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The Study of Black American Male School Principals' Life Experiences and How They Affect Black American Male Students in Their Schools to Close the Academic Achievement Gap

Linda Palija

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The Study of Black American Male School Principals' Life Experiences and How They Affect
Black American Male Students in Their Schools to Close the Academic Achievement Gap

Linda Gray Palija

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:

Carla L. Sparks
Chair, Dissertation Committee

Dawn Coffey
Member, Dissertation Committee

Jamie Bell Butler
Dean's Representative

Harrington Pals
Director, Doctoral Program

R Muller
Dean, National College of Education

June 4, 2020
Date Approved

The Study of Black American Male School Principals' Life Experiences and How They
Affect Black American Male Students in Their Schools to Close the Academic
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Linda Gray Palija
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education

National College of Education
National Louis University

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was conducted to inform the present educational system concerning what is known about Black American male former principals and district leaders and how they affected Black American male students in closing the academic achievement gap. The context of this inquiry was an examination of three Black American male former principals/district leaders in one region of the United States, and the study focused on how they used their life and professional experiences to help Black American male students in their schools to close the academic achievement gap. Three themes were acknowledged in this investigation: the impact of having a strong Black American male in their lives, ensuring effective professional development was offered in the schools they led, and the importance of a diverse and culturally competent faculty that included Black teachers.

PREFACE

My dissertation is titled “The Study of Black American Male School Principals’ Life Experiences and How They Affect Black American Male Students in Their Schools to Close the Academic Achievement Gap.” This study was conducted using three former public-school principals. It has been written to fulfill the graduation requirements of the Educational Leadership Program at National Louis University. I was engaged in researching and writing this dissertation since April 2018.

The project was undertaken because of the plight of the Black American male students widening the academic achievement gap in public schools in a region of the United States. The research was intensive and allowed me to discover methods that these former principals used in their schools to help Black American male students to close the academic achievement gap. Common themes were discovered, and common survey results were examined, and a solid determination was revealed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has truly been a journey of great patience and commitment. I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee, Dr. Carla Sparks and Dr. Dawn Coffin; thank you for being such an important part of my dissertation. Your guidance has enabled me to accomplish this goal. Thank you, Dr. Sparks, for helping me through the ups and downs of this extensive work. Your leadership has been inspiring and greatly appreciated. I would like to also acknowledge the support I received from new classmates I met during this journey. Maria, Angie, Trudy, and Ron, your words of insight were deeply felt and received. I would like to thank the participants in this study, who took time out of their lives to allow me to have a glimpse into their experiences and be able to relate them to the needs of Black American male students, present and future. May your lives be enriched and may you prosper continuously.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the maker and finisher of all things. It was He who started me on this journey, and it was He who graciously gave me strength and enabled me to complete this journey, may He be praised. I would like to thank my husband Michael for his patience, motivation, and sacrifice of time. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents Boisy and Thelma Gray who fought the good fight and finished the course and inspired me to have the desire to want to succeed in life. Lastly, to all my family, friends and colleagues who have supported me along the way. You helped me in ways you could not imagine. You are all so AMAZING!

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
PREFACE	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
DEDICATION	vii
List of Figures	x
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction	1
Problem Background	2
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Questions	4
Definition of Terms	5
The Educational Significance	5
CHAPTER TWO	7
Literature Review	7
Historical Perspective	9
Race and Gender in the Context of Education	14
Leadership in the Black American Community	17
Black American Male Leadership	20
Black Student Achievement	22
Black Principal Leadership Impact on Student Achievement	25
Significance of Hiring Black American Male Teachers	27
Professional Development for Educators	29
Academic Performance of Black American Students	31
Black American Teacher-Student Relationships	33
CHAPTER THREE	38
Methodology	38
Research Design	38
Participants	38
Instrumentation	39
Methodological Assumptions	39
Limitations	42
Delimitations	42
Procedures	43
Data Collection and Analysis	43
CHAPTER FOUR	45
Data Analysis and Results	45
Research Questions	46
Data Collection Procedures	46
Participants' Background	47
Data Analysis	48

Emergent Themes	49
Theme 1: Strong Black American Male Influence	52
Theme 2: Professional Development	53
Theme 3: Black American Male Students need Black American Leaders	54
Significance of Theme 1	54
Significance of Theme 2	55
Significance of Theme 3	55
Summary	56
CHAPTER FIVE	58
Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	58
How Black American Former Principals Responded	59
Research Questions	59
Research Question 1	60
Research Question 2	60
Research Question 3	61
Discussion of Themes	63
Theme 1: Strong Black American Male Influences	63
Theme 2: Professional Development	64
Theme 3: Black American male students need Black American leaders	66
Recommendations and Research Suggestions	67
Future Research Suggestions	69
Reflection	69
Conclusion	72
References	74
Appendices	88
Appendix A: Individual Participant: Survey Questions	89
Appendix B: Individual Participant: Interview Questions	90
Appendix C: Participant Interview Transcription	91

Figures

Figure 1: Survey Results for All Three Participants49

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The United States of America is composed of many different races and cultures. The history the United States has defined itself as a welcoming and open society for all. America is considered as the great melting pot and all are welcomed. However, this openness does not seem to be truthful for how every culture and race is treated. The treatment of some cultures and races is not always pleasant. To be specific, history has shown that Black Americans have been mistreated on an extremely high level (Booker, 2000). Slavery was the beginning of the mistreatment of Black Americans. The mistreatment continued with laws that were made specifically to shame and embarrass the Black American, such as The Jim Crow Laws. The mistreatment also continued with the refusal to allow Black Americans common freedoms, such as the right to own property and the right to vote. In present day society, Black Americans are still underemployed and being left behind in the educational system (Booker, 2000).

The purpose of Jim Crow Laws was to separate White and Black people. Restaurants, hospitals, schools, prisons, and the like were required to have separate facilities for Whites and Blacks. One famous example of this is the bus segregation laws. Rosa Parks was required, as a Black American, to sit at the back of the bus. She did not, of course, and that helped lead to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Jim Crow laws did not only apply to southern states. Nearly half of the fifty states in the U. S. had segregation laws. For example, Wyoming had laws prohibiting marriage between White persons and people from other races. In California, Black people were not allowed to testify for or against White people. Today, any laws designed to segregate any racial

group of people are referred to as Jim Crow laws. They have been used to segregate Asians, American Indians, and other racial groups in American history.

Problem Background

Black Americans, especially males, have been made to believe that they are less than others are in the American society. After slaves were “freed” during the Civil War, slave masters did not allow them to leave their plantations. They took advantage of the Black Americans’ inability to read, write, or understand what was happening around them, and slave masters kept them in bondage (Booker, 2000). This only proved that the White race did not want to let their so-called power over the Black American be broken. Whites most likely knew that when true knowledge was given to the Black American male, he would gain the ability to take his place as a leader in society (Booker, 2000).

Even when isolation and prejudice were not mandated by regulation, they were so accepted as a part of everyday life, that they were tolerated and demonstrated by society in the United States of America. Unfair treatment of Black Americans was so ordinary that even when people wanted to confront it, they were often looked upon as troublemakers. Societal institutions made it noticeably clear that anyone who accepted Black Americans as a part of their family or in a friendly manner would be ostracized from the rest of the community. For example, if an owner of a local grocery store befriended a Black American person, and it became known to any one in a leadership position, the store would not get any further business and soon have to close down. This treatment was done legally and accepted by all (Booker, 2000).

Black male students in many states live in the smallest possible levels of educational access and achievement and the highest occurrence of scholastic segregation.

Black males demonstrate lower achievement rates than do their White male and all ethnic female equivalents on such procedures as high school graduation, undergraduate registration, degree fulfillment, graduate program admittance and career qualification achievement. Mostly, Black male pupils in many states have greater amounts of interruption, dismissal, corporal abuse, and rash school quitting than do other pupils in the educational environment. These academic difficulties contribute to the highest rates of being without a job renowned amid the black men in numerous places in the United States. Additionally, these educational barriers exacerbate a host of community crises related to the Black male inhabitants, among which criminal activity and misbehavior are perhaps the most troubling (Brown, 2004).

The repetitive example of achievement problems categorizes Black males as the pupil group whose needs are least served by the educational system. Although many individual Black males successfully negotiate the public elementary and secondary school system, the negotiation of those students by the aggregate Black male population is often marked by failure and the truncation of educational experience. Not surprisingly, Black males who do not succeed in negotiating the ladder of educational achievement may develop less than positive conceptualizations of themselves and be unable to contribute to the general society what their beginning, innate potential may have promised (Brown, 2005).

It is not adequate merely to replicate the oft-heeded condemnation that American schools are publicly central organizations conveying moderate ideals using average educators. Schools preserve substantial authority to monitor and regulate the potential life opportunities of all persons who join their institution. Black males in addition discover

that the importance, group, and programs of the schools they attend drastically modify their scholastic success, their vision of identity, and their successive financial and societal outlook. The second-rate scores attained by Black male students at all stages of schooling, the deceptive lessening in the quantity of Black males partaking in advanced instruction, and the deficiency of scholarly accomplishment equivalent to the Black males' quantity at every single level of instruction in various states in America, all these have underwritten to the wisdom of apprehension expressed by the educational, financial, and governmental choice producers in the United States of America (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 2017).

Purpose of Study

In an effort to understand the experiences of Black American male principals in public schools, and how their backgrounds were affecting the Black American male students in their schools concerning bridging the academic achievement gap, I did this qualitative study. In order to enhance the study, I employed the research techniques of interviews and surveys, to explore, understand, and profile the leadership experiences of three Black American male principals. This study generated in-depth portraits of three Black American male principals that helped me understand their experiences as they related to the Black American male students in their schools.

Research Questions

Based on the rationale stated above, the following questions guided my research:

1. How did these Black American males rise to leadership in the public-school environment?

2. How are these Black American male leaders impacting their schools on a personal level?
3. What is the impact these Black American males are having on bridging the academic achievement gap between Black American male students in their educational environment?

Definition of Terms

Black American - United States, American citizens of and or belonging to an African Descent within an American ethnic group who are of a non-Hispanic origin (Dictionary, 2010a).

Leadership - A procedure by which leaders inspire supporters on the road to an ambition, influencing through ideals visions and interaction communicating to people their value and prospective so plainly that they can see it within their own soul (Covey, 2004).

Caucasian - White skinned person of European origin. These persons are of the lighter of the White race of people, of European origin (Dictionary, 2010b).

The Educational Significance

The educational significance of this study is Black American males have been portrayed with negative stereotypes in American society as well as other places in the world for many decades. They have been shown in the media in negative contexts. Even among Hollywood casting directors, Black American males are often portrayed as being violent and causing harm to others (Turner, 2018). Research has shown many Black American male students have home environments that are not healthy in the form of

education, positive interactions, as well as communicating effectively (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevarez, 2017).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In today's society, leadership is known as the way to allow persons in a group to develop situations which enable them to accomplish the institution's positive end results (Toll, 2017). Leaders are faced with various challenges that require different ways of making their environment a success. Effective leadership is mandatory for any organization to be beneficial to society. True leadership establishes a purpose involving instruction and knowledge that would accomplish the hope of students, parents, and all other stakeholders (Zhu, Zhu, & Johnson, 2019).

All over the world, leaders have been required to interact and meet the needs of other cultures within their dominant culture. The idea of multiculturalism within a thriving society has been brought to the forefront throughout the world and especially in education due to global interactions. This global impact on our society has begun to impinge on our education system and upon the lives of all who live on Earth (Franco, Ott, & Robles, 2011). Additional multicultural leadership support groundwork is being provided by companies to their corporate leadership in order to keep up with the global environment and the changes in the world today. Such leadership has been determined a necessity at most every area and level of our society (Kelchner, 2016).

Leaders are more and more inundated with cultures that are not representative of their own culture. They are forced to recognize racial histories that may be outside of their comfort zones. As leaders move from one geographical area to another, they are increasingly in need of guidance to help them to effectively manage the cultural

differences and provide a responsive organizational interaction to multiple unique cultural needs (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015).

Leadership positions in an organization such as an educational organization may be sought as a means to command respect and higher wages as well as a means to effect change and provide better and more effective organizational practice. In education, the desire to contribute to the good of society and help people is often at the forefront of a person's desire to serve in a leadership position. Many who are in those positions, however, do not understand the difference between being a leader and being a manager (Covey, 2004). Managers micromanage things, not people. They lack vision, and in the educational environment only see what is in front of them at that moment. They do not include all stakeholders and they usually only include a small group of people that they view as important to them personally. This type of leadership is usually very futile (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010).

According to Hao and Yazdanifard (2015), effective leadership is accepted even more in the educational arena and used to increase the desired result of graduating students. Effective leadership is having the power of encouragement on others in your circumstances. Effective leadership allows one to encourage others and obtain the buy in needed to bring about the complete task of the institute. Communication is one of the most important characteristics of an effective leader. When a leader communicates with a clear, precise, and achievable goal, members of his or her organization will, more than likely, respond in a positive and encouraging manner. Effective leaders build communities of involved and active membership (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Good leaders have to share their principles, expectations, and trustworthiness for their environments, so

that their fellow workers can endorse the common ideas and yield honorable merchandise (Covey, 2004).

However, when it comes to Black leaders in education, or Black male leaders, they have not been received with the same dignity and respect as their White counterparts. Black male leaders have had to endure horrific treatment, and in the educational setting, they are often looked upon as just the discipline go to person, of the Black students (Kafele, 2012). When a Black student gets in trouble and a Black leader is present, though rarely, the student is usually taken to them for discipline and this is considered the best way to use a Black administrator in the school setting. If the Black administrator does not punish the Black student harshly, it is looked upon as giving the student a break because he or she is Black (Pitman, 2010).

Historical Perspective

Black Americans in the United States of America customarily perceived academic achievement as a way to independence. Black Americans were barred from being taught to read and write, nevertheless some persons were proficient to develop remarkably simple abilities. In the days of servitude, males and females who had educational abilities were looked upon as distinguished representatives of the slave population and these persons were given the mission of teaching others in the slave households (Sambol-Tosco, 2004).

The mentality of citizens was fixated on the Black American males exhibiting a brutal personality and the social order structure gave endless reminders that Black males were believed to be a less significant class (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). The humiliation of Black Americans, especially males, remained many years following the

adoption of the thirteenth Amendment and bondage stopped in 1865 (Becker, 1999). Even after bondage ended, the slave owners continued to use the Black people as their slaves. The “masters” took advantage of the fact that the Black Americans in bondage did not have any means of communication and did not understand that their servitude had been ended by the government (Booker, 2000).

In the 1900s, Black Americans were kept in their inferior status because they were not allowed to vote, they were not allowed to own their own land, and they often were not able to find employment. This was because many of the White people would not hire them (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). There were often no work prospects inside the Black American communities, so Black Americans had to try to find employment outside of their communities. However, finding work beyond their neighborhoods was virtually unfeasible and having a distinct scholastic method delayed growth (Lomotey, 2010).

The academic progression of having isolated educational environments with unsatisfactory subsidy, workforce, and supplies continued until 1951. This was when a groundbreaking court case went before the United States Supreme Court, *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education*. This case was acknowledged as a highly crucial supreme court decision in the record of academic excellence (Blanchett, Brantlinger, & Shealey, 2005). In Topeka Kansas in 1951, a group of 13 parents, standing in representation for 20 of their sons and daughters, entered into a court case against the school board of education (Alvarez & Brown, 2002). The foundation of the complaint was the occurrence of the exclusion of Black students from equal and adequate academic environments; the contention was that the education environments provided for Black students were not equivalent and were not equitable in comparison with those provided to White students.

At work in this inequity was the dogma of retrogressive race separation enacted to the detriment of the Black children. One of the significant arguments in the case was supported by the testimony of Kenneth Clark, a psychologist, whose direction of a psychological assessment of the students impacted by the inequitable environments demonstrated the lack of positive educational provision within the Black American schoolchildren's environment that were provided in the White schoolchildren's environments (Clark & Clark, 1947). Attorneys in the lawsuit claimed that the isolated and unfair academic environments in which Black American students were taught reflected a perception of greater Black societal dependency on basic education and contributed to practices that reflected a lowering of the Black students' academic and societal worth (Blanchett et al., 2005). On May 17, 1954, the federal court verdict was "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (National Archives and Records Administration, n.d., p. 1). The fundamental nature of this verdict was that separation exclusively established on the basis of cultural background robs minority school children of the same prospects. This was deemed true even if a variety of quantifiable considerations seem to be identical (Blanchett et al., 2005).

School assimilation of White with Black students was not a simple procedure throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The notion of Black American school children to be taught together with White students in practice was extremely limited in acceptance (Lomotey, 2010). While there was a typical group of provinces in the South and frontier territories that integrated calmly, in other places, White opposition to educational integration caused public insubordination and cruel altercations (America's Families and Living Arrangements, 2010). Disturbances, animosity, offenses against persons, and

cultural appellations were very frequent in the country during this time. In the 1950s and 1960s, ethnic friction was prominent and a normal part of day to day life (Brunner & Haney, 2007).

Blacks and Whites balked at integration. In the Black neighborhoods, assimilation was not flawless. Angry mobs of White people were refusing to abide by the court's ruling. The White students and their parents waved racially motivated signs and yelled racial slurs at the Black students. Black families wanted to have the same opportunities for a good education as the White students were afforded. Many of the Black students were assaulted and injured by the mobs (National Park Service, 2006). Discord and humiliation shadowed Black Americans and no matter where they were, discrimination was still strong, yet most families endured and continued living their lives as usual.

Although unification and separate but equal started to be implemented over time, new methods were being used to divide and discriminate among Black and White people (Lomotey, 2010). As integration was being enforced, many Black pupils continued to undergo discrimination in different forms. The Black pupils were identified in overreaching numbers as exceptional learners requiring entrance into special education programs. Some, especially Black American males, encountered unethical or overly administered disciplinary and punishment practices. Some students were assigned to classes taught by uncertified educators and low-level course content classes resulting in much poorer educational experiences (Lomotey, 2010, p. 408). These diminishing practices of more subtle discrimination permitted educational institutions to say they were educating Black American students, though students were not being provided equitable education.

Usually placement of students into special education classes was prompted by the classroom teacher (Lomotey, 2010). This practice was a means that allowed the teachers to segregate Black students to special education classrooms and tailor their class roll in such a way to only include students who were seen as more desirable and well behaved. Over-classifying, often under false pretenses, many, especially Black students, as special needs students resulted in those students becoming ill-prepared for assimilation into society, higher education, and the workforce. The normative practice of inequitable academic and social curriculum, regardless of the means, undermined the opportunities of many Black students (Blanchett et al., 2005).

The unfair treatment of Black American students did not end with these actions. In the 1900s, there was much debate among the Black community regarding Black education. Two proponents at the forefront of the debate were Mr. W. E. B. Du Bois and Mr. Booker T. Washington. These two Black educators differed on approaches for Black communal and monetary advancement; however, they did agree that all Blacks needed to be educated in a correct way (Public Broadcasting Station, p. 1).

Mr. Washington was the founder of Tuskegee Institute, which still exists today and is considered an Historically Black College/University (HBCU). This educational institution continues to thrive with a reputation for excellence in education for students Black and White. Another prominent figure during that time was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He graduated high school at the age of 15. He then attended Morehouse College and graduated at age 19. He graduated with his Ph. D. in Theology from Boston University at age 26 (Brunner & Haney, 2007). He came on the civil rights scene during an incident

evolving Mrs. Rosa Parks, who was arrested for refusing to allow a White passenger on a city bus to take her seat in the front of the bus.

These activists continued fighting for the rights of Black Americans until their dying day. However, racism still continues to plague communities today. The securing of equality and equity are still being pursued by Black people. Black students are still experiencing the effects of the inequitable racial systems and practices present in educational institutions during the 1950s and 1960s in the classrooms they enter today (Wei, 2004, p. 2).

Race and Gender in the Context of Education

Race and gender inequities are shameful practices that seem to endure in the educational arena more often than many believe. Black American students, particularly Black American males, are often deprived of greater educational opportunities by the misuse of race and gender discrimination in the educational system (Wright, 2009). Often Black students are not treated with the care and understanding that is needed for them to be successful. The idea that a Black male may be identified by their race and gender as a potential problem and as in need of censure or segregation in the school setting is happening today. Many see the Black American male manhood as threatening and without investigation judge them in a negative light (Spencer, Harpalani, Fegley, Dell'Angelo, & Seaton, 2002). The way the Black American male dresses, how he speaks, and the music he listens too, is often viewed by others as challenging their authority, especially in the educational environment (Davis, 2005).

Cuffee, 2008 suggest that dress, music, and speech patterns of some Black male students are forms of coping devices . Most educational personnel are not aware of this

and treat Black American males as outsiders who are rebelling against the larger, predominantly White, societal establishment. Black students are often more harshly disciplined or overly disciplined in a spiraling negative cycle of censure. When Black American males are treated in this negative manner, they, in turn, often do not view school as a positive environment (Cuffee, 2008). The negative treatment is detrimental, often leading to low academic achievement. Once the feeling of being denied acceptance and opportunity in the school setting, the Black American male usually feeds into what is considered his path of destruction, and he becomes what he thinks he is supposed to become, a criminal (Oliver, 2003).

Educational communities are much too quick to accept this prevalent attitude of negativity toward the Black American male and just give up on him (Dance, 2002). Usually they just ignore the concerns of the Black American male and close their eyes in hopes that he will just go away. Of course, it does not; it just escalates and becomes more of a problem than they could ever have imagined (Davis, 2005). The Black American male becomes disenfranchised and even when he tries to do what he thinks the educational system wants him to do, he is still rejected and shown that he is considered less than many of his White counterparts (Entman & Rojecki, 2000).

The traditional view of the Black American male continues to show inequality in the American school system (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). Even when new teachers are given the challenge of teaching Black American males, they often give up on them very quickly when it comes to their academic performance. Many attempt to get special education services for them right away and have them removed from their classes. Teachers often seem quick to complain that the Black American males disturb their

classroom environment and prevent other students from getting a quality education (Dance, 2002).

The research shows that Black American males disproportionately make up more than half of the enrollment of the special education classes in many public schools. Black American males are identified by their teachers as “slow learners” or as having learning disabilities of some form (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). Most schools are guilty of having Black American males in many of their special education classes. Even when the Black American males are labeled as having a learning disability, they are still treated with less respect than the White students in their classes. It is often reported that Black American males are the loudest in the classroom, will not do their work, and have the most referrals for being defiant (Davis, 2005).

Black American males have struggled with their identities within the dominant culture of the nation. The identity for Black American males is also a challenge not just with the White community, but how Black Americans get along with other Black Americans (Hecht et al., 2003). Some light skin Black Americans have been noted to have issues or discriminate against darker-skinned Black Americans. This type of racial mentality came about from the slavery environment when the “masters” would favor lighter skinned individuals. They would pit lighter skinned slaves against darker skinned slaves; a practice that became ingrained in many society groups of Blacks (Booker, 2000).

Black American males contend with their desire to be accepted as themselves in the educational environment. They are faced with a cultural expectation of low academic achievement. Their educational experiences are marked by the fact that they are different

from others in their classroom (Conchas, Lin, Osequera, & Drake, 2015). The Black American male is often looked upon as weak and shiftless. Many times, they are treated this way as well. Their race, social class, and gender are often considered detrimental in the educational environment (Cuffee, 2008).

Leadership in the Black American Community

Black American leadership is not only a depraved idea of some White Americans; it seems that this belief is held in the Black American settings as well. Unfortunately, many Americans are not used to seeing Black American males in positive roles, such as workers, responsible fathers, husbands, or as positive community leaders (Demby, 2017). It is vital to have Black American male leadership to revive the community.

In the world of Black American leadership in the community, bible-based faith has continually been an essential part of the Black American population. This is due to the racism and discrimination in the United States, that African American bible institutes have were formed (Reese & Brown, 1995). The institution did not necessarily form based on religious need in the Black community, but the mistreatment of Black Americans causes this institution to be established to help defend the race of Black people from a racist society. The black church took on more and more responsibility as the situations with racial divide continued to widen (Guron, Hatchett & Jackson, 1989).

In the community of Black Americans, the church showed its leadership in many ways. When Black people needed to find comfort and stability, they would turn to the church to find it. The Black church has opened it doors for a type of release of pressure, poverty and has given hope to all who enter in (Cone, 1970). In the black American society, the church Preachers are able to hold together the Black community by being

able to identify with their conditions, emotional states and their future hope to make things better in their lives and their family's lives (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

For example, preachers would often preach about how Heaven was so much better than Earth. They would state that when you get there you will be at rest and not have to worry about being in physical pain or being able to have enough money to pay your bills. Everything would be simply fine in Heaven. This type of sermon or speech was reassuring to the Black American people who attended the service and gave them a type of peace to get through another day (Calhoun-Brown, 1999).

In today's society, the Black church leaders have to still keep their involvement in the political arena for the black community. This is because living conditions for Black people are not getting better (Gaines, 2010). At times the treatment of Black Americans seem to become intolerable, but when things happen in society that continues to demonstrate racism it tends to remind you of the 60's when the racial disparities were at their highest. Black church leaders put themselves in the gap to help Black people get justice. Black church leaders help the Black community stand tall in the face of difficult times and will remain vigilant as always (Gaines, 2010).

Many believe that there are no longer Black American leaders who have the ability to guide the community, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. Dubois (Booker, 2000). Even with the election of former President Barack Obama, Black American community leaders still have less influence and more challenges. However, this does not mean that Black American leaders are no longer in our society. Today Jessie Jackson, Jr., Martin Luther King III, and former

President Obama, are still paving the way and continuing the fight for social justice while serving the needs of their communities (Lacina, 2018).

The Black Panther motion picture was considered, by some, a motion picture that aided with cultural and socialization concerns for Black Americans. The movie showed an entire culture of African people that were leaders and warriors in a society of greatness. This was also supported by the Black community and was well received by a great amount of the public in America (Turner, 2018). However, Hollywood casting directors and writers still have ensured many roles for criminals played by Black American males. Hollywood casting directors and writers continue to show Black American males as having less authority than women, more gang affiliations, more unemployment, and more major crime escapades.

These negative representations of Black American males have gone beyond the United States. Many countries have similar outlook as many in the United States in their belief that Black American males should be expected to serve in less than desirable roles in society. These images corrupt the way the Black American males are perceived and may indeed cause them psychological harm presently, and in the future (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). These negative ideas influence Black American leaders today as well as Black Americans as a whole (Kohli et al., 2017). Studies about Black American males have mainly been focused on them as a dying race, as being violent, causing criminal activity and a major contributor in the criminal justice system (Figueiredo-Brown, Ringler, & James, 2015).

Black American males' roles in the family is often looked upon as violent, lazy or being a deviant in the community (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). As research findings state,

Black American males are more likely portrayed in relation to negative, violent behaviors than to positive behaviors (Turner, 2018). Countless Americans have taken it upon themselves to show Black American males in the most degrading and negative manner possible. Many times, the focus began as positive attributes of Black American males; however, they often end up relating more to stereotypes. For example, the Black American male may have a role where he is a honorable father figure in the beginning of the movie, but by the middle of the movie it shows him as leading a double life as a gangster or cheating on his wife with another woman. Hollywood writing directors rarely show a Black American male with a high paying job and having a successful life. This causes the Black youth to view Blacks in a destructive setting and thing that they should become what they see on the movie screen.

Black American Male Leadership

Black American males have in most cases been denied their proper role in society in the United States of America as well as other places in the world for many years. In the early 19th century Black American leaders faced racial inequality. Even when Black Americans were “free” they were still treated unfairly (Clayton & Johnson, 2011). In most areas of the country, Black Americans were not allowed to do common things such as voting, eating in public places, and riding in the front of the city bus (Wei, 2004, p. 1).

There were a few documented studies about Black American males as quality leaders nationally, as well as in the classroom. However, very few of them spoke to the exceptional qualities and skills that Black American male leadership represented. Moreover, the achievement of cross-cultural networking skills, and the quest of community accuracy, via leadership and student organizations association, were reported

by the participants and were linked to cultural individuality expansion theories (Harris, 2003). According to Jackson, 2019, a passion for activism and service in the Black American community were key elements in ensuring equal treatment in the courts as well as in the employment and educational systems.

Black Americans have been steady in their views on leadership over many years.

Black American leadership has been mainly about the listed traits that follow:

1. Black American leadership contributes to the positive living conditions of the community in areas of public life, and accountability for promotions.
2. Black American leadership supports relations at the provincial, neighboring, and nationwide domains.
3. Black American leadership is continued by linking with concerns about the progress of the Black American environment. (Jackson, 2019, pp. 1-2)

It has become apparent in the Black American society that many of those who came through the struggle of the 1960s and prior did not pass the knowledge on to the present generation (Austin, 2018). Many young Black American males and females do not understand why there is a holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or why an African American history month is needed (Demby, 2017). Not very many of their families have taken the time to share with them about how Black Americans had to live in the 1800s through the 1960s. They did not pass on the facts that laws were made against Black Americans, such as the Jim Crow Laws (Jackson, 2019). This information related to Black American male leadership because Black people had to build themselves up and have the courage to become leaders and discard the discouragement of White people who said they could not become leaders.

The common state of Black males is not hopeful. This cluster of people has encountered elevated levels of fatality, imprisonment, being without a job, and minimal amounts of university completion levels (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006, p. 12). According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, “in 2006 only 7.5% of Black American males graduated from college, 19.5% were unemployed double that of other nationalities, more than 40% were imprisoned, 10% being between the ages of 18 and 29” (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006, p. 12). Black males will have an even sadder future to look forward to if these numbers continue in this dismal trend.

Historically, Black American males have been at a hardship. Black American males have been exposed to enslavement, refusal of the right to vote, violence and loathe felonies. They have been unlawfully incarcerated, not allowed to own land, and experienced many other wrongdoings (Kornblum, 2008, p. 304-313). Citizens of Black American lineage have confronted a long record of cruelty, shame, and repression. Throughout the years of oppression, to Jim Crow laws and even in the current-day civilization, White people have been considered as outstanding and all knowing (Kornblum, 2008, p. 206).

Black Student Achievement

The Black American male youth of all ages have been suffering within academics and society because they have lacked the influence of positive male figures (Johnson, 2008, p. 3). Inside urban communities, families have been plagued by unemployment, poverty, incarceration, expulsion, and school drop-out rates climbing (Jiminez, 2008).

Some of the major advances in academic achievement produced by Black school children happened around the same time the integration proposals applied their ultimate

impacts. When the practice of desegregation began decreasing after the 1980s, the achievement scores of Black students declined (Lorsen & Orfield, 2002). While not proving causation, this correlation suggests that desegregation contributed to academic gains for Blacks (Losen & Orfield, 2002). The recent attention to achievement for Black students has confirmed many disparities in student achievement across subject areas and student academic outcomes between Black and White populations that were present before court enforced integration still persist today.

As a result of targeted interventions in schools, Black students achieved higher levels of academic success than the prior two decades combined. Unfortunately, the achievement gains made by Black and Hispanics from the enforcement of integration in the previous years on national measures dissipated. Ironically, these declines occurred during one of the most aggressive eras of school reform in the nation's history. These reforms included a number of comprehensive school curriculum reform models (Bery, 2014).

Though prior research suggested that principals have had important effects on school outcomes, the need to address the gap, especially when it comes to Black male students, is especially profound given that by 2050, 50% of the school age population will be non-White, 26% of all children will live in poverty, and 8% will speak a first language other than English in their home (Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman, & Chan, 2015). There has been a growing increase in the number of children of color in public schools in the U. S. Most principals have come from the teaching ranks and relatively fewer Blacks have been entering the teaching and educational leadership profession. Even when Blacks have entered teaching and leadership positions in schools,

they have often been used as the disciplinarian to try to keep the Black students in line (Bery, 2014).

Schott's 50-state report series chronicled the hurdles and systemic challenges in the national education system that have resulted in frustrating, racially identifiable gaps in graduation rates, including disparities in school discipline and inequitable school supports. The 2015 report illustrated the inexcusable degree to which Black male students have been neglected by our nation's inequitable public education system. The report's latest estimates for national public high school graduation rates were 59% for Black male students, 65% for Latino males, and 80% for White, non-Latino males. The gap between Black and White male students increased from 19 percentage points in the 2009-2010 school year to an estimated 21 percentage points in the 2012-2013 school year (Schott Foundation, 2015).

While the success of principals in schools in the U. S. has been undeniably influenced by socio-economic issues and demographics, it has proved difficult to determine the nature and extent of the effect of such factors on student achievement. This is because they are overly complex, and research in these areas often ends in doubt or dispute (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2016). Although Black schools were commonly lacking in funding, research suggested that the environment of the segregated school often had some redeeming qualities that helped Black students learn in spite of the neglect their schools received from school boards comprised largely of White board members. It appeared that White school leaders did not see the need for better school material for Blacks, but because they had Black teachers that were able to relate to them, Black students were still making academic progress (Kafele, 2012).

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and its pressure on all schools to demonstrate annual yearly progress in meeting high standards of student performance required urban principals to accomplish what few have been able to do or face removal (Craciun & Snow-Renner, 2002). Since that time, the more current policy consists of Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). The purpose of ESSA is to make sure public schools provide a quality education for all students. ESSA gives states more of a say for how schools account for student achievement (U. S. Department of Education, 2015).

Black Principal Leadership Impact on Student Achievement

Leadership in the schools of America has been compiled of many aspects. In the 1700s and 1800s, Black people were not allowed to have an education. Black people decided that they would provide their own schools, and they only had the ability to use Black teachers. This was because White people did not consider Black people as equal humans, so the White people would not share any of their resources to help the Black people with their educational endeavors. In other words, Black teachers, Black principals, and Black students were learning from one another and the learning was beneficial (Booker, 2000).

Black males in school leadership in the school environment has been limited. Often there have not been enough Black teachers in the schools and very few were taking the path to become school leaders. When Black principals, especially males, were allowed to go into leadership roles, they were often hindered in many ways. This means that Black males were usually not recognized publicly, and therefore, not able to be

accepted into roles that would ultimately benefit the schools (Woodson, Jones, & Gowder, 2020).

Even when Black males were allowed to become school leaders, they were often given schools with students of low socioeconomic status. This was due to many of the students being labeled as Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students. The ESE students' needed additional help from within their schools and outside sources of the educational system (Kafele, 2012). Other studies have shown how relationships with students were affected by having educational leaders who looked like the students or leaders who had the same or similar backgrounds as students, when it came to race, and were able to benefit the student achievement (Bell, 2010). Studies have also shown when it comes to Black and Brown students, they were able to make significant progress if they had Black and Brown teachers and administrators in their schools to mentor them. Significant progress meant students were able to make grades that allowed them to have a grade point average that met the requirements of the school district in which they were registered (Karadag, Bektas, Cogaltay & Yalcin, 2015).

Numerous studies have been fashioned regarding school leadership and scholar success. A 2015 study revealed that the concentrations of leadership ought to be centered on specified traits and skills, and these needed to be reframed so that they emphasised obligations instead of posture for school rank heads (Karadag et al., 2015). Educational regions with vastly successful principals were linked with learners' success. School leaders could only be as valuable as they were permitted and actively involved in the school, neighborhood, and district functions. Heads of schools who had elevated

measurements of pupils of color were more likely to have heightened tasks (Karadag et al., 2015).

Significance of Hiring Black American Male Teachers

For many years in America, the teaching establishment has belonged to the women of the world. It was once considered if you were a woman you could become a nurse or a teacher, and males were not looked upon as either in the workforce. However, as times have changed, men have been made a part of both environments, but have not become dominant in the fields. In the educational field, men, especially Black American males, have not been present enough to represent the Black student population that are exemplified in schools (Mitchell, 2010).

The scholastic environment and pupil surroundings in the United States of America has been advancing. In a study published in 2005, 41% of the pupils in this nation's community school structures were subgroups and the prediction was that more subgroups would be attending community schools than ever before (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Nevertheless, the education vocation has not been competent in adjusting to keep up with the challenges of the ever-modifying pupil environment (Arends, Winitzky, & Tannenbaum, 2001, p. 21). White educators represented 90% of the educators in the teaching job market, Black American educators represented seven percent, and the remaining three percent were people of Spanish American and Asian American decent (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). Black American male educators represented only two percent of the educational work force (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

Eighty-two percent of all community educators in America were women, with males representing 18% of the education work force (National Center for Education Information, 2005) The educational environments ought to make a rigorous determination to seek after Black American males and place them in employment. Introducing new educators with modern concepts, tactics, and procedures can invigorate an educational environment (Camera, 2018). Accomplishing a cultural equilibrium in the education work force has been vital in an endeavor to enhance educational execution, improve interaction, and accelerate egalitarianism (Henze, Norte, Slather, Walker, & Katz, A., 2002, p. 86).

The shortage of men in teaching has resulted from having minimal prominence and wages; the view of being an educator has been it is a ladies' job. There has also been a concern of complaints of sexual abuse (Brown, 2008). Black American educators could improve the existence of countless disparate pupils because Black lives mattered and several Black Americans had flamboyant narratives of the past overflowing with experiences about power, persecution, success, and personal life encounters (Camera, 2018). Black American males that have taken the journey of becoming an educator, have enriched the lives of their students and increased academic performance (Milner, 2006). For some of these Black American pupils, this was the only arena where they could see someone who looked like them in a leadership role (Brown, 2008). Black American male influences have been extremely important to Black American male youths because they could have the ability to make or break the outcome of their lives (Brown, 2008).

Professional Development for Educators

The escalation in the diversity of our educational environments produces both prospects and trials. The challenges include structuring and access to curriculum and assessment that meet the needs of a more diverse student body, as well the promotion of school cultures and classrooms that support tolerance and understanding across differences (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). One of the central strategies for addressing these challenges must involve providing support to teachers and school staff to work in schools characterized by more diversity. One of the primary concerns with the changing demographics in schools is the probability of a culture gap developing between teachers and students. Teachers may view students through the lens they have developed throughout their personal schooling experience (Aceves & Orosco, 2014).

This lens may not accurately reflex an understanding of cultural differences. To effectively provide instruction to a diverse group of learners and make connections with the students and their families, teachers need to understand cultural differences and the rich backgrounds the students bring with them (Stantoro & Kennedy, 2016). Teachers must be culturally responsive practitioners, understanding the lens through which students see the world. They must also be capable of working with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and incorporating various pedagogical strategies to meet the needs of all learners (Woods, Barksdale, Triplett & Potts, 2014). Teachers should receive on the job training to successfully teach in diverse school settings and become reflective about potential biases they may bring into the classroom and which could become barriers to student and school success (O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008).

Many districts as well as principals allow for cultural training of school staff (Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education, 2016). Due to there being so many cultures in the public-school system and many of the teachers being unfamiliar with some of the various backgrounds of students they teach, it is particularly important there are opportunities for educators to learn about and understand the cultures and backgrounds of their students and parents, so they will not accidentally offend them and embarrass the school by their actions (U. S. Department of Education, 2016). Cultural diversity professional development should occur at least twice a school year, so the educators are refreshed with current practices and procedures.

Critical to lessening the achievement gap is the schooling of initial youth teachers. Educators and supervisors must, before school begins, plan and continue professional development that supports the staff and helps the staff comprehend that most Black American pupils are not immature or psychologically impeded (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). When educators utilize successful conflict approaches, Black American pupils can accomplish the same educational and communal education in school as other children. The Black American children may have different backgrounds that may allow for various teaching methods to be used, in order for them to move forward (O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008).

However, foundational educational establishments and professional development in schools will help Black American students keep up with their classmates. Professional development programs, done properly, can benefit the students as well as the educators in a great way (Stantoro & Kennedy, 2016). The trainings should allow teachers to comprehend the way in which student progress and educational knowledge are

indistinguishably connected and how students from diverse experiences can be taught properly. Black American children need teachers to have cultural background training in order for them to be able to understand and provide proper teaching methods for instruction (Aceves, & Orosco, 2014).

Academic Performance of Black American Students

As all children are, Black American children are innate with the capacity to be taught but need appropriate experiences to get their capacity to maturity. Experiences created by way of connections with families and ideas that bring meaningful structure influencing youngsters' natural, public, poignant, and intellectual advancement are important. Several facets of growth, such as understanding linguistics, having the ability to share, utilizing icons, and creating classifications, are inherent abilities among children that can be developed when taught appropriately (Matthew, Rodrigue, & Reeves, 2016). Black American males are the smallest subgroup of students who are accomplishing the goals to be proficient in the school environment (Gershenson & Dee, 2017).

A rare kind of learning is background specific, such as understanding a specific dialect, establishing exceptional methods to compartmentalize the situation, and clarifying the connotations of activities. To be more specific, an enormous preponderance of small children understand dialect, but whether children will understand Black American language or universal language hangs on their encounters in their linguistic neighborhoods. As a consequence, a child's linguistic achievement indicates personalities and natural social capability, and it also signifies the grammatical attributes of a specific ethnic population (Takanishi, 2016). Black American students use this type of dialectal expression because it is what they have been taught from home. Some

educators have a tendency to mock such dialectal language because they view it as incorrect English (Calarco, 2014).

Many Black American children have positive adult relationships and achieve their basic development potential. Children's experience in the social world of family and community play a critical role in what and how well children learn in school (Calarco, 2014). The benefit of having parental interaction in a child's life is essential. However, in the Black American community, many parents work hours that prevent them from spending time with their child, and many Black American males are not in the home or have been incarcerated, and therefore, are not available to give the needed time and support to the child (Alter, 2015). Many times, extended family members, like grandparents, must try to provide the needed nurturing for the child.

These financial and community drawbacks of Black American youth are often related to poverty. Poverty places a burden on families, and a large number of Black Americans live at an economic level that causes distress physically and mentally. Many families suffer from not having enough food to feed everyone in the household as well as physical illness (Matthew, Rodrique, & Reeves, 2016). When people have this type of stressful environment, school is not the most important thing on their mind, and academics have suffered due to these conditions.

Poverty among Black Americans surpasses that of any other ethnic household (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 2017). Researchers have shown that poverty levels have fallen for White Americans, Latino families, and Asian families during the last decade, but it has not for Black Americans. In 2015, some 38% of Black American children existed beneath the poverty mark. This was extremely lower than any other cultural

household (Alter, 2017). These factors lead to students missing school, students missing schoolwork, and widening the academic achievement gap for Black American children (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2014).

When students of color are recognized for being intelligent, they are able to feel empowered and meet the academic challenges they face on a day to day basis (Spillane, 2006). Educators have the power as leaders of the classroom to establish a culture of diversity acceptance that allows for various learning styles (Strayhorn, 2008). If educators are given proper training and the freedom to bring forth an open learning environment, students of color will be able to benefit. Students who feel welcomed and treated well, having their needs met, and able to enjoy the learning environment, will be able to move forward in academic excellence (Walker, 2011).

Black American Teacher-Student Relationships

A 2016 report by The U. S. Department of Education, “The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce” presented results of a survey on the ratios of community school educators who persisted in the identical school in 2011-2012 to 2012-2013. The analysis revealed that Black educators’ preservation ratio was the smallest. The study included White, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific teachers. Asian/Pacific teachers ranked the greatest retaining at 96%.

Trained educators have a tendency to have jobs in impoverished inner-city schools with elevated quantities of pupils that are minorities (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018). These high-level-poor-quality schools have a tendency to come up with greater percentages of educators who abandon the career and those who go to other educational environments that have better quality teachers than the low-poverty schools (Valant, &

Newark, 2017). Yet the make-up of several of the classrooms look like that of children of color only, as in the days of discrimination. It is apparent that these schools are in poor neighborhoods and have fewer beneficial learning materials as other schools. This is unfortunate because students of color need the same opportunities as all other students in the educational setting (America's Families and Living Arrangements, 2010)

The similar-to-me effect is a type of rater impact in which an appraiser gives more encouragingly the individuals viewed as comparable to himself (Wheeler, Haertel, & Seriven, 1992). The similar-to-me effect is important and has a great impact in the scholastic field. In a similar-to-me relationship in the classroom, the educator can establish a relationship with pupils comparable to them readily. The link is usually founded on mutual experiences and ethnicity. The pupils are then beyond eager to receive teaching, punishment, and reproach from a person with whom they relate and share the same race as students accept such teachers as having shared encounters (Wentzel, 1999).

The similar-to-me effect is present and viable in teacher-student relations from preschool through high school (Wentzel, 1999). The similar-to-me effect fosters a positive relationship while benefiting the students academically and socially (Ladd, Birth, & Buhs, 1999). Educators and pupils experiencing interactions developed on the comparable to me effect validated extreme amounts of assistance and lesser amounts of discord (Hamre & Pianta, 2006). The extreme amounts of assistance and the lesser amounts of tension lead to pupils achieving above average results on educational and developmental modifications than do pupils whose interactions with educators do not show as much encouragement towards the student (Wentzel, 1999).

There are plentiful amounts of quantifiable investigation findings, which provide data on the relationship between the dearth of Black American educators at a school and the poor academic performance of Black American male students at the same school (Corbett & Wilson, 2002). The study was completed when Black American male students link up and developed a connection with Black American male educators, which showed they were more prone to develop educational accomplishment and tenacity. Hamre and Pianta (2006) noticed an encouraging educator-pupil connection with the identical ethnic group and gender that could affect the pupils' success up to octonary ages and after. Corbett and Wilson (2002) reported research that determined when there is a small amount of Black American male educators present in the schools, the Black American male students are beyond prone to be dispassionate in the educational environment and more likely to be missing, which leads to diminished educational accomplishment. Basically, when a school does not have Black male educators to influence Black male students, the students will not do much schoolwork (Bowman, Comer & Johns, 2018).

Research has indicated that unlike Black American male educators, White educators do not encourage and set high-ranking aspirations for Black American male pupils. Consequently, the pupils are mindful that the expectations of the educators are minimal, and the students generally perform according to beliefs stemming in minimal educational execution (Kafele, 2012). Milner (2006) stated the mentorship and role model aspects of a teacher instill in a student what they can look forward to in the future. A role model will be inspirational only to the degree a person is able to identify similarities with the role model (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004). Milner (2006) also determined Black American teachers are a necessity for academic achievement. They

have the ability to animate lessons and provide examples, which can help students remember and later refer back to the subject matter. Conceptual and qualitative studies present sound evidence suggesting that the attributes held by Black American teachers and the physical presence of these teachers can have a significant impact on academic outcomes of Black American students' higher reading scores on state tests (Easton-Brooke, 2010).

The lack of Black American teachers in the classroom hinders the growth and development of students because there is little incentive for minority students to strive for advancement in school (Takanishi, 2016). In a school setting, being able to relate to the staff and administrative individuals is important to students. Children need to see people similar to them, so they have a positive vision to emulate (Henze et al., 2002, p. 86). If the janitorial and cafeteria staff were all Black individuals, then nonwhite students would correlate their identity to that of submission without understanding the situation and going on to believe that they were not fit for other developed societal roles (Henze et al., 2002, p. 86).

At times, Black educators have to revisit the culture of today's youth and be able to understand what they are experiencing in their lives. This present culture of Black American students, especially males, are dealing with a lot more societal pressures than in previous years (Alter, 2015). They are not only struggling to graduate high school; they are becoming fathers at much younger ages and having to try to get employment without having a beneficial education. Many get jobs, but also lose jobs just as quickly. This is a reality that Black and White educators need to recognize and provide a culture of understanding in their classrooms (Cooper & Smith, 2010).

Nevertheless, Black American educators are a great benefit when it comes to Black students' needs in the classroom. Black American educators benefit Black students better than educators of other races due to their being able to make connections with the students and parents (Reardon, 2015). Black American educators are generally able to speak to parents on a level they are comfortable with, and the parents are able to relate to and understand the conversations in a pleasant way (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2016). Black parents often prefer Black American teachers for their children because of the connection they make with the students.

According to Milner (2006), some teachers have decided not to acquire and retain the professional development training of how to use shared culture to build a rapport with students. They also do not use procedures about how to set examples for successful development and how to connect with parental figures of races different than their own. Educators, at times, do not realize how important it is to be able to identify and understand their students. They just want to teach them the curriculum and treat each student the same and call it equality (Garibaldi, 2007). Many White educators only see through their own backgrounds and cultures and this can and does hinder the Black American male students when it comes to the support they need in the classroom (Calarco, 2014).

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The history of Black American males, as it relates to the racial achievement gap in the public-school system, has been an alarming state of affairs in today's society (Demby, 2017). It appears that Black American males have continued to fall behind academically for many years. The Academic achievement gap has shown a lagging behind of Black American males in school (Martin, Spenner, Mustillo, 2017).

Research Design

In this study, I employed a qualitative research design. The qualitative research study consisted of Black American males who were retired principals and district leaders. Through a qualitative research design, I examined three individuals' lives, personal events, deeds, executive implementation of leadership roles, community actions, and dealings with others in the community. Qualitative research allowed for academic and collective understanding of the research topic. Qualitative research designs allow the researcher to increase a comprehensive accepting of the experiences of participants which is paramount and described from beginning to end. In order to address the topic of this study, I used the Critical Race Theory which sustained the qualitative methodology via case studies as the data collection method.

Participants

Through this study, I examined Black American male principals in the public-school systems who had all become district leaders and were all now retired. I focused on their backgrounds, including their childhood, education, and their household environment. I focused on their experiences as they moved up through the ranks of being

employed as a public servant in the school system. I examined their journey and treatment from others in and outside of the school system. I focused on the impact they had on their schools as the leader. This research study consisted of a qualitative method in the form of a case study on each participant.

Instrumentation

Critical Race Theory has become more and more apparent as a developing viewpoint on race, the law, and policy (Parker, 2015). I used Critical Race Theory to examine the social expectations, the personal backgrounds, and the connections that the Black principals had with their schools and society. For many decades, Critical Race Theory (CRT) researchers in the field of education have hypothesized, scrutinized, and faced up to the ways racism and ethnicity develop instructional organizations, and routines in scholastic environments (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). The occurrence of race and racism can be located throughout American learning institutional organizations. The understanding that students who come from alternative human environments based on race, social and economic factors, have more undesirable involvements in the scholastic environment than White pupils. CRT offers numerous resources to help teachers to represent social actions, in order to establish a setting that shows that learning is cherished for all pupils and make sure that all pupils are given the same opportunity to achieve a beneficial education (Parker, 2015).

Methodological Assumptions

As the United States K-12 pupil populace becomes more and more genealogically diverse, the majority of its educators continue to be White and female. Motivated by this occurrence, the problem is the troubling absence of Black male educators in the

classroom. As a matter of fact, there is such a deficiency of Black male educators in schools, that many pupils may not ever confront a Black male educator in their lifetime. The lack of Black male educators is also linked to harmful (Sandals, 2020).

Race is a taxonomy structure that is seen on a daily basis and has shown its non-attractive self before the eyes of educators in the school systems of America. The question is: What do the educators do when they see racism or racial acts being used, and used against Black American students, especially males? CRT is a theoretical framework in the public sciences, created out of epistemic viewpoint, that uses critical theory to analyze society and ethnicity as they correlate to classifications of race, law, and power (Sandals, 2020).

CRT signifies the interpretation that the law and legal organizations are characteristically racist and that race, itself, is a replacement for being geographically grounded and normal, in a communally made perception that is used by others to supplement their financial and governmental concentration at the cost of people of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Ladson-Billings, CRT began with a notion that racism is normal in American society. It critiques liberalism and argues that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation. CRT states racial discrimination arises from the public, profitable, and lawful discrepancies that White people make among races to preserve privileged White activity in employment and procedures, giving increase to poverty and criminality in many minority communities (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

I used Critical Race Theory as my theoretical framework because the educational system policies towards Black American students, especially males, has resulted in a

calamity of methods that have held them back from academic accomplishments. Critical Race Theory in my study addresses issues that would allow Black American males to move forward and enable them to help close the academic achievement gap, if these racial hinderances were combated and done away with for the benefit of the Black American male students. The racial issues that Black American male students are dealing with come from federal policies, school district policies, and the lack of community involvement practices that have occurred for many years. My study addresses the system concerning Black male principals and how they affected Black male students in their schools to help close the academic achievement gap and how they used their abilities and resources to help accomplish this particularly important goal.

The participation in my study was voluntary, and I ensured privacy for each participant. I also used CRT to describe how former Black American male principals and district leaders experienced the racial pressure of working with Black American male students in their schools in order to close the racial academic achievement gap. For this qualitative research, a case study approach was the research method I used to study the experiences of these former Black American male educational leaders. I communicated with the participants in my study via telephone interviews, and I handled surveys via email and telephone.

Limitations

The limitations of my study consisted of concerns regarding more in-depth interview and survey processes which may result in skewed results based on the types of questions asked and whether the participants were willing to be open and honest. The limited number of participants in this study was another limitation. The study included three participants. This may have provided minimal results in contrast to having a larger sample of participants. The participants consisted of only Black American male former principals in the public-school environment. In order to mitigate this limitation, I asked each participant a number of very in-depth and specific questions. I encouraged them to be completely honest and reassured them that the information they provided was securely coded and only used for the purpose of this study.

The outcomes of these case studies are subject to the interpretations of the reader. The fact that I am a Black American female obtaining knowledge about Black American males may have caused some hindrance for the participants to be forthcoming with information. Another limitation of this study was that some may have thought that these successful Black American males were anomalies and did not represent the vast majority of Black American males in American society. The last limitation is that the case study format was used instead of the traditional format of research methodology. Some may not have considered this a reliable form of research; however, I believe that this allowed for the best results in this study.

Delimitations

A delimitation of this study was use of the Critical Race Theory (CRT). I believe this because CRT promotes fundamental variations in procedures and associations to

encourage acceptance of others and offers theoretical and familiar structure to bring understanding to racial discrimination (Campbell, 2014). For this study, I believed that this method was the most suitable. Another delimitation for this study was that I specified participants meet the following requirements: (1) being a Black American male former principal in one public school district in one state and (2) being a principal for two years or more in the same school. These qualifiers were met in order for the participant to be a part of this study.

Procedures

I incorporated the methods of interviews and survey questionnaires in my study. I documented answers to interview questions and survey questions which allowed a recordkeeping of the contributors' reactions, work behaviors, and lifestyles. In line with the policies of the Institutional Review Board, the investigative methods were accepted, and I abided by all approved procedures.

In this study, interviews consisted of in-depth questions for the participants. I asked participants open-ended questions to categorize the apparatus of their leadership positions. The interviews helped me establish the participants' family history, educational background, and how they used their leadership positions to help Black American boys to close the racial academic achievement gap. The interviews also consisted of how each participant felt he had benefited his school environment.

Data Collection and Analysis

The sample in this study included former Black American male principals/district leaders in public schools. The methods for collecting data included a survey and interviews in which I used a variety of questions, mostly unrestricted. I conducted the

interviews over the telephone, and I handled the surveys via email and telephone. I collected data and analyzed it to establish my study's outcomes and methods for future recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Results

The purpose for this qualitative study was to give a clear framework to how the life experiences of Black American male former school principals/district leaders affected Black American male students in their schools to help close the racial academic achievement gap. Through this study, I concentrated on three Black American male former school principals/district leaders who interacted with Black American male students in their schools and school districts. In this chapter, I established the results of the surveys and the interviews I conducted by telephone with the participants. My intent in this study was to document the lived experiences of three Black American male former school principals/district leaders in an attempt to provide a clear picture of how Black American male students benefitted from having Black American male educational leaders help them close the racial academic achievement gap.

Through a common focused environmental view, I explored Black American male former school principals/district leaders' views on how Black American male students were helped to close the academic achievement gap on a personal level. The participants all had backgrounds in schools where they had to focus on Black American males who were behind academically. They all expressed how they used their backgrounds and life experiences to move those students forward in the school environment.

Research Questions

The research questions scrutinized through the surveys and interviews were:

1. How did these Black American males rise to leadership in the public-school environment?
2. How did these former Black American male principals/district leaders impact their schools on a personal level?
3. What was the impact these Black American male former principals/district leaders had on bridging the academic achievement gap for Black American male students in their educational environment?

Data Collection Procedures

As stated in chapter three, the Black American male participants for this study were former school principals or district leaders in the United States. Each participant completed the same survey, and I interviewed each participant over the phone, at different times, using the same set of questions. I emailed the recruitment letter to five prospective research participants who qualified based on the research criteria. Of the five prospective research participants, all five responded expressing interest in participating in the study. I eliminated two participants due to their lack of follow through and communication in a timely manner. I invited the other three respondents to participate in the study by completing the survey and the interview process. All of the participants completed informed consent forms, surveys, and a 30-40-minute interview over the telephone. The survey was completed either over the telephone or by email.

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed me to collect the data needed to complete this study. I assured all participants that their responses would

remain confidential. All research participants were actively engaged during the interview process and answered each question completely. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them for accuracy.

Participants' Background

Through this qualitative study, I employed a sample of Black American male former principals/district leaders from various locations in one state. The research participants gave formal consent to participate in this study. The research respondents answered questions about their lived experiences. The participants provided information regarding their journey to becoming a principal/district leader. The participants spoke about their positions as a principal/district leader and how being a Black American male either helped or did not help them move forward.

Participant 1 (P 1) was in the education field for 42 years. He received his bachelor's degree in Physical Health and Safety. He served in the United States Army for 22 years. He served in various positions in the educational field including Physical Education teacher, Driver's Education instructor and continued to move up to principal of two different schools. He ended his career as an Area Superintendent, where he served for 12 years.

Participant 2 (P 2) was in the educational field for more than 20 years. He received his bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature. He also attended a predominantly Black high school. He went on to obtain his master's and doctoral degrees. He served as principal of a middle school and worked as a district administrator for five years before retiring.

Participant 3 (P 3) was in the educational field for 44 years. He received his bachelor's degree in Political Science. He attended an historically Black college. He went on to obtain his master's and doctoral degrees in Educational Leadership. He served as a principal, an area director, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, and an Implementation Specialist during his career in education.

Data Analysis

The data I collected in this research study was coded and examined in concurrence with the research method I described in chapter three. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a developing viewpoint on race, the law and policy (Parker, 2015). This qualitative data depends strongly on the method of analysis that includes a) social expectations, b) personal backgrounds, c) identification of themes, and d) connections that Black American former principals had with their school communities. I examined each participant's survey and interview statements and used CRT to recognize all related lived experiences involving Black American male principals and Black American male students in closing the academic achievement gap. This data examination technique allowed me to achieve comprehension of the participants' lived experiences. Attained statements, segments, and vital phrases permitted me to investigate major portions of data. The topics and narratives enabled me to evaluate the study problems that drove the research assumption. The data that were made available included a wide-ranging evaluation of the outcomes. I collected and assessed the data, and then I grouped it by topics. The categories that were revealed are described below.

Emergent Themes

Three Black American male former school principals/district leaders from various locations in the one state provided surveys and interviews for this research study which focused on the lived experiences of Black American male former school principals/district leaders and how they affected Black American male students in their schools/districts. I collected data and analyzed surveys and interview questions (see Appendices A and B). There were three major themes that emerged from the interview data with two of the same themes from the survey data. The themes from the interviews were 1) having a strong Black male as an influence in their lives, 2) professional development in their schools, and 3) Black male students need Black male leaders and teachers in their educational environment. The figure below represents the survey results for each participant. The values represent 1= Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= Agree, and 4= Strongly Agree.

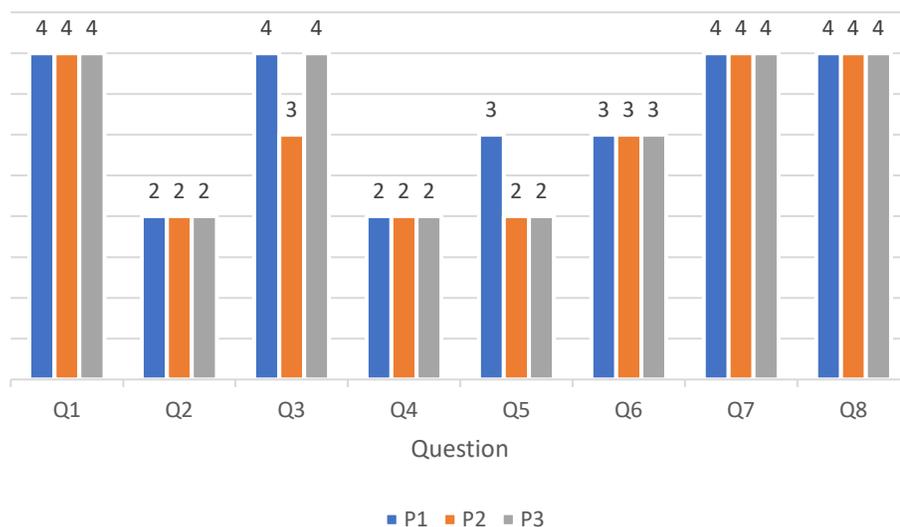


Figure 1. Survey results for all three participants; the values represent 1= Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= Agree, and 4= Strongly Agree

Using Statement 1 of the survey, I asked participants to rate the statement: I enjoy being a principal in this county. Of the three responses, all three participants strongly agreed.

Using Statement 2 of the survey, I asked participants to rate the statement: I feel the Black American males in public schools are being taught properly. Of the three responses, all three participants disagreed.

Using Statement 3 of the survey, I asked the participants to rate the statement: I believe my family background has helped me become a better principal. Of the three responses, two strongly agreed and one agreed.

Using Statement 4, of the survey, I asked the participants to rate the statement: I believe Black American male principals are treated equal to other principals in this school district. Of the three responses, all three participants disagreed.

Using Statement 5 of the survey, I asked the participants to rate the statement: I believe the achievement gap for Black American males is closing. Of the three responses, two disagreed and one agreed.

Using Statement 6 of the survey, I asked the participants to rate the statement: I believe Black American male principals are helping the Black American male students in their schools to move forward academically. Of the three responses, all three responded agree.

Using Question 7 of the survey, I asked the participants to rate the statement: I believe Black American male principals could do more to help Black American male students. Of the three responses, all three strongly agreed.

Using Question 8 of the survey, I asked the participants to rate the statement: I believe a program should be developed for helping Black American male students in closing the academic achievement gap. Of the three responses, all three strongly agreed.

Questions 9-11 were written responses. Question 9 was: What would you like to see in this school district to help Black American male students close the academic achievement gap? Participant 1 stated, “Have more Black male mentors for Black male students” (personal communication, April 5, 2020). Participant 2 stated, “I would like to see a program that targets Black American male students in the pre-school and elementary division. This program should include systematic tutoring and evaluation” (personal communication, April 8, 2020). Participant 3 stated, “There should be needs assessments to identify why they are struggling. All the needs should be addressed or none of them. You should not just address some of the students’ needs and not all of their needs because that will not help” (personal communication, April 29, 2020).

Question 10 was: What is the most important job of a Black American male principal in helping Black American male students improve academically? Participant 1 said, “To have more community involvement and cultural diversity training for their staff” (personal communication, April 5, 2020). Participant 2 said, “It is important that the principals provide staff development experiences designed to equip teachers with the necessary skills to work with Black male youngsters. Learning styles and cultural limitations among many elements should be included” (personal communication, April 8, 2020). Participant 3 said, “Principals should meet them where they are and provide them with ways they can be successful; and protect them from racial discrimination” (personal communication, April 29, 2020).

Question 11 was: Is there anything else you would like to state about Black American males in your school/district and efforts to close the academic achievement gap? Participant 1 said, “To have [principals] understand the importance of promoting reading and comprehension skills to all the Black male students and other students as well” (personal communication, April 5, 2020). Participant 2 said, “Not at this time” (personal communication, April 8, 2020). Participant 3 said,

Well, when I look at African American males and what they need, I believe we should remove the race and the color and just see these males as just our children that need our help. When you get teachers and educators to look at kids based on their needs and not their ethnicity and gender, you can close the gap, but if you are doing it because I am a Black male, you are doing it because you are told to do it and not meeting the need of the child. (personal communication, April 29, 2020)

Theme 1: Strong Black American Male Influence

All three study participants spoke about having a strong Black American male as a part of their home life. They stated how particularly important and influential this was as they were growing up in a segregated world. They each attended predominantly Black schools and were taught by Black teachers. One of the three participants was reared by a single parent who was a Black male due to the passing of his mother when he was young. So therefore, all the participants had a strong Black American male influencing their lives. The Black males influenced their lives by being there for them when they had a problem and needed someone to talk to and help them resolve the problem. The Black

males also influenced the former principals' lives by showing them in their lives how to maintain a household and be a respectable citizen.

Theme 2: Professional Development

All three study participants discussed having professional development in their schools or districts. Each of them mentioned that professional development for teachers was extremely important for Black American males to move forward in closing the racial academic achievement gap. One participant spoke of having follow up training to make sure what was being taught to the teachers about the culture of Black males or Black students, as a whole, was maintained throughout the school year. All three participants also mentioned that teachers of all races, including black teachers, needed cultural trainings. This was because the students that they had in their classrooms were not of the same mindset as the students during the time when they were growing up.

Based upon my professional observations, the mindset of students today is based upon being able to have a cell phone, connect to social media, and have a social life inside and outside of the educational setting. In many schools today, students are on their phones in and outside of the classroom. School rules concerning phones vary, but many schools have policies regarding when students can and cannot use their phones. However, some students take it upon themselves to defy the school rules and use their phone anytime they choose. Students of today are interested in having social media as a platform of connecting and communicating with each other. They can be in the same room and not speak to each other but will message each other over the phone to talk instead of having a person to person conversation.

Theme 3: Black American Male Students need Black American Leaders

All three study participants agreed that in order to move Black American males forward, Black American male teachers/leaders were needed in their school environment. All participants stated that this was an especially important way that the Black American males could see themselves as being able to become a productive citizen instead of just another Black male who had no future. One participant stated that the Black male students needed the right Black male leader, not just because he was Black, but one who would provide what the students needed in order for them to be successful in school. When a teacher is in front of a student, that teacher needs to be able to relate to that student on many levels. Race is an especially important level, and the teacher needs to be able to provide the student's educational, emotional, and cultural needs (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2017).

Significance of Theme 1

All three study participants spoke about having a strong Black American male as a part of their home life. The significance of this theme was, according to research, having a person with whom a child can identify and can share similar backgrounds can help with establishing an identity. This can lead to building trust and can enable Black American males to be motivated to do better in their academic work (Chang, 2017). The research participants expressed that having a Black American male as a role model for their lives allowed them to become successful leaders. Having a role model for students is not uncommon in the school environment. According to research, Black American males, if acted upon early in their youth, have benefited from having Black males as role models. Black American males in younger grades, such as Pre-K through second grade,

who are mentored by a Black American male, are more likely to do well with academic grades as well as socializing with others in his school and his community (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2017).

Significance of Theme 2

All three research participants expressed the belief that professional development of teachers and staff was extremely important. One of the participants expressed that follow up training was a major key to professional development, as well as making sure the training was being utilized in the classroom. The research participants also expressed that even if the teacher was Black, he or she needed training in cultural sensitivity. The participants indicated that this was because the various generations of Black Americans were different, and the current students were not of the same generations as their teachers. According to research, having teachers understand their students' backgrounds is essential (McFarland, Murray, & Phillipson, 2016). When professional development trainings were provided to teachers and other staff, they were given the opportunity to find ways of relating to their students, or at least better understanding why the students may be acting the way they were behaving in the classroom. Teachers and staff could then find ways to develop an understanding and show more means of giving instruction to students in ways that would promote learning on their level (Bates & Morgan, 2018).

Significance of Theme 3

All research participants agreed that it was especially important that Black American male students had Black American male and female teachers. This was because when students see people of their own race, they are more prone to focus and listen to them (Easton-Brooke, 2016). Participant 1 stated that Black students, especially

males, needed Black male teachers, so they could be able to relate to common experiences that were happening in their lives. He stated, “I told them stories and gave them illustrations of how I became successful coming through the education system” (personal communication, April 5, 2020). This was important because many times, Black American males have not had people with whom they could relate in the school environment. They very often have seen very few people who looked like them, and so they may have felt alone or isolated when it came to sharing their feelings about life or just a social problem. When a Black male student sees a person of his own color, he often feels more comfortable in reaching out to that person and opening-up because he needs that security (Chang, 2017).

Summary

In chapter four, I discussed the findings on this qualitative study that resulted from the experiences of Black American male former principals/district leaders and how they helped Black American male students close the racial academic achievement gap in their schools. The chapter also included survey findings, interview findings, data analyses, and emerging themes. The themes provided the foundation for the research analyses. The interview themes that emerged from the surveys were:

1. Strong Black American male influences
2. Professional Development
3. Black American male students need Black American male leaders

These three emergent themes allowed me to construct descriptions from the research participants’ lived experiences. The findings gave voice to the significance of the influences that Black American male leaders inside and outside of the classroom have

had on Black American male students. Participants highlighted how having a Black American male teacher or leader in the presence of Black American male students could allow for decreasing the racial academic achievement gap because of the relationships that were developed. Also, when teachers of all races were given professional development on culturally diverse teaching methods, and proper classroom follow up to see that the training was being implemented with the students, students were able to feel accepted and responded better in the classroom setting.

Chapter five will offer an analysis of the findings as well as implications of study breakthroughs. Chapter five will also show constraints, disparities in the research and suggestions for future research. Chapter five will include tables and graphs to illustrate the research and conclude the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Reflections

Chapter five will contain a reaffirmation of the research problem, the rationale of my study, and a clarification of the results of this study. I will also discuss the implications of the findings as well as the constraints and recommendations for future exploration on how Black American male principals/district leaders can move Black American male students forward in closing the racial academic achievement gap.

The problem is that Black American students are being left behind when it comes to receiving a beneficial education from the present educational system in America. Black American males are not progressing in the area of closing the racial academic achievement gap when compared to Whites in the educational setting (Jackson, 2019). This study focused on how Black American male former principals/district leaders affected the educational environment of the Black American males as they were educated and motivated to move forward in a positive manner when it came to receiving a beneficial education.

This qualitative research study engaged in the life experiences of Black American male former school principals/district leaders and how they affected Black American male students in their schools to help close the racial academic achievement gap. This solitary case study strategy formed a plethora of data that informed how Black American male principals impacted the outcomes of Black American male students in the schools and how this impacted their future. The subsequent analysis delivered a narrative of key themes that emerged and demonstrated how Black American male principals affected Black American male students in their schools.

How Black American Former Principals Responded

The main research question guiding this examination was: What was the impact these Black American male former principals/district leaders had on bridging the academic achievement gap between Black American male students and other students in their educational environment? Based on this question, the goal of this qualitative study was to investigate the life experiences of three Black American male former principals/district leaders and how they affected Black American male students in their schools and districts. Through the findings of my study, I determined that Black American males' influences in their personal lives helped to develop their careers and helped them understand the needs of Black American males in their schools due to their personal journeys and experiences in life. The findings also determined that having professional development for teachers in the area of cultural identity of Black American males helped determine better outcomes for closing the academic achievement gap. The findings of the study also endorsed existing literature while offering depth on how Black American male former principals/district leaders helped to close the academic achievement gap for Black American male students.

Research Questions

The present study of Black American male principals and how they affect Black American male students in their schools to close the academic achievement gap was guided by three questions. The three research questions were the foundation of the study and what I sought to answer in my findings. The information and the outcomes from the investigative research were able to offer comprehensive and intensive responses to the three research questions.

Research question 1. The first research question of the study was: How did these Black American males rise to leadership in the public-school environment? This question was essential to my understanding and it led me to find the emergent theme of the importance of having the influences of Black American males in the participants' lives. Usually, before an individual can become a principal in the public-school system, candidates must endure training and in-service courses to make sure they have the knowledge and skills to become a principal. Through analyzing data I collected, I was able to answer research question 1; the influence of the Black American males in their lives taught the participants to persevere in their educational journeys and propelled them to leadership roles. They were influenced to become Black American men of courage and be strong as they endured hard times. This enabled them to move forward in their careers, and they used that influence to help others advance as well. The three participants all received on-the-job-training through the school districts in which they worked and were able to establish proficient skills that helped them lead their schools with meaningful and intensive purpose. Research states that black American males need the influence of other Black American males in order for them to be able to see themselves as strong and capable (Bell, 2014). This type of modeling gives young Black American males the inherit desire to want to do better for themselves and connect with their communities. When this type of mentoring is made more available, it can bring about positive change in the behavior and emotional conditions of Black American males.

Research question 2. The second research question was: How are these Black American male leaders impacting their schools on a personal level? This question was

important because it guided me to identify a theme that demonstrated how Black American principals were present and involved with Black American male students, and how they used their leadership skills to connect with their students personally which helped provide them with a healthy learning experience (Bell, 2014). The themes that was establish was making personal interactions with the black American males in their schools and black teachers being a part of their day to day lives. Research states that culture and tradition are grouped over time to adapt the environment and create groups that have common interest (Bell, 2010). Throughout society, as educators adapt to various challenges, they must understand the need to be familiar with a community's history. For example, as an outcome of intercontinental dependence, Black people mingled the fragments of their home-grown dialect to converse with each other.

This was because they did not share a common language. Today this is often called Black English. In order for Black American males to understand and believe that they are capable of doing great things in society, they need to see people who look like them in leadership roles, such as teachers and principals (Bell, 2014). Having a connection to someone from whom they can learn and from whom they can relate, through stories and familiar backgrounds, will enable the Black American male students to be inspired to want to make their lives better than what they might have seen around them. Such relationships will help them to overcome the adverse atmosphere they are surround by in the school environment (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018).

Research question 3. The third research question was: What is the impact these Black American males are having on bridging the academic achievement gap between Black American male students in their educational environment? This question was

important because it allowed the participants to reveal how they involved their leadership skills in helping Black American male students in their educational environments close the academic achievement gap. The theme that emerged from this question was the importance of providing professional development, specifically cultural trainings, for teachers and staff in order to help the students have proper instruction and cultural learning in the classroom. Research stated that professional development is a catalyst for helping educators learn about what their students need in the classroom environment. Cultural professional development helps educators understand the needs of students in specific ways (Bates & Morgan, 2018).

For example, when teachers take English Language Learners training, they are taught about the backgrounds of various types of cultures and households. This training helps them understand why a student might not look them in the eye when the teacher is speaking to the student, or why another student may hold his or her head down when speaking in front of the class. The same type of training is needed when it comes to Black American students. Black American students, especially boys, have a way of learning that is beyond the tradition view. Cultural training for teachers should be specific to the ethnic group and reinforced in the classroom to make sure the methods are being used properly in the classroom (Aceves, & Orosco, 2014).

These methods will ensure that students are receiving proper instruction. If the methods are taught with fidelity, Black American students should be able to obtain the information and be able to increase their understanding of the material taught. If Black American students understand the material and learn it properly, they can make better scores on academic exams, and therefore, the academic achievement gap will begin to

close. As the academic achievement gap begins to close, then more opportunities for Black American students will open and allow for better treatment and stability of the Black American community.

Discussion of Themes

The three themes that surfaced from the study provided impact on the participants' experiences while allowing focus on future implications for studies. These themes and future implications will help form programs that may need to be put in place in the public-school setting. This may help school districts to provide stakeholders a better understanding of Black male students and how they can be helped to accomplish positive outcomes academically.

Theme 1: Strong Black American male influences. All three study participants stated that they had a strong Black American male influences in their lives while they were growing up either in their household or in their school environment. Participant 1 stated that this influence helped him move forward and gave him purpose in developing a sense of how important it was to go to college to obtain a degree (Personal Communication, April 5, 2020). Participant 2 stated he had a Black American male to confide in, and this helped him handle situations that arose in his professional life (Personal Communication, April 8, 2020) Participant 3 stated that he was told by other non-Blacks that he could not accomplish the goal of getting a higher education, so that was his motivation to move forward in school. He also stated that his coaches, who were Black males, inspired him to do well academically (Personal Communication, April 29, 2020)

The results of this portion of the study suggested that when a strong Black American male was present and actively engaged in the life of a young Black American male in a positive manner, there were more positive outcomes and less negative outcomes. Research stated that Black American males who are mentors in the lives of other Black American males can produce substantial results in their mentees having more completion of educational goals, attending college more often, and having higher paying jobs (Jackson, 2019).

The participants expressed a passionate, strong emotional bond during the interview process for the Black American males who influenced them. Participant 1 stated that it was his dad who inspired him on a daily basis to do well in school. Participant 2 expressed how going to a Black school and Black college helped him to relate to his teachers and professors in making life decisions and promoting how he viewed his future. Participant 3 stated that his Black teachers and coaches influenced him and helped him realize his potential to be successful.

Theme 2: Professional development. The study participants expressed professional development as being extremely important in helping Black American males improve and to help close the racial academic achievement gap. All three participants made mention of the importance of providing the right professional development for staff in order to accomplish this goal. Participant 1 said,

I had many [Exceptional Student Education] ESE students in my schools, so I knew what was needed to overcome the racial academic achievement gap. I used equity. Most people deal with equality, but equality is not comparable to equity because equity is what makes people successful, not equality. I made sure

teachers had proper trainings to understand what their students needed. (personal communication, April 5, 2020)

Participant 2 said, “I believe that closing the academic achievement gap will happen. I think it can happen. I think Black American males have a better chance to close the [racial academic achievement] gap if they have Black American male administrators” (personal communication, April 8, 2020). Participant 3 said, “The Black American males that need help need to be identified, and an analysis should be done to find out what are some common factors that are keeping these students from achieving” (personal communication, April 29, 2020).

The research participants were all able to express the importance of various ways of closing the racial academic achievement gap for Black American males. They all spoke from a personal or professional point of view concerning ways to close the racial academic achievement gap for Black American males. This theme was particularly important to the participants and seemed to be essential in the school environment of today. This enhanced the research that stated, professional development and training of cultural understanding of student backgrounds, can help the educational process move forward and help the classroom environment to benefit each student (Chang, 2017).

The professional development trainings that were mentioned by Participant 1 were called Cultural Diversity training, which was conducted by a district employee for all staff. This training was conducted to help all staff understand student cultural needs and how to meet their individual needs academically and socially in the classroom. Participant 2 stated that he had an intern at his school who was working on a dissertation in the area of low student achievement and was able to deliver a training called *Sensitivity*

of Differences. He said this helped the staff immensely and follow up on the training was implemented to make sure what was taught in the training was being done in the classroom. Participant 3 mentioned a training called AVID Culturally Relevant Teaching. This training was not required for all district school employees but was available to all district personnel. This training consisted of ways to help close the academic achievement gap for Black students, as well as how to work with other cultures and genders of students.

Theme 3: Black American male students need Black American leaders.

The study participants deemed that Black American male students needed Black American male or female teachers and/or administrators in their day to day school environment. All three of the participants agreed that Black American male students may not always have a positive Black American male role model at home, and if one could be seen in the school environment, that could bring about encouraging changes. On this theme, the participants offered their thoughts. Participant 1 stated, “We don’t have enough Black leaders in the school districts because White people think more of equality than they do of equity” (personal communication April 5, 2020). Participant 2 stated, “In my experiences and through observation, Black kids had a fair chance when they were being taught by Black people” (personal communication, April 8, 2020). Participant 3 stated, “We should identify kids that are Black and are not being successful. They can be taught by a Black person, but not just because they are Black; they need to be the right Black teacher. Don’t say this is a Black need or a White need, just address the need of the child” (personal communication, April 29, 2020).

The research participants were able to express the importance of Black students' need for having a Black teacher based on their experiences and how they observed things in the schools at which they were principals or they supervised from a district level. Even though this may not be the case in all situations, this does support the research which states that Black American males can identify more by having Black American males as a part of their day to day school environment because they can learn and see and hear about their culture from someone who looks like them (Demby, 2017).

Recommendations and Research Suggestions

Through this qualitative case study, I attempted to make known any gaps in literature. The majority of literature I reviewed concerning Black American male principals spoke to how they are looked upon by their districts as not being effective enough in their schools. My study added to the literature as I unearthed three topics or themes that show how Black American former principals'/district leaders' life experiences affected Black American male students in their schools to help close the racial academic achievement gap.

Education for the Black American male has been imperfect for well over a ten-year period. Principals who are Black American males have been in short supply. Over time, this hiring practice has gotten better; however, there are still comparatively few Black American males in educational leadership roles. There are still more Whites being hired in leadership positions in schools than Black American males (Jackson, 2019). The number of Black American male scholars has increased, but with the lack of Black American male educators in schools, Black American male pupils have been left behind White American male pupils contributing to the racial academic achievement gap. This

is very evident when it comes to high school completion rates in the United States of America where Black males lag behind other subgroups of students (Demby, 2017).

The first theme that emerged from the data I collected signified the thinking of how Black American male former principals/district leaders believed Black American male students need Black American male positive influences in their lives. It represents, that a positive Black male influence can help Black American male students in becoming more successful in the school environment which would improve the academic achievement gap. This is important because it will help Black American males to become thriving and productive citizens. I recommend that educators in America bring about more focus on understanding of the benefits of having Black American males as a role models at school in the lives of Black American male students who may not have a strong Black American male figure in their personal lives.

My second recommendation based upon the second theme that emerged from my data collection is that American educators focus on having better cultural training for all teachers. Black teachers need to have culturally sensitive training just like non-Black teachers. According to my study, this was vital to the progression of Black American students, as well as other students in the school environments. Teachers see students on a daily basis and need to understand how to help them based on where the students come from and how they see things in their world beyond the classroom.

My third recommendation is that when establishing programs for Black American males, educators should consider the true need for each individual student. Students should not be grouped together just because they are Black males. Each student should be looked upon as a unique individual. As Participant 3 stated, “Students should be assessed

[as unique individuals], and it should be determined what their need is and met based on that criteria” (personal communication, April 28, 2020).

Future Research Recommendations

Based upon my study, I believe that future research should focus on how Black American female principals/district leaders affect Black American females and Black American males in closing the racial achievement gap. Such studies should also include how White American principals and district leaders affect Black American students in closing the racial academic achievement gap. Lastly, I recommend that future researchers should consider how Black American teachers affect Black American male and female students in closing the racial academic achievement gap. Other minority groups should be included in future studies, such as Latinos and Asians.

Reflection

In the United States of America, having an education has been instilled as an essential necessity for most people. Educators are looked upon as having a higher standard in the community and the obligation to lead students in the proper manner, so that they can become lawful and upright citizens. Educators have the capability to direct and inspire students, coworkers, and societal members and ought to make use of the status and bring education to the forefront in a cheerful and effective way. Due to the leadership status of educators, they must take upon themselves this strength and use it for the betterment of the educational environment and eventually the world.

The educational existence of which I have been a part has been one that does not represent all ethnic groups on an equal and equitable manner. Daily, it is a struggle to be a part of a system that mistreats individuals because of their skin color or their

background. Many of the educational environments of which I have been a part did not have very many races represented.

In my professional experience, I have noticed leaders who seem to believe there is justification for having an all-White staff, or only a few Blacks on the staff. There are mandates that require that all the students' ethnic backgrounds have to be represented by certain groups of employees in the school district, but I have noticed this is often overlooked, and a person is hired who is said to represent multiple races. The few Blacks who are hired, are usually looked upon as a token to represent a small portion of what is needed to create a diverse staff. Many Black educators just keep to themselves to avoid any controversy, and very few speak out on issues that are important to the Black students for fear of possible retaliation.

My philosophy of education is that every student has the ability to learn. However, they must be given the proper motivation under the right conditions. The information taught has to be relevant to the students and meet the needs of the students. When I teach my students, I try to relate to them in a way they can understand and are able to build connections with real world situations.

I let my student know that they are the future and they have choices to make that will affect them for life. I let them know that nothing is etched in stone, at this point, but that they should be thinking about how they want to impact society. I try to give them something impactful to think about each time I see them in class. I have noticed that for some students, Black and White alike, the classroom is their safe place, so I try to make it as safe for them as possible, while educating them on real world events.

As a Black American female educator, I try to build strong relationships with all my students, and particularly with Black American male students. I do this through discussions and interactions. Conversing with Black American male students about their interests, goals, and career desires, shows them that someone is concerned about their future. It is apparent that when a student knows that a teacher, as a Black American person, cares about him, the student is willing to open up and speak freely about what is going on in his life. He is willing to share what he is thinking about, and if he is having problems how he plans to fix the situation. He is also ready to listen to the teacher's suggestions and maybe even try one or two to see if they will help him.

Many times, during my 23 years as an educator, other teachers, administrators and school personnel have brought students of color, mainly Black American males, but some females also, to my classroom for me to teach because their previous teacher could not handle their behavior. In such situations, I have spoken to the students about what was happening in their previous classroom. They freely discussed what the situations were in their classrooms. When I asked them why they did not simply go to their teachers and explain what was happening, they stated the teachers did not understand what they go through, but they knew I did understand because we were both Black. I then gave them advice on how to do better in class. Many times, this helped, and they were successful in class with their peers.

Once again, our students are our future, and because Black American male students are often looked upon as troublemakers, slow learners, and dropouts, it is very needful that they have extra support in schools. This extra support can come from Black American teachers, both men and women. It is essential that Black American male

students realize they can be successful in society and change the outcome of their life. Black lives do matter, and we as educators need to make sure we relate this message to our students in meaningful conversations with the presence of Black American teachers in their lives.

Conclusion

In chapter five I offered a summary conversation of the themes, findings, future research, and recommendations related to my topic of study. The findings of this study speak to how the life experiences of Black American males who are former principals/district leaders affected Black American male students in closing the academic achievement gap in their schools. I gave the participants surveys and I interviewed each participant. Then I analyzed the data to provide stakeholders, and school districts with feedback concerning how they can establish programs that will benefit Black American male students in closing the racial academic achievement gap, from the perspective of Black American male former principals/district leaders who have been a part of schools with Black American male students. The experiences of the study participants offered significant knowledge into the formation and the conservation of beneficial program(s) that are aimed at helping Black American male students close the academic achievement gap and move forward in their lives to build successful careers in American society. I recommend that when establishing programs in schools to address concerns regarding Black American students not making progress in closing the racial academic achievement gap, that if programs are developed to help, these programs should be seen as a stepping stone and not as one-size-fits-all program solutions for all students. Students should be

seen as unique individuals and not grouped just because they have the same racial identity. They need to be helped from the inside out.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Individual Participant: Survey Questions

Appendix B. Individual Participant: Interview Questions

Appendix C. Participant Interview Transcription

Appendix A

Individual Participant: Survey Questions

On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree, please circle one:

1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

1. I enjoy being a principal in this county. 1 2 3 4
2. I feel the Black American males in public schools are being taught properly. 1 2 3 4
3. I believe my family background has helped me become a better principal. 1 2 3 4
4. I believe Black American male principals are treated equal to other principals in this school district. 1 2 3 4
5. I believe the achievement gap for Black American males is closing. 1 2 3 4
6. I believe Black American male principals are helping the Black American male students in their schools to move forward academically. 1 2 3 4
7. I believe Black American male principals could do more to help Black American male students. 1 2 3 4
8. I believe a program should be developed for helping Black American male students in closing the academic achievement gap. 1 2 3 4

Please provide written responses to questions 9 - 11.

9. What would you like to see in this school district to help Black American male students close the academic achievement gap?
10. What is the most important job of a Black American male principal in helping Black American male students improve academically?
11. Is there anything else you would like to state about Black American males in your schools/district and efforts to close the academic achievement gap?

Appendix B

Individual Participant: Interview Questions

1. Do you believe that your life experiences have helped you become a better principal or district leader? Please explain.
2. Now I would like you to tell me, based on your life experiences, how you use them to promote higher academic achievement among the Black American male students in your school or across the district?
3. Do you believe Black American male students, working with a Black American male principal causes them to achieve better academically? Please provide details.
4. Do you believe Black American male students will become more academically advantaged by having a Black American male as a part of their day to day school environment?
5. As a Black American male leader, how do you feel you can help close the academic achievement gap for Black American male students in this district?
6. Do you believe other leaders in the district would be helpful in developing a program specific to helping Black American male students close the achievement gap?
7. Is there anything else you would like me to know about how Black American male principals/leaders can help Black American male students with closing the achievement gap in this district?

Appendix C

Participant Interview Transcription

PARTICIPANT 1

Interview Date: April 5, 2020 (Interview took place over the telephone)

Me: Do you believe that your life experiences have helped you become a better principal or district leader? Please explain.

P1: “Yes, I do, I came from poverty, and coming from poverty, you learn how beneficial and important education can be used to help you move forward.”

Me: Now I would like you to tell me, based on your life experiences, how you use them to promote higher academic achievement among the Black American male students in your school or district?

P1: “I used many illustrations and stories when I was dealing with students, to let them know how I became successful as I came through the education system.”

Me: Do you believe Black American male students will become more academically advantaged by having a Black American male as a part of their day to day school environment?

P1: “Yes, because when you are dealing with minorities, if they can see someone that looks like them, they feel more comfortable talking about situations they probably wouldn’t normally talk to other people about.”

Me: Do you believe Black American male students will become more academically advantaged by having a Black American male as a part of their day to day school environment?

P1: “Yes I do. I am a mentor now, and I am mentoring Black males in schools, and though the mentoring, they are realizing the importance of having an education. They are realizing the importance of respecting other people and also the importance of being able to make a strong influence in their community. They often say I want to come back to my community and give back.”

Me: As a Black American male leader, how do you feel you can help close the academic achievement gap for Black American male students in this district?

P1: “I knew what I needed to overcome the academic achievement gap; it was equity. Equity is what makes people successful, not equality.”

Me: Do you believe other leaders in the district would be helpful in developing a

program specific to helping Black American male students close the achievement gap?

P1: “Yes I do, but we don’t have enough Black leaders in the school districts because White people think more of equality than they do of equity. As a Black person looking at what Black students need, when I addressed the district people, they only think of equality and not equity for students.”

Me: Is there anything else you would like me to know about how Black American male principals/leaders can help Black American male students with closing the achievement gap in this district?

P1: “Yes, I believe we need to recruit more minority teachers. We need to find ways to keep them in the school system once they are recruited. I believe black students can relate to Black teachers. We should also have Black teachers helping to recruit other Black teachers. We should also help the new teachers and new principals have for sensitivity trainings at the beginning of their teaching careers. This will help them with understanding the culture of students they are trying to teach as well as the communities these students are living in.”

PARTICIPANT 2

Interview Date: April 8, 2020 (Interview took place over the telephone)

Me: Do you believe that your life experiences have helped you become a better principal or district leader? Please explain.

P2: “No one plans to become a principal. When you are 12 or 13, you don’t say I am going to be a principal one day. My experience in the classroom allowed me to have the training I needed to move to a human resources position, then assistant principal and after about 10 years, the decision making and problem solving skills I developed prepared me to be a principal.”

Me: Now I would like you to tell me, based on your life experiences, how you use them to promote higher academic achievement among the Black American male students in your school or district?

P2: “What I did as a principal was made sure the low-achievement students, who in a lot of cases happened to be Black and Brown students, received the extra support they needed. I identified those students and made sure they received the needed attention. Furthermore, the part that helped me with Black male students was staff development. I identified what staff development my teachers would need to help manage these students and made sure they were provided to the teachers. I especially focused on training that provided sensitivity and diversity for White, Black, and all other races on my staff. I also made sure that follow up and evaluation was being provided. Making sure the training

materials and methods were being done in the classrooms and not just ignored, was highly effective.”

Me: Do you believe Black American male students, working with a Black American male principal causes them to achieve better academically? Please provide details.

P2: “As I compare my experiences of attending a mostly Black high school, and a mostly Black college, at least until I pursued my graduate degree, I see that through observation Black students had a fair chance when they were being taught by Black people. I think that made the difference because the Black teachers are good teachers and because they only had Black students to teach, bias were a non-issue. However, that’s not to say that non-African American teachers could not help Black students, if they are concerned enough.”

Me: Do you believe Black American male students will become more academically advantaged by having a Black American male as a part of their day to day school environment?

P2: “Black people, teaching Black people and working with Black people give a little bit more sensitivity and they might be able to provide more for them.”

Me: As a Black American male leader, how do you feel you can help close the academic achievement gap for Black American male students in this district?

P2: I think that closing the academic gap will happen. I think it can happen; however, it will have a better chance if districts have Black American administrators. I do feel that there are non-Black administrators that do a particularly good job with Black students, but overall Black American males would do better with Black principals.”

Me: Do you believe other leaders in the district would be helpful in developing a program specific to helping Black American male students close the achievement gap?

P2: “Absolutely. I do know that any effort working towards a program will help to make a difference. I think it has to be planned, deliberate, and systematic, and needs to be in place at the lower grade levels, especially pre-school through second grade. If the Black male student is not identified and helped by this time, he will be playing catch up academically after second grade.”

Me: Is there anything else you would like me to know about how Black American male principals/leaders can help Black American male students with closing the achievement gap in this district?

P2: “Districts need to be mindful and discover specifically what is occurring with Black male students and provide them with services and programs designed to help those students close the achievement gap. It would be a lot easier to address the academic deficiency at the beginning of the student’s school career than to try and fix it at the end.”

PARTICIPANT 3

Interview Date: April 29, 2020 (Interview took place over the telephone)

Me: Do you believe that your life experiences have helped you become a better principal or district leader? Please explain.

P3: “Yes, because non-Black people told me that I couldn’t achieve academically, and my parents did not have the opportunity to achieve academically. My Black male coaches and teachers helped me to understand why education was important and not to listen to other people telling me I could not become as good as someone else.”

Me: Now I would like you to tell me, based on your life experiences, how you use them to promote higher academic achievement among the Black American male students in your school or district?

P3: “Yes because it provided a role model. By meeting them where they are academically and protecting them from racism.”

Me: Do you believe Black American male students, working with a Black American male principal causes them to achieve better academically? Please provide details.

P3: “Yes, as long as all of the student’s needs are being met. Also, they can see someone that looks like them being successful, and they don’t have to listen to someone telling them they can do something when they see it for themselves in someone that looks like them.”

Me: Do you believe Black American male students will become more academically advantaged by having a Black American male as a part of their day to day school environment?

P3: “Yes, as long as he is the right Black American male. If he is helping the students to progress and move ahead in school. He has to understand his role in helping the student as a Black role model in helping the students.”

Me: As a Black American male leader, how do you feel you can help close the academic achievement gap for Black American male students in this district?

P3: “As long as the students’ academic needs are being met, the gap should close.”

Me: Do you believe other leaders in the district would be helpful in developing a program specific to helping Black American male students close the achievement gap?

P3: “Programs, if the program does not meet the need of the student, it is not a good program. Students are looked at differently when they are labeled ‘in a program.’ The student’s needs should be identified and if the program is designed to meet that need, it

will be good for that student; however, there are lots of programs that don't provide the needs of Black male students.”

Me: Is there anything else you would like me to know about how Black American male principals/leaders can help Black American male students with closing the achievement gap in this district?

P3: “We need to know why these children who are Black are not achieving. An analysis should be done to assess whether it is cultural or instructional. The need should be identified; now address those needs with professional development of teachers and staff.”