice posed a large problem for Jamaican educators. It meant granting students some power in their school life, which threatened teachers' power position over students. From stakeholders' responses, the beliefs about who has power and authority, and who exercises leadership are embedded in society, and such roles are not believed to be in the hands of students.

When students were asked how they thought that their teachers would react to this aspect of the model, most students felt that teachers would react negatively to the shift in power. One student said, "Some teachers would react angrily to students being on equal level of authority with them." Students shared that, "teachers are in charge of students" and that "teachers tell students what to do" and also "carry out disciplinary actions." Therefore, students felt that most teachers in their school would not favor having the student leaders empowered in their school, and "some [teachers] will be offended about the idea of students being their own leader" and "them [teachers] losing power over students."

St. Benedict's overseers believe that using a top-down leadership approach with students does not promote the development of students' personal responsibility and accountability for their learning. Their approach was to create a structure that allowed students to use their talents to lead themselves, but at the same time feel surrounded and supported by the rest of the school community. This more facilitative style with students was new to Jamaican stakeholders, and the educators were disquieted by the possibility of

loss of personal power over students that this approach suggested. Jamaican teachers were not used to being in the background in the school community, and hence were not sure about what their new role would entail and how they would function.

Teachers were particularly resistant to the idea of giving up their power position over students. One teacher expounded that “right now teachers have the power and control” of how things happen, and they do not want to give that up. Teachers want to maintain their autonomy to do things as “they want to” because it is suitable for them. One teacher stated candidly, “As teachers, we are afraid of letting go [of] that power.” Teachers acknowledged that they would be challenged to adjust to a model like St. Benedict’s, as “old habits die hard” and it would be “a big cultural shift for them.” For the teachers, adjusting to the idea of allowing the male students to take the lead and make decisions about the running of the school, which is the core of the St. Benedict’s model, is hard for them. They could not conceive the idea. They doubted that they could get to the point of “standing by and watch the boys make decisions,” and not “reprimand them” and “allow them to do something wrong and correct themselves.”

Even parents portrayed these cultural leadership ideologies. Parents demonstrated this with their concern regarding their sons being led or disciplined by another student. One parent said, “I don’t know if parents would mind, or approve of their child being disciplined by another child. Not sure if they [student leaders] will know how far to go.” Another parent affirmed her position and questioned how student leaders would be trained, “How will they be trained to lead? Not sure I want my son to be subjected to leadership of other boys, like in the freshmen orientation militaristic approach.” One

student confirmed that his parents would not like the idea either, and stated that they would be “angry or upset that a child is fully in charge of their child.”

Although many students liked the idea and benefits of student leadership, some students also had concerns about being led by another student. One student said he would feel “upset about being governed by a student in an inferior grade or inferior level.” Also, parents and teachers had some skepticism about the peer-tutoring strategy of the model, as the idea of students taking the role as teachers to their peers was seen as an anomaly. Ultimately, given the cultural norms, students were not seen as a group that should have power and exercise leadership.

Administrators at the MOE acknowledged that this shift for teachers to take on a facilitator role, which is inherent in the U.S. model, would be problematic for teachers. One administrator said, “Teachers have and want to maintain their power [over students]. Giving students shared leadership responsibility will topple their power; and they do not know how to manage this shift in their roles in the student-teacher relationship.” Thus, “Teachers would need to be properly and appropriately prepared for their role and significance in the new model.”

But even without the new role for teachers with St. Benedict’s model, the school leaders and the MOE administrators all believed that changes did need to occur in the teaching and learning process in order to meet new societal needs. One MOE administrator stated, “From what I see, the training of teachers will have to change, as we have to now see the teacher’s role as a facilitator, *the guide on the side, versus the sage on the stage.*” The MOE administrators shared that they hoped to move to this teaching philosophy in the future by rolling out a student-centered curriculum, and the St.

Benedict's model affirmed to them that the approach of putting students at the center of the educational process could be successful. They appreciated St. Benedict's educational process of creating a "partnership with the students" and admired the commitment of the school leaders in the way they "focus on, and attend to, the needs of their student," by "having the students at the center of whatever they were doing, including the leadership."

However, MOE administrators acknowledged that there are many challenges involved in changing the teaching culture, as "the teaching profession is an old profession" and teachers are "set in their ways." One administrator concluded that for teachers, "It's a large pool, whose members are products of the society and the current teacher training and philosophy. However, it is crucial to get this body retrained for the new era of education." Employing St. Benedict's student leadership model in Jamaican schools would mean major adjustment to how stakeholders' viewed and exercised leadership in the Jamaican school culture. It would require a change of perspective on who holds power and authority and who can exercise leadership in the school community. Such a shift in power ideologies poses a major challenge for stakeholders to support the new model.

**Teachers' beliefs and concerns that cause resistance to change.** The third cultural barrier to implementation of the model was related to resistance to change, particularly among the teachers, based on their beliefs about schooling and their role in it. To employ St. Benedict's school model was seen by teachers as a "big cultural shift." They were ambivalent about the prospects of implementing St. Benedict's model in their school. On one hand, they recognized and welcomed the benefits of the model for both themselves and the students (discussed in the first section above). But on the other hand,

they were concerned about what the change would require of them. They shared that, “it is hard to change” because “you will have to pull up this” then “do that” and sometimes one “does not have the energy.” They also feared the “upfront hard work” and the “teething pain in the transition period” from when the model is implemented to when it is in full force, which are unknown.

What added to teachers concerns about moving ahead with the new model were the perceived extra challenges due to their school size. They conjectured that it would require a lot more work to organize and manage their student population of 1450 male students than at St. Benedict’s with their student population of 550 male students. One teacher stated, “The problem is the size. It would be a lot more work in terms of the number of boys at our school.” Given that the teachers were already apprehensive of the work involved in changing the school model, the prospects of more work based on their larger student body was not appealing. One teacher explained that teachers were looking at the “process rather than the product,” and were concerned about “how they were going to get it all done.” Furthermore, since the model had proven effective with a student population of 550 male students, teachers had concerns about its workability and effectiveness with a larger student population. With no guarantees of success in using the model at their school, plus the major role they would play in the change, teachers shared that they were wary of any “fallback of responsibility on them if the St. Benedict’s strategies do not work.” Few teachers did not share these views about the prospect of changing the school model, and one teacher described the general teacher attitude as “negative and fear-based,” focusing more on “what could go wrong” than what could go right.

In the end, with all that would be involved in transforming the school model, most teachers felt that it was just too much. They asserted that for them to take on the St. Benedict's model, "it would need to be a well-put-together plan," detailing the changes that had to be made for all the players. They believed there had to be a solid plan addressing the significant changes to the school operations that would occur with the new model and more importantly, to support the changes that would be required of the teachers. One teacher stated, "I think it would be possible if we are directed how to do it."

A few teachers stated that they would be willing to support the change because they think that "it can be done," and "nothing beats a failure but a try." One teacher projected that only about 30% of the teachers would be willing; but believed that, "All teachers have to be on board given our culture." Another teacher agreed but felt that given the resistant teaching culture, "They would need a policy to force teachers, as there will be no willingness." The teacher offered an explanation as to why the change would not be willingly embraced by teachers and said, "Similarity is comfortable; even if it is not going anywhere. Once things are functional, it does not have to be excellent. One can get by as is." In addition, given that the start-up and roll out of the model would have growing pains, teachers would likely resist because they "don't want the extra work" and, they fear the "unknown." Other teachers were also candid about their difficulty with supporting the change after having worked this way for so many years. One teacher shared, "The hardest [group] to adapt are the teachers. Students are more willing than we are." The teacher further explained, "They [students] are more so able to go out on a limb and are more willing to accept change and try something new."



These resistant reactions by the teachers were also echoed by other stakeholders (as described in other areas of this section). Resistance to change is normative in the Jamaican school culture, which suggests that this might be one of the preliminary matters to address before moving ahead with any implementation plan. An administrator at the MOE acknowledged the need for a change in teachers' training to modernize the education system. One had said, "Teachers are the blocks to changing a school system. We need to modify teacher education." In reviewing and identifying the benefits of the St. Benedict's model for the local schools, the MOE administrator further stated, "The challenge now is to get the system to change. We don't have the cohort of teachers to get there. We now have to have teachers unlearn. So, where we have to start is at the teachers college, because we can't continue this way."

These teacher reactions to model adoption and stakeholders perspectives of the Jamaican teaching culture show how change in schools introduces new activities for teachers, and how the action of teachers can influence change efforts. Model adoption was dependent on the level of teachers' support.

**Homophobic Jamaican culture that hinders model adoption for all-male schools.** The final cultural barrier to implementing the model is the homophobic culture and its impact on Jamaican all-male schools. Many stakeholders believed that one of the reasons that St. Benedict's model cannot be adopted wholesale is that "homophobia is a big part of it," and that within the Jamaican school community, the "homophobic culture is the biggest issue to fix." The teachers all echoed similar sentiments. While all stakeholders, for the most part, felt positive about building a strong cohesive school community where persons were treated with love and respect, and where they felt that

they mattered, their concern was the potential for their efforts to be misconstrued and perhaps trigger homophobic reactions within the school community, or worse, with the public.

Stakeholders pointed out frankly that some expressions of care and love in the St. Benedict's school community would not be acceptable in the Jamaican culture. It was not the norm for Jamaican males to tell each other in public "I love you," or for them to "hug" as done among the students at St. Benedict's. Teachers did not think this show of affection between male students would go over well, and that there would be resistance because of how negatively this interaction among males is perceived in the Jamaican culture.

Students shared that showing care and love among male students in the Jamaican society can be seen as "being soft" and "you will be taken advantage of" as they deem it as a "sign of weakness" and that you were "grown up like a girl." Although the behaviors and words between males may be free of any homosexual inclinations or intentions, their public use of them could quickly lead to homosexual labeling in Jamaica that could cause aggressive reactions from others in the society. As such, the students said that although they would like to have great camaraderie and a strong sense of brotherhood among their peers, they were concerned about the school or themselves being associated with any homosexual labels. The idea of such a labeling was very uncomfortable for these male students being interviewed, as they did not want to experience the harsh consequences as had happened to some male students who were accused of being homosexual.

Some stakeholders felt that the general emphasis on creating a loving and caring school environment, plus the one-week overnight sleepover and communal showers included in the freshmen orientation could create enabling conditions for those with homosexual intentions. Parents and teachers feared that a few individuals might “take it as an opportunity to further their gay agenda.” One administrator at the Ministry of Education (MOE) agreed that these aspects of the model could raise homophobic concerns and pointed out that, “Because society is now more open to homosexuality (and there are more of these [homosexual] people), some persons may think this model may be seen as licensing of the homosexual behavior and therefore [the school is] giving opportunities for it to happen.” The interviewed students had the same fears and were also not keen with the overnighting feature in the orientation program. But nonetheless, they felt that the overnight sleepover was also a positive thing for new students as it could accelerate the bonding process between the freshmen, given the extended time they would spend together.

Given the strong homophobia in the Jamaican culture, stakeholders wanted to ensure that their school community did not get stuck with any gay stigma or be seen as “licensing homosexuality” as it could cause problems for the school community and possibly endanger the student population. A homophobic subculture was created in the school from the wider societal homophobic culture. This translation of societal culture into the school’s culture shows the interconnectedness of contexts, and how people make meaning of wider dimensions of social life and apply the meaning in sub-contexts. As such, the wider societal culture also has to be considered in school change efforts.

## Section Summary

The main challenges to adapting St. Benedict's model in the Jamaican context were due to the structural arrangements in the education system, the cultural beliefs and norms specifically in the school system, and more generally in the wider society and the interaction between them. Five main themes emerged as the structural barriers to the implementation of St. Benedict's school model in the Jamaican school: (1) lack of clarity in educational policies about who has the power and authority to bring about change; (2) how financial-structural arrangements influence the decision for model adoption; (3) the policies and practices that constrain getting the right teachers; (4) the high demand on school for sustained academic outcomes impact school structure; and (5) ability to sustain a long-term commitment to change (See Appendix H). These structural barriers were tied in many ways to the complex network of the education system and the ways in which they are interrelated. These findings revealed the power and political dynamics in a centralized and hierarchical education system; the variance in perspectives, meaning and actions of stakeholders; the importance of financial outlay and long-term commitment; the central role of teachers and what drives the school structure and organization, and how each of these created barriers to change.

The cultural barriers were also significant. Not only were these interrelated with the structural issues, but they also impacted stakeholders' views regarding whether or not the model was feasible in their context. These fell under four major themes: (1) giving students voice is not culturally normative; (2) a teaching culture that maintains power relationship over students (3) teachers' beliefs and concerns causing resistance to change; and (4) a homophobic Jamaican culture that hinders model adoption for all-male schools

(See Appendix I). The findings of these cultural challenges indicated the longevity of embedded cultural beliefs and practices, and how great the resistance can be to changing them, even at the cost of perceived benefits and opportunities for students.

In summary, the findings reveal that barriers to model implementation can arise from school culture and its relationship to the societal culture and context. Particularly impactful were the power tensions and micro-politics in the school community, especially in the teacher-student relations. The findings also highlighted the importance of having full buy-in from teachers for model adoption, given that they resist changes that challenge what they perceive as both their identity and relationship in the school community and their ideologies about teaching and schooling.

The challenges to model implementation are interrelated, although they were presented separately as structural barriers and cultural barriers. Structure, culture and agency all interact in the change process (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). Thus, as educators respond to change (take up their agency), there is a dynamic relationship between their actions and the cultural and structural features of the school and society, and from these interactions, barriers to model implementation are created.

### **Stakeholders' Proposals for Model Implementation in the Jamaican School**

Stakeholders' proposals did not directly address the structural and cultural challenges to model implementation discussed above, but were more focused on the practical and "doable" issues involved in adapting the model to their school operations. Understandably, there are no easy answers or ready solutions to these complex and interrelated challenges to implementing the model, especially given their historical, cultural, economical and political roots. But what seems hopeful is that stakeholders are

aware of and acknowledge the challenges in their educational system. Certainly, finding and moving ahead with a solution for the major barriers, such as changing the way teachers are being trained, which was suggested by one MOE administrator, is a huge endeavor by itself. Because model adoption could get stalled with the enormity of attempting to address some of the intricate challenges at the start, stakeholders took a pragmatic approach and proposed ways that they could proceed with implementing some of the aspects of the model - the ones they thought would give them some added value to what they currently have in place.

Specifically, stakeholders' proposals entailed employing selected aspects of the model, and applying the strategies in ways that they felt would work best for their school structure and educational mandates, and which would maintain the cultural norms, practices and community relations that were important to them. They asserted that things did not have to be done exactly as it was done at St. Benedict's, but the key was getting the same effects and outcomes. Outlined below are their various proposals offered by the participants in this study for implementation.

### **Stakeholders' Proposals for Implementation**

Stakeholders held many similar views about implementing the St. Benedict's model in their school and the aspects that they would like to include. Their suggestions were: (1) establish ground rules for implementation; (2) allow schools to take ownership of model implementation; (3) get buy-in from school community; and (4) determine the aspects of the model to implement. See Appendix J and K for a summary of these findings with related participants' quotes.

**Establish ground rules for implementation.** There was overall agreement among all stakeholders that there would not be a wholesale embrace of the St. Benedict's model; meaning that not all the strategies would be taken up exactly as done at St. Benedict's. The words of one of the school leaders reflected the opinions of the stakeholders: "What would have to happen is that we have to modify [the model] to suit our own unique situation. We could not adopt it wholesale." He stated that, "not one size fit all" and "we would have to look at our own unique situation, and modify what needs to be modified for our socio-cultural heritage and background. That's a big part of it."

The stakeholders at the school also felt that it was important to start out the implementation process on a "small manageable scale," with only a few components of the model. This way, the school community could see and ascertain how things are working out, and based on the progress, make decisions regarding the next move. One of the administrators at the MOE suggested that in implementing the model, it was best to "see what is happening on the ground, and see how it will fit in." He thought it important to "take a gradual approach" and "phase it in" and proposed that a "pilot" approach be undertaken.

Another implementation ground rule for the school was to begin the new program with an entirely new cohort of students in Grade 7, and then follow with successive cohorts. One school leader asserted, "For me it starts from first form, so it is an attitude shift starting from an early age." Since the change in the school model would mean a totally new way of operating in the school community, stakeholders thought it was more feasible to mold new incoming Grade 7 students in the "right way forward" from the onset, rather than attempt to change the students who were already in the system.

Another school leader shared, “ Best to start with the more pliable, manageable boys.” One student suggested: “Start with first form freshmen [Grade 7 students], training them about the rules, regulations and systems of the school, so they can get used to it. So by the time the student governance is in place, they know how to play the right part in their school body.” The outlook was that “in 3 to 4 years you would have covered the whole school,” and by then, the entire student population would only comprise students of the new school model.

**Allow schools to take ownership of model implementation.** The administrators at the Ministry of Education (MOE) were all in agreement that the model implementation decision rested with the school's leadership team, and that the MOE would play a supporting role (discussed in section 2 above). The MOE administrators felt that it was the role of the school leaders to set the new direction of the school and manage it. One asserted, “Once the management team of the school buys into this new philosophy [St. Benedict’s model], then it starts there.” The administrator offered that if the school preferred for the MOE to approve the implementation of the model, then the school would need to “take the affirmative approach and come up with the plan, and then ask the MOE to approve it.”

Although the school leaders were somewhat ambivalent, the teachers preferred for the school leaders to take the lead in the model implementation decision and not the MOE, “as that would take forever.” Furthermore, they did not think the MOE should “tell them how to run their school,” as they believed that, while the MOE provides the basic guidelines, the onus is on the school to create its own culture.



In accepting the responsibility to decide on the model implementation, the school leaders felt it an important first step to have the school administrators visit St. Benedict's to see the model in action. They believed that "they would need to actually see and experience St. Benedict's" by visiting the school to "know and understand" what the model was about. The stance was that members of the school's administrative team, such as the school board chair, the principal and the administrative staff should make the visit, as "they are the ones that know how things really work, and know what's negotiable and what's non-negotiable for the school." In their visit to St. Benedict's, they would assess the strategies in action to determine what would be acceptable and work for their school, seeking to answer for themselves questions like: "Are there things that we can do, and things we cannot do [at our school]?" Based on the school administrator's review, they could make a clear decision on whether or not to go ahead with the model.

The next important factor for the school leaders regarding model implementation was having the right people in place to set-up, oversee, drive and maintain the new strategies of the school model. There were two roles the leaders believed critical as part of the transformation process: the Principal and the Dean of Students. One reason is that in the Jamaican education system, principal appointments are long-term. Therefore, it was very important to have the "right principal" who "buys into the desired school model." They pointed out that the principal's role carries a lot of weight and influence in Jamaican schools, hence the principal's buy-in for the model is critical; otherwise, it was "not going to happen."

The teachers agreed that the principal was a critical player in moving ahead with the implementation of the new model as, "it is the principal who has the greatest

influence and the final say.” However, one MOE administrator added to the viewpoint on the significance of the principal and said, “It [the implementation of the new school model] must be in the hands of the leadership team. The principal is only one voice. One voice cannot do it. Everybody must be singing the same song.”

The second important role that the school leaders felt important to be in place as part of the transformation process was a Dean of Students. This would require a new permanent position on the leadership team to oversee the project implementation, as well as lead the program onwards for students’ leadership development. The school board chair stated that the person in this role would be the central key person to pull the implementation plan all together; and that “The Dean of Students would be the person working with teachers and students and other stakeholders.” The principal offered that the Dean of Students could be partnered with the Campus Minister, whose role focuses on the formation of character and the promotion of the faith and justice in the school community. Together these two persons could head the project team for implementation of the model, and choose to call on others for help, including parents who have talents or resources to support the project. The principal said, “I think those two would work”, and that they should be “trained first.” The school leaders felt that once the leadership team was on board and in place, and they had reviewed the model and agreed on the new way forward, they would reach out to the rest of the school community for their input in planning the implementation.

**Get buy-in from the school community.** The school leaders stated that once their leadership team was on board with implementing the St. Benedict’s school model in their school, the next move would be to talk with the teachers, then the students. One

school leader explained, “I think I would talk to the teachers first to see how they would envision it.” He would especially want to find out from the teachers: “What they would envision as the leadership responsibility to give to the students.” Using this strategy with the teachers seemed to be consistent with the direction teachers preferred, which was a “consultative and cooperative approach” from the school leaders regarding the model implementation. But even so, some teachers shared that they would take on the model once they were “getting the decision from the top” and had the assurance that there would be “consistency across the board.” One teacher stated that even though there would be naysayers, “Once the decision is made by the top, they [the teachers] would have to do it.” This conforming style of the teachers in response to the decision of the management team was seemingly a norm, as one MOE administrator clarified, “The teachers would fall in line because they have the senior management team leading the group.”

Buy-in from both students and parents were also seen as important by school leaders. To get students’ buy-in for the model, the school leaders stated that they would meet with the students after they have heard fully from the teachers: “I would go to the students, to dialogue with them to figure out what they want.” He said that after he met with both groups, he would “create a little community” with teachers and students and try to “work it out” with them, based on the vision and the needs identified by each group. With regards to parents, the school leaders acknowledged that parents would be key players in the change process, as some are “reluctant to try anything new” and are major influencers in their sons’ lives. The principal was emphatic about the need to “socialize the parents first” to help them understand their role and the benefits of the new strategies.

To help with winning over stakeholders to the new model, one MOE administrator offered that “presentation was the key,” and that the strategy to use when presenting (and implementing) the model was to help people make connections to how it would work locally. She shared, “State, how it [the model] can work, what part of it now exists, and how we can infuse it.” For example, she noted that the structure of the St. Benedict’s school model was based on the Boy Scouts leadership principles, and, in Jamaica, the Cadet Corp program offered a similar model that could be used as the local reference for stakeholders, given that parents were familiar with the Cadet system and some had their sons enrolled. Plus, she pointed out, “These are the boys who have turned out to be great leaders.” Therefore, she offered, “Show the similarity [of St. Benedict’s school model] with the cadet system.” She felt that a relatable approach to stakeholders would “work better in terms of their receptiveness,” as it would help minimize the sense of being overwhelmed that stakeholders may experience from the idea of a wholesale system change.

In moving forward with the implementation process, the school board chair stated that he wanted an organic process rather than one carried out “in a bubble.” He said, “We have to keep it real” so that the school remained “responsive to the needs of the school community.” The collective approach to implementation was also appealing to other stakeholders. Teachers agreed that the process should include all voices, including students, in determining the way forward. The MOE administrators acknowledged that the work for the leadership team could be overwhelming and thus implementing the St. Benedict’s model should be done “through partnership with the MOE, and all stakeholders.”

**Determine the aspects of the model to implement.** Most stakeholders felt that it was more “doable” to “adapt the model to their current structures and systems.” They asserted that they “had a basic framework in place at their school,” and they could apply “certain aspects of the model to improve what they already had.” Furthermore, given the differences in school setting and size between their school and St. Benedict’s, stakeholders pointed out that they would still need to configure the model in different ways that would best fit their school’s specifications.

The aspects of St. Benedict’s model that stakeholders considered as most important for implementation in their school were: (1) the group system with the leadership structure to connect students and organize them to lead themselves; (2) the freshman orientation structure as a vehicle for getting new students in line with the new school model; (3) the practice of reporting daily attendance to account for all students; (4) focusing on the 3 A’s (academics, attitude and activity) to enhance students’ school engagement; (5) adopting a balanced approach to student leadership development; (6) building of a sense of brotherhood to enhance student cohesion and school spirit; and (7) including non-academic courses and activities to support a more holistic development of students. See Appendix K for a summary of these findings with participants’ quotes.

***The group system with leadership structure.*** Stakeholders felt that the group system organized within a leadership structure was a perfect way to bring together their large community of 1450 male students. They were taken by this innovative strategy that they could employ to enhance and support students’ academics, behavior and school involvement, plus build community and school spirit. Stakeholders shared that they already had group systems and leadership structures at their school. An administrator

from the MOE shared, “A grouping system is not a new idea. It already exists in the schools.” However, they were designed and used differently, and did not connect the student body. Instead of creating anew, stakeholders proposed two options for implementing St. Benedict’s group system and leadership structure into their existing arrangements.

One option was to apply the strategies within the current sports house system in the school, which is made up of four large groups of students across grade levels and class. All stakeholders thought their house system was a possible option to implement St. Benedict’s group system as it had the same basic structure. One MOE administrator proposed, “We can work this St. Benedict’s strategy through the sports housing system, as house groups are a mixture of students across school years and forms. So that’s an opportunity.”

Option two was most popular among stakeholders. This option was to revamp the two student leadership structures they had in their school, and redesign it as one structure that would tie in the rest of the student population with the student leaders. The principal explained “There are already leadership structures in our school” that consist of a “head-boy system and a student council body,” as well as “there are student leaders for each grade and class.” He further explained, “the difference is that we do not have a reporting structure” that connects the leaders or students. He stated that the leadership structure is “disjointed” and “there is no reporting upwards.” In his view, to adapt to the group system and student leadership structure used by St. Benedict’s, they just needed to “create a reporting structure” into what they already have in place.

The students felt that the way in which their two leadership structures currently functioned was not supportive of building cohesion within the student body. In the students' opinion, their leadership bodies worked against each other, with the head-boy system more skewed to "policing students," while the student council body "looks out for the students." To move forward, the Jamaican students believed that their two leadership structures should be "combined" to form "one leadership structure," and be "honed" to function as St. Benedict's group system and leadership structure. The students also proposed that student leaders roles should be "amplified" and they should "be given more responsibility and ability to gain respect." Furthermore, they stated that the "student leaders will need training" to learn how to carry out their roles to promote unity, and it will be "good for their leadership and personal development." The students asserted that generally, the student population would be happier with this new student leadership approach as they presumed that "policing would stop," and there might be more of a "supportive" attitude from both student leaders and teachers towards students.

***The freshman orientation program.*** The important thing for stakeholders in specifically using the freshmen orientation program was to employ some of St. Benedict's already proven strategies to get students aligned with the new school philosophies of student leadership and building brotherhood and community. For stakeholders, the freshmen orientation program was an important part of their change process, as it would be the vehicle through which incoming Grade 7 students would be oriented to the new school model. Although their school already had an orientation program in place for new students, stakeholders at the school acknowledged that it would have to be revised to reflect the structure and operations of the new school model.

Important elements of St. Benedict's freshman orientation program that the Jamaican stakeholders favored included: having student leaders help with leading the orientation program and training new students about the new school approach; and having a boot camp segment with the help of the Cadet Force Corp in Jamaica (similar to the boot camp done by the Naval Academy for St. Benedict's freshmen during orientation). Regarding the militaristic training routines in the boot camp, some parents felt that it would be helpful for some of the male students who may "need it" to get focused on school, and some students thought it was a good way to "instill both physical and mental discipline" with the "newbies."

*Reporting daily attendance.* All stakeholders wanted this feature of St. Benedict's model implemented because they believed that taking attendance would ensure that the male students turned up for school, and on time. In addition it would be helpful in bringing the entire school community closer, as it entailed student leaders accounting for every student, every day. To implement the daily attendance taking of their large student population, stakeholders did not believe it was possible to go about it the same way as St. Benedict's with their entire school community. Stakeholders felt that it was more feasible for them to carry it out at the class level rather than the community level.

Teachers suggested fitting this practice into their daily form-time at 7:45am. They offered that the attendance reporting at the class level could still be given the "St. Benedict's flavor" by transforming what they do into an "exciting process" for their students to "look forward to." Even though it might seem more exciting to take attendance with the entire school community, teachers felt that it was easier to work with



male students in small groups in order to have and maintain control. The teachers offered that a larger assembly of students could be considered later on when the community bond gets stronger and “the boys know what is expected of them on these occasions.”

***Focusing on the 3 A’s.*** Stakeholders really liked that the focus of groups would be on students working together and supporting each other to achieve their highest scores on the 3 A’s (academics, attitude, activity). They believed that the shift from the individual to the collective approach for gains and success in these important schooling areas could potentially improve their students’ outcomes. Therefore, scheduling periods as done at St. Benedict’s to bring the groups together on these objectives, would be something they would explore. Teachers offered that their form-time could be used up more efficiently and could be assigned “for group meetings to help create cohesion among students.”

***Balanced approach to student leadership development.*** The student leadership element of St. Benedict’s model entails empowering students and including them in the leadership of the school. At St. Benedict’s, student leaders were given the responsibility and the autonomy to make decisions and run the school operations, and were supported by the faculty and school administrators as they carried out their leadership roles. Although empowering students and giving them voice were central features of the St. Benedict’s school model, and deemed critical for their students’ leadership development, there were mixed views among the Jamaican stakeholders about taking on these component. For the Jamaican students, they felt that having autonomy and voice in school would help them with not only “developing their leadership capacity,” but also with “building their character.” Furthermore it would help them to become more “self

confident” and “comfortable with themselves.” But because this kind of student leadership development went against cultural norms in Jamaica, (as discussed in section two above), some Jamaican stakeholders were not fully in favor of it.

The school leaders thought that the best approach to introduce the idea of including students in the leadership of their school was to “negotiate” with teachers and see how best to navigate this cultural challenge of giving students voice and power. The school leaders offered that they would have to find a “balanced approach” for facilitating both academic and leadership development for their students. But they did not envision that they would employ the same level of student empowerment as St. Benedict’s.

***Building of a sense of brotherhood.*** The stakeholders were all for building community and brotherhood. But with the high level of homophobia in the Jamaican culture, they sought flexibility in shaping these expressions according to their cultural norms. For example, they offered that instead of students “hugging and telling each other they love them,” they would rather “shake hands.” In addition, most stakeholders did not favor the overnight segment of the freshmen orientation program. This was due to their apprehensions about the risks to the freshmen by anyone with any homosexual agenda, or even the possible irrational labeling that could occur from the event. They did not want to put members of the school community at risk from misinterpretation and negative reactions from persons within the school community or from the wider society.

***Including non-academic courses and activities.*** At St. Benedict’s, the 11-month school year calendar was considered a core strategy that contributed to preparing their students for a more successful life. This extension of the school year allowed the inclusion of activities such as: leadership training for student leaders, a freshmen

orientation program, freshmen end-of-year hike up the Appalachian trail, and non-academic courses for their students. Although Jamaican stakeholders thought it would be beneficial for the male students to be engaged in these ways, they shared that it would be problematic to implement a longer school year, as there were many structural and cultural challenges.

Most teachers felt that the extended school year “was not necessary,” that in addition to adding a week or two prior to the start of the school year for freshman orientation, all the other extra activities could be “structured” into their current nine-month calendar year. They shared that “time is there [available],” in the 9-month calendar, but teachers need to “make it efficient.” When asked how that could be achieved, they proposed that sessions for leadership training and non-academic subjects could be structured into the “form-time” and the “student activity period” that is scheduled each week and are “mostly a free for all.” One teacher pushed back on the idea of structuring extra activities during the 9-month school year because they are currently stressed with meeting academic deadlines. This teacher felt that adding extra time to the school year would be necessary, but that teachers would also have to be paid for the extra time.

### **Section Summary**

Stakeholders’ proposals were directed mostly at addressing the practical issues of model implementation that were within their locus of control. Proposals entailed preliminary activities to model adoption in the local school, and suggestions as to how to adapt preferred components of the model in ways to derive the most benefits. Their suggestions on ways to go about model implementation were to: (1) establish ground

rules for implementation; (2) allow schools to take ownership of model implementation; (3) get buy-in from school community; and (4) determine the aspects of the model to implement (See Appendix J and K). Although stakeholders' proposals did not specifically address the structural and cultural challenges to St. Benedict's model adoption, the structural and cultural challenges discussed previously will undoubtedly need to be addressed in order for most of the stakeholders' implementation proposals to be advanced.

The findings indicate that support for a new school model is enhanced when stakeholders can fit favored aspects of the new model in their pre-existing systems. Also shown by the revelations, is that stakeholders were the experts of their local context and were able to offer many suggestions about how they could implement aspects of St. Benedict's model in their school. These findings indicate how valuable stakeholders' input and support are in bringing about major changes in their school community.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of this qualitative study on the feasibility of transferring and adapting a student leadership educational model, developed in the U.S., to high schools in Jamaica. The findings report the perceptions of Jamaican stakeholders in the education field regarding the different aspects of the model that they supported and felt would improve male students' education in Jamaica. The chapter included the benefits, challenges and modifications necessary to implement such a model in Jamaica, as well as the local adaptations that would be necessary for this model to contextually fit and be successful in Jamaican schools. See Appendix D, E, F, G, H, I, J and K for summaries of these findings, along with related quotes from stakeholder groups.

In summary, the findings revealed that the stakeholders all approved of the new educational model and thought it very beneficial to the educational experience of students, and to improving the outcomes for their male student population. However, despite their positive attitude toward the St. Benedict's model, stakeholders identified various barriers to its implementation. Consequently, they made proposals on ways to implement elements of the model to make it work within their context. These findings underlined the complexity of transferring a packaged model to a school that is contextually different in structure, culture, setting and size from the original school. It shows the difficulties for making change happen, especially when it would require members in the school community to change the way they normally think and act.

Having discussed the major benefits, challenges, and modifications to implementing the new educational model in Jamaica, chapter five includes a review of the findings, as well as their implications for using a student leadership educational model to educate high school male students in Jamaican schools. It also examines what lessons can be learned from this case regarding the transfer and general scaling up process of educational models from the U.S. context to another context.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study in three main sections. The first section provides a brief review of the purpose of the study and its findings. The second section offers an interpretive discussion of the findings of the study (Jamaican stakeholders' perceived benefits and challenges of implementing St. Benedict's model in the Jamaican school context; stakeholders' proposed modifications of the model; and lessons learned about the transferability and scaling-up of an externally developed model in a new context). The third section addresses the study's major implications (contributions, limitations, and future considerations).

#### **Brief Review of the Purpose of the Study and the Findings**

This study explored the transferability of St. Benedict's student leadership educational model to the Jamaican school context and its potential to enhance the educational outcomes of Jamaican high school male students based on the perceptions of significant stakeholders (see Appendix A for a diagram of St. Benedict's model). This is the first study to investigate the transference of an educational model aimed at addressing the academic and social issues of Jamaican high school male students. Previous efforts to address the academic underperformance and underachievement of Jamaican male students have been unsuccessful. One major initiative implemented in 2013 to address the problem of high school male students' underachievement in Jamaica focused on an entrepreneurial-oriented educational program to engage male students in their school life and to provide them with the skills to set up their own businesses (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013; Universal Management Group, 2013). To date, no data has been

reported to indicate the impact of this entrepreneurial initiative on the academic results of the male students at any of the 15 participating high schools.

This research also aimed at understanding how best to help educate Jamaican male students, and asks specifically what aspects of the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model implemented in the U.S. are beneficial and transferrable to an all-male high school in Jamaica, and what changes to the model would be necessary. This research also helps to address the larger question regarding the benefits as well as the challenges of adopting and adapting an educationally successful program experienced in one context to another context - a process of transference, referred to more commonly as "scaling up" (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002).

While the Jamaican school is similar in some respects to St. Benedict's (i.e., it is a Catholic school located in the inner city, serves an all male population, students are at risk, and share an African ethnicity albeit with a different history), it is decidedly different in terms of school size, ethos, culture, and structural arrangement. In addition, the Jamaican school is public and St. Benedict's is private, the educational systems are very different (British versus American), and each is embedded in a very different national context (See Appendix B).

The following research questions guided this study:

5. What aspects of the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model are perceived by Jamaican stakeholders as potentially beneficial in helping to improve the education of Jamaican high school male students?

6. What are the risks and challenges to implementing the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model in Jamaican schools as perceived by Jamaican stakeholders?
7. What modifications to the St. Benedict's student leadership educational model are needed for successful adaptation in Jamaican schools as perceived by Jamaican stakeholders?
8. What can we learn from key stakeholders in Jamaica about the general process of scaling up successful educational reform models designed to support high school male students when the process requires the transferability of education from a U.S. context to a Jamaican context?

To answer these research questions, data was collected using interviews and focus groups conducted with Jamaican stakeholders at the Jamaican school, and at the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) (see Appendix C for stakeholders' demographics). This data include stakeholders' reactions to a video clip (<http://www.sbp.org/60Minutes>) illustrating the St. Benedict's school model, and their responses to the interview questions. The interview questions were focused on finding out what Jamaican stakeholders liked about the St. Benedict's school model, their perceptions of the benefits and opportunities, and the challenges and risks they saw related to possible implementation or adaptation of the model in their school.

The findings of the study revealed that despite their high enthusiasm for the U.S. school model, as the realities of what it would take to implement it came to light, Jamaican stakeholders' support for model implementation in their context did not match their enthusiasm (See Appendix D, E, F, G, H and I). Specifically, they stated that they



wanted many of the outcomes evident in the St. Benedict's model, but pointed out that the model would not work in their context without modifications that reflected Jamaican culture and educational structures. Their modification proposals indicated that they would prefer a partial implementation of the St. Benedict's model that excluded some of its core aspects (See Appendix J and K). These exclusions and suggested modifications raise questions about whether the model is transferable and whether the modified version of the model can achieve the same successful educational outcomes as those experienced by St. Benedict's.

In addition to contributing specifically to our understanding of the specific attitudes of Jamaican stakeholders regarding the benefits and challenges of the St. Benedict's model, this study contributes more generally to our knowledge regarding the transferability of educational reform models and the body of research on scaling up educational reform (See Appendix L). Specifically, it exposes the reasons why transferability requires that the original educational model, in this case the U.S. educational model, be crafted to respond to the contextual, structural, cultural and educational needs of the new Jamaican context. The next section discusses the findings of this study in detail in three parts: (1) benefits and challenges of implementing the model; (2) Jamaican revised model: accommodation without full implementation; and (3) lessons learned regarding the general scaling up and transferability of U.S. educational reform models in Jamaica.

### **Benefits and Challenges of Implementing the Model**

Chapter four findings detailed Jamaican stakeholders' reactions to St. Benedict's student leadership educational model, presenting their positive reactions, as well as their

resistances and hindrances to implementing the model. The discussion below infers from stakeholders' reactions to the model, and offers some insights and new understanding of the underlying issues regarding the academic plight of Jamaican high school male students, and the possibilities that St. Benedict's model might offer for enhancing their educational outcomes. Discussed are the major benefits and opportunities of the model as perceived by stakeholders, and the relevant aspects of the model they support, which include the group system structure, the 3 A's, daily attendance-taking, student leadership development and the non-academic course offerings. Also discussed are stakeholders' resistances and perceived challenges to implementing the model, which primarily comprise structural barriers, including financial challenges, lack of operational freedom, need for qualified teachers, lack of commitment to long-term change and ambiguity regarding authority; plus cultural barriers, including educational ideologies, leadership role of students and societal homophobia.

### **Benefits of the Model for Jamaican Male Students**

One goal of the study was to obtain the perceptions of stakeholders about the relevance of St. Benedict's model to address the academic and social issues of Jamaican high school male students. The relevance of the model to Jamaican male students was evidenced in the high level of enthusiasm and optimism across the board from all stakeholder groups for the model (See Appendix D and E). The broad appeal and stakeholders' ascription of the model as "ideal," and as one that they would want in their school, is a testament to the model's relevance and responsiveness to stakeholders' aspirations for their students and school. Stakeholders were inspired by St. Benedict's successful holistic approach to education that placed their male students at the center of

the school experience, and one that reflected a positive and strong school community and spirit. Furthermore, with a more recent governmental focus on building the leadership capacity of citizens, and for schools to integrate effective strategies to accomplish this with their students, stakeholders were also particularly attracted to the model's emphasis on building students' leadership capacity.

The very positive reactions of the Jamaican stakeholders indicated that the model resonated with them, and that it was at some level responsive to the various stakeholder groups' needs (See Appendix D). Since stakeholders' perspectives and interpretation of the model differ based on their individuality, varying positions and relationships in the school community, each group recognized unique benefits and opportunities (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). Students thought the model provided them a way to get involved and be empowered in their school life to develop confidence and leadership skills. Teachers saw the model as offering them the freedom to focus more on teaching, rather than on discipline. Parents saw the model as an opportunity for their sons to become more disciplined and responsible. School leaders saw the model as a way to create a caring, supportive and harmonious school community. The MOE administrators saw the model as a way to develop model citizens and future leaders. The fact that the model resonated strongly with each stakeholder group is a positive indicator for support of the model as a whole, and their comments suggest that it could be adopted and applied in some form in Jamaican schools.

The most encouraging reaction in support of the model was the sanctioning of it by the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) who described it as a "great model," and offered their approval for schools to go ahead to use it as they deemed possible. A timely

coincidence was that the student-orientation of the new model aligned with the MOE's current vision and plans of launching a student-centered curriculum in the Jamaican school system (Ministry of Education, 2016b, 2017b). This pedagogical shift from teacher to student focus suggests that future attempts to scale-up similar student-centered educational models, including the St. Benedict's model, is likely to be greeted positively. Furthermore, implementing a model that is endorsed by the MOE could promote support of the model at the school level.

Regarding the aspects of the model itself, stakeholders believed that the strategies of St. Benedict's model (Appendix A) were relevant to enhancing their male students' educational experience and outcomes in meaningful ways (See Appendix G). This sentiment was primarily based on the premise that the male students at St. Benedict's were not only ethnically similar to Jamaican male students, but also that St. Benedict's students deal with similar educational struggles, emotional distress and life circumstances as the Jamaican male students. Both student populations were at risk for lower academics due to issues such as having parents with low socioeconomic status, poor parenting and living conditions, exposure to gang violence and crime, and so on. Because St. Benedict's leaders were able to aptly assess their students' needs and put structures in place to enable them to achieve success, Jamaican stakeholders therefore reasoned that the strategies could have a similar impact on their students. Recognizing the similarities between their male student challenges and those of St. Benedict's encouraged Jamaican stakeholders' support for the new model, as they saw its applicability to also potentially helping their male students.

**Support for group system structure.** Jamaican stakeholders at the school gravitated towards the aspects of St. Benedict's model that they felt would be most beneficial to them and which were within the scope to implement at their school level (See Appendix G and K). One main aspect of St. Benedict's model that fit their criteria was the group system structure, which entails placing students in small groups that are connected by group leaders in a hierarchical leadership structure. This group system structure is the core configuration of the St. Benedict's model (Appendix A), and is the framework that facilitates student leadership and the other strategies, and functions as a vehicle to build and foster community, cohesion, brotherhood and a sense of belonging among their students (SBP, 2015). The group system was created by St. Benedict's leaders based on their fundamental principle of establishing connectedness among their student population that would enable their students to feel connected to the school community. The St. Benedict's leaders asserted that connectedness was important to their students due to the high level of emotional stress and disconnectedness that many of them experience, which the leaders believed was in the way of their students' learning and academic prospects.

St. Benedict's leaders assertion about the value of school connectedness to their students' academic success aligns with the findings of a study done by the World Bank on youth at risk in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cunningham, 2008). The study states that a lack of connectedness to school is associated with a variety of risky behaviors in youth, such as repetition of school grades, dropping-out of school, substance abuse, gang membership and activity, violence, and substance abuse, which all lead to poor educational outcomes. In light of these findings, and the fact that gang related crime

and violence perpetrated by Jamaican male adolescents are still chronic problems in Jamaica (Harriot & Jones 2016), it seems opportune for Jamaican stakeholders to take on strategies such as St. Benedict's group system structure that facilitate their students' connectedness to school.

**Support for 3 A's.** To ensure productive and constructive focus for the interactions within their student groups, Jamaican stakeholders felt that applying St. Benedict's 3 A's strategy (focusing on academics, school attitude and activities) with their student groups would be ideal. Since students' academic achievement, school attitude and involvement in activities were major foci in the Jamaican schooling process, having students support each other in these areas within their groups was perceived by stakeholders as an optimal opportunity for enhancing student relations, promoting cohesion and simultaneously advancing students' output in these central schooling elements of the 3 A's.

**Support for daily attendance taking.** To further elevate group unity, stakeholders wanted to incorporate St. Benedict's daily attendance reporting strategy in the student group structure, where students would be accounting for each other on a daily basis. The projected positive impact on students' academics, school attitude and activities, and the ripple effect in the rest of the school community of applying these preferred strategies in their school motivated stakeholders to consider partial adaptation, given that full-scale adoption was not a realistic option.

While stakeholders' support for the three strategies of St. Benedict's model - the group system leadership structure, focusing on the 3 A's and conducting daily attendance reporting - may appear insufficient to produce significant change in their students and

school life, in fact, each strategy is comprehensive and impactful, and calls for very involved planning and implementation, and also follow-up to work out the kinks (SBP, 2015). Effective assimilation of these strategies into the Jamaican school operations might facilitate the decision to incorporate St. Benedict's freshmen orientation. It would be necessary to familiarize and acclimatize incoming students with these new and atypical strategies for Jamaican schools, using St. Benedict's freshmen orientation program that is already designed to carry out this type of student training.

To be sure, stakeholders' various ideas on how to implement these strategies and accommodate them in their existing systems indicate their desire to bring about these changes in their school. As Fullan (2007) has pointed out, when reform strategies affirm stakeholders' strong affinity for the perceived benefits, stakeholders are more willing to explore ways to implement the strategies and are more open to adapting them to their local settings.

**Support for student leadership development.** Another strategy that Jamaican stakeholders thought would be valuable to their students overall development was how St. Benedict's went about developing their students' leadership capacity. Having students learn about leadership, and simultaneously develop their leadership skills and abilities by running the school and taking on real responsibilities in the school operations, will undoubtedly endow students with many skills that are far reaching. As the experiential design to leadership development is the prominent feature of St. Benedict's model, and held by St. Benedict's leaders as the aspect that contributes most to their students' success, it piqued the interest of the Jamaican stakeholders. St. Benedict's

headmaster, Fr. Leahy boasts, “Not everybody can teach leadership or build community the way we do it,” (Leahy, 2015).

On one level, this strategy incited various levels of intrigue and excitement among Jamaican stakeholders, but on another level, it invoked varying concerns and perspectives about how it could be embraced in their local setting. Although Jamaican students were very keen on the idea, Jamaican educators were much less enthused due to many cultural and structural reasons (discussed in the next section on challenges) and were particularly concerned that it would unduly distract students from more academic endeavors. As previous research on the transferability of reform models has shown, when reform strategies entail major structural and cultural adjustments, support for stakeholders taking on these strategies in their school is lowered (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002).

Jamaican students’ keenness to take on this experiential student leadership aspect of St. Benedict’s model reveals their interest in expanding their realm of learning and development beyond the traditional school foci. Studies on gender learning differences indicate that male students have a strong preference for experiential school strategies, and will respond to teaching methodologies that involve movement, relevance and novelty, which are characteristic of St. Benedict’s student leadership strategies (Gurian, 2010; Gurian, & Stevens, 2005; Jantz, 2016; Sax, 2009).

Another reason for the students’ attraction to this particular leadership experience may be their interpretation of the constructed Jamaican male identity and how men are to function in society. Their notion of maleness aligns with the Jamaican male gender identity as dominant, and in that, leadership is a male domain (Figueroa, 2000; Parry, 1996). They see the student leadership strategies as giving them the opportunity to “feel



like men,” which is demonstrated by them being more autonomous, actively in charge and making important decisions in the school. What is highlighted here is a mismatch between the constructed Jamaican male identity and the ways that students are forced to function in their typical schooling process, which entails them being more constrained and passive, operating more under adult directives; all of which they resent to some degree. In his research, Figueroa (2010) stated that the Jamaican education system is one that “demands passivity, conformity and diligence” for students to do well, and these qualities are “more in tune with the hegemonic construction of femininity” (p. 67). Furthermore, the “clash” between the construction of masculinity and this more feminine ethos of the Jamaican education system is one of the underlying problems for the underperformance and underparticipation of Jamaican male students in high school (Chevannes, 2002; Clarke, 2005; Figueroa, 2010, p. 67; Parry, 1997).

To be clear, the Jamaican educators and parents desire that their students be developed as good leaders and acknowledge the effectiveness of St. Benedict’s strategies. Nonetheless, based upon the local Jamaican contextual conditions, which support a traditional teacher-centered approach, along with an educational culture that privileges academic success, the educators felt it was wiser to take a “balanced approach” to developing their students’ leadership abilities. Surely, St. Benedict’s leaders would argue that it is through students exercising real leadership in a supportive community that they truly learn about discipline, responsibility and accountability, and which leads to student’s improved academics. Nonetheless, while Jamaican educators’ overall thrust was also indeed to have their male students develop more discipline, responsibility and accountability, they defaulted to using their traditional instructional approach. Jamaican

stakeholders' emphasis on these three qualities signifies what they deem as important elements for students to do well in their school. And doing well in this case is not measured by students' leadership abilities, but by how many passes they have attained in their high school terminal exams. Even though, from St. Benedict's experience, student agency and their academic output are related (SBP, 2015), at this point, within the Jamaican educational paradigm, students' academics are privileged over leadership development.

Figueroa (2004) provides some explanation for this academic emphasis in the Jamaican education system. He argues that due to *male privileging* from gendered socialization at home and in the community - in which boys have fewer chores, freedom to roam, lower required levels of responsibility and self-control - Jamaican boys have less opportunity to develop the needed processing skills and discipline required for schooling. As a result, they are at a disadvantage in the Jamaican education system that has a regimented rote-learning routine in that "it is a system oriented more towards passing exams than learning and developing life skills" (Figueroa, 2010, pp. 67- 68). Although this characterization of the Jamaican education system may seem negative, stakeholders were clear about the cultural demands on their students for academic success, and hence gravitated towards the aspects of St. Benedict's model that they believed would provide students the requisite skills and capabilities, and which would support the academic focus of the current educational paradigm.

**Support for non-academic course offerings.** The non-academic course offerings at St. Benedict's included having students take classes such as photography and have them participate in outdoors activities like the four-day hike across the trails of the

Appalachian Mountains. While all Jamaican stakeholders were in support of having these types of opportunities for the students, the educators had reservations about the extent that they could implement these strategies. Already their school was conducting retreats, but only for senior students, due to a limited fiscal budget, constraints on various resources and a packed school calendar. Including more non-academic activities could require extending the school year, as St. Benedict's did, which poses major structural and cultural challenges for the Jamaican school. Nonetheless, the educators and parents acknowledged that outdoor activities such as the hike are "good for boys;" and along with the students, they saw the potential for such experiences to expand students' horizons, and in turn, enhance student relations and school connection, as demonstrated with St. Benedict's students.

It is generally understood that some Jamaican students are not sufficiently exposed to broader life experiences, and there is a reliance on schools to provide these opportunities. The traditional expectation of some Jamaican parents is for the school to provide the learning opportunities to shape their sons into men and prepare them for life (Watson-Williams & Riddell, 2011). Seeing how these non-academic activities seemed to positively impact St. Benedict's students, along with the positive feedback from their senior students about their experience on the school retreats, the Jamaican educators were motivated to review how they could expand the senior retreats to include more students. Although stakeholders might not be in a position to immediately adopt the specific strategies, exposure to the model afforded the stakeholders the opportunity to acquire new ideas that they could apply in their own context. This example shows that adoption

of a new model does not have to be a replication, but that the model's guiding principles can serve a purpose to the new context.

### **Summary**

The collective positive reactions of stakeholders indicate their desire for better educational experiences and outcomes for their students. The similarities of the circumstances between the two student populations (St. Benedict's and the Jamaican school), the perception that the model could positively impact Jamaican male students, and the fact that the preferred strategies could potentially be integrated into their school's pre-existing systems and context, increased stakeholders support of the model. From stakeholders' assessment of the St. Benedict's model, relative to their local context, it seems likely that they will select the strategies that they deemed most appropriate and important at this point, to fill in some of the gaps in their students' educational process (See Appendix G and K). These strategies may potentially improve their students' academic output and provide them with some broader personal development.

Stakeholders' clarity on the strategies that they think will be immediately relevant to their male students, along with their foresight on starting out with only a select few, confirm previous research by Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, (2002) that indicate that the scaling up of any reform requires the inclusion of stakeholders' insider knowledge and understanding of their context for successful implementation. Since stakeholders are more likely to be more supportive of an implementation plan that they offered or contributed to, it is then likely to increase stakeholder agency to make the changes that would support at least a partial implementation of the model (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Hargreaves, 2005).

### **Challenges With the Model**

Jamaican stakeholders' strong appeal for the St. Benedict's student leadership model and its benefits did not guarantee their full support for its implementation in their school. Major structural arrangements in the Jamaican education system, and importantly, school culture, challenged the implementation of the St. Benedict's model in the Jamaican school and dimmed the prospects for transferring the model to the Jamaican context (See Appendix H and I). Since structure, culture and agency are co-constructive forces in the implementation process, the interrelatedness among them is reflected in the challenges stakeholders faced. The interplay of the actions of Jamaican educators, the culture of the local school, and the structural constraints within the system as well as the school, created barriers to implementation and highlighted the complexities confronting the implementation of an externally developed school model in a new context (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Helsby, 1999).

In addition, the comprehensive nature of St. Benedict's model compounds the difficulties to implementation, as the model's components impact various facets and layers of the Jamaican schooling process (SBP, 2015). Overall, the high demand for change that will be required to implement the model in the Jamaican context is problematic for retaining Jamaican stakeholders' support of the model. Research from Glennan, Bodilly, Galegher, and Kerr (2004) states that the higher the demands of a new model for the target school to change, the greater the likelihood for the school to reject the model.

The main challenges to implementing the St. Benedict's student leadership model in the Jamaican school are discussed below (See Appendix H and I). The structural and cultural barriers are discussed separately to highlight their particular emphasis.

**Structural challenges to the model.** The structural challenges included, but were not limited to: the organizational structures between the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) and the schools, the educational regulations, policies and mandates, deeply ingrained practices such as financial arrangements between the MOE and the schools, teacher hiring practices, as well as school governance. The broad scope of these challenges is as a result of St. Benedict's model being so comprehensive in its design. Although the model is not highly specified, in that it does not include school organizational models, curriculum, lesson plans, development or implementation plans, its structure, formulated from a set of guiding principles, permeates the school's entire framework of operations. As such, attempts to implement the strategies of the model in the Jamaican context means making changes to many structural conditions at the local school level, as well as between the school and the MOE, all of which affects Jamaican stakeholders' support for the model.

**Financial challenges.** St. Benedict's shared that there are important structures within their schooling process that enabled them to do what they do. Most important and fundamental is that St. Benedict's is an independent school, giving the administrators both operational and financial autonomy regarding their model adoption and funding decisions. To meet their fiscal goals, St. Benedict's charges tuition, but the school's primary funding comes from an operation of twelve staff dedicated to fundraising. St. Benedict's self-governance and self-reliance may have inherent challenges, but the

school's independence gives their leaders the freedom to experiment and create what works for their school community and benefit student needs. Having asserted their functional freedom to set up their unique schooling process, St. Benedict's leaders shared that they created their school model over time, in keeping with their educational philosophy and goals to meet the particular needs of their students. They also ensured the school's operational credibility by gaining middle states' accreditation.

The Jamaican school's financial situation is very different, and is the foremost structural drawback in transferability of the St. Benedict's model. The Jamaican school is not an independent school and its structural-financial relationship with the MOE sets the parameter within which it can function. Even though the school receives funding from the MOE as a grant-aided school, and also gets additional funding from other sources, the school leaders statements, "the needs are greater than the income," and "we are struggling to keep the lights on," present a clear enough picture of the financial status of the school and why the Jamaican school leaders would find it particularly difficult to consider taking on any additional arrangements that might lead to further financial obligations. The dire financial state of the school and the impact on its normal functionality is truly concerning, but more concerning is how this financial state retards growth opportunities for the students, which is captured well by the statement of one school leader: "What really suffer are deferred maintenance and creative and innovative initiatives."

***Lack of operational freedom.*** The second major structural drawback for the Jamaican school in taking on St. Benedict's model is its real lack of operational freedom. Although the MOE administrators stated that there is no educational policy limiting the

school from taking on innovative ideas and practices, the educational policies and mandates, along with the emphasis on academics and assessments, consumes the school's operational structures and routines. These make it almost impossible to provide a more holistic educational experience as offered by the St. Benedict's model, in which academics is a priority, but building community life and developing student leadership is equally important. As St. Benedict's headmaster, Fr. Leahy says, "The academics are intense. But what drives the whole operation is community life and leadership," (Leahy, 2015). So entrenched is the operational and academic timetable at the Jamaican school, that the educators conceded that there was no time or energy to take on other things, particularly a new school model with strategies that were not directly academically related.

In reality, financial and operational constraints hinder the Jamaican school from embracing almost all aspects of the St. Benedict's model. For example, the idea of moving from a 9-month to an 11-month school year will entail substantial additional expenses to cover two extra months of full school operation and will require significant realignment of school operations. The extended period of the school year at St. Benedict's provides the time needed for all the non-academic, project-based and advanced experiential courses and activities that are not offered in the regular school terms, and which are geared towards providing enriching and growing experiences for both students and faculty (SBP, 2015). Further, this extended school period affords time to carry out the initial leadership training and practicum for the student leaders for the upcoming school year. In accordance with their holistic approach to the schooling process, St. Benedict's organizes their use of instructional time and school calendars to



focus on developing multiple areas in their students, which is supported by works of Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi and Liaghatdar (2012), who assert that a holistic approach to education, one that “nurtures the development of the whole person” can “meet the needs of all types of learners” (p. 185).

Even if funding were somehow available in the Jamaican school for an 11-month school year, educational regulations and policies, particularly pertaining to teachers, might deter making modifications to extend the operations and to obtaining faculty coverage. These challenges speak to the necessity of addressing structural changes and financial circumstances in scaling up or transferring from one context to another.

*Need for qualified teachers.* The Jamaican school leaders were not only tentative about the St. Benedict’s model working in their normal school operational period, but they also questioned whether the model could work with their current teaching practices. They believe it is particularly important to have faculty (and also staff) who embrace the new school model. In their assessment of potential teachers, St. Benedict’s leaders look for candidates “who have the ability to adapt to the sometimes unpredictable demands the school will make on their time and energy, and their willingness to encourage students to take ownership of the school, including certain parts of the decision-making process” (SBP, 2015, p. 25). St. Benedict’s leaders assert that having teachers who are dedicated, committed, enthusiastic and imaginative is a major success factor for their school model. Hence, for the Jamaican school leaders, having the freedom to hire teachers who they believe would work more compatibly with the St. Benedict’s school model - teachers who consider teaching more as a calling rather than a job - is a huge factor in their model adoption decision.

Indeed, previous literature point out that teachers are the centerpiece of educational change (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). This perspective highlights the importance of having teachers who are skilled and who also support the change to enable the successful implementation of St. Benedict's model in the Jamaican school. Therefore, the Jamaican teachers' overall low level of support for important and core aspects the model (despite liking the potential outcomes), and their resistance to changing how they do things, is very problematic for the Jamaican school leaders in making the model adoption decision. Although Hargreaves and Fink (2004) advocate using an inclusive approach to the implementation of a design model in order to generate self-initiated change from teachers (rather than mandating or imposing change, which would evoke negative reactions), it seems unlikely in this case that, even with a collaborative approach, there would be sufficient voluntary support from the Jamaican teachers. They are seemingly deeply embedded in their current teaching practices and resistant to making changes. Thus, unless the school leaders have adequate liberty with creating their team of staff and faculty accordingly, they will not succeed in implementing the model.

***Lack of sustainability structures.*** Another important structural challenge that hinders the implementation of St. Benedict's model in the Jamaican school is the likelihood that the program would not have provisions in place to sustain change efforts long enough to attain successful model implementation and subsequent transformation. Previous research points out that in order for educational change to be sustainable long-term, there must be time for new the learning to occur and to institutionalize the changes in the new context (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Fullan,

2007). The Jamaican school leaders' felt a sense of futility because of their projections that implementing the model would require a 20-year time span, and they did not believe they had the supporting structures in place to assure this could happen.

Sustainability of the model would be difficult without a structure in place to continuously champion, lead, create enthusiasm and provide on-going support for the program, which the Jamaican school leaders agreed is imperative to truly getting the full benefits of the model. Hargreaves and Fink (2004) state that to avoid temporary, localized bursts of change that have little lasting or widespread improvement, and ensure that the improvements last even after leaders have departed, they should pay attention to how they approach, commit to and protect changes in their school. Hence, putting sustainability structures in place that ensures continuity of the model, regardless of who is in leadership, is an important factor for the Jamaican school leaders to take into account if they choose to pursue any type of model implementation design.

St. Benedict's has strong structures in place that assures sustainability of their program. Their continued success with their students comes from their strong community of dedicated and committed faculty and staff who stay for decades. But moreover, the fact that St. Benedict's overseers are monks, and that the school is located on the monastery grounds where the monks live, provides a unique type of structure, which provides oversight and continuous assurance that the mission of the school will continue to receive support. Furthermore, the monks consider their work with male students as a religious calling, and take a *vow of stability* that binds them to serve where they are appointed, assuring a high level of stability and an unquestionable long-term commitment on their part. Altogether, this domicile permanence of St. Benedict's

overseers and their vocational commitment explains their ability to focus on and champion the cause for their student population, and highlights what it took to develop and sustain their all-encompassing school model.

While this exceptional level of duty may not be necessary for model adoption elsewhere, it is an indication that some amount of long-term institutionalized commitment and planning is required to effectively adopt and sustain the St. Benedict's model in a new context. One way that the Jamaican school leaders could potentially make provisions for sustainability of the St. Benedict's model is to structure a long-term commitment and continuity strategy in their implementation plan, whereby the ownership and oversight of the process is anchored in a stable framework of the local context. In their case, the sustainability structures could possibly be anchored in the Catholic community that oversees the Jamaican school, and/or with the Jamaican Ministry of Education.

*Ambiguity regarding authority.* Another major structural challenge that could have a nullifying effect on efforts to move forward with implementing the model is the ambiguity as to whether authority to implement the new model lies with the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) or the school leaders. With both the MOE and the school pointing to the other as the owner of the model adoption decision, it could lead to an impasse that affects implementation, as each entity has plausible reasons for their perspective on who has the power and authority. The MOE felt that the school needed to assert its authority and autonomy to make decisions for its own operations, while the school felt that the MOE's stance was misplaced because, as a grant-aided school who rely on getting functional support from the MOE, then the model adoption decisions, and

the ultimate success of implementation is heavily dependent on the MOE. Crucial support that the school would need from the MOE to move forward with implementation includes approval for the school to obtain additional staff, approval to hire new teachers who would work better with the student leadership strategies of the model, plus a commitment of financial support and other resources that would be necessary for the implementation process.

Murphy & Datnow (2003) point out that in schools seeking to transform themselves, they look to district leadership (in this case the MOE), as well as the educational climate and regulations, to ascertain whether or not it is worth investing their time and efforts. Furthermore, in moving forward, schools need educational leaders to build supportive conditions to enable successful change. In the Jamaican educational context, the hierarchical and structural-financial arrangements between the school and the MOE strongly indicate that the role and actions of the MOE are significant factors in the fate of St. Benedict's model adoption and implementation (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). Thus, without firm commitment of support from the MOE, the school leaders may take a safe path of either not implementing the model, or taking on only those aspects of the model that they could manage on their own, and even so, would require great impetus on the school's part. Consequently, the vacillation between the MOE and the school about the ownership of the model adoption decision puts in questions its fate.

As the highest entity in the organization of the education system in Jamaica, the MOE has the power and influence to impose meaning, and effect significant actions and results, at the school level. Although the initial positive reactions of the MOE administrators to the model depicted significant support and a promising fate for the

model adoption in the Jamaican context, their hand-off to the school to make the model adoption decision makes implementation questionable, since the weight of change cannot be borne by the school alone.

It is possible that the MOE administrators' actions in this situation is indicative of their readiness to create new ways for the MOE and school to relate, as well as how the school will handle their operations. Nonetheless, since the boundaries of authority between the MOE and the schools are new and in flux, until there is better clarity and trust, the normative dynamics and expectations of the MOE will most likely prevail. Thus it would be necessary for the transition period, that the MOE provide the school with clear support in order for them to feel confident about taking the lead in the model adoption decisions, and feel that their efforts would be fruitful.

In the current tenuous relationship between the school and the MOE regarding the model adoption decision, it seems likely that if the school moves forward, the extent of the implementation will hinge on which group takes responsibility for the decision. Undoubtedly, the chances of implementing the model are extremely slim if the school takes sole responsibility, as they do not seem to have the enabling structural conditions to handle this alone.

**Cultural challenges with the model.** The cultural challenges to the model are profound. Significant cultural variances between the two school contexts, as well the lack of openness to change on the part of Jamaica educators, generated major difficulties in implementing St. Benedict's model in the Jamaican school (See Appendix I).

*Educational ideologies.* Fundamentally, the differences in educational ideologies and ensuing approach to schooling between St. Benedict's and the Jamaican school are

harbingers to the cultural challenges of transferring the model. With the classic educational model (one that is academically focused, teacher-centered, and has a top-down power structure) still intact in the Jamaican school system as a result of its beginnings under British colonial rule, the resultant school culture stands in sharp contrast to the student-centered culture of St. Benedict's school, which was achieved through the efforts of the monks to *reculture* (Hargreaves, 2007) their school in 1973. At this point, the educational paradigms in the two schools are almost polar opposites, where the Jamaican schooling process entails a more linear and concentrated approach to students' academics, and has a test preparation and assessment atmosphere. Whereas, St. Benedict's takes a more holistic approach to schooling, and concentrates on non-academic elements such as building community and student leadership, which their leaders believe are critical underpinnings to student academic achievement and outcomes. These cultural differences pose inherent challenges to the transferability of the model.

Thus, this means that in order to achieve any change in their school, an open and willing disposition of Jamaican stakeholders is critical. St. Benedict's leaders actually attribute their educational success with students to their shift to an open disposition, enabling their "willingness to drop or modify specific processes and introduce new ones as needed, to achieve desired outcomes and to respond to the changing needs of their students" (SPB, 2015, p. 3). These leaders shifted their school culture by continuously asking the question, "What is good for the students?" Given the entrenched teacher-centered orientation, embracing this type of disposition to create change for students might be a useful idea for Jamaican educators to consider. Nonetheless, for Jamaican stakeholders to obtain the benefits of the St. Benedict's model, a culture change seems

imperative, and hence being more open and willing to change their educational ideologies could alleviate some of the intrinsic transferability issues, and elevate the chances of a successful transfer of the model to their school.

*Leadership role of students.* Of all St. Benedict's programs, the system of student leadership, used to develop their students' leadership abilities and capacity, is the most culturally problematic for the Jamaican educators. In examining this component of St. Benedict's model, Jamaican educators realized that adopting the strategies would require them taking on a more collaborative and facilitative role with students, whereby they would support students' leadership, voice, autonomy, innovation and agency. As illustrated in the stakeholders' responses, relating with students in these ways is not customary for Jamaican educators, and goes against the cultural fiber of the Jamaican school.

Essentially, what the shift to a more facilitative role would mean for Jamaican teachers is a redistribution of their power with students, whereby they would need to give up some of their control over students. This power shift would cause a drastic alteration in the student-teacher relations at the Jamaican school, one that Jamaican teachers perceive as threatening to their role, powerbase, identity, relationships, functions and routines in the school community; and more importantly, would disrupt their sense of success and satisfaction in their current standing with their students. For the model to be successful in a new setting, St. Benedict's leaders would argue that this more constructivist approach with students is essential to the development of students' leadership ability. Nonetheless, shifting their power position with students is culturally confronting, imposing tremendous demands on them to change the way they see and do



things at their school (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Glennan, et al., 2004; Hargreaves, 2007). Thus, Jamaican teachers strongly disfavored this particular component of the model.

St. Benedict's leaders acknowledge that their approach to student leadership development is unusual, especially their core strategy of giving student leaders real responsibility for running the school operations. This radical move defies the rationale of traditional school operations, even though their actions demonstrate their willingness and commitment to do what works for their students. Perhaps, through the traditional lens of the Jamaican educators, bestowing such high level of autonomy and empowerment to students and allowing them to run the school operations seem extreme. St. Benedict's leaders explain that, "*How* we teach our students is as important as - if not more important than - *what* we teach them" (St. Benedict's Preparatory Vox Institute, 2017, p. 2). St. Benedict's leaders believe that providing their all-male student population with real learning experiences is a more effective approach for developing their leadership skills and equipping them with the requisite knowledge and skills for better school outcomes, and to better handle life's demands and challenges in the future.

Although the basis and rationale for their students' inclusion in school leadership is understandable and appreciated by the Jamaican educators, at this juncture of the Jamaican educational cultural evolution, having students on par with adults is not culturally acceptable. Jamaican educators' perspectives and definition of leadership, shaped by a longstanding and predominantly hierarchical and authoritarian leadership style carried out by adults in the Jamaican society and the education system, place students in the subordinate role. With their deep-rooted traditional mindset, Jamaican

educators' and parents' expectation of students to date is still that students should stay diligently focused on their schoolwork; and that if students maintain discipline, responsibility and accountability in the school process, they will yield success. Essentially, exercising leadership by Jamaican students is under the directives of Jamaican educators, who are still perceived as the holders of knowledge. The strong opposition from Jamaican educators to the student leadership strategies of St. Benedict's model illustrates the non-negotiability of some cultural norms that account for an unwillingness to fully implement this more democratic educational model.

Jamaican educators were resistant to giving students opportunities to have voice and agency in other areas of the schooling process for the same reasons – traditional educational beliefs and practices in which teachers are in the lead, and unwilling to go outside their comfort zone. However, Hargreaves (2007) explains that teachers' resistance to drastic innovations is a natural and predictable response, not only because they prefer the familiar, but also because of the pressure placed on them in the change process. Furthermore, the limits set on teachers' involvement in the adoption decision, and the possibility of them dealing with an ill-designed and poorly implemented change process is simply too much. Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan (2002) add that teachers resist school change when they do not see its value over current practices, and thus view the changes as additional stress and pressure to their already difficult job.

Given the educational paradigm of the Jamaican educators, taking on St. Benedict's experiential approach to students' leadership development will not only be a new and different approach to teaching and learning. It will also be a move that calls for fundamental changes to Jamaican educators' values, beliefs and customs regarding

leadership, power, authority, and the educational process, and would affect how the entire school operation is carried out in the Jamaican school. Hargreaves (2007) cautions that educational change projects fail when educators get overloaded in the implementation process in their efforts to maintain their regular jobs and simultaneously take on the work of extensive and intensive change.

Jamaican students desire to be treated as important members in their school community and be given voice and involvement in solving problems in their school, as modeled by St. Benedict's. These desires are not unusual or biased, as these sentiments are generally common among students (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Furthermore, while student voice activities may not be a cultural norm in the Jamaican school or society, and are viewed skeptically by Jamaican educators, studies support St. Benedict's leaders' perspectives on the value of these strategies to students' development. Indeed, as previous research has shown, student voice activities increase their growth in competency, agency and belonging (Mitra, 2004), enhance student-teacher relations (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000) and help with school improvement (Fielding, 2001). The findings from these studies align with St. Benedict's student outcomes and reflect the desired outcomes of the Jamaican stakeholders for their male students.

Student voice activities at the basic level entail students sharing their opinions of problems and potential solutions, and can extend to also having students collaborate with adults to actually address the problems in their schools; all of which describe the opportunities for which Jamaican students yearn. Rudduck and Flutter (2000) assert that the "traditional exclusion of young people from the consultative process, the bracketing out of their voice, is founded upon an outdated view of childhood which fails to

acknowledge children's capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives" (p. 86). An awareness of the positive research findings on student voice, and an understanding of how to facilitate the activities with students and maintain their power status, may be one way to help Jamaican educators understand and be more receptive to increasing their students' autonomy in school.

The power tension in student-teacher relations points to the cultural constraints in the Jamaican school context, where teachers' ideologies about teaching and student-teacher relationships are hierarchical, and thus would have to be changed to enable St. Benedict's more autonomous student leadership strategies to be fully applied in the school.

***Societal homophobia.*** Another important cultural barrier to transferring the St. Benedict's model to the Jamaican school is the Jamaican societal homophobia and its translation in the school community. The overt expressions of love, care, and concern displayed among the St. Benedict's male students (hugging, and telling each other "I love you," for example), were concerning to Jamaican stakeholders, as they associate these behaviors with homosexual propensities. With the low tolerance in the Jamaican society for displays of male affection, stakeholders' resistance to taking on these features of the model was not surprising. And although stakeholders favored greater cohesion and brotherhood among students, they surmised that taking on these specific features of St. Benedict's model would be problematic for this all-male Jamaican high school, given the societal tensions on the matter.

The existence of the 1864 Offences Against the Person Act in Jamaican law seem to keep the homophobia in the Jamaica society alive. Stemming from the country's

colonial history where the church condemned homosexuality as an abominable act, and criminalized it during Britain's colonial rule in Jamaica with the establishment of the Act, the moral and religious undercurrents are still strong in this mainly Christian society. Because these laws are still in effect in Jamaica (although not fully enforced), they create a climate in the society that breeds and reinforces condemnation, discrimination and violence against men who portray effeminate mannerisms that are interpreted as homosexual. Although one teacher at the Jamaican school denounced this cultural belief as "garbage" and felt it was time enough to move away from these attitudes that limit boys' emotional expressions and the development of "softer skills," the beliefs persist. As such, St. Benedict's emphasis on developing a sense of brotherhood in which their motto of "whatever hurts my brother hurts me" and encourages male students to hug each other, tell each other they love them, and show concern for each others' well-being was generally rejected.

At the same time though, the Jamaican students are asking for a more supportive and cohesive student body. They may attempt St. Benedict's ideas on creating brotherhood while choosing ways to express them culturally, but their preferred portrayals may limit true student bonding, given the high sensitivity to such caring expressions. Homophobic concerns in Jamaica demonstrate how some cultural issues are long-lasting, embedded in the system, and capable of blocking changes that are arguably necessary to advance education, especially for male students.

The monks at St. Benedict's do acknowledge that it takes a while for new students to adjust to this style of relating to each other, where male students openly express love and care, as these practices are uncommon and have a different meaning in the wider

society. St. Benedict's takes a stance for teaching love in the form of Christian agape, a selfless, brotherly love without sexual connection or connotation, and the monk leaders believe in its importance to transform the lives of their students. Hence they take time to enlighten their students through modeling a new interpretation, expression and language of care for each other. No doubt this cultural shift would likely take time to be supported in the Jamaican context, or would need to take a different form of overt expression. Jamaican students suggested ways in which they would prefer to build brotherhood in their school, such as, shaking hands rather than hugging. Most importantly, these students wanted assurance that they would be allowed to choose their own forms of expression of love and care. It seems such mitigation would be necessary.

### **Summary of Structural and Cultural Challenges**

Altogether, the significant structural and cultural challenges that emerged from the study indicate the difficulties with implementing the St. Benedict's school model in the Jamaican school context. The interrelatedness of the various challenges, and their interplay with educators' actions, work together to constrain efforts to transfer the externally developed school model in the new context. Variances in organizational arrangements, school structure and operations, and differences in the cultural context between the two schools, generate high demands for change in the Jamaican school setting, which are requisite to enabling successful implementation of the model. Despite stakeholders' support for the beneficial aspects of the model (discussed in previous section), the extensive requirement for major structural and cultural changes in the local Jamaican school decreased their support for the model.

Broadly, the prominent structural challenges to address in order to create enabling conditions for model adoption and adaptation in the Jamaican school are for the school leaders to have both increased operational freedom and sufficient financial support. Operationally, it appears that the high MOE regulatory oversight might be a strain on the innovative and creative spirit of the school, as adherence to the MOE rules seems more important than attending to the specific and changing needs of the student population. Fiscally, the situation of the local Jamaican school is dire; and as the school leaders stated, “money talks.” Thus, from a pragmatic perspective, no matter how mission-driven the project may be if taken on, even with all the other structural challenges that need to be addressed in the Jamaica school context, funding will be the bottom line in assuring a more successful implementation of the model in the school.

In addition, the cultural challenges to transferability of the model to the Jamaican school are significant. Jamaican educators’ educational paradigm, and their customs and beliefs about teaching and schooling, the way that power is distributed and applied between students and teachers, and stakeholders’ views and attitudes about student leadership and brotherhood, are critical cultural issues that stand in the way of the model working as intended in the Jamaican context. The well-established traditions, ideologies, policies and practices in the Jamaican educational system have created a school culture seemingly incompatible with the particular kinds of change that are central, if not essential, to adopting St. Benedict’s model.

This study illustrates the need to attend to school culture and teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding educating young men, if scaling up of an educational reform model is to occur. Adequate buy-in of the model from the Jamaican teachers is an important factor

in making the model adoption decision, and sufficient openness and willingness to change on their part will be necessary to enable a more successful transition to the new model (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2007). These cultural challenges to implementing St. Benedict's school model highlights the importance of taking into consideration educators' ideologies and their educational paradigm when pursuing educational change, as educators' beliefs and perspectives influence their level of support for a new school model, and their consequential actions impact the success of the implementation process (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002).

### **Jamaican Revised Model: Accommodation Without Full Implementation**

Implementation proposals by Jamaican stakeholders showed not only their preferred aspects of St. Benedict's model, but also reflected their realistic and pragmatic stance to working with what they deemed possible under the challenging circumstances (See Appendix G, J and K). Educators made it clear that they did not intend to take on the model wholesale, and that for their school, "things do not have to be done exactly the way it is done at St. Benedict's," which seems to indicate Jamaican stakeholders' sensitivity to the contextual differences between schools, and perhaps the presence of non-negotiable boundaries they are unwilling to cross. Their approach was to adapt an abbreviated form of the model by integrating some parts of it into their current framework of education and schooling, in order to bolster their existing systems while maintaining the status quo.

Given the array of complex and interrelated structural and cultural barriers to transferability that surfaced, it was really not surprising that stakeholders' were only open to taking on the parts of the model that were compatible with their current educational



paradigm and their schooling structures and culture. Unquestionably, Jamaican educators' greatly desire that their students have a successful educational experience, which was evident from their high enthusiasm and positive reactions to St. Benedict's model. However, with the entrenched traditional educational beliefs and practices that are normative, they were not ready or open enough to change their mental models about schooling and the way they were doing things. They also were not sufficiently motivated to take on the "extra work" that it would entail to realize their aspirations for their school and students. From a social change perspective (Komives & Wagner, 2016), in assessing St. Benedict's model for adoption, the Jamaican educators were not trying to address the roots causes of the underachievement and underperformance of their high school male students, or change the system that was preserving and reinforcing the problem. Faced with the overwhelming barriers to achieving some progress, it is understandable that the Jamaican educators would gravitate towards what they believed were workable options. Essentially, their revised model was a collection of "doable" aspects of the model that may reflect a realistic approach, but might be a superficial approach, to addressing the factors underlying the academic and social struggles of the Jamaican high school male students (See Appendix G and K).

But is it futile in the long run to move ahead with this abbreviated version of St. Benedict's model? St. Benedict's monk leaders may think so. Having worked on their school model for over 44 years through a process of trial and error to create an effective and successful learning environment, responsive to the specific educational needs of their student population, they know best what aspects of their model make the real difference to their students' success. St. Benedict's monk leaders would likely contend that by

excluding the model's cornerstone strategy – the experiential student leadership system – schools might not achieve the turnaround with students they hoped with employing only the other strategies. In fact, many of the other strategies of St. Benedict's model are peripheral to this core feature, and mostly serve to expand and bolster students' leadership development (SBP, 2015). St. Benedict's school monk leaders believed that, for their primarily African American students to have a more successful future (given their history and generally challenging life circumstances), they needed strategies that would have them develop and embody new mental models, mindsets, skills and abilities. Therefore, giving their students real experiential leadership experiences and voice in a supportive learning environment (which may be lacking or limited in their own home setting) is key to their formation of self-leadership and self-authorship during high school life; and these experiences are intended to translate into students leading a more empowered and responsible approach to life. These are all the qualities that the Jamaican educators and parents desire for their students.

As St. Benedict's school leaders explained, their educational focus for their students is to prepare them for life beyond high school. From the onset, St. Benedict's leaders faced the social realities of their primarily Black student population of being a people ascribed the foot of the social ladder in the United States, and they acknowledged the failure of the education system in America to address their students' educational needs and societal problems (SBP, 2015). Indeed, Woodson (1933) discusses in detail how the mainstream educational system in America destroys the personal growth of Blacks. Therefore, in their drive to offer an alternative reality and new possible futures for “a population that never gets to lead,” (Pelley, 2015), St. Benedict's leadership

assertion that their students need additional elements in their school life to be successful in life, led them to imbue their school model with values that “run counter to those both of the larger American culture and the urban street culture,” (SPB, 2015, p. 3). In their view, the model’s principles and practices are “based on common sense” when you are about “creating an educational environment that helps young urban men to grow into well-educated, happy and responsible adults” (SPB, 2015, p. 3). Where Hargreaves (2007) might refer to St. Benedict’s school process as *reculturing*, scholars of Black education and Black identity development might ascribe it as a process of *decolonization of the mind*, where education is used as an “instrument of social mobility and liberation” (Hilliard, 1978, 2000; Wiggan, Scott, Watson & Reynolds, 2014, p. ix; Woodson, 1933). Given the similar colonial history, educational experiences and life circumstances of the Jamaican student population with St. Benedict’s student population, and with St. Benedict’s success using their educational approach, it seems that even if they could not do so in the immediate stages, Jamaican educators might consider taking on this transformational strategy - St. Benedict’s experiential student leadership system - to make a real difference with their male students.

It is not that the Jamaican revised model may not provide meaningful change or value to the Jamaican school or students. But Jamaican educators’ expectations of what their selected strategies might achieve should be grounded in realism and the recognition of what it took for St. Benedict’s to achieve this level of success with their students. The profound shift in the mindset of St. Benedict’s monk leaders and their commitment and conviction to making community building and student leadership development the center of their educational process, altered their lens of how they should go about educating

their student population. Through their transformed lenses they created their schooling structures, contextualizing them according to their specific local history and culture. And it paid off. Therefore, Jamaican educators' hopes for achieving the types of outcomes as St. Benedict's students -100% graduation rate, 98% of graduates matriculating to college, and 87% earning a college degree within 6 years or are presently enrolled – will call for a similar work of change as done by the leaders of St. Benedict's. To be sure, St. Benedict's leaders caution that their school model is not characteristic of the “simple cures, quick fixes and magic bullets” that are usually sought (SBP, 2015, p. 3). With Jamaican educators only taking on the aspects of the model that fit into their comfort zones, they dismiss other principles and features of the model that hold potential to attend to the social needs of their male students, and in the end, their efforts might not lead to the fulfillment of their perceived benefits of the model, nor address the needs and interests of each stakeholder group (See Appendix E and F). Jamaican educators' lack of willingness to change beliefs and practices, even at the cost of other benefits to their students, demonstrates how strong resistance to change can be.

But all is not lost. While Jamaican educators' selected aspects of St. Benedict's model may not be deemed revolutionary options, and it may be questionable to move ahead with a partial adoption, one view is that doing so may actually be a groundbreaking move for the Jamaican school. Taking this step forward with their favored few strategies could be the beginning of something more profound. It is not only very positive that the Jamaican educators are willing to try something new, but the strategies they selected do alter normative practices, and even this slight shift could cause a crack in the old educational paradigm and bring new light and possibilities for change.

So what does this mean for the transferability of St. Benedict's model? In a discourse on educational reform, Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan (2002) point out that in transferring an externally developed model, implementation at the target school does not mean an exact copy or replication of the new model, and that "effectively transferring an innovation across school contexts is said to be difficult at best," (p. 1). In reality, the contextual differences of the two different sites in this case would likely not enable one hundred percent transferability and full implementation. Further, with St. Benedict's model not being a fully prepackaged reform, with specified implementation plans, but more a sharing of their program (guiding principles and strategies), with the invitation for schools to adopt or adapt accordingly to address their own needs (SBP, 2015), schools then have liberty to choose their preferred aspects of the model and how to implement it.

Evidently, St. Benedict's model provided new and useful ideas and strategies that the Jamaican stakeholders felt would add value to their schooling process. From the educational change perspective, the proposed partial adoption of St. Benedict's model at the Jamaican school is perhaps one way in which this type of unspecified educational model, which presumes a more locally driven process of change, can be introduced and initiated in a new context.

### **Lessons Learned Regarding the General Scaling Up and Transferability of U.S. Educational Reform Models In Jamaica**

The discussion above offers some useful insights for answering research question four regarding the general process of transferability and scaling up of educational models to a new educational setting. Jamaican stakeholders' reactions to the possibility of adopting the U.S. student leadership educational model for the Jamaican school context

revealed that despite the appeal and intrigue of the strategies and potential student outcomes of St. Benedict's school model, its transferability to Jamaican schools is challenged by many important structural and cultural differences that exist between the two educational contexts.

The lessons gleaned from this study regarding the transferability and scaling up of an externally developed educational model in a new context identify not only the conditions that support model adoption, but also those that create barriers to it (See Appendix L). In summary, the lessons indicate that a closer alignment of the features of the new model with the educational structure, culture and future plans of the target school setting increases the possibility of success for transferability of the model. Thus, higher demand of the model for change in the new local setting decreases the possibility of success for transferability of the model.

The importance of alignment of a new model with the local setting for a successful reform transfer is evident on many fronts in this study. The findings reveal Jamaican stakeholders' enthusiastic and positive reactions arising from their high resonance with the new model. Although each stakeholder group liked the model for different reasons, the responsiveness of the model to their particular needs elevated their support for the model and its adoption. The proven success of St. Benedict's strategies with male students, and being able to identify some parallel features of the model and seeing ways that they believed these aspects would fit into the pre-existing systems and structures in their local setting, sustained stakeholder support for the model. Very important was the endorsement of the model by the administrators of the MOE, which elevated its transferability due to the power position and influence of this institution in

the Jamaican education system. Jamaican stakeholders saw in the model the potential solution to their concerns about student engagement and performance, as well as strategies that could enhance student outcomes without altering their current educational paradigm and goals. The flexibility of the components in the model and the ability to configure them for their context presented an ideal situation for these Jamaican stakeholders. This level of alignment of visions, goals, aspirations, beliefs, values, systems and practices of one model to a new context sets up amenable conditions for transferability.

Intuitively, we can see then how the converse situation hinders model adoption and transferability. Without alignment, change becomes a critical factor for consideration, often creating barriers that significantly hinders transferability, as illustrated in this case. The work of change that would be required by the more transformational aspects of the new model countermanded Jamaican educators' strong appeal for the model, and in turn diminished its transferability. The cultural and structural challenges further compounded the situation, increasing the complexity of bringing about change, contributing to low levels of readiness, openness and willingness among Jamaican stakeholders. Resistance was particularly high for features of the model requiring a change in cultural views and practices in teaching and leadership, which calls on the disconcerting need for individuals to personally change how they think and act. Consequently, despite stakeholders liking a new model and its possible benefits, it does not necessarily guarantee their support for model implementation when insufficient alignment of the model to their context creates a high demand for local change.

Strong alignment of the model in the local context could be increased by promoting buy-in and enabling conditions for change. But even so, strong alignment might not likely lead to full adoption of St. Benedict's model in the Jamaican context, at least not in the short term, because adopting St. Benedict's model would require a whole school change, and many aspects of the model strongly challenge Jamaican cultural norms. Attempts to implement the model might well be frustrated early on, if and when results do not occur as envisioned or in a timely manner. Beyond the inherent and real challenges of transferring the model to a different setting, change depends upon involving different stakeholder groups who hold disparate values, and with various power dynamics at play.

Essentially, this study highlights that context matters when transferring school models. It indicates that in trying to reform a school or school system, the specific context should frame the reform, ensuring that it is culturally sensitive and fits the specific needs of the population.

This research case study offers some useful insights with regards to understanding the factors that support and challenge, as well as complicate the general process of transferability and scaling up of school reform. Previous research posits that the benefit of scaling up educational change models is that they offer schools administrators a prepackaged plan that could potentially be solutions to their educational problems and could enable school improving (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002). As seen in this case study, there was definitely a sense that stakeholders hoped for St. Benedict's model to be the solution to help with improving education for their Jamaican male students, when they identified favorable features of the model. But, important for transfer and scaling up



of a new model is contextual fit. Although transferability does not mean implementing an exact copy of the reform design, the higher the differences between the two contexts, the lower the possibility of transferability, as was evidenced in this study.

Previous research also highlights the complexities of the implementation process, which pose major challenges to transferability. Datnow, Hubbard and Mehan, (2002) points to the co-constructive nature of the implementation process as it “involves a dynamic relationship among structural constraints, the culture of the school, and peoples actions in many interlocking sites and settings,” (p. 11). As such, the process is multidirectional, unpredictable and imbued with interrelated conditions and consequences, with the agency of educators “shaping and being shaped by the structural and cultural features of school and society,” (p. 13). The interrelated structural and cultural challenges that arose from this study align with the finding of previous research, as they bore these similar characteristics, conditions and consequences.

So, although there is pressure for schools to change due to economical, social and political conditions, as well as increasing public dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of public schools, and that the adoption of external school models may seem plausible, it is seldom a successful endeavor because of the complexities involved in the implementation process. The findings of his study reinforce what previous research has argued regarding the benefits, as well as the structural and cultural challenges and complexities, involved with transferring and scaling up new reforms in a context different from where the model originated (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002).

## Conclusion

This study investigated the benefits and challenges of adopting and adapting a student leadership educational model from an all-male high school in the U.S., to an all-male high school in Jamaica, and its potential for enhancing the educational outcomes for Jamaican male students. In their reactions to the St. Benedict's school model, what the study reveals is that Jamaican stakeholders deeply desire for their high school male students to have a positive educational experience and attain academic and personal success. The obstructions to their earnest desire for solutions and new ideas to fully attain and sustain these outcomes, are interrelated structural and cultural barriers that have long-standing historical, economical, societal and political roots, which are continuously reinforced and normalized in their local traditions, customs, beliefs, values and practices.

Specific findings showed that Jamaican stakeholders felt that the school model offered many benefits and opportunities for each stakeholder group (See Appendix D, E and F), and that some strategies of the model were very relevant to enhancing the educational outcomes of their male student population (See Appendix G). The Jamaican male students were particularly inspired by the model and expressed eagerness to take on many aspects of the model, especially the core system of student leadership.

Nonetheless, with the contextual differences and the various challenges to transferability, Jamaican educators proposed a revised model that they believed better aligns with their school culture and local operations. Important considerations for Jamaican educators were their traditional focus on increasing students' level of discipline, accountability and responsibility for their schoolwork. In addition, all stakeholders felt it

important for students to have an increased sense of belongingness and cohesion to enhance student relations and connections with their school life. Accordingly, stakeholders selected the related aspects of St. Benedict's model that they believed would provide these benefits to their students (See Appendix G). While all these values are noteworthy and support the thinking within the Jamaican educational realm, two key strategies – the student experiential leadership system and an 11-month school calendar - that St. Benedict's leaders deemed most effective for their model's success, were not considered apt for the Jamaican school (or societal) culture (See Appendix K). Strong resistance and structural hindrances existed for these aspects of the model.

Overall, Jamaican stakeholders' attraction to the model was very strong, but their support for it was measured by its alignment to their current educational paradigm, their school culture and the structural changes they were ready to take on. In the end, the transferability of St. Benedict's model to the Jamaican school is low, primarily due to the high demands for change required by stakeholders in order to take on certain key aspects of the model. Even if the abbreviated version of the model proposed by the stakeholders is implemented, in light of current views and practices, the likelihood of it producing major turn around in the educational engagement, performance or outcomes of the high school male students is not optimistic. Indeed, the model adaptations would likely result in merely reinforcing the current Jamaican educational status quo, a linear educational focus on academic success.

From the study findings, it is clear that significant changes to the way education is regulated, structured, practiced and envisioned in the Jamaican educational system are imperative for enabling the enhancement of the educational outcomes for Jamaican male

students. Jamaican educators do want change, and they recognize the complexity and difficulties of leading and making changes to their dense and ingrained education system. In this case, implementing a student leadership model, the fear of loss of power by the Jamaican teachers, and the uncertainty of what the changes could produce, contribute to their resistance. This resistance to change as per Fullan (2007), can occur as people usually do not know how to improve a situation or might not believe it can be improved. As such, to support change efforts, especially at the early stages, emphasis should be on capacity building strategies, such as providing new knowledge and enhanced resources, aimed at increasing the collective efficacy of the group. Furthermore, to aid progress with the change process, Fullan advocates for a focus on taking action rather than on making elaborate plans, as the change process is a socially based process and the planning is thus built on “doing, feedback, and corrective actions” (p. 57).

Prior studies by Jamaican scholars on the underachievement of Jamaican male students offer some ideas that may be useful for the way forward. In his studies, Miller (1986) stated that just as there were intentional and deliberate acts carried out to create particular outcomes with Jamaican male students under colonial rule, which were successful, so too now a similar approach should be taken, thankfully with a different agenda and for different results, geared towards the holistic development and success of Jamaican high school male students. By coincidence it seems, one of the Jamaican school leaders at the local school echoed similar sentiments when he stated that for change to happen at the local school, actions needed to be “intentional and deliberate.” With regards to the educational process itself, another Jamaican scholar, Chevannes (1999), advocated for schools to be a rite of passage that would transform boys to men.

This idea, for the most part, aligns with the overall educational philosophy and approach employed by St. Benedict's leaders of preparing their male students for life, not just to graduate high school (SBP, 2105).

Maybe a first, but profound, step could be an invitation to Jamaican stakeholders to see the purpose of education through a new lens. The lens offered by Chevannes (1999), and which is demonstrated in the approach used by St. Benedict's, through which the educational process is seen as a rite of passage, and that schooling is a preparation for life and not just for graduation in the final year. This new lens could be helpful in creating an entirely new environment for education in Jamaica. Then the question that is continuously asked by the St. Benedict's leaders, and which drives the creation of their culture and structures of the schooling process, "What is good for the students?" could become applicable and useful to organically opening up possibilities and aid with the natural creation of an effective educational model that is more suitable to the current needs of the Jamaican male students.

Harnessing and capitalizing on all the positive factors related to Jamaican stakeholders' desire for educational change might form an initial set of actions to explore. Investigating stakeholders' enthusiasm for the model and their preferred aspects of the model (Appendix D, E, f and G), plus the MOE administrators' strong support for it, may be a way forward in applying Miller's (1986) suggestions related to creating intentional and deliberate actions for change. To assure "continuity of good direction," Fullan (2007, p. 59) suggestions may be useful, which is to start the turnaround process with greater control, and to pay "careful attention" to developing the leadership of others as well as putting in place a leadership succession plan.

Collaboration with various stakeholder groups, in the process of creating and pursuing the desired educational vision and a plan for fulfillment over time, supports the enactment of desired change as posited in educational change theories (Datnow, Hubbard & Mehan, 2002; Hubbard, Mehan & Stein, 2006). Important key players in the collaboration are the leaders endowed with the sphere of power and influence on decisions and resources. As shown in this case, the Jamaican teachers' buy-in and input matters, the school leaders' role in setting and maintaining the school's philosophy, direction and tone is crucial, and the MOE administrators' inclusion, decisions and actions are vital to schools gaining the requisite supportive policy framework and resources to bringing about change. And last, but not least are the male students who are earnest for increased agency and for their viewpoints and ideas to be included in creating for themselves a new future. Altogether, these combined agencies and synergies can open the way forward to facilitate the development of a relevant Jamaican school model, or to support the transfer and implementation of a new model that aligns with Jamaican stakeholders' overarching educational vision.

### **Implications of the Study**

This section completes chapter five of the study. It covers three sections, including the contributions of the study, its limitations and considerations for future research

#### **Contributions**

This study adds to prior studies on the education of Jamaican male students by offering an alternative perspective and approach, which includes using an experiential student leadership educational model. This model advocates a change in Jamaican

educators' traditional paradigm by focusing on building community and student leadership as a central way to enhance high school male students' academic and life success. In presenting the new model's structure, underpinning principles, its development and success with minority male students in one U.S. school, along with Jamaican stakeholders' response to the model, the study offers a deeper understanding of Jamaican educators' beliefs about education and the way that they believe schooling "needs to be done."

The educational model explored in the study differs from prior models and strategies attempted in some Jamaican schools that advocate a more piecemeal approach to change, which included changing classroom tactics to engage male students, or providing entrepreneurial or vocational training specifically for low-performing male students (Jamaican Teaching Council, 2013; Universal Management Group, 2013). The new model also differs from other strategies in that it does not recommend isolating low-performing students (stigmatizing them) in the classroom or in separate tracks (Oakes, 2005). With its more holistic approach to education, as well as placing students at the center of the school experience, the new model calls for a re-orientation of school operations, which involves making changes to many aspects that will impact the entire school community. Considering a whole school change allows for a clearer understanding of how beliefs and structures are entrenched within a community and the challenge they present to change.

Beyond examining a new educational model and the promises it holds, this study also provides the reactions of stakeholders and the realities of attempting educational change. Abundant enthusiasm from students, and great optimism among all stakeholders,

were accompanied by resistance to, and even fear of, implementing the new model in their school. The study underlined how scaling up or transferring successful educational models from one context to another demands attention to the ideologies and beliefs of educators and students who are charged with implementing reform.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are limitations to this study. The foremost limitation is that it explores the feasibility and efficacy of adapting an external and new educational model to the Jamaican education system, by looking at only one school in Jamaica. Hence its findings are specific to the participating school and are not generalizable to other Jamaican schools. While findings regarding Jamaican stakeholders' personal reactions to the model might be representative on a broader school system scale, the wide diversity of the Jamaican school contexts limits the findings on the feasibility of the model to the one school in the study.

In addition, St. Benedict's model itself has not been tested in other schools or contexts. Therefore its exclusive success in one school - its originating school, St. Benedict's - limits its applicability to male students outside of St. Benedict's school type and setting. Although a number of other schools in the U.S. have inquired about and seem to be making plans to implement some of St. Benedict's strategies (St. Benedict's Preparatory Vox Institute, 2017), at this point, there are no other school references to draw from for discussion on the findings of this study regarding how the model works in other types of setting.

Another limitation of the study arises from my positionality as the researcher of this study (Lather, 1986). I am a Jamaican citizen and I am affiliated with the Catholic



faith and also familiar with the local school. Given my background, identity, experiences, values and assumptions, it is likely that some researcher bias influenced the study as I conducted data analysis and came up with findings.

Although my positionality is a limitation, it also offered me a unique perspective, as well as accessibility to stakeholders and data for this research. Since I understand the Jamaican culture and can relate to the Jamaican people and their customs, I was able to ask questions other researchers might not consider, going deeper and being more specific. I believe the participants were more open and forthright in sharing their experiences with me and, as a result, I was able to get rich data to analyze for this study.

### **Considerations for Future Research**

Finding new ways to effectively educate Jamaican high school male students for successful educational and life outcomes is ultimately the outlook for this current research. With the findings showing that context matters for transferability of any new model and that cultural alignment is key to enhancing model adoption, it seems plausible that future research designed to find meaningful solutions to address the problem of underachievement and underparticipation of Jamaican high school male students and enable pertinent school change, ought to at least satisfy these two conditions emerging from the study.

Given that Jamaican stakeholders view St. Benedict's model as an "ideal" school model and believe that some of the strategies are relevant to their student's needs, and likely to enhance the educational outcomes for Jamaican high school male students, an action research study that supports the piloting of the Jamaican stakeholders' revised version of the St. Benedict's model might be a good research option to consider. The

Jamaican stakeholders advocated for initially implementing the model in their school as a pilot program. Not only did they desire an experimental setting, but they also wanted a process that manages and safeguards their students' school experiences and outcomes while adapting the atypical model to their context. In this light, an action research design may actually provide the avenue for Jamaican educators to experiment with their preferred strategies of the model. It would offer an empirical and supportive framework and a diagnostic process that would aid with evaluating and investigating problems, and helping to develop fitting solutions as they arise during the implementation process. The reflective and adaptive process afforded in action research is an advantage in enabling contextual and cultural adaptations. Furthermore, findings during the process might offer ways, means and encouragement for other Jamaican schools to possibly take on relevant strategies.

In considering future transferability and scaling up considerations in Jamaican schools, it would also be useful to investigate how St. Benedict's model would work in other schools in the U. S. with similar all-male, minority student population. To further minimize some of the contextual issues, trying out the model at another Benedictine or Catholic high schools would probably yield some interesting findings about the true transferability of the model and important factors to take into account. Inquiry with the schools that are currently trying out St. Benedict's strategies would provide knowledge and understanding, as well as an opportunity to evaluate the strategies that the individual schools chose and why, how they conducted their implementation process, and their reports of progress or outcomes if any. Such information would offer an expanded lens

on St. Benedict's model for added perspectives and insight into its applicability and utility beyond St. Benedict's boundary.

Another option to address solutions for the male students at the local Jamaican school is a study that curates the successful educational strategies being used in other Jamaican schools. There are surely Jamaican high school male students that are doing well, and high schools that are having success. Thus, finding out what is working and why it is working in the local schools is an indisputable place to start looking for strategies that assure contextual fit. These strategies would be inherently cultural, and hence might be more readily adaptable and acceptable to other local schools.

What may be an essential matter to creating desired change in the Jamaican educational culture, specifically to school culture and teachers' beliefs and practices regarding educating young men, is teacher (re)training. Teacher training that would not only provide updated skills and tools for the current times, but to also attend to the ideologies and beliefs of educators. Administrators at the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) stated clearly, "Teachers are the blocks to changing a school system," and declared an urgent need for modification in teacher education, starting at the teachers college, because things cannot continue this way. Although revamping teacher training programs will be a major commission, it was revealed in the study to be a significantly necessary one to really effect the needed cultural transformation in the schools. Expecting teachers to take on transformative work without requisite training is not workable or sustainable, as "they are products of the society and the current teacher training and philosophy." Therefore, their preparedness and role is vital for educational change, as teachers are impacting students and the future everyday in their classrooms.

Making it at least a priority to set up studies to evaluate current teacher training programs and identify means and ways to establish more appropriate ones would be indicative of a serious move and commitment by the MOE for transforming the Jamaican educational system.

Whatever future research is undertaken and whatever strategies are employed, as a consequence, are important. But what matters most in moving forward with any implementation plans and efforts for educational change is ensuring that requisite inputs are made to effect and bring about the needed changes that will produce sustained positive educational and life outcomes for the Jamaican high school male students. While this may not be achievable in the short-term, making adequate steps in the direction towards this goal is paramount. Very promising is the MOE's recent launch of the student-centered national curriculum, revealing a major shift in the educational outlook for Jamaica from the governmental level (Ministry of Education, 2017b). Placing students at the center of the teaching and learning process is antithetic to what has been sustained over the years. It seems that now is an opportune time for Jamaican educators and other stakeholders to engage in a mission of an educational change process in order to eventually manifest their ideal school model, one that educates Jamaican high school male students for success in both school and life.

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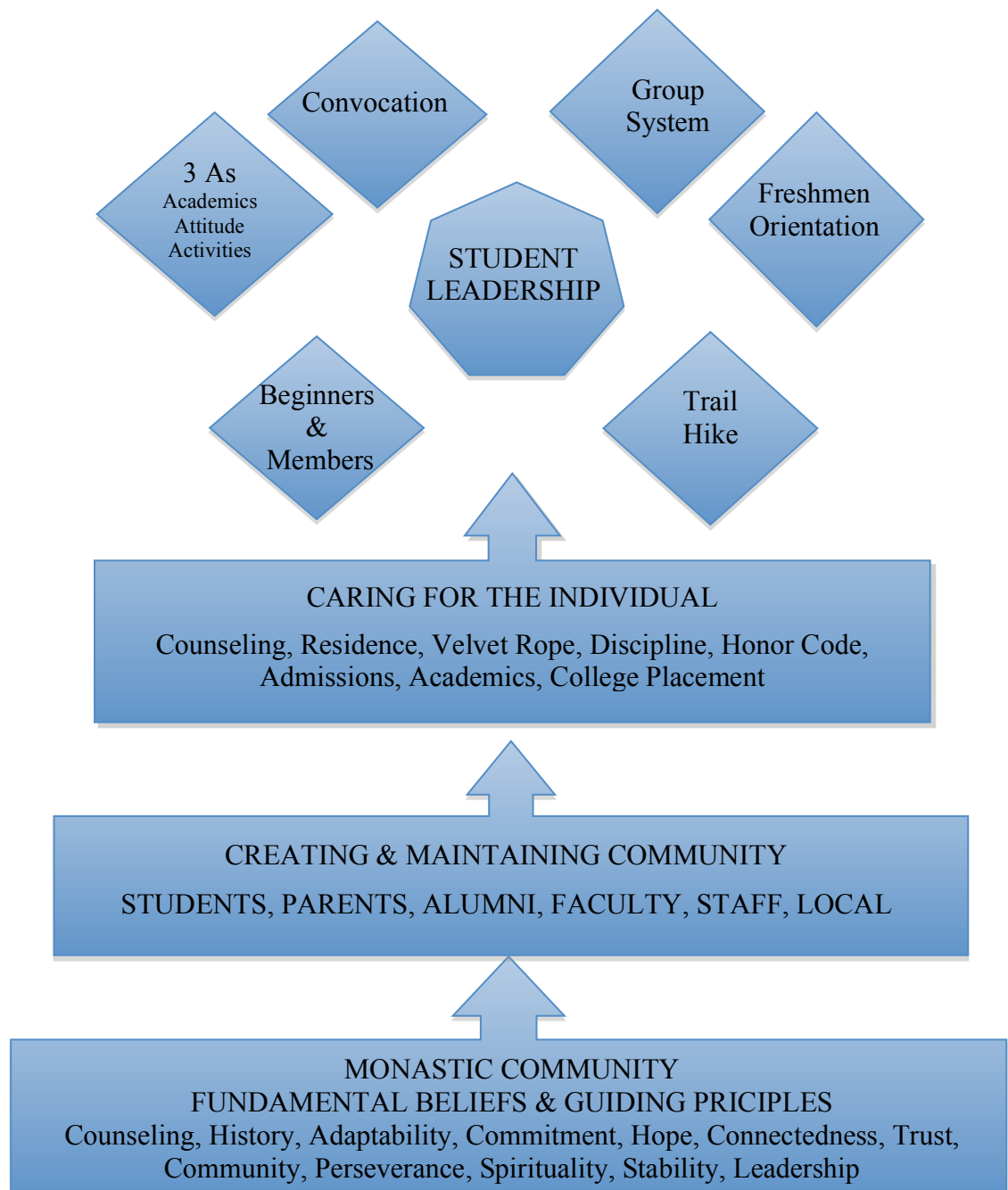
APPENDIX A

Diagram of St. Benedict's Preparatory Student Leadership Educational Model

**St. Benedict's Preparatory School**  
**Student Leadership Educational Model**

*"Whatever hurts my brother hurts me."*

A school is a community of learners made up of students, teachers, staff, alumni, and parents, rather than simply an organization composed of interchangeable parts.



APPENDIX B

Similarities and Differences Between St. Benedict's School and the Jamaica School



<b>Similarities Between Schools</b>		
<b>Feature</b>	<b>St. Benedict's School</b>	<b>Jamaican School</b>
<b>School Type</b>	Faith Based High School	Faith Based High school
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic
<b>School Location</b>	Downtown, Inner City	Downtown, Inner City
<b>Student Population</b>	All-Male	All-Male
<b>Student Profile</b>	Minority/Mid-Low SES	Minority/Mid-Low SES
<b>Student Ethnicity</b>	Primarily African Descent	Primarily African Descent
<b>Differences Between Schools</b>		
<b>National Context</b>	United States (Developed Nation)	Jamaica (Developing Nation)
<b>Educational System</b>	American	British/ Caribbean
<b>School Control</b>	Independent Private Prep School	Public High School
<b>Calendar Year</b>	11 Months	9 Months
<b>Governance</b>	Benedictine Religious Community (Monks) on location	Jesuit Religious Community and School Board off location
<b>Funding</b>	Tuition, Donors, Fundraising	Grant-Aided by Government, Donors
<b>Student Population</b>	550	1450
<b>Head of School</b>	Head Master	Principal
<b>School Model Focus</b>	Community building and student leadership development	Academic Excellence
<b>Operational Oversight</b>	Community Supported Student Leadership	Administrative Leadership
<b>School Ethos</b>	Community, Brotherhood, Student Leadership & Academic Excellence	Academics comes first
<b>Teaching Approach</b>	Student Centered	Teacher Centered
<b>Student Leadership Structures</b>	System of Student Leadership: Empowered student leadership	Traditional Head-Boy system and Student Council: Directed student leadership
<b>High School Graduation</b>	Completion of Credits	Standardized Exams

APPENDIX C

Jamaican Stakeholders' Demographic Information

Table C1

*Codes Names and the Code Descriptions for the Five Jamaican Stakeholder Groups*

<b>CODE</b>	<b>Stakeholder Group Descriptions</b>
<b>SHG-S</b>	Students currently attending selected Jamaican high school in Grades 9 -13
<b>SHG-T</b>	Teachers currently teaching at selected Jamaican high school
<b>SHG-P</b>	Parents of students currently attending Jamaican high school
<b>SHG-L</b>	School leaders currently leading selected Jamaican high school
<b>SHG-M</b>	Current administrators at the Jamaican Ministry of Education

Table C2

*Demographics of the Five Jamaican Stakeholder Group*

<b>CODE</b>	<b>Total in Group</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>Educational Roles</b>
<b>SHG-S</b>	29	-	5	Student Focus Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 7 Student Leaders Grades 10-13</li> <li>▪ 6 Students Grade 9</li> <li>▪ 2 Students Grade 10</li> <li>▪ 8 Students Grade 11</li> <li>▪ 6 Students Grade 12 and 13</li> </ul>
<b>SHG-T</b>	10	5	2	Teachers Subject areas: Mathematics, Business Studies, Art Technical Drawing, Mechanical Technology, English Language, Literature, Computer Science, Life Skills
<b>SHG-P</b>	7	-	1	Parents with sons in Grades 7, 8 and 9
<b>SHG-L</b>	3	3	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leader of Religious Community</li> <li>▪ School Board Chairman</li> <li>▪ School Principal</li> </ul>
<b>SHG-M</b>	4	4	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minister of Education</li> <li>▪ Permanent Secretary</li> <li>▪ Director of Policy Analysis</li> <li>▪ Director of Regional Educational Services</li> </ul>
<b>Total Number of Participants = 53</b>				

## APPENDIX C Cont'd

**Description of the Role of Jamaican Stakeholders' in Leadership Positions**

Table C3

*Brief Descriptions of the Role of Administrators at the Jamaican Ministry of Education*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Role at the Ministry of Education (MOE)</b>
Minister of Education	Responsible for the policy and authority for the development of education for the Jamaican citizens.
Permanent Secretary	Accountability Officer, responsible for the daily operations of the MOE in carrying out its mandates.
Director of Policy Analysis	Responsible for the analysis of the education system, and present recommendations for the enforcement, amendment or introduction of policies.
Director of Regional Educational Services	Responsible for the educational support to all educational institutions in assigned region, overseeing the supervision and quality assurance of the public entities.

Table C4

*Brief Descriptions of the Role of School Leaders at the School in Jamaica*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Role at the Jamaican School</b>
Leader of Religious Community	Oversees the religious life of the school
School Board Chairman	Oversees the management and operations of school
School Principal	Handles the daily school operations

## APPENDIX D

Quotes of Jamaica Stakeholders' First Impression Reactions  
to St. Benedict's Student Leadership Educational Model

<b>Quotes of Jamaica Stakeholders' First Impression Reactions to St. Benedict's Student Leadership Educational Model</b>	
<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Sample Quotes</b>
<b>Across the Board</b>	“Great model;” “Lovely;” “Awesome;” “I love it;” “Ideal school model.”
<b>Students</b>	“I don't understand how it would work, but it would be pretty neat if it could work for my school.”
<b>Teachers</b>	“If we can get St. Benedict's school model into our school system, other than making the teachers' job easier, I believe that academically, everything, every area of school life, will be positively affected.”
<b>School Leaders</b>	“The model excites me. Any model that looks like that and has success like that is exciting. This is what we want our school to be.”
<b>MOE Administrators</b>	“We are trying to do the same thing. This is the kind of culture that we are trying to promote; a school culture where the student is the focus and the target.”

APPENDIX E

Responsiveness of St. Benedict's Student Leadership Educational Model  
to Each Jamaican Stakeholder Group

<i>Responsiveness of the Model to the Jamaican Stakeholder Groups</i>	
<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Quotes by Stakeholder Group</b>
<b>Students</b>	<p>Students thought the model provided them with a way to get involved and be empowered in their school life, so they could innovatively solve their problems and be properly groomed as successful young men and leaders.</p> <p>“At St. Benedict’s, the encouragement, motivation and affirmation given to the students are impressive!”</p> <p>“I will have a voice.”</p> <p>“I like the fact that they make boys feel like men to run the school like that.”</p>
<b>Teachers</b>	<p>Teachers saw the model as offering them the freedom to focus more on teaching, rather than on discipline, so they could enhance the quality of teaching and learning in class.</p> <p>“Students’ developing responsibility, leadership, and accountability will improve use of class time. I think a model like this will help. It would also be less stress for the teachers.”</p>
<b>Parents</b>	<p>Parents saw the model as an opportunity for their sons to become more disciplined and responsible to better assure their sons success in school and life.</p> <p>“Our sons will get more disciplined and responsible.”</p> <p>“Better men, better leaders, better school, better community.”</p>
<b>School Leaders</b>	<p>School leaders saw the model as a way to create a caring and harmonious school community that focuses on fulfilling the needs of all the members in the school community.</p> <p>“Building community”</p>
<b>MOE Administrators</b>	<p>MOE administrators saw the model as a way to develop model citizens and future leaders using a holistic approach to education.</p> <p>“We are trying to do the same thing. This is the kind of culture that we are trying to promote;” a school culture where “the student is the focus and the target.”</p>



## APPENDIX F

Jamaican Stakeholders' Perceived Benefits of  
St. Benedict's Student Leadership Educational Model

<i>Jamaican Stakeholders' Perceived Benefits of St. Benedict's Model</i>	
<b>Perceived Benefits of the Model</b>	<b>Related Stakeholders' Quotes</b>
Fosters a Caring and Supportive School Community	<p>“The unity between the boys is to be admired. They work collectively and build up each other. They do not compete and fight against each other.” [Student]</p> <p>It’s a system where the unloved can feel loved, the spoiled can realize that they don’t need to be spoiled; that it’s okay not to get everything you want; those that are mean will learn that sharing is caring, and that it also benefits others around you.” [Teacher]</p>
Develops Students as Leaders	<p>“The model is good to teach them responsibility, because that is what we need for these young men. Some of these boys ... they don’t know how to do anything at all.” [Teacher]</p> <p>“Problems are brought to teachers and authority figures and nothing is done about it. Therefore, it’s about time for students to start getting involved in solving them.” [Student]</p>
Enhances the Teaching and Learning Environment;	<p>“Students’ developing responsibility, leadership, and accountability will improve use of class time. I think a model like this will help. It would also be less stress for the teachers.” [Teacher]</p> <p>“It would be easier for the teachers to just teach and not deal with the disciplinary problems.” [Student]</p>
Helps Parents with Developing Their Sons	<p>“Parents will love the militaristic approach for boys to build discipline as many fathers are missing and mothers are not able to control them.” [School Leader]</p> <p>“Our sons will get more disciplined and responsible.” [Parent]</p> <p>“Better men, better leaders, better school, better community.” [Parent]</p>

## APPENDIX G

Jamaican Stakeholders Preferred Strategies of the St. Benedict's Student Leadership Educational Model, and the Perceived Benefits to Jamaican Male Students.

<i>Jamaican Stakeholders Preferred Strategies and the Benefits for Jamaican Boys</i>	
<b>Preferred Strategy</b>	<b>Benefits for Jamaican Boys</b>
<b>Group System with Student Leadership Structure</b>	<p><i>Fosters connectedness among students and connection with school, enhancing student relations and promoting cohesion.</i></p> <p>Students are connected to each other in small groups, and these small groups are connected by group leaders in a hierarchical leadership structure, forming a framework that functions as a connected supportive network system for students, and a vehicle to enable students to interact and collaborate with each other for academic and social purposes in ways that facilitates the development of students' level of discipline, responsibility and accountability, and simultaneously build and foster community, cohesion, brotherhood and a sense of belonging among students.</p>
<b>Focus on the 3 A's in Student Groups (Academics, Attitude, Activity)</b>	<p><i>Maintains students' focus and advances their output on the important schooling elements: academic achievement, school attitude (conduct, punctuality and attendance) and involvement in school activities.</i></p> <p>Small-group peer-support structure for students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Encourage and support each other's academic success.</li> <li>✓ Make each other accountable for their conduct in school, and their punctuality and attendance to school.</li> <li>✓ Encourage each other's participation in at least two school activities.</li> <li>✓ Have a social outlet in ways that build cohesion among the student population and increase school spirit.</li> </ul>
<b>Daily Attendance Reporting</b>	<p><i>Encourages high punctuality and attendance rates among students.</i></p> <p>Daily reporting of students' punctuality and attendance conducted by small-group leaders to support and motivate students to turn up to school everyday and on time, and to help early detection of students at risk for dropping out of school.</p>
<b>Freshmen Orientation</b>	<p><i>Orients new students to the school's heritage and traditions and helps them become successful members of the school community.</i></p> <p>Orientation program to familiarize new students with the school's history, rules, operations, culture, and students' honor code, and to integrate them in the group system leadership structure and its functions, as well as help prepare them to handle and overcome the challenges of high school</p>

## APPENDIX H

Jamaican Stakeholders' Perceived Structural Challenges to  
Implementing St. Benedict's Student Leadership Educational School Model  
in the Jamaican School Context

<i>Jamaican Stakeholders' Perceived Structural Challenges to Implementing the St. Benedict's School Model in Jamaican School</i>	
<b>Structural Challenges to Implementing the Model</b>	<b>Related Stakeholders' Quotes</b>
Lack of clarity regarding who has the power and authority to bring about change.	<p>“The schools have the power. They just need to call on us as a resource.” [MOE]</p> <p>“That’s what the ministry says.” [School Leader]</p>
Limiting financial-structural arrangements that affect model adoption decision.	<p>The restrain for me is that I can get excited; but the reality is that we would need financial resources to implement this model.” [School Leader]</p>
Policies and practices that constrain getting the right teachers.	<p>“We do not have such autonomy in who we hire, and who we fire.” [School Leader]</p>
High demand on school for sustained academic outcomes.	<p>Yes, the ministry is big on academics. Once we see that the students are passing, that’s high on our agenda.” [MOE Administrator]</p>
Ability to sustain a long-term commitment to change.	<p>“It would have to be a special project funded for at least 10 years to change the system.” [Teacher]</p>

## APPENDIX I

Jamaican Stakeholders' Perceived Cultural Challenges  
to Implementing St. Benedict's Student Leadership Educational Model  
in the Jamaican School Context

<i>Jamaican Stakeholders' Perceived Cultural Challenges to Implementing the St. Benedict's School Model in the Jamaican School</i>	
<b>Cultural Challenges to Implementing the Model</b>	<b>Related Stakeholders' Quotes</b>
Giving students voice is not culturally normative.	“Giving the students voice? That’s a hard one in Jamaica. That is not a part of the Jamaican culture.” [MOE Administrator]
A teaching culture that maintains power relationship over students.	“As teachers, we are afraid of letting go of that power.” [Teacher]  “Some teachers would react angrily to students being on equal level of authority with them.” [Student]
Teachers’ beliefs and concerns that cause resistance to change.	“It’s a big cultural shift.” “Too much work. It is hard to change.” [Teacher]  “Similarity is comfortable; even if it is not going anywhere. Once things are functional, it does not have to be excellent. One can get by as is.” [Teacher]
A homophobic Jamaican culture that hinders model adoption for all-male schools.	“Homophobia is a big part of the problem.” [School Leader]  “Homophobic culture is the biggest issue to fix.” [Teacher]



APPENDIX J

Jamaican Educators Proposed Approach to Model Implementation in the Jamaican  
School

<i>Jamaican Educators Proposed Approach to St. Benedict's Model Implementation in Jamaican School</i>	
<b>Cultural Challenges to Implementing the Model</b>	<b>Related Stakeholders' Quotes</b>
Establish ground rules for implementation.	<p>“What would have to happen is that we have to modify the model to suit our own unique situation. We could not adopt it wholesale.” [School Leader]</p>
Allow schools to take ownership of model implementation.	<p>“Once the management team of the school buys into this new philosophy [St. Benedict's model], then it starts there.” [MOE Administrator]</p> <p>“They are the ones that know how things really work, and know what's negotiable and what's non-negotiable for the school.” [School Leader]</p>
Get buy-in from school community.	<p>“State, how it [the model] can work, what part of it now exists, and how we can infuse it.” [MOE Administrator]</p> <p>“We have to keep it real. Make sure it is responsive to the needs of the school community.” [School Leader]</p> <p>“I think I would talk to the teachers first to see how they would envision it.” [School Leader]</p> <p>“I would go to the students, to dialogue with them to figure out what they want.” [School Leader]</p>
Determine the preferred aspects of the model to implement and how to implement.	<p>“Adapt the model to their current structures and systems.” [School Leader]</p> <p>“Already have a basic framework in place at their school. Can apply certain aspects of the model to improve what we already have.” [School Leader]</p>

## APPENDIX K

Jamaican Stakeholders Preferred Aspects of St. Benedict's Model For Potential  
Implementation, and Aspects not Favored for Implementation,  
Along With Related Participant Quotes

<b>Aspects and Features of the Model for Potential Implementation</b>	<b>Aspects of the Model NOT Favored for Implementation</b>
<p>The <b>Group System</b> with the leadership structure to connect students and form a supportive network among themselves</p> <p>“I think it is really important to get male students involved for them to feel that they are a part of something. This way, you get more out of him than when he is just being there as a regular person. When you are in a group, you are no doubt stronger; you are unified. If you look at it, in a gang, no one is left out” [Student]</p>	<p>The <b>Experiential Student leadership system whereby</b> students are included in leadership of school, and opportunities for student voice and autonomy are created.</p> <p>“On another level it makes you wonder how much time these boys will have to devote to academics.” [School Leader]</p> <p>“I would not want it [student empowerment] to happen here with our students. At least, not to the extent that St. Benedict’s has it. Our system does not allow for that.” [School Leader]</p> <p>“Academics come first.” [Teacher]</p> <p>“I do not want my son’s academics to go down because of the extra responsibility he gets as a leader.” [Parent]</p>
<p>The <b>Freshman Orientation</b> structure as a vehicle for getting new students in line with the new school philosophy</p> <p>“It is key to what is done at the entrance. You set the stage. Thereafter, it is a matter of managing the process and the output.” [MOE Administrator]</p>	<p><b>11-Month School Year</b> [accommodates non-academic courses, freshmen hike and student leadership training]</p> <p>“Its not necessary. Time is available in the 9-month year.” [Teacher]</p> <p>“The reality is that we would need financial resources to implement this model.” [School Leader]</p>
<p>The practice of <b>Reporting Daily Attendance</b> to account for all students.</p> <p>“I found it amazing that they actually looked out for one another to ensure that everyone was at school and not on the streets.” [Student]</p> <p>“Some students are late because they don’t care. So, the peer-to-peer accountability would help them.” [Teacher]</p>	
<p>Focusing on the <b>3 A’s (Academics, Attitude and Activity)</b> to enhance students’ school engagement</p> <p>“These are very important to the school. They must be followed.” [Student]</p>	

<p><b>Adopting a balanced approach to student leadership development</b></p> <p>“Education without formation is useless. A balanced time is needed for each [leadership and academics] so that students can have time to prepare and pass exams but also learn how to assert self as individuals.” [School Leader]</p> <p>“We mix up doing well in school with doing well in society.” [Teacher]</p>	
<p><b>Building of a sense of brotherhood to enhance student cohesion and school spirit;</b></p> <p>“The communal support will help to bridge the gaps for students as it provides other layers of support to facilitate student development and deal with their emotional hurts.” [MOE Administrator]</p>	
<p><b>Including non-academic courses and activities to support a more holistic development of students.</b></p> <p>“Outdoor activities are good for boys.” [Teacher]</p>	

## APPENDIX L

Lessons Learned About Transferability And Scaling Up of Reform Models

From a U.S. School Context to a Jamaican School Context

<b>Lessons Learned about Transferability and Scaling up of Reform Model</b>	
<b>Support for Model Adoption</b>	
<i>Alignment is crucial to the success of reform transfer.</i>	
1	<i>Needs Alignment:</i> A school model that responds to the various stakeholder groups' needs, provides an opening for adoption of the model.
2	<i>Vision Alignment:</i> A school model that aligns with and is sanctioned by the educational visions of the leaders of education in the new context, enhances the chance for model adoption.
3	<i>Structural Alignment:</i> A school model that can fit into the pre-existing structures of the intended context, will likely lead to stronger support from stakeholders.
4	<i>Cultural Alignment:</i> A school model that allows for flexibility in applying its strategies to align with the cultural norms of the new context, enhances its chance of transferability.
5	<i>Goal Alignment:</i> A school model whose goals align with the social and academic goals of a school, helps to promote model implementation.
6	<i>Teaching Culture Alignment:</i> A transferability process that considers the ideologies, beliefs and practices of the educators in the new context, will have a greater opportunity for full implementation. (Teachers have major impact on what gets implemented. Buy-in from them seems essential.)
7	<i>Timing of Implementation Alignment:</i> Adopting a long-term outlook for model implementation –one that is carried out in incremental phases - may be more manageable to stakeholders and may also help them overcome resistance to change, as the inherent challenges may require adaptive rather than technical solutions.
8	<i>Full Stakeholder Inclusion and Buy-In:</i> An implementation process that includes input and has member representation from the different stakeholder groups, and takes a consultative and cooperative approach to the process, is more likely to be successful.
9	<i>Full Support from Top Educational Leaders:</i> A sound implementation plan that is approved by all stakeholders enhances implementation possibilities, as it provides sanctioning and policy reference from the top and the bottom and will likely improve the sustainability of the model.
<b>Barriers to Model Adoption</b>	
<i>Strong appeal for the model and its benefits does not necessarily guarantee support for model implementation. Change faces barriers.</i>	
1	<i>Change Requires Altering Beliefs:</i> Stakeholders are resistant to change when they are required to change many of their ideologies, especially if the changes are too many and oppose deeply entrenched cultural values.
2	<i>Change is too deep and too complex:</i> The interrelatedness of the many structural, cultural and practical challenges to implementing a new model escalates their levels of density and complexity, decreasing the chances for model adoption.
3	<i>Change Demands Flexibility:</i> Taking a one-size fits all or pedantic approach will impede model implementation, as stakeholders at the school level want the flexibility to do things in ways that work for their specific situations and feel manageable to them.

4	<i>Change Demands Readiness:</i> Lack of readiness to take on full implementation may only enable partial or biased implementation.
5	<i>Change Demands Funding:</i> Lack of access to funding is a major hindrance to model implementation.
6	<i>Change is Enabled by Independence:</i> Schools that have the freedom and ability to make independent decisions about their operations, and can acquire suitable human resources and financial resources are more able to support model adoption.
7	<i>Change Requires Buy-In:</i> Forced model implementation in schools may trigger opposition to the model. Transferability is more likely successful when all stakeholders buy-in.
8	<i>Change is Contextually Challenged:</i> Transfers across international borders are at high risk for model implementation due to increased differences between the original context and the new context, and especially between developed and developing nations.



APPENDIX M

Adult Consent Form (18 Years Old and Over)

**Adult Consent Form (18 Years old and over)****University of San Diego Institutional Review Board****Title of Research Study: Educating Boys in Jamaica: In Search of a New Lens****I. Purpose of the research study**

Marcia Chin is a student in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. You are invited to volunteer to participate in a research study she is conducting. The purpose of this research study is to explore new ways of approaching the education of male adolescents in Jamaica in order to help improve their academic outcomes and future prospects.

**II. What you will be asked to do**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to either engage in a focus group discussion with the researcher, or be interviewed by the researcher, during which you share your perceptions regarding a student-led school model used by a high school in the United States, and the possibilities of adapting this school model to schools in Jamaica.

**III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts in participating.

**IV. Benefits**

While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be in knowing that you helped researchers in their quest to better understand how to successfully educate male students in Jamaica.

**V. Confidentiality** **Option 1: Claim Right to Confidentiality**

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings.

 **Option 2: Waive Right to Confidentiality**

Allows disclosure of identification and information provided, which may be used as supporting evidence to study findings. The disclosure may take the form of attributing quotes to you from your responses or utilizing other information about you based on your unique position and role in your institution.

## VI. Compensation

You will receive not compensation for your participation in the study.

## VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research Participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

You do not have to participate, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you're entitled to, like your health care, or your employment or grades. You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

## VIII. Contact Information

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

- **Marcia Chin - Principal Investigator**  
Email: marciachin@sandiego.edu  
Phone:
- **Dr. Lea Hubbard - Dissertation Committee Chair**  
Email: lhubbard@sandiego.edu  
Phone:

-----

**I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received / do not require a copy of this consent form for my records.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (**Printed**)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX N

Child Assent Form (Students Under 18 Years Old)

**Child Assent Form (Students under 18 years old)**

**University of San Diego Institutional Review Board**

**Title of Research Study: Educating Boys in Jamaica: In Search of a New Lens**

My name is Marcia Chin and I am inviting you to volunteer to participate in my research. Research helps us find out new information. For my research I want to find out new ways to successfully educate high school male students in Jamaica in order to help improve their academic outcomes and future prospects in life.

To participate in this study, I invite you to be one of the members in a group of students with whom I will be interviewing as a group about my research. Your participation will involve:

- ◆ Watching a documentary video and listening to a presentation about the way in which another high school goes about educating its all-male student population.
- ◆ Thinking about what you saw and heard, and give your feedback based on the interview questions. There are no right or wrong answers. You are asked to honestly share your thoughts and feelings.

I will audio record the interview session with the group, and may also take some notes while we are all talking. But nobody will know it's you, because I won't use your name or any reference to you.

You do not have to do or say anything that you do not want to, and you can quit from participating anytime. If there are some parts of this you do not want to do, just tell your Mom/Dad. Your mother or father will NOT be able to see any information that you tell me.

If you tell me that:

- Somebody is hurting you or
- You want to hurt yourself or someone else, I will need to tell somebody.

It is okay to say 'No,' to participating in my research. Nobody will be mad at you.

\*\*\*\*\*

Do you think this is OK for you to participate in my research?

I think it's OK for me to participate in a conversation for this group interview. I can change my mind anytime.

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Child's printed name

APPENDIX O

Parent Consent Form

## **Parent Consent Form**

### **University of San Diego Institutional Review Board**

#### **Title of Research Study: Educating Boys in Jamaica: In Search of a New Lens.**

#### **I. Purpose of the research study**

Marcia Chin is a student in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. Your child is being invited to volunteer to participate in a research study she is conducting. The purpose of this research study is to explore new ways of approaching the education of adolescent males in Jamaica in order to help improve their academic outcomes and future prospects.

#### **II. What your child will be asked to do:**

If you decide for your child to be in this study, he or she may be asked to engage in a focus group discussion with the researcher about the research, which will involve:

- ◆ Watching a documentary video and listening to a presentation about the way in which another high school goes about educating its all-male student population.
- ◆ Thinking about what was seen and heard in the video and presentation, and giving their feedback based on the interview questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Your child is asked to honestly share their thoughts and feelings.

The focus group session will be audio record, and notes will be taken during the discussion. Your child's participation in this study will be within two hours.

#### **III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts**

There are no foreseeable risks in your child's participation.

#### **IV. Benefits**

While there may be no direct benefit to your child from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that your child helped researchers better understand how to successfully educate male students in Jamaica.

#### **V. Confidentiality**

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from your child will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your child's real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings.

Confidentiality may be breached under the following circumstances: (1) when there is suspected child abuse or neglect; and/or (2) when there is a reasonable suspicion that the child presents a serious threat of physical violence to himself or to others unless protective measures are taken.

You will not have access to the data your child gives the researcher.

#### **VI. Compensation**

Your child will receive no compensation for his participation in the study.

#### **VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research Participation in this study is entirely voluntary.**

Your child does not have to participate, and he or she can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you or your child are entitled to, including health care, employment, or school grades. Your child can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

#### **VIII. Contact Information**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

- **Marcia Chin - Principal Investigator**  
Email: marciachin@sandiego.edu  
Phone:
  
- **Dr. Lea Hubbard - Dissertation Committee Chair**  
Email: lhubbard@sandiego.edu  
Phone:

**I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.**

---

Signature of Parent

Date

---

Name of Parent (**Printed**)

Name of Child

---

Signature of Investigator

Date



APPENDIX P

Participants' Demographic Data Form

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FORM**

EVENT &amp; NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

PARTICIPANT ID #: \_\_\_\_\_ STAKEHOLDER GROUP: \_\_\_\_\_

MALE  FEMALE  AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

ETHNICITY: \_\_\_\_\_ RELIGION: \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:

 High School  Pre-University  Undergrad  Graduate  Professional

OCCUPATION: \_\_\_\_\_ TENURE: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF YEARS IN EDUCATIONAL FIELD: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF YEARS INTERACTING WITH MALE STUDENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

ROLE WITH MALE STUDENTS:

 Mentor  Teacher  Guardian  Coach  Other \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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APPENDIX Q

St. Benedict's School Model Interview Guide:

Educational Leaders

## St. Benedict's School Model Interview Guide

### For Jamaican stakeholders in leadership roles:

- **Jamaican School:** School Leaders
- **Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE):** Administrators

*(Adapt questions according to the different stakeholders)*

### Interview Session

*After watching the video presentation of St. Benedict's Preparatory School model, interviewees will be asked the following questions to obtain their perceptions of the school model and the transferability of this educational model used in the United States, to the Jamaican context.*

### Starting Prompts after watching video:

We will start with your general thoughts on what you've just seen:

- I. *What did you observe that made the most impact on you? Why?*
- II. *What was significant in the school's educational model that stood out to you and why was it significant?*
  - ◆ What/Who in the video intrigued you and why?
  - ◆ What /Who bothered or concerned you about the video?

### Specific Questions to guide semi-structured interview:

1. Overall, what do you think of St. Benedict's approach to educating male students?
  - a. Which aspects of the model do you see as most/least attractive?
  - b. What are the advantages/disadvantages?
2. What are your thoughts about whether the model would work for male students in Jamaica and why or why would they not work for Jamaican male students?
3. What are the challenges with your current school model? What kind of education do Jamaican male students seem to need?
4. How and why might St. Benedict's school model support /not support the needs of Jamaican male students? Why?

5. What specific aspects seemed to strike you as effective pedagogy for male students at the Jamaican high school(s) and why?
6. What specific aspects should be considered for implementation in the Jamaican high school(s)? Why do you think so?
7. I guess that you realize that the U.S. and Jamaica context is different. So, could you talk to me about how that might play into the transferability of this U.S. student leadership school model, particularly geared for male students?
  - a. Generally, what would be the social reactions/responses in adopting this U.S. school model?
  - b. Given the longstanding concern for male students' education, what societal norms, beliefs and attitudes do you think might play significantly in the transferability of the model? Why?
  - c. How do you see the social, political and historical climate of the two countries impacting the choice and potential opportunity for successful implementation? (Probe U.S. history of marginalization of Black males and their historical evolution, versus history and current Jamaican context where Blacks are a majority and Jamaican governmental leadership is Black)
  - d. What will be the attitudes, views and openness towards importing this model be from the school, ministry, and government? Why or why not would they implement the model?
  - e. In what ways would the fact that the model is from a Catholic school have any bearings on its acceptance and transferability to Jamaican schools? Why or why not? (Probe for Jesuit versus Benedictine difference for participating Jamaican school)
  - f. Are there any other barriers that would affect the transferability of this model to Jamaica? What are they and why would they affect transferability?
  - g. From your perspective, are there any other contextual factors that would enable or challenge the transferability of the St. Benedict's educational model? Why would they influence the scaling up?

8. What specific modifications of the model, and adaptations by the Jamaican school community participating in this study would be important to implement in order for it to be successful for their Jamaican male students?
  - a. Thinking about how school in Jamaica is structured - would St. Benedict's model fit into the Jamaican school's structure? Why? Why Not?
  - b. What about the educational culture in Jamaican schools – Would the school/ministry culture support the adoption of a student leadership model? How? Why or why not?
  - c. How might the teachers, administrators and parents react to the model? What will they like or dislike and why?
  - d. What would be the challenges in leading such a school model in Jamaica?
  - e. What would be the risks and challenges to implementation? Why?
9. How sustainable do you think the reform would be and what will be necessary to have sustainability? What school or educational policies would need to be put in place?
10. Would this model work for the education of Jamaican male students more generally? Why or why not?
11. How would Jamaican male students react to this model? What would they like about it and what would they not like about it?
12. Is there anything else you want to share that we haven't talked about yet?

APPENDIX R

St. Benedict's School Model Focus Group Guide:

Students, Teachers and Parents

## St. Benedict's School Model Focus Group Guide

### For Jamaican stakeholder groups:

- **Jamaican School:** students, teachers, and parents.

### Prior Participants' Arrival: Room setup.

- ◆ Sort supplies and setup accordingly  
(consent forms, audio recorder, large and small post-its, DVD player & projector, name tags, note pads, pens, markers)
- ◆ Lay out refreshments
- ◆ Arrange room and seating
- ◆ Set-up admin table with supplies
- ◆ Test equipment for audio recording and video playing
- ◆ Post chart with guidelines for focus group

### On Arrival of Participants:

- ◆ Greet participants
- ◆ Register participants' arrival on register and complete Demographic Data form
- ◆ Assign participant identification tag (Participant ID# only)
- ◆ Offer refreshments
- ◆ Guide participants to seating arrangements

### Opening of Session:

- 1) Welcome and thank everyone for volunteering to participate.
- 2) Introduce researcher/facilitator, and administrative support.
- 3) Provide basic guidelines for focus group process, review them with participants, and refer to the chart on the wall to serve as reminders.
  - a. *Voluntary process:* If you feel uncomfortable during the meeting, you have the right to leave or to pass on any question. There is no consequence for leaving.
  - b. *Confidentiality:* Keep conversation "in the room;" do not share the identity of the attendees or what anybody else said outside of the meeting.
  - c. *Respect:* Everyone's ideas will be respected. There will be no judgments about what anyone has to say.
  - d. Everybody has the right to pass on a question and there are no right or wrong answers.



- e. One person talks at a time, and everyone has the right to talk. The facilitator will seek to have balanced contributions from participants.
  - f. Cell phone use not allowed during session.
  - g. It is okay to take a personal break if needed or to help self to refreshments.
  - h. Session will be audio taped and notes will be taken during session, but individual names or identifying information will not be attached to comments.
- 4) Hand out the consent form.
- a. Ask participants to review, ask any questions, and then sign the consent form. Collect forms and offer a copy of the consent form to participants.

### **Official Start of Session**

- 1) Provide brief overview of the study and goals for the focus group or interview:  
 “We are meeting with you to explore an educational model that uses leadership as a strategy to improve the educational outcomes of high school male students, and investigate its relevance and transferability to Jamaican schools. We would like to find out the viability of adapting the strategies in this model that is employed by a high school in the United States, for use in Jamaican schools, by examining what could (and should) be implemented in Jamaican schools to help improve the educational outcomes of Jamaican high school male students, and why the strategies may or may not be acceptable practices in the Jamaican context.”
- ◆ The format of the session is:
    - Presentation of a video of the school model employed by St. Benedict’s Preparatory School located in Newark, New Jersey
    - Discussions as guided by questions from facilitator
  - ◆ The entire session will be run for 60 to 90 minutes.
  - ◆ A formal break will be optional, dependent on participants’ needs after session begins.
- 2) Proceed with session until end, keeping track of time.
- Start with video and then questions. Replay sections of video as needed.**
- Proceed with discussion using focus group questions as a guide.**

**SEE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS ON NEXT PAGE**

*(Adapt questions according to the different focus groups)*

**NB: For opening question after video, request for participants to write down their thoughts on the note pad provided.**

(Note: Writing the responses serves to obtain participants initial thoughts before being influenced by other's viewpoints. Notes to be collected for use in data analysis)

*Give 2 minutes to complete and then invite participants to share what s/he wrote to stimulate discussion.*

**End of Session**

- 1) Before ending session, debrief with participants. Ask for final comments and questions.
- 2) Thank all for participating and close session.

## APPENDIX R cont'd

**St. Benedict's School Model - Focus Group Guide Questions****For Jamaican stakeholder groups:**

- **Jamaican School:** students, teachers, and parents.

*(Adapt questions according to the different stakeholder groups)*

**Interview Session**

*After watching the video presentation of St. Benedict's Preparatory School model, interviewees will be asked the following questions to obtain their perceptions of the school model and the transferability of this educational model used in the United States, to the Jamaican context.*

**Starting Prompts after watching video:**

We will start with your general thoughts on what you've just seen:

- I. *What did you observe that made the most impact on you? Why?*
- II. *What was significant in the school's educational model that stood out to you and why was it significant?*
  - ◆ What/Who in the video intrigued you and why?
  - ◆ What /Who bothered or concerned you about the video?

**Specific Questions to guide semi-structured interview:**

1. Overall, what do you think of St. Benedict's approach to educating male students?
  - a. Which aspects of the model do you see as most/least attractive?
  - b. What are the advantages/disadvantages?
2. What are your thoughts about whether the model would work for male students in Jamaica and why or why would they not work for Jamaican male students?
3. What are the challenges in your current school model? What kind of education do Jamaican male students seem to need?
4. How and why might St. Benedict's school model support /not support the needs of Jamaican male students? Why?

5. What specific aspects seemed to strike you as effective pedagogy for male students at your current school and why?
6. What specific aspects should be considered for implementation at your current school or in Jamaican schools? Why do you think so?
7. I guess that you realize that the U.S and Jamaica context is different. So, could you talk to me about how that might play into the transferability of this U.S student leadership school model, particularly geared for male students?
  - a. Generally, what would be the social reactions/responses in adopting this U.S. school model?
  - b. Given the longstanding concern for male students' education, what societal norms, beliefs and attitudes do you think might play significantly in the transferability of the model? Why?
  - c. How do you see the social, political and historical climate of the two countries impacting the choice and potential opportunity for successful implementation? (Probe U.S. history of marginalization of Black males and their historical evolution, versus history and current Jamaican context where Blacks are a majority and Jamaican governmental leadership is Black)
  - d. What will be the attitudes, views and openness towards importing this model be from the school, ministry, and government? Why or why not would they implement the model?
  - e. In what ways would the fact that the model is from a Catholic school have any bearings on its acceptance and transferability for your current school or other Jamaican schools? Why or why not? (Probe for Jesuit versus Benedictine difference)
  - f. Are there any other barriers that would affect the transferability of this model to Jamaica? What are they and why would they affect transferability?
  - g. From your perspective, are there any other contextual factors that would enable or challenge the transferability of the St. Benedict's educational model? Why would they influence the scaling up?

8. What specific modifications of the model, and adaptations by your current school community would be important to implement in order for it to be successful for Jamaican male students?
  - a. Thinking about how school in Jamaica is structured - would St. Benedict's model fit into your current school structure? Why? Why Not?
  - b. What about the educational culture at your current school – Would the school/ministry culture support the adoption of a student leadership model? How? Why or why not?
  - c. How may the teachers, administrators and parents react to the model? What will they like or dislike and why?
  - d. What would be the challenges in leading such a school model in Jamaica?
  - e. What would be the risks and challenges to implementation? Why?
9. How sustainable do you think the reform would be and what will be necessary to have sustainability? What school or educational policies would need to be put in place?
10. Apart from your current school, but would this model work for the education of Jamaican male students more generally? Why or why not?
11. How would Jamaican male students react to this model? What would they like about it and what would they not like about it?
12. Is there anything else you want to share that we haven't talked about yet?



## Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

**Action Date:** July 19, 2016

*Note: Approval expires one year after this date.*

**Type:**  New Full Review  New Expedited Review  Continuation Review  New Exempt Review  
 Modification

**Action:**  Approved  Approved Pending Modification  Not Approved

**Project Number:** 2016-07-260

**Researcher(s):** Marcia Chin Doc SOLES

Dr. Robert Donmoyer Fac SOLES

**Project Title:** Educating Boys in Jamaica: In Search of New Lens

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

### Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

Dr. Thomas R. Herrinton  
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## Institutional Review Board Project Action Summary

**Action Date:** November 15, 2016 *Note: Approval expires one year after this date.*

**Type:** \_\_\_New Full Review New Expedited Review \_\_\_Continuation Review \_\_\_New Exempt Review  
\_\_\_Modification

**Action:** Approved \_\_\_Approved Pending Modification \_\_\_Not Approved

**Project Number:** 2016-11-090  
**Researcher(s):** Marcia Chin Doc SOLES  
Dr. Lea Hubbard Fac SOLES  
**Project Title:** Educating Boys in Jamaica: In Search of a New Lens – Phase 2

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

### Modifications Required or Reasons for Non-Approval

None

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited review at any time.

Dr. Thomas R. Herrinton  
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