ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

OF ATTENDING SINGLE- SEX SCHOOLS

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The purpose of this quantitative, descriptive study was to examine African

American male students' perceptions of attending a single-sex school. Daily,

schools remind us that the problem is not who we serve but how well they are

served. Poverty, crime, gangs, and other social problems that exist in some

neighborhoods pose considerable challenges. The pull of the streets and all the

dangers associated with it, is drawing many young African American males onto

the path of delinquency at an early age (Scott, 2011). However, schools that are

successful with African American males show us that they can overcome these

obstacles when they work closely with parents and when schools implement a

positive learning environment that meets the needs of the students they serve.

The researcher utilized a survey design to investigate the perceptions of African

American males attending a single-sex high school. Using culturally responsive

teaching as the theoretical framework, this study examined African American

male students' perceptions of a single-sex high school in the academic, social, and behavioral constructs.

The study identified many aspects of the single-sex learning environment that the students perceived to be superior to their experiences in a co-educational setting.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ATTENDING

SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLS

by

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has been approved

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my heavenly father. Thank you for allowing me to see your bigger picture. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Sandy and Tony Smitherman whose words of encouragement continued to ring in my ears. To my Dad, for instilling a hard work ethic and to Mom for keeping her prayers and hope alive! Thanks for believing in me when I did not even believe in myself! My sister Lia, who has never left my side and very special to me. Thank you for the encouragement and sisterly advice at the exact moments I needed it most. To Will and my closest friends, thank you for being my stress release and laughter when needed! I will always appreciate all you have done.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Across America, educators dedicated to their profession seriously pontificate aspects of education. Overcoming the achievement gap is often discussed and strategies exacted to overcome disparities. The term evokes debates on how, when and to what extent this concept exists; however, in several districts, the academic failure of African American males is a stigma for school leaders, politicians, and district leaders (Wilson, 2016). In its wide use, the concept is not a secret; nor is it easily defined. Seeking to understand the concept totally, Ladson-Billings (2006) explained and defined the concept of the achievement gap as a matter of race and class. This gap in academic achievement between minority and disadvantaged students and their White counterparts represents a very pressing issue in education.

Another aspect of the issue is how males are represented in the data. Research has been conducted in certain school settings, such as rural, suburban and urban, and has even looked at their socio-economic background and race/ethnicity. This researcher, while engaged in the plight of African Americans in education, sought to understand the plight of African American males particularly in single-sex schools and if this gap exists. Ladson-Billings' assessment and definition of the achievement gap provides an understanding of the structural component of education and its unlikely match to meet the needs of all students.

African American males in certain states lag behind their peers academically and are more likely to be placed in special education classes (Scott, 2011). Those who complete high school and enroll in college face challenges (Aratani, 2007). It is disappointing to this researcher to continually read and analyze data supporting the deficit of African American males' achievement. As an educator, it has been my experience to witness successful interventions in single-sex schools and co-educational settings.

Existing research on single-sex education primarily focused on how it differs from more common co-educational school settings and environments regarding strategies and practices that have been used. Data showed single-sex education is associated with improved academic and behavioral performance in students, but few studies report advantages of single-sex classes (Aratani, 2007). As such, the curious notion of how single-sex schools impact African American males became a focal point for this researcher.

Background of the Study

Generally, when researching African Americans, the research involves urban areas and students who are attending schools with few resources and the least qualified students. Usually, from low-income homes, these students are profiled by data to become dropouts. According to Sizer (1992), school leaders sought to control behavior more than developing students. Research demonstrates students of color in urban settings are being marginalized (Kozol, 1991; Wilson, 2016). As an equalizer, education is supposed to erase barriers

and prepare students, without regard to race, socio-economic status or location to ensure students have access to creating a better life. Outside of urban settings, it has been recorded that African Americans are still not invited to participate in higher level courses, are more often tracked for remedial or special education services than their White peers and suspended at higher rates (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Orfield & Ashkinazw, 1991). These practices have resulted in a system that resembles segregation as Whites often persist and outperform in most areas of measure.

African American males have been the focal point of discussion and research for more than twenty years (Scott, 2011). As they progress, it seems of grave concern. For years, many have dedicated studies to this concept with like results: African American males are struggling in school. An example is researchers finding African American males tend to drop out of school, doubling the rate of their White counterparts (Ogbu & Simmons, 2003). Additionally, SAT and ACT scores on average are 100 points lower. Most astonishing, African American males represent about 8% of college students (Mahany, 2009).

More evidence suggests African American males have been labeled as having learning disabilities and represent the highest rate among suspensions and expulsions from school (Haag, 2000; Wilson, 2016). This poses an important question: Why do African American males continually fail and underperform in the current education system? Researchers such as Ogbu, (1978), Ladson-Billings (2006), and Kunjufu (2002) espouse incompetent or lack of cultural

awareness from teachers who have low expectations and offer poor opportunities. Further, coupled with poor teacher performance, African American males often are not getting educational support from home or within the community to positively impact their educational pursuit.

As such, this has led to the creation of more single-sex schools and classrooms for African American males (Scott, 2011). By creating more single-sex classrooms and schools, teachers, school leaders, politicians, and district leaders hope to improve the narrative of academic performance and enhance the social development of African American males. Providing additional support, such as differentiated instruction and mentoring, may provide African American males a greater likelihood for success.

Single-sex schools are not new inventions and have been effective educational environments for many years. In the 18th century, military academies, elite boarding schools, and parochial schools have served young men only (Gandy & Piechura, 2009). African American males in educational settings were more than likely labeled as having a learning disability or classified as mentally disabled and placed in classes for special education needs (Sax, 2002). They were also absent from talented and gifted programs, Advanced Placement and honors courses, and International Baccalaureate programs (Freedman, 2008). When compared to their White peers, African American males lagged significantly in grade point average and performance on standardized tests

(Mahany, 2009). As such, there is an achievement gap, and current strategies are not assisting with its closure.

Failing in academic settings led to strong implications for African American males in Pre-K-12 and higher education; however, widespread failure has a direct correlation with the quality of life (Scott, 2011). There is an increasing correlation between African American males who perform poorly in school and their subsequent involvement in the penal system (Yates, 2011). Understanding the devastation of this, various states have embraced single-sex education as a strategy to assist with risks and hardships commonly associated with academic performance and social development of African American males (Novotney, 2011). For these disadvantaged students, single-sex classes show positive academic outcomes. When racial and gender differences are suppressed, rather than discussed, African American males lose out (Wallace, 2010). As a result, this research focused on understanding African American males' perceptions toward their educational experiences.

Theoretical Framework

The tenets of Culturally Responsive Teaching as articulated by Geneva Gay were used to frame this study (see Figure 1). These tenets are distinguishing traits in qualities that can be used for assessing the student's perceptions of academic, social, and behavioral advantages and disadvantages in single-sex schools.

Advantages and disadvantages can be defined as any state, circumstance, opportunity, or means especially favorable to success, interest, or any desired end or on the other hand, something that puts one in an unfavorable position or condition (*Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*, 2019).

This study only used the multidimensional and empowering tenets as they relate to how students are presented with information in their academic environment. These tenets were correlated with student responses from the *Attitude Toward School Inventory* to answer the research questions. The multidimensional tenet applies to how teachers address certain aspects in their class, such as curriculum, learning, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques and performance assessments (Gay, 2000). As a student's culture spreads into all components of teaching, it is important to look deep into each one. By being multidimensional, teachers can ensure that students are not disadvantaged in specific areas of schooling, academically, socially, or behaviorally. Teachers should have students actively participate in their own performance while working towards building relationships with students.

The empowering tenet allows students to develop a mindset that is greatly beneficial for both their well-being and ambitions. It empowers students to improve both inside and outside of the classroom. This teaching can be seen as an improvement in students' academic competence, self-efficacy, and initiative. They learn not only content but also how to use a newfound self-belief to make

progress towards their goals. When teachers have high expectations for their students and support them appropriately, they will meet their expectations (Gay, 2000). If teachers present information in a manner that empowers, African American males may experience better educational outcomes. Students' survey responses give perceptions as to how they have formulated a relationship in single-sex schools.
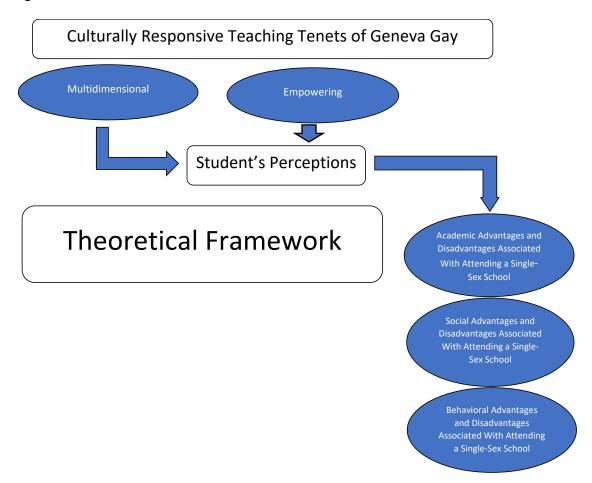

Figure 1. *Culturally Responsive Teaching*

Academic Advantages and Disadvantages

The *Attitude Toward School Inventory* assessed the students' perceptions of academic advantages and disadvantages in single-sex schools. Academic questions focused on whether certain classes were more interesting now that they are attending an all-male high school than at their previous coeducational school, if classes at their all-male high school were tougher than the classes at coeducational high schools, or if male students who attend all-male high schools will have higher standardized test scores than males who attend coeducational schools.

Social Advantages and Disadvantages

The *Attitude Toward School Inventory* assessed the students' perceptions of social advantages and disadvantages in single-sex schools. Social questions focused on students' relationships with administrators, teachers, and other male students at their current all-male high school than at their coeducational school, if they feel that attending an all-male high school resulted in them having a more positive self-image, or if they feel that attending an all-male high school has deprived them of interacting with the opposite sex.

Behavioral Advantages and Disadvantages

The *Attitude Toward School Inventory* assessed the students' perceptions of behavioral advantages and disadvantages in single-sex schools. Behavior questions focused on class rules and discipline being consistently followed at their single-sex school rather than at their coeducational school, is there less

bullying at their all-male high school than at coeducational high schools or were there more fights and violence at their all-male high school than at coeducational high schools.

Statement of the Problem

This researcher struggled with the reality of American education. Once touted as the best education system in the world, throughout my life, this excellence has diminished. African American males are suspended, labeled, tracked into special education, and locked out of opportunities of advanced placement more than their other peers (Haag, 2000). African American parents are forced with the decision of leaving their sons in schools that are not adequately educating or preparing them or send them to single-sex schools.

Single-sex schools offer males an educational environment that may provide better opportunities as the focus is on creating better people (Scott, 2011). In these environments, students are allowed to get their basic needs met and feel validated. Failure of African American males has a direct connection to their quality of life because an unsuccessful K-12 experience often leads to poor choices that have a negative impact (Scott, 2011). African American males who do not do well in K-12 educational settings may drop out, which may lead to their participation in illegal activities (Yates, 2011). As education is the great equalizer, it is imperative that all students receive adequate instruction and preparation. Currently, this is not a widespread practice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative research study, using a correlational research design, was to examine the perceptions of African American males in single-sex schools. After decades of failure, low academic achievement and persistence, several studies have examined the plight of African American males without great success. It is imperative to investigate, from African American males' perspectives, if single-sex schools make them feel validated enough to be successful.

Literature has focused on teachers, environments, and strategies, but few delve into the African American male and giving a voice to his needs, wants and how he desires to be taught and treated in an educational setting. This research hoped to unveil a concept that leads to real strategies of how to approach African American males in educational settings by inquiring about their perceptions in their educational environments.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this query:

Research Question 1:   What are African American male high school students' perceptions of the academic advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school?

Research Question 2:   What are African American male high school students'

perceptions of the social advantages and disadvantages

associated with attending a single-sex school?

Research Question 3:   What are African American high school students'

perceptions of the behavioral advantages and

disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex

school?

Significance of the Study

The results of this research may be used for professional development to improve student academic performances. These results may also help school districts determine the best allocation of needed resources. Even more so, these findings could show that African American male students in high schools are no more successful academically when attending single-sex schools, as compared to African American male students in regular coeducational schools.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are influences out of the researcher's control. They are the conditions, shortcomings, or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher and place restrictions on the methodology and conclusions (*Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*, 2017).

Delimitations are choices made by the researcher that should be mentioned. They describe the boundaries that the researcher has set for the study (*Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*, 2017).The delimitation of this

study is its narrow scope of participants. Participants are African American males who are attending single-sex schools. Participants are being questioned about their plight in three areas of focus at a single-sex school. To decrease the possibility of problems that could affect the findings of this study, an additional list of delimitations and limitations were defined:

1. Data accuracy

2. Student Participation

3. Utilizing only African-American males versus White or female students in rural or suburban schools.

4. Limiting the study to only high school students.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study, terms were used to explore the experiences of African American males in single-sex educational settings. Prior to presenting an in-depth analysis of the study, listed are terms that provide an understanding of the research:

- **Academic Performance**: the level of performance a student displays in an educational setting including grade point average, standardized test scores, and honors received (Scott, 2011).

- **Single-Sex Schools**: the practice of conducting education where boys and girls attend separate classes or in different buildings or schools.

- **Co-Educational Schools**: American colloquial language offers 'coed' or 'co-ed' to refer to a school with boys and girls present. It is also used to describe a situation where both sexes are integrated.

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching**: this concept uses cultural knowledge, frames of reference, performance styles, and prior experience of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant.

Summary

African American males bring unique characteristics and experiences into American classrooms. Recognizing the inherent strengths and qualities of these characteristics has eluded educators for decades, leading to misguided special education referrals, increased discipline challenges, and dropout rates. Limited research examines the perceptions of African American males in an attempt to inform and transform teaching practices. This quantitative study investigated African American males' perceptions of single-sex or co-educational schools in achieving success in high school. Knowing what appeals to African American males can be used to increase participation and achievement in schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the literature is necessary as it investigates historical concepts of a topic depicting underpinnings and offering an understanding of how an idea was defined, established and developed. This chapter offers insight into the literature exploring education in the United States, urban education, and culturally responsive teaching. These concepts tie a unique bow of why and how African American males are marginalized in traditional settings, what can be done, and how strategies may be implemented to increase their academic gains.

Understanding the origin and development, this literature review will perhaps synthesize, analyze, and explain each concept and its relation to the other. A researcher needs to understand what has been done before, bringing forth strength and weaknesses of past and existing studies and what those perspectives may mean (Boote & Belle, 2005; Wilson, 2016).

History of Single-Sex Public Schools

Early American schools were single-sex and directed towards educating boys only. Prior to the 19th century, single-gender schools were prevalent through college. In colonial America, only boys were given widespread access to education even though the concept of education was dismal and not available to most children (Delpit, 2012). Schools were created depending on religion, social and financial situations of the region, and was a mixture of single-gender and mixed-gender. An example, in New England, mixed gender schools and schools

for women were more prevalent than in other regions below the Chesapeake Bay. Race, gender and religion were all major roles in education in terms of quality, as well as availability.

Pros and Cons of Single-Sex Schools

Proponents argue that single-sex education and co-educational classes improve learning and performance by matching teaching and learning to the student's needs. Separate gender classes help to reduce achievement gaps, especially when teachers use techniques geared toward the gender of their students (Novotney, 2011). For urban, African American males, single-sex education is viewed as a way to counter dropouts and the school-to-prison pipeline. Students felt more confident and empowered to try new activities without existing social pressures (Novotney, 2011).

However, opponents of single-sex education have raised the issue of whether this type of educational setting can become a dumping ground for our African American male students and question; while there have been achievement gains made in single-sex education classrooms, could it be credited to teacher instruction rather than the student body (Haag, 2000). Leonard Sax (2002) and others agree that merely placing boys in separate classrooms from girls accomplishes little. He has found that the teaching style promoted by advocates of single-sex education was ineffective and detrimental to some.

Opponents also argue that single-sex classrooms lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes and sexist attitudes (Mahany, 2009). Assigning all

individuals of one gender to a class and using gender-based instructional techniques, assumes that all students of one gender are alike and will respond the same way (Novotney, 2011). Students in single-sex classrooms will one day live and work side-by-side with members of the opposite sex. Educating students in single-sex schools limits their opportunity to work cooperatively and co-exist successfully with members of the opposite sex (Mahany, 2009).

Urban Education in America

Statistics provide insight into how phenomena are examined. Troubling information, often directs and informs urban schools. These schools, often in dire straits, are the places preparing minority students. Prior to de-segregation, these schools often produced great leaders and scholars. However, over the past several years, urban schools have become the moniker for those who are academically and socio-economically disadvantaged. Martin (2003) discovered in the early 2000s, urban education was an under-researched and under-studied aspect of education. While gathering students from small groups and communities, these students often have higher disparities. Not exclusive to this sect of education, however; persistent issues such as the education of parents, family income, language, and ethnicity are predictors of student success.

More often than not, urban school districts serve learners from poor, under-educated and under-exposed families (Bell, 2003; Gomez-Velez, 2013). It is important to understand and note education has not been fair to all since its inception. All children were not the focus. Teachers, instead concentrated on

good students (Bell, 2003; Gomez-Velez, 2013). Students were socially accepted if they paid attention in class, followed directions, completed assignments on time, and scored well on assessments. These characteristics were ideal for teaching and learning.

As urban enclaves have grown in the past several decades, examples of research have provided insight to challenges these unique districts face, such as skill set decline of students and relationships between students and teachers and the impact these declines have on student outcomes. As the socio-economic gaps widened between teacher and student, students automatically entered the learning environment with different ideas and expectations (Bottoms, Han, & Presson, 2005; Wilson, 2016). Noting that relationships are key and critical to student learning and development, Ladson-Billings (1996) developed a strategy to employ, ensuring teaching and learning is centered on relationship building between students and teachers. Deeper teacher training and development must be thorough and must have adequately prepared professionals for the uniqueness of the urban environment.

Relationships are the cornerstone to ensuring all students feel welcome and can be successful in the learning environment. Another aspect of relationships is how the student sees him or herself within the context of the environment. Clark (1965) researched how the student reacts and responds to school based on the environment. In this study, the environment is inclusive of how parents view education and teachers' and parents' experiences in school.

Examining the psychological effects and impacts of living in urban areas, his study delved deeper into the concept of people feeling invisible and unworthy; often in these situations, crime is high. Feeling outside of mainstream society, urban inhabitants have less access to quality education and overwhelmingly feel the government has left them behind.

Clark (1965) found students in urban learning environments in the 1960s struggled with reading comprehension, in elementary and middle school. Other aspects of literacy, such as word knowledge, were lacking, too. Math skills demonstrated a similar pattern of underachievement in elementary and middle school. When comparing students in Harlem to their New York counterparts, the results were dismal. Students not housed in socio-economically depressed areas were almost half a grade behind by eighth grade. His study led him to the inequalities of education in public schools during segregation. The findings strongly suggested urban learners, especially boys, are not likely to value education because they have likened it to government and another entity that has left them behind or not taken them seriously.

Clark (1965) espoused that the system is an ironic and tragic inversion of the purpose of education and that Negro children in urban schools tend to lose ground as they proceed in schools and fall further and further behind (p. 123). In his examination, five assumptions of inferiority were derived. The assumptions aligned with this study: assumption three, states ". . . one cannot expect from culturally deprived children adequate educational performance in the classroom

because they come from homes in which there is no stimulation for educational achievement. . . ." (Clark, 1965, p.126).

This generalization is supported by the absence of books in the home, stimulating discussions and active engagement of intellectual stimulation. Children are taught to read, however, a child whose parents do not have access to or value books, may have issues learning to read as quickly as a child whose parents provide access and engagement (Clark, 1965, p. 126).

Another assumption states ". . . children from deprived communities bring into their classroom certain psychological problems that are peculiar to their low socio-economic status and interfere with educational processes in their learning environment. These two assumptions are internalized by teachers in urban environments thus impacting how they present information, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy, ". . . the fallacy in the assumption does not mean a system based upon them will be demonstrated to be ineffective; . . . the horror is results seem to justify the assumptions. . ." (Clark, 1965, p. 128).

At the time of this investigation, few were investigating inadequate natures of education, curricula, or educational settings, which have an impact on student outcomes and academic success. Further, even fewer investigated how teachers in urban environments felt, how their feelings of being overwhelmed and defeated carried over to their approach to teaching. During this period, most students were taught by the same ethnic background and race of teachers. If

these teachers believed students from urban enclaves were not able to learn,

imagine the thoughts of their White counterparts who did not want segregation.

Understanding this pervasive problem in the 1960s, Clark researched how

relationships between the environment and students are impacted and manifest

in the classroom. Ogbu (1978) researched minorities in America and their

approach to education. Minority children over the past several decades have

performed lower than their White counterparts in achieving academic success.

Boys, particularly African American, are lagging behind all groups. Attempting to

explain the gap in achievement and academic success, Ogbu studied types of

minorities.

A voluntary minority is an immigrant who moved to the United States

freely, believing it would enhance their ability to become better off economically

and academically and to attain freedom. Voluntary minorities encounter social

problems and racism, too, but feel they are not permanent issues or problems,

thinking once they acculturate to American society, they will be fully accepted,

and barriers will no longer exist (Ogbu, 1978). Parents of voluntary minority aged

students teach their children the importance of education and expect the best.

Involuntary minorities (African Americans) did not have the luxury of

making a decision to come to America, resulting in feeling lost and thinking they

are worse off than majority culture. Feeling disenfranchised, the involuntary

minority attribute their economic and academic difficulties to institutionalized

racism which manifests in practices of discrimination. These practices cannot be

deterred by hard work, intelligence, college attendance or other aspects of acculturation (Ogbu, 1978). Seeking to understand achievement outside of urban enclaves, Ogbu sought to understand a phenomenon in Shaker Heights. Shaker Heights is an affluent African American community experiencing high failure rates of boys. He found that inadequate education is not specific to urban enclaves, but persists in middle-class communities, too. It was found that African Americans in suburban settings often do not trust their educators and they are not represented, leading to a rejection of learning. Deeper, these students felt the more academic success attained, they were identifying with majority culture more than their own and did not want to be singled out. While not directly stated, his study implied African American males in learning environments are in dire need of culturally relevant pedagogy and may do better in single-sex classrooms that are led by people who look like them.

Hilliard (1998), another theorist focused on making education an equitable practice, sought to understand how to engage all students through the lens of African American boys and practices that are culturally responsive. Highly critical of African Americans who become educated and leave their communities, Hilliard was very leery of charter schools and other alternative learning opportunities housed in public education. Hilliard offered that once curricula represents all cultures, not just black and White, students would learn and become more engaged in learning. As cultures are investigated and understood evenly, truths of who contributed to the growth of society would enhance learning and an

appreciation of all. Hilliard expressed ". . . schools have been slow to perform partnerships with poor parents and families of color, since values and behavior patterns differ so greatly between each community, a disconnect prevails" (Hillard, 1998). Hilliard created several programs and curricula of inter-connectedness to provide student engagement.

The theorists presented researched different aspects of the learning environment. Their lens provided varying scales of inequality and treatment of African American male students while other researchers sought to understand and resolve disparities with all stakeholders.

As stated, relationships are key to student success. When students feel connected to their teacher and trust their best interest is being protected, achievement increases for all students. Kunjufu (2002) offers insight into urban students and their teachers. Using socio-economic status to understand how teachers approach teaching urban students, he sought to understand how White middle-class women engaged urban students. He found teachers using statements such as "I do not see color" and "these kids are not like the ones we used to teach (p. 16) left a profound reality ". . . the single most important factor impacting the academic achievement of African American children is not the race or gender of the teachers, but expectation . . . (p. 17).

This differs greatly from other theorists as they believe if a student has the same gender, same race teacher, the student will do well. Per Kunjufu's research, the impact of teacher expectation is far greater. Students who know a

teacher expects excellence and holds them accountable will perform better and rise to the expectation. Countering this ideology, Kunjufu rationalizes that White teachers often are not adequately prepared for urban education. Their own education takes place in rural or urban settings, thus black people are not a part of their daily lives or activities. Further, their higher education experience in teacher education usually takes place in traditionally White institutions. These teachers lack the understanding African Americans have living in urban settings. Finally, he offers teachers must be trained to work in urban settings. Overall, his study provides evidence that teacher expectation is important.

Agreeing with Kunjufu on practical approaches, Ladson-Billings (2001) lends ". . . teacher preparation is the problem as most are led by White, middle-class professors who do not have experience in urban settings dealing with high poverty rates. . ." It has been noted students from low socio-economic backgrounds are anxious and struggle in schools due to fear of alienation. Moreover, students in urban environments are often taught by people who do not understand their plight, environment or situations. Students want to please their teachers and do well. Race must be a factor that is overcome to create strong student-teacher relationships. Teachers gain cooperation with students particularly when they feel cared for and respected. If teachers display a caring attitude and create a trusting relationship, Weinstein and Mignano (2003) discovered students will more openly share their thoughts, ideas, take risks, and

develop a sense of social responsibility. Classrooms organized to ensure trust create learning environments that appeal to students.

Kunjufu (2002) in seeking to understand how to improve student achievement, created categories for teachers: custodians, referral agents, instructors, teachers, and coaches. The greatest of the five are those who coach. Coaches create a learning system that garners trust, engages students, and has few discipline problems because relationships are paramount. He further suggested administrators employ strategies that empower. Instead of being a disciplinarian, leaders should see themselves as instructional leaders. As instructional leaders, they should prepare teachers and students for teaching and learning. Teachers should have high expectations for their students, and students should spend more time on task. Teachers should also create a more positive school environment while using tests as guides to improve practices. Employing these strategies, student achievement will increase.

Boykin (1996), another theorist, sought to understand the cultural complexities underpinning schools. He espoused schools do not take advantage of assets African Americans provide in educational settings. As such, students do not receive consistent instruction that is beneficial and uplifting. His program, *Success for All,* was created as a reform model and implemented in DC Public Schools.

The model uses several aspects of community learning to engage and provide education for urban schools. Techniques such as cooperative learning,

tutoring, family support services, and professional development for teachers and parents help to aid those in poverty-stricken enclaves. Many parents in poverty do not have a solid understanding of how to prepare their children for the educational environment. As a result, the professional development guided parents on how to ensure their children were adequately prepared for learning and how to sustain those skills for academic success.

Like other reformists and theorists, creating relationships and working to establish alignment between students, teachers, students' home life and community is critical. This example of reform makes every effort to hold all stakeholders accountable.

The urban education environment is plagued with poverty, lack of resources, and school leaders and faculty who are overwhelmed. Researchers have asserted that those in the profession are in a quandary as the unique problems hinder student achievement and success. Even if leadership and great teachers are in place, African American boys face dismal results on tests, do not attend school regularly, and are suspended at higher rates than all their peer groups.

Theorists presented in this section all agree relationships are essential to building learning environments that produce well-established students who are critical thinkers and successful in learning. Understanding their environment at school provides a lens that ultimately lends itself to how leadership and teachers approached learning from a behavior and control aspect, often alienating

students. Treatment of African American males in public education has been widely studied in the last decade. Their treatment may indeed factor in their approach to learning.

Experiences of African American Males in US Urban Public Schools

A number of school districts in the United States have experienced persistent failure of African American boys (Scott, 2011). This culture of failure exists and is pervasive in urban settings. Students of color, particularly boys, are often not offered higher level courses, enrolled in special education, and suspended at higher rates (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Orfield & Askinaze, 1991; Wilson, 2016). Brown v. Board of Education was supposedly the factor to de-segregate schools; however current data reflect the system in urban areas, is still separate and not equal. Contributing factors, according to Scott, are low self-esteem, low expectations coupled with cultural inferiority that plays a significant role in hindering the development and academic success rate.

Cultural theorists such as Asa Hilliard (1992; 1998) and Kunjufu (2002; 2005), focused efforts on identifying and developing practices to ensure African American boys and other marginalized students were effectively addressed in learning environments. Further, Gandy (2009) stated, ". . . African American students who are boys are struggling to become successful. . ." As such, teachers, school leaders and all stakeholders need to understand the plight of African American boys and their other marginalized counterparts in schools. In this system, Whites are better educated and prepared than African American

boys in urban settings. They have better course offerings, better-qualified teachers, and course offerings that are not an option in urban settings. The urban student is more likely to live in poverty, have one parent in the home, have a parent who is not well-educated, and may struggle with English as a primary language.

Barriers persist and often students drop out of their education to work and provide for themselves and their families. Noting the urban school learning environment, Gandy (2009) stated ". . . African American boys are struggling to become successful. . ." A hindrance is socio-economic status and family structure. The lives of some urban students are chaotic. They have no limitations or daily routines, which may cause discipline issues in a structured educational setting (Gandy & Piechura, 2009). Students in urban environments have voiced their inability to fit in and feel left out because they do not have the latest fashions, shoes, and are embarrassed in school (Scott, 2011). Further, boys in depressed economic settings struggle with esteem issues.

According to Scott (2011), these young boys have few, if any, positive role models to promote their scholarly pursuits, resulting in several falling prey to negative images. Urban environments are full of opportunities to promote drugs, join gangs and do other things outside of education. Additionally, society has, through television and research, told young men in urban enclaves they would more than likely die or go to jail. Etched in their psyche and surrounded by few options outside of criminal activity, boys begin to believe it, coupled with teachers

who are ill-equipped to teach them and are unable to create definitive

relationships to support their learning styles. Sax (2002) agreed with Scott and

added, teachers with low expectations or expecting students to adhere to their

middle-class ideals, often leave African American males alienated.

Embarrassed by their lack of fashionable clothes and esteem issues,

African American males often do not embrace school. These barriers coupled

with parental participation negatively impact their success. Research suggests

students do better when parents are involved in academic pursuits. When

parents demonstrate low support, academic levels decline and often

accountability from parents is not present. Feeling a lack of support, African

American males often withdraw emotionally from learning, deciding if their

parents do not invest or care, they should not either (Sax, 2002). This researcher

has also witnessed withdrawal and lack of support from community, family, and

educators.

Seeking to understand how African American males persist in urban

educational environments, several researchers have reflected that having a

positive student-teacher relationship is critical to academic success (Scott, 2011;

Wilson, 2016). Teachers who have positive relationships with their students and

behave in a caring way, influence student motivation. In short, if a teacher is

negative, that behavior turns students away from learning. However, if a teacher

is very positive, student motivation increases. Teachers, in elementary schools,

often have more influence on students (Haag, 2000; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

Education, after desegregation, is the great equalizer. If educated, people have a greater opportunity to overcome their circumstances. However, urban learning environments are not preparing African American male students to overcome. It is important to understand how African American males are treated in traditional educational settings as it may lend to how they are treated in single-sex educational settings.

African American Experiences of Males in Single-Sex Urban Public Schools

Teachers in urban environments are often overwhelmed and frustrated. These conditions tend to exact harsh extremes on students, such as higher suspensions and referrals to special education programs. While many teachers are certified and experienced, few are well versed and trained in culturally relevant pedagogy, restorative practices, and do not understand the environment where their students live. This results in excluding African American males from rigorous courses, according to Cooper (2006).

Males educated in single-sex environments have higher academic achievement (Gandy & Piechura, 2009). Researchers explain students in single-sex schools have better relationships with their peers, teachers, and feel connected to the learning environment. Being connected, boys focus on learning, creating relationships and compete for better grades. Feeling good about themselves and their decisions, students performed better and focused on

embracing how they learned (Novotney, 2011). In this environment, boys saw themselves differently and were capable of graduating and attaining higher education. One student recalls, ". . . I feel the single-gender environment for me (an African American student) provided a type of confidence that I did not experience in other educational settings. . ." (Novotney, 2011). When students feel appreciated, safe and trust their teacher, learning and academic achievement occur at higher rates.

Current single-sex classrooms are pivotal in providing learning environments where African American males thrive. In these environments, African American males achieve academic success at higher rates than their peers in urban learning sites and experience fewer discipline issues. Single-sex education for males offers a safe space for males to flourish and develop their critical thinking skills and explore educational options.

According to Yates (2011), Eagle Academy in New York is an example of African American boys thriving in single-sex settings. Eagle Academy data reflect a graduation rate higher than other schools in the state. Leadership at the academy hold their students accountable and have high expectations of students. Removing distractions, such as girls, allows students to focus and gain better scores. Additionally, fear of being wrong and looking foolish in class does not exist in this setting.

Urban Prep Academy also has experienced optimal outcomes with African American boys. Located in Chicago, 100% of students graduate and receive

acceptance into higher education institutions. Located in one of the most troubled communities in the nation, this school, according to Yates (2011) is a huge accomplishment. Many students are results of poverty-stricken families, surrounded by drugs and crime; however, they remain focused on academic excellence due to positive factors in their learning environment. Overcoming the odds may be connected to their single-sex education (Yates, 2011).

Another example of overcoming odds in school is occurring at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University's Middle College. Dedicated to the education of high school boys, they boast a 100% graduation and college acceptance rate. Students in the middle college are offered attendance at the university if they have honor roll status their freshmen and sophomore years. As such, they have two years of college courses when most of their peers are still enrolled in high school coursework.

Students enrolled in this school do not struggle economically, as their experiences mirror those studied in Shaker Heights by Ogbu. Once enrolled in the middle college, they experience higher academic success rates. Students in single-sex education experience smaller class sizes, have more opportunity to engage and create relationships with teachers, other students, and administration. All of these may be factors in their higher success rates. Opponents of single-sex education often overlook increased academic achievement; however, the excelling rates of achievement among African American males is very compelling (Mahany, 2009). Creating success and

avenues to excel is a goal of education. This goal should be embraced in all areas, without regard to socio-economic status.

Not unlike African American boys, Latinos face difficulties in educational settings, too. A longitudinal study dedicated to The Black and Latino Male Schools Intervention (BLMSIS) conducted between 2006-2009, reported of seven single-sex schools serving African American and Latino boys ages 9-18. Higher rates of academic success, attendance and fewer suspensions were noted (Yates, 2011). Examining instruction, leadership, curriculum, school climate, and extra-curricular activities and how each of the categories impacted students, this study indicated that single-sex education focused more on understanding the student holistically. Faculty and administrators sought to understand students' social and emotional needs resulting in a better climate and culture in the learning environment (Yates, 2011). These practices appear to be very strategic and intentional and may be successful if implemented in all educational settings.

Another example of single-sex education being successful is occurring in the state of South Carolina. According to the American Association of School Administrators (2017), single-gender classrooms experience higher rates of participation, attendance, and increased test scores. One school district reported public schools are offering more choices because educators have come to believe that a broader instructional menu brings positive results for everyone.

Parents, over the last decades, have become more involved in how their children are taught and seek different options. In South Carolina, parents in high-choice school districts have been given options of a charter, magnet, Montessori programs, and schools focusing on arts, music, STEM and other varieties. Legally, education is supposed to provide the same level of access to each gender. After noting gender gaps demonstrating boys in grades 3-8 scoring below average on standardized tests in the areas of English/Language Arts, Math, and basic reading, over the last four years, it offered an opportunity to explore options to increase academic gains. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) revived the idea of legal single-sex education. In 1972, Title IX determined sex discrimination in schools was illegal. The NCLBA re-established requirements for legally permissive single-sex education (AASA, 2017).

Programs organized by gender must be voluntary, be implemented in an even-handed manner, be sustainably equal for both genders and be reviewed every two years. Further, a co-ed option in identical classes must be available with guidelines providing an overview of how to ensure equity is present in single-sex classes. Single-gender classes are not mere throwbacks to old primitive practices and sex discrimination, but an opportunity to thrive in the midst of peers and support.

Using multiple formats, South Carolina single-gender education offers a win-win for students. These practices of single-gender classes can be implemented immediately without great cost. As such, South Carolina has seen

an increase in single-sex classrooms increasing from 70 in 2007, to more than 200 in 2008. Since there has been such a huge increase, the state now offers a specific professional development conference on how to teach and prepare for single-sex classrooms. This conference, offered annually, is taught by teachers every March and more than 300 teachers are in attendance.

American education is unique in that it is required to educate all people ranging in ages from five to twenty-one. Other countries have developed practices that eliminate students by age, assessments, and socio-economic status, hence leaving education to those who can test well and are usually well behaved. Educating students who are from various backgrounds is difficult and requires extensive training.

However, it is apparent in the United States model, a sect of student population is not being well educated. The sect of the population that is struggling is African American males. American schools need to create and develop strategies dedicated to the overall success of this population. Demonstrating efforts that prove these children are valued, loved and can achieve have proven, in the above cases, that student achievement increases. Alternative education options for students, particularly African American males living in urban enclaves, may need to become common viable practices. If the goal is to thwart negative behavior patterns, suspensions and how material is presented, addressing the needs of African American males should be adapted in all settings.

The U.S. Department of Education, according to Freedman (2008), provided regulations in opening and operating single-sex educational facilities. Continual practices and research on how to improve education for African American males can prove impactful for all students. Once a severe need is addressed, others who are marginalized begin to thrive when strategies are employed.

Perceptions of African American Males in Single-Sex Environments

Limited research examines the perceptions of African American males in single-sex environments. However, existing research suggests that males perceive their success in school is dependent on classroom environment, teaching styles, and familial support primarily of their mothers. These males also believed that benefits of an all-male classroom were increased attentiveness, comfortability, and teacher's use of relevant and differentiated teaching practices helped to enhance their learning. Some challenges noted were an occasional strange feeling of being in a classroom with only males, while also having some unproductive academic behaviors. Most importantly, these males agreed that teachers that fostered their success, created a comfortable learning environment, held high expectations, were encouraging, and engaged in teaching practices that relate to and motivated them, pushed them past their capabilities (Scott, 2011).

Knowing what appeals to African American males can be used to increase the participation and achievement of these students in schools. Students

admitted that their success in school was dependent on their classroom environment and their peers. Students felt more comfortable in environments where they felt safe with less embarrassment, therefore willing to take risks, leading to engagement and learning (Mahany,2009). Learning is about taking risks and growing from mistakes and not being ridiculed for getting information wrong. Students who are engaged, attentive, and participate in classroom activities and lessons will have more positive academic experiences in schools (Mahany, 2009).

To ensure success of African American males in school, educators must actively seek to build community in the classroom and establish classrooms that are engaging places where students want to come and learn. Gay (2010) states, "By building an academic community of learners, the teachers respond to the sense of belonging that youths need." Ultimately, students who were comfortable, were able to learn more. One student stated, "If I'm uncomfortable for any reason, I get stressed out. But when the teachers make me feel like I'm at home, I'm able to learn easily." Students must feel content to do their best in school to meet academic success (Scott, 2011).

Teachers that fostered African American male success created comfortable learning environments, held high expectations, were encouraging, and engaged in teaching practices that motivated them (Scott, 2011). While these traits are not a surprise to most, it was interesting that African American males described teachers they felt possessed these traits. Students believed

teachers that contribute to their success in the classroom never gave up on them and encouraged them until the end (Scott, 2011). Kunjufu (2002) states, "For the African American male, the highest value in a relationship is encouragement."

Culturally Responsive Teaching

After the civil rights movement and desegregation, several racist underpinnings remained in education. Realizing this and its impact, several educators began to create methods to provide quality and equitable practices in education. Multicultural education was created as a result. Under the umbrella of multicultural education, culturally responsive teaching was created. Culturally responsive teaching is a concept, a process, and an educational reform movement (Banks, 2005). Other terms synonymous with culturally responsive teaching are culturally mediated instruction and culturally congruent (Gay, 2000).

Developed with an understanding of the cultural reform movement, culturally responsive teaching is a way of instruction that is inclusive and sensitive and can be classified as a diverse method of knowing, understanding, and presenting information. Gay (2000) defines the concept as utilizing cultural knowledge, prior experiences, performance styles of diverse ethnic students to make learning more effective and relevant. Ladson-Billings (1994) coined the term and defines it as a level of teaching that should occur in an environment that supports multicultural outlooks while allowing for inclusion of knowledge that is relevant to students. Recently, the founder of this concept has determined this is

not relegated to minority-serving schools, but to all learning environments, without regard to socio-economic status.

Culturally responsive teaching is a revolutionary approach to teaching and learning. Understanding that students who feel left out or feel their teacher does not like or understand them, will become dismissive, rebel, or check out mentally (Wilson, 2016). Culturally responsive teaching is important because this form of teaching creates an intentional environment promoting student development and growth (Gay, 2000). Gay believed that a culturally responsive teacher understood the cultural characteristics of his/her students and knew ''detailed factual information about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups'' (p. 107) Gay also felt that teachers should be able to modify the existing curriculum to address the needs of all students in the classroom, thus making connections between the students' home and school environments.

To address the needs of society as a whole, Gay noted that a culturally responsive teacher must create a positive learning environment, hold high expectations for all students, and communicate effectively with students and their families. The final aspect of her vision for culturally responsive teaching was the use of learning strategies or, ''the act of teaching is matching instructional techniques to the learning styles of diverse students'' (p. 112).

As previously stated, this approach is identified as a way to provide academic success for African American, Latino, and other children in U.S. public

schools. As culturally responsive teaching continues to be researched, six universal dimensions have been concluded (Aronson & Laughter, 2016):

- Culturally responsive teachers are socially and academically empowering by setting high expectations for students with a commitment to every student's success;

- Culturally responsive teachers are multidimensional because they engage cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives;

- Culturally responsive teachers validate every student's culture, bridging gaps between school and home through diversified instructional strategies and multicultural curricula;

- Culturally responsive teachers are socially, emotionally, and politically comprehensive as they seek to educate the whole child;

- Culturally responsive teachers are transformative of schools and societies by using students' existing strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design;

- Culturally responsive teachers are emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies as they lift the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools.

According to Ladson-Billings (1994), culture is central to learning. It not only plays a role in receiving and communicating information, but it helps to

shape the thinking process of groups and individuals. Ladson-Billings (1992) defined culturally relevant or responsive teaching as teachers' cultural competence: how they teach in a multicultural setting. She stated that teachers who are culturally responsive use "cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 32). She further stated that culturally responsive teachers develop learning that is intellectual, social, emotional, and political based on three criteria: (a) students experiencing academic success; (b) students developing and/or maintaining cultural competence; and (c) students developing a critical consciousness which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

National statistics reveal that the population of the United States is becoming more ethnically diverse, but the teaching force remains mostly White and mostly female (Deruy, 2010). Teachers from the dominant culture must accept the reality that many of their students will come to their classrooms with cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds that are different from their own. These teachers must first challenge any bias or the perception that only certain students are capable of academically succeeding (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Therefore, it is critical that teachers become aware of how curriculum and texts have left marginalized students underrepresented in subjects such as history and science (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Also, holding this understanding is central for K-12 educators developing activities and modes of inquiry that allow

students to show their understanding of course material and to be engaged during the instructional process.

Next, to prepare to teach students who suffer oppressive conditions, K-12 educators must come to understand what is responsible for marginalized and poor students' marginalization inside and outside of schools. In addition, teachers must provide a classroom environment where all students learn collectively. They must also work collectively with their students and their students' families to eradicate the educational opportunity gap, which is responsible for the under academic performance of poor and marginalized K-12 students in the United States.

Children of color not only confront an educational debt, but they also confront an opportunity gap that, too often, is unacceptably wide. For example, less than 8% of students taking AP mathematics or AP science courses today are African American (United States Department of Education, 2013). In California, White students are about four times as likely to participate in a gifted and talented education program as their African American or Latino/a peers (United States Department of Education, 2013). Unequal opportunities do not help close the opportunity gap, but instead perpetuate the gap.

Tragically, the opportunity gap starts before kindergarten and continues into the college years. Culturally responsive teaching stresses the importance of educators learning from and respectfully relating to other cultural backgrounds, heritages, and traditions (The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements, 2014).

The concept of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010, p. 10) emerged in response to concerns over ethnic and racial inequities in the United States. This pedagogical approach is also identified as a way to provide academic success for African American, Latino/a, and other children in U.S. public schools (Gay, 2010).

Lastly, teachers must ensure that the images displayed in their classrooms represent a wide variety of diversity within and across ethnic groups, as well as ensure they are accurate extensions of what is taught throughout the curriculum (Gay, 2010). Regardless of social inequities, students must be provided with the resources and exposure necessary to achieve academic proficiency.

Some of these resources include: experienced, highly qualified teachers, academic and advanced courses, technology and classroom materials, and books (Gay, 2010). Furthermore, in order to participate in a democratic society, students need to develop skills in literacy and numeracy and expand their technological, social, and political abilities. Ladson-Billings (1995) maintained that culturally responsive teaching "requires that teachers attend to students' academic needs, not merely make them 'feel good'" and that it is imperative to have students "choose academic excellence" (p. 3). By focusing on the importance of academic success in the world, teachers can foster a desire for intellectual achievement.

Teachers must also create an accommodating and inviting classroom culture if they are to reach diverse student populations. K-12 public schools in the United States have become more diverse as students enter their doors; therefore, integrating cultural awareness in the classroom is vital (Kea, Campbell-Whatley, & Richards, 2006). More importantly, teachers must demonstrate that they care for their students and their cultural needs which in turn evokes positive emotions that empower and motivate students (Gay, 2010). Some examples of how culturally relevant teaching is being employed in K-12 classrooms are as follows: teachers working in partnership with families to demonstrate high expectations; teachers demonstrating to students that they are perceived as capable learners; teachers ensuring curriculum content is engaging and relevant to the students' lives and cultures; and teachers creating a classroom community that is welcoming to all students and families (Schmeichel, 2012).

Overall, culturally responsive teaching is designed to create an environment where teachers are fluid. In fluidity, teachers become what is necessary to provide instruction (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Teachers are multidimensional and strive to create lessons that engage all learning types while being inclusive and welcoming of all cultures. When used effectively, culturally responsive teaching has the ability to transform learning environments.

Culturally responsive practices are the only way educators can establish productive classroom communities and engage in instruction that will engage, motivate, and inspire African American boys (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Building

relationships, knowing the students, identifying their needs and wants, and teaching them through their cultural lens are critical to the success of students, particularly African American males. If we indeed want to impact the trajectory of African American males, it is necessary for culturally responsive practices to be understood and implemented. This approach provides useful strategies in any environment; more often in single-sex settings where boys tend to have higher academic gains (Lucas & Villegas, 2011).

Summary

The review of literature indicates that educational researchers consistently acknowledge that there is a persistent gap in academic achievement among students of various socioeconomic backgrounds. Current practices, such as culturally responsive teaching, have evolved to create learning environments that empower both genders. However, how teachers, parents, and students conceptualize and understand culturally responsive teaching must be explored to gain insight on school and home factors that contribute to the social, behavioral, and academic achievement of low-income students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

When students feel legitimate and their experiences between home, school, and community are bridged positively, students are empowered (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Culturally responsive teaching, if used with great fidelity, may be a component to overcome negative patterns surrounding race, class, and gender in educational environments.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to examine potential

factors that lead African American males in single-sex schools toward success.

This chapter provides details of the research methodology used to respond to

research questions and test hypotheses presented in Chapter I. Thus,

quantitative analysis provides an in-depth understanding in ways that apply to a

range of settings (Creswell, 2014). Sections presented in this chapter will discuss

the rationale for the quantitative research study, the role of the researcher and

participants, data collections, data analysis, and validity of the study.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are African American male high school students'

perceptions of the academic advantages and

disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex

school?

Research Question 2: What are African American male high school students'

perceptions of the social advantages and disadvantages

associated with attending a single-sex school?

Research Question 3: What are African American high school students'

perceptions of the behavioral advantages and

disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex

school?

Research Design

This study used a quantitative research study, using descriptive statistics

Surveys were used to analyze the perceptions of African American males in

single-sex education settings. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative

research methods are pre-determined; contain instrumental-based questions;

use performance, attitude, observational and data gathered from surveys, and

employ statistical analysis and interpretation. Further, Creswell (2013) informs

that during the 19th and 20th centuries, strategies of inquiry associated with

quantitative research were those embracing philosophical assumptions housed in

a post-positivist nature. These assumptions possess elements including

determinism, reductionism, empirical observation, cause-and-effect, and

measurement based on prior theories (Creswell, 2013). Often testing theories

and explanations, quantitative researchers add identifying variables to the study.

Usually, this practice is followed by well-developed research questions and

hypotheses using theories, validity and reliability standards.

With the use of surveys, researchers have the ability to have close-ended

questions, use pre-determined approaches, and use numeric data (Creswell,

2014). Researchers use surveys to describe how a group of people in society

thinks or acts. The researcher then collects data from the questionnaire that may

ask about perceptions or opinions and then analyzes the data to draw

conclusions about a larger population (Creswell, 2014).

This query focused on perceptions of African American males in single-

sex schools to determine and ascertain if they have better educational outcomes

than African American males in co-educational schools. With the use of a survey,

Attitude Toward School Inventory, the researcher investigated African American

males' perceptions in single-sex school settings. The survey participants'

answers were based on several aspects of their educational experience using a

Likert scale.

Role of the Researcher

Creswell (2014) speaks to the importance of a primary investigator

disclosing personal experiences and details that influence personal interest in a

study. As an African American woman teaching African American males in public

education, my experiences have shaped my perspective and inspired me to

approach this research with great vigor and curiosity. While I cannot directly

experience what my children have in public education, I often question how their

experiences are mirrored by others who look like them. Social and economic

challenges observed in this study may make students want to do better, given

their circumstances. However, data reflect most do not do well. My sons, with the

support I provide, do not have a choice. It is the expectation they will complete

high school and college, the same expectations my parents had for me.

Having been employed in education and working in rural, suburban and urban environments, a theme persisted-the mistreatment and mishandling of African American males. Often in suburban and rural settings, parents are involved enough to thwart extreme and harsh practices; however, some of the same practices of over-referring to special education and higher suspension rates are still prevalent. Classism and racism are undercurrents throughout the system and are easily manifested in urban areas as education is underfunded and people are poor. As a result, students suffer. My personal experience in each of these settings motivated me to examine the character of practices—in looking at how or if African American males thrive in single-sex education settings. I wished to determine how or if policies, procedures, environment and teaching strategies provide African American males with greater access than their peers in public schools.

My passion is directly connected to the plight of those confined to poverty, those who are disenfranchised and marginalized, particularly African American males. To ensure this research had been aptly investigated, the use of culturally responsive teaching has been explored to expose the depth of inequity and deprivation that has manifested in public education. This bias was managed to ensure the study was conducted in a responsible manner. To accomplish this, I anticipated ethical issues in advance and developed approaches to resolve them.

Ensuring that personal bias did not interfere with the creation of my research questions and hypotheses, I used two approaches. My first approach

was to thoroughly and comprehensively review the literature and modeled ideas and practices. I employed the practices of researchers in the field who addressed similar guides. Provided these studies were bias-free, or the researchers revealed their bias, they proved excellent guides for research questions and hypotheses development in this study. Second, a fellow researcher reviewed and evaluated my writing, questions, and hypotheses to ascertain bias. Use of another set of eyes provided critical insight and feedback to ensure clarity and neutrality.

After much thinking, reflecting and debating, I accepted a quantitative approach to this inquiry. It provided a direct and the least biased path to examining African American males in single-sex education. Use of surveys provided a convenient truth and limits to violating ethical issues. This method guaranteed anonymity as participant information would not be disclosed. Data collected would be discarded after a reasonable time ensuring it will not be misused (Creswell, 2014). Further, Creswell (2014) warns against simply using results and strongly suggests researchers report contrary findings, too. Research plans were examined by Morgan State University dissertation committee and institutional review board in order to seek approval before data collection and analyzed to follow protocol.

Research Setting

I selected a public high school in a southern state. This school served African-American males from low-income backgrounds, as indicated by the high

percentages of those who have qualified for federal free or reduced lunch programs. These males ranged in age from 18-21.

Participants

The target population consisted of 75 African American high school students attending a single-sex high school located in a southern state. Each participant was an African American male, a high school student between the ages of 18-21, currently attending a single-sex high school, and has attended a co-educational school.

Instrument

The survey, *Attitude Toward School Inventory*, investigated the attitudes of African-American males in single-sex educational settings. The survey consisted of 62 items. Choices to these questions ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Data Collection Procedures

Collection of data in quantitative analysis requires the researcher to follow specific guidelines. As stated in Creswell (2012), coding variables is a process allowing the researcher to align numbers or different labels to each variable. Rules of coding must be followed with great consistency to ensure ethical research practices are employed.

Ensuring ethical research practices are employed, this researcher asked for permission to proceed with the study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Morgan State University by completing the required forms. Upon

successful completion and approval, the school system being researched was contacted to inquire about processes to garner information and use of students who may be under the legal age to consent.

The actual research for this study occurred in one site visit at a selected single-sex school. A letter outlining the process, date and time was sent to the school administrator to introduce the study and to select a date for a face-to-face meeting. A data sheet was completed with information outlining specific demographics, such as age and academic outcomes. Students who met the criteria of African American, male, 18-21, attending a single-sex school, and attended a co-educational school were reviewed. Students meeting the selection criteria at the site were given a recruitment letter explaining the purpose of the study. Attached, an informed consent form provided clear details outlining the process, expectations and how information would be used once it had been secured from participants. The consent form also provided information regarding potential risks and efforts made to reduce those risks. A confidentiality form was provided.

Continuing to follow ethical guidelines, confidentiality is a must. There were no identifiers within the survey. Every effort was made to ensure confidentiality. Information from this study was kept private and any research results made public would not include any information that would make it possible to identify the site or participants. Potential participants could choose to decline to answer any or all questions and/or terminate their involvement at any

time during the site visit if they chose. Additionally, there was an understanding of no recourse or retaliation for unwillingness to complete the survey or participate in the inquiry.

Students who returned a signed consent form were invited to a meeting at the site. This meeting was held in a location indicative of privacy, offering a safe environment after the school day had ended. Participants were given instructions and asked to sign a consent form. The questionnaire was administered to participants while the researcher and guidance counselor were present. Participants were given the questionnaire, and each question was read aloud in its entirety to ensure all participants understood, had time to answer, and questions, if posed, could be answered for greater clarity. Once the questionnaire was collected, the researcher advised participants of contact information if questions arose. In this process, every effort was employed to ensure quality and ethical practices. Further, the number of questions had been taken into consideration as lengthy questions may cause frustration and lag time. As a result, only 62 questions were asked. The researcher had planned for a 90-minute session for the read aloud and answer time.

Data Analysis Procedures

A quantitative research, using information gathered from surveys of African American males attending a single-sex high school was used to evaluate and examine experiences and student outcomes. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample by using percentages of each survey response.

Data from African American males in a single-sex high school were examined to ascertain if their experiences in single-sex schools were better for them than traditional education. This researcher used SPSS version 23 to analyze descriptive statistics. After an analysis of the data, information regarding percentages, means, relationships, and standard deviations was provided. According to Trochim (2006), descriptive statistics offer a summary of the sample using graphs, percentages, and visual data. Using descriptive statistics, data were disaggregated for social, behavioral, and academic advantages and disadvantages.

According to Creswell (2012), researchers should use descriptive statistics to simplify research by organizing and summarizing data, enabling researchers to describe their observations. Descriptive statistics offer general occurrences in the data, spread of scores, or provide a comparison for relationships (Creswell, 2012).

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the participants in terms of age, grade, when they first enrolled in their current school and whether attending their current school was their choice. It was also used to summarize participants' responses from the survey on each of the 62 individual questions.

Summary

This quantitative research design used the *Attitude Toward School Inventory*. It provided insight into successful student outcomes of African American males in single-sex schools using descriptive statistics. The use of a

quantitative research design allows an unbiased approach to gathering and

potentially analyzing data collected (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2015). The research

questions were tested to determine if there are academic, social, and behavioral

advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to add to the limited body of research examining the perceptions of African-American males in single-sex schools. Using the Culturally Responsive Teaching theory as the framework, this study employed a quantitative design to answer the research questions. The target population for this study was African American male students enrolled in a single sex high school. Looking at three constructs: social, academic, and behavioral, for inter-relation reliability, data sought to decipher if there was a connection between behavior, social, and academic outcomes when an African American male is educated at a single sex high school. The total sample size is 75. Among participants, the average age is 18.12 with a standard deviation of 0.464. Seventy four percent of the sample consisted of African American males who began their high school matriculation in the ninth grade. Moreover, of the total participants, more than half, 58%, were enrolled based on a student decision to attend a single-sex high school. At the time of this query, all participants were 12th graders.

This research began with three overarching questions:

Research Question 1: What are African American male high school students' perceptions of the academic advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school?

Research Question 2:   What are African American male high school students' perceptions of the social advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school?

Research Question 3:   What are African American high school students' perceptions of the behavioral advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school?

Descriptive Statistics

Table one reflects the variables of the study, which are African American males enrolled in a single-sex high school. Listed are the sample size of N= 75, with a mean of 18.12 and a standard deviation of .464.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	Std. Deviation
Age	75	18	21	18.2	.464
Valid N (listwise)	75				

Academic Construct

This query used the *Attitude Toward School Inventory* for which participants rated their answers on a Likert scale. For the purpose of this research, twenty-two academic questions were asked within the survey. Data reflected N=75, all participants answered this section of the survey.

Data reflected that African American males for the most part agreed that academics at their single-sex high school were better than their co-educational schools. Of the 75 students who answered the survey, 93.3% felt as though classes were more interesting than what they had experienced in a co-educational school setting. They enjoyed the smaller classroom sizes and felt more comfortable learning at their single-sex school. They were more satisfied with their classes, especially reading and 100% agreed that they were more likely to pay attention in their classes now than when they attended their co-educational school. Surprisingly, this study found that only 54.7% of African American males would send their son to a single-sex school. (See Table 2).

Table 2.

Academic Questions

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
Classes at my all-male high school are more interesting to male students than what is offered at co-educational schools.	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	93.3%	4.0%

Male students who attend all-male high schools will have higher standardized test scores than males who attend co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	97.3%	1.3%
Classes at my all-male high school are smaller than the same classes at co-educational high schools.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.3%	2.7%
Classes at my all-male high school are tougher than the classes at co-educational high schools.	0.0%	4.0%	1.3%	93.3%	1.3%
I feel more comfortable learning in an all-male high school than in a co-educational high school.	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	96.0%	1.3%
I feel that attending an all-male high school has cause me to do more school work.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.3%	2.7%

If I have a son, I will send him to an all-male high school.	0.0%	33.3%	8.0%	54.7%	4.0%
The classes at my all-male high school has increased my academic success.	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	96.0%	2.7%
An all-male high school is a great way to improving the learning of African American males.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	96.0%	4.0%
Teachers at my all-male high school take into account the learning style of male students better than teachers at co-educational schools.	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	94.7%	0.0%
I am more interested in reading now that I am attending and all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%

I am more interested in English class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	98.7%	1.3%
I am more interested in mathematics class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	2.7%	17.3%	77.3%	2.7%
I am more interested in science class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	5.3%	5.3%	89.3%	0.0%
I am more interested in social studies class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	96.0%	1.3%

I am more interested in physical education class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	8.0%	5.3%	85.3%	1.3%
I am more likely to pay attention in class in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.%	0.0%
My grades have improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	5.3%	22.7%	4.0%	65.3%	2.7%
I complete more homework since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	9.3%	0.0%	90.7%	0.0%

Teachers hold higher expectations for male students at my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.	1.3%	2.7%	8.0%	86.7%	1.3%
I am satisfied with my classes at my all-male high school.	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	98.3%	0.0%
The classes at my all-male high school has improved my attitude toward learning.	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	97.6%	0.0%

Social Construct

Research Question 2:   What are African American male high school students'

perceptions of the social advantages and disadvantages

associated with attending a single-sex school?

The social construct measured the perception of relationships within their

single-sex educational setting. Participants were exposed to 30 questions, which

are listed within the survey in the appendix. The total number of participants to

answer the questions in this construct was 75 (N=75).

Further insight into these data reflected African-American males agreed

that they have a better relationship with teachers, administrators, and other male

students than they did at their co-educational schools. For the most part 62.7% of

African American males agreed that bullying at their school was less than their previous co-educational setting. However, 17.3% of students agreed that they believed there were more fights and violence at their present school than they're at their co-educational schools.

Students all agreed that their classes were more fun and feel as though they have benefited from attending a single-sex school. Students also agreed that their current school had improved their attitude and self-confidence (See Table 3).

Table 3.

Social Construct Questions

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have a better relationship with male students at my all-male high school than I had at my co-educational school.	0.0%	1.3%	2.7%	93.3%	2.7%
I have a better relationship with teachers at my all-male high school than I had at my co-educational school.	0.0%	1.3%	1.3%	94.7%	2.7%

I have a better relationship with administrators at my all-male high school than I had at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	89.3%	8.0%
There is less bullying at my all-male high school than at co-educational high schools.	1.3%	26.7%	6.7%	62.7%	2.7%
There are more fights and violence at my all-male high school than what happens at co-educational high schools.	69.3%	4.0%	6.7%	17.3%	2.7%
I feel that attending an all-male high school has deprived me of interacting with the opposite sex.	0.0%	2.7%	2.7%	93.3%	1.3%
I feel that attending an all-male high school has allowed me to become more involved in athletics.	0.0%	8.0%	5.3%	84.0%	2.7%

I feel that attending an all-male high school has resulted in me having a more positive self-image.	0.0%	1.3%	2.7%	96.0%	0.0%
The classes at my all-male high school has improved by attitude toward school.	0.0%	1.3%	1.3%	93.3%	4.0%
Attending an all-male high school has improved my attitude about teachers.	0.0%	12.0%	4.0%	84.0%	0.0%
I feel that attending an all-male high school has improved my self-confidence.	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	96.0%	0.0%
Students in my classes are more fun to study with than at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Students in my classes actively participate in all class activities.	0.0%	1.3%	4.0%	92.0%	2.7%

Students in my all-male classes are more respectful of each other than at my co-educational school.	1.3%	2.7%	8.0%	85.3%	2.7%
Students in my all-male classes are more likely to help each other than at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	97.3%	0.0%
I am more interested in participating in all class activities in my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
I ask more questions in class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	97.3%	0.0%
I am more willing to try new activities in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%

I am more able to make friends in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	5.3%	93.3%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%
My attendance has improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	96.0%	0.0%
My relationships with my classmates have improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	1.3%	2.7%	89.3%	6.7%
My sense of belonging and connection to school has improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	94.7%	5.3%

I am more involved in extracurricular activities since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	94.7%	4.0%
I enjoy being in school more now that I am in an all-male high school.	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	96.7%	2.0%
Discipline is less of a problem in my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.	5.3%	1.3%	0.0%	93.3%	0.0%
There is more drug use in my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.	4.0%	96.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
There is more violence in my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.	6.7%	93.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Overall, I have benefited from attending an all-male high school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%	0.0%

| I plan to return to this high school next year. | 4.0% | 96.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| I feel more comfortable sharing my opinions in my all male classes than I felt when I attended a co-educational school. | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.0% | 96.0% | 0.0% |

Behavioral Construct

The behavior construct offered six questions used in this query. All 6 questions are within the survey listed in the appendix. Of the six questions, all participants answered each question. (N=75).

One hundred percent of students agreed that their motivation to do well in school had improved since they attended their current single-sex school. Ninety-six percent of students disagreed that they felt more stressed at their current school and for the most part they enjoyed their classes and learned more than at their previous co-educational schools. Of the 75 students, 94.7% felt proud of themselves since they started at their single-sex school (See Table 4).

Table 4.

Behavior Construct Questions

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I enjoy most of my classes at my all-male high school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	64.0%	36.0%
I am learning more in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	77.3%	22.7%
My motivation to do well in school has improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Class rules are more consistently followed my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	96.0%	1.3%

I am prouder of myself since I started attending an all-male high school.	0.0%	1.3%	2.7%	94.7%	1.3%
I feel more stressed in my all-male classes than I did at my co-educational school.	0.0%	96.0%	2.7%	1.3%	0.0%

Summary

Chapter four provides an overview of the data. These findings are presented showing African American students' perceptions at a single-sex high school in the areas of academic, social, and behavioral. Data reflected positive outcomes as it relates to African American males in single-sex schools. These students agree they are learning more and formulating better relationships than at co-educational schools. Although this data only touched the surface of African American male perception's in single-sex schools, it does provide a synopsis of factors that should be addressed when using single-sex environments as a strategy in helping African American males succeed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

American education has been in transition for decades. Each report finds a new way to present information to students, a different method to prepare teachers, and strategies on discipline. In spite of all the recommendations and suggestions, students still struggle. As such, this research attempted to ascertain if African American males educated in a single-sex environment perceived their education differently. To gauge their perceptions, this research was guided by three over-arching questions:

Research Question 1:   What are African American male high school students' perceptions of the academic advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school?

Research Question 2:   What are African American male high school students' perceptions of the social advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school?

Research Question 3:   What are African American high school students' perceptions of the behavioral advantages and disadvantages associated with attending a single-sex school?

These questions were asked to determine if participants felt their decision to attend a single-sex educational environment allowed them freedom they did

not experience in a co-educational setting. Research suggests single-sex educational settings benefit boys in minority groups. According to Guarisco (2010), minority boys often need the emotional uplift provided in a single-sex educational environment. Public schools that are single-sex environments witness an increase in student achievement, particularly for minority students or students who are poverty-stricken. Students have improved behavior and teachers focus more on learning differences (Guarisco, 2010). While girls who attend single-sex educational settings have certain benefits, data reflected their male counterparts have more beneficial outcomes.

Further, according to Harwin and Lloyd (2019), there were 283 single-gender public schools in the United States during the 2014-2015 school year; most of which were located in Texas and Florida. More than 75% of the single-gender schools are located in urban or rural areas, while only 12% are located in suburban areas. Additionally, Harwin and Lloyd (2019) also found, ". . . there are many more all-boys public schools in the country." Of the schools investigated in their study, most were racially and economically segregated as the students were overwhelmingly black and Latino and 1.5 times more likely to qualify for free or low-cost meals. . . (p. 17). As such, the need to investigate how African American males perceive their educational setting in a single-sex environment is strongly needed. Research has shown that minority males need a different type of support that often may not be available in a co-educational setting.

Discussion

Chapter five provides an overview of the dissertation, discussion about results and moves into further research. This researcher sought to understand if African American males were treated differently in a single-sex educational setting and if they were aware of any differences in their behavior, their social awareness, and their academic outcomes. This researcher understands that if the behavior is better in school, their potential for positive social and academic outcomes are better, too. If student behavior is positive, their interactions with teachers, administrators and other students is usually positive. Hence, students who behave well, as the survey instrument and data reflect, will align well.

Students, when they feel safe, are with culturally relevant educators, and are given positive reinforcement, usually excel in the educational environment (Wilson, 2016). Participants and their teachers in this query were overheard conversing about their environment and teachers, all of which were positive and affirming.

Overall this research can provide an insight of what needs to be researched, how to develop an instrument that captures data more effectively and can lend insight to further implications in the areas of policy, practice and educational leadership.

Contextual Connections to Culturally Relevant Teaching

It is frequently reported that educators have lowered expectations of minority students (Delpit, 2012; Wilson, 2016). However, single-sex education

has emerged as a possible solution to address student performance and lessen gaps in achievement. In 2002, the United States government passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which permitted the implementation of single-sex classrooms in public schools. In years that followed the implementation of NCLB, educators have adopted the single-sex approach to education seeking to improve student outcomes. However, since the inception of single-sex education and its recreation with NCLB, few have delved into the statistics of their outcomes. As this query has demonstrated, some researchers argue the importance and greatness of single-sex education. The answer is complex and deeply personal. This researcher argues single-sex classes may not be an immediate solution to solving a very difficult problem; however, there are reasons for educators and parents to embrace single-sex schools as an effective means to increase student outcomes.

It is known that schools have not always focused on educating all students. Initially, schools taught boys how to become a man, to seek a trade, and focused on girls becoming homemakers. Education was centered on Christian principles to ensure students had the ability to read the Bible (Wilson, 2016). However, as we are in the 21st century, the converse has become true. In poor and urban environments, or often where an influx of people with color live, students and teachers enter the classroom with conceptually different perceptions of learning. This has been demonstrated and noted for decades as Clark (1965) researched urban students and discovered how they felt invisible

and set aside from when they left their neighborhoods. Seeking further information, Clark (1965) began to research IQ scores and realized the scores were severely lower and the decline began as early as third grade. This decline persisted through high school.

Another researcher, Ogbu (1978), sought to understand the dynamics of African Americans failing in school, even though they had secure socio-economic status. African Americans living in poverty and suburban neighborhoods were finding their students did not have good academic standing or positive academic outcomes. While suburban African Americans had all the supplies, parental support, and access when in educational settings with their White counterparts or with their White teacher, they still did not feel adequate. Students in middle-class homes often did not trust their White teachers and found it challenging to create and sustain lasting relationships with their White teachers. This insight was coupled with a governmental query attempting to understand the plight of American schools and students. The need for accountability of teaching and learning became paramount. Strategies were created to approach the learning environment differently. Often, in urban and poor areas, these were not implemented or simply overlooked.

Another researcher, Hilliard (1998), felt African Americans had not been appropriately addressed or educated due to specific laws and policies established to prevent optimal outcomes in education. Each student had the ability to increase their awareness as a result of coming from a different

background; however, hatred and unfair practices persisted. During this era, researchers sought to understand how people from disadvantaged backgrounds could become more efficient test takers. It was not until recently the focus of research has extended to unfair systems and discriminatory policies that negatively impact poor people, particularly people of color more than other populations (Kunjufu, 2002). Hence there is the need for this research, as it attempted to provide a potential solution for African American males who may have been mistreated in a co-educational setting.

The need for culturally responsive teaching was not overlooked but did not gain attention until the last decade. While it is packaged for White teachers working in urban environments, the strategies and approaches to learning can be implemented in any setting to ensure students are actively engaged and supported. Many African American scholars have dedicated research to improving the educational environment for students of color. White scholars have been investigating their privilege and how they approach teaching and learning to students who do not look like them also. Examining privilege, race, and other aspects of how they perceive education and the education of people of color, researchers have sought to understand the learning dynamic and how they can change to better educate the student. Doing so, many have effectively implemented culturally responsive teaching strategies in their classrooms and approaches to teaching and learning.

This is important and exciting. When the majority culture begins to examine itself and how it has not been effective in assisting all people, things begin to change. Culturally responsive teaching is an approach to leadership, teaching, and learning that aids students to become their best selves. Males, who appear to struggle more than any other group, need teachers who can relate, uplift, and provide educational spaces where they are not afraid to grow, develop, and learn. Male students, particularly those who are poor and of color, need teachers who support and provide opportunities for them to share their stories, dreams and even troubles. Additionally, the culturally responsive teacher and school leader often have different methods of discipline that are strong, but supportive. Students, even when they are wrong, know they are welcome to return to the classroom without shame, have an opportunity to make-up work, and can still thrive in the setting.

Schools are social systems. This social system is led by behavior and adult perception of student behavior. If leadership demonstrates the ability to change and thrive, students will better understand how to behave. Further, if teachers demonstrate how to teach and empower students to share their ideas, the learning environment becomes richer, leaving students feeling valid. Validation leads to acceptance and better outcomes overall.

While this research provided an insight to African American male student perceptions at a single-sex high school in the areas of academic, social and behavioral, it can be noted that results from the survey and discussions of how

their teachers made them feel welcomed in their academic environment exist. Students often discussed openly how teachers made them feel empowered, appreciated, and seemed to care about their personal lives. Further, teachers maintained favorable student-teacher relationships and assisted in addressing learning differences and performance issues.

This researcher would recommend this study be replicated in a similar school setting to determine if the findings will be the same, perhaps using a qualitative or mixed-methods approach. Using a qualitative approach, student voices of their lived experiences would provide a better understanding of their perceptions of academic, social and behavioral advantages and disadvantages. Mixed-methods would allow the conversation and discussions to add to the data. It would allow a deeper conversation around participant perception and will enable the researcher to query the 'why' and 'how' of treatment and teaching and learning practices. Overall, this research may be helpful in how districts and specific schools effectively introduce culturally responsive teaching into professional development and other strategies to support the learning styles of African American males.

Implications for Practice, Policy and Educational Leadership

Discussions leading to possible solutions to problems is the ultimate hope for researchers. Improvements, especially in education, are vital as lives can be transformed through education. Access to an excellent education can fundamentally change how people live and set a family in poverty on a different

path, projecting them into middle class, access to various social organizations, and insights on how to continue to garner better resources. It is vital that the field of education continually reflect and make attempts to become better for all children. This section is dedicated to possible improvements and restructuring of programs ensuring students are well prepared.

Practice

The practice of teaching and learning is vast. Students have many different learning styles and trying to reach all students is difficult. However, it can be done. When systems are dedicated to ensuring all students are successful, approaches are different. This query is dedicated to understanding if African American males perceive their education differently in a single-sex educational setting. Teachers approaching this environment must know how to approach males. Teachers must be prepared separately for teaching in this environment. Further, school leaders must know how to lead and train their teachers to ensure the learners are getting their best.

Instruction is essential. Teachers first must lose preconceived notions of certain students not being able to achieve. After understanding all can achieve, presentation of engaging material, focus of critical and intentional thinking and how it relates to the student can powerfully transform student outcomes.

Teachers and school leaders are trained in colleges of education/teacher preparation. Colleges may need to dedicate more attention to teachers becoming culturally responsive, by demonstrating what it looks like, how it manifests, and

its potential outcomes. Many of the colleges have professors who have not been in the K-12 environment in more than twenty years; further, many have not ever taught in a different setting other than co-educational. Professors must be adept at various types of educational settings, how they function and what is best in each setting. While culturally responsive teaching can be implemented in most places, if the concept is never presented to pre-service teachers and school leaders, it may never be understood or fully implemented.

Teaching is a profession that requires reflection. Teachers must ask themselves how lessons are presented and what can be done to improve them. Doing so, the planning and implementation of lesson plans will become better. With differentiation and specific preparation for target students, the planning is more difficult, but the outcome will serve better for the teacher and students.

Policy

Often discussed, but rarely understood, policy is often overlooked to ensure optimal outcomes for all stakeholders. In teaching and learning, there is a policy regarding sexual harassment and against racist practices, but there is not one speaking directly to covert practices and behaviors in the classroom. If students of a particular ethnic group feel isolated and threatened in the classroom, how is that ever managed? This is of particular interest, as many do not have the language or skills to actively discuss how they are being treated or how they feel about their mistreatment. Microaggression is prevalent and often so intentional and pervasive, students who are young and unaware may feel it is

them, not knowing it is a behavior exacted upon them. As the teaching force becomes overwhelmingly White, suburban and female, it is essential that these teachers and school leaders learn how to create an environment that is free from any discriminatory practices.

Educational Leadership

Research-based and theory are often terms that are discussed, but not always the focal point of recommendations for the learning environment. Often in districts, school leaders see a concept effectively implemented in another district and they immediately want to try it in theirs while not understanding different demographics, how to train educators, or how to effectively implement the concept. When it fails, often the concept is blamed, but not the ability to lead effectively or how to strategically plan for it.

School leaders need to be taught strategic planning and development designed for their demographic body. By planning strategically, they may be able to fully review concepts and ideas that are research-based and proven theories that can increase academics for all students. Further, they can plan on how to fundamentally implement the idea for their staff. An example of this is culturally responsive teaching. It is a concept that is highly valued and discussed but is not broken down into how to implement and differentiate it for specific schools or districts. If school leaders focus on planning strategically, they can begin to successfully implement programs that can be successful at their schools for their population.

This research is centered on African American males and their perception of education in a single-sex environment. If they are traumatized in a co-educational environment, it is imperative that policy is shaped so that all students are fairly treated and have a voice in their educational settings. Teachers and school leaders may need assistance from the district level to help educate in different settings. Education is vast and everchanging. As such, when training educators and leaders, it is imperative their scope is expansive in nature. What may be deemed as best practices in a traditional, co-educational setting may not be beneficial in other educational settings. The approach to each setting could prove to be very different, but those being trained in education and leadership may consider learning best practices for all educational settings.

The implications suggested in this research work in concert to ensure African American males have the best outcome in any environment. However, it should be noted that this research supports single-sex educational environments for African American males as research supports their growth and development. In single-sex educational environments, it is possible to create and maintain caring relationships, have high expectations of every student, and have a staff that reflects the belief in every young African American male, without regard to his socio-economic status.

Parents

Parents are the critical and unique piece to a successful education for all students. When students know their parents care, or there is a relationship

between parents, teachers, and administrators, they will have a different perception of their education and experience. As a former teacher, I found it was imperative that parents understood the importance of high-quality early childhood education programs. It is also very important for parents to participate in reading, math, and creative conversations with children in their early developmental stages.

Entering school can be a challenging task for parents who do not understand the process. As such, schools and school systems need to create pamphlets and flyers in different languages that represent the demographics of their community and the people they serve. If there is a large group of a particular ethnic group, perhaps hiring someone who fluently speaks their language would be helpful.

Another potential idea to aid in parent development is hosting PTA and parent-teacher conferences at different days and times to adjust to parents' schedules. Often meetings are scheduled during work hours for parents. If serving a community in poverty, parents may work multiple jobs or have different schedules that do not allow them to visit the school regularly. Teachers and school leaders may need to assist with changing dates and times to ensure parents feel welcome and accepted in the learning environment.

Parents also have to be informed of policy and procedure and expectations of students. Often, students are not taking information home, or it is not in a language that is widely understood. Leadership must create a path that is

inviting and welcoming to parents. Presenting a unified front that is working to ensure the best outcome for the student will serve all parties involved.

Summary

It is the belief of this researcher that African American male achievement can be improved when educators develop a mindset of success for every child without regard to their color, ethnic background or socio-economic status. When given adequate resources, proper instruction, and rigorous expectations, African American males can perform at the same pace as their counterparts. Educators have to become more aware of different strategies in order to provide African American male students with guidance and encouragement, an example, culturally responsive teaching.

Further, it is important to note that changes in practice, how to communicate with parents, policy and educational leadership may promote a different experience from the beginning of the K-12 experience for African American males and all other minorities. Establishing expectations and regulations of fairness provides an equitable and successful outcome for African American males.

This research study offered insight as to why culturally responsive teaching and nurturing environments are necessary and impactful for students, teachers, and school leaders. Seeking to improve the educational environment for African American males, higher success rates will be noted.

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Appendix

Attitude Toward School Student Survey

1. Was attending your current high school your choice? (select one)
   o Yes
   o My parent(s) made me go
   o Joint decision of my parent(s) and I
   o Other

2. When did you first enroll in this school?

   _____

3. Grade in school (select one)
   o 9th
   o 10th
   o 11th
   o 12th

4. Age (select one)
   o 18
   o 19
   o 20
   o 21

Please respond to each of the statements using the rating scale provided.

5. I have a better relationship with male students at my all-male high school than I had at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I have a better relationship with teachers at my all-male high school than I had at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I have a better relationship with administrators at my all-male high school than I had at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. Classes at my all-male high school are more interesting to male students than what is offered at co-educational schools.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. Male students who attend all-male high schools will have higher standardized test scores than males who attend co-educational schools.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. Classes at my all-male high school are smaller than the same classes at Co-educational high schools.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. Classes at my all-male high school are tougher than the classes at Co-educational high schools.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. There is less bullying at my all-male high school than at co-educational high schools.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. There are more fights and violence at my all-male high school than what happens at co-educational high schools.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

14. I feel more comfortable learning in an all-male high school than in a co-educational high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

15. I feel that attending an all-male high school has deprived me of interacting with the opposite sex.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

16. I feel that attending an all-male high school has cause me to do more school work.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

17. I feel that attending an all-male high school has allowed me to become more involved in athletics.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

18. I feel that attending an all-male high school has resulted in me having a more positive self-image.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

19. If I have a son, I will send him to an all-male high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

20. The classes at my all-male high school has increased my academic success.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

21. The classes at my all-male high school has improved my attitude toward learning.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

22. The classes at my all-male high school has improved my attitude toward school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

23. Attending an all-male high school has improved my attitude about teachers.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

24. An all-male high school is a great way to improving the learning of African American males.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

25. Teachers at my all-male high school take into account the learning style of male students better than teachers at co-educational schools.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

26. I fell that attending an all-male high school has improved my self-confidence.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

27. I am satisfied with my classes at my all-male high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

28. I enjoy most of my classes at my all-male high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

29. Students in my classes are more fun to study with than at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

30. Students in my classes actively participate in all class activities.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

31. Students in my all-male classes are more respectful of each other than at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

32. Students in my all-male classes are more likely to help each other than at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

33. I am more interested in participating in all class activities in my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

34. I ask more questions in class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

35. I am more willing to try new activities in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

36. I am learning more in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

37. I am more able to make friends in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

38. I am more likely to pay attention in class in my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

39. I am more interested in reading now that I am attending and all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

40. I am more interested in English class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

41. I am more interested in mathematics class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

42. I am more interested in science class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

43. I am more interested in social studies class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

44. I am more interested in physical education class now that I am attending an all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

45. My grades have improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

46. My attendance has improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

47. My relationships with my classmates have improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

48. My motivation to do well in school has improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

49. My sense of belonging and connection to school has improved since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

50. I am more involved in extracurricular activities since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

51. I complete more homework since I started attending my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

52. Class rules are more consistently followed my all-male high school than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

53. I am prouder of myself since I started attending an all-male high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

54. I enjoy being in school more now that I in an all-male high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

55. I feel more comfortable sharing my opinions in my all-male classes than I felt when I attended a co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

56. Teachers hold higher expectations for male students at my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

57. Discipline is less of a problem in my all-male high school than at my Co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

58. There is more drug use in my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

59. There is more violence in my all-male high school than at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

60. I feel more stressed in my all-male classes than I did at my co-educational school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

61. Overall, I have benefited from attending an all-male high school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree

62. I plan to return to this high school next year.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree