Saving Our Sons: The Impact of a Single Gender Public School on the Social, Emotional

and Academic Progress of Young African American Males from Low Socioeconomic

Urban Neighborhoods

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Abstract

Saving Our Sons: The Impact of a Single Gender Public School on the Social, Emotional and Academic Progress of Young African American Males from Low Socioeconomic Urban Neighborhoods

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African American males consistently perform at significantly lower academic levels, than their peers, at every age level and on almost every national assessment (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010; Harvey, 2010; Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010; Fergus & Noguera, 2010), and of all racial/ethnic and gender groups, African American males continue to be the least likely to secure a regular high school diploma in four years (Schott Foundation, 2012). Their lack of educational progress increases the likelihood that many of them will not live productive and meaningful lives, and they will be trapped in a continuous cycle of poverty. Because of the technical skills required to be employable in the 21st century workforce, getting a quality education may be more critical now, than in years past (Jackson & Moore, 2006).

Too many of the African American male students in several of the coeducational public schools within the urban centers of the United States are not achieving academically. It is the researcher's opinion that many of the coeducational public schools, in large urban cities, are not meeting the social and emotional needs of their African American males, which greatly contributes to the low academic performance of these students. If this nation is truly serious about ameliorating the educational problems

of these members of our society, we need to examine, and adopt educational alternatives to these schools that have historically not met their needs.

This qualitative study will examine the impact of single gender public schools on the educational progress of young, low-income African American males. The specific aim of this inquiry is to add to the limited, but growing collection of theories and research about single gender public schools and to critically examine how these single gender public schools affect the social, emotional, and academic progress of young, low-income African American males. This study will focus on the perceptions and experiences of young, low-income, African American males who attend a single gender public school; perceptions and experiences of their parents and/or guardians; and the perceptions and experiences of their teachers and administrator. Specifically, this study will focus on what the single gender public school is doing to develop a school culture designed to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of these young, low-income, African American males.

The researcher designed and conducted a pilot study to explore the complexities of the research process. The participants of the pilot study were six African American male students, their parents/guardians, three of their teachers, and their administrator. The pilot study was conducted at The Leaders Academy, an all African American male, public high school located in a large Midwestern city. The Leaders Academy also served as the site for the final study, which will focus on four students, their parents/guardians, three teachers, and the principal.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to

My beloved wife, Carolyn Joyce Murphy

For your 35 years of Enduring strength,

Tremendous patience, Continual Encouragement, and

Unconditional love.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to acknowledge and thank my wife, Carolyn Joyce Murphy for her patience throughout this doctoral journey. The many days and nights at the computer writing, and days and nights away from home conducting research, took time away from you and I am very thankful for your love and patience. I could not have successfully taken this arduous journey alone. There were many days when I did not feel like working on this project, but your encouragement and support kept me focused and moving forward. After 40 years of being together, you are still my best friend. I love you.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Dwan Robinson for her encouraging words and suggestions throughout the writing process. You were a strength and a guiding force that kept me focused on the finish line. Often, you would apologize for your many comments written on my manuscript and I had to constantly remind you that those comments were not only welcomed, but needed. I will remember our numerous meetings at Panera and the wonderful conversations we had. I still think we should invest in Panera, to get a return on the many dollars we spent there.

I also thank the entire dissertation committee, Dr. Mona Robinson, Dr. Jerry Johnson, Dr. James Moore, and Dr. Bill Larson, for your guidance and wonderful suggestions that gave direction and life to my work. Your contributions were immeasurable.

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Operational Definition of Terms

African American and Black: The two terms will be used interchangeably to represent young men and other persons of African descent. Thus, when using Black in lieu of African American, it will be capitalized. A small "b" will only be used when it appears in a direct quotation.

Low Income: Students who qualify for free or reduced priced school meals as determined by federal policy. Family income ranges from $11,000 for a one person household to $39,000 for a household of eight (United States Government, 2013).

Perceptions: Feelings, observations, and opinions of young African American males.

Young African American Males: Males in grades seven through twelve; ages 12 - 18.

Single Gender Schools: Schools where the entire student population consists of all males or all females.

Social: Traits that enable one to interact with others, such as, collaboration, cooperation, good character, decision-making, emotional control, and ethical behavior. "To be good citizens with positive values, and to interact effectively and behave consistently" (Elias, Zins, Weisberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, et. al., 1997).

Emotional: One's thoughts and feelings that determines one's actions. Such as, caring, anger, empathy, impulse, commitment, and love (Goleman, 1995).

Academic Achievement: Performance in school determined by multiple forms of assessment that reflect achievement levels of African American males. "Academic achievement refers to the level of schooling you have successfully completed and the ability to attain success in your studies" (Your dictionary, n.d., p. 1).

Progress: Forward movement towards accelerated levels of academic achievement and positive life outcomes.

Urban: Inner city areas, usually characterized as low income, poor, disenfranchised, etc.

Education: Enterprise that prepares students to attend college or pursue a career. This study focuses on students in grades seven through 12.

Schooling: Practices and strategies generally employed to educate young people. For purposes of this study young people refer to students, ages 12 through 18.

Organizational Habitus: The race and social-class based "dispositions, perceptions, and appreciations" of teachers and administrators that create a shared school culture (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004, as cited in James & Lewis, 2010, p. 4).

Traditional Public Schools: Public schools serving both male and female students within the same facility.

The Researcher: The person conducting this research study – Robert L. Murphy

Achievement Gap: "The disparity in academic performance between groups of students…which shows up in grades, standardized test scores, course selection, dropout rates, and college completion rates, among other success measures" (Education Week, 2011, p. 1)

Critical Race Theory (CRT): "CRT is a theoretical framework that lends itself to studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it" (Delgado & Stephancic, 2001, p. 3). "Critical Race Theory focuses theoretical attention on race and how racism is deeply embedded in the framework of American society" (Creswell, 2007, p. 247).

Phenomenological Study: A qualitative research tradition (Creswell, 2007) that "asks the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 132).

Critical Theory (CT): A framework that "focuses on how injustice and subjugation shape people's experiences and understandings of the world… It seeks not just to study

and understand society, but rather critique and change society" (Patton, 2002, p.130). "It is concerned with empowering individuals to transcend the constraints placed upon them by race, class, and gender" (Fay, 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 27).

TLA: The Leaders Academy, a pseudonym for the single gender public school where the research was conducted. TLA is a college prep high school focused on preparing its students to be leaders and to excel in college or a chosen career.

Chapter 1 Introduction

My children, my children of Grace, you're gonna have to start the family over. It's on

you to set things straight.

Y'all done traded one slavery from another when you turned your back on Wisdom.

You ain't free to do what you want to do; you free to do what you supposed to do. Find

out what you're here for, what you were sent for.

Take care of the children. Just 'cause they don't come from you

Don't mean they don't belong to you.

Change never comes without struggle…and joy never comes without pain.

In your lifetime you will see a big struggle,

But you have each other to get through it.

Freedom ain't just about living free it's about being free. The chains on our Wrists ain't

as strong as the chains on our mind. (Berry, 2009, pp. 1-3)

Historical Background

   The excerpt above is taken from *Redemption Song*, a novel by Bertice Berry

(2009) about a female slave who writes "the story of her life" to her future generations in

hopes of giving them valuable advice to positively impact their lives. Her discourse

articulates the attributes that she believes her descendents must possess and the actions

they must take to overcome the debilitating effects of slavery and step into the light of

true freedom. Berry, through her character, addresses many issues that are pertinent and

necessary to my life and the lives of young, low income, African American males today. Berry clearly outlines the necessity to rise and live out the greatness that is within us.

The history of African American males has been filled with centuries of marginalization, and maltreatment (Woodson, 1933; Kluger, 2004; Leary, 2005, Noguera, 2008). Many young, low income, African American men today are still mentally and psychologically enslaved, and continue to live at the lower end of this nation's economic scale (Akbar, 1996; Cose, 2002; Hutchinson, 1996; Leary, 2005; Madhubuti, 1990). We must endeavor to understand the causes of the problems that plague this population and search tirelessly for plausible and viable solutions to resolve them.

Like many young African American males, I too was adversely influenced by and exposed to many negative issues, which include but are not limited to poverty, low self-esteem, fatherlessness, negative media images, crime, low academic achievement, and self-destructive behavior. Throughout my teen and young adult life I attempted to understand the meaning behind many of the obstacles that I had to overcome in my desire to achieve the American dream; a dream, which, quite frankly, had been more precisely a nightmare for me, and many young, low income, African American males. From the ideals of the American dream, I imagined that I could grow up, have a nice job, a wife and kids, buy a house and a car and live happily ever after. I believed that I could have all of these things; that these were my rights and privileges as an American. As I grew older, I sought to find the keys that would unlock the doors to the opportunities to obtain the things that this dream said I could or should possess. The more I searched the more I

became aware of the game and the rules of the game that I was being forced to play.   I became acutely aware of the place designated for me by society and I fought to overcome the stereotypes that had been portrayed, planned, and intended to keep me on the lowest rung of the American dream (Robinson, Moore, & Mayes, 2013; Hutchinson, 1996; Noguera, 2008; Steele, 2003). Like Berry's (2009) character, I have spent countless hours searching for ways to help myself and young, low income, African American males develop strategies to overcome the pervasive effects of our historical past. However, despite my efforts and the work of many educators, African American males are still ranked at the bottom of the academic ladder, and still live on the economic fringes of our society. "With respect to health, education, employment, income, and overall well-being, all of the most reliable data consistently indicates that Black males constitute a segment of the population that is distinguished by hardships, disadvantages, and vulnerability" (Noguera, 2008, p. xi).

During my 36 year career as an educator, I have had the opportunity to be involved in the lives of thousands of young, low income, African American males and to witness their successes and their challenges. I have marveled at the resilience displayed by many of these young men, and many like them, who faced obstacles that appeared insurmountable, but who chose to persevere and find ways to overcome those obstacles (Miller & MacIntosh, 2002). However, I have witnessed far more young, low income, African American males who have succumbed to the obstacles that surrounded them and made choices that destroyed their lives. Numerous young, low income African American males, with whom I have interacted, and many others across this nation, by their own

admission, had tremendous potential to become whatever they desired to be, but they were never able to realize the fulfillment of that potential (Kunjufu, 1986; Kunjufu, 1988; Noguera, 2008).

There have been articles written, research projects conducted and published, and dissertations and books written about the plight of the African American male (Miller & MacIntosh, 2002; Sayfer, 1994; Henfield, 2006; Bell, 1992; Cose, 2002; Noguera, 2008). The dilemmas of African American males have been studied and are well documented, yet, the problems still persist (Bell, 1992, Noguera, 1997). In 2010, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly published a report for The Council of Great City Schools entitled *A Call for Change: The Social and Educational Factors Contributing to the Outcomes of Black Males in Urban Schools.* The report states:

> The nation's young Black males are in a state of crisis. They do not have the same opportunities as their male or female counterparts across the country. Their infant mortality rates are higher, and their access to health care is more limited. They are more likely to live in single-parent homes and less likely to participate in early childhood programs. They are less likely to be raised in a household with a fully employed adult, and they are more likely to live in poverty. As adults, Black males are less likely than their peers to be employed. At almost every juncture, the odds are stacked against these young men in ways that result in too much unfulfilled potential and too many fractured lives.

Much of this story has been told before. Still, there has been little work

focusing specifically on the academic attainment of Black males in our schools

and how it is contributing to the destructive pattern we see (p. iii).

However, there are many young African American males from low socio-economic areas

who, have not been destroyed by the myriad of negative influences that plague our poor

neighborhoods, and have successfully overcome the quagmire that traps, or has trapped

so many of our peers.

Theorists suggest that an education focused on the social, emotional, and

academic growth of students is critical to the development of skills that empower young

people to be contributing members of our society (Cohen, 2006; Elias et al., 1997;

Beland, 2003). This is especially pertinent when considering the education of young, low

income, African American males (COSEBOC, 2013; Banks, 2013). African American

males continue to achieve, academically, socially, and financially, at levels much lower

than their peers of all races. Therefore it is vital that schools begin to look for strategies

to change this situation. It is with these understandings in mind that I endeavor to study a

single gender public school, serving young, low income, African American males, and

the impact that it has on its students' social, emotional, and academic progress.

This phenomenological study will concentrate on the perceptions and experiences

of young, low income, African American males and their parents/guardians, teachers, and

an administrator. I chose to use the phenomenological approach because it allows the

researcher to focus on the "meaning of lived experiences" (Creswell, 2007, p. 57) for

multiple participants, and it values their "stories" as significant and credible data (Patton,

2002, p. 104). This method explores the experiences that are common to all participants, in a study, as the researcher collects data to build a collective portrayal of the "essence of the experience" for each of the individuals (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 58). Utilizing the transcendental approach to phenomenology seemed to be a better fit for this study because it is concerned with describing the meaning of the experiences of the participants, as opposed to the hermeneutical approach, which focuses on interpreting the meaning that individuals give to their shared experiences (Creswell, 2002).

Going forward, to provide clarity, I will refer to myself as "the researcher" for the remainder of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a single gender school on the academic progress of African American males from low socioeconomic, urban neighborhoods. This study will focus on the perceptions and experiences of the African American male students, their parents/guardians, their teachers, and the administrator about what the single gender public school is doing to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of young, low income, African American males. Single gender public schools, that are designed to meet the needs of African American males, have been shown to have a tremendously powerful affect on their students' progress (COSEBOC, 2013; Urban Prep, 2012; Eagle Academy, 2012; Boys Latin, 2013; Fergus & Noguera, 2010). These schools have created a culture and curriculum designed specifically to meet the needs of their African American male students. It must be noted here, that although

single gender public schools have shown promise in educating young, low income

African American males, they are by no means a panacea for the myriad issues that these

students face. These schools may not be the answer, but they are an answer.

This study will specifically look at African American males who have grown up

in low socioeconomic urban neighborhoods and attend a single gender public school.

This inquiry will also share information and explore the factors that impact the social,

emotional, and academic progress of these young African American males. Little

research has been conducted documenting the experiences and perceptions of the

students, their parents, teachers, and administrators in this type of school. A thorough

description of the experiences and perceptions of individuals within the single gender

public school community is critical to ascertaining the intrinsic qualities that make the

school what it is.

Significance of the Study

This work is important because the quality of life outcomes for many young, low

income, African American males, with limited educational success, has been and

continues to be severely limited. This researcher hopes to highlight the conditions that

produce the abysmally low academic performance that many young, low income, African

American males continue to demonstrate and make recommendations about possible

solutions to address their eradication. Horace Mann (1848), the father of education in the

United States, indicated that "education is the great equalizer" (p. 1); the tool that the

downtrodden can and should use to improve their lot in life and progress. Without a solid

education, that provides the requisite knowledge and skills to prepare this population to

become contributors to our society, African American males will continue to live at the

lower end of our nation's economic ladder. The executive summary of *Given Half a

Chance: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males (2008)* reports

that the Schott Foundation for Public Education has compiled data on the academic

performance of African American males for nearly 10 years. The foundation's hard work

has been focused on alerting the nation about the significant educational dilemmas of

African American males, which include excessive special education placements, poor

graduation rates, and an excessive expulsions and suspensions. The 2008 report shows

that large urban districts and many states do not educate African American males as

effectively as their White males.

The Schott Foundation is a think tank focused on educational equity issues, high

performing schools for all children, and educational philanthropy. The foundation

publishes bi-annual report on the educational attainment of African American and Latino

boys. Similar to this study, The Schott Foundation is interested in developing

educational strategies to concentrate on the achievement gap between African American

males and their peers.

The data, from Figure 1 below, reemphasizes the findings that The Schott

Foundation, 2008 articulates. It is apparent that although African American males are

less than 10% of the United States' student population, they account for almost 25% of

the nations' expulsions and suspensions and 20% of the special educations referrals. This

population, however, represents less than 5% of the gifted and talented referrals and less

than 4% of the advanced placement science and math students. Conversely, for White males, the performance percentages in these categories are commensurate with their percentage of the student population.

African American Male vs. White Male National Percentages Comparison
(Wheelock College, 2010)
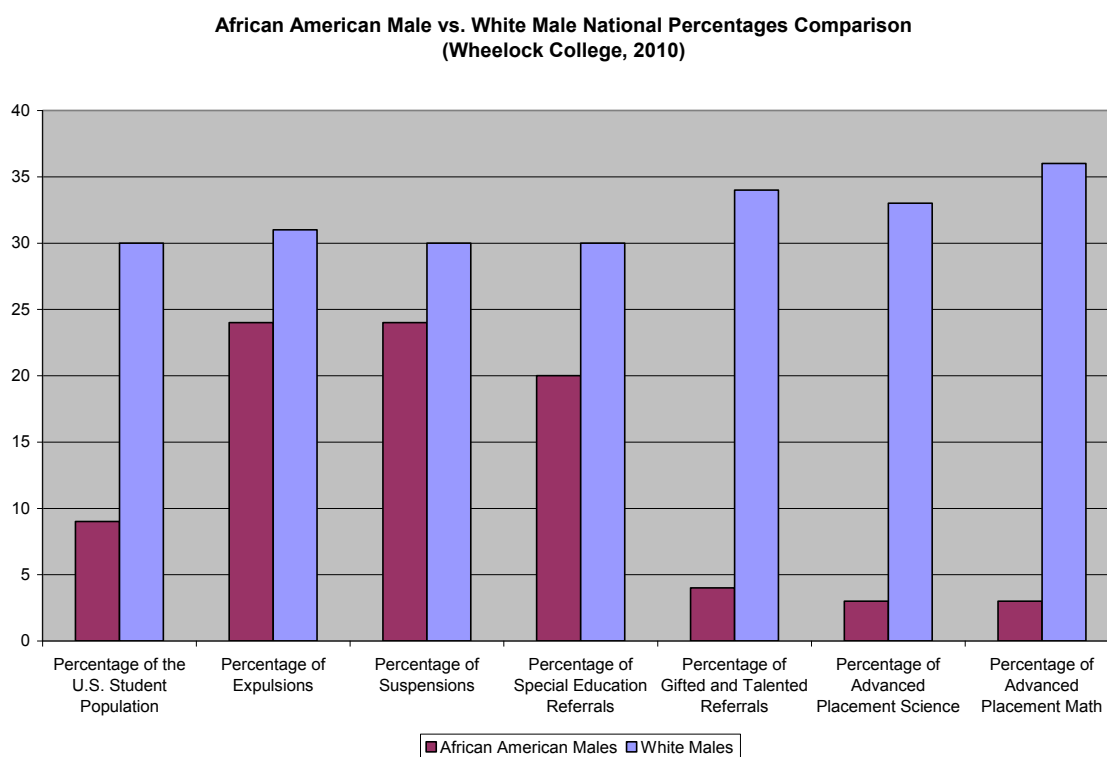
Figure 1. African American Male vs. White Male National Percentage Comparison

The lack of academic achievement among many young, low income, African American males continues to be a problem in traditional public schools, in the urban centers of the United States. This data and others cited in *Given Half a Chance*, suggests that young, low income African American males are severely underperforming academically and are in danger of not being able to take advantage of the many

opportunities that are available for those citizens who are prepared to continue their education or enter the work force.

Because of the technical skills required for employment in the 21st century, getting an education may be more critical than in years past (Jackson & Moore, 2006). If this is true, then we, as educators, must do everything within our power to create educational institutions that optimize every resource available to tackle the needs of all of our young students, including young, low income, African American males, so that they can receive an education that empowers and enables them to rise above the constraints of their current conditions. True authentic education is the meshing of the affective and cognitive domains, thus it is a social, emotional, and academic endeavor. Educators must design and implement strategies that inculcate all of these domains (Cohen, 2006). Too often, many traditional urban public schools fall short of accomplishing their stated goal of educating all students and particularly young, low income, African American males because they do not address their social and emotional needs (Jenkins, 1990; Lareau, 2003; Gladwell, 2008). In *Understanding and Educating African American Children*, William Jenkins (1990) states:

> One of the first things I noticed about the inner city Black child is the absence of structure in his life—at least as the middle class society would define structure. He is often the product of a one parent household. His home life is often loosely threaded, and there is no designation of roles and responsibilities. As a result, he is often disorganized, disoriented, and his world is usually in disarray. In school this lack of structure manifests itself in bad behavior, and poor study habits.

This country rewards for proper behavior and punishes for improper

behavior… The school, the institution established to teach proper behavior,

assumes one has gotten the basics at home. That assumption is often in error

when made about the Black child from the inner city. It is assumed he has

learned certain basic facts about our society in his own home. In reality, he has

not (p. 4).

Many of these urban students that Jenkins (1990) references need interventions in

school to help them learn some of the skills they lack. Single gender public schools are

presently striving to build the bridge between the cognitive and affective gap by

concentrating on the social, emotional, and academic needs of the African American male

student. These schools are endeavoring to assist in their students' efforts to overcome

many non-academic barriers such as, poverty, negative stereotypes, and lack of support at

home. These schools have also been successful in educating young, low income, African

American males by concentrating on holistic educational approaches (Robinson-English,

2006; Cable & Spradlin, 2008; Hawley, 1996: Banks, 2013). As a result of the low

academic achievement of African American males in high school and college, these

schools were designed to provide "academic and social competencies" (James & Lewis,

2010, p.7) to optimize their students' opportunities for success.

Much of the research on single gender schools indicates that there is no consensus

on their necessity, appropriateness, or effectiveness. Proponents of single gender public

schools suggest that these schools are highly successful with and, therefore suitable for

young, low income African American males (Gurian & Ballew, 2003; Gurian & Stevens,

2005; Hughes, 2006; Robinson-English, 2006; Sax, 2002; Sax, 2005; Sax, 2007; Webb, 2001); while opponents suggest that they are ineffective, sexist, and socially unacceptable (Goodrich, 2006; Greathouse & Sparling, 1993; Kaminer, 1998; Pollitt, 1994; Zengerle, 1997). Several researchers propose that single gender schools are valuable and appropriate specifically for low income minority students (Hawley, 1996; Robinson-English, 2006). However, "much of the debate is philosophical" and has not been based upon sound empirical evidence (Mael, Smith, Alonso, Rogers, & Gibson, 2004, p. i). Therefore, it is this researcher's opinion that further study, which yields empirical data, needs to be conducted in single gender schools; more specifically, in single gender public schools serving young, low-income, African American males.

A great majority of the research about single gender schools is focused on parochial, private, middle class, upper middle class, and elite schools (Gewertz, 2007; Cable & Spradlin, 2008). Therefore, it would be beneficial to examine the single gender public schools that focus on low income, minority children. The research on the middle and upper class single gender schools has shown that they meet the needs of their students, in addition to preparing them to function successfully in the greater society. Many of the students, who attend these single gender schools, do not require the schools to provide a high level of social and emotional intervention, because they receive them at home. (Cable & Spradlin, 2008; Hawley, 1996; Webb, 2001). The goal of this research study is to add to the growing, but limited collection of research about single gender public schools and to critically examine how these schools affect the social, emotional, and academic progress of young, low income, African American males. An awareness

and understanding of the organizational habitus (culture) of single gender public schools and the perceptions of the low income, young, African American males who attend them will enable all stakeholders (parents, families, educators, community members, etc.), to develop an educational experience which meets the social, emotional, and academic needs of each male student.

Research Questions

The intent of this study is to acquire a better understanding of the impact of single gender public schools on the social, emotional, and academic progress of African American males from low socioeconomic, urban areas. In addition, this research will examine the differences in the cultural environments of these schools and the cultural environments of traditional public schools to better understand the perceptions of these differences, by the young, low income, African American males. Specifically, this study will focus on the aforementioned males who have attended both single gender and traditional public schools by asking:

➢ How is the social, emotional, and academic environment in an urban, single gender, public school comparable to the social, emotional, and academic environment in a traditional urban, public school?

➢ How does the culture (organizational habitus) of the urban, single gender, public school address the social, emotional, and academic needs of their African American male students?

➢ What are the perceptions of the students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrator when comparing the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the urban, single gender, public school with the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the traditional, urban, public school?

In order to identify the experiences and the perceptions of African American male students in single gender public schools, the researcher chose to use qualitative research methods. Qualitative methodology enables the researcher to get a detailed understanding of an issue by observing and talking to the individuals (participants) who are immersed within the phenomenon being studied. By doing so, the researcher has the opportunity to hear the participants' voices as they "share their stories." (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). As stated previously, much of the research on single gender schools is not based upon sound empirical evidence, but upon philosophical assumptions (Mael, et al., 2004). Therefore it seems appropriate that the social, emotional, and academic experiences of the students who attend these schools and their parents, teachers, administrators be heard. It is essential to use qualitative methods to accomplish the task of garnering in depth, personal data concerning the research questions. Glesne (2006) writes: "Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomenon from the perspective of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions" (p. 4). The social, emotional, and academic conditions of many young, low income, African American males need to be changed and it is this researcher's hope that this study will be a contributing factor in facilitating that change.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

Theorists suggest that a large majority of the African American males, who are academically unsuccessful, attend school in the major urban cities of our nation (Schott Foundation, 2010, Harvey, 2010, Schott Foundation, 2012). In an effort to narrow the scope of this study, the researcher chose to focus on one single gender public school, serving predominantly young, low-income, African American males, and more specifically, those African American males who had previously attended a traditional urban, public school. This inquiry includes observations and interviews, in a single gender public, high school, of young, low income, African American males, their parents/guardians, teachers, and administrator. The study will be conducted at The Leaders Academy (TLA) (pseudonym), an all-African American male public high school of approximately 300 students, located in a large Midwestern city. Although the school fit the desired profile of being an all African American male, public school, having a high graduation rate (97%) and high poverty index (100% of TLA students qualified for free and/or reduced priced meals), the location of the school was the determining factor in its choice as the research site. The researcher considered doing the study in three other schools that had very similar demographics to TLA, but felt that Leaders was the best choice because of its proximity to his home and job. Each of the other schools was at least a six hour drive from the researcher's home and job, while TLA was only two and one half hours away. This proximity enabled the researcher to minimize the number of days that he would have to be away from his family and his job, and maximized his ability to spend considerable time at the research site.

Concentrating on one research site and a small purposeful sample allowed the researcher to spend an extended period of time with each of the participants, and enabled him to collect in-depth, thick, rich data from each individual. However, the decisions to conduct the study at one school, with a small purposeful sample may limit the transferability of the collected data. Further research may need to be conducted to ascertain if the data collected and conclusions made are consistent with other single gender public schools, serving the same population.

The researcher understands that being an African American male who grew up in poverty, in a single parent household located in a low income neighborhood, could give him a vantage point of familiarity from which to view the perceptions and experiences of the students he observed and interviewed. He made every effort to be reflexive in his approach to this study, while being open, fair, and objective as he balanced the impact of his life experiences with how he viewed what he heard and observed. Patton (2002) states, "Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voice of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (p. 65).

The Researcher's Life Journey

Given the researchers personal life experiences, it is relevant to this study to elaborate on his life journey.

I was born in a very large Midwestern city in 1949 and the first few years of my life were fairly normal. My two older sisters and I lived with my mother and father in a modest home, in the inner city. We were a happy family until my mother and father got divorced when I was five. At that point things began to change. When my mother and father separated we moved out of the comfortable inner city home and into a two bedroom apartment in a much poorer section of town. My mother raised our family on a meager nurse's aide salary, which meant that most of my childhood was spent in poverty. My mother was a wonderful woman, who worked hard to provide for us. She made sure that we had the things we needed, but we rarely got many of the things we wanted. I remember many days of eating beans and that hideous welfare cheese. Life was hard, but our home was always filled with love.

My mother was diligent in providing the proper guidance for me, but she could not teach me how to be a man. My father was not around very much and had very little impact on my life. I knew who he was but really did not know much about him.

School, during this time of my life, was a wonderful experience for me. I attended a wonderful Catholic grade school where the majority of the students were African American. It was an outstanding school. The nuns were tough, but treated us all with loving care and kindness. I was a very good student and always brought home excellent grades.

The love that I felt in our home and in my school, shielded me from the harsh realities of being an African American male in the 1950s and 1960s and I was not even aware that the world outside my home and school was very different. This reality

became very clear, at the end of my seventh grade year. My mother decided to move the family from our Midwestern city to a large city in the Pacific Northwest. My mother enrolled me in another Catholic grade school. However, this school was nothing like the one I had left behind. In the Midwestern city, I walked to school every day with my sisters and my friends, who all looked like me. Now, in Pacific Northwest, I was all alone. My sisters were both in high school and I rode the bus alone to school every day. The majority of the students were White and many of them were not warm and inviting to "the new kid." Even the nuns were different. At my old school, the nuns were nurturing and gave me extra help whenever I needed it. These nuns were hard and cold and constantly scolded me for not paying attention. It was difficult for me to stay focused because I was bored. I had already done most of the work that these eighth graders were doing. Many of the students accused me of being a know-it-all because I knew most of the material and I was consistently answering many of the questions in class. I constantly asked my mother to enroll me in the all African American public school that was a few blocks from our home, and she refused and stated that I was going to remain where I was.

That year, I managed to maintain my good grades and graduated from grade school as an honor student. The following year, I was enrolled into an all male Catholic high school that was predominantly White and the majority of the students came from middle and upper income homes. I was one of only three African American students in the entire ninth grade and one of only eight in the entire school. The three of us were treated rather rudely by the majority of the White students. We ate lunch by ourselves at the same table every day. Since the three of us were on the football team, occasionally

some of our white teammates ate lunch with us. But that was pretty much the extent of our socializing with the majority of our classmates, who never invited us to their parties, or asked us to go hang out.

Each grade level was divided into three groups labeled A, B, and C. The other African American ninth grade boys and I were placed in 9C. At first I did not give much thought to this arrangement. However, one day I was talking about classes with one of the White football players, who was in 9A. I discovered that although we were in the same grade, we were not taking the same classes. He was taking Advanced English, Advanced History, and Latin, while I was taking regular English, regular History, and Spanish. The other two African American were also in the same classes that I was in. Since I had been an honor student in the eighth grade, I wondered why I was not in the advanced courses. That evening, I shared with my mother what I had discovered and she stated that she would call the school the next day to inquire about the level of my placement. The next evening, I asked my mother if she had the conversation with the school counselor. She seemed very upset and agitated as she began to recount the conversation with me. She stated that the counselor had told her that I was placed in the "C" level classes because it was felt that I could not handle the advanced work. She told him that I had been an honor roll student in grade school and that she felt that I was capable of doing the same work that the students in the A classes were doing. He told her that the grade school that I had attended was not very highly regarded for its academics and although I was an honor student in grade school, it was best to leave me at the level at which they had placed me so that I would experience a level of success. My mother

said she told him that she wanted me to be prepared to go to college, and wondered if the classes that I was taking would meet my needs. She knew that my goal was to go to college and become an engineer. The counselor told her that in his experience, many of the African-American students who attended that school never went to college. And that the education that I was getting would prepare me to get a good job after graduation. He assured her that I was getting the best education possible and that she had nothing to worry about. I told my mother that I was not happy with the arrangement and she stated that she would call the principal the next day. Later that day, I found out that her conversation with the principal did not go much better than the conversation she had with the counselor. She told me that they were not going to move me to the upper level classes and that they would look at my progress and reevaluate my class placement at the end of the school year, and that they would move me up the next year, if it was warranted. I asked her to let me switch to the predominantly African American high school in our neighborhood and she refused.

Needless to say, the following year I was in 10C and I remained in the "C" level classes all four years of high school. Each year we had the same conversation about moving to the higher level classes, and each year the decision was made to have me remain at the lower level. Although I did not consciously perform lower than my capabilities, I became very insecure and withdrawn and finished high school with "Cs" and "Ds". I came face to face with the stark realities of my world.

Prior to moving to the Pacific Northwest, I lived in a sheltered world of a loving, African American family, neighborhood, and school where the majority of everybody

looked like me and I was accepted. Now, I was struggling to understand why I was no longer accepted for the high achieving person I was. I was thrust into a totally different world. Although I was an A and B student in grade school, I was relegated to the lower classes just because they felt that African American boys could not handle the advanced classes.

I think what I experienced next finally set me on the road to success. After graduating from high school, I attended a community college for one quarter, desiring to fulfill my dream of becoming an engineer. I barely had enough money to make it through that first quarter and when it was over, I decided to drop out, work full-time, and save some money to go back to college. The year was 1968 and the Vietnam War was at its zenith. Since I knew that my draft notice would arrive soon, I decided to enlist in the United States Marine Corps. This decision turned out to be the turning point in my life. I entered the Marine Corps a scared, scrawny, teenager with little or no self-esteem and left a strong, confident, self-assured, young man. My drill instructors recognized that I possessed leadership qualities and did everything within their power to help cultivate them. They pushed me to my limits, and beyond. They would not let me fail. Although their manner of showing their level of caring was the complete opposite of the teachers in my Midwest school, I felt the same deep level of support and caring. The experiences of going through Marine Corps boot camp and commanding an infantry squad in combat changed me dramatically. These experiences gave me the confidence that I could still achieve at high levels, despite the four traumatic years that I spent in high school.

The researcher's life journey provides an illustration of the reason why this study is important to him and why he is passionate about the education of young, low income African American males. As he conducted this study, the researcher constantly reflected upon his life's journey and how he has dealt with and overcome many of the "structural and systemic roadblocks" (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 4), that continue to impede the progress of many young, low income, African American males today.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

"Education is a precondition to survival in America today." – Marian Wright Edelman

(As cited in Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010, p. 2)

In recent years, it has become common to talk about the "Two Americas," one characterized by opportunity and wealth, and the other characterized by significant social and economic strife.

There is, however, a Third America. This America is often captured in popular television documentaries and newspaper stories and includes frightening statistics about unemployment, poverty, and high rates of incarceration. The citizens of this Third America are primarily men, and mostly men of color. These men now live outside the margins of our economic, social, and cultural systems. They are the byproduct of many societal failures – including the failure of our nations' schools (Harvey, 2010, p. 2).

The statement from Harvey, of the College Board, (2010) is representative of much of the literature on the state of the educational achievement and life outcomes of the African American male, in the 21st century; especially young African American males. A review of the literature on these males describes a bleak outlook. Terms, such as "at risk", in peril, endangered, and "in crisis" are often used to describe and project the futures for this population (Noguera, 2008; Hutchinson, 1996; Cose, 2002; Bell, 2010a). Given the convergence of many factors, such as "race, class, structural/institutional

racism, personal responsibility, a lack of equal access to opportunity" (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 3), and to early childhood development, negative stereotypes, teacher expectations, and negative media characterizations on the educational and life outcomes of young, low-income, African American males, the researcher decided to view this study through the lens of Critical Theory (CT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT).

CRT is important to this study because it recognizes that racism is "a normal part of our culture and emphasizes the importance of people of color narrating their own stories" (Biklen & Casella, 2007, p. 6). It also focuses on "the relationship between race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stephanicic, 2001, p. 2) and attempts to comprehend and alter its affect on those who are discriminated against. CT is equally important to this inquiry because its "perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender" (Creswell, 2007, p. 27).

The trajectory of the outcomes in life, for African American men of all ages, is far lower than those of White males. Whatever the areas of comparison are, the success rate of African American men in relation to that of White men is substantially lower. Therefore, it is no longer practical for the nation to overlook the troubles of the African American male, because his failure, in these areas of life, adversely affects our society and our country (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010).

Any study focused on the academic achievement of African American males has to examine the persistent achievement gap between this population and their peers. Therefore, this review of the literature begins with a view of the current achievement gap,

followed by several reasons for the gap's existence, and various remedies that have been

utilized in an attempt to eliminate the gap. The focus of the review then looks at the

history of single gender schools and the potential of these schools to provide an effective

solution to addressing the achievement gap. The organizational habitus (school culture)

is also examined as the driving force to the effectiveness of the single gender public

schools for African American males. A look at the essential components of the African

American male, single gender public schools' culture explores the critical strategies that

the single gender public schools utilize to establish a culture of success.

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gap, as stated earlier, is the educational outcome differential

between various clusters of students from different racial groups. The achievement gap

between African American males and their peers is not a new phenomenon. African

American males constantly achieve at significantly lower academic levels, than their

peers, at every age level and on almost every national assessment (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell,

Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010; Harvey, 2010; Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010; Fergus & Noguera, 2010;

Kleinfeld, n.d.). As evidenced in Figure 1. (p. 21), African American males are

consistently overrepresented in several educational areas, such as suspensions,

expulsions, dropouts, and special education referrals, and underrepresented in advanced

placement and honors classes, and gifted and talented referrals (Schott Foundation, 2008;

Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2009). This data is however, reversed for White males.

Data from a 2004 United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights report,

cited in a publication from Wheelock College (2010) is further evidence that this nation needs meaningful and effective interventions, like single gender public schools, to address the disparities evident in the achievement gap data. The report shows that:

➢ White males represent 30% of the student population and account for 30% of the suspensions, 31% of the expulsions, and 30% of the referrals to special education.

➢ Black males, who represent less than 9% of the nation's students, account for almost 24% of the suspensions, 24% of the expulsions, and almost 20% of the referrals to special education.

➢ This data also shows that White males account for 34% of the gifted and talented students, 36% of the advanced placement mathematics students, and 33%of the advanced placement science students.

➢ Black males represent only 4% of the gifted and talented students, only 3% of the advanced placement mathematics students, and only 3% of the advanced placement science students (Wheelock College, 2010, p. 2).

The African American male graduation rate is alarming, and unquestionably depressing. While the national graduation rate for White males is 78%, it is only 52% for African American males (Schott Foundation, 2012). "Only 2.5% of African American males, who enter public schools, will earn a college degree by the time they are 25 years old. This means that 97% of young African American males…are left to pursue avenues to make a living that do not require a college degree" (Fergus & Noguera, 2010, p. 22). When those employment opportunities are not available, African American males must find other, perhaps less desirable avenues of earning a living.

One of the greatest challenges and threats facing America's schools and social institutions is the insufficient opportunities offered to poor and minority children. These challenges pose a "moral threat" (Levin, 2005, p.6) to our communities and country. At a time, in our history, when increased proficiency and comprehension are required to attain the best careers, African American children, especially males, do not have the education to be competitive. These same children are a "social threat" because children with inferior educational skills "are more likely to be arrested, become pregnant, use drugs, experience violence, and require public assistance" (p. 6). These children's weakened capacity to compete at higher levels makes them an "economic threat" (p. 6). Finally, poor and minority children's educational levels deprive them of opportunities to positively contribute to our society, which makes them a "civic threat" (p. 6).

If our nation is ever going to address the academic deficiencies of young African American males, we must not be satisfied with closing the achievement gap. We must focus on eliminating the root causes, which CT and CRT describes as an amalgamation of "race, class, and "structural/institutional" racism (Tsoi-a-Fatt, 2010, p. 3) and calls for working towards strategies to change these conditions. Single gender public schools are endeavoring to equip young, low income African American males with the education, motivation, and skills to overcome the barriers established to keep them at the bottom of America's society.

Reasons for the Achievement Gap

The academic ability of young, low-income, African American males is not the greatest determining factor for their educational success. The precarious situation of our nation's African American men and boys is due to the previously mentioned, multifaceted crossroads of "race, class, and structural/institutional racism" (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 3). In addition, a lack of equal access to opportunity and early childhood development, negative stereotypes, media characterizations, teacher expectations, and personal responsibility have also contributed to the difficult position that African American males find themselves. (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010; Harvey, 2010; Fergus & Noguera, 2010; Hutchinson, 1996; Noguera, 2008; Jenkins, 1990; Cose, 2002; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004).

The achievement gap has existed for centuries and is a direct result of policies and structures designed to maintain the status quo of second class citizenship for African Americans. During slavery, African Americans were forbidden to learn to read. Throughout this era, a person could be jailed for teaching a slave how to read or write. Once slavery was abolished, African Americans demanded an education that was equal to the education that Whites received. Supposedly "separate but equal" schools were established for Whites and African Americans. Although they were separate, they were anything but equal. For example, in 1868 a plan was devised to continue the dominance of the White community.

The White establishment created an extraordinary strategy to limit, hinder, undermine, and thwart the drive by the black community for an education system

that would open the gate to analytical, political, economic, educational, and cultural independence. This plan was called the "Hampton Plan" which had three basic principles:

1. Young black men and women must not get a liberal arts education. That is no literature, philosophy, mathematics, strategic or critical thinking skills.

2. Young black men and women must not get training in trades or enterprise that will enable them to compete economically, and

3. Young black men and women must internalize the fundamental principle that politics is white folks' business.

The current achievement gap and its related disparities are the direct consequence of these conscious policies begun in the 1860s (Southern Echo, 2004, p. 7).

"Any attempt to educate Black male students must also begin by recognizing that they have unique educational and emotional needs that many schools are not yet prepared to meet" (Wheelock College, 2010, p. 3). Bell (2010a) "supports the assumption that academics may not be the prevailing factor that thwarts Black males from graduating from high school" (p. 14). As mentioned before, society's structural inequalities, such as, poverty and institutional racism, have been shown to impede the progress of African American males. Bell (2010b) further suggests that African American males have difficulty with skills that hinder their ability to "effectively compete in the classroom" (p.5)…[A lack of] "skills like raising their hands and following directions, prevent these students from engaging in the learning process" (p. 5). The inculcation of social, cultural,

and mental health services, in the schools, will positively impact the ability of these African American males to compete in the classroom (Bell, 2010b).

If we, as a nation, are going to ameliorate the lack of academic success of young, low-income, African American males, we must develop schools that have the strategies in place to address the social, emotional, and academic issues these students face. In recent history, many school reform initiatives have been created to improve the academic performance of the nations' student population. Some of these efforts include, but are not limited to differentiated instruction, smaller class sizes, team teaching, back to basics, open classrooms, smaller schools, Title I – a federal spending authorization for low income students, and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – a bill designed to encourage schools to increase the academic performance of their students (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Education Week, 2011). Despite these efforts, African American males continue to achieve at levels far below the levels of their peers. The latest reform effort, the common core standards, is designed to prepare and encourage students to think more deeply and critically. Teachers will be required to change their instructional practices and create lessons that promote their students' ability to support and defend their answers; students will be required to go beyond just finding the right answer. This effort is supposed to result in students being college and career ready. It is this researcher's opinion that if we do not address the root causes of the achievement gap and our schools does not attend to the social and emotional needs of young, low income African American males, the academic achievement gap between this population and their peers will continue to persist.

The History of Single Gender Schools

Single gender schools are not a new phenomenon in the United States. Rosemary Salamone (2003), in her book *Same, Different, Equal: Rethinking Single-Sex Schooling*, offers a history of single gender schooling. Single gender schools have existed for centuries and have historically been private institutions, serving the most affluent and privileged males of American society. As early as 1630 The Boston Latin School educated boys and "later became a feeder school for Harvard" (p. 67). During this era, there was little need for coeducational schools because schooling for girls was not a high national priority (Cable & Spradlin, 2008). The patriarchal philosophies of the early Americans espoused that girls did not need formal education to fulfill the roles of mother and wife (Riordan, 2008; Salamone, 2008). However, after the Revolutionary War, as public schools began to grow, the demand arose for more "systematic schooling" for girls, and elementary schools began enrolling girls. Girls received only three years of formal education because the government felt this was a sufficient amount of training to prepare girls for marriage and motherhood.

By the early 1800s, women began to demand more formal schooling for girls (Kaminer, 1998). "They maintained that education would train unmarried women to teach young children. As a temporary career, teaching was ideal preparation for motherhood" (Salamone, 2003, p. 66). These demands lead to the creation of the first women's seminary and college. With the advent of the common school, by the mid 1850s girls were allowed to attend secondary schools and coeducational schooling became the norm in most large cities (Hughes, 2006). These coeducational schools in the

large urban cities grew mainly because economic factors demanded their existence more

so, than the moral and philosophical opinions demanded them (Riordan, 2008).

By the beginning of the 20th century, as girls began to succeed in school and

began to outperform the boys, educators became concerned about the lack of progress

and the increasing dropout rate for "working class" boys. The educators searched for the

cause of this phenomenon and determined that boys were becoming more feminine

because they were attending school with girls and mostly female teachers. This fear

forced the school reform pendulum to begin to swing back towards single gender schools

with the creation of separate vocational schools for boys and girls. The vocational

schools emulated society's opinion of the traditional roles for men and women by

preparing the girls to be housewives and preparing the boys to go to work and provide for

the family.

In the 1960s, schooling based upon the gender stereotypes exhibited in the

vocational schools soon began to come under attack by the women's movement.

Numerous all male public schools and many "elite private schools, colleges, and

universities" (Salamone, 2003, p. 69) had their admission policies challenged and once

again, the reform pendulum began to swing back towards coeducation. By the 1970s, the

feminist movement had pushed for equal educational opportunities for women and girls

and because the feminists felt that coeducation was the best vehicle to accomplish their

goals, they demanded access to all-male schools and universities. As a result, by the mid

1980s, only a few single gender public schools were still in existence (Cable & Spradlin,

2008).

Over the next 20 years, several research studies began to appear extolling the benefits and detriments of single gender schools and the school reform pendulum has continued to swing both ways. The feminist research reports that single gender schools reinforce gender stereotypes. This research suggests that no credible research exists that proves that single schools improves students' academic performance. However, they do suggest there is proof that single gender schools continue to foster "gender stereotyping and legitimizes institutional sexism" (Halpren, et al., 2011, p. 1). To the contrary, proponents of single gender schools suggest that research shows these schools are highly effective and therefore, appropriate for educating both girls and boys, and especially poor minority boys (Gurian & Ballew, 2003; Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Hughes, 2006; Robinson-English, 2006; Sax, 2002; Sax, 2005; Sax, 2007; Webb, 2001).

The Single Gender Public School: A Solution?

According to the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (2012), there are approximately 506 public schools offering single gender schooling opportunities, such as single gender classrooms, and 116 of the 506 schools are exclusively single gender public schools. Among those 116 schools, are eight single gender, urban, public high schools whose student enrollments are comprised mostly of young, low income, African American males. These eight single gender public high schools have developed programs to address the social, emotional, and academic needs, of their students and are educating and graduating young, low-income, African American males at rates that far exceed the national average for this population (Fergus & Noguera,

2010). As stated earlier, some of these schools were created with the mission of providing an education that would prepare urban African American males, who want to attend college, with the essential educational and social proficiencies necessary to accomplish their goal (James & Lewis, 2010); to remove persistent impediments that have thwarted the efforts of African American males in diminishing the achievement gap that exists between them and their White peers (Fergus & Noguera, 2010); and to advance personal and scholarly high performance for their students (James, 2010).

There are varied and opposing opinions about the necessity, appropriateness, and effectiveness of single gender schools. Much of this debate centers on the premise that boys and girls learn differently (Sax, 2002; James, 2008; Sax, 2005; Salamone, 2003; Riordan, 2008; Gurian & Ballew, 2005; Norfleet-James, 2007) and the feminist argument for gender equity (Goodrich, 2006; Greathouse & Sparling, 1993; Kaminer, 1998; Pollitt, 1994; Zengerle, 2001; Halpren, Eliot, Bigler, Fabes, Hanish, Hyde, et. al, 2011).

In their research on child brain development, Sax (2002 & 2005), Gurian & Ballew (2005), and Norfleet-James (2007) suggest that there are biological variations in the growth of the young male and female brain, which affects their brain functions, maturation rates, and learning styles, and impacts how and when they learn certain skills. Sax (2002 &2005), Gurian & Ballew (2005), and Norfleet-James (2007) suggest that boys and girls can be served more effectively and their academic achievement can be optimized when they are educated separately. Riordan, (2008) suggests that single gender public schools help decrease distractions for their students while providing more

ethical and societal direction and less sex bias, which in turn results in higher academic achievement.

Halpren, et al. (2011) debunks Sax's (2002, 2005) research, calling it "pseudo-science" and stating that it is "deeply misguided, and often justified by weak, cherry-picked, or misconstrued scientific claims rather than by valid scientific evidence" (p. 1). They suggest that single gender schools are a huge step backwards, that there is no empirical evidence that supports Sax's findings, and that all Sax and his colleagues (Norfleet-James, 2007, and Gurian & Bellew, 2005) accomplish is to reinforce gender stereotypes. Goodrich, (2006) and (Kaminer, 1998) agree with Halpren and her colleagues, and they also refute the research done by Sax advocating that there is little to no evidence confirming the benefits of single gender public schools. Goodrich (2006) says that the "scientific evidence," [that undergirds Sax's research is] "unclear at best and nonexistent at worst" (p. 1). They deny that there is a "boy crisis" and suggests Sax has only fostered gender inequities and gender stereotyping. Greathouse and Sparling, (1993, p. 1) propose that single gender public school schools "violate girls civil rights" and are divergent to the Brown v. Board of Education ruling.

It is not the purpose of this study to focus on these debates, but to examine whether single gender public schools are viable institutions for meeting the needs of a particular segment of the nation's population; specifically young, low-income, African American males.

Fergus & Noguera (2010), in conjunction with The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, conducted a three year longitudinal study of seven single gender public

schools "serving primarily Black and Latino boys ages 9 to 18" (p. 4). They found that each of the schools in their study had crafted an institution that was designed to address the specific needs of their students. The scholars' analysis of the data they collected, through interviews and focus groups, revealed two predominant theories that directed the designers as they developed their schools. The theories are:

> Theory 1 – schools need to understand and have knowledgebase of the social/emotional needs of Black and Latino boys and Theory 2 – schools need to understand how the academic needs of Black and Latino boys have surfaced and target strategies for addressing those needs… Our analytical approach to understanding single-sex schools for boys of color is to ask the question: what do you do and why do you do it (Fergus & Noguera, 2010, p.4).

These seven, single gender public schools were successful in creating an institutional environment where the low-income African American male students felt safe and could be individuals, where academic achievement was engrained, and where discipline policies were less important than "the development of the students' character, ethics, and moral values" (Noguera, 2012, p. 11).

School Culture

All groups and organizations have a culture that identifies them. This culture is the corner stone of the organization, and it not only delineates what or who the organization is, but also guides and determines the behavior of the individuals who are within the organization. Culture is a result of the collective knowledge of the members of

the organization, as well as, a progression of renewing the basic tenets as new members gain knowledge and embody the values of the group. "It is the glue that holds the group together and unites people around a set of shared values, beliefs, and practices" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 243).

Schools, like most groups and organizations, have a culture that sets them apart from other schools. Theorists (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Patton, 2002; & Darling-Hammond, 1997, Peterson & Deal, 2002) suggest that a school's culture is a collection of "shared norms, values, beliefs, rituals," expectations, mind-sets, and perceptions that guide the behaviors of all the individuals within the school, and distinguishes it from other educational institutions. The school's culture does not fluctuate, but is a firmly established way of life, which is the starting point for accomplishing all the goals of the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). A school's culture consists of intricate arrangement of customs and practices that have been developed over time and is shaped by the way the administrators, teachers, and key stakeholders emphasize, cultivate, or change fundamental norms, values, assumptions, and beliefs (Deal & Peterson, 1999). As the individuals, within the school, go about their daily tasks, their thoughts, actions, and conversations, as well as their success or failure, is determined and guided by the established culture. "A school's success flourishes in cultures with a primary focus on student learning, a commitment to high expectations, social support for innovation, dialogue, and the search for new ideas…also an ethos of caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff, and between staff and students, based on respect, trust" (Deal & Peterson, p. 6 & 7).

Culture is defined, at its deepest level, as a shared set of "basic assumptions, espoused values, and beliefs" (Schein, 1992, 1999). Many schools include language about high expectations and high academic achievement for all students, in their vision and mission statements. If the schools are committed to accomplishing their stated goals, these statements cannot just exist as "espoused values" on paper or on the walls of the school. The vision and mission statements must become fundamental "basic assumptions" that live in the hearts of all individuals and are evident in every interaction between every staff member, and between all staff and students. These assumptions and beliefs, accepted and exercised at their highest levels, create an organizational habitus that optimizes the opportunities for all students to succeed.

Organizational Habitus – Transforming School Culture

Organizational habitus is defined as a culture that is established when all members of an organization share an awareness, approval, and acceptance of a set of core beliefs and values (Horvat & Antonio, 1999). In a school setting, organizational habitus is developed when all of the adults: teachers, administrators, secretaries, custodians, etc., share the belief that they are responsible for student learning and that their expectations of the students have a direct influence on student achievement. This shared belief is the life's blood of the school that flows through every aspect of the school, guides the planning process and daily activities among the adults, and determines the daily interactions between the adults and the students (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004).

This organizational habitus based upon the adults' understanding that they are accountable for their students' education and the knowledge of the impact of their expectations on their students' academic achievement seems to be the foundational core belief for the single gender public schools serving young, low income, African American males. This researcher interviewed leaders from four of the eight previously mentioned single gender public high schools serving young, low income, African American males, to ascertain how their schools have developed an organizational habitus that has lead to their very high rate of academic success. The four school leaders said their schools' habitus incorporates, but is not limited to, the following components:

➢ they employ teachers who believe in their students' ability to achieve at high levels and are committed to creating a classroom environment that will foster positive teacher/student relationships based upon caring, respect, and trust;

➢ all adults, within the school have high expectations of all students which creates a culture of excellence;

➢ a demand for the highest standard of personal and academic achievement, which is fostered by continuous guidance from all adults;

➢ daily gatherings to inspire and motivate students to give their best effort and to recognize student accomplishments;

➢ African and African American history is infused throughout the entire curriculum and is celebrated regularly. It is not relegated only to Black History Month;

➢ project-based and inquiry learning teaching strategies are incorporated in all content areas;

➢ use of asset mapping and other diagnostic tools to ascertain and develop student learning styles and capabilities;

➢ engagement in out-of-school support programs, such as mentoring and internships;

➢ in-school advisory groups, which offer adult and peer support for students;

During interviews with the previously mentioned school leaders, the components that helped develop a school's organizational habitus were discussed. The researcher found that many of the aforementioned components of these schools' habitus were resident at TLA. For example, TLA has daily student gatherings, called opening sessions, where the boys hear inspiring messages, say the school pledge, and engage in cultural presentations designed to enhance their self-worth as African American young men. These components and many more also appear in the literature on single gender, public schools educating young, low-income, African American males. Although no particular school structure has been proven to be a panacea, the tremendous success that these single gender public schools have attained must be acknowledged (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010). It is suggested that trust, concern, caring, and student engagement leads to higher academic achievement and greater life outcomes. Some of these schools put tremendous emphasis on the need to reverse and tackle "cultural and structural inequities," such as, poverty, racism, and under-funded schools that have prohibited young African American males from closing the achievement gap. These schools also utilized their comprehension of the social, emotional, and academic needs of young African American

males as the foundation for developing the policies of their schools (Fergus & Noguera, 2010).

"Many African American males come to school without adequate social skills to function in a classroom, environment. These males are confronted with two 'selves': 'one-self,' which depicts what community and peers expect of them, and the 'other-self,' what the school expects of them" (Bell, 2010a, p. 6). The situation in which young African American males find themselves must be addressed and the time has come to cease talking about the problems and put into action strategies that concentrate on their needs. "These solutions include rigorous and relevant curriculum, effective teachers, and equitable instructional resources."…"Perhaps most important, though, is that teachers and administrators have high expectations and a genuine belief in the promise and performance of Black male students" (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 8). In order to engage their African American male students, teachers must be dedicated and come to school with a passion, energy, and enthusiasm every day (Kafele, 2009). All stakeholders must focus on the social, emotional, and academic growth of our young African American males, while cultivating the strengths they possess (Wheelock College, 2010; James, 2010; Fergus & Noguera, 2010; Toldson, 2008). For African American males to excel in school today, they must be taught how to think critically and analytically (Kafele, 2009). School personnel should assist in the cultivation of good attitudes regarding the purpose of school (Fergus & Noguera, 2010; Jenkins, 1990). School staff should also facilitate a culture of effort (James, 2008) and students should be socialized to the rules, attitudes, and the primary purpose of school (Bell, 2010b; Jenkins, 1990; Noguera, 2008).

The seven single gender public schools studied by Fergus & Noguera (2010) were all focused on meeting the social, emotional, and academic needs of their students. Fergus & Noguera also found that there were many strategically placed programs and rituals, such as, mentoring programs, "Rites of Passage", and after school activities that were utilized by all of the seven schools.

Summary

The relevant topics addressed in this review of the literature were utilized to establish a framework of information for this study. These topics included a description of the current lack of academic achievement of young, low income, African American and the impact that their low academic achievement has on their life outcomes; the current academic achievement gap between these males and their peers; possible reasons for the existence of the achievement gap; unsuccessful strategies that have been utilized in an attempt to close the achievement gap; the history of single gender schools; all African American male, single gender, public, schools as a plausible solution in closing the achievement gap; the organizational habitus (school culture) of these schools; and the key components that creates the schools' culture.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

The lack of academic achievement among many young, low-income, African American males continues to be a problem in traditional public schools, in the urban centers of the United States. As previously stated in Chapter Two, African American males are at or near the top in all of the negative academic and behavioral categories such as suspensions, expulsions, dropout rates, and special education referrals, and at or near the bottom in all of the positive categories, such as graduation rates, gifted and talented referrals, and advanced placement and honors classes (Schott Foundation, 2010; Wheelock College, 2010).

These data suggest that a disparate level of academic expectations and outcomes exists in this nation's traditional public schools. It is apparent that although African American males only constitute a third of the United States' student population, they account for more than half of the expulsions and suspensions of all students. In addition, more than half of the special education referrals are attributed to African American males and they have substantially lower gifted and talented, Advanced Placement Science and Advanced Placement Math assignments than students from other groups.

If we are going to tackle this disparity and eliminate the achievement gap, that plagues our country, it is imperative that we begin to examine alternate educational opportunities and then duplicate those strategies from educational institutions that have shown promise in improving the educational experiences and outcomes of African

American males. Schools like Urban Prep Academy in Chicago, IL., have achieved tremendous academic success with African American males (Chicago Tribune, 2012). With a graduation rate that exceeds 95%, Urban Prep has graduated three classes of young, low income, African American males from 2010 to 2012, and 100% of their graduates have been accepted into four year colleges (urbanprep.org, 2012).

Research, though limited, has shown that since 1999 the number of single gender public schools has grown from four to 116, and those designed to meet the needs of African American males, have been shown to be very successful (Fergus & Noguera, 2010). Many urban school districts have observed the data on the success and effectiveness of these schools and are now creating their own single gender schools. For example, Columbus City Schools, Columbus, Ohio opened two single gender middle schools in the fall of 2010.

Purpose of the Study

Again, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact of a single gender public school on the social, emotional, and academic progress of young, low, income, African American males. As the number of single gender public schools serving young, low-income, African American males has continued to increase over the past decade, modest amounts of research has been carried out documenting the experiences and perceptions of the students, their parents, teachers, and administrators at these schools. A thorough understanding of the experiences and perceptions of individuals within the single gender public school community and the organizational habitus they have

developed is critical to creating strategies to increase the graduation rates and life successes for the young African American male students, who attend these schools.

To accomplish this task, the researcher chose to develop this study using qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology enables the researcher to get a detailed understanding of an issue by observing and talking to the individuals (participants) who are immersed within the phenomenon being studied. By doing so, the researcher has the opportunity to hear the participants' voices as they "share their stories" (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

The researcher also used findings from preliminary data collected during a pilot study to further reinforce the need for this research. This will be discussed later.

Research Questions

The intent of this study is to examine and consider the experiences and perceptions of young, low-income, African American males, their parents, teachers, and administrators in single gender public schools. By focusing on these experiences and perceptions the researcher hopes to gain an understanding of how each individual perceives how the single gender public school has affected the social, emotional, and academic progress of its student population. The research questions are:

➢ How is the social, emotional, and academic environment in an urban, single gender, public school comparable to the social, emotional, and academic environment in a traditional urban, public school?

➢ How does the culture (organizational habitus) of the urban, single gender, public school address the social, emotional, and academic needs of their African American male students?

➢ What are the perceptions of the students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrator when comparing the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the urban, single gender, public school with the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the traditional, urban, public school?

Research Design

The intent of this study is to gain an understanding of the social, emotional, and academic environment created in a single gender public school and the impact that this environment has on the academic progress of young, low-income African American males. In an effort to understand the social, emotional, and academic environment of the single gender public school, the researcher chose to utilize a phenomenological case study approach to provide the participants of the study the opportunity to tell their stories. Hearing their voices will give us the opportunity to gain insight into their perceptions and experiences. Confirming the perspectives of these participants further reinforces evidence provided by the various stakeholders in the pilot study. According to Patton (2002), "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (p. 104). He further states:

The phenomenological approach to qualitative research focuses on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into

consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning. This requires

methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people

experience some phenomenon – how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it,

judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others. To gather

such data, one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly

experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have "lived experience" as

opposed to secondhand experience (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

Theoretical Framework

As stated, this phenomenological study focuses on the social, emotional, and

academic environment of a single gender public school and the impact of that

environment on the progress of young, low-income, African American males. As stated

previously, there is a huge gap between White male and African American male

graduation rates, which is 31%; the overrepresentation of Black males in the areas of

suspensions, expulsions, special education referrals; and the underrepresentation in the

areas of advanced placement classes, honors classes, and gifted and talented referrals.

This is achievement gap is a result of a complicated combination of "race, class, gender,

and structural/institutional racism" (Tsoi-A-Fat, 2010, p. 3). Therefore, the researcher

decided to view this phenomenological study through the closely related theoretical

lenses of Critical Theory (CT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT).

CT, as noted previously, is a framework that "focuses on how injustice and

subjugation shape people's experiences and understandings of the world… It seeks not

just to study and understand society, but rather critique and change society" (Patton, 2002, p.130). "It is concerned with empowering individuals to transcend the constraints placed upon them by race, class, and gender" (Fay, 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 27). Similarly, CRT is a theoretical framework that lends itself to "studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power… It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 6). CRT "understands racism as a normal part of our culture and emphasizes the importance of people of color narrating their own stories" (Biklen & Casella, 2007, p. 6).

When looking at education, CRT also examines "how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups" (Solorzano, 1998, p. 122). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) framed their discussion of CRT and education around:

> "Three central propositions: 1) Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequality in the United States; 2) United States society is based on property rights; and 3) The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity" (p. 48)

The cultural inequities delineated in CT and CRT outline the constructs that affect the lives of the young low income African American males in this study. Each day, these young men must deal with the structural and institutional barriers set up to keep them buried at the lower end of this nation's economic scale. For this reason, CRT provides the basis for an analytical model that focuses on the failure of the U.S. education system

to adequately educate the majority of culturally and racially subordinated students
(Mertens, 2009).

Each of these frameworks, examined as complimentary constructs, provide a
contextual point of view from which to describe the perceptions and experiences of the
young African American males who attend TLA, their parents/guardians, teachers, and
their principal.

Sampling Method

As noted earlier, a pilot study was conducted which supports the need for this
research. The participants in the pilot study were six, African American male students,
their parents/guardians, four teachers, and the principal. Following the pilot study, this
actual study consisted of four young, African American males, their parents/guardians,
three of their teachers, and the principal. Each of the young men attends The Leaders
Academy (TLA), a single gender, public high school in a large Midwestern city. Each of
the students was classified as low-income since each is included in the free and/or
reduced priced meal program. Four of the young men in the pilot study were seniors and
two were juniors. Two of the young men in the final study were juniors and two were
seniors. The four students were chosen from a pool of 12 prospective participants in the
final study, and for the pilot, six were selected from a pool of 20. The potential
participants were recommended by their teachers and administrator, based upon the
teachers' and administrator's knowledge of the students. On one of the first visits to
TLA, the researcher presented a summary of the project to the faculty during a staff

meeting and asked them to recommend juniors and seniors that they thought could be potential contributors for the study.

Extreme case sampling was used to select the student participants. This sampling method, which is a form of purposeful sampling, enables the researcher to "learn from unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, for example, outstanding successes/notable failures" (Patton, 2002, p. 243). Once selected, the perspective participants met, as a group, with the researcher, and he explained the scope of the project and allowed them to ask questions. Each student, who stated that he was interested in participating, was asked to fill out a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain demographic information about each perspective participant. Based upon the students responses, on the questionnaire, the researcher selected participants for both studies, utilizing extreme case sampling, because he wanted to investigate young African American males, who had attended a coeducational school prior to enrolling in TLA, and who had performed poorly at the coeducational school, but who were excelling at TLA.

Once the participants were selected, they were given a letter (Appendix A) to take home, describing the research study and asking their parents/guardians for their permission to allow the boys to take part in the study. The boys were also given a letter asking each of their parents/guardians to agree to be participants in the study.

Questionnaires were also distributed to eight teachers who, after reading the letter (Appendix A) describing the study, expressed interest in participating. The researcher used purposeful sampling strategy to select three for the study. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative research technique for selecting participants "because they can purposefully

inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study"
(Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Since the school only has one administrator, the researcher was
hopeful that the administrator would agree to be a participant as well. The researcher
sought to gain knowledge about the organizational habitus of TLA by examining the
perceptions and experiences of the students, their parents/guardians, their teachers, and
their administrator.

Sample Size

As mentioned earlier, the participants selected for this study are young, low-
income, African American males, who attend TLA. The researcher decided to select six
boys, from a pool of 20, to participate in the pilot study, and for the final study he
selected four boys, from a pool of twelve. This decision was made to support the thought
that a small sample would facilitate spending more time with each individual, and gaining
a greater level of information from those researched. Also, a larger sample would greatly
extend the time period allocated to collect data.

Data Collection

The researcher utilized a variety of strategies to collect in depth data for this
study. These strategies were questionnaires, one on one, face to face or telephone, semi-
structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and field notes.

> ➤ The questionnaire (Appendix B) provided the researcher with demographic
> information on each potential participant, such as previous schools attended,

grade point averages at their former schools and at TLA, class rank, discipline

record, etc. This information was analyzed to determine which of the boys should

be selected to participate in the study. It was important for the researcher to

gather detailed information about each potential participant to facilitate the

extreme case sampling process. The researcher sought to gain knowledge about

the organizational habitus of TLA by examining the experiences and perceptions

of the students, their parents, their teachers, and their administrator. Once the

questionnaires were analyzed, the researcher used this data to develop an

interview guide (Appendix C) for each group of participants. The open-ended

questions were designed to allow each participant to answer freely and elaborate

on their perceptions and experiences.

➢ Semi-structured, face to face, or one on one telephone interviews were utilized to

provide the students, in the study, the opportunity to share their experiences and

their perceptions about their educational journey. The semi-structured interview

is a process that allows the interviewer to ask the interviewees a set of previously

prepared, open-ended questions while also giving the interviewer the flexibility to

ask follow-up questions based upon the responses of the interviewee (Wengraf,

2004). The parents/guardians, teachers, the administrator shared their perceptions

of the boys' educational experiences and each described their particular role

within that process. The researcher was cognizant of the fact that he would

possibly have to adjust his interview schedule, and the location of the interviews,

to meet the needs of each participant.

➢ After finishing the one-on-one interviews, the researcher conducted focus group interviews, with each separate cluster of participants. The focus group provided an opportunity for each participant to hear the responses of the remaining group members, which encouraged additional dialogue, increased the individuals' reflective thoughts, and produced additional data which may not have arisen in the one-on-one interviews (Patton, 2002).

➢ During his visits to TLA, the researcher also spent time observing, the school surroundings, inside and outside, and the students, teachers, and the principal as they interacted with each other in different settings within the school (i.e., student/student interactions in the classroom, in the halls, in the cafeteria, etc.; teacher/student interactions in class; student/principal interactions in the halls, at lunch, and in the office). Collecting data through observations was valuable to the researcher because this method gave the observer the opportunity to acquire an understanding of the milieu in which individuals interrelated, and to see things that the participants were not aware of, or things that the participants may have been reluctant to share in an interview. Observations also allowed the researcher the opportunity to draw upon personal information as he compared his perceptions to the perceptions of the participants (Patton, 2002).

➢ Lastly, the researcher wrote field notes, while individually observing the students, teachers, and the principal. Additional observational notes were written about the setting of the school, which included viewing documents and artifacts displayed throughout the building.

Interviews

The majority of the interviews, for the study, was face to face, individual and focus group sessions, and recorded on a digital recorder at the school or in the students' home. The researcher conducted telephone interviews with the parents/guardians of the students who had difficulty arranging their schedules to participate in face to face interviews. Since the purpose of the study was to gather the perceptions and experiences of the participants, concerning the impact of the single gender public school on the social, emotional, and academic progress of young, low-income, African American males, qualitative interviewing seemed like the best way to acquire meaningful data.

Since an observer cannot see thoughts, perceptions or feelings, it was vital that the researcher used interviewing because it was the most efficient means to gather this type of information. Hearing the participants' voice provided the researcher with data that he could not have gathered by any other means. The interviewing process assumes that the participant's viewpoint is significant and understandable (Patton, 2002). To ensure continuity, all of the interviews were conducted and all recordings were transcribed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

When using the phenomenological method in research, to analyze data, one may need to ask, "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 132)? Specific to this study, the researcher examined the perceptions of young, low-income, African American

males about the impact of the organizational habitus (school culture) of the single gender public school, on their social, emotional, and academic progress. To begin the analysis required the development of an efficient system of organizing the large amount of data collected. The researcher developed a coding system, using colored markers, which facilitated the organization of the data into themes, patterns, and categories. While reading through the questionnaires and interview transcripts, the researcher used the colored markers to highlight participant responses that seemed similar. As this process continued, he began to notice several of these responses were common throughout each of the participants' transcripts and they were developing a consistent pattern. These emergent patterns became the major themes of this study.

Once all the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, he listed the emergent patterns and themes that were present in the data. The themes were then collated and recorded for later use. To facilitate this process, the researcher developed individual case write-ups for each participant. He then used the individual case descriptions to perform a cross-case analysis, which made finding common themes and patterns more apparent.

To complete the analysis of the data, this researcher used a holistic perspective as an analytic strategy. The holistic perspective is described as, "The whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum its parts; focus on complex interdependencies and system dynamics that cannot meaningfully be reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships" (Patton, 2002, p. 41). The whole phenomenon in this study, that which made the greatest impact upon the

students, turned out to be the organizational habitus of the school, which permeated the very fiber of all that the schools is and does.

While critics of holistic perspective state that it "oversimplifies the complexities of real-world programs and participants' experiences"…[The advantages are] "that greater attention can be given to nuance, setting, interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies, and context" (Patton, 2002, pp. 59-60).

Establishing Trustworthiness

One of the main goals of any researcher is to make certain that the information and conclusions presented are credible, valid, and trustworthy. Trustworthiness is "that quality of an investigation (and its findings) that made it noteworthy to audiences" (Schwant, 2001, p. 258). Unlike the statistical methods utilized in quantitative studies, trustworthiness is achieved in qualitative research by establishing, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility in a study is achieved by the triangulation of data from multiple sources, and also the methods used in the collection of the data (Glesne, 2006). To establish credibility in this inquiry, the researcher utilized three types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, and methodological triangulation.

1. Data Triangulation. The following individuals were interviewed to garner informational data:

   ➢ African American male students who attend a single gender, urban, public high school;

➢ Parents/guardians of each of the student participants;

➢ Teachers employed at the high school;

➢ The administrator (principal) of the high school;

➢ Administrators at four other African American male, single gender,

  public high schools;

Collecting data from these multiple sources enabled the interviewer to cross check

the information received to ensure that what you was hearing was an accurate

representation what happens at the single gender public school.

2. Investigator Triangulation. To ensure investigator triangulation, the

  researcher used the following techniques:

  ➢ Peer Debriefing. Peer debriefing necessitates soliciting the

    involvement of a disinterested colleague or peer to discuss evolving

    assumptions and conclusions of the study. This enables the researcher

    to examine his thoughts, search for any personal biases, and challenge

    suppositions or interpretations during the study (Lincoln & Guba,

    1985).

  ➢ Member Checking. Member checking was incorporated by giving the

    participants the opportunity to review the transcripts of their

    interviews to ensure that their thoughts and comments are accurately

    stated.

Since the researcher did not employ other interviewers with whom he could

compare notes, he had a professional colleague, who has her doctoral degree, read this

study and she asked the researcher questions about his assumptions, findings, and interpretations. The researcher also gave each interviewee a copy of the interview transcript to verify if the accuracy of what was written.

3. Methodological Triangulation. The researcher employed the following methods to garner information for this study:

> Student demographic questionnaires;

> Individual face-to-face and telephone interviews;

> Focus group interviews;

> Field noted gathered during observations;

> Information from examining documents and artifacts;

Several methods were used to collect data for this study, which provided the researcher with different forms of information that could not be collected any other way. For instance, observing the participants does not provide the observer with the thoughts or feelings of the individual. That information can however, be gathered through an interview.

Transferability suggests that generalizations can be made across similar cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure transferability, inquirers utilize thick descriptions of the participants' experiences and perceptions. Thick descriptions consist of in-depth and detailed information gathered from the interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition to asking the questions on the interview guide, the researcher asked several probing questions to gather in-depth, detailed information from each participant. He then used

the data collected, from each individual, to determine if there were common themes and patterns that would emerge.

Dependability is accomplished by establishing a coherent recognized review of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which includes:

- ➢ Examining all of the collected data, acquired from various sources, such as, interview transcripts and field notes;

- ➢ Summarizing and analyzing the accumulated data to formulate theories and assumptions;

- ➢ Organizing the data into themes and patterns that emerge from the analysis of the collected data;

- ➢ Process Notes Documenting the research methods used to determine strategies to ensure that the data is presented in a trustworthy and credible manner;

- ➢ Establishing meanings and reasons for suggestions and decisions made in furcating the outcomes of the study;

- ➢ Creating various tools to collect data in different ways and from different sources.

Accomplishing the standard of confirmability necessitates that the researcher demonstrate that the information, in the study, is based on the data and that it is presented clearly and objectively (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was achieved by utilizing the audit trail, triangulation and member checking.

Researcher Reflexivity

In using a qualitative inquiry method, the investigator must be cognizant of the fact that he is the research instrument, and it is critical that he be reflexive in his approach to this work. Reflexivity is recognizing the impact of one's experiences and background and how one comprehends and functions within the research process (Glesne, 2006, Patton, 2002). This researcher understands that being an African American male who grew up in poverty, in a large urban city, could shape the entire inquiry process and how he reported on the collected data. His life's journey, which was mentioned earlier, demonstrates the struggles he went through to gain credibility and acceptance within a matrix prearranged to keep him out of the mainstream of this society. The researcher made every effort to be reflective about the impact of his life experiences, morals, values, and predispositions on how he viewed what he heard and observed while conducting this study.

The researcher was committed to following the confidentiality requirements established by the Ohio University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and made every effort to ensure that the participants were not adversely affected during the study. Each individual was allowed to ask questions, about the research, prior to agreeing to participate and they were notified, verbally and in writing that they could withdraw from the process at any time. All transcripts and recordings of the interviews were handled in accordance with all IRB policies. The letter (Appendix A), which was presented to each potential respondent, participant consent forms (Appendix C), and IRB forms and approvals (Appendix E) are included with this dissertation.

Pilot Study

As stated earlier, the researcher conducted a pilot study, which provided insightful themes and patterns, as well as, ideas for improvement of the study. The pilot study provided an opportunity for the researcher to gain knowledge about himself as a researcher, knowledge of research practices, and to assess interview questions and observation methods (Glesne, 2006). This pilot study was carried out at TLA, which is the studied single gender, public school serving African American males. Questionnaires were distributed to 20 students and 10 teachers, with the intention of selecting six students and three teachers as participants. Each selected student's parents/guardians and the principal were asked to take part also. Once the sample was chosen, the researcher interviewed each respondent individually and in focus groups, and observed the students, teachers, and principal as they went through their daily routines in the school. The intent of the full research project is to further examine the impact of single gender, public schools on the social, emotional, and academic progress of low income African American males.

Pilot Study Outcomes

This researcher gained valuable information about the intricacies of the inquiry process during the pilot study. There were several unanticipated difficulties and setbacks that arose throughout this endeavor. Gaining access to TLA, which is located in another city in the state, took much longer than expected. The researcher attempted to communicate with the school by mail, email, and telephone, but he achieved no success.

After several months of trying, the researcher talked with his superintendent and asked her to facilitate by contacting the superintendent in TLA's district. Within a few short weeks, the researcher received an email granting him permission to visit the school.

Once the project began, the researcher became aware of the tedious process of arranging visits to the school and scheduling interviews with the parents. There were several cancelations and rescheduled appointments, because of conflicts in the parents' availability. It was also difficult finding a mutually agreeable time and place to conduct the parent focus group interviews. Initially, the researcher wanted to hold parent focus groups at the school in the evening. After several date changes, it was decided to meet at the local library on Saturday mornings.

Weather conditions also caused delays. On three different occasions, the researcher traveled to TLA's city, only to find out that school was closing because of snow.

As the interviews commenced, the researcher quickly realized the importance of preparing an adequate number of probing questions. After the first two student interviews, which did not produce sufficient data, the researcher developed several additional probing questions, which made the remaining interviews more meaningful as they yielded more in-depth responses from the interviewees.

One of the most positive outcomes of the pilot study was how easy it was to build rapport with everyone at TLA. The teachers were very excited about the project and were anxious to hear the researcher's thoughts about the school and their practice. They gave the researcher full access to their classrooms and were very willing to give up their

free time for interviews and general conversation. When the principal introduced the researcher to the student body and told them about the study, he instructed the boys to treat him like he was family. The principal also gave the researcher full access to every facet of the school and he was able to observe during staff meetings, assemblies, parent teacher conferences, and discipline sessions between the principal and students.

As the data from the pilot study was collected and analyzed, the researcher discovered several themes and patterns that were evident in the findings. First, it was glaringly obvious that every individual lives out the core beliefs and values that help develop the organizational habitus of TLA. No matter who the researcher spoke with, students, teachers, parents, or the principal, he heard the same message of nurturing, caring, support, and high expectations. For example, Mr. Jackson (pseudonym), a math teacher stated, "We are the example… They are like our sons and we want the best for them, so we model what we expect, in speech, dress, attitude, demeanor, etc." Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton (pseudonyms), parents of three Leaders Academy students said, "We've had three sons there and they all have become very focused. The teachers expect the best out of the students. They push them and they don't accept low performances." Chris (pseudonym), an 11th grader remarked, "The teachers put all of their heart into what they do. They do a lot of things that they don't get paid for…I am challenged to give my best every day."

The family atmosphere at the school was the second theme that emerged from the organizational habitus of TLA. Each of the boys spoke a lot about this aspect. Jamaal (pseudonym), a 12th grader said, "The teachers are more like mothers and fathers. They

treat me like family… They are there for me." Omari (pseudonym), an 11th grader

remarked, "We are family here. My classmates are more like brothers than friends."

Mrs. Slaughter (pseudonym), Omari's mother stated, "The school has made a big

difference in my grandson's life. It's a family atmosphere; they treat all the boys like

they are family."

A third theme that was evident was the level of confidence that each of the boys

felt about their futures. Jeff (pseudonym), a 12th grader stated, "Since coming here, I

have become a young man with character. The teachers give us inspirational words to

live by and they have helped me develop leadership skills." Omari said, "I have become

someone who wants to be a leader and help others. I try to help whoever and wherever I

can. I guess that's why I want to be a teacher." Jamaal (pseudonym), a 12th grade said,

"Here, I try to grow and learn from every experience. They are trying to show us how to

grow from boys to men."

As the researcher planned for the actual study, he endeavored to address some of

the difficulties experienced in the pilot study, so that the data collection process was more

manageable and efficient. As a result of the pilot study experience, he added a few

different questions to the interview guides and developed additional probing questions to

ensure that the interviews were more in-depth. He also observed to see if the themes and

patterns that emerged from the pilot study were consistent with what he found during the

actual study.

Chapter 4 Findings

I am, in this place, a tank filled with helium.

I will always be that tank, whose sole purpose is to fill the lives of these students with that

substance that will cause them to soar, whether they want to or not.

Because a helium balloon will soar;

Unlike one that is just filled with oxygen, which will just lie over on its side.

That's all it's about. Moving.

I will not allow you to be your own weight, in this room, to hold yourself down.

And I will not allow you or anyone else, to take away the scissors, or any instrument that

can free you, and prevent you from going up and up, and out of sight.

I am here to help you soar. That's all I live for.

I am not here for any other reason.

I tell my students all the time, that all I care about is you being sharp.

You may not like me. You may hate me. But you will soar.

Christine Turner (Educator at TLA)

Introduction

  This chapter, like the quote above from one of the TLA teachers, presents a synthesis and summary of the findings drawn from the analysis of data collected from interviews, focus groups, observations, field notes, and artifacts at TLA. A summary of the demographic information about each participant, a description of the school, and a

thematic analysis of the data are also included. As noted before, the purpose of this study was to provide a voice to the young, low-income, African American males, their parents, teachers, and the principal concerning the impact of a single gender public school on the social, emotional, and academic progress of the schools' students. To accomplish this task, the subsequent research questions were explored:

- ➤ How is the social, emotional, and academic environment in an urban, single gender, public school comparable to the social, emotional, and academic environment in a traditional urban, public school?

- ➤ How does the culture (organizational habitus) of the urban, single gender, public school address the social, emotional, and academic needs of their African American male students?

- ➤ What are the perceptions of the students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrator when comparing the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the urban, single gender, public school with the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the traditional, urban, public school?

Demographic Characteristics

   The School.

   TLA, which opened in the fall of 2007, is a small, public, high school located in a large Midwestern city, in the United States. The school building, which was formerly a middle school, is sandwiched between a slowly decaying, urban neighborhood, a very large railroad yard, and several large, old, commercial buildings. Although the

neighborhood is in decline, upon arrival to the school, the building and grounds appeared to be clean and well maintained. Entering the building is not easy, as all of the doors are locked and you have to be buzzed in by the secretary if the security guard is not at his post. Once inside, you are greeted by the security guard(s) and have to pass through the metal detector. The researcher later discovered that this practice is not restricted only to TLA, but is standard procedure for each high school in the district. The security guard then asks the visitor to report to the main office to sign in. As you walk to the office, you observe that the main foyer and halls are also neat and clean like the outside of the building. "Welcome to TLA" is painted in large bright letters, over the stairs. This welcome is the only thing on the walls of the very large foyer except one poster that says, "It Takes Courage to be a TLA Man."

The second floor of the building is unused as TLA only occupies the first floor. The building is sectioned into three large wings. There are mixed classrooms, the library, and the office in one wing, mixed classrooms and the cafeteria in the second wing, and the gymnasium occupying the third wing. The classroom walls completely opposite of the walls in the halls. Each classroom has posters of famous African Americans and examples of student work on their walls. As you walk through the school, you cannot help noticing how quiet and orderly the school is. During class changes, the boys are required to walk on the right side of the hallway, which makes transitioning very smooth.

TLA, which operates as a day school, is a warm and inviting place. There is an atmosphere of order and structure can be observed as you walk through the halls. As you pass students in the halls, they often stop, shake your hand, and introduce themselves.

The teachers are just as welcoming as the students and it does not take long for you to understand that this ritual is part of the culture of the school.

The foundational beliefs and core values of TLA are spelled out in their mission statement, which is displayed in the main office. It says:

> The mission of The Leaders Academy is to develop exemplary students who will reach their full potential and beyond. The Leaders Academy will assist students in recognizing their genius and realizing their self-worth. Students will be encouraged to stay patient and poised to seize every opportunity for success. Students are guided by scholarship, leadership, and service to mankind. The Leaders Academy will cultivate young men to become global leaders of the century.

In this chapter, it becomes increasingly evident, in the responses of the participants, that the TLA's organizational habitus empowers all of the individuals to live out the school's mission of creating global leaders.

Based upon the graduation rate for African American males, TLA outperforms all other high schools in the school district. The district graduation rate for African American males is less than 30%. However, TLA's graduation was 97% in the 2010-2011 school-year. The state, where TLA is located, is ranked in the lowest 10% of all states in graduation rates for African American males (Schott Foundation, 2012).

The Students.

As noted previously, TLA is an all African American male high school, with a student body of approximately 300 boys, all of whom qualify for the free and reduced priced lunch program. The school attracts boys from all over the large urban city, and some travel up to two hours each day to get to school. Each student wears a dress shirt, tie, black slacks, and black dress shoes every day. A blazer is also a part of the dress code, but the students are not required to wear them every day. The principal usually stands inside the front door, in the morning, to greet the boys and make sure they are in dress code.

All of the boys have an air of poise and confidence about them as they move about, carrying their books and belongings in a black, shoulder-strapped brief case, with the school's crest on it; they are not allowed to carry book bags. They seemed focused yet very relaxed, and it was surprising to notice very little horse play among the boys.

The Participants.

Four boys and their parents/guardians, three teachers, and the school's principal were selected to take part in the final study. Each participant was interviewed individually and everyone, except the principal, participated in a focus group interview. Profiles for each of the participants have been included to provide background for the perceptions and experiences that were shared by each individual. Figure 2 below, gives a brief description of the participants' profiles. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of each participant.

Participants	Demographic Information
Students	
Ramone Hughes	16 year old junior; at TLA two years; has a 3.1 gpa; lives with his mom, dad, and two sisters
Eugene Calhoun	18 year old senior; at TLA four years; lives with his mother and younger brother; has a 3.4 gpa
Kwame Porter	18 year old senior; at TLA two years; lives with his grandmother; has had a 3.2 at TLA
Travis Boyd	17 year old junior; at TLA three years; lives with his mother and older sister; 3.4 gpa
Parents/Guardians	
Mr. & Mrs. James Hughes	Ramone's parents; wants Ramone to be a role model for his sisters
Mrs. Delores Calhoun	Eugene's mother; single mom; works two jobs
Mrs. Wanda Battle	Kwame's maternal grandmother; raised six children as a single parent; has been guardian since Kwame was six
Mrs. Helen Boyd	Travis' mother; single mom; let Travis decide the high school he wanted to attend
Teachers	
Ms. Tina McCall	White, female, Math teacher; late twenties; six years teaching, one year at TLA
Mr. Marshall Burke	African American male counselor; 28 years as educator, three years at TLA
Mrs. Christine Turner	White, female Science teacher; late fifties; 11 years teaching, two at TLA
Principal	
Mr. Titus Robinson	African American male; administrator for nine years, first year at TLA

Figure 2. Brief description of participant profiles

Ramone Hughes.

Ramone is a 16 year old, five foot eight inch, athletically built junior, with a sharp wit and an infectious smile. He lives with his mother, father, and his two sisters. He has been attending TLA since the beginning of his sophomore year. Ramone is a member of the football and track teams, vice-president of the junior class, and a member of student council. He takes a math class at the local community college and wants to major in engineering after he graduates and enrolls in a four year college. Ramone has a 3.1 cumulative grade point average, but admits that if he had applied himself, at his other school during his freshman year, his grade point average would be much higher. He had a 1.7 grade point average his freshman year, which was at his old school. He credits his mother, father, and TLA for helping him turn his life around and getting him on track for college.

Mr. and Mrs. James Hughes.

Of the four students selected for this study, Ramone was the only one who lives with both of his parents. Mr. and Mrs. Hughes both work outside of the home and are very focused on their three children's academic success. They have very high expectations for Ramone. Because he is the oldest, they want him to be an outstanding example for his sisters to follow. They were very disappointed in his academic performance at his first high school and thought that the change to TLA would give him a fresh start and a new perspective on school. Mr. and Mrs. Hughes are huge supporters of TLA and have been very pleased with Ramone's progress at the school.

Eugene Calhoun.

Eugene is a muscular, six foot six inch, 275 pound senior, who has attended TLA all of his high school career. He lives with his mother and younger brother. Despite Eugene's tremendous physical size, he is a very gentle and caring young man, who makes it his mission to ensure that everyone at TLA feels welcomed and cared for. He is very outgoing and has a disarming personality, which enables him to get along with everyone. Eugene is often seen giving advice to underclassmen about what it means to be a TLA man. He is president of the senior class and a member of the football team. Although Eugene spends many hours practicing football and studying to maintain a 3.4 grade point average (he had a one point zero his eighth grade year), he serves as a volunteer in several community projects.   Several Division I colleges have offered Eugene a scholarship to play football. He has also been offered academic scholarships to several schools and has applied for the Gates Millennium Scholarship; a full academic scholarship. Eugene plans to be an education major in college and become a science teacher.

Mrs. Delores Calhoun.

Mrs. Calhoun is a hard working single mom, who works two jobs to support herself and her sons. She leaves for work, in the morning, as the boys are getting up for school. She relies heavily upon Eugene to assist with her younger son, who is an eighth grader. She fixes breakfast for them each morning, before she departs. She says that breakfast is the most important meal and if she didn't get it ready, she knows that the

boys would just cereal every day. She is very proud of both her boys and she makes sure that she checks their homework each night before she goes to bed. Mrs. Calhoun is thankful for the men at TLA, who have mentored Eugene and been a father figure for him. She said that Mr. Calhoun passed away when Eugene was in the sixth grade and that things were pretty difficult for him in middle school. Eugene's academic performance was very poor, during that period, but he has excelled in high school, with the guidance of his mentors at TLA.

Kwame Porter.

Kwame is a slender, five foot seven inch senior who lives with his grandmother. He has lived with his grandmother since he was six years old. Kwame was very reluctant to talk about his parents and the reasons why he lived with his grandmother. He did, however, speak very positively of about his grandmother and acknowledged her for helping him forget about his early life and focus on his future. Kwame enrolled in TLA at the beginning of his junior year, after spending two years at a large coeducational high school. He stated that his first two years of high school were troubling and he that he experienced very little academic success at his other school. He had all Ds his freshman year and Cs and Ds his sophomore year. Kwame is extremely happy at TLA and says that the school saved his life and has prepared him for college. He has carried a three point two grade average at TLA.

Mrs. Wanda Battle.

Mrs. Battle is Kwame's maternal grandmother, who has been caring for Kwame all of his life. She spoke very little about Kwame's parents, because she wanted to honor his decision of not wanting to share details. She did, however, acknowledge that things did not go well with them and she would often let Kwame stay with her for periods of time prior to her becoming his legal guardian at age six. Mrs. Battle is a strong, independent, Black woman who raised her own six children as a single parent. She is fiercely loyal to her family and is a strong supporter of TLA. She is a member of the Parent Council and spends many hours volunteering at the school.

Travis Boyd.

Travis is a six foot one inch junior, who enrolled in TLA at the beginning of his freshman year. He lives with his mother and older sister on the opposite side of town from the school. Travis spends approximately one and one half hours, each way, commuting to and from school every day. He takes two buses and a train. He says that the trips are not so bad because he uses the traveling time to read or get some of his homework done. Travis loves to read and play chess. He says he loves playing chess because it makes him think and problem solve, and he loves matching wits with his opponents to see whose strategies work best. Travis also loves computers, and is always assisting his fellow students and occasionally helps his teachers in the use of technology. He wants to major in computer science when he attends college, but he is not sure if he wants to go to a four year school or a technical college. Travis currently has a three point

four grade point average, which is much higher than the two point one he had at his former school.

Mrs. Helen Boyd.

Mrs. Boyd is a deeply religious woman, who has fought to keep her children focused on living right and making good choices. She is happy that Travis is now a junior and he is beginning to show signs of becoming a fine, mature, young man. Mrs. Boyd stated that she did not choose to send Travis to TLA. To the contrary, she wasn't sure if it was the right place for her son. She had heard that TLA was a school for troubled Black boys and she feared that some of the boys would have a bad influence on her son. She said that at the end of his eighth grade year, Travis researched several high schools and chose TLA after talking with the principal at a school fair. He told his mother that he was impressed with the principal and the two students that were with the principal. The students were dressed in the school blazers, and shirt and tie. Mrs. Boyd is very happy with TLA and the influence it has had on Travis, and she is also overjoyed that she allowed him to make the choice to come to TLA.

Ms. Tina McCall.

Ms. McCall, who is a White, female, math teacher in her late twenties, has been teaching for six years. This year being her first at TLA. Although her friends have encouraged her to leave and teach in the suburbs, Ms. McCall has spent her entire career in the urban district. She says that she requested the transfer to TLA, and she is where

she belongs, teaching the kids she is called to teach. Ms. McCall wholeheartedly believes in the tremendous potential of the boys at TLA. She thinks that since she is new this year, she feels like an outsider and she wants to deepen her relationships with the staff, so that she and they can more effectively collaborate on strategies to maximize the opportunities to impact their students' lives. Ms. McCall spends many hours, after school and on Saturdays tutoring any students who need help in math; even those that she does not have in her classes.

Mr. Marshall Burke.

Mr. Burke, an African American male who has been an educator for 28 years, is the school's college counselor. He has been with TLA for three years and has been very instrumental in helping the students matriculate through the college application and selection process. He spends a large amount of his time meeting with parents or talking with them on the phone. He believes that it is just as important to educate the parents on the process, especially those who never went to college themselves, so that they can have informed conversations with their sons during this crucial time. Mr. Burke also devotes much of his time in mentorship sessions with several boys. He says he knows that many of the students do not have fathers at home, so he makes himself available anytime a young man needs to talk.

Mrs. Christine Turner.

Mrs. Turner is a White, female, science teacher in her late fifties. She has been teaching for 11 years, spending the last two at TLA. Teaching is Mrs. Turner's second career. She spent 25 years conducting medical research in a hospital, and she uses her experiences and knowledge garnered from working in the laboratory to design lessons and classroom practices that allow the boys to be active and interactive as they learn. Mrs. Turner believes that learning by doing is a powerful strategy that helps the boys become more engaged in the learning process.

Mr. Titus Robinson.

Mr. Robinson, who is the principal at TLA, began his career as a special education teacher in 1997. He has been an administrator for nine years and this is his first year as the principal of TLA. Mr. Robinson is always at the front door in the morning when the boys come into the school. He speaks to every young man as they arrive and checks to see if they meet the dress code. He wants them to know that he is there to hold them accountable to adhering to TLA's expectations of excellence, but that he is also there and ready to them help them with whatever they need. Mr. Robinson's visibility does not end with the morning greetings at the door and he spends very little time in his office, and is constantly moving throughout the school the majority of the day. He is constantly speaking with students and teachers, and making mental and written notes of things he observes so that he can address them in a timely manner. Mr.

Robinson reported that this technique has enabled him to build rapport and trust with the students and teachers in a relatively short period of time.

Emerging Themes

The researcher began the data analysis process by comprehensively reviewing the individual participant write-ups, the interview transcripts, and the demographic questionnaires. As stated in the previous chapter, a worksheet and colored markers were used to assign a code to the unrefined data. The data was then organized into in a code book (Appendix D). The researcher compared the similarities and dissimilarities of the perceptions and experiences of the participants to ascertain the emerging themes, patterns, and categories of the data.

Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory as Frameworks

As previously stated in chapter three, the outcomes of this study were examined through the frameworks of CT and CRT. Again, CT is a framework that "focuses on how injustice and subjugation shape people's experiences and understandings of the world" (Patton, 2002, p.130). Similarly, CRT "understands racism as a normal part of our culture and emphasizes the importance of people of color narrating their own stories" (Biklen & Casella, 2007, p. 6). The findings of this study are developed and presented within the convergence of the aforementioned frameworks, with the intent of examining the perceptions of the participants concerning the social, emotional, academic impact of a single gender public school on low-income African American males.

Organizational Habitus

As stated in the literature review, organizational habitus is defined as a culture

that is established when all members of an organization share an awareness, approval,

and acceptance of a set of core beliefs and values (Horvat & Antonio, 1999). In a school

setting, organizational habitus is developed when all of the adults: teachers,

administrators, secretaries, custodians, etc., share the belief that they are responsible for

student learning and that their expectations of the students have a direct impact on student

achievement. It was immediately obvious, in analyzing the data, that TLA's

organizational habitus had a tremendously positive impact on every participant group,

especially the students. The core beliefs and values that are foundational to the

organizational habitus of TLA are: high expectations for the social and academic growth

of all students; caring, and trust; and social, emotional, and academic support. These

central aspects of the TLA belief system are exhibited through practices, such as, the

students' ability to call their teachers, on their cell phones, whenever they need them;

presence of the youth support staff; teachers staying after school to assist students with

work; close monitoring of the student dress code; all adults personally knowing each

students; and pep talks and inspirational speeches during student gatherings. These core

beliefs have created what several of the participants described as a family atmosphere

that makes it very easy for them to want to come to school and to give their best in all

they do.

Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this study, as mentioned in chapter one, is to explore the impact of a single gender, urban, public school on the social, emotional, and academic progress of young, low-income, African American males. This was accomplished by exploring the perceptions and experiences of the participants concerning the similarity and differences of TLA with those of a traditional public school. The participants were asked to speak honestly and freely. Their perceptions and experiences are reflected, in their own words, on the following pages of this chapter.

The researcher asked each participant to share some of their experiences and compare the culture and climate of TLA with the culture and climate of their previous school(s). He received the following responses:

Kwame's response was:

I went to Hope (pseudonym), I would say that it was a bad experience. I started in Hope in the ninth grade. Then, things were pretty cool because we all were young and things were good. But as I got older, I began to see the difference in how certain groups of students were treated. At Hope, it was predominately white, pretty much. The few Black people were together most of the time… I felt that some of the teachers were racist towards us. Socially, I couldn't really talk to nobody about what was going on in my life, because they couldn't understand the things that had happened to me. And academically, I think the teachers felt that since I was African American, I could not learn at the same levels that the other students could. I could, but they just never paid attention to me. So I just didn't

perform… At times, it made me feel left out, but at other times, I just didn't care, so I just sat there.

When I transferred to TLA, I was coming from an all white school, so when I first got here I was shocked. I thought it was going to be rough in here. I think I was scared the first few days. But as time went on, I began to realize that it was not what people think. I mean if you look at the outside of TLA, it is not what people think at all. People probably think this is like jail, but it is not. People are really nice here, and you have to get to know everybody. When I first came here to visit, it was in an old building and it kind of looked like a jail. But since I've been here, I know that it is just school… I think that the teachers here really want us to learn, and they go out of their way to develop ways to help us learn our lessons. Instead of the teacher just not caring, like at Hope; here, they do care. I need people in my life who are going to help me go in the right direction, like they do here. At Hope, the teachers didn't tell me anything.

When asked the same question, Ramone responded:

At my other school there were more students and more students in the classrooms, maybe 20 to 30 people in each class. More people in the hallways so you had to fight to get around people just to go to class. There were more fights. The cafeteria was basically just chaos because there would be ninth through 12th grade in there. It was just way different than the TLA…. I really didn't talk to any of my teachers or get close to my teachers, I just went to school and went to their classes and just left. I never talked to them after class or before class. They said

they wanted us to succeed and be something; they really didn't seem like it. It seemed like they were there to do what they had to do and get their paycheck and leave. There was never any extra help after school.

Everybody at the TLA are friends. There are no enemies. We have a few fights but not that many. The classrooms are smaller. At the other school there were as many as 30 students in a class, here at TLA it's closer to 15 students in each class. Here the teachers have more time to spend with each student so you can get a lot of extra help. They have more time to spend with each student and they are trying to make us better.

Ramone's parents expressed their perceptions in comparing the climate and culture of the different schools with the following statements. His mother stated:

I think his old school was overwhelmed with a new culture of students. Before, they were used to a certain type of kid and a certain type of atmosphere. It used to be white and Jewish children going there and now in the last decade it has turned over to be a majority of African American children. So the teachers are not really adapted to help some of the kids. Not because their African American, or that there's something wrong with them. A lot of the people have moved from this area in our neighborhood into Woodale (pseudonym) and it's a different culture. My husband was talking to the teachers but a lot of parents don't. So the teachers expected a lot from our son after my husband showed them that he was a concerned parent. Before that, I don't think they really cared or expected anything from our son except to act ugly or different than what they were used to.

I think TLA is a better culture, because it seems like they're trying to teach them how to be better young men. Some of the boys have a ways to go and may not quite be there yet, but the school is making a big effort to try to help them change and grow and understand what it takes. There are some boys who still don't get it and they may not ever get it later. They will probably come back later and tell Mr. Robinson how much of an impact he had on their lives. Our son has a father figure at home but many of the boys do not. But a lot of them look at Mr. Robinson as a father figure. I think that's a big difference in the culture of this place vs. his old school. Every morning, and opening session, he gives them a pep talk; he gives them an inspirational speech to keep them focused and keep them going. It's kind of like a family culture. A lot of people get mad because he makes the kids do community service, like handing out food to the poor. But he makes them do that because if they weren't doing that, a lot of these kids would be out getting in trouble for doing things that they know they should not be doing. Ramone's father added:

I think the atmosphere of his old school was definitely different than what he was used to. In middle school, he went to schools in the inner city and he was used to the routine and the unstructured atmosphere of those schools …TLA is totally different. It's urban. It's not a big school. It's fun but it's more structured this year. They allow the boys to be young man, but they give them parameters. It's more disciplined this year. They still have fun, but they understand that the school is a place of learning.

Travis compared the two schools by commenting on the impact of going to school with girls versus attending the all-male school. He stated:

In classes, I wasn't really focused on the lessons because I would be talking to the girls and playing around with the girls. I really didn't catch up on all my work and I really didn't do well on test because I wasn't focusing on the lessons that much. I really didn't have that much time after school to work on my grades because the teachers had other things to do. So that got me behind and I really wasn't doing all my homework either. When I transferred in to TLA, they took me in as family, and helped me to calm down and focus, and get my grades back on track.

Mr. Burke gave his insight when comparing TLA and some of the traditional public schools that he had worked in. He commented:

I think that there are certain expectations in this building. I think that it is important that every adult here knows just about every student in the building. I think that this is a major factor and it enhances the chances of maximizing the students' abilities. There is a lot to be said for personally knowing each student, because you can engage with them every day. In this environment, they can be who they are. That is very important. If I took some of these students to some of the other schools that I worked in, I truly believe that they would not be able to be themselves. There, they would have to make some adjustments to the culture of the building, but here, they can really relax and be who they are. I believe that this factor is very good, because the culture here allows the students to be

comfortable with whom they are and they can be more relaxed and comfortable, which increases their chances of succeeding. They can develop their leadership potential and they can maximize their abilities here. As African American males, we've been curtailed all of our lives, and sometimes it brings tears to my eyes to see them function in an environment where they are free to express themselves and be who they are.

When comparing how they experienced the environments of the single gender public school and the traditional public school, the participants expressed that the environment at TLA was much more comfortable and met their needs much more than their previous school(s). The high level of attention in addressing the social, emotional, and academic needs, of the boys, demonstrated that TLA was absolutely committed to living out the tenets of its mission of helping the boys reach their full potential. Like other single gender, urban, public schools serving young, low income, African American males, such as Boys Latin in Philadelphia, Urban Prep in Chicago, and Eagle Academy in New York, TLA is focused on empowering young African American males to be successful in school and in life.

Needing to probe a little deeper into TLA's organizational habitus, the researcher wanted to know the participants' perceptions about the impact of level of care and support that the boys received at TLA, he asked, "How do the adults at TLA demonstrate that they care about the students and support their needs in comparison to the adults at your other school(s)?" Ramone responded by stating:

At TLA it is totally different than it was at my other school. All the teachers care.

I've talked to a lot of teachers before, after, and during school. They actually treat

me like family and they try to help me when I'm struggling. I have been to a lot

of tutoring sessions and after school help. Here the teachers have more time to

spend with each student so you can get a lot of extra help. They have more time

to spend with each student and they are trying to make us better. At my other

school, teachers were just teachers. I really didn't talk to any of my teachers or

get close to my teachers, I just went to school and went to their classes and just

left. I never talked to them after class or before class…They said they wanted us

to succeed and be something, but they really didn't seem like it. It seemed like

they were there to do what they had to do and get their paycheck and leave. There

was never any extra help after school.

Mrs. Battle, Kwame's grandmother, explained her perceptions by saying:

Support is the biggest difference in TLA and his old school. At TLA they care

about the students. They expect the best out of them. They don't want less than

the best. That's the difference. They don't say that we are going to pick the kid

that we want to succeed. They want them all to succeed and do well. And that's

the big difference. They want all the boys to succeed. This school has made a big

difference in my grandson's life. If he had not come here (TLA), I don't think his

grades would have been close to where they are now and I'm not sure if he would

even still be in school.

Eugene commented:

They care for you more here. When I am walking down the hall, the teachers ask me am I going to class and am I doing my work. They always make sure that everybody is on point. They push me, and they are very hard on me. If I hand in work that is not up to par, they hand it back to me and say "Eugene, I know you can do better than this. " They make sure that I stay on point and do my best work… They are teaching us how to be independent, and be young men, and be different. There is a sign in the front of the school that says "It takes courage to be different." They help us to be strong and be different… We talk about more than academics. We talk about life experiences and life skills.

Kwame shared an interesting perspective when he said:

The major difference is the care. You hear a lot of teachers say things like good job, I'm proud of you, and a lot of students mistake that for care. I look at it like words of encouragement but when you see a teacher literally put themselves at risk just like Mr. Burke, he's had three surgeries since my sophomore year and that's putting him at risk for feeding his family; if he can't work then he can't feed his family, so he's putting himself at risk. Teachers have paid for uniforms and have done so much outside of their jobs to show that they care and it's not only words of encouragement, in the classroom they show that they care by helping students go above and beyond what's expected of them and breaking it down. The teachers at other high schools they have this expectation level and they expect you to know stuff and if you don't they just move on and they never

slow down or break it down to you and catch you up to speed. They leave it up to

you and here at TLA academy that never happens…My favorite teacher is Mr.

Crump (pseudonym). I talk with him every day about college, but we can really

talk about anything. He helps me make it through my day. When I come to him

with my problems, he helps me out.

The boys recounted that they received a much higher level of care and support at

TLA than at their previous schools. While in school, many young, low income, African

American males need social, emotional, and academic support to overcome the barriers

that impede their progress (Fergus & Noguera, 2010; COSEBOC, 2013). It has been

suggested that these males can receive increased care and support in a traditional urban

public school. The question is, do they? The data suggests that they do not. If they did,

the graduation rates, for African American males, in these traditional public schools

would be much higher. It is TLA's commitment to supporting its students' needs that is

the foundational core value that creates the success that the boys achieve.

Travis recounted his perceptions concerning the level of caring and support by

talking about the youth support staff. The youth support staff are a group of younger

African American male adults, who are with the boys throughout the day. Their role is to

support and counsel the boys about whatever is needed and whenever it is needed. Travis

stated:

They are like another teacher in the classroom, and they follow you to whatever

class you go to. They help you with whatever you need. If it's getting tutored or

even help outside of school. If you have problem at home, they can help you with

it and basically try to take care of you and look out for you. Their job is to help you take care of you. That's what they are here for. If I have a problem and I need someone to talk to, I can always go to them. That's their job. To help you take care of you. We didn't have anything like this at my other school.

Mrs. Turner metaphorically described her role in caring and supporting the TLA students by stating:

I am, in this place, a tank filled with helium. I will always be that tank, whose sole purpose is to fill the lives of these students with that substance that will cause them to soar, whether they want to or not. Because a helium balloon will soar; unlike one that is just filled with oxygen, which will just lie over on its side. That's all it's about. Moving. I will not allow you to be your own weight, in this room, to hold yourself down. And I will not allow you or anyone else, to take away the scissors, or any instrument that can free you, and prevent you from going up and up, and out of sight. I am here to help you soar. That's all I live for. I am not here for any other reason. I tell my students all the time, that all I care about is you being sharp. You may not like me. You may hate me. But you will soar.

Another foundational component of TLA's organizational habitus is a high expectation for each student to exhibit social and academic growth. The researcher inquired about the expectations that the teachers had at the students' previous school as compared to the expectations of the teachers at TLA. Eugene had several comments concerning this question. He stated:

I think the teachers at my other school, the ones who could see something in me, had expectations for me to grow, improve, and become a young man, and to become somebody different than who I was. For those who didn't see much in me, I think their expectation was for me to live a life of crime and become a horrible person, and do the things that I was doing before.

I know the teachers here (TLA) expect me to perform. To make sure that all of the work that I do is good and correct. They know that I am a hard worker and I'm a good all around student. They tell me every day, that I am smart and they have very high expectations for me. So I just follow through with them and see where they will take me. They want the best for me and want me to go to college…They expect me to be a leader and I gladly meet every challenge that they set for me.

Kwame's perceptions of teacher expectations were similar to Eugene's. Kwame declared:

The teachers at TLA expect me to be in the top three of my class. If I fall short it's a huge deal. A huge deal! It's like extremely bad. Even if it's like on a homework assignment or something because we set the bar so high, so even if I have slight fall off, it's like a huge deal and very noticeable. Since they know how I was in the past if they see me falling off it's a big deal because they know how far I can and have fallen off in the past, and how hard it may be to get me back on track. So, I guess the expectation level is huge.

The teachers at my other school (Hope) were very indifferent. It was like learn or don't learn; if you don't choose to learn then you won't get an education. They would not go out of their way to help you. They would just put an F in the grade book and move on.

Mrs. Boyd, Travis' mother shared a conversation she had with Mr. Robinson concerning his expectations of Travis. She stated:

I think they (TLA) have high expectations of Travis. I had a meeting with the principal, not long ago, and he indicated that my son is the type of young man, with his grades and his type of leadership skills, that he would like to see run for senior class president next year. Next year, he would like to see my son be a leader that runs the school next year.

I seldom heard any positive comments from the teachers or the principal when Travis went to the other school. They would say things like Travis could be doing better, if he worked harder; or Travis should be on honor roll.

Ms. McCall discussed her expectations for each of her students by saying:

I set the bar really high for all of my students. I understand that everyone doesn't love math like I do, and for some it doesn't come easy. But I tell all of my students that if they work hard and don't give up when things seem too hard, they will eventually learn what they need to be successful in my class. I am always willing to stay after school to tutor and I often work with students during my free periods. When they see that I am willing to give extra for them, they are more willing to work extra also.

Throughout his career, as an educator, the researcher encountered many teachers who had low expectations of the students they taught. Often, those expectations were lived out in the low academic performance and poor classroom behavior of the students. It is vital that teachers expect the best from their students, and develop strategies to facilitate the process (Diamond & Spillane, 2004). The organizational habitus of TLA is built upon high expectations for every student. The teachers understand that there is a direct correlation between what they expect of their students, and the levels at which the students perform.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the core beliefs and values that form the organizational habitus of TLA, helps creates a warm inviting atmosphere that most participants equate to the feeling of being in a family instead of being in a school. Eugene describes it this way:

> I think that the biggest difference is that we have a mission here, a real vision.
> We have a staff here that won't let you stop or settle for less than your best. Even
> if you are down, they will be there to encourage you. I have many of my
> teachers' phone numbers and I can call them whenever I need them. They also
> have my cell number and they call me whenever they need me. This place is just
> amazing. There is a connection here. It's a deep family, love connection.
> Sometimes you get mad at your family and feel like roughing them up. We all
> have our days; I have mine. But we always come back together and work things
> out. I can honestly say that I could not see myself any place else. We are truly a
> family here.

I tell everybody, that I love each and every one of them because I've spent

four years of my life; an important four years; these weren't just any four years.

And I've shared so much with them, and I feel like they are all my brothers. We

have shared so many things together and there are some stories that we all can

relate with and it feels like one big family. I look at every single one of them like

they're my brothers.

Mrs. Calhoun remarked:

It's a family atmosphere so they treat the boys as if they were their own.

Kwame offered this perspective:

Everybody here are brothers; well almost everybody. You have different cliques

here, but you will have that anywhere. At the end of the day though, everybody is

very close. It helps to feel comfortable with everybody here. It makes it very

easy to learn. One of my teachers has been here since I've been a freshman and

she treats me like one of her sons. She looks out for me. I love it here.

Most of the teachers don't seem like teachers, they seem like aunts and

uncles and moms and dads. Sometimes they go above and beyond their career

expectations and I feel like they are part of the family too, because sometimes

they take away from their own families just to satisfy the needs of some of us.

Confidence in the Boys' Futures

An additional theme which was also very evident in the data was the high level of

confidence that each participant, especially the students, had in the possibilities and

future successes of the boys. Everyone reported that they felt that TLA was preparing the

boys to be successful in college or whatever career those chose. It was evident, in the

comments below, that leadership training is an integral part of the organizational habitus

of TLA, which is consistent with the literature from theorist who examined other single

gender public schools (Fergus & Noguera, 2010). Each student responded positively to

the interviewer's question concerning their future plans after graduating from TLA and

the parents and teachers were excited about the possible opportunities that awaited these

young men. Conversely, they all felt that the boys would not be in this position if they

had remained at their former school(s).

Ramone responded to the question about his future plans by saying:

If I had stayed my old school I probably would have kept getting into fights and

not doing my work. I would probably still have a 1.7 right now. But now, I have

people in my life that show me the way. Instead of just telling me to do this or

that, they actually show me what they want me to do and how to do stuff. They

actually treat me like I'm wanted; like I'm somebody. And that makes my days

go by much easier and much better…. I want to go to college and get a degree in

criminal justice. I may want to be a police officer after I get out of college.

Kwame responded enthusiastically about his perceptions of where he is as a

person and a student. He stated:

Socially, I have made a lot more friends and I am now more open and talking with

other people. Academically, I feel very comfortable. I feel very comfortable

with learning and not having to worry about what other people around me think of

me. That used to affect me, but now I am more comfortable with me and it doesn't matter what people think about me…. I am planning to go to the University of Arizona, Arizona State, or University of Southern California and I am going to study theater…. If I had remained at my old school, I probably would have been in jail.

Eugene recounts several experiences and perceptions that exhibit his level of confidence in his future endeavors. He remarked:

I think that I have developed great leadership skills here at TLA. I think that they have allowed me to be sounder in dealing with the events that have happened in my life. It has brought out a change in me that I think no other school could have accomplished. I am so happy I came here, because I know I would not have accomplished all that I have or become the mature person that I am, at any other school. I did not want to come here. My mother made me come here. I'm not going to lie. I did not like it here. During the first month, I really hated it. I was mad that I was here. But after that first month, I began to realize how lucky I really was. After that, I began doing my best and I loved it. I don't think that I would have worked as heard to be successful, if I had gone someplace else… Once I leave TLA, I am going to go to Eastern University (pseudonym). I am going to major in education so that I can become a teacher one day, and eventually become a principal. I also want to study abroad. I think that that is important and I think that everyone should have the opportunity to study abroad…. If I had not come to TLA, I don't know where I would have been or

what I would have been doing. There is no doubt in my mind that if I had gone to

Belton (pseudonym), like I was supposed to, I know I would not have been doing

what I am doing now.

Travis expressed the desire to excel beyond the expectations of his neighborhood

and to have different future outcomes. He said:

TLA has affected me very positively because it has helped me mature and it has

gotten me ready for college. They are teaching us how to be independent, and be

young men, and be different. There is a sign in the front of the school that says

"It takes courage to be different." I want to be different than a lot of the guys

from the neighborhood. All they want to do is hang out and do unproductive and

destructive things. I want to have a different future than that. I want to go to

college and major in architecture. After that, I plan to have my own architecture

firm…If I had gone to another high school and not come to TLA, I am sure that

my grades would not have been as good and I would not be getting my life on

track to have a successful career.

Ramone's parents' response was very similar to his. They stated:

TLA has made a big difference in our son's life. I don't think his grades would

have been close to where they are now. We are not sure if he would even still be

in school if he had remained at his old school. Our plans are for him to go to

college. Even if he doesn't get a football scholarship, we're going to apply

because we know that he has good grades and will be able to get in school. As

long as his grades stay where they are he will be able to get into school. And those are our goals; for him to go to school.

Mrs. Calhoun says that she is very excited about Eugene's possibilities for the future. She knows that she will not have to pay for college, because of all the scholarship offers. She shared her thoughts by saying:

We have college coaches calling the house every night and Eugene gets a lot of letters from colleges every day. I am thrilled that he will probably get a football scholarship, but I am happier about the academic scholarships than the ones for football. He applied for the Gates Scholarship and if he gets it, all of his college through graduate school will be paid for. Eugene dreams about playing in the NFL and he is working very hard to get ready for college football. I know that if he continues to get good grades in college, and he does not make it to the NFL, he will be able to get a good job and take good care of himself. I am so glad I put him in TLA.

Sustaining the Culture

Another theme that emerged from the data collected during the interviews with the teachers and principal. Each member of this participant group remarked about the tremendous amount of time, energy, and planning it takes to maintain and sustain the culture of TLA. These participants talked about the difficulty of hiring and keeping the right teachers, and the ongoing professional development it takes to keep everyone on the same page.

Mr. Robinson, the building principal, spoke about the complexities of hiring the right people and then working with them to ensure that they understand that he is there to support them, by stating:

When I am interviewing prospective teachers I start with the question, 'why do you want to do this?' Because I had to ask myself that question. And I know why… It has to be an understanding that when you are talking about working with our young men, you're talking about a matter of life and death. You're talking about something that is rewarding long-term and could be frustrating short term…You have to have the mindset and be prepared for and understand that our boys are at risk…You don't have time for prescriptions; you have to fix them right away. If you don't have that mindset it's going to be hard, and you have to know that it is good work. For me it's God's work and I don't think everybody can or should do it. So I am very critical when I'm on an interview board. I am very critical with allowing just anybody to be in charge of our children. It has to be the right fit and you have to be the right person, because it's serious; it's a matter of life and death. So I need to know why, why do you want to do it.

My strength with teachers is to figure out what their strength is. That's always been my strength, to really dwell on that part of who you are and to encourage you there. But it's hard work and we have to have those candid conversations. We have those ups and downs when they are not performing like we need them to, so we have to deal with that. And so, that relationship is professional and that relationship is built on honesty and trust. But it is a hard

dance, it's a hard balance. It's the first year, so we're learning each other still and they have to build trust in me as we go forward, and I have to build trust in them too. But I think we're on the right track.

Mrs. Turner talked about the need for ongoing collaboration, planning, development of innovative teaching strategies. Her comments were:

The teachers here are very supportive of each other. We stay after school to plan. We have PLCs every Tuesday, and team meetings every Thursday. When we get together in our PLCs, we make recommendations about the students we think really need help. Then in our team meetings we write what we have done, and then we go over it and make connections with each other's lessons, so we can plan interdisciplinary units. We have a much more collaborative environment here than I experienced at any of my other schools, and it really helps…Mr. Robinson is always encouraging us to be innovative in our teaching and that's great.

Ms. McCall echoed Mrs. Turner's comment about being innovative in her teaching. She spoke about a conversation she had at a recent meeting with her team members. She remarked:

This is my first year at TLA and I shared this incident with my colleagues during a recent team meeting. I told them that before I came to TLA, I would have constant arguments with my fellow teachers. I called them fellow teachers, because we certainly were not colleagues. I told them that my opinion of education in most schools right now, is that it is broken. We have to look in the

mirror and look at ourselves and stand up and say what is going on here? My

evaluation is that what most of us have been doing is not working. Why do we

have to keep going through the same traditional steps, when we know they are not

working? Why don't we try some things and see if they work. If we don't

change then the students are the ones who will ultimately suffer. If we keep doing

the same things and are not trying to be innovative or trying to think out of the

box to make some changes, then we just going to keep doing what we've have

been doing and continue to get the same results. I am so glad I transferred to

TLA. I know that I have the freedom and support to grow as a teacher and have a

positive impact on the future of my students. After all, isn't that why we went

into this profession in the first place?

Summary

The findings from the analysis of the data collected in this study indicate that the

participants perceive that there are few similarities and quite a few differences between

the traditional urban public school(s) and the single gender urban public school. Their

responses also reflected the feeling that the organizational habitus of the single gender

public school greatly contributed to the social, emotional, and academic progress of the

students. TLA's habitus also empowered the teachers in their pursuit of helping the

young, low income African American male students develop into confident young

leaders.

Chapter 5 Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This qualitative study describes the experiences and perceptions of a group of young, low-income, urban, African American males and their parents/guardians, their teachers, and their principal. It examines how the participants perceive the similarities and differences in the culture of a single gender, public school and a traditional public school. The study also explored the organizational habitus (culture) of the single gender, public, high school and how the schools' culture impacted the social, emotional, and academic progress of their African American male students.

The participants, selected for this study, included:

➢ Four African American male students, two seniors and two juniors;

➢ Their parents/guardians, two single mothers, one grandmother, and one husband and wife couple;

➢ Four staff members, one White female math teacher, one African American female social studies teacher, one African American male counselor, and the African American male principal.

The student participants were chosen through extreme case sampling. As previously mentioned, in chapter three, this sampling method, which is a form of purposeful sampling, enables the researcher to "learn from unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, for example, outstanding successes/notable failures" (Patton, 2002, p. 243). The students' responses on the demographic questionnaire revealed that

their experiences in the schools they attended, prior to enrolling in TLA, were socially and academically unproductive. Each student's grades were considerably lower and their relationships with the students and teachers were unrewarding.

Analysis of data from individual and focus group interviews, questionnaires, and observations produced three common themes. These were:

➢ Organizational habitus, which included four sub-themes:

1. High expectations for the social and academic growth of all students;

2. Caring and trust exhibited by the staff;

3. Social, emotional, and academic support from the staff; and

4. Family atmosphere at the school;

➢ High level of confidence in the boys' futures;

➢ Maintaining and sustaining the schools' culture.

How these themes answer the research questions presented in this study will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Research Question One

How is the social, emotional, and academic environment in an urban, single gender, public school comparable to the social, emotional, and academic environment in a traditional urban, public school?

The conclusions from the data collected from the individual and focus group interviews, demographic questionnaires, and observations indicated that the students and

parents/guardians perceived that the environment at TLA was much more conducive to the social, emotional, and academic growth of its African American male students. Each of the students and their parents/guardians indicated that the boys were far more comfortable and successful at TLA than they were at the traditional public school they attended prior to enrolling in TLA. When describing TLA's climate, one student said, "The climate of the school is very friendly. It is like being a part of a family." Another student commented, "Everybody here is very close"…"It makes it very easy to learn." The students and parents/guardians described the environment at TLA as being caring, supportive, culturally welcoming, safe, and family oriented. The boys and their parents/guardians all believed that the boys would not have been successful if they had remained at their former school(s) and not enrolled in TLA. They felt that the boys had not receive the same level of social, emotional, and academic support, that was provided at TLA, at their former school(s).

Conversely, when describing the environment at their former schools, the boys used negative expressions, such as: impersonal, too large, distracting, indifferent, unsupportive, and culturally insensitive. One student used the term "racist" when referring to some of the teachers at his former school. Another student spoke about the climate at his former school being "loud and obnoxious." They spoke about the difficulties they encountered and the trials they endured while attempting to work within an environment they felt was not conducive to their success. Getting extra help from teachers was a struggle. One student shared that "the teachers would not stay after to help anybody."… "At 2:30, they were out the door." Another stated, "There was never any

extra help after school." While discussing building relationships with their classmates, one student remarked, "I don't think that many students liked me." Another student said, "I really didn't have any relationships with the kids at my other school."

Research Question Two

How does the culture (organizational habitus) of the urban, single gender, public school address the social, emotional, and academic needs of their African American male students?

As articulated in the previous chapter, it was immediately obvious, in analyzing the data, that TLA's organizational habitus had a tremendous positive impact on every participant group, especially the students. Organizational habitus is defined as a culture that is established when all members of an organization share an awareness, approval, and acceptance of a set of core beliefs and values (Horvat & Antonio, 1999). The core beliefs and values that are foundational to the organizational habitus of TLA are: high expectations for the social and academic growth of all students; caring, and trust; social, emotional, and academic support. These core beliefs have created what several of the participants described as a family atmosphere that makes it very easy for them to want to come to school and to give their best in all they do.

Each participant group, students, parent/guardians, teachers, and the principal, reported that they were extremely comfortable at TLA and they knew that it was place where they could grow and thrive as individuals.

The boys knew that they were in a school that was specifically designed for their success. The students reported that they knew the teachers cared about them and that the teachers were not only committed to the boys' academic progress, but that the teachers were also helping them grow as leaders and positive, young, African American men. They reported that the teachers and the principal expected their behavior to be exemplary and treat everyone with courtesy and respect. One student reported, "They actually treat me like I'm wanted. Like I am somebody."…"Mr. Robinson gives me inspiration and words to live by." Another student stated, "They actually treat me like family and they help me when I'm struggling."

The parents/guardians value the schools' habitus and expressed deep satisfaction with the school and its impact on their sons' progress. They were extremely positive when talking about the high level of commitment, dedication, and support the teachers and principal exhibited. On parent stated, "There are teachers there that are pushing the boys to be better young men and I applaud them for that." Another said, "The principal tells the boys what to expect. Since he sets the expectations, a lot of the boys listen and understand that that's how things are going to be."…"He is always consistent." The parents/guardians feel that school not only supports and cares about their sons, but the school is also kind to and considerate of the parents. One parent said, "This place is amazing. There is a connection here. It's a deep family, love connection." They say they are always welcomed to come to the school during the day, which most of them do when they have the time. "The school communicates regularly with the home to let us know what is going on with our sons," commented another parent.

The teachers expressed their sentiments concerning the schools' habitus. One teacher commented, "The main difference here is that we are expected to love the boys. Genuinely love them." The teachers often work well beyond the regular school day. They can be found tutoring students, meeting and collaborating with each other in planning or professional development. The teachers work extremely hard at maintaining a caring and supportive atmosphere for the boys to thrive in. Another teacher stated, "When they see that I am willing to give extra for them, they are more willing to work extra also."

The principal acknowledged how he felt about being at TLA by saying, "This place has totally changed me. It's a different level of work and I think my calling is working with our young men. I didn't know how it was going to be in an all boys' school, but I love it. It is a family."..."I think it has changed the course of my professional career. My next step was to maybe be its chief of staff or a superintendent somewhere. Or maybe a CEO, but I don't know about that now."

Research Question Three

What are the perceptions of the students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrator when comparing the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the urban, single gender, public school with the social, emotional, and academic characteristics in the traditional, urban, public school?

The teachers and the principal felt there were attempts to provide social and emotional support at the traditional schools. This help usually came from the guidance counselor, the nurse, or an occasional social worker. They said although there were teachers in the traditional school who provided social and emotional support to students, many of the teachers in the traditional school felt it was the job of the support staff that had more time and were trained to address such issues. The teachers stated that at TLA, every teacher understands that their role is not limited to academics, and they are expected to address the needs of the whole child. Scholars agree that young African American males need a social, emotional, and academic support from the school to be successful (COSEBOC, 2012, Fergus & Noguera, 2010. Kunjufu, 1986). A teacher shared the following, "Each adult here, should be prepared to lend an ear to listen, and if needed, a shoulder to cry on." Another teacher shared, "I just want to teach these boys, so they can be much better than where they come from." Since student support is a vital part of the teachers' responsibility at TLA, most of the relationships between students and teachers at the traditional public school were not as deep as the relationships at the single gender public school. For example, most of the students at TLA have the teachers' cell phone numbers and are free to call a teacher if they are in need. Although this could cause serious problems, teachers say that this privilege is hardly ever abused by a student. The teachers stated that it is important for the boys to know that the teachers are committed to being a resource for them, so they are comfortable with this arrangement.

One would think that the first comparison that the boys would mention would be the presence of girls at the traditional public school and absence of girls at TLA.

However, like the teachers, the boys also felt that the greatest difference between the two types of schools was centered on the level of social and emotional support given. The boys felt that they received little to no social and emotional support at the traditional public school. One student shared, "At my other school, I didn't talk to any of my teachers at all. I just went to class, sat for forty minutes, and then left." Another stated, "I really didn't talk to any of my teachers or get close to my teachers." These statements, however, did not reflect how they felt about the level of support they received at TLA. Each of the boys is convinced that the teachers at the single gender public school are, by far, more supportive than the teachers at the traditional public school. One student echoed the comments of a teacher who talked about students having teachers' cell phone numbers. He commented, "I have many of my teachers' phone numbers and I can call them whenever I need them. They also have my cell number and they can call me whenever they need me." Another stated, "I need people in my life who are going to help me go in the right direction; like they do here." Unlike their sub-par academic performances at the traditional school, the boys felt that they all were excelling academically at TLA, because of the level of support they received from the teachers and staff. Each of the students has a grade point average that is well above 3.0. A student explained, "We have a staff here that won't let you stop or settle for less than your best."

All of the participants talked about the family atmosphere of TLA, which is a result of the high level of social, emotional, and academic support given to the students. The parents/guardians said that the teachers were more like mothers and fathers, to the boys, instead of teachers. The teachers stated that they loved the boys like they were

their sons, and the principal spoke a lot about the father/son relationships that he had with many of the boys. The boys often said that their fellow students were more like brothers, instead of friends or classmates, and the teachers were more like moms and dads, or uncles and aunts. Conversely, not one of the participants used any of these positive comments when they referred to the teachers in the traditional public school. Nor did they mention that the traditional public school had anything like the family atmosphere of TLA.

Conclusions

The findings of this qualitative study corroborated the assumptions of the researcher listed below:

➢ Young, low-income, African American male students are positively impacted by the single gender public school. Students and parents/guardians felt as though the boys were loved, supported, cared for by the staff at the school.

➢ The high level of social and emotional support, in the single gender public school, increased the opportunities for the academic success of its young, low-income, African American male students. The social supports were things, such as, counseling, mentoring, leadership development, and the ability to talk with staff whenever it was needed. The emotional supports, such as, pep talks and inspirational speeches, encouragement, affirmations, the ability to talk with the staff about personal issues helped the boys adjust, be focused, and stay positive.

High expectations, extra help during and after school, and consistent personal social and emotional support enabled the focus more on their academic work.

➢ The organizational habitus of the single gender public school created a high level of social, emotional, and academic support for its young, low-income. African American male students. The students were educated in an environment with where everyone acknowledged that the school had a warm and inviting atmosphere, that felt less like a school and more like a home, and everyone felt like family.

➢ The social, emotional, and academic environment in the traditional schools was more different from than similar to the social, emotional, and academic environment of the single gender public school. Participants described the traditional public school's environment as being too large, impersonal, unsupportive, distracting, and indifferent to the boys needs. They described the single gender public school as caring, welcoming supportive, relational and family-like

➢ The perceptions of the young, low income, African American male students, their parents/guardians, teachers, and principal are that the single gender public school is socially, emotionally, and academically different from the traditional public school(s). The boys were socially and emotionally disconnected from the teachers and students and academically unsuccessful at the traditional public school(s). At TLA, the boys were cared for, supported, and loved, while getting personalized academic support during and after school.

The participants in this study were very candid when describing their perceptions and experiences, concerning the impact of the single gender public school and the traditional school(s), on the social, emotional, and academic progress of its young, low-income, African American male students. In every interview, the individuals were very affirming and enthusiastic when describing their experiences and perceptions about TLA and the tremendous affect the school had on the lives of its students. Parents/guardians talked about the changes they had seen in their sons (i.e., higher academic achievement, increased maturity, and more focus on college and beyond), after the boys were enrolled in the single gender public school. All of the parents/guardians unanimously felt that the social and emotional support from the TLA staff was the biggest contributing factor in the changes they had seen. Students shared that they knew that they would not been the persons or students they are now, if they had remained at their former schools. They all credited the family atmosphere, created by the high level of social and emotional support at TLA, for their tremendous personal and academic accomplishments.

The teachers and principal were explicit in their description of the tremendous amount of time, energy, and collaboration it took to maintain the organizational habitus of TLA. However, they all felt that these sacrifices were well worth the time and effort expended, because the social, emotional, and academic progress of the students was the principle focus of their endeavors.

The participants were unanimous in their descriptions when comparing the social, emotional, and academic environments of the two types of schools. They described the traditional school(s)' environment as too large, impersonal, unsupportive, distracting, and

indifferent to their needs, while describing the single gender public school as caring, welcoming, supportive, relational, and family-like.

Discussion and Implications

As reported previously, low academic achievement for African American males in the United States, evidenced by their low graduation rate, continues to be a serious national problem. Based upon the latest data, only 52% of African American male students earn a high school diploma in four years. The majority of African American male high school students, in this country, attend "under-resourced" schools in large metropolitan cities, and the preponderance of these schools are traditional schools (Schott Foundation, 2012). There are, however, some schools within these large urban centers, whose African American male graduation rates significantly exceed the national graduation rate for this population, and many of them are single gender public high schools. Examples are, The Urban Prep Academies in Chicago, Boys Latin of Philadelphia Charter School, and The Eagle for Young Men in New York. Each of these schools boasts a graduation rate above 85% (Urban Prep, 2012, Boys Latin, 2012, Eagle Academy Foundation, 2012). In conjunction with these schools' graduation statistics, the growing, but limited research on single gender public schools serving predominantly African American male students suggests that single gender public schools have been shown to positively impact the progress of their students (James, 2008, Fergus & Noguera, 2010, James, 2010, James & Lewis, 2010).

The findings from this current study support the propositions and assumptions espoused by the aforementioned theorists, and indicate that the organizational habitus of the single gender public school helps to produce a system of social, emotional, and academic support, which greatly enhances the students' prospects for success. The implications of these findings could possibly have an extensive influence on several different constituencies, who are interested in addressing the needs of young, African American male students. For example, school districts who have tried multiple unsuccessful academic programs, in an attempt to improve their African American male graduation rate, may want to explore support-based interventions. African American parents, whose sons may be floundering and failing in a traditional public school, may be interested in the results of this study as they search for alternatives to help their son. This study's findings may also be of interest to charter school operators, who are planning to open a single gender school, and are creating their mission and vision statements' core values. Furthermore, information from this study may assist teachers who are developing strategies to help their African American male students.

Recommendations

Suggestions, based on the findings of this study, are provided for education policy-makers, school leaders, teachers, parents, and all stakeholders who are interested in the education and life outcomes of young African American males. These recommendations are made in an attempt to facilitate the provision of strategies to eliminate the achievement gap between young African American males and their peers,

and to increase the opportunities for these males to experience an education that is designed for their success.

Recommendations for Policy-Makers

There have been many school reform programs initiated to increase the effectiveness of public schools in America, such as, differentiated instruction, standards-based education, inquiry learning, the small schools movement, NCLB, and most recently common core state standards. Yet our country continues to trail many of the industrialized nations of the world in educating its young citizens. If we, as a nation, are going to remain competitive in today's world economy, we must increase the educational levels of all our students and especially our young African American males, who are being educated at a lower rate than all other demographic groups. The findings in this study suggest that instead of continuing to set policy for and fund programs that focus on cognitive-based strategies, it might be helpful for us to consider creating policy and funding to develop single gender experiences that provide environments conducive to African American males.

Recommendations for Principals

At the beginning of his school administration career, this researcher was told that a principal's number one set of clients, in the school, were teachers and that the principal affects student growth through the teachers. It is true that a great majority of a principals day is spent working with the adults in the building. However, the students must view

you as one of their biggest supporters. To accomplish the awesome task of helping

teachers accomplish their goals and supporting student needs, the principal must

understand the impact of the school's culture on all the individuals in the building. One

of the major roles for a building principal is establishing, maintaining, or sustaining the

culture of the school (Deal & Peterson, 1999). The findings in this study reveal the

influence that the principal had on organizational habitus (culture) of the single gender

public school and on all of the participant groups. Those individuals, who endeavor to

lead a single gender public school, or a traditional public school for that matter, would do

well to follow the example of the principal in this study and ensure that the school

establishes a culture that is support-based.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers are the gasoline that enables the engine of the school to run. Without

gasoline, the engine stops. Put low grade gasoline in an engine and it will not run

efficiently. Put bad gasoline in an engine and it shuts down. Teachers are a school's

greatest asset and they determine the level of effectiveness that a school has on its

students. The findings in this study give insight into the perceptions and practices of

three teachers, who work very successfully with young African American males.

Teachers who are concerned about the progress of young African American males and

who are planning to work with this population would do well to follow the examples of

the teachers in this study. Notice their level of commitment to their students and the

things they do to support them. Also notice how they live out the core values of the school's culture.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are several areas of interest for future research within this study. This researcher has heard it said that the true measure of success for a high school is not what the students do while they are in the school, but what they do after they leave. One of the major goals of a high school is to prepare their students for life after graduation. A longitudinal study, spanning five to 10 years after the African American males graduate from the single gender public school may be of interest, to examine the students' progress in college or in their chosen career, and in life outcomes. This information could be very beneficial to the high school personnel as they evaluate their programs to measure their effectiveness.

Data from a study of African American males who attended a single gender public school, but decided to withdraw and enroll in a traditional public school may be of interest. Exploring the perceptions and experiences of these students and the reasons why they left the single gender public school could yield information that could be pertinent to a school while conducting their self-evaluation and school improvement processes.

This study focused on the perceptions of young low-income African American males who had been unsuccessful at a traditional public school prior to enrolling in the single gender public school. A research study focused on the perceptions of young low-income African American males, who were successful in a traditional public school

before coming to the single gender public school, may produce an entirely different set of data.

Evidence from this study indicated that there are specific qualities, such as, patience, love, caring, and commitment, that a teacher should possess in order to be effective in working with low-income African American male students, in a single gender school. An in-depth qualitative study of teachers, who have been considered to be effective in working with this population of students, might provide information that could be used in teacher preparation programs and staff development sessions.

Reciprocity

Creswell (2007) calls attention to the importance of the researcher to "give back to participants for their time and effort" (p. 44). This researcher delivered thank you letters to all of the individuals involved in this study, detailing their part in making this study a reality and their contribution to the growing body of research on single gender public schools and African American males. They also received a copy of an Executive Summary of the research, which contained the major findings and recommendations.

Final Thoughts

This study provided the researcher the opportunity to explore the lives of young African American males and the people who support their efforts to become adults and contributing members of our society. Through the lens of CT and CRT, the researcher was able to explore how the young men worked to "transcend the constraints placed upon

them by race, class, and gender" (Fay, 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p.27), and deal with the persistent presence of racism in our society (Biklen & Casella, 2007). To hear the stories of how the young men overcame their deficiencies and struggles and the stories of the support provided by the adults in their lives, was truly inspiring. The findings in this study has given this researcher valuable and pertinent information to carry forward into his future endeavors and his work with young, low-income, African American males.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to the Participants

Summary of Research
For Completion of Doctoral Program at Ohio University

Robert L. Murphy

"The Impact of Single Gender Schools on the Social and Academic Progress of Young African American Males from Impoverished Urban Communities"

Many young, low income, African American males are faced with numerous and pervasive negative issues, that include but are not limited to low self-esteem, lack of a father or father figure in their lives, destructive media images, criminalization which leads to their low academic achievement, their nihilism, and self-destructiveness. The data show that educationally, a large segment of this population leads the nation in the negative categorizations of suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to special education. The data also show that educationally large segments of this population are under-represented in many positive categorizations such as referrals to gifted and talented programs, advanced placement class, and honors classes (Schott Foundation, 2008, Noguera, 2008). Needless to say, in many of the coeducational public schools within the urban centers of the United States, the majority of these young males are not achieving academically, which adds to the possibility that they will not live productive and meaningful lives (Noguera, 2008, Fergus and Noguera, 2010). Historically, education in the United States has been looked upon as the panacea for overcoming the effects of poverty. If the nation is truly serious about ameliorating this situation, we need to look at, and adopt educational alternatives to educate this population other than in schools that have historically not met their needs.

This study will examine the impact of single gender public schools on the educational progress of young, low income, African American males. It is the researcher's opinion that coeducational schools are not meeting the social and cultural needs of these young males, which directs their underperformance academically. The specific aims of this research is to add to the growing, but limited collection of theories and research about single gender public schools and to critically examine how these schools affect the social and academic progress of low income African American males. This study will focus on the perceptions and experiences of young African American males who attend single gender public schools; perceptions and experiences of their parents and/or guardians; and the perceptions and experiences of the teachers and administration. Specifically, this study will look at African American males who have grown up in low socioeconomic urban neighborhoods and attend single gender schools. It will also focus on what the schools are doing differently than coeducational, public schools to address the social and academic needs of young African American males.

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaires

<u>Student Questionnaire</u>

1. Grade Point Average last year? _____
2. Class Rank, if you know it? _____
3. How many years have you attended the Leaders Academy? _____
4. What year did you enroll in the Leaders Academy ___9 ____10 ____11 ____12?
5. What school did you attend prior to enrolling in the Leaders Academy? _____
6. What was your grade point average at your former school? _____
7. Was your former school co-educational _____ or all boys _____?
8. Have your grades improved since enrolling in the Leaders Academy? _____ If so, by how much? _____
9. Did you take honors or Advanced Placement classes at your former school? _____ If so, which ones? _____
10. Do you take honors or Advanced Placement classes at the Leaders Academy? _____ If so, which ones? _____
11. How much homework did you do each night at your former school? _____
12. How much homework do you do each night at the Leaders Academy? _____
13. Did you take special education classes at your former school? _____ If so, do you know what your special education designation was? _____
14. Do you take special education classes at the Leaders Academy? _____ If so, do you know if your special education designation is the same? _____
15. Were you ever suspended at your former school? _____ If so, why and for how many days? _____
16. Were you ever expelled from your former school? _____ If so, why and for how many days? _____
17. Have you ever been suspended at the Leaders Academy? _____ If so, why and for how many days? _____
18. Are you planning to go to college? _____
19. Do you think that the teachers at your former school had high expectations of/for you? _____
20. Do you think that the teachers at your former school were doing all they could to prepare you for college success? _____
21. Do you think the teachers at the Leaders Academy have high expectations of/for you? _____
22. Do you think the teachers at the Leaders Academy are doing all they can to prepare you for college success? _____

Teacher Questionnaire

1. Grade/Subject you teach? _____
2. How long have you been a teacher? _____
3. How long have you taught at the Leaders Academy? _____
4. What school or schools did you teach in prior to coming to the Leaders Academy?
   _____
5. Before coming to the Leaders Academy, did you ever teach in a single gender (all boys) school? _____
6. If so, how does that experience compare with your experiences at the Leaders Academy?
   _____
   _____
7. Have you ever taught in a co-educational school? _____
8. If you had experiences teaching in a co-educational school, what are the major differences between the Leaders Academy and the co-educational school?
   _____
   _____
9. If you have taught in other schools besides the Leaders Academy, how much homework did you assign each night?
   _____
   _____
10. What percentage of your students regularly completed the homework you assigned? _____
11. How much homework do you assign your students at the Leaders Academy?
    _____
12. What percentage of your students at the Leaders Academy regularly complete their homework? _____
13. What was your level of expectation for your students at your former school?
    _____
14. What is your level of expectation for your students at the Leaders Academy?
    _____
15. Please describe the climate and culture of your former school?
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

How does the climate and culture of your former school compare to the climate and culture of the Leaders Academy?
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C: Interviewing Protocols

<u>Student Interview Guide</u>

1. Tell me about your school experiences prior to enrolling in Leaders Academy?
2. What was a typical day like in your former school(s)?
3. Describe your academic performance prior to enrolling in Leaders Academy?
4. Describe the climate/culture of your former school? Classrooms, cafeteria, halls, etc.?
5. Tell me what your discipline record was like at your former school(s)?
6. Tell me about your relationships with some of the students at your former school(s)?
7. Tell me about your relationships with some of the teachers and administrators in your former school(s)?
8. Describe what you think the teachers' expectations were of and for you at your former school(s)?
9. Describe how the climate/culture at your former school(s) affected you socially and academically?
10. Tell me about your school experiences at Leaders Academy?
11. What is a typical day like at Leaders Academy?
12. Tell me about your academic performance since you enrolled in Leaders Academy? Has it changed and if so, how.
13. Why do you think that your academic performance has changed since you have come to the Leaders Academy?
14. Describe the climate/culture of Leaders Academy? Classrooms, cafeteria, halls, etc.?
15. What has your discipline record been since enrolling in Leaders Academy?
16. Tell me about your relationships with some of the students at Leaders Academy?
17. Tell me about your relationships with some of the teachers and administrators at Leaders Academy?
18. Describe what you think the teachers' expectations are of/for you at Leaders Academy?
19. Describe how the climate/culture at Leaders Academy has affected you socially and academically?
20. Do you think that you would have become the student you are now if you had remained at your former school(s)?
21. What do you think the major differences are between your former school and Leaders Academy?
22. Tell me what your plans are once you leave Leaders Academy?

Teacher Interview Guide

1. Describe some of your teaching experiences prior to coming to Leaders Academy?
2. Describe the climate/culture of your school(s) prior to coming to Leaders Academy?
3. What was a typical day like at your former school(s)?
4. Describe your interactions and relationships with the students at your former school(s)?
5. Describe your interactions and relationships with the parents at your former school(s)?
6. Describe your interactions with your colleagues (teachers and administrators) at your former school(s)?
7. Describe the expectations of/for the students by you and your colleagues at your former school(s)?
8. Describe the climate/culture of your classroom at your former school(s)?
9. Describe the academic performance of the students at your former school(s)?
10. Describe the academic performance of the students in your classroom, at your former school(s)?
11. Describe the level of discipline issues at your former school(s)?
12. Describe some of your teaching experiences here at Leaders Academy?
13. Describe the climate/culture here at Leaders Academy?
14. What is a typical day like here at Leaders Academy?
15. Describe your interactions and relationships with the students here at Leaders Academy?
16. Describe your interactions and relationships with the parents here at Leaders Academy?
17. Describe your interactions with your colleagues (teachers and administrators) here at Leaders Academy?
18. Describe the expectations of/for the students by you and your colleagues here at Leaders Academy?
19. Describe the climate/culture of your classroom here at Leaders Academy?
20. Describe the academic performance of the students here at Leaders Academy?
21. Describe the academic performance of the students in your classroom here at Leaders Academy?
22. Describe the level of discipline issues here at Leaders Academy?
23. Describe your level of effectiveness as a teacher here versus your effectiveness at your former school(s)?
24. Describe the level of support you received at your former school(s) versus Leaders Academy?
25. Describe your part in establishing and maintaining the climate/culture here at Leaders Academy?

Appendix D: IRB Consent Forms

Ohio University Consent Form
Parent

<u>**Title of Research:**</u>
The Impact of Single Gender Public Schools on the Social and Academic Progress of
Young African American Males from Impoverished Urban Communities

Researcher: Robert L. Murphy

You are being asked to participate in educational research. For you to be able to
decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the
project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed
decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose,
procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information
will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the
study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this
study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

<u>**Explanation of Study**</u>

This study is being done because the data show and suggests that educationally,
African American male students lead the nation in the negative categories of suspensions,
expulsions, and referrals to special education. The data also show that educationally
large segments of this population are under-represented in many positive categories such
as referrals to gifted and talented programs, advanced placement class, and honors classes
(Schott Foundation, 2008, Noguera, 2008). Historically, education in the United States
has been looked upon as the panacea for overcoming the effects of poverty. Your
participation in this study will give you the opportunity to share about your perceptions of
your son's experiences in his single gender school and to contribute to the growing body
of research on the impact that single gender public schools are having on the social and
academic progress of low income African American males. If you agree to participate,
you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and participate in interviews, both
individual and in a focus group with other parent participants. Your participation in the
study will last approximately three months. During this time, you will be asked to fill out
a short questionnaire, which should take approximately one half hour; you will be
interviewed, privately, 2-3 times with each interview lasting approximately one hour; and
participate in a focus group with other parents lasting approximately two hours.

Risks and Discomforts

You should not participate in this study if you are uncomfortable with publically sharing about your son's schooling experiences. The project will require you to share your son's schooling experiences at his present school, as well as his experiences prior to enrolling in the single gender school. The questionnaire and interview guide will contain inquiries about his discipline and academic experiences in both schools. The researcher does not anticipate that any risk or discomfort will be incurred as a result of this experience. However, if you determine that you are not comfortable in sharing these experiences you may withdraw from the project at any time.

Benefits

The anticipated benefits of the study would be the indication that the single gender public schools are making a significant impact upon the social and academic progress of young low-income African American males. Further it would suggest that these schools should be duplicated to improve the education of African American males thus, improving their quality of life and the quality of life of their communities.

Your participation in this project will not improve your son's grades in any way, nor will his grades be hurt if you decide not to participate in the project or discontinue your participation at any time.

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, you will receive a $50.00 gift card.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact *Robert L. Murphy by*

email at whcadirector@hotmail.com or by phone at 614-507-3378 or Dr. Jerry Johnson by email at johnsoj9@ohio.edu or by phone at 740-597-3364.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary
- you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯ Date⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯⎯

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Version Date: *[September 12, 2010]*

Ohio University Consent Form
Teacher

<u>**Title of Research:**</u>
The Impact of Single Gender Public Schools on the Social and Academic Progress of
Young African American Males from Impoverished Urban Communities

Researcher: Robert L. Murphy

       You are being asked to participate in educational research. For you to be able to
decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the
project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed
decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose,
procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information
will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the
study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this
study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

<u>**Explanation of Study**</u>

This study is being done because the data show and suggests that educationally, African
American male students lead the nation in the negative categories of suspensions,
expulsions, and referrals to special education. The data also show that educationally
large segments of this population are under-represented in many positive categories such
as referrals to gifted and talented programs, advanced placement class, and honors classes
(Schott Foundation, 2008, Noguera, 2008). Historically, education in the United States
has been looked upon as the panacea for overcoming the effects of poverty. Your
participation in this study will give you the opportunity to share your story about your
perceptions and experiences about teaching in a single gender school and to contribute to
the growing body of research on the impact that single gender public schools are having
on the social and academic progress of low income African American males. If you
agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire; agree to be observed,
by the researcher, at school in different activities such as, class, lunch, teachers'
meetings, extra-curricular events, etc; and participate in interviews, both individual and in
a focus group with other teacher participants. Your participation in the study will last
approximately three months. During this time, you will be asked to fill out a short
questionnaire, which should take approximately one half hour; you will be interviewed,
privately, 3-4 times with each interview lasting approximately one hour; and participate
in a focus group with other teachers lasting approximately two hours.

Risks and Discomforts

You should participate in this study if you are uncomfortable with publically sharing about your teaching experiences. The project will require you to share your experiences at your present school, as well as your experiences prior to coming to the single gender school. The questionnaire and interview guide will contain inquiries about your teaching philosophy, grading and homework practices, and student expectations in both schools. The researcher does not anticipate that any risk or discomfort will be incurred as a result of this experience. However, if you determine that you are not comfortable in sharing these experiences you may withdraw from the project at any time.

Benefits

The anticipated benefits of the study would be the indication that the single gender public schools are making a significant impact upon the social and academic progress of young low-income African American males. Further it would suggest that these schools should be duplicated to improve the education of African American males thus, improving their quality of life and the quality of life of their communities

Individually, you will have the ability to share your story to assist in furthering the research on single gender public schools and to improve the educational climate of the school community.

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Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by the researcher. Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation
As compensation for your time/effort, you will receive a $50.00 gift card.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact **Robert L. Murphy by email at whcadirector@hotmail.com or by phone at 614-507-3378 or Dr. Jerry Johnson**

by email at johnsoj9@ohio.edu or by phone at 740-597-3364.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- you are 18 years of age or older
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary
- you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Version Date: *[July 25, 2010]*

Appendix E: IRB Approval

OHIO
UNIVERSITY
1804
Office of the Vice President for
Research

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OH 45701-2979

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search.ohiou.edu

The following research study has been approved by the
Institutional Review Board at Ohio University for the period listed
below. This review was conducted through an expedited review
procedure as defined in the federal regulations as Category(ies):

7

'roject Title: The Impact of Single Gender Schools on the Social and Academic Progress of
Young, African American Males From Impoverished Urban Communities

'rimary Investigator: Robert LeBarron Murphy

:o-Investigator(s):

aculty Advisor: Jerry Johnson
(if applicable)

)epartment: Educational Studies: Educational Administration Progress

Rebecca Cale

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

8/2/12
Approval Date

8/1/13
Expiration Date

This approval is valid until expiration date listed above. If you wish to continue beyond expiration date, you must
submit a periodic review application and obtain approval prior to continuation.

Adverse events must be reported to the IRB promptly, within 5 working days of the occurrence.

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review.
Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to