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Does a Positive Male Role Model Affect the Achievement of Adolescent African-American Males? A Case Study

Elphin Maxwell Smith Jr.
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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Does a Positive Male Role Model Affect the Achievement of
Adolescent African-American Males?
A Case Study

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

Elphin Maxwell Smith Jr.
Arkansas Tech University
Bachelor of Science in Engineering, 1988
Arkansas Tech University
Master of Science in Educational Leadership, 2003
Arkansas Tech University
Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership, 2006

December 2015
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

Dr. Carleton R. Holt
Dissertation Director

Dr. Janet Penner-Williams
Committee Member

Dr. Mary Ramey
Committee Member

Abstract

African-American males are at risk. A continuous cycle of low academic achievement, low academic attainment, and high incarceration rates threaten to end the lives of many of these young men one way or another. There are many challenges faced by African-American men that have caused economic opportunities to evade these young men. The concern is whether families, educators, and communities can help every African-American male achieve at a higher level in order to participate in better economic opportunities. This qualitative case study is designed to help families, educators, and community leaders understand and help African-American males achieve academically, close the achievement gap, and graduate from high school. This study will address many of the factors that contribute to the low academic achievement, low educational attainment, low graduation rate, high unemployment, and high incarceration rate of African-American men. This study is intended to give educators the knowledge that could help African-American boys increase their educational attainment that would lead to greater economic opportunities for these young men. There must be some changes made in how African-American male students are engaged, motivated, prepared, and supported as they move toward graduation. Leaving high school with a diploma is no guarantee of a successful and productive life; however, a high school graduate is more likely to avoid unemployment, poverty, and possible incarceration.

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Dedication

First of all, I thank God my creator, sustainer, and my savior. Secondly, to my mentor, role model, and father, the late great Elphin Maxwell Smith Sr. I could not have written a better script for my life if I would have spent 1,000 years trying. Like I've said so many times and never get tired of saying, Thank you dad. Thank you momma Mildred for pushing us like you did to do better and be better people and role models for our children. Thanks to the two greatest teachers in the world.

To my life partner, thanks for standing behind me and with me. Thanks for all the encouragement you gave me when I needed it. Thanks to my girls for asking many questions to me about the process, about where I was, and reminding me that I would not let you quit. Your right it can be done. Thank you Dr. Kristen and Ameerah; you both continue to make me a very proud man and father. I pray for each of you each and every day and would like to encourage you to "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding and acknowledge him in all that you do and he will direct your path (Proverbs 3:5).

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Chapter One

Introduction

In the 21st century graduating from high school is a first step in securing a solid economic future, but many African-American males are not finishing. Why are these young African-American men not graduating from high school? This case study seeks answers to this important question. In addition, this case study will seek to establish the importance of a male role model. Thus, it will aim to investigate whether a positive male role model can improve the African-American males' chances of graduating from high school.

According to Holland (1989), attaining good quality education is the key to success in life. Holland also expressed the idea that knowledge is one of the main reasons behind the United States' fast rise to world power and dominance. Kuykendall (2004) posted that the goal of the U.S. government is that all citizen graduate from high school in order to become productive members of society by age 18. Some of the greatest moments in U. S. history, such as the Civil Rights movement, the war on poverty, and the struggle to ensure that all Americans are treated fairly, are based in and around education (Holland, 1989). Kuykendall also asserted that fights for worthy causes addressed by the struggle for integration, equality, and equity are, in fact, struggles for knowledge, freedom, and economic success. Freedom and education are two factors that will continue to be the most precious commodities this country possesses (Kuykendall, 2004).

The African-American male lags behind every ethnic group including the African-American female in academic achievement, academic attainment, and graduation rate (United States Department of Education, 2014). These young African-American men in Arkansas also experience the greatest school dropout and unemployment rates, and are disproportionately

represented in the state's prisons (Arkansas Department of Correction, 2014; Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). Addressing these disparities is important because many of these young men are not living up to their potential and are not fulfilling their responsibilities as fathers and role models for their young sons (Polite & Davis, 1999). The African-American males' underachievement may have many undesirable effects, as many are dropping out of high school, face prolonged periods of unemployment, and often end up on the wrong side of the criminal justice system. As a result, their young sons have to grow up without their fathers (Gilmore & Gilmore, 1982). The high rate of absenteeism by these African-American men could have generational effects, as the absence of a positive role model or mentor may be the main reason behind the cycle of underachievement these African-American men experience (Harris, 2012).

Focus of study. Having an education has been shown to improve economic conditions for individuals in the United States. The African-American community have always understood the concept of "educational power." Historically, African-Americans had to overcome many challenges to take advantage of the available educational opportunities (Kaba, 2010). Many of the challenges faced by African-Americans are well known and adequately documented (Horton & Horton, 2001). Throughout the history, laws were created, aiming to prevent literacy in the African American communities, and small African-American schools were burnt down to scare and intimidate African-American communities and keep these children from learning to read and write. In many cases, police physically prevented African-Americans from entering and integrating into schools when laws concerning school were changed (Kaba, 2010). The African-American community, in spite of these challenges, has made some social and economic progress because of education. However, when a particular race or gender does not take advantage of the

educational opportunities, then the whole country has to take responsibility for failure (Kafele, 2009).

The focus becomes what Americans can do to help African-American males achieve academically? One way is by collaborating with the family of young African-American males to promote academic success (Dortch & The 100 African-American Men of America, 2000). Another way to help these African-American boys and their families is to create mentoring groups in our communities (Foster M. , 1993).

African-American males are not achieving. Educational opportunities are widely available but in return, educational progress has been elusive for the African-American male (Hale, 2001). African-American males in Arkansas continue to lag behind their peers of other ethnicities in academic achievement and are not reaching their full potential (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). The study by Hale also indicates that parents and teachers often have low expectations of African-American male students. Consequently, these African-American boys are disproportionately represented in special education, in detention, and on the suspension list in many schools (Holland, 1989). The following data support the statement:

- Only one out of two African-American males will graduate from high school compared to a 75% graduation rate for the nation (United States Department of Education, 2014).
- African-American males lag behind African-American females and their White-American peers in both school completion and employment rates (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).
- 60% of all African-American males in Arkansas who dropped out of school have spent time in prison by the time they are 35 years old (Arkansas Department of Correction, 2014).

- 7% (1 out of every 15) Americans will serve time in prison compared to 33% (1 out of 3) African-American males (United States Census Bureau, 2014).

According to Kafele (2009), economic opportunities are elusive for many African-American men. One of the greatest things about being an American is educational achievement will promote economic opportunities (Kafele, 2009). The challenges of educating every American regardless of ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status is in the national spotlight as indicated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (NCLB, 2002). The expectation, according to NCLB is that all students, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status, will achieve at a proficient level or above. Also, NCLB was specifically designed to close existing achievement gaps between gender and ethnic groups. Therefore, this nation will continue to be a “nation at risk” as long as there is a disproportionate number of specific gender or ethnic group lagging behind (United States Department of Education, 2014). Some educators argue that the expectations of NCLB are unachievable and, therefore, a hindrance and an unnecessary burden. Yet, there are other educators that argue that the expectations of NCLB is exactly what this country needs, as they can reveal the discrepancies in our educational system (Wallis & Steptoe, 2007).

Contributing factors for low academic achievement. According to Kunjufu (1986), there are many challenges faced by African-American men that have caused economic opportunities to evade these young men. The concern is whether families, educators, and communities can help every African-American male achieve at a higher level in order to participate in better economic opportunities. According to Morrison (2002), in the 21st century it is very hard to improve one’s economic status without an education. The lack of educational achievement by the African-American male should become a real concern for American citizens.

Therefore, the challenge is to focus on what improvements are needed to increase academic achievement among African-American males (Morrison, 2002).

According to Hunter and Bartee (2003), contributing factors attributed to the low achievement of African American students were single-parent homes, poverty, and language barriers that may or may not exist. Cultural norms, the absence of a positive male role model, and low socio-economic neighborhoods involved with crime contribute to those negative attributes. Hence, the focus of this study is contributing factors to promote a positive, well disciplined, well-adjusted, productive, and educated African-American male (Harris & Taylor, 2012).

Graduation rates as predictors. According to Dewey (1976, p. 6), “What the best and most educated parents wants for their own children must be what the American communities want for all of their children. Any other idea for our schools is narrow and unacceptable; acted upon, it may destroy this country.” In Arkansas there is a statistically significant difference of African-American students’ K-12 achievement as compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Arkansas Department of Education, 2010). White students perform at a significantly higher level than their African-American peers. There is an existing gap in achievement between these two groups of students from the beginning of their K-12 experience to the end (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). African-American students achieve at a lower rate, are in more trouble, and graduate at a much lower percentage rate than their White counterparts (Hunter & Bartee, 2003).

According to Polite and Davis (1999), the parents of African-American males have the right to expect their children to receive the same education as any other students in our schools. Thus, we, as a nation, must also desire the same education for all citizens of this great country

(Polite & Davis, 1999). Darling (2008) believed that this desire for our students must include completing the educational process by graduating from high school. According to the Arkansas Department of Correction (2014), half of all men that are incarcerated in Arkansas have not finished high school. Sixty percent of African-American men in Arkansas that have not graduated have spent time in prison by age 35 (Arkansas Department of Correction, 2014).

Staying out of trouble. When we take a closer look at gender and ethnicity, we find that African-American males are not achieving academically. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), 1 out of 10 African-American male fourth graders can read above the basic level. The U. S. Department of Justice (2014) reported that approximately four out of 10 African-American males between the ages of 15 and 25 years old have been incarcerated compared to 3 out of 20 men represented in the U. S. population. In Arkansas, African-American men account for approximately eight percent of the state's population but represent 53% of the prison population (Arkansas Department of Correction, 2014).

There are many opinions about why differences exist between the ethnic groups (Harris, 2012). Cephas (2012) indicated in a study that few researchers could agree on the contributing factors. The one thing that is for sure, at the present time, African-American students will not reach the same academic achievement level as their White peers (Cephas, 2012). Many African-American males read at an eighth grade level upon graduating from high school (Cephas, 2012). Because of these low achievement levels, they may be held back at higher rates, be suspended at higher rates, drop out of high school at a higher rates, and ultimately miss many of the economic opportunities they could obtain with a good education (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). In addition, low-performing young African-American men are at an increased risk of

being at or below the poverty line as adults, because many of these men have not, cannot, or will not finish high school (Children Defense Fund, 2009).

Economic future. The disproportionate number of African-Americans in prison only tells part of the story. There are families that are missing fathers, husbands, and role models for their sons, as well as providers (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996). The economic futures for these affected families are not bright (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Furthermore, the disproportionately high rate of incarceration will prevent these young men from adding to the economy; instead these young men will not be employees and will consume tax dollars (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). According to the Arkansas Department of Correction (2014), the state spends approximately \$23,000 per inmate per year. That is more per year than many Arkansans make. The annual expenditures per student by the same state of Arkansas are comparatively dismal, at \$6,500 (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). In other words, more tax dollars are being spent to house and care for an adult prisoner in Arkansas than are allocated for educating an Arkansan high school student.

Statement of Problem

According to Kafele (2009), the first step to attaining greater economic opportunities is high school graduation. African-American males, however, are lagging behind their peers of all ethnicities, as well as African-American females, in terms of high school graduation rates. Kafele also asserts that failing to graduate will decrease their chances for economic opportunities in this country. Thus, we need to find the way to help these African-American males graduate from high school (Kafele, 2009). In seeking the most effective strategies to achieve this goal, it is worth exploring the effect of a presence of a positive male role model.

Moving from childhood into adolescence brings about many well-documented changes in the life of a child. First, according to Cephas (2012) there is the chemical change, which is well known, understood, and documented. This chemical change brings about many physical changes that we can easily see (Cephas, 2012). Secondly, Tatum (2005) suggested that there is a mental shift that is not always talked about, not as well known, and often not understood. This mental shift is referred to by Tatum as “the adolescent shift” or simply a shift in self-awareness. These young adolescents begin to have a perceived understanding of who they are and who they will become (Tatum, 2005). In the case of the adolescent African-American male, around middle level school, they come to their own conclusions about the world they live in, how they fit in, and who they believe they will become (Tatum, 2005).

Tatum (2005) also described the transition in the self-awareness stage as important because the adolescent’s history and relationships will play a tremendous role in his mental state at this time in his life. There are some adolescent African-American males, for example, that will have healthy, positive, and encouraging relationships already in place such as a positive role model or mentor (McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994). These positive relationships will be a major factor in positive social changes, academic achievement, and educational attainment. McLaughlin et al., (1994) referred to the adolescent with positive relationships already in place being in “hopeful adolescence.” These healthy encouraging relationships can come from a variety of sources, such as family, the church, the community, positive competitive teams of some kind, or positive role models (McLaughlin et al., 1994).

On the other hand, according to (McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994), the majority of these adolescent African-American males will be in the category known as the “unhopeful adolescent.” These adolescent African-American males can have unhealthy or negative

relationships with the world around them which could include negative peer pressure, drug infested neighborhoods, drug use, and no church or community input or influences (McLaughlin et al., 1994). These unhealthy relationships will help them form very negative and unhealthy conclusions about the world and how they fit in. The “unhopeful adolescent” will often find himself in trouble in school, on the wrong side of the criminal justice system, and possibly dropping out or being pushed out of school for behavioral problems, thus failing to graduate (McLaughlin et al., 1994).

With a better understanding of the shift in adolescent self-awareness we can and should provide for these young men a positive role model (Harris & Taylor, 2012). According to Harris and Taylor, these role models should be provided in school, at church, and in the community at a very early stage in their development. By providing a positive role model, we are then providing a positive relationship that will help make many of these childhood transitions positive experiences (McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994).

Importance of male role model. Many people in this country have grossly underestimated the value of a role model or mentor in the life of a child (Dortch & The 100 Black Men of America, 2000). One of the reasons that many of these African-American boys are in trouble is that they come from situations that they perceive to be insurmountable and impossible to overcome (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996). In addition, young (often teenage) mothers, single-parent homes, in poverty, and living in neighborhoods that are often plagued with drugs and crime, and an endless number of negative role models can all lead to low self-esteem and no vision for their lives outside of what is happening to them at any particular moment (Tatum, 2005). Low school achievement, very low educational attainment, early exit from the public

school system, unemployment, and trouble with the law are the kinds of things that these young men have become accustomed to and believe is the way life is (Polite & Davis, 1999).

A positive African-American role model can provide young men with a very powerful example of life outside of the walls to which they have become accustomed (Cephas, 2012). Once this example is set before them, they will understand the world in a different way. They will also be able to envision themselves away from their negative environments and become a productive citizen and a positive role model for someone else (Cephas, 2012).

Socialization. Life for everyone is about change and the ability to make adjustments. There are no changes greater in life than those children go through. Changes from infancy to adulthood will include many milestones, many benchmarks, many turns, and many obstacles that must be navigated successfully for individuals to become positive, productive citizen of this country (Kuykendall, 2004). There must be a guide in the life of a child if the child is going to have a chance for success and for gaining confidence toward becoming a man (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996). In the case of the adolescent African- American male, he will face in this country some very unique experiences and obstacles and therefore will benefit greatly from the experience of an African-American man (Dortch & The 100 African-American Men of America, 2000). The communities can provide for these families and young me mentor programs that will ensure success is a continuum (Hunter, 2011).

School attendance. The academic achievement of young African American males will suffer because they do not know and will not learn in their early years how to navigate many of the obstacles they will come face-to-face with or how to achieve academically. They will suffer with feelings of being left out, rejection, and low self-esteem, which may ultimately lead to low school attendance and a life of trouble (Morrison, 2002). There are many things that will

contribute to the feeling of rejection by these young men; in fact, the absence of a positive male role model is a major contributing factor to low self-esteem (Hunter, 2011). Without a male role model, these young men may not develop the emotional and social skills necessary to overcome many of the problems they will face and may eventually drop out of school (Holland, 1996).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what factors are associated with African-American males who graduate from high school, with a focus on whether and how the presence or absence of a positive male role model influences the graduation rates.

Research Question

What are the perceived effects of mentoring by an adult African-American male on the likelihood that a young African American male would graduate from high school?

Significance of Study

Many adolescents African-American males are not achieving. These boys are not working up to their full potential and may miss out on many of the economic opportunities. There are many contributing factors, but Americans cannot agree upon one factor that can be fixed. These young men continue to fall behind all other ethnic groups, including African-American females. The intent of the present study is to identify potential contributing factors that can lead to higher achievement, higher academic attainment, and a brighter economic future for these young men.

Theoretical Framework

According Scott (2013), one of the original Freedom Writers, reaching students that are working beneath their potential is something that he has been able to do because of his very own unique experiences. In fact, the theoretical framework for this study is based on his book

R.E.A.C.H.. The “R” is being able to “relate” to the troubled youth, or being able to meet these young people on their level without condemning them. The “E” is for “engaging” these young people to find out their needs and who they really are. The “A” is for helping them become “aware” of their circumstances and the fact they can do better and be better than those circumstances. The “C” is for “convincing” these young people that there is a way out of their predicament and there is always a reason for hope. The “H” is for giving them a “hand” and not leaving them to struggle on their own. In this book by an African-American male, Scott (2013, p. 24) ask the question: “How can we reach young men and young women today considering all of the challenges they face?” These young people are in the streets for one reason or another doing things that are detrimental to their growth and development. Most of these youths are considered “UNREACHABLE” by many adults, just as the book’s author was. Someone took time out of his busy schedule and told him that he was important and that he could make a difference for someone else. The intention of the book was to show others (adults) that they could have an impact on the life of a child (Scott, 2013).

While some African-American men in Arkansas are achieving their full potential, the group as a whole is not (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). Some of these young men are considered unreachable and may drop out of school, be unemployed, and possibly end up in prison because they are not achieving academically (Children Defense Fund, 2009). According to the recent statistics, African-American males are not reaching the same level of economic attainment in life as other ethnicities (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Thus, this study will explore the effectiveness of mentoring as it pertains to African-American males’ academic achievement and demonstrate the effects of supportive positive role models. Scott’s (2013) formula could be part of the strategy for helping young people move out of and away

from their hopeless existence and embrace a new life with greater confidence. Scott believes that he is a walking testimony of how one caring adult can make a difference in the lives of young people. In addition, he offered some advice for reaching these underachieving young men (Scott, 2013).

Conceptual Design

The design of this study is based on the fact that African-American men are at risk. African-American boys are not achieving academically, are not reaching the same level of academic attainment, or economic attainment as their Caucasian peers (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). How can this country or community help these young men achieve and move beyond their present cycle of underachieving?

The present study was designed with the aim of helping Americans understand and break this cycle of underachievement by adolescent African-Americans based on the collected data (see Figure 1.1). In order to better understand this phenomenon, the researcher will sample the population of young African-American men for the purpose of determining their perceptions regarding the importance of male role models in their successful completion of high school. The researcher will analyze their responses in order to address the research questions guiding this study (Creswell, 2007).

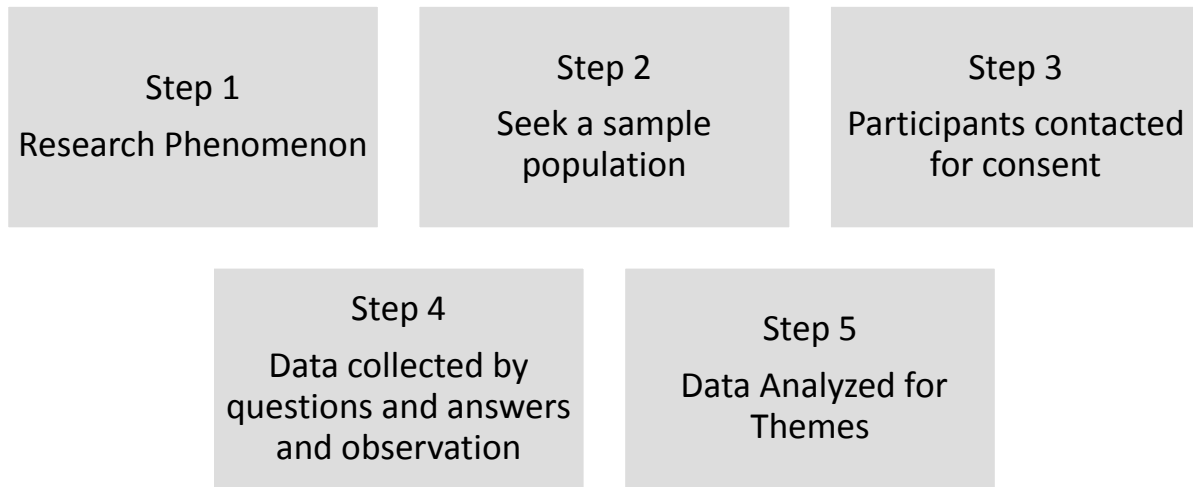


Figure 1.1. The five-step study data collection process.

According to Figure 1.2, the challenge of finding the right data is a five step process that includes: (1) the problem was researched; (2) the population was explored for an appropriate sample; (3) participants were contacted for their consent; (4) the interview question were asked and observations were made and data collected; and (5) the data was analyzed for themes and coded.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher's ability to remain unbiased or fair minded as data are discovered and presented during the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The three major goals of research according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) are:

1. Have an open mind so that an understanding of the data are evident.
2. Make sure the ideas that are received through data collection are factual.
3. Researcher should have the ability to determine what is significantly relevant to the matter at hand.

Theoretical sensitivity can be drawn from four sources: analytical rigor, knowledge of literature, professional experiences, and personal experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Analytical rigor. According to Mays and Pope (1995), to be certain that analytical rigor is obtained the research design must have an orderly plan and systematic approach. In addition, data must be meticulously dealt with which will involve three phases: (1) data collection phase, which involves collecting the right data; (2) data interpretation phase, which will include analyzing the data correctly; and (3) communicating the results so that other researchers will know and understand how you came to the final conclusion (Mays & Pope, 1995).

Knowledge of literature. The researcher draws knowledge from his personal and professional experiences to demonstrate the need for research. While the extant literature points to many contributing factors, the present study focuses on examining the effects of the presence or absence of positive male role models in the academic success of young African-Americans. This is in line with the findings of extant research, which indicates that absent fathers play a critical role in the development of the adolescent boys' lives, regardless of ethnicity (Harris & Taylor, 2012). Thompson (2010) argued that one of the major contributing factors of African-

American male school failure, high dropout rates, and prevalent low self-esteem is the low socio-economic status of many African-American families. African-American mothers are more likely to maintain a single-parent home than mothers of any other ethnic group in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2014). According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) the resources to raise children are not as-available as they would be for couples. Breaking the cycle of poverty is a very difficult obstacle to overcome (Thompson, 2010).

Professional experience. After teaching in the public school system for almost 20 years, the researcher see the need to encourage young men, young women, and entire families. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), African-American men are more likely to be unemployed and African-American mothers are more likely to maintain a single parent home. The need is more prevalent in the African-American community. Families are hurting and looking for help. I often tell these families that education is the key to success.

As a pastor for almost 10 years in the African-American community, the researcherI realize that young moms and single mothers need help raising their children. As a pastor, it is not only my responsibility to provide an example for young children, but also give guidance to these families in need. Most of these families in need are looking for and willing to accept help, but are afraid to ask for assistance. Many of the families that I have had the opportunity to serve are headed by a single parent and are living at or below the poverty line.

Personal experience. I grew up with many friends who did not have the good fortunes that I experienced with a loving mother and father at home. I did not understand it while growing up in the neighborhood, but now I do. Upon entering junior high school I notice that many of my African-American male and female friends where not there. When I entered high school, many more of them disappeared. I now understand that many of these childhood friends

grew up in poverty, single-parent homes, moving from house to house, and many of them faced homeless situations. Many of my friends were victims of domestic abuse, living with alcoholic parents, or were in foster care living without parents at all. Academically there were a few exceptions, however, many of my African-American friends did not perform up to their potential and dropped out of school. My personal experiences influenced the study as African-American male.

Limitations

This study is limited to one high school in northwest Arkansas. Although there are neighboring schools and other high schools with similar demographics, this school was chosen because of its demographics, geographical location, and time limitations. There are mothers, female teachers, and female church members providing excellent role models for African American male students, but this study is limited to male role models. In addition, a study of the long-term effect on the African-American male after graduation and other influences on graduation rates would be a good idea, but this study is limited to the male role model's influence on graduation rates of these African-American males.

Definition of Terms

To provide an understanding of the terms used in this study, a list of terms and their definitions is included listed in this section.

Achievement Gap The difference in mean score for two or more ethnic groups. A statistically significant higher or lower group average. (The difference is larger than the margin of error) (United States Department of Education, 2014).

Achievement Levels Specific subject area and grade level performance indicators: Below Basic; Basic; Proficient; Advanced (United States Department of Education, 2014).

- Below Basic – level indicates that the student has no knowledge of skills that are essential for proficient work. Student is working well below grade level.
- Basic – level indicates that the student has some knowledge of skills that are essential for proficient work. Student is working just below grade level.
- Proficient – level indicates that the student has solid knowledge of the skills that are essential for working at or slightly above grade level.
- Advanced – level indicates that the student has superior knowledge of the skills that are essential for working well above grade level.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) The U.S. Department of Education uses a threshold score for Literacy and Math to determine if a school or a subpopulation of that school is making progress per state mandate (United States Department of Education, 2014).

Educational Attainment Public or private school completion or grade reached including *General Education Development (GED)* In addition, it is the number of years or hours completed while attending schools of higher education (United States Department of Education, 2014).

High School Dropout The term is used to describe the act of leaving school before completion (the event). The term is also used to describe a person who left high school before completion (the person) (United States Department of Education, 2014).

High School Completion The act of completing high school or an equivalent and receiving a high school diploma or equivalent such as a General Education Development (GED) certificate (United States Department of Education, 2014).

Poverty A family is considered poor or living in poverty if the family's total household income is below a predetermined income threshold depending on family size (United States Department of Education, 2014).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) President George W. Bush enacted a reform measure through the U.S. Department of Education in 2001 Literacy and math skills of students in grades 3-8 will be measured for student achievement (United States Department of Education, 2014).

Racial/Ethnic Group Categorization How racial groups or ethnic groups are organized based on ethnic heritage (United States Department of Education, 2014).

- White Person / European American – any of the people that originated in Europe, Middle East, or North Africa.
- African-American Person / African-American – any of the people that originated in the African-American racial groups of Africa.
- Hispanic or Latino – A person of one of the Spanish cultures or origin, regardless race. (Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central America).

Role Model A person who is looked up to and admired and whose behavior we want to follow or copy (Dortch, Jr., Thomas and the 100 African-American Men of America, Inc., 2000).

Mentor A role model that will take an active part in the life of a child to help them become better citizens (Dortch, Jr., Thomas and the 100 African-American Men of America, Inc., 2000).

Hero A hero is a person whose acts and deeds we admire and inspires us to greatness (Dortch, Jr., Thomas and the 100 African-American Men of America, Inc., 2000).

Summary

According to the data, African-American males are at risk. A continuous cycle of low academic achievement, low academic attainment, and high incarceration rates threaten to end the lives of many of these young men one way or another. There are many factors contributing to the underachievement of the African-American males, including high divorce rate, single-parent homes, absentee fathers, poverty, low-income neighborhoods, negative role models, and teen pregnancy. However, the absence or presence of male role models in the home, community, and school is the focus of this study.

Organization of the dissertation. The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one started with an introduction and background of study. The problem was stated and the purpose was given along with conceptual design and significance of this study. After the definition of terms and the theoretical frameworks were presented the chapter concluded with a summary. Chapter two, the literature review, acknowledges through research why the problem of the study is so important. In Chapter three a thorough discussion of the methods that will be used to collect data and the processes uses to determine the accuracy of data are provided. A presentation of data collected, provided in Chapter four, will allow the researcher to see the importance of the findings through data. Chapter five will offer an interpretation of the data collected and give recommendations to parents, educators, and community leaders and give suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Organization of the Chapter

Chapter Two starts with a search strategy and introduction of the literature review. After the introduction, the family influences, head of household, and lack of education attainment makes up the next three sections. The educational attainment section is followed by economical affects, parental influences and involvement, and lack of male role models in the home. The next section discusses community influences and is followed by the village concept of raising community children and African-American male role models. The educational influences and its environment with low academic achievement, parental involvement, and teacher influences complete the section prior to the summary. Hence, the summary of the literature concludes the chapter.

Search Strategy for Literature Review

The researcher's personal and professional experiences added more depth to the knowledge of this particular subject. It also helped to determine wording for search strategy. After reading and reflecting on the subject, an outline was made for each chapter. More hours at the university's library were spent looking for various books, dissertations, and scholarly articles for insight to support the research. As research was done, the outlines were completed.

The search strategy for the literature review is the driving force behind the development of this chapter. The literature review is used to determine what others discovered on the subject of African-American males' success or failure. Furthermore, the research question guided the research of scholarly articles, dissertations, and books using ProQuest, and ERIC.

Search strategy included words and phrases like African-American males/boys, academic achievement, graduation rate, drop-out rate, role models, mentors, educational attainment, achievement, economic attainment, African-American communities, African-American schools, male teachers, and African-American male teachers. The initial search revealed a plethora of articles, dissertations, and books on the topic of interest for this study. The scope of this review was thus subsequently narrowed to include only the more specific sources that directly relate to the phenomenon under investigation.

Introduction

Many African-American adolescent males are low achievers in Arkansas middle-level schools (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). There are many varied opinions on why the achievement gap exists; however, educators have not answered the question of how to close this gap. Educators can also point to many factors that contribute to low achievement of African-American students but cannot decide which factor is most important. Some factors that may contribute to the low achievement of African-American students are: single-parent homes, poverty, language barriers that may or may not exist, cultural norms, lack of community involvement, lack of support, and a lack of understanding by educators (Harris & Taylor, 2012).

The focus of this study is the achievement of African-American male students in Arkansas, which lags behind not only their Caucasian counterparts, but also all other ethnic groups, including African-American females (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). Terdal and Kennedy (1996) argued that one of the contributing factors, which they consider to be very important, is the absence of a positive, productive, well-disciplined, well-adjusted male role model. These role models are not present in the family unit, the community, or the educational setting (Morrison, 2002). Role models for these young African-American boys may increase

their chances of becoming high achievers in school and positive examples for other African-American males (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996).

Most of these adolescent African-American males do not develop the skills, principles, or discipline needed to avoid many of the negative or less desirable outcomes for young men (Carie, 2009). If nothing is done, according to Carie, these students will continue to fall behind and act out in ways that are unacceptable in this society. In fact, Care continues to argue, most of these young men are surrounded by negative media images, negative news reports about African-American men, derogatory music videos, and negative unproductive men in their local neighborhoods. These kinds of images are the only role models that most of these young African-American males will have (Caire, 2009). As a result, many of them will become what they see, negative and unproductive members of society (Kuykendall, 2004).

The academic achievement of these young African-American males will suffer because they do not know and might not learn; in their early years how to achieve academically (Harris and Taylor, 2012). They will suffer with a feeling of being left out, a feeling of rejection, and low self-esteem, which ultimately can lead to a life full of challenges that will be hard to overcome (Darling, 2008). There are many things that will contribute to the feeling of rejection by these young men; however, the absence of a positive male role model is a major concern and contributing factor to low self-esteem and low academic achievement (Harris & Taylor, 2012). Without positive role models these young men may not develop the emotional and social skills necessary to overcome many of these challenges they will face (Riccuti, 2004). Furthermore, they may not be able to make a positive contribution to their homes, schools, or communities. Role models set examples; for example, being a good father and husband; is something that a good father and husband can teach (Darling, 2008).

Thompson (2010) asserted that the low achieving African-American male is a problem that not only affects the African-American community. It is a problem that affects all Americans. Most of the low achieving African American males will become burdens to society. They may, for example, become fathers that cannot or will not provide for their families (Thompson, 2010). According to Holland (1989), this cycle will continue from generation to generation and possibly never end. If we ignore the problem of the low-achieving African-American male the problem will continue to grow and the cost will continue to rise for all Americans (Thompson, 2010).

Family Influence

Head of household. Kuykendall, (2004) suggested that these adolescent African-American males are all members of families first. These families are considered the basic building blocks of society. The family should be bound together by a mutual commitment and an obligation to help and support one another (Darling, 2008). In addition, Darling suggested that these families are usually held together by some legal means or an understanding that there is or should be a commitment. The family is a contributing factor, whether good or bad, in the lives of these students and these communities (Darling, 2008).

Thompson, (2010) argued that one of the major contributing factors of the African-American male school failure rates, drop-out rates, and prevalent low self-esteem is the low socio-economic status of many African-American families. The low socio-economic status is due to the dramatic increase in single-parent homes over the last four or five decades (United States Census Bureau, 2014). This dramatic increase is more severely felt in the African-American community (United States Census Bureau, 2014). The African-American community has experienced double the increase over the last four to five decades than any other ethnic group

in the United States (Elliott & Simmons, 2014). Therefore, African-American mothers are more likely to maintain a single-parent household than their White or Hispanic counterparts (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Resources to raise children in a single-parent home are not as available as they would be for couples raising children together. Researchers also suggested that the reason low income African-American mothers are more likely to experience the difficulty of raising children with minimal resources than their White counterparts is because African-American parents face different kinds of problems, which include discrimination (Paschall, Ringwalt, & Flewelling, 2003).

Mothers are very concerned about their sons rounded development. Studies by Morrison (2002) have found that a young male's well-rounded manly identity comes from a positive productive man in his life or from a father-son relationship. It starts in the traditional family of husband and wife. Morrison's findings also suggest that, in the 21st century, it is easy to lose a sense of family because the expectations concerning families are different than they were 50 years ago. Women in the 21st century, according to Darling (2008), are more independent than they were in previous decades. Lacking strong male role models and father-son-like relationships, these young men may gather together among themselves and create gangs that will replace their families (Darling, 2008). Darling continues to explain that gangs and gang members are often negative and unproductive members in their communities. In addition, these young men develop a distorted sense of reality and manhood and pass this unproductive lifestyle to their sons, creating a cycle of negative unproductive men (Darling, 2008). Because of these concerns, mothers have a tendency to be easier on their young males, afraid they could push them into a negative, unproductive, and gang related life style (Darling, 2008).

Lack of education attainment. Trusty (2002) insists that educational attainment is often created by parents' expectations for themselves and their children. African-Americans have made some progress over the last three decades; however, they have not made as much progress as other ethnic groups towards academic achievement (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). According to Trusty (2002), when comparing African-American boys to African-American girls, research indicates that boys possess lower academic values and achievement goals than girls. In many cases, these comparisons are made of boys and girls living in the same house or those of the same family, living in the same neighborhoods, or attending the same schools (Trusty, 2002). These African-American boys' attitudes about their academic achievement is not good; as their expectations are low and coupled with low self-esteem, their academic performance, explains Trusty (2002) is far below school standards. Trusty's (2002) study asserts that these attitudes and low expectations are indicated by the achievement gap that exists between African-American males, their white counterparts, and African-American female who continue to outperform these young men. Their goals for future academic attainment are low or non-existent (Trusty, 2002).

High parental expectations for their child's educational attainment could lead to parental involvement in their child's education. Children's educational attainment will be based, in large part, on their own self-images. High expectations will help parents build their child's self-image up. Researchers have found a very strong relationship between how a child sees himself in reference to his peers and his academic performance (Trusty, 2002). African-American children may develop a low self-image early in life, perhaps even before kindergarten, and in many cases they perceive themselves lower than their peers of other ethnicities. This low self-image will affect their academic attainment (Kuykendall, 2004).

According to Holland (1996) there is a strong relationship between African-Americans' beliefs related to education of their children and their children's academic achievement. What parents believe should count. When African-American parents believe their children are equipped and capable of achieving academically and relate those beliefs to their children, their self-image increased, they were highly motivated, and they put more effort into their studies. Increased motivation and effort will produce academic success. With this success, the African-American child's self-image will increase and the child will continue to push himself and become a believer in his own ability (Trusty, 2002).

Economical affects. Researchers are now focusing on the value of the African-American man concerning economic stability in the African-American family (Polite & Davis, 1999). There are now questions about the African-American men's ability to contribute to the family as a father or role model. In addition, there are questions about the African-American man's ability to contribute to the family as an economic resource. Questions about the African-American man's value to the African-American family are beginning to increase. One of the more prominent questions is: how much of an impact did slavery have on the African-American man's ability to cope with the pressure of being head of a household and the primary breadwinner for the African-American family? Family relationships were often disrupted by the selling and killing of the most assertive, brightest, and smartest African-American men, who were considered a threat to the stability of the plantation. As an enslaved people, the men were often rendered powerless while watching the mistreatment of their families. How functional had the African-American family been and for how long during these trying years of oppression? Was the African-American man ever considered the head of a household or primary bread winner (Polite & Davis, 1999)?

Polite and Davis, (1999) also noted that in the last two decades researchers have begun to focus more on economic and social issues in the family, with the African-American family being the primary focus. The unemployment rate, economic opportunities, motivation, educational attainment, and institutional racism; and their impact on the mindset and behaviors of African-American men were of particular interest. Many of these things have contributed to the instability and ineffectiveness of African-American men and their ability to provide a solid economic base for their families. This inability to provide for their families has been detrimental to the establishment of a relationship between the African-American man, his wife, and his family. The inability to maintain a lasting relationship contributes to the increase in single mothers leading households (Polite & Davis, 1999).

Hare (1979) suggested that the impact of teen pregnancy on the African-American family has been tremendous. Teen pregnancy is highest among lower socio-economic groups, in this case African-American youth. When the father figure is absent from the home, young African-American girls may compensate for this lost relationship by developing a relationship, mostly negative, with other men in the community. Often, the families these young ladies create must rely on governmental assistance instead of the children's father in providing for their families. The resulting family is again growing up without a father and the cycle continues. No economic base is formed in either case. The result is children growing up without a father and living in poverty. The young men that grow up in these families will again be susceptible to very negative outcomes as adults (Horton & Horton, 2001).

Education could be the key to a brighter economic future for African-American men, as it would allow them to overcome many of the formidable challenges they face. However, in order to take advantage of educational opportunities, they need commitment of all American citizens

(Harris & Taylor, 2012). The first step in increasing African-American males' participation in higher education is an effort to increase their high school graduation rate (Kafele, 2009).

After the Civil Rights movement of the 60s, economic opportunities for African-American men increased, as they finally had the chance to obtain white-collar jobs and enroll in educational programs (Kaba, 2010). Many of these job opportunities and educational programs, according to Kaba, that were closed before the Civil Rights movements, were suddenly open to African-American men. However, the difference in earning between African-American men and White men continues to be an issue (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). A study by Kaba (2010) indicated that African-American men applying for entry-level positions had a lower probability of being called back for an interview than White men with a criminal history.

How do the economic conditions of the average African-American man affect his relationships with his family? Unemployment rates among African-American men have always been high and have not declined substantially despite the increased economic and educational opportunities (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). In fact, even with increased economic and educational opportunities, there is no guarantee of equal treatment (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996). Among men with college degrees, this disparity is particularly significant, as one in nine African-American men are without work, compared to one in twenty-nine White men (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

While we cannot erase the facts of 200 years of enslavement or 100 years of legalized discrimination, we can do what we can to minimize the impact of these issues in the African-American communities. Thus, we must continue to look for solutions and give our recommendations. This was the main motivation behind the present study.

Parental influence and involvement. According to Harris and Taylor (2012), the most important thing parents could do to improve their children's chances for academic success is to help their children know and understand the norms and values of school and society at an early age. Parents are very important and must be involved early in the lives of their children in order to teach them the important life skills they must have to be successful in school and society. Before they enter school or society as an active participant, young students and citizens must know what is expected of them in order to be successful. Parents must know that knowledge and understanding of these expectations will increase their children's chances for high academic achievement and success in society.

Parents must be aware of their influence on the lives of their children in the early pre-kindergarten years. The home environment could be the first step toward positive child development. It is important that children know and understand that they can receive encouragement, love, and support, and learn important life skills that are useful academically and socially in their home environment (Paschall, Ringwalt, & Flewelling, 2003). Parents, especially single parents and parents of African-American males, must enlist the aid of community members, churches, and school personnel as early as possible to ensure that children will have meaningful experiences before their transition into the school environment. These early meaningful experiences may increase their chances for success in the educational process and in life (Harris & Taylor, 2012).

Early positive parental involvement will help many of these children, especially African-American males; avoid negative outcomes as they grow. It is imperative that parents know, understand, and embrace these norms and values in order to demonstrate and teach their children properly. If they have struggled or are struggling with their own understanding, then parents

must seek or enlist the support of school officials, significant mentors, community members, churches, and civic groups in order to know and understand their roles as parents related to early childhood development (Kafele, 2009).

Parents must be proactive in teaching their children, especially African-American males, the accepted behaviors and attitudes of school and society. If a parent is not proactive the child will learn behaviors from other sources, possibly negative and unproductive ones. These other sources could be the Internet, TV shows, video games, or many other negative media outlets. Children could develop a very negative outlook on life and carry this bad attitude into their academic careers. The African-American male is at risk, more than any other ethnic group, of becoming unemployed, dropping out of high school, and being incarcerated. Early proactive parental involvement could help these young men avoid such negative outcomes and become successful students and later become gainfully employed (Thompson, 2010).

Researchers argued that parental involvement early and continuously through-out the educational process will further increase children's, especially African-American males', chances of avoiding many of the negative consequences associated with school and life (Harris & Taylor, 2012). Educators must make the effort to welcome parents into the school and help them understand how important their involvement is for the success of their children. Educational staff must help parents overcome many of the barriers that will keep them from participating in their child's academic careers. School personnel may be required to make some changes to increase parental involvement, as research has indicated that parental involvement from early on in the students' academic programs is very important for high academic attainment (Kafele, 2009).

Lack of male role models. As we look at the landscape of American communities we find more and more children growing up in single-parent homes. Too much time has been wasted talking about the problem of fatherless homes; mothers want concrete solution and answers now while they are in the process of raising their sons. How can these mothers raise positive, productive, well-adjusted young men (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996)? Fatherless families are increasing at an alarming rate. Research has indicated that children in these fatherless homes, especially sons, are more likely to drop out of high school and become unemployed (Polite & Davis, 1999). The poverty rate for African-American children in female-headed single parent homes is almost 70%. Homes led by African-American females under the age of 25, the poverty rate increases to around 90% (National Urban League, 2000).

In American society, we have continued to underestimate the role of the father in the home especially in the homes of African-American families (Dortch & The 100 Black Men of America, 2000). Without a father or positive male role model, these young men will miss out on learning the role of a man. Their lack of a positive productive role model may hinder their ability to understand what being head of a household means and why being a good father to their sons is so important and necessary. They may suffer emotionally as adults and have difficulty forming relationships and the number of out of wedlock births will continue to rise. Research has indicated that fatherless children are more likely to suffer emotionally, financially, and academically (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996).

According to the Children's Defense Fund (2009), two of the biggest indicators for first time incarceration are race and poverty. In Arkansas thirty-three percent of African-American males will be incarcerated in state or federal prison compared to 17% of Hispanics males and 6% of White males (Arkansas Department of Correction, 2014). Poverty is prevalent in the African-

American community especially in the single-parent female-led households more so than any other ethnic community. Female led single-parent homes make up the largest percentage of children living in poverty (Thompson, 2010).

The studies of Harris and Taylor (2012) suggest that these fatherless African-American boys may not understand what constitutes normal behavior for a young man, role model, or father and may begin to act out in ways that are unacceptable at an early age. If not given proper guidance, according to Harris and Taylor, they will seek and find role models for themselves. The sad fact is that many of these role models will be negative and unproductive men in the community with a recipe for fast money and their own version of being a man (Harris & Taylor, 2012). These role models could be young men that have not finished high school, are unemployed, or are men headed down a path of destruction. Many incarcerated men are men that grew up in single-parent female-led homes and misunderstood aggression for normal masculine behavior (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996).

Community Influence

Village concept of raising community children. Thompson (2010) stated that this country must realize that any challenge faced by any group, is a challenge for all citizens. Citizens of this country must get back to the “village concept” (African proverb) of raising children. All members of the community must be involved in raising community children if there is going to be any success in closing the achievement gap, raising the graduation rate, decreasing poverty, and decreasing crime rates. This is a problem for all citizens, not just the African-American community, Hispanic community, or the poor community. All members of this country must understand the challenge of graduating Americans from high school is one all citizens must face and deal with together. Helping young people become productive members of

a community is a critical challenge for the whole country, as the whole country will benefit if these young African-American men graduate from high school and become productive members of society.

Conversely, all member of this country will suffer the consequences of the unproductive life-styles these young high school dropouts will lead (Polite & Davis, 1999). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), the level of education a person obtains will in large part determine his future. People living in poverty are responsible for many of the social challenges this nation faces. Statistics show that people who do not finish high school are two times more likely to live at or below the poverty line than a person who finished high school. Statistics further indicate that the same person that did not finish high school is six times more likely to live in poverty than a person who graduated from college (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

Thompson (2010) asked the question, “What can this society do to help these young African-American men achieve?” For these young men to become positive productive members of society there must be some positive productive influences in their lives. Positive male role models can be a positive influence at many different levels of the community. Morrison argued that the home, the school, the church, and different civic organizations could all provide, at some level, positive influences for young African-American males. Just as parents are asked to be proactive for their children, many community organizations and schools should be proactive in setting up programs to help these single mothers with their children, especially African-American boys, who are at risk more than any other ethnic group. These community groups can be instrumental in providing positive influences for these young men and teaching them how to handle school and life.

The African-American male will have a better chance of becoming a positive productive male role model if he is exposed to other positive productive male role models. These positive male role models can teach boys how to overcome barriers and succeed in school, in life, and as fathers. In addition, they can provide their sons and grandsons with positive male role models. Exposing African-American males to positive role models could create a positive, productive cycle that will benefit society as a whole (Dortch & The 100 African-American Men of America, 2000). The factors contributing to the success of African-American males could involve family, community, and educational environmental influences.

African-American role models. According to Morrison (2002), the job of mentoring and being a role model for young African-American boys, and all boys for that matter, was the responsibility of the father for centuries. In the 21st century, however, single motherhood is increasing at an alarming rate. Single mothers are looking for answers and reaching out for help that will enable them to raise their young sons to be assets to society. These single mothers are finding it very difficult to overcome some of the societal barriers that have been placed in front of them. While it is not impossible for these young single African-American mothers to raise their sons to be good citizens on their own, the help of a positive well-adjusted African-American male role model could make a big difference. These male role models could help and increase these mothers' chances for success. African-American men could help with some unique challenges that only African-American men in the United States have faced.

Research has indicated that children, especially "at-risk" African-American boys, in the absence of a father, need and will look for someone to identify with so they can develop their own self-image (Harris & Taylor, 2012). Parents, older siblings, uncles, grandparents, men in the neighborhoods, teachers, coaches, celebrities, athletes, and music artist are all potential role

models for these young men. This quest for knowledge is what drives the human spirit; it is called survival. Young human beings are trying to find out who they are and how they fit into the world around them. These bright, intelligent African-American young men are going to discover their world with or without guidance (Kafele, 2009). That why it is important to help these young men become what America wants and need them to be. It is never a good idea to leave a baby on his own while he discovers and learns what is going on around him. Without proper guidance, the babies will discover a wide variety of things, good and bad. In a like manner these young African-American males should not have to learn how to discern good and bad without proper guidance.

In the case of the absent father, single parents must seek other options with the understanding that African-American male role models and mentors may not be available in their communities. However, parents should not give up because there may be good male role models of other ethnicities in the community, at church, or at school. There are certainly good books and classes on the topic to help guide and instruct single parents on raising young men without fathers. The bottom line is that children especially African-American boys, need the guidance and support of families, friends, and community members to become successful adults (Harris & Taylor, 2012).

Influence of Educational Environment

Low academic achievement. According to Holland (1996) there is not a lot of data to support the school experience of African-American males alone, except the test scores that have become so familiar. However, the small amount of data that we have supports the disproportionate rate of adolescent African-American male's failure, assignment to special education, suspension, expulsion, low academic achievement, and the achievement gap that

exists between African-American boys and their White counterparts in Arkansas (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). In Arkansas African-American boys continue to be the most at risk for many of the less desirable outcomes for students (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014; Arkansas Department of Correction, 2014). Because these young men are often placed in positions of expected failure, they often become victims of their own low self-esteem and will not achieve at the level they are capable of (Polite & Davis, 1999).

Because of the pressures placed on poor African-American families, the adolescent males in these families are more prone to acting out against authority. Schools, in many cases, are not equipped to handle these behaviors. Research has shown that these kinds of problems can be handled with the help of male role models (Kaba, 2010). These young men need all the help they can get (Harris & Taylor, 2012). Educators must seek to help these young men by increasing parental involvement and teacher preparation, and placing male role models in schools to prevent these young men from participating in the negative behaviors they are very familiar with and have been exposed to in their community environment. Male role models will help and become positive influences for these young African-American males (Dortch & The 100 African-American Men of America, 2000).

Parental involvement. According to Kaba (2010), historically education has always been important to African-American people and an important part of their community lives. However, most people in America do not believe there are many African-American families that care about their children's education. History indicates that education was important to Africans many years before they arrived in the United States (DuBois, 1907). Enslaved and free African-Americans were desperate to learn how to read and write English from the moment they arrived in the United States. The United States government, however, allowed laws to be created and

instituted that forbade literacy in African-American communities (Bennett, 1962). These laws made literacy for these early African-Americans very tough but not impossible. These enslaved African-American people did not allow these newly created laws to diminish their value in education and continued to push their literacy efforts forward in spite of the strong opposition by racist Whites (Bennett, 1962). According to DuBois (1910), by the turn of the 20th century nearly 4,000 African-Americans had earned college degrees and 70% of all African-Americans could read and write on some level. African-Americans continue to fight for equal educational opportunities for their children to this day.

According to Thompson (2010), misunderstanding by both educators and parents of African-American students continues to be a tremendous stumbling block that both sides must cross. African-American parents often believe that educators do not care about their children's academic progress and are quick to place their African-American children in special education classes to keep them from interfering or disrupting with the "normal" academic progress of other students. Educators do not believe African-American parents care enough about their child's education and are often not involved in their education (Kuykendall, 2004).

Educators and parents must come together and bridge the communication gap that exists. Studies have shown that parental involvement makes a big difference in academic performance of students (Henderson, 1987). Parental involvement could go a long way in decreasing the achievement gap and increasing African-American educational attainment (Hunter & Bartee, 2003). Educators must put the effort into reaching these parents and getting them involved in their child's education to enhance and increase students' performances.

African-American parents must understand that parental involvement should go beyond parent-teacher conferences to have an impact (Darling, 2008). In order to make a difference,

parents must become a part of the academic landscape by volunteering for different jobs around the school, visiting classrooms to check on their child's classroom participation and behavior, helping with field trips occasionally, and participating in ways to place themselves on the school's campus (Henderson, 1987). Educators must continue to ensure that parents are welcome on campuses by toning down the educational jargon to ensure that parents are not made uncomfortable and can understand what is expected of them and their child for future success in school. Educators can no longer afford to exclude parents from the educational process and parents can no longer miss opportunities to help their child succeed (Henderson, 1987). By inviting African-American parents on to campuses and into classrooms the goal of closing the achievement gap will be easier to achieve.

Teacher influence. Foster (1993), noted that one of the most important requirements to enter and be successful in the 21st century workplace is a high school diploma. Families, communities, and schools must all participate in keeping and moving students down the path to graduation. There must be some changes made in how students are engaged, motivated, prepared, and supported as they move toward graduation. Twenty-five percent of all students fail to graduate on time and almost 40% of African-Americans fail to meet graduation requirements with their peers. Research has also shown that 80% of students that fall behind in middle and junior high school will leave school without a high school diploma (Thompson, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Research has indicated that leaving high school with a diploma is no guarantee of a successful and productive life (Trusty, 2002). However, a high school graduate is more likely to avoid unemployment, poverty, and possible incarceration. High school dropouts have cost the nation millions, billions, and even trillions of dollars in social service expenditures because they

are highly susceptible to a low socio-economic life-style which can lead to crime. These students lose their beliefs that they can be successful academically, and, as a result, they lose their interest in school and just quit. Many of these students who have lost interest in school use their intelligence and acquired skills for a negative and unproductive life style and end up on the wrong side of the criminal justice system (Polite & Davis, 1999).

Students that live in single-parent homes, research has indicated, are at the most risk of dropping out of school. African-American males have the highest risk factor of any other ethnic group because they are, more often than not, living with only their mothers. Research also indicates that children who live with their same-sex parent are more successful. These African-American young men are at a higher risk than any other group of becoming drop outs and living in poverty (Kuykendall, 2004). They are living in poverty, exposed to crime, and face negative role models in their neighborhoods each day. History indicates that there are some African-American men that have made it out of their low-socioeconomic neighborhoods but many African-American men have not. Historians have speculated that there are some residual effects of 200 years of enslavement and 100 years of legal decimation along with present day institutionalized racism that continue to affect the mentality of many these African-American males. As a result, they lose the belief that they can be successful (Neblett, Chavous, Nguyen, & Sellers, 2009).

Educators must look at making some big changes across the landscape of the educational arena in order to help these students succeed. Educators must realize it does not make any difference if students are pushed out, dropped out, or are emotionally spent and stop trying. The bottom line is the same: 25% of all students do not graduate and 40% of African-American students do not graduate. As educators make changes, teachers must become the main focus of

the discussion for increasing the graduation rate. These teachers must endeavor to possess the skills that will motivate, engage, and move students toward graduation and academic success (Polite & Davis, 1999).

There is a high correlation between teacher effectiveness and teacher-student relationships (Hooks & Miskovic, 2011). By forming an alliance with students, teachers are more likely to have success and move their students toward graduation. To move these students toward success in the classroom, teachers must be aware of who their students are and where their students come from. A good teacher-student relationship starts with an awareness and understanding by the teacher of their student's background (Hooks & Miskovic, 2011). The student's background would consist of, but not be limited to, home environment, neighborhoods, activities, language, and learning styles. These teachers build relationship with their students while motivating and accepting the responsibility for their success or failures (Sherwin & Schmidt, 2003).

Effective teachers of African-American students develop a good understanding of their students' cultures, which enables them to determine more effective ways to motivate, engage, and keep these students on the path to success (Foster, 1993; Foster, 1997). These teachers believe that all students can learn and be successful in the classroom in their pursuit of gaining the requirements for high school graduation. These teachers also believe that the student's effort is the biggest contributing factor that will determines his success. They search continuously for new ideas because they believe that it is very important for all students to see and understand the connection between the school curriculum and their out-of-school experiences and interest (Foster, 1993; Foster, 1997).

Scott (2013), one of the Freedom Writers, discussed the essence of culture. African-American students grow up in homes with values that are different from other cultures and different from other African-American families. These different cultures must co-exist in the same school and neighborhood. Teachers need to have open minds in order to have good relationships with students. For example, if a student values rap music and a rap artist is his hero and the teacher does not like it, the teacher should keep that information to himself and not allow the student to know it. Teachers must understand the essence of culture. According to Scott (2013), teachers must seek to understand and develop an ability to see relationships in activities and core principles that will bring to light a cohesive unity of an individual and a community.

Summary of Review of Literature

African-American males are an endangered species. A good education can help create a brighter outcome for many of these young men. But how can their young mothers, single mothers, and mothers without the help of their sons' fathers, help these African-American boys become men? Fathers have traditionally filled the role of mentor and role model, but in the last five decades fathers have disappeared or become unable, unwilling, if not all together unfit to fill the role of father.

The endangerment of these African-American males is a big problem for American society at-large. Americans must realize that providing help for these young men is critical for this country, because many of these young African-American men will become high school drop-outs, unemployed, and fathers of children that they cannot or will not support. Helping these young African-American men become educated, productive, law-abiding mentors and role models for their sons will benefit all of America. America needs to make help for young African-American mothers, single mothers in many cases, obvious and forthcoming. Mentoring

programs, big brother programs, and community role models are all things that will help.

However, American citizens must put forth the effort to help these adolescent African-American boys make sense of the world around them and find their place in it by finding out who they are.

Most Americans understand that the foundation of positive development is the loving support and guidance from the family, the school, and the community. The question of this study is: what happens when loving support and guidance of a father is not there?

Throughout this extensive literature review, many ideas and opinions are given about young African-American males. No one, however, have incorporated the ideas and opinions of these young African-American males. The researcher believes that these young men will have a very strong opinion about their needs as adolescents African-American males. The young African-American males could be the key to finding and eliminating contributing factors that prevent them from fulfilling their potential. Talking to young African-American men may be the key to helping them graduate and find a brighter economic future.

Through the research it was found that there must be open and honest communication between families, schools, and communities. This communication must include these young men which may enable many people the opportunity to help and understand what their needs are. Male role models for these young men may not be the whole answer, but through open and honest communication, the answers to affect change in their lives may be found.

Next, Chapter Three will discuss the methodology that will be used in obtaining some very useful data about African-American males.

Chapter Three

Research Design

Organization of Chapter Three

Chapter Three begins with an introduction, a focus of the study, and the research question is presented. The research design and timeline with a table is presented next and then followed by site and sample selection with a description of participants. The data collection that includes a table of interview questions, observations, and document collections are listed. Following the data collection, the researcher's role management, managing, and recording data follow. Persistent and prolonged engagement demonstrates trustworthiness and credibility. As a qualitative researcher triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and audit trail are also included for validity and credibility. Finally, the evidentiary inadequacies and the summary end Chapter Three.

Introduction

According to the data, African-American males in Arkansas are an at-risk population (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). A continuous cycle of low academic achievement, low academic attainment, high unemployment rate, and high incarceration rates threaten to end the lives of many of these young men one way or another (Kuykendall, 2004). There are many contributing factors that may be responsible for the underachievement of the African-American male such as high divorce rates, single-parent homes, absentee fathers, poverty, low-income neighborhoods, negative role models, or teen pregnancy. However, the absence of male role models in the community, school, and home could be the most harmful contributing factor (Polite & Davis, 1999).

Educators understand that the educational community alone cannot control many of the aforementioned contributing factors. A study by Kaba (2010) has shown that these kinds of problems can be handled with the help of male role models. These young men need the help of a caring community that may be able to provide role models or mentors (Harris & Taylor, 2012). Educators must seek to help these young men by increasing parental involvement and teacher preparation, and placing male role models in schools to prevent negative behaviors in their community and school environment. Male role models may help and become positive influences for these young African-American males (Dortch & The 100 African-American Men of America, 2000). An African-American male role model would be instrumental in helping these young men overcome obstacles that are unique to African-American men in the United States (Lewis, 2013). However, any caring adult could help these young men find hope (Scott, 2013).

Focus of the Study

In the case of the adolescent African-American male, around their middle-level school years, they come to their own conclusions about the world they live in, how they fit in, and who they believe they will become (Tatum, 2005). These adolescent African-American males can have unhealthy or negative relationships with the world around them which will include negative peer pressure, drug infested neighborhoods, drug use, and no church or community input or influences. These unhealthy relationships will help them form very negative and unhealthy conclusion about the world and how they fit in. They will often find themselves in trouble in school, on the wrong side of the criminal justice system, and will possibly drop out or be pushed out of school for behavioral problems and fail to graduate (Trusty, 2002).

Many people in this country have grossly underestimated the value of a role model or mentor in the life of a child (Harris & Taylor, 2012). One of the reasons that many of these

African-American boys are in trouble is that they come from situations that they perceive to be insurmountable and impossible to overcome. Low school achievement, very low educational attainment, early exit from the public school system, unemployment, and trouble with the law are the kinds of things that these young men have become accustomed to and believe is the way life is (Polite & Davis, 1999).

A positive African-American male role model may provide young men with a very powerful example of life outside of the walls they have become accustomed to (Cephas, 2012). Once this example is set before them, they might understand the world in a different way. They may also be able to envision themselves away from their negative environments and work to become a productive citizen and a positive role model for someone else (Cephas, 2012).

Research Question

What are the perceived effects of mentoring by an adult African-American male on the likelihood that a young African American male would graduate from high school? According to Holland (1996), we must seek to understand the problem of African-American males' failure in the home, in the school, and in the community. This study seeks answers to this very important question. Many of these African-American men are lost in a cycle of underachievement for one reason or another (Holland, 1996). There are ways to give these men hope and we must seek to ensure that they are provided a brighter future. We, as a society, must not leave any stones unturned in the quest for helping young African-American men achieve their full potential. We must continue to search for ways to break this cycle of underachievement and failure many of these African-American men experience. Mentoring programs could be the answer (Cephas, 2012).

Research Design

According to Creswell (2007), a qualitative study is the best approach when trying to develop an understanding of a fact or situation that has been observed the cause or explanation of which is in question. The researcher is trying to build a case with concrete data (Wertz, 2005). The researcher gathers the facts based on the true experiences of people through questioning techniques or an interview process. Patton (1990) argued that there are four types of interviews to be considered: (1) the informal discussion, (2) the controlled interview, (3) the open-ended question interview, and (4) the very structured fixed answer approach. The validity of study through triangulation was explained through methodology.

This qualitative study will employ the semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument. All participants will be asked questions in a conversational manner and the answers will reflect their experiences. This approach will facilitate gathering and organizing the raw data, and will assist in the subsequent analysis.

The challenge of finding the right data that may stop the cycle of underachieving adolescent African-American males is a five-step process: (1) the problem was researched; (2) the population was explored for an appropriate sample; (3) participants were contacted for their consent; (4) the interview question were asked and observations were made and data collected; and (5) the data was explored for relationships and coded.

Site and sample selection. African-American males are not graduating at the same rate as their peers which may be due to lack of a positive role model to influence and motivate them toward higher achievement. The researcher focused on African-American males that attended a low-socioeconomic northern Arkansas high school. According to the Arkansas Department of Education (2014), at present, 41% of the student population is Hispanic, with 27% Caucasians,

and 18% African-Americans. There are currently 140 African-American male students, which is equivalent to 8% of the student body's population. This high school in northern Arkansas had a 78% graduation rate for African-American male students over a three year period (10th, 11th, and 12th grade) (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014).

The participants are no longer attending the high school. They may or may not have graduated. The study included an identified group of surveyed participants, observation data from observing the participant and the surrounding environment, artifact collection, and collecting results by data analysis. Therefore, the researcher sought to discover what driving forces could reach African-American males and motivate them to higher academic achievement, higher academic attainment, and a secure economic future.

Participants. The researcher will be looking for ways to help African-American males and therefore, sought input from African-American males. The demographics of this group of African- American males required four things: (1) location, (2) age, and (3) educational attainment. The interview questions provided additional information about the people involved in the study, who are young men between the ages of 18 to 24 that at one time attended the school in question. This group will include both successful young men and those that did not finish high school, were incarcerated, or spent time in the detention center.

As a part of this study, the researcher will interview nine African-American males. The interviews will begin after the Institutional Review Board's approval (IRB). More specifically, three participants will be successful high school graduates, three will be high school dropouts, and the remaining three will be young men who have spent time in jail or are presently incarcerated. The researcher will identify these individuals by talking to parents and pastors, as they are likely to know some of these young African-American males. The researcher should

have no trouble finding participants because he is a pastor in the community that he was born and raised in. Speaking to the Sheriff and detention facility officials in order to gain access into the detention facility and lives of the inmates will be an important part of the process. The inmates will be interviewed on the site of the detention center, to ensure that they are comfortable with the process and can talk freely. These onsite visits will add to the credibility and validity of the study.

Depth versus Breadth

According to Patton (2002), depth is the process of creating a guided study that will increase the possibility of obtaining the data needed to answer the research question. This study is important because it will be used for information that may help educators and community leaders better understand the contributing factors to the underachievement of adolescent African-American males. According to Patton (2002), when selected studies do not bring clarity, then a qualitative study is the best means to obtain the needed information. As the interview with each participant is completed, the data yielded will be utilized in the subsequent data collection process, in order to increase clarity. Their participation during the interviewing process will enhance and give validity to the study.

The interview process will give the researcher an opportunity to look deeply into the lives of participants and make discoveries that will enhance the study of underachieving African-American males. The participant's experiences will clarify any misunderstanding and give them opportunities for relating those experiences to other African-American males in need of help through this interview and data collection process. The researcher first attempted to build rapport with each participant and create an atmosphere that should enhance the study by allowing the participant the opportunity to participate freely with no

constraints. The goal is to increase the comfort level of each participant which should allow the participant to give information in great detail and create a study that would help other African-American male.

In order to give the study credibility, the researcher must ensure that his opinions and twenty years of teaching and pastoring experience do not affect this process. Thus, he will make every effort to allow the responses to the interview questions to speak only on behalf of the individuals that have provided them. This is an obvious challenge for the data collection process and the researcher; however, it will not be the first time that the researcher will be suspending his preconceived notions when conducting interviews. During marriage counseling, the researcher have learned that the process is much more effective if he allow couples to work out their problems while he listen without contributing his views and experiences.

Data Collection

Interviews. The goal of the interview will be to establish that there are some contributing factors that could turn out to be common to all participants. In addition, the interviews may help determine if one contributing factor is more prominent than the others. These interviews could help researchers, educators, and community leaders better understand what Scott (2013) suggested about reaching young people that are working beneath their potential and labeled unreachable.

The interview will enable the researcher to collect data with a great deal of detail. In addition, the interview process will enable the researcher to make some profound discoveries about African-American males in relation to role models positively influencing academic environment. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) argued that, when approached properly the interview gives the interviewer the ability to get needed information from the participant. The interview

process is one of many ways to help the participant focus on past experiences and knowledge gained during their involvement in a particular phenomenon (Wertz, 2005).

Participants will be hand delivered or mailed participant letters by the researcher. A deadline of a week and half will be given to return responses. The researcher will record the interviews using a digital recorder. A few questions, provided in Table 3.1, will be asked and other questions generated through probing based on participants' responses. Dragon Speaking software provided transfer of recording to print. Member checks (having participants to review responses in the presence of researcher) will provide clarification of participants' responses to clarify any questionable responses and correct misinterpretation (Creswell, 2007).

Table 3.1

Interview Questions for Participants

- 1) 1) Tell me about your experience in school growing up.
 - a. Describe what your teachers were like and how you related to them.
 - b. Tell me about what life was like growing up in your household.
 - c. Describe what family members were most influential on your development.
 - d. Describe the sort of resources and economic support your parents or guardians were able to provide to you as a child.
 - e. Describe what kind of economic hardship you had to endure as a child.
 - 2) Describe how an influential person impacted you in your school age years.
 - a. What sort of attributes did you look for in a role model?
 - b. Describe how your influential person was present in your life.
 - c. Describe how they were a constant in your life and how this impacted you.
 - d. Describe the kind of work your influential person did in order to make a living.
 - e. How did this impact you as a child?
 - f. Describe how your role model impacted your academic life.
 - 3) Describe the different types of organizations or activities you participated in while in school.
 - a. How did these change over time, and if they did change, why did they change?
 - 4) Tell me anything else that you want me to know about your experience.
-

Observation. Field notes will be used during the interview process to collect the data yielded by observing the participants and surroundings during the interviews. Interviews will take place where participants requested (i.e., jail cell, home, etc.). The researcher observed body language, participants' appearances, speech patterns, and environment (if in jail or home locations). Body language included talking with hands, head movement, direct eye contact, or needing to stand and move. Participants' appearances will be observed for pride in personal grooming, pants sagging, and so on. Careful attention to speech patterns will take place. This will include whether participant speak professionally and/or used "street language" or profanity. If the participant request for the interview to take place in the home, the researcher will observe the home life (number of cars, whether living with a parent, economic status, etc.). Comfort of the participant in regards to distance to researcher will also be noted. Observational data will be stored in a confidential folder and locked in a file cabinet only accessible to the researcher.

Document collection. The researcher will take photographs of all collected documents, which will be stored on a flash drive and locked in the researcher's file cabinet. The data for this study will be collected during the interviews with nine male participants. Prior to commencing the interviews, the researcher will request from each participant the grades (physical evidence), report cards or transcripts, as well as proof of graduating from high school, and birth certificate or driver license for proof of age. These participants will also be asked to provide trophies or award collected during their high school experience.

The data collected during the interviews will be analyzed for emerging themes that may help identify factors that contributed to the achievement or underachievement of these African-American males. The researcher thus expects to gain an understanding of how a role model or

mentor affected the lives of study participants and the point or age in their lives that the role model or a person or influence had the most impact on their development.

Using audio recording devices during the interview process will decrease the chances for lost data and increased the accuracy of data obtained. The researcher will take observational of field notes in a nonthreatening way during the process. Patton (1990) stated that using as many different methods as possible to collect data increases the credibility of the data sought. Using a voice recorder and taking notes farther decrease the opportunity for lost data gave the researcher opportunity to focus on something other than exact quotes. The researcher will focus on things such as emotion, feeling, points of emphasis during the interview, body language, and tone of voice as data is collected.

Data analysis. According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), the process of generating theory from data is referred to as “grounded theory.” This process yields general principles that arise from specific observations, interviews, or documentation that was obtained during the data collection stage of a qualitative study. The “grounded theory” approach will be employed in the data analysis conducted as a part of this qualitative study. Grounded theory states clearly something that may have been implied during the interview, observation, or document gathering stage. This is a systematic process that, when carefully performed, is believed by Strauss and Corbin to yield a good theory as a result.

Axial coding will be employed during the data analysis. In line with the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (2008), the first step that will be employed in this study is “open coding.” Open coding, according to Strauss and Corbin, begins with the data collection. This data is subsequently analyzed by creating large tentative segments based on what the

researcher observes in the collected data. Finally, the researcher can begin to interpret the meaning of the collected data.

Axial coding is the second step in the coding process, whereby more specific codes are created from the open coding process. The importance of this part of the process lies in its ability to reveal emergent themes from the subcategories that were taken from the open coding process. Relationships within the categories that were created from open coding should now be apparent (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This grounded theory process will give the interviewees a voice that speaks with clarity.

Researcher's Role Management

The responsibility of collecting, managing, and analyzing data belongs to the researcher. Bryant (2004) argued that, during the data collection process, the researcher must maintain an open mind and not show partiality one way or another. The researcher must allow the data to speak for itself and not try to influence the outcome for the sake of proving his/her point (Creswell, 2007). In line with these recommendations, the researcher will remove himself from the process while collecting data and not allow his opinions or experiences to interfere with the data collection. Removing himself from the process will be difficult, because of his work with families and young people in the African-American community. However, these interviews will not be the first time he has had to face this kind of challenge. The researcher's experience as pastor will increase his ability to ensure that his views and opinions do not affect the process and will give the collected data a chance to speak for itself.

According to university policies and the law all information deemed confidential must be kept confidential by the researcher. In order to maintain the system of moral principle in research

the opinion of the researcher must be kept out of the study. A copy of questions and responses and a completed transcript will be sent to each participant to ensure accuracy and validity.

It is understood that open-mindedness and confidentiality are an integral part of the study; however, while seeking information, the researcher must admit that the study will be approached with great anticipation for three reasons: (1) the researcher's personal experiences; (2) the researcher was looking forward to hearing about some of the experiences of the participants; and (3) the researcher feels great empathy for many of the African-American males who are underachieving.

Trustworthiness. According to Merriam (2009), the use of triangulation is also going to increase the credibility and validity of the study. Access to peer reviews was provided along with audit trails, peer debriefing, observation of transcripts, administering member checks, and multiple sources of data which all increase trustworthiness of collected data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The collection of data was carefully planned and the questions asked were based on the research question. The researcher is looking for factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the African-American male.

Prolonged engagement. The researcher has 19 years of experience in education as a classroom teacher. By spending sufficient time, 4 weeks, interviewing the participants, he was able to establish a relationship with participants. This relationship enabled the researcher to study and understand the participant to obtain needed information. According to Swartz (2002), prolonged engagement is an effective way to increase trustworthiness and credibility of study.

Persistent engagement. Allowing participants the opportunity to check and recheck the data increases the accuracy of data. The checking of data by participants will also address any inconsistencies, biases, or misinterpretation of collected data. The process of persistent

engagement will help establish concreteness in the data sought (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There was sufficient time spent with participant to ensure that data collected which included the participant's responses was accurate. At any time during the process, the participants will have an opportunity to withdraw from the study without incurring any penalties or suffering adverse consequences.

Triangulation. Triangulation includes interviews, observations, and document collection. Interviews will take place where the participants are comfortable, which will be noted. A voice recorder, personal notes, researcher observation, member checks, peer debriefing, and an audit trail were all a part of the data triangulation method. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), data triangulation is a method to compare collected data to ensure consistency. The researcher recorded and transcribed interviews and compared the transcribed notes with the personal notes taken during the interview process to ensure it all lined up with the observation. The researcher also sent letters to the prison superintendent seeking approval for the study. Consent forms for participant's interviews, the recording of interview notification, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) forms were all collected and documented.

Member checks. Feedback by participants is another important step in building validity and credibility in a study according to Creswell (2007). Member checks also increase accuracy of data collected during the interview process. Allowing participants the opportunity to take part in the collection process by looking over their interviews before the final draft will clarify anything that needs clarification and give members the opportunity to make needed corrections (Creswell, 2007).

Peer debriefing. According Lincoln and Guba (1985), the voice of a critical friend who is involved in the study, has experience, or has knowledge of the study will increase accuracy

and keep the researcher focused. Pastors, community leaders, principals, and teachers will be critical friends and a part of the process which will help the researcher stay focused.

Audit trail. To ensure the validity and accuracy of data obtained during the study the researcher maintained a password-protected internet account, an external hard drive, a password protected laptop, and a padlock-protected file cabinet locked with transcribed notes at the researcher's private home and place of employment (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data protected during the study were transcribed interviews, the recording device, personal notes, and observation notes made during study.

Evidentiary Inadequacies

Erickson (1986) argued that there are five evidentiary inadequacies that need to be addressed by the researcher in order to maintain a high degree of quality in his study. The first concern is inadequate amount of evidence. This problem of inadequate amount of evidence was dealt with by collaborating with faculty and staff of the University of Arkansas for six years and three years of intensive research into the achievement and underachievement of African-American males. In addition to collaboration and research there were four months of data collection through interviews and observations of African-American males.

The second concern according to Erickson, was inadequate types of data. This concern was considered and handled by personal interviews and observation to ensure that the collected data reflected what was seen and heard during data collection. Peer debriefing was performed by recent doctoral graduates, committee members, and other faculty members to ensure that the study was focused.

The third problem that Erickson, addressed was interpretive status of evidence of the data. Member checks allowed participants the opportunity to clarify any data that may have been

misinterpreted by the researcher. Member checks also increase accuracy of collected data.

Persistent engagement ensured that sufficient time was spent with participants that would address any inconsistencies or biases in collected data to be addressed.

The fourth concern addressed by Erickson, was inadequate discrepant case analysis evidence. I looked for and found African-American male participants with a variety of backgrounds. These participants were very diverse in their economic status, academic achievement, and academic attainment. Interviews and observations of African-American males with different backgrounds and at different location solidified adequate discrepant case analysis and gave depth to the qualitative study.

Finally, Erickson's fifth concern was inadequate disconfirming evidence. This concern was handled by allowing all participants the opportunity to check and recheck the collected data (persistent engagement). Not only did persistent engagement ensure accuracy, it was also a step to ensure that all collected data was handled carefully and taken seriously (Erickson, 1986).

Summary

The researcher's experience created the interest and method used in this study. There is an understanding in the educational community that there are many contributing factors to the low performance of the African-American male; however, which factor is the most meaningful is not always clear and not always agreed upon. There must be a way to help these young African-American men achieve more academically, which in turn leads to a brighter economic future.

By researching, observing, and analyzing the collected data, a critical contributing factor to the underachievement of the African-American male may be observed. All participants' answers and identities were held in strict confidence. They were also given the opportunity to revisit their responses before the final draft which increased credibility, validity, and accuracy.

A very meticulous data collection, documentation, observation, and analysis process will also help increased accuracy. This meticulous data analyzing process will create axial codes (common categories) that will be taken from open codes created by the researcher. The data will be compared and analyzed until no other categories can be created.

Chapter Four

Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine what factors are associated with African-American males who graduated from high school with a focus on how the presence or absence of a positive male role model influence the graduation rate. The design of this study included interviewing eight young African-American adult males between the ages of 18 and 24. These young men were interviewed in hopes of shedding some light on factors that contributed to their successful graduation from high school or their failure to graduate. In addition, the data collection process included recorded interviews, transcribed recording, and the examination of the interviews to create themes and sub-themes.

The interview process gave the researcher the opportunity to look deeply into the lives of eight participants and make discoveries that will identify the factors that contributed to their successful graduation from high school or their failure to graduate from high school. Through the data collection process the participant's voices were heard which clarified many things that the data presentation will show and gave these young men opportunities to relate their experiences to other young men, families, and schools. It was also the intent of the researcher to create an atmosphere that would enhance the data collection process by allowing the participants the freedom to speak their minds with no constraints. Another goal of this data collection process was to increase the understanding of the educational community by listening to the voices of these young African-American men as they spoke about their recent academic experiences.

Chapter 4 includes the presentation and analysis of the collected data in this qualitative study. The research question is: what are the perceived effects of mentoring by an adult African-American male on the likelihood that a young African American male would graduate from high school? This question was addressed throughout the data collection process. The six methods of trustworthiness as explained in Chapter 3 were employed to ensure the accuracy and the validity of the data. Chapter 4 starts with an introduction and includes description of the audience, transcribed interviews, the audit trail, axial codes, descriptive matrix, data analysis, and a summary.

Audience

The targeted audiences for this qualitative study are families of young African-American males, community leaders, educators, counselors, civic leaders and policy makers and anyone who can help these young men by mentoring or creating mentoring programs for them. This study will contribute information that can help young African-American by allowing their voices to be heard concerning their experiences in high school. Hearing their account of the experiences they had in high school can provide an opportunity to understand their perceptions. In addition, this qualitative study will help these young men improve their achievement, graduation rates, and contribute to the closing of the achievement gap.

Participants

Eight African-American males between the ages of 18 and 25 years old were included in this study. The education level of these young men ranged from high school drop-out to college graduate. The intent of the selection process was to create a diverse pool of participants to find a variety of factors that contributed to their successful graduation or their failure to graduate. The challenges they faced as adolescents and young African-American men would be an important

part of this qualitative study. Another goal of this study is to provide useful information to African-American males, families, educators, and community leaders that will help these communities understand these young African-American men and their challenges, especially as it relates to positive male role models and the graduation rates of these young men.

Increasing the performance of African-American males, closing the achievement gap, and decreasing the drop-out rate is a concern for all Americans and another goal of this qualitative study. What happens in the lives of young adolescent African-American males will help educators and all Americans better understand how to motivate and create success in the lives of these young men.

Member Checks

Feedback by participants is an important step in building validity and credibility in a study according to Creswell (2007). Member checks also increase accuracy of data collected during the interview process. Allowing participants the opportunity to take part in the collection process by looking over their interviews before the final draft will clarify anything that needs clarification and give members the opportunity to make needed corrections (Creswell, 2007).

Prior to submitting the responses to the interview question the participant had an opportunity to explore, clarify, validate, or change the responses to the interview question. The researcher visited each participant after the interview process was completed and received some changes. The subsequent data analysis created open codes that would later produce axial codes through the triangulation of the data.

Transcribed Interviews

This study included the transcription of eight recorded interviews. It was important to make each of these participants feel comfortable during their interviews so they would be willing

to share their personal thoughts and experiences while recalling their kindergarten through 12th grade experiences. These interviews took place in many different locations, wherever the participant felt they were free to share their thoughts and experiences. A detention center, libraries, grandparents' homes, and restaurants were some of the places the participants decided were best to talk freely. Table 4.1 gives an overview of participants' demographics and educational experiences.

Table 4.1

Noted Participants' Age and Educational Status When Interviewed

Participants	Age	Education
Participant #1 (P1)	20	General education development test (GED)
Participant #2 (P2)	20	High school diploma current college student
Participant #3 (P3)	24	High school diploma college graduate
Participant #4 (P4)	21	High school drop-out
Participant #5 (P5)	19	General education development test (GED)
Participant #6 (P6)	24	High school diploma
Participant #7 (P7)	20	High school diploma
Participant #8 (P8)	20	High school diploma

Note. The African-American male participants at the time of their interviews are noted with a P for participants. Their ages in years and educational levels are displayed. The General Education Test is taken in lieu of a high school diploma which has to be passed with a certain score.

Audit Trail Notation

This qualitative study consisted of recorded interviews, transcribed recording, field notes (observations), and signed consent forms with the promise of confidentiality for each participants. In addition, researcher's committee granted permission, and the collected data were analyzed and combined to produce themes and sub-themes.

This qualitative study included eight African-American males between the ages of 18 and 24 years. These African-American males were observed and interviewed individually at a place of their choosing. Audit trail notation allows the researcher to be true to his word about their confidentiality while giving the researcher the flexibility to keep track of participants throughout this study. As shown in Table 4.1 and 4.2, the identification of each participant was kept confidential by audit trail notation. The use of the letter P for participant and numbers (1, 2, 3...) in table 4.1 and 4.2 allowed the researcher to protect the identity of each participant. The number indicated the order in which they were interviewed. For example, P1 represents the first participant interviewed, P2 represents the second participant interviewed, followed by P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, and P8.

The second column in Table 4.2 indicates whether a biological father or a step-father was involved in their lives. The third column indicates whether the participants had trouble in school or with the law during their school age years. The fourth and final column in Table 4.2 denotes how they are doing as adults. The occupation of each of the participants is recorded in the fourth column of Table 4.2.

All participants were African-American males that were past high school and well into adult years. Observations and questions produced all demographic data seen in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2. The information collected in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 is an overview of the participants'

lives to the point of the interview. The data collection process began with the approval of the researcher's committees, IRB's approval, an approval letter from the Sebastian County Sheriff's office, and an approval and consent form signed by each participant.

Table 4.2

Participant's Adolescents and Adult Demographics

Participant	Father Involved in Childhood	Trouble in School	Occupation
P1	No	Yes	Felony conviction Prison
P2	Yes	No	College student
P3	Yes	No	Post Office full time employment
P4	No	Yes	Unemployed
P5	No	Yes	Unemployed felony conviction
P6	No	No	Factory Worker
P7	No	Yes	Unemployed
P8	No	Yes	Unemployed felony conviction

Data Analysis

According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), the process of generating theory from data is referred to as “grounded theory.” This process yields general principles that arise from specific observations, interviews, or documentation that was obtained during the data collection stage of a qualitative study. The grounded theory approach will be employed in the data analysis conducted as a part of this qualitative study. Grounded theory states clearly something that may have been implied during the interview, observation, or document gathering stage. This is a systematic process that, when carefully performed, is believed by Strauss and Corbin to yield a good theory as a result.

Axial coding was employed during the data analysis. In line with the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (2008), the first step that was employed in this study is open coding. Open coding, according to Strauss and Corbin, begins with data collection. These data were subsequently analyzed, which created large tentative segments based on what the researcher observed in the collected data. Finally, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the collected data.

Axial coding was the second step in the coding process, whereby more specific codes were created from the open coding process. The importance of this part of the process lies in its ability to reveal emergent themes from the subcategories that were taken from the open coding process. Relationships within the categories that were created from open coding were then apparent (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The grounded theory approach gave the interviewees a voice that spoke with clarity.

Presentation of Axial Codes

Axial coding is the second step in the coding process, whereby more specific codes were created from the open coding process. The importance of this part of the process lies in its ability to reveal emergent themes from the subcategories that were taken from the open coding process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After the open coding process seven themes emerged from the data. The seven major themes or axial codes that emerged from the data are: (1) parental relationships, (2) mentor or role model, (3) economic resources, (4) socialization, (5) school attendance, (6) extra-curricular activities, and (7) academic performance. Table 4.3 displays seven axial codes or themes at the top and open codes under each of the seven themes. The data were collected through interview and observation.

Table 4.3

Axial and Open Codes

Parental Relationships	Mentor or Role Model	Economic Resources	Socialization
Dad stayed involved	Make my mother proud	What we needed	Better at Grandmas
Parents were pastors	Father stayed involved	Child support	Learned to be by myself
Did not get along	Father influenced me	No problems	Very structured
Got married again	Father was not around	I called dad	We prayed
Mom took us away	Be like my Father	Government help	Did not have many problems

Table 4.3

Axial and Open Codes (continued)

School Attendance	Extra-Curricular Activities	Academic Performance
Junior high was better	Learned to use my anger	Teacher's influence
forced myself to go	Active in sports	Respect for teachers
I stayed in school	Participated	I graduated
Grandma was a teacher	Student counsel	I did enough
Grandma worked at school	Young brothers league	Made us read

Descriptive Matrix

Table 4.4 is a descriptive matrix. The descriptive matrix displays axial codes of the data that was collected from the African-American male participants. This conceptually clustered matrix represents data collected from the transcribed interviews of each African-American male participant. These data were collected to support axial codes obtained.

Table 4.4

Descriptive Matrix: Axial Codes of African-American Male Participants

Participants	Parental Relationship	Mentor/ Role Model	Economic Resources
P1	I never met my real father	I lost respect for my mother's boyfriend	Mom worked two jobs
P2	Got a divorce when I was young	My father stayed involved	We had what we needed
P3	Had a great relationship	I want to be like my dad	We lived comfortably
P4	did not get along	Dad was not around	We didn't have anything
P5	Mom took us away from dad,	Dad was on drugs in and out of jail	Mom got government assistance
P6	grandparent's had a good relationship	Grandparents was a good example for me	My grandfather helped us a lot
P7	Mom and dad broke up	Step-dad was good to us before he died	My grandparents help out a lot
P8	Parents screamed and hollered a lot	2 African-American teachers influence me	We depended on grandma for help

Table 4.4

Descriptive Matrix: Axial Codes of African-American male participants (continued)

Participants	Socialization	School Attendance	Extra-Curricular Activities
P1	I did not establish many relationships	I stopped going to school	I participated in golf shortly
P2	I stopped being so angry	Things began to be more stable in junior high	Participating in sport helped me
P3	My father stayed in our business	I did not have a choice	I received a football scholarship
P4	I was on my own	School was not important	I did not do anything
P5	I learned to be myself early	School had become boring to me	I was not at school enough
P6	I did not question authority	School was important to grandma	JROTC taught me discipline
P7	I got involved with the wrong crowd	My grandma was a teacher at Junior high	Football and track helped me deal with issues
P8	I began experimenting with drugs	I began to skip classes in senior high	Football is the reason I graduated

Table 4.4

Descriptive Matrix: Axial Codes of African-American male participants (continued)

Participants	Academic Performance
P1	I did not like interacting with teachers
P2	I did not have trouble in school
P3	I related well with all my teachers
P4	School was not important to me
P5	I liked elementary. I felt like I was a very good student
P6	I did what they asked me to do
P7	I did not see eye to eye with all teachers
P8	I did alright in school not great just alright

Parental Relationships

Once the interviewing process was over, data were analyzed and themes and sub-themes began to emerge. One of the major themes that emerged was parental relationships. Parental relationships, for the purpose of this study, were defined as the relationship between the two parents, grandparents, or caregivers. How the primary caregivers got along with each other and made decisions regarding the participants regardless of their marital status, separation, or divorce were the focus of this major theme. When the relationship between the parents or caregivers was good both parents, grandparents, or caregivers were involved early in the development of these young men and continued to be involved throughout their school-age years.

According to the participants, parental relationships were major contributing factors to their success or failure in school. Although participants responded differently most participants understood the importance of their caregivers' relationships and commented early in the interview about this relationship. How their parents or caregivers got along made a big difference in the participants' approach to life.

P1 commented about the abusive relationship between his mother and her boyfriend and how it formed his approach to authority figures and led him to a lot of trouble. According to P1:

I never met my father, but my mother had a very abusive boyfriend. He was mean to all of us. I grew up disliking authority figures, which led me into a lot of trouble in school and with the law.

P1 believes that the abusive relationship of his caregivers was detrimental to his academic progress and life success. P1 continued by stating:

My mother lost respect for herself and I lost respect for her. She stopped working and things went downhill from there. Don't get me wrong, I love my mother. But I stopped listen to her, which led to more trouble for me.

P4 shared that his mother and father were not married and they did not get along. P4 stated:

I felt like I was on my own for most of my life. We had no support from our father and our mother was always angry. She allowed us to run wild.

P5 shared that his mother and father broke up when he was around 3 or 4 years of age.

His mother packed them up and moved from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Baltimore, Maryland. P5 said:

I felt from a very young age that I was in the way. Ten years after leaving Fort Smith my mother sent us back to Fort Smith to live with Dad. The separation from my father was not good for my personal development. I still feel kind of lost. My mother's boyfriends didn't care much for us. I believe that was one of the big reasons we, my brother and I, were sent back to Fort Smith.

Good parental relationships were described by these young African-American males as being a benefit to their growth and development. P2 is a good example of the benefits of a good parental relationship. P2 stated:

My mother and father got a divorce early in my life; however my father stayed involved with all of us. I was angry at first but my dad helped me work through it. My mom was able to call my father when we were not acting right and he would always respond right away. Even though my mother and father were separated, my father was always there and always made sure we had what we needed.

P3 insisted that his parents had a great relationship and both had a shared interest in his success:

P3 stated:

My parents were both pastors. They worked together and they were both involved in all my business. I understood what their expectations were from an early age because I heard the same thing from both of them.

Parents must be aware of their influence on the lives of their children in the early pre-kindergarten years. The home environment could be the first step toward positive child development. It is important that children know and understand that they can receive encouragement, love, support, and lesson in important life skills that are useful academically and socially in their home environment (Paschall, Ringwalt, & Flewelling, 2003).

P6 stated:

My grandparents believe in going to church and were highly respected in the community. They taught me to be tough and proud of who I am.

P7 stated:

It was there in Texarkana that my mom got married again to my step-dad. I got really close to my step-dad and I believe he really cared for us.

P8 claimed:

There was a lot of screaming and hollering between the two of them. Many times the arguing lasted all night long and we (sister and brother) went to school sleepy. That's one reason we like staying at my grandmother's house.

Summary of Parental Relationships

According to the data parental relationships made a big difference in the participants' lives. Parents, grandparents, or caregivers must understand that their relationship with one another is important in the lives of their children. According to the data the relationships of the caregivers shaped the attitudes and dispositions of these participants at an early age. Caregivers must be careful to work together to help raise the students for a brighter future.

Mentor/Role Model

Mentor/role model is the second major theme because each African-American male participant indicated that there was always someone in his life that made an impression on him. Each participant believed that a mentor or role model was an important part of his life and most of the participants can remember who their role models were. Someone made an impression, positive or negative, and shaped their attitudes toward life. Sometimes those attitudes were formed in a positive way and sometime they were formed negatively. Their mentors were the people who were responsible for their early attitudes most of the time.

P1 for example, insisted that his mother's boyfriend helped him form his negative opinion about authority figures, which led to a lot of trouble early in his life. P1 stated:

I did not know my father; however, my mother's abusive boyfriend caused me to lose respect for him. I had a real dislike for authority figures. These attitudes led me to a lot of trouble in school and with the law.

P1 continued at a later point talking about role models:

After I serve my time in prison I will get a good job and be a good example for my sons and daughters. I will spend my time in prison learning a good skill so I can get a good job and be a good example for my children.

P4 believed that his parents were responsible for pushing him toward the negative role models he experienced in his life. His father was not in his life and his mother was completely unreliable. His grandparents filled the role of mentor for a few years in his life. He felt strongly that he was completely on his own trying to figure out life. P4 stated:

My father was never around and my mother was completely unreliable. I struggled early in life trying to figure out who I was and the direction I needed to take. The only time I felt like I had help was the time we stayed at our grandparents' house. We stayed with our grandparents' for about two years. We were warm and comfortable and grandma had rules. When my mother came for us, I was very angry.

P5 stated that after his mother took them to Baltimore he struggled trying to identify with someone. He said that this lack of a positive role model growing up causes him to struggle to this day. P5 stated:

I have been convicted of a felony simply because I hung out with the wrong people. I hung out with the wrong crowds and ended up in trouble. I struggle with the direction my life needs to take.

On the other hand, P6 insisted that his grandparent set the tone for his life early. He strongly believes that his untroubled teenage years could be attributed to the strong example set by his grandparents. P6 asserted:

My grandparents were very religious and maintained a very structured living environment. Even though we did not have much they expected me to go to school with my head up and be proud of who I was. Going to church was an expectation just like going to school and graduating. I'm raising three kids and I remember a lot of things my grandparents tried to teach me.

P8 stated that he did not want to be like his father. His father was addicted to drugs and alcohol and did very little to provide for his family. His father, from his perspective, was a negative role model. However, he had an uncle, his father's brother that provided a positive example and helped him on many occasions. P8 asserted:

My father and mother argued a lot over his drug use. He was unemployed most of the time. My uncle; however paid close attention to us and would come by and take me with him. He had a son my age, my cousin, and I enjoyed my time with them. He would always have some positive activities for us to be involved in. He introduced me to football and wrestling. He would talk to us all the time about doing right.

P7 stated that his grandfather played an important part in his life and his approach to life. In addition, he understood how important it was to him when his grandfather stopped what he was doing and traveled from Fort Smith to Texarkana to meet him in a time of need. He believed that his grandfather was his role model. P7 stated:

I always felt that I was important to my grandfather. He was always attentive to us. He pastored a small church in Fort Smith but always took time for us. He allowed me to work with him on the weekend and earn some extra money. My grandfather was my role model. It will be important for me to be to my children what he was to me.

P3 said that he wanted to be like his father. He had a great deal of respect for his father and how he raised them. He believed that his father's expectation pushed him through high school and college. P3 stated:

My father was always in our business. He carried himself in a mil-mannered fashion but he always knew what was going on with us. He tutored us and always stayed involved in everything we did. I want to be like him. I want to be there for my children just like he was there for us. I graduated from college because he expected me to.

P2 declared that;

All my brothers participated in some kind of sports activity because my father expected us to. My father stayed involved with us even though they (my parents) were divorced. My father was my role model; I have a football scholarship because of him.

Summary of Mentor/Role Model

In American society, we have continued to underestimate the role of the father in the home especially in the homes of African-American families (Dortch & The 100 Black Men of America, 2000). Without a father or positive male role model, these young men will miss out on learning the role of a man. Their lack of a positive productive role model may hinder their ability to understand what being head of a household means and why being a good father to their sons is so important and necessary.

According to the data a positive mentor or role model is important in the life of a young man. The primary caregiver, in most cases (6 out of 8), was a single mother. Raising a child or children is not easy when two people are responsible for their day-to-day care. It is an even bigger challenge when only one parent is raising children all alone. It is important for other family members, community members, churches, and educators to remember the village concept of raising children. All Americans must do a better job of providing these families with the support and resources they need especially in terms of role models or mentors for their children. All Americans will benefit. When a positive mentor or role model is involved in the life of a young man he could be a benefit to his community.

Economic Resources

Most of the participants indicated that they did not have much when it came to economic resources. P2 and P3, however, were the exceptions. P2 claimed his father always made sure that he and his siblings had what they needed even after he divorced their mother.

P2 asserted:

My father stayed involved with us. He always called and was always at our different extra-curricular activities. If my mother called him he came right over. We always had what we needed.

P3 stated:

I can't remember having any problems concerning money. If there were any problems Mom and Dad didn't tell us. We had everything we needed and most of what we wanted in life. Everything was pretty smooth growing up.

P1 never met his father but lived with his mother and her boyfriend. He remembered his mother working two jobs and eventually quitting the work force all together. P1 stated:

We did not have much; I can remember my mother receiving food stamps and other government assistance. Growing up was pretty rough. We move from apartment to apartment and from school to school.

P4 can remember his father not being involved with them at all and can remember not having much of anything. "Cold and hungry" were the words he used for his situation. The only time during his child hood that he could remember being comfortable was when his mother dropped them off at his grandparents' house for two years. P4 stated:

I can remember being cold and hungry most of my child hood. I felt like I was on my own. My father was never around and my mother was completely unreliable. The only time I can remember being comfortable was when mom dropped us off at grandma's house. We stayed there for about two years. When mom came to pick us up I was very angry.

P5 stated that he could remember economics as it related to school and school work. He felt that they did not have the kind of technology they needed to be successful in school.

P5 said:

I can remember not having what we needed to do our school assignments. We did not have the technology to do the home work that was assigned to us. Every now and then mom would take us to the public library to get school work done. That did not happen much most of the time we went to school without completing our assigned homework.

P6 stated that he was picked on at school because he was "the poor kid." He stayed with his grandparents that were both retired and on fixed incomes. He also felt that his grandparent environment was a very stable one. P6 stated:

We did not have very much but we were comfortable. I was bullied at school because I was the poor kid. We had what we needed.

P7 believes they were able to make it because of their grandparents' help. His step-dad was instrumental for only a short period of time before his death. P7 stated:

We had most of what we needed as long as we were in For Fort Smith with our grandparents close by. When we were in Texarkana, I can remember being hungry. Then my step-dad came along and things got better. Then he got sick and lost his job and things got worse.

P8 stated that his mother worked two jobs and can remember fights between his mother and father over his drug use and unemployment. P8 claimed that:

My mother worked all the time, sometimes two jobs. We did not have a lot. My mother blamed it on my dad, which is a big reason they fought. Most of the fights were about Dad's drug use. He did not work much but he was always high off on drugs and alcohol. He came in late drunk or high they argued and he would always promise that he would do better.

Summary of Economic Resources

According to the data economic resources were an important issue in the lives of the participants. The lack of economic resources presented many challenges in their lives. Communities, schools, and the government have, in recent history, tried to reduce the effect of limited resources; however poverty continues to be a problem in America. Polite and Davis, (1999) noted that in the last two decades researchers have begun to focus more on economic and social issues in the family, with the African-American family being the primary focus. Many of the participants understood the importance of economic resources and also understood where they stood in reference to these economic resources.

Socialization

Socialization was another major theme. According to Harris and Taylor (2012), it is a word used to refer to the lifelong task of teaching and learning standards and duties imposed by

law that will provide an individual with the skills to be successful in school and society. Parents are very important and must be involved early in the socialization process and the lives of their children in order to teach them the important life skills they must have to be successful in school and society.

P1 was not successful in establishing relationships. P1 stated:

I did not like interacting with authority figures, which included teachers and police officers. This attitude led me to a lot of trouble.

P2 felt like things began to stabilize in his junior high school. P2 stated:

In elementary I was angry and did not make a lot of friends. I learned to use my anger and aggression on the playing field in junior high. I think that my life was beginning to turn around at that point.

P3 described his childhood as being “very smooth.” Compared to everything he has seen he attributed his socialization to his father’s and mother’s input. P3 stated:

I got along well with all of my teachers. I can’t remember having many problems. There were times when I was hanging out with the wrong crowd but my parents quickly fixed that problem. I believe that I related well with all my teachers.

P4 attributed his trouble to his parents’ lack of concern and believes strongly that he was on his own to figure the world out. P4 stated:

My parents were uninvolved in my growing up experience. My father was in and out of jail and my mother did not care or know how to take care of us. I was in and out of trouble a lot in school from the beginning.

P5 recognized the need for structure early in life; he felt that this structure was going to help him succeed. He needed structure and goals. P5 asserted:

I did better in classes that had strict teachers. We moved around a lot in Fort Smith with my dad. I began to get in trouble at school and with the law because I skipped school a lot.

P6 attributed his success in the social setting to his grandparents, his caregivers, and the structure they provided. P6 stated:

My grandparents did not have much except they were pretty strict on us. My grandparents believe in going to church. They taught me to be tough and proud of who I am.

P7 attributed his lack of success to his lack of guidance. P7 stated:

My dad was not around much in my early years. My tongue got me in trouble a lot. I did not establish many relationships with people except my grandparents whom were always correcting me. I got involved with the wrong crowds.

P8 stated that he got involved with the wrong crowds because of a lack of guidance. He also stated that he was in trouble because of the crowd he was with. P8 stated:

I began experimenting with drugs in middle school because of the people I hung with. I later began to skip class in senior high school.

Summary of Socialization

Harris and Taylor (2012) asserted that one of the most important thing parents could do to improve their children's chances for academic success is to help their children know and understand these standard and duties of school and society at an early age. According to the data many African-American boys do not succeed because they simply get off to a bad start in life and do not start with the understanding of the expectation of school and society. These young men soon became disenfranchised and lose interest in school and become disengaged in the educational process. Parents and caregivers must know that the educational process begins at birth.

School Attendance

Another major theme was school attendance. School attendance is a very important part of graduating on time from high school. When school attendance was important to parents, grandparents, or caregivers, it became important to the participants. For example P1 did not believe that school attendance was important.

P1 stated:

At the age of 17 I stopped going to school, and started running the streets and got involved in drugs and petty theft. I started running with the wrong people and got myself in trouble.

P2 was sure that it was his father's involvement and persistence that pushed him through school.

P2 stated:

My father always made sure we had what we needed and often picked us up from school. In elementary I move around a lot from school to school. Things began to be more stable in junior high.

P3 admitted that school attendance was an expectation in his household. P3 stated:

I graduated from high school because it was an expectation. Playing sports helped but I'm sure if I did not play sports I would have graduated.

With his parents involvement the expectation was obvious. He considered school to be a pretty pleasant activity for him. P3 continued:

I got along well with the teachers and all the teachers were very helpful. I can't remember having many problems in school.

P4 did not believe school was important. P4 stated:

I did not like teachers and they were hard on me. My grades were not good and I didn't care. When I turned 18 I just dropped out.

P5 was a very intelligent young man that accredits his lack of interest in school to his lack of motivation. School was not a challenge to him and therefore he lost his desire to attend.

P5 stated:

By the time I moved to the 6th grade school had become boring to me. I felt like we were going over the same stuff over and over. School was not challenging at all. We move around a lot. We were constantly changing apartments and schools. At the age of 16, I was put in the detention center and told by the judge to get my GED. I got my GED in 15 days and was offered a math and science scholarship because of my high scores in those areas.

P2 claimed:

My father always made sure we had what we needed and often picked us up from school. In elementary I moved around a lot from school to school. Things began to be more stable in junior high.

P6 attributed his good attendance and success in school to his grandparents' involvement and expectations. P6 stated; "I never questioned their authority."

P6 also commented:

I was quiet in school I did not give anybody any trouble and did not question their authority; grandma would never allow that. I graduated from high school because of my grandparents.

P7 did not shy away from the fact that he stayed in trouble in school, but because of the intervention of some teachers and his grandparents he was able to persevere. P7 commented:

I got in trouble a lot in school. I guess you could say that I saw things differently than most. I got along with most teachers. One teacher impartial was responsible for getting me started in sports (football and track). My grandmother was teaching at junior high school and I was pretty well behaved and had a good relationship with most of the teachers there.

P8 believes that his good attendance could be attributed to his grandparents' help and his participation in athletics. P8 commented:

I was a football player; I was in the band, and on the wrestling team. These kinds of things kept me in school.

Summary of School Attendance

According to the data, school attendance was an important part of graduating from high school. To succeed in school and build healthy habits for the work place, school attendance must be a priority for students and parents. Lack of school attendance can lead to many problems including falling behind academically, becoming disengaged academically, poor grades, and eventually dropping out of school.

Extra-curricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities were a major theme because of their importance, as expressed by the participants. All of the participants who finished high school on time believed extra-curricular activities helped them achieve in school directly or indirectly. In addition, most participants believed extra-curricular activities pushed them on to graduate from high school.

P1 lost interest in school except for the short period of time he participated in golf. He confessed that he lost interest in golf because of a lack of support and shortly after that he lost interest in school. P1 claimed:

The white gentleman taught me how to play golf and talked to me about making my life better and how to do it. I tried to do what he told me to do but my attitude kept getting in the way. I stopped playing golf and dropped out of school shortly afterward.

P2 stated that extra-curricular activities like football, basketball, and track were responsible for giving him an outlet for his anger and keeping him out of trouble. These activities, he stated, kept him motivated to graduate from high school. P2 stated:

I learned to use my anger and aggression on the playing field. Maybe that's what made me so good. Things began to be more stable in junior high when I started to participate in the extra-curricular activities. Junior high was not as bad as elementary. I was also a member of student counsel in junior high and senior high. I believe that I can do anything if I put my mind to it and work at it.

P3 is a 24 year old college graduate who believes his parents expectations pushed him through high school graduation and on through college. He stated that he would have finished high school without any kind of extra-curricular activities; however the activities gave him extra motivation to do well. He stated he received a scholarship because he enjoyed playing. The football scholarship gave him motivation to finish college. P3 claimed:

I participated in church youth groups, Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). I played football and received a football scholarship. Football gave me the extra motivation I needed to do well in high school and college. I love playing the game.

P4 participated in sports in middle school but lost interest in sports and school and eventually dropped out. P4 stated:

I did not do anything in school I did not want to be there.

P5 did not have any interest in doing any extra-curricular activities. He was not interested and eventually stopped going to school. P5 stated:

I was not at school enough to do anything. I got my GED in jail at the age of 16. I was proud of that because they told me that no one passes the test the first time.

P6 described his extra-curricular activity as one of the things that gave him discipline throughout high school. P6 stated:

I was in JROTC which was like a junior Army that taught me a lot of discipline. I thought I would join the Army as an adult because of this activity.

P7 described his extra-curricular activity as being responsible for his graduating from high school. P7 stated:

I played football and ran track. The coaches were always there to help me. They gave me rides home, they picked me up when I needed a ride, and they kept me out of a lot of trouble at school. Sports kept me in school.

P8 believed with conviction that his extra-curricular activities were responsible for him graduating. P8 stated:

I was a football player, I was in the band, and I was on the wrestling team. These kinds of things kept me in school and I would go further to say that I graduated because of these activities.

Summary of Extra-curricular Activities

According to the data, extra-curricular activities played a very important part in the participants' attitudes, their dispositions, and their successful completion of high school. In some cases extra-curricular activities were directly responsible for good school attendance and the enjoyment of school. For other participants, extra-curricular activities gave them a way to

channel some of their excess energy and even anger, which helped them cope with regiment of the regular school day. These activities allowed participants the opportunity to feel good about themselves and be involved in something positive outside of the classroom.

Academic Performance

Academic performance was the last of the major themes. The participant's academic performance was based, in large part, on the participants' attitudes and behaviors toward school and school officials. These attitudes and behaviors were shaped by parents' understanding of their influence on their children as they faced going into school and society. If all seven major themes were positive there were positive effects in the academic setting.

P1 believed his attitude toward school and school officials was shaped early in his life which directly influenced his attitude and ultimately his behaviors. P1 shared:

I did not like interacting with authority figures, which included teachers and police officers. These attitudes led me to a lot of problems. When I was 16 I went back to school to make my mother proud of me. I ended up in trouble and left school.

P2 believes that his father's and teachers' involvement and intervention eventually led to his very successful and fruitful academic performance. P2 stated:

In elementary I moved from school to school and apartment to apartment. Things began to be more stable in junior high. My father checked on us and picked us up a lot. Most of the teachers cared about the students and wanted us to succeed. Junior high was not as bad for me as elementary. There was an English teacher that introduced me to Martin Luther King Jr.'s autobiography and I began to read all about him. I changed a lot in junior high school. I stopped being so angry and began to focus on my school work.

P3 understood that his parents' knowledge, expectations, and involvement had a very powerful influence on his academic performance. P3 shared:

I went to good schools all the teachers were helpful and my parents were completely involved in my education. I got along well with all my teachers and can't remember having many problems in school.

P4 was challenged in school and socially because of his parents' lack of understanding of the academic socialization process. According to P4 his parents did not understand what skills or behaviors he needed to be successful. P4 commented:

My father was not involved and my mother was unreliable. I did not like being at school it was not important to me. I did not like teachers and they were hard on me. My grades were not good at all.

P5 believed that he understood the rules and expectations of the school setting but eventually lost interest. P5 explained:

I liked elementary I felt like I was a very good student. I worked really hard. As a matter of fact, my first grade teacher wanted me to move up to third grade but mom would not allow it. By the time I moved to sixth grade school had become boring. I felt like we were going over the same stuff over and over, I began to shut down. I did better in classes that had strict teachers.

P6 lived with his grandmother and felt strongly that the structure he encountered in that environment prepared him for academic success. P6 asserted:

I was quiet in school and did not give anybody much trouble. I did what they asked me to do and did not question their authority; grandma would never allow it. My grades were not outstanding but enough to keep me passing through.

P7 had the influence of his teachers and his grandmother, who pushed him through high school.

P7 claimed:

I can remember moving around from place to place. I stayed at the middle school I started because my grandmother is a teacher there. I had a good relationship with most of my teachers.

P8 stated that it was the influence of two African-American female teachers that kept him interested in high school. P8 asserted:

I did not have much trouble at school, besides skipping some classes. I did not work hard in school but I did enough to keep the teachers off my back. In Little Rock High School there was an African-American history teacher and an African-American English teacher that talked a lot about African-American history in the United States. We had to read *Roots*, which led to many class discussions. These discussions had a pretty good impact on me.

Summary of Academic Performance

Good academic performance, in many cases, is the byproduct of many things coming together such as: parental expectations, good school attendance, hard work by students, and student support. Good academic performance can lead to positive outcomes and hopeful futures. Many of the participants understood the difference between good and bad academic performance. However, many of the participants felt powerless to change their production and outcomes. These dispositions could be changed with the input of knowledgeable parents, teachers, and communities. Once these habits were formed they were hard to overcome.

Summary

The data in Chapter 4 is a good representation of the data obtained during the interviews of eight African-American males. The coding process produced seven major themes which were: (1) parental relationship, (2) mentor/role model, (3) economic resources, (4) socialization, (5) school attendance, (6) extra-activities, and (7) academic performance. These major themes were developed during the coding process of the transcribed interviews. Each of the African-American participants were able to determine why or why not he was successful in his pursuit of a high school diploma. The data presented are an accurate description of their interview.

Summary of Chapter 4

Interviews, observations, field notes, and analyzing data for themes and sub-themes were all a part of the triangulation method use in this case study. After transcribing the interviews, the data were analyzed and produced all of the information presented in Chapter 4. The eight African-American male participants were very honest and forthcoming which allowed a brief look into their lives. The grounded theory approach produced open codes, which produced axial

codes or major themes and ultimately gave these participants voices that spoke with an effective state of consciousness and clarity.

The axial codes presented in Table 4.4 were a good representation of the voices that spoke during the interviews. In Chapter 4 the eight African-American male participants' lives and attitudes during their 12-year school experiences were very clear. The axial codes or major themes were: (1) parental relationship, (2) mentor/role model, (3) economic resources, (4) socialization, (5) school attendance, (6) extra-curricular activities, and (7) academic performance. The participants were interviewed using a conversational type of interview.

The analyzed data facilitated the development of selective codes, which supported and answered the research question. Chapter 5 starts with an introduction and theories one, two, three, and four. Next there is a summary of the finding and interpretation of data, the research question, and recommendations to the field. Finally, there is a recommendation for further research and the conclusion.

Chapter Five

Recommendation and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine what factors are associated with African-American males who graduated from high school with a focus on whether and how the presence or absence of a positive male role model influences the graduation rate. The study included the interviews of eight African-American males with educational backgrounds ranging from high school dropout to college degree. The ages of these young men ranged from 18 to 24 years. The factors associated with the successful graduation from high school were ascertained through an interview.

Once the interviewing process was complete, the data were analyzed for themes and sub-themes. Each participant was asked to be open and honest with the researcher. The interviewing process gave the researcher the opportunity to look deeply into the lives of the eight participants and make discoveries that helped identify factors that contributed to their successful graduation from high school. The entire process allowed the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of factors that affect African-American males' kindergarten through 12th grade experiences.

The seven major themes or axial codes as discussed in Chapter 4 of this case study are: (1) parental relationships, (2) mentor/role model, (3) economic resources, (4) socialization, (5) school attendance, (6) extra-curricular activities, and (7) academic performance. There were four selective codes identified which are: (1) mentor/role model, (2) economic resources, (3) socialization, and (4) educational system/community. Analyzing the data from the interviews of eight young African-American men who had recently left high school produced the kind of information that was useful in determining the reasons for some of the successes and failures of

these young men in their school experiences. Many of the answers that these young men gave during the interviews produced data necessary to answer the research question.

Discussion theory 1. The first selective code that became apparent while analyzing the data was mentor/role model. A positive African-American role model can provide young African-American boys with a very powerful example of life outside of the walls to which they have become accustomed (Cephas, 2012). Cephas (2012) believed that many people have underestimated the value of a positive role model in the life of a child, especially in the life of an African-American male. Many of these young men come from broken homes that were socio-economically challenged and believe their situation was impossible to overcome (Cephas, 2012). A positive male role model could help these troubled young men see the world in a different way (Dortch & The 100 Black Men of America, 2000).

Each of the eight African-American male participants understood the difference between a positive and negative role model. Even though some of the participants were consistently exposed to negative role models, they all admitted to knowing and being exposed to a positive male role models at some point during their adolescent years. The participants could always remember the positive role model that stepped into their life, even if it was only for a short period of time. These participants could remember the conversations and the advice the positive male figure gave them. The participants could also remember who it was and how they related to them. There was always something about the positive male figure that made a lasting impression on the participants.

Many of these participants (5 out of 8), spent most of their childhood being influenced by negative male figures. These negative influences shaped their attitudes which, in some cases, determined their path in early life. One participant recognized a negative example in his life and

blamed these negative examples for his 10-year prison sentence. In many of the cases concerning a negative example, there was always some kind of intervention by family, school personnel, community member, or law enforcement. The intervention was successful sometimes. Each participant that received intervention believed they needed it and, therefore, the intervention was always well received. However, some participants described the positive intervention by a positive role model as not enough or too late.

There were participants that looked outside of their immediate families for examples. Grandparents, uncles, community members, and school personnel were all mentioned as being instrumental in providing positive examples and advice for the participants. However, because most of the participants were living in single-parent homes and moved around a lot, these positive example did not always last or have a lasting influence.

The participants that received positive examples from the beginning of their lives reported that they had little trouble making adjustment early in life and had very few problems in school. These participants reported that they received guidance, care, and could always count on these positive men to be there for sound advice and encouragement. These participants completed high school and attended college. While one of the participants is still attending college, one went on to graduate from college. These participants were very powerful examples of positive role models, adding value to the life of these young men.

Discussion theory 2. The second selective code that surfaced while analyzing data was economic resources. According to Hunter and Bartee (2003), one of the contributing factors attributed to the low achievement of African-American male students was the lack of economic resources or poverty. Hunter and Bartee (2003) also asserted that poverty or the lack of economic resources will often lead to other problems such as limited knowledge of cultural

norms, the lack or absence of a positive male example, and living in low socioeconomic neighborhoods infested with crime, which will often contribute to those negative attributes. The data indicated that most of the participants (6 out of 8) did not have the economic resources they needed, which added to many of the problems that are associated with families living in poverty.

According to Miller, Paulakis, Lac, and Hoffman (2014), there is a relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and school achievement. Farkas (2011) asserted that living in poverty is directly related to low school achievement. As a matter of fact, according to Farkas (2011), this strong positive correlation directly determines school success in many cases. There is, according to Ducan and Magnuson (2011), an income performance gap that is two times the achievement gap that exists between African-American and Caucasian students. The income performance gap is obvious when students start kindergarten; the gap does not decrease in size, and is still evident in high school.

Data indicated that some of the participants (2 out of 8) had the economic resources they needed because of their father's involvement. In both cases when the economic resources were provided, these students went on to graduate from high school and enter college. When the economic resources were not there, most of these student struggled in school because of the concerns outside of school such as: (1) mom or primary care giver working more than one job, (2) high mobility, and (3) being cold and hungry.

According to Lewis (2013), a common challenge for families with a lack of economic resources is providing positive role models for their children. With the head of the household, in many cases being a woman and working more than one job (Lewis, 2013), these students were left to their own devices to discover the world around them. In the neighborhoods they lived in they often found negative role models (Lewis, 2013). Many of the participants commented that

they often ran with the wrong crowds and found themselves in trouble. With the parents or primary caregiver working second shift or after midnight shift, these participants had a lot of time on their own and made bad decisions frequently.

Another common challenge for families in poverty or living with low economic resources is high mobility. According to Dalton (2013), student mobility is the process of families with school-age children changing location and schools frequently. Dalton (2013) also suggested that student mobility is often the cause of student disengagement. Student disengagement can and most times does lead to low student achievement and a high drop-out rate. According to the data participants with low economic resources, many times their families moved around frequently. These participants stated that they moved from apartment to apartment and from school to school, which lead to a lot of confusion about expectations in school. These participants often found it very difficult to restart their lives each time they moved. The participants admitted to struggling in school most of the time. They admitted to struggling meeting academic standards and fitting into the different cultures at the different schools.

Another challenge of families living in poverty is to meet the needs of their children (Klar & Brewer, 2013). Some of the participants said they could remember being cold and hungry in their childhood and adolescents. Some of the participants also admitted that the only relief they had was when they went to grandma's house. Most of the participants living in poverty did not feel secure and would have problems engaging in school work at school and at home.

Discussion theory 3. The third selective code that materialized while analyzing data was socialization. According to Harris and Taylor (2012), socialization is a word used to describe a lifelong process of teaching and learning standards and duties imposed by societies that will

provide these young African-American men with the necessary skills to be successful in school and society. Harris and Taylor (2012) also asserted that the most important things parents could do to improve their children's chances for success in school and life is to teach them these standards and duties for school and society at an early age. Parents are important and must be involved from the beginning in the lives of their children in order to teach them the important life skills they need in order to be successful (Terdal & Kennedy, 1996).

Humphries, Strickland, and Keenan (2014) commented that students will have difficulty in school when their socialization is not addressed early in life. Humphries et al. (2014) also stated that successful students are well balanced socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. Parents, Humphries et al. (2014) asserted, are an important part of the socialization process because parents can teach and demonstrate, very early in life, actions that will make the socialization process less difficult. Humphries et al. also stated that the relationship between parent and child will form the foundation of the child's knowledge and will affect the child's socialization growth and academic success.

Educators, according to Humphries et al. (2014), must understand that they can and will play an important role in the teaching and demonstrating socialization skills to their students. These skills are taught to students by a variety of adults and peers, and the socialization process is very important for those who want to be successful in life. Learning to navigate the many obstacles they will face is also important for academic success.

According to the data, most of the participants were not given the attention they needed early in life and therefore struggled with the norms of school and society. The results of these struggles were a lack of confidence, disengagement from the academic process, and being in trouble with school officials and law enforcement agencies. The participants that lack these

skills had trouble making the needed adjustment to avoid trouble they encountered. These participants always cited their lack of knowledge for being in the trouble they were in. Some of the comment the participants made was: (a) “I did not know how,” (b) “I did not like authority figures”, (c) “I could not see eye to eye with them.” These comments indicated to the researcher that there was a lack of guidance in their lives.

Many of these participants, however, did not learn those standards and duties imposed by society and therefore suffered with feelings of rejection, which turned to anger and disengagement. More than one participant admitted to being very angry and could not explain the reason for this anger or the source of it. These participants admitted to not having the social skills needed to overcome many of the problems they faced in school and society. Three participants eventually dropped out of school because they did not have the social skills needed to navigate the many problems they faced.

Discussion theory 4. The fourth and final selective code that became apparent was educational system/community. According to Toldson (2014), leadership in the field of education must take the necessary steps to minimize the effects of problems faced by any group of students in the educational system. Toldson (2014) also noted that educators can play an important role in the lives of these young African-American males. There are many programs to minimize the effects of poverty in our schools, however, mentoring and socialization are problems that have not been adequately addressed. Toldson (2014) suggested that education must push the idea that all students can achieve and finish high school, then find the necessary programs that will help these struggling students succeed.

Kunjufu (2004) stated that one of the most prolific problems facing the African-American community is homes without fathers. In fact, Kunjufu (2004) suggested that in many of these

communities, positive role models are not often in the homes or neighborhoods. The data presented in this study indicated exactly that fact, many of the participants grew up without fathers and some without any positive role models. Noguera (2008) asserted that these young African-American male students that are growing up in fatherless homes, in poverty, and without family support calls for greater consideration and more assistance from the educational community than other groups in the system. If educators expect to increase the achievement of these African-American male students, close the achievement gap, and increase the graduation rate of these young men, they must take action to minimize the effects of the problems.

According to Berry (2005), African-American male students are perceived as students that cannot perform at an acceptable level and therefore placed disproportionately in low-level and special education classes. One participant, for example, described school experience as being very boring and unchallenging which cause him to disengage from the educational process. This participant also confessed to doing better when the classes were challenging and teachers were strict. This participant believed that the educational system did not test his abilities to the point of being able to understand what he was capable of doing academically. He later dropped out of school and received his GED by court order and received scholarship offers because of his high scores on the exam. Another participant went back to school after dropping out with the intention of finishing high school. However, he admitted to receiving little or no support from school personnel and eventually dropped out. He went on to receive his court-ordered GED in the detention center.

Tatum (1997) suggested that one ethnic group is often influenced by the perceptions or stereotypes they have of another ethnic group, even if the perception is not true. These preconceived notions or stereotypes often influence the decisions made by a group concerning

another group of people. Tatum (1997) also argued that even members of the stereotyped group unconsciously assimilate these demeaning perception about their own group and make decision that are influenced by these stereotypes of themselves. Wright (2011) further noted that these very young (6-10 years old), easily influenced African-American boys are susceptible to making decisions based on these demeaning perceptions about themselves. Serval participants admitted to making decisions that was not in their best interest repeatedly and receiving little or no guidance from school personnel. They did, however, receive office referrals and discipline from school personnel. Understanding these ideas about stereotypes should increase educators' awareness and motivation to intervene in the lives of these young men to create a better sense of self-worth. Educators must believe and emanate the idea that all student can and will achieve toward graduation.

Summary of selective code findings. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine what factors are associated with African-American males who graduated from high school with a focus on whether and how the presence or absence of a positive male role model influences the graduation rate. During the process of analyzing the data, four selective codes were found: (1) mentor/role model, (2) economic resources, (3) socialization, and (4) educational system/community. These selective codes were reinforced with the axial and open coding process. Interviews, observations, and field notes were all a part of the triangulation process. All data retrieved from the interviews were very important and useful in these findings.

Presentation of research question. After thoroughly analyzing the data taken from transcribed interviews, seven major themes were found. From the seven major themes that became apparent, selective codes surfaced from the data to answer the research question. The selective codes were: (1) mentor/role model, (2) economic resources, (3) socialization, and (4)

educational system/communities. While processing the data, open codes were discovered and pointed to seven axial codes. The selective codes that came from the data helped the researcher answer the research question. The selective codes supported the participant's childhood and school experiences. These selective codes were major factors that determined if the participant successfully graduated from high school or became a high school drop-out.

Mentor/role model became a major theme because these participants shared information about positive men in their lives that provided positive examples that helped them overcome major obstacles. Most of these young men shared information about positive examples that made short appearances in their life and helped them for small periods of time. The young men that had role models in their lives from the beginning claimed they did not have many problems in school or society. The positive role models were important in helping these young men, as children understand by example how to behave in school and life. When positive role models were present in the lives of the participants, the example was set before them, economic resources was not a factor, and the socialization process took place. The key is a positive role model because they are trying to do the right thing all the time. These role models are also great examples of how to behave in school and life.

Economic resources was another selective code that became apparent after some investigations of the data. All participants indicated that the economic resources were a major factor that determined their success or failure. When the resources were available, it allowed participants to focus on other things that could help them succeed. When the economic resources were not available, participants struggled to focus on school work and other things that could make them a successful student. Economic resources were a very important part of these participants' lives growing up.

Socialization was the third selective code that came into view from the coding process. Participants all claimed that learning the norms of school and society aided them in their successful navigation in their early school years. Participants that struggled with engaging socially in those early years became frustrated and began to act out in ways that were inappropriate in school. The socialization process, according to the participants, played an important role in their success or failure in graduating from high school.

Educational system/community was the fourth and final selective code that surfaced while analyzing the data because educators were in place and could have intervened in some way to change the lives of these struggling young men. If the guidance and support for these young men are not at their home, then educators must be prepared with the needed resources to make the transition to school life easier for these young African-American boys. More than two participants reported that they felt that they did not have the needed support in school from school personnel. The achievement gap is very real and must be addressed in some way, by providing resources for these young men to help them graduate from high school we can and will make a difference in their lives.

Research question. What are the perceived effects of mentoring by an adult African-American male on the likelihood that a young African-American male would graduate from high school? The data in this study pointed to four major themes for graduation of participants, which are:

1. Mentor/role model was important because all participants can remember a positive male in their lives who provided a positive example in words and deeds. Sometimes these examples were outside of the immediate family, but all participants can remember someone who inspired them to do better and be better people.

2. Economic resources were a major theme because having the proper resources allowed the participants the opportunity to concentrate on something other than those basic needs. Being cold and hungry is a major barrier to being engaged in school.
3. Socialization is important because successful students know schools' and societies' expectations as they enter into school and society. Many of the problems they face in school will be navigated successfully because they know the expected behaviors.
4. Educational system/community was important because educators are the last line of defense for helping these young men graduate from high school. Educators must be better prepared to help all students overcome obstacles and graduate from high school, no exceptions.

Recommendation to the Field

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine what factors are associated with African-American males who graduated from high school with a focus on whether and how the presence or absence of a positive male role model influences the graduation rate. These recommendations are based on the findings of this qualitative case study, a lot of deliberation, and the outcomes that became apparent while analyzing data taken from these young African-American men. Most of these participants, like many African-American males, were raised without the benefit of having two parents at home. In many cases, the only parent was a very young single mother. It is therefore, recommended that a planned series of future events be established for these young African-American boys and their families.

These planned events should take into account the fact that these young African-American boys are at risk of starting school behind their peers academically, becoming disengaged academically, dropping out of school, and finding themselves on the wrong side of the criminal justice system. These planned programs should be educational programs directed

towards the families and these at-risk boys such as: (1) young parent intervention and education programs directed at parents and perspective parents, (2) Preschool programs for these young African-American boys who are at risk of dropping out of school, (3) Mentoring programs for the young African-American boys, (4) a structured pull-out program directed toward intervention and getting these young African-American boys back on track, and (5) a highly structured whole-school academic program.

The data also pointed to these young African-American men getting off to a good start and becoming disengaged from the educational process along the way. Most of the young men that were interviewed talked about being disengaged at some point during the school experience. These school-age African-American boys need to be targeted with programs before school, during school, and throughout their kindergarten through 12th grade experience. These programs should be set up to engage, motivate, and encourage them to be better and do better in school.

Parent intervention and education programs. According to the data, many of these young parents did not know or understand the importance of training these young at-risk African-American boys in the early stages of life. Sanders (2012) suggested that the public have become aware of the many challenges these at risk youth could pose to society without proper training. Sanders (2012) also suggested that parent intervention and education classes have gained support from the public in recent years.

Parent intervention and educational programs need to be established for these young parents and future parents through the schools, community centers, and churches (Sanders, 2012). Sanders (2012) also commented that the purpose of parent intervention and educational classes would be to increase the parent's knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the needs

of these very young at risk boys. These parent educational programs, according to Sanders (2012), could help get these young African-American boys off to a good start in life and increase their chances of staying on track and graduating from high school.

Essential strategies for parents are described by Winter, Morawska, and Sanders (2012) as a set of measures taken by parents to increase their knowledge, understanding, awareness, and confidence in raising their children for success in those early stages of life. The parenting classes could improve their parenting skill tremendously and thus improve the child's chances for success and obtain positive outcomes (Winter et al., 2012). Winter et al. demonstrated the effectiveness of parental intervention and education through a controlled group experiment.

They used two groups of parents with two different socio-economic status (SES) levels with the expectation that the group with higher SES would benefit more. Winter et al. reported that through post-intervention examination both groups benefited equally. Both groups of parents, according to Winter et al. grew substantially in the understanding, knowledge, awareness, and confidence of essential parenting skills. This study by Winter et al. indicated that all parents would benefit from intervention including those low-income parents of the most at risk children. Furthermore, these parenting intervention and educational classes could benefit these parent and all of society.

Preschool education. The data indicated that many of the participants needed to get off to a better start in school academically and socially. Many of the participants started behind their peers and added to the many obstacles they had to overcome, which eventually lead to academic disengagement, underachievement, eventually dropping out of school, problems finding employment, and problems with the law.

According to Welsh, Nix, Blair, Bierman, and Nelson (2010), there are emerging investigations proposing that a child's mental abilities undergo substantial change early (preschool) in their life. Welsh et al. (2010) suggested that recent information found out about early childhood development has considerably influenced the development of early childhood education. After significant information has come to light concerning early childhood education (preschool), according to Barnett (2012), researchers found that this early start in education plays a significant role in student's success. This early education had an effect on IQ; however, this IQ increase was short-lived (Barnett, 2012).

Upon further investigation, researchers (Barnett, 2012) have determined that there are substantial long-term effects on the student's abilities after their preschool experience. Barnett (2012) asserted that many of these investigations have demonstrated consistent improvement on test performance with a decrease in students assigned to special education and student failures. Other advantages, according to Barnett (2012), include improved attendance, improved graduation rates, better employment opportunities, and a decrease in the involvement with the criminal justice system.

Being prepared for entrance into primary school requires a student to have many different kinds of lessons (Ozasian & Gursoy, 2012). According to Ozasian and Gursoy (2012), early childhood education can enhance an at-risk child with many different kinds of practical lessons that will help and be important during their primary schools experience. Ozasian and Gursoy (2012) also stated that these early childhood lessons in a preschool setting will help many at-risk students develop the physical, mental, and psychological skills they need to be successful during the primary school experiences. Ozasian and Gursoy (2012) believe that the cost of preschool to

tax payers will be beneficial in the long run. Getting the at-risk student off to a good start in their primary education will be worth every penny spent.

Mentoring program. The data also pointed to these young African-American males getting off to a good start and later in their academic experience become distracted, disengaged, lost interest in school, and eventually dropped out. One of the big reasons was the importance of school was not stressed at home. Mentoring programs for these at risk students is another way to stress the importance of their school experience, keep them engaged in school, and help them graduate from high school.

According to Griffin and Toldson (2012), over the last ten years mentoring programs has been seen as a way to help these young African-American stay engaged and on track to graduate. Recent studies have shown, according to Griffin and Toldson (2012), that 2.5 million adolescent African-Americans boy and girls across the United States benefit from mentoring programs. Shelby (2009) also stated that some programs have proven to be more successful than others. One of the most important keys to building an effective mentoring program according to Griffin and Toldson (2012) is listening to the needs of the students, families, school, and the community involved. Griffin and Toldson (2012) stated that there are no one-size-fits-all; every program will be different and based on the need of the families and communities involved.

Jeynes (2012) stated, after years of research, that the most successful mentoring programs were those that reached outside of the school and school district to get community members involved in mentoring these young at risk boys. These community members, Jeynes (2012) added, were successful business men, working men raising families, and ministers and pastors that could deliver practical advice and messages about the need to graduate and successful post

high school experiences. These members of the community members could also be role models for these young men.

Other successful mentoring programs, according to Jeynes (2012) were those schools and school districts that recruited faculty members of similar ethnicities as their students that provided on a daily bases mentors and role models to their students. To create better opportunities for these young men, mentoring programs must be taken into consideration as a way to increase student performance, close the performance gap, and help these young African-American men graduate from high school.

Structured pull-out program. Many of these African-American boys are growing up without the benefit of having two parents at home. In addition, these young men need positive guidance from the very beginning of their lives. These young men and their families need a continuum of organized events that would offer guidance. These planned events could include a structured pull-out programs with community leaders, business leaders, and motivational speakers pushing these young men to succeed (Kafele, 2009).

Principal Buruti K. Kafele was responsible for turning around several schools that were predominantly African-American (90%). These schools were ten percent proficient and moved to 90 percent proficient in a short period of time (Kafele, 2009). Kafele (2009) stated that one of his most important tools was a dress-up “empowerment program” (pp. 71). Kafele also stated that he pulled students out of class every Monday for a half of day to receive encouragement and motivation from community leaders, then send them back to class highly motivated Tuesday through Friday. Because of the success he had, he is now a motivational speaker for those schools dealing with low-performing African-American males population (Kafele, 2009).

According to Kafele (2009), his empowerment programs will pull these young men out of class periodically to be mentored, challenged, and encouraged to be model students and citizens for themselves and for others. Kafele (2009) stated that these pull-out programs would also teach them how to be successful academically and graduate from high school. Kafele (2009) also asserted that successful men in the community could help by being a part of the pull-out program. These programs could offer tutoring, enrichment, and extra-curricular activities that would enhance their understanding of the world around them and what it take to be successful and graduate from high school (Kafele, 2009). These kinds of programs could play a major role in increasing the achievement of the African-American male student, closing the achievement gap, and increasing the graduation rate of African-American male students. Kafele's (2009) empowerment programs were very successful.

Boys clubs, churches, and other community organizations could partner with schools to help these young African-American male students stay engaged in school. These organizations could provide programs outside of school and the school setting that would be instrumental in helping these young men stay out of trouble and busy with positive activities. These groups could also be responsible for providing mentors and mentoring programs, tutoring programs and extracurricular activities that would motivate and encourage these young men and their families during their k-12 experience.

Structured school program. According to Pitre (2014), there are some things being done in the field of education that offers promise for struggling students. A very structured school program offers the promise of increasing African-American students' performance and closing the performance gap that exists between African- and European-American students. Pitre (2014) explained that leaders in the field of education have begun to reject the idea that

students of low socio-economic status cannot learn. In the educational setting, there are some things that we cannot control but there are some things that we can control (Pitre, 2014).

Delpit (2012) noted in her research, four things that high performing, high minority, and low income schools are doing right. According to Delpit's (2012) research, the four keys are: (1) relevant learning opportunities or real world experiences that would give these students opportunities to use what they are learning in the classroom in a real world setting. This approach would give the learning relevance for the student. (2) A demanding and uncompromising academic curriculum. These high achieving schools are wholeheartedly dedicated to executing a demanding curriculum. (3) The educators are committed to helping students link new things they are learning to ideas and facts they already know. These educators in these high performing schools acknowledge and honor what their students already know. (4) A sincere even overpowering belief in their students' intelligence and abilities. Educators in these high-performing schools believe in their students' intelligence and act on that belief by developing demanding curricula and expecting their student to perform while giving these students the support they need.

Recommendation for Further Research

The recommendations of this researcher are based on the finding of this study. There are many things that may affect the achievement of African-American males that are not covered in this study. It is therefore recommended that families, policy makers, and educators look at and study other things like parents' expectations for their students, teacher's expectations for their students, what causes these young African-American males to disengage from school, and if that is the case, how parents and educators can get them back on track.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine what factors are associated with African-American males who graduated from high school with a focus on whether and how the presence or absence of a positive male role model influences the graduation rate. The selective codes that were responsible for answering the research question were: (1) mentor/role model because all participants could remember a positive male in their lives that provided a positive example in words and deeds, (2) economic resources because having the proper resource allowed the participants the opportunity to concentrate on something other than those basic needs, (3) socialization was important because it is important for students to know and understand school and societies expectations as they enter their primary school experience, and (4) educational system/community was important because educator are the last line of defense for helping these young men graduate from high school. Educators can be prepared to help all students overcome the many obstacles they will face for successful graduation from high school.

Many of the experiences shared by these African-American male participants was from their heart and very personal. The researcher could in many ways relate to their experiences and established rapport with these young men easily. Because of the rapport that was established with these males, they were very open and honest about their experiences.

The African-American males who participated in this case study varied in experience and education. These young African-American men's participation was voluntary and greatly appreciated. These young men indicated they understood the importance of this study and felt compelled to participate so they might provide help for other African-American males. They answered question openly and honestly and gave this study credibility. Because of their

willingness to help, they will in some way enhance the lives of other African-American males, African-American females, and all Americans. The lives of all Americans will be better.

Contribution to the Field of Education

The information contained in this study should be useful in the field of education for all struggling students. Eight African-American males gave the field of education a look into their lives and thoughts. Educators must take this information and put it to use. Programs can be started for parents and prospective parents to help them get their children off to a good start in life, which will solve a lot of the problems these young men face.

This data also pointed to the lack of education of many of the parents. Parenting classes can be started that will help with many of the issues these young parents face. Educators should be involved in diversity training, which could eliminate some of the preconceived ideas about these young African-American men. The data indicated that there was always someone in the life of the participants that provided an example for them to follow. All eight participants revealed their need for a positive example, which was not always a reality. Through hiring and training educators could provide these young men with some positive examples in the way of role models.

All Americans must make an effort to increase our understanding of these young African-American men and be a part of the solution. If all Americans make an effort to increase the graduation rate of African-American men, all Americans will benefit from their progress. Americans can no longer ignore this problem.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

- 1) Tell me about your experience in school growing up.
 - a. Describe what your teachers were like and how you related to them.
 - b. Tell me about what life was like growing up in your household.
 - c. Describe what family members were most influential on your development.
 - d. Describe the sort of resources and economic support your parents or guardians were able to provide to you as a child.
 - e. Describe what kind of economic hardship you had to endure as a child.
- 2) Describe how an influential person impacted you in your school age years.
 - a. What sort of attributes did you look for in a role model?
 - b. Describe how your influential person was present in your life.
 - c. Describe how they were a constant in your life and how this impacted you.
 - d. Describe the kind of work your influential person did in order to make a living.
 - e. How did this impact you as a child?
 - f. Describe how your role model impacted your academic life.
- 3) Describe the different types of organizations or activities you participated in while in school.
 - a. How did these change over time, and if they did change, why did they change?
- 4) Tell me anything else that you want me to know about your experience.

APPENDIX B

Participant Letter of Information

Date

Dear [Participant's Name]

I am a doctoral candidate in the educational leadership program at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. I am doing research on African-American males and their academic achievement. The title of my dissertation is; Dose the presence of a positive role model affect the graduation rate of adolescent African-American males? This is a case study that examines the effects of some contributing factors to Adolescent African-American males' academic underachievement. The literature review revealed many contributing factors such as: poverty; single-parent homes; teenage mothers; and the absence of the father or a positive male role model. All of these factors may affect the achievement of adolescent African-American male. This case study is an attempt to identify the importance of a positive male role model.

This study includes research, recorded interviews, and observations. This qualitative case study is expected to benefit families, educators, and community leaders. According to the law and University of Arkansas policies, all participants and interested parties will have access to the data and findings. No information that can be identified will be used in any publication of the research. All collected data such as: interview responses and observations will be stored by researcher under password protected electronic programs. Please contact Iroshi (Ro) Windwalker (IRB/RSC Coordinator- Research Compliance) at 210 Administrative Building, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701 if you have any question or concerns. The phone number is 479-575-2208 and email is IRB@uark.edu. Dr. Carleton Holt, EDLE Graduate Advisor/Associate Professor in Room 233, graduate Education Building, University of Arkansas, 72701 is my faculty advisor and his email is cholt@uark.edu and his phone number is 479-575-5112.

Respectfully submitted,

Elphin M. Smith Jr.
University of Arkansas
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C

Participant Informed Consent Document**Title of Research**

Does a positive male role model affect the achievement of adolescent African-American males?
A Case Study

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to determine what factors are associated with high school graduation rates of African American males. Once we discover the effects of these factors we might be able to find ways that will contribute to the elimination of these contributing factors by providing these families the support they need. Support from school, community, and extended family members that may help eliminate at least one or all these very detrimental contributing factors.

Procedure

Using audio recording devices during the interview process decreases the chances for loss data and increases the accuracy of data obtained. The researcher will also take observational notes in a nonthreatening way during the process. The interview process gives the researcher an opportunity to look deeply into the lives of participants and make discoveries that will enhance the study of underachieving African-American males. The participant's experiences will clarify any misunderstanding and give opportunities for relating those experiences to other African-American males in need of help.

Risk, Stress, and Discomfort

It is understood, if a participant feels any discomfort or stress they can remove themselves from the study at any time without risk. There will be no risk involved in the study in anyway.

Confidentiality

It is understood that open mindedness and confidentiality are an integral part of the study, however, while seeking information it is also understood that the responsibility of collecting, managing, and analyzing data belongs to the researcher. The researcher must maintain an open mind and not show partiality one way or another as data is collected. All participants' answers and identities will be held in strict confidence to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Participants will be given the opportunity to revisit their responses before the final draft which increased credibility, validity, and accuracy. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB Compliance Officer listed in the attached letter.

Participant's Agreement

I realize as a participant that I will not be compensated for my participation and my participation is strictly voluntary. In addition, I understand that my identity will remain confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Furthermore, all information contained herein is clear to me.

_____ Participant's Signature _____ Date

_____ Researcher's Signature _____ Date

APPENDIX D

December 4, 2014

Sebastian County Sheriff's Office
c/o Sheriff Bill Hollenbeck
800 South A Street
Fort Smith, AR 72901

Dear Sheriff Hollenbeck

This letter is a request to conduct my research as a part of my doctoral degree at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville. I am under the supervision of Dr. Carleton Holt (associate professor of educational leadership). I would like your permission to interview (person to person) 3 African-American males held in the Sebastian County detention center in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The participant will be between to ages of 18-24 years of age and have attended Northside High school in Fort Smith.

The purpose of this study is to determine what factors are associated with African-American males who graduate from high school, with a focus on whether and how the presence or absence of a positive male role model influences the graduation rates. According to my research, the first step to attaining greater economic opportunities is high school graduation. African-American males, however, are lagging behind their peers of all ethnicities, as well as African-American females, in terms of high school graduation rates. According to the data, African-American males are an at-risk population (Arkansas Department of Education, 2014). A continuous cycle of low academic achievement, low academic attainment, high unemployment rate, and high incarceration rates threaten to end the lives of many of these young men one way or another. There are many contributing factors that may be responsible for the underachievement of the African-American male such as high divorce rates, single-parent homes, absentee fathers, poverty, low-income neighborhoods, negative role models, or teen pregnancy. Research also indicates that failing to graduate will decrease their chances for economic opportunities in this country.

My methodological instruments will include the recording of person to person interviews, observation, and document collection. The goal of the interview will be to establish that there are some contributing factors that could turn out to be common to all participants. In addition, the interviews may help determine if one contributing factor is more prominent than the others. These interviews could help researchers, educators, and community leaders better understand young African-American males who are working below their potential.

If you have any questions concerning my study or would need additional information to assist you in making a decision, please contact me at [REDACTED]. You are also welcome to contact my advisor, Dr. Carleton Holt, at 479-575-5112 or at cholt@uark.edu.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Institutional Review Board at the University of Arkansas. I hope that the results of this study will benefit the organization and the participants directly involved.

If you agree or disagree for me to do my research inside the detention center, please complete the consent form below and send to me or I can pick it up. Thank you for the consideration of allowing me to do my research study within your district.

Yours sincerely

Elphin M. Smith Jr.
UA Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership

APPENDIX E

SEBASTIAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF BILL HOLLENBECK

Honor and Integrity

SINCE 1851



December 11, 2014

Dear Dr. Carleton Holt,

This letter is to confirm that we grant Mr. Elphin M. Smith Jr. permission to conduct interviews of willing participants within our detention facility. The interviews are being granted for the purpose of aiding Mr. Smith to write his doctoral thesis in Education Leadership with University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 479.783.1051 or at hrunion@co.sebastian.ar.us.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'H. Runion III'.

Hobe Runion
Chief Deputy

800 South A Street
Fort Smith, AR 72901
(479) 783-1051
Fax: (479) 784-1395



P.O. Box 337
Greenwood, AR 72936
(479) 996-2145
Fax: (479) 996-7771

APPENDIX F



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

December 16, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Elphin Smith
Carleton Holt

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 14-12-379

Protocol Title: *Does a Positive Male Role Model Affect the Achievement of Adolescent African-American Males? A Case Study*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 12/16/2014 Expiration Date: 12/15/2015

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

This protocol has been approved for 9 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

109 MLKG Building • 1 University of Arkansas • Fayetteville, AR 72701
Voice (479) 575-2208 • Fax (479) 575-6527 • Email irb@uark.edu

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