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An Examination of Principal Practices and Successful Outcomes for Black Male High School Students

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An Examination of Principal Practices and Successful Outcomes for Black Male High School Students

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the strategies used by select secondary school principals to increase the graduation rates among Black males in schools close to urban centers in New York State. Using culturally proficient leadership theory as a lens, this study sought to gain a better understanding of what secondary school principals are doing to increase the graduation rates of Black males. Data in this study were collected using semi-structured interviews of secondary school principals with successful graduation rates for Black males. A purposeful sampling model was used to select six to eight secondary school principals and ask them about their strategies. This study demonstrated that secondary school principals can close the graduation gap between White and Black males by using certain strategies. Several themes emerged from this study in response to the research questions. The findings from this study revealed that: secondary school principals must know that they are the orchestrators of the success within their schools; secondary school principals must be knowledgeable about culturally proficient leadership strategies; and Black males need a voice in their schools. Findings from this study will help guide secondary principals and assist superintendents in hiring and developing leaders.

An Examination of Principal Practices and Successful Outcomes for Black Male High

School Students

By

Marck E. Abraham

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Marie Cianca

Committee Member

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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

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Dedication

I am blessed to have been able to complete this dissertation. Although writing a dissertation is a lonely journey, I cannot take credit for my success alone. First, I would like to thank God. Without His grace and wisdom, I would not have been able to complete this task. Second, I would like to thank my dissertation committee. There were times when I could not see light at the end of the tunnel, but Dr. Cianca's and Dr. Owens' belief in me and my ability carried me through. I've learned how to trust the process.

I would also like to thank my mother, Etchika Pierre, for instilling in me the value and importance of education. To my children: we did it! I told you that we can do anything we put our minds to. Mia, Mariah, and Marck Jr., Daddy loves you so much! You sacrificed your time, and I appreciate you three; you are my heart. What I do, I do for us. Yolanda and Jaqueta, thank you for your support through this journey. Danielle, thank you for love and always being there for me in the long haul and for motivating me when I felt like I could not make it. I would like to thank all my friends, the superintendent, and my supporters, who spoke to me with a sense of pride, cheered me on, and told me that I can make it. I would like to thank the principals who participated in this study. You are appreciated.

Lastly, I want to thank my troubles and heartaches. I learned that all things work together for the good. Love the Lord and those who are called according to His purpose. My tribulation has been my biggest motivator. When it was said that I could not, I responded with *watch me*, because I can and will finish.

Biographical Sketch

Marck Abraham is a transformational leader with a wealth of experience in urban education. He is committed to providing a world-class educational experience that ensures all students achieve their goals of post-secondary college and fulfilling careers. His mission has been to create environments that assist students to reach their maximum potential in life.

With more than ten years of experience in education, he currently serves as the principal of McKinley High School. He successfully oversees the daily workings of the largest CTE schools in Buffalo, which is the second largest urban school district in NY. In this role, he handles the budgets, manages serious personnel issues, and acts as a school representative in the community.

Furthermore, Marck oversees staff development and trainings, creates and maintains community partnerships, and increases productivity while containing costs. At McKinley, he has shown success by increasing graduation rates, decreasing negative behaviors within the school, raising teacher expectations, providing instructional focus to schools, and increasing parental involvement. In addition, he has experience at both elementary and secondary levels in developing and implementing policies, initiatives, and systems to continually boost efficiency and performance.

Marck is the CEO and founder of MEA Consulting, LLC. MEA offers real estate management, educational lectures, workshops, training, and personal coaching. Marck is an educator, transformational leader, instructional leader, administrator, motivational

speaker, and educational consultant. Additionally, he has experience speaking on radio shows, at schools, churches, conferences, and many community-based organizations. Marck's school has been recognized as a NYS Black Male Graduation Rate Model School and NYS CTE Model School. He was named Principal of the Year in 2018 and established the first Buffalo Urban Teacher Academy.

Marck is of Haitian decent and he grew up in Miami, Florida. He moved to Buffalo on a football scholarship while seeking to play Division IA football. Taking the discipline and work ethic from the field to the classroom, he developed a passion for education and felt compelled to impact young men after his two close friends were killed. He is also a loving father who values faith and family. Marck enjoys reading, music, lifting weights, and traveling. He is a big guy in stature with an even bigger personality, a commanding force both physically and inspirationally. He also strongly believes that "When wishing won't, work will," and his favorite Nelson Mandela quote is: "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the strategies used by select secondary school principals to increase the graduation rates among Black males in schools close to urban centers in New York State. Using culturally proficient leadership theory as a lens, this study sought to gain a better understanding of what secondary school principals are doing to increase the graduation rates of Black males. Data in this study were collected using semi-structured interviews of secondary school principals with successful graduation rates for Black males. A purposeful sampling model was used to select six to eight secondary school principals and ask them about their strategies.

This study demonstrated that secondary school principals can close the graduation gap between White and Black males by using certain strategies. Several themes emerged from this study in response to the research questions. The findings from this study revealed that: secondary school principals must know that they are the orchestrators of the success within their schools; secondary school principals must be knowledgeable about culturally proficient leadership strategies; and Black males need a voice in their schools. Findings from this study will help guide secondary principals and assist superintendents in hiring and developing leaders.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Impact of the School Principal

School principals matter. A principal's vision and strong leadership are key to creating a school environment that fosters high academic success (Aguilar & Herrington, 2012). In any school, principals are the vital component and one of the key factors for increasing student achievement. They are the critical individuals in charge of moving their schools forward (Bradshaw, 2000; Dutta & Sahney, 2016). Principals are only second to teachers when it comes to increasing student achievement (Leithwood, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Davis, 2012; Quin, Bischoff, & Johnson, 2015). School leadership is a difficult task, requiring individuals to work long hours with little thanks in return (Drysdale, Gurr, & Goode, 2016).

Several studies have been conducted at the elementary level to examine the importance of principals in schools (Drysdale et al., 2016; Sebastian, 2012; Dutta et al., 2016; White-Smith & White, 2008). Examining the impact principals have on student achievement is not a new area of research. Beginning in the early 1980s, Hallinger (2003) demonstrated that a principal's actions have an indirect effect on student achievement. Although a majority of the research regarding principal leadership is focused at the elementary level, the research demonstrates that principals play a major role in student achievement, teacher development, and school culture (Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2013; Sebastian, Huang, & Allensworth, 2017).

School principals have a direct impact on teachers and an indirect impact on student achievement (Leithwood, 2005; Shatzer et al., 2013). Successful schools also have a principal who is involved with instruction, has a purpose and a clear vision for where the school is going, and shares a belief that all students can learn (Ford, 2012; Dutta et al., 2016; White-Smith, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013). As the school leader, principals are influential in creating a culture of success. According to Shatzer et al. (2013), successful schools are those where teachers have positive attitudes towards students, student learning is the major focus, and academic achievement is expected for all students.

Currently, the national four-year graduation rate is 59% for Black males and 80% for White males (Schott, 2015). This achievement gap continues to grow. The four-year graduation gap between Black and White males was 19 percentage points in the 2009-2010 school year and increased to 21 percentage points in the 2012-2013 school year (Schott, 2015). Although the achievement gap between White and Black males is not a new phenomenon, it is considered a more serious issue because of mandates such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and currently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (Quin et al., 2015; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013; Finnigan, 2012; McGuinn, 2018). These accountability measures have made the achievement gap between White and Black males a national issue and priority (Quin et al., 2015; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013; Finnigan, 2012; Pringle, Lyons, & Booker, 2010). However, schools are not successful experiences for all students.

There are many theories about why Black males are not graduating from high school on time. Some educators argue that families are to blame (Lynn, Nicole-Bacon,

Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010). Others feel that Black males are incapable of competing academically with their White counterparts (Noguera, 2008). Some educators believe that Black males fail academically because of beliefs in racial stereotypes, such as that Black males are lazy, biologically ill-equipped to perform well in math and science, only athletically inclined, insubordinate, rude, incapable of academic success, poor, and live in a culture that doesn't value learning (Noguera, 2008; McGee, 2013; Lynn et al., 2010; Harper, 2009). Most of these views are deep-seated, and many are rooted in racist opinions. These views produce low expectations for Black males, which result in the failure of Black males in schools (Harper, 2009).

Conversely, many success stories about Black males are untold (McGee, 2013). School principals are at the helm of the culture in their schools. It is possible for school principals to transform negative stereotypes about Black males into positive outcomes. One example of positive outcomes is at Eagle Academy, a New York City charter school. The principal is leading Black males to a graduation rate of 84% (Hyman, 2009). At Urban Prep Academy in Chicago, the school principal is leading Black males to a 100% graduation rate, and 100% of Black male graduates from Urban Prep are being accepted into college. The principal at Urban Prep Academy has been producing these results for the last seven years (Finley, 2016).

Although some secondary schools are successful with Black males, there is still a significant achievement gap between Black and White males in this country (Schott, 2015). With such large disparities in the graduation rates, the data show that Black males are not the problem. School systems are the problem (Schott, 2015).

Principals lead reform within their schools (White-Smith, 2012). The sense of urgency must come from the principal as the leader of the building (Ford, 2012). Principals can influence and create a safe and accepting culture that makes all students feel welcome (Ford, 2012). Black males can be successful in schools led by strong principals (Kunjufu, 2004). Schools that are closing the achievement gap among minority students are led by strong and courageous principals who have a sense of urgency to do something different within the culture of the school (Ford, 2012; Noguera, 2008; Shatzer et al., 2013; White-Smith, 2012). Many schools that have increased student achievement among minority students have done so by taking ownership of the failure of their students. Successful schools look internally for ways to increase student achievement among their minority populations. Conversely, unsuccessful schools often have a culture that blames students and parents for student failure (Ford, 2012; Noguera, 2008; Shatzer et al., 2013; White-Smith, 2012).

Some high schools create barriers for Black male students. When schools are not culturally sensitive, the resulting environment can force Black males to deal with the psychological pain of racism and adult negative stereotypes (McGee, 2013). In some suburban schools, Black males can be pressured to fit into a suburban middle-class culture that does not embrace their cultural identity. According to McGee (2013), some suburban teachers and administrators create a climate where Black male students are not good enough. McGee (2013) noted that Black males often need to change their tone of voice, hairstyles, manner of speaking, demeanor, and style of dress to look smarter and appear non-threatening. Schools that are not culturally aware persist with negative perceptions of Black males. In such schools, Black males can be stereotyped as lazy, not

as bright as White children, and academically inferior (McGee, 2013; Lynn, Nicole-Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010; Harper, 2009; Tyler, Thompson, Falynn., Gat, Donna., Burris, Jennifer., Lloyd, Howard, & Fisher, Sycarah, 2016). This is demonstrated in the *Nigger* culture concept (Harper, 2009). Harper (2009) stated that when Black males are the victims of negative stereotypes, the school culture unconsciously assigns them the most hated term, *Nigger*. School leaders who are not culturally sensitive view different cultures as a problem (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell Jones, 2009).

As part of their duties, school principals are responsible for student discipline. School principals have the final say for all student suspensions and expulsions. Schools with high success rates ensure that students are in school and not out of school on suspension. Schools that struggle with Black male achievement often promote a culture where Black males feel like criminals and demons (Pringle et al., 2010; McGee, 2013; Bristol, 2014; Meir, 2015). The criminalization of Black males in schools can be observed in the disproportionate number of discipline referrals Black males receive for subjective reasons (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Black males are sent to the office for reasons such as disrespect, defiance, and insubordination, all subjective terms (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Black male children are faced with zero tolerance disciplinary actions such as suspension or expulsion (Darensbourg, Perez, & Blake, 2010). Black males are suspended and expelled at a rate three times higher than any other race in the country (Bristol, 2014).

When Black males are suspended, they become disengaged socially and are less apt to follow school rules. The result of disengagement and disapproval creates an environment where Black males feel like outcasts, and are ultimately barred academically

from schools (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Lewis, Simon, Uzzel, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010; Darensbourg et al., 2010). This leads to less time on task, academic problems, and eventually, dropping out of high school (Lewis et al., 2010; Gregory et al., 2010; Freeman, 2015; Parsons, 2017). The impact on Black males is a problem for school principals due to the mandates they face for increasing student achievement and improving graduation rates (Shatzer et al., 2013).

As previously stated, school principals are responsible and accountable for the academic performance of all students within their schools. Increased accountability can be seen with initiatives such as Race to the Top, No Child Left Behind, and the Every Student Succeeds Act. In these government initiatives, school principals are held accountable to ensure all students achieve academically (Davis et al., 2012; Finnigan, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013; McGuinn, 2018). Overall, student achievement is important, but it is imperative that data for subgroups such as Black males are examined and increased as well.

A study by White-Smith (2012) indicated a need for reform in urban schools, especially for Black males. As data show, there is a disparity between the rate at which Black males graduate from high school and the rate at which White males graduate from high school (McGee, 2013; Schott, 2015). The disparity between graduation rates for White and Black males plays a part in the achievement gap. Outcomes for subgroups such as Black males need to be examined because these students are failing at such a high rate. To this end, principals in some states are finding success with this subgroup.

In New Jersey and Tennessee, some secondary school principals are doing a phenomenal job and are finding ways to graduate Black males at a rate above the national

average of 59% (Schott, 2015). Systems that principals put in place can lead students to graduation and then to college (Ford, 2012). Furthermore, some principals are delivering successful outcomes for Black males as evidenced by the number of Black males attending college. Currently, over two million Black men are college educated, with over a million Black men in college today (Schott, 2015). These statistics challenge the status quo that all schools are failing Black males, that principals don't matter, and that Black males cannot be successful.

When students are placed in a challenging educational environment and are given high expectations to learn, they often achieve high academic success (Pringle et al., 2010; Bacon, et al., 2010). Many researchers have found that the biggest contributor to student academic achievement is teachers (Pringle et al., 2010; Darling Hammond & Adamson, 2012). However, as stated earlier, second to teachers, student academic achievement is influenced by their school principal due to the culture and systems principals employ (Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2012; Leithwood, 2005).

Most research on principal leadership and influence examines their effects on student achievement at the elementary level. Additionally, current research does not focus on Black males, and most of the research is quantitative. This study undertook a qualitative examination of the role secondary school principals play in the achievement of Black males and the strategies used to reduce the student achievement gap in this population.

Problem Statement

The literature is currently absent on secondary school principals and their success with Black males. Closing the achievement gap between Black and White students has

been a concern for the past half century and has cost taxpayers billions of dollars (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Yet there is still limited research on the strategies schools are using to close the achievement gap (Khalifa et al., 2016). Despite many efforts and billions of dollars in resources to fix the issue, the gap between White and Black students only lessened somewhat in 1971. Since the 1980s, the gap has been increasing (David & Marchant, 2015). There is not enough qualitative research on secondary school principals and what they are doing to produce positive results for all students, especially Black males.

The data are not ambiguous. Black males are not graduating from high school on time with their peers. Black males are being outperformed academically by their White peers in exam scores and graduation rates (Fletcher & Cox, 2012). However, several schools are producing high graduation rates for Black males with little attention in the research to examine these schools (Schott, 2012).

School principals have an important role in creating an environment that increases the academic achievement for all students. The more principals work with teachers and focus on the quality of the learning experience, the greater effect they have on student achievement (Robinson & Werblow, 2008). Principals are responsible for creating a culture that promotes a supportive, safe learning environment and encourages high academic achievement.

The literature on principals who produce high-performing outcomes in urban schools is scarce. Research on principals and the effect they have on academic success for Black males is even scarcer. It is important to examine what principals are doing in

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those schools where Black males are graduating and going on to college. It is not yet known what strategies are most effective and how to replicate successful school cultures.

Although elementary schools provide great insight about how to increase student achievement, the research falls short for secondary schools. Secondary and elementary schools are very different in their day-to-day operations, curricula, parental support, discipline, and stakeholders such as colleges (Sebastian et al., 2017). Most of the research has looked at the strategies that principals are employing in suburban elementary schools and some urban elementary schools. A few have examined urban secondary schools, but none has examined the strategies principals are implementing to increase student achievement among Black males. This research addressed the gaps by examining the specific strategies principals are using to positively affect an underserved population within secondary schools.

Theoretical Rationale

The theoretical framework used for this research was culturally proficient leadership. Cultural proficiency is an effective framework for this study because it is a model that can shift the culture of a school or district and can help leaders and staff understand how to effectively interact with other cultures (Lindsey et al., 2009). Culturally proficient leaders exhibit personal values and behaviors that engage effectively with individuals in schools and communities and address issues that arise when cultural differences are not being addressed (Lindsey et al., 2009). When leaders are culturally proficient, they do more than advocate for another culture; they understand the culture and celebrate it from a leadership perspective (Khalifa et al., 2016). To be culturally proficient, a leader must embrace the nuances and complexities of the cultures they serve

(Khalifa et al., 2016). Unfortunately, most leaders in secondary schools are not trained to be culturally proficient leaders, and as a result, Black males are not embraced in schools, are stereotyped and misunderstood, and are disproportionately suspended.

The data are startling. Black males are suspended or expelled three times more than any other race in the country. They perform at a lower level than any other race in reading and math levels, and they have the lowest graduation rates nationwide. Black males are referred to the main office more often than any other group for subjective reasons, such as speaking loudly, being disrespectful, or being defiant (McGee, 2013). When students are suspended multiple times, they become disengaged from the school environment, and student achievement decreases (Gregory et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 2010; Darensbourg et al., 2010).

These disparities demonstrate that Black males are in school cultures that are hostile toward them (Khalifa et al., 2016). Black male children deal with the same social and emotional issues all children face, but they are also forced to struggle with growing up in a society that continues to question them. Black males are made to feel that they are dangerous or not smart enough, as evidenced by the disproportionate number of referrals to special education classes. They are disproportionately suspended and forced to fit into a suburban culture or be outcast for being different (McGee, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016).

It is imperative that principals practice culturally responsive leadership to address the needs of their Black male students, a population that is failing disproportionately (Khalifa et al., 2016). A culturally proficient leader demonstrates five elements in their leadership practices: assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of

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difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Lindsey et al., 2009). Culturally proficient leaders:

1. Assess the culture by identifying the differences among people within their environment.

2. Value diversity by embracing the differences among other cultures and teaching others to do likewise.

3. Create a work setting that embraces the challenges of diversity.

4. Understand that challenges will arise.

5. Manage conflict in a positive way to help everyone understand that cultural clashes can occur.

6. Adapt to diversity by being a life-long learner of other cultures.

For these reasons, the conceptual framework of cultural proficiency as espoused by Lindsey, Robins, & Campbell Jones (2009) is an effective framework to use to undergird the study.

Culturally proficient leadership theory is rooted in transformational leadership theory. Transformational leaders are strong moral leaders who fight for the inequalities of non-dominant groups. Transformational leadership theory requires a leader to exercise moral convictions and strength (Lindsey et al., 2009). Black males are underperforming academically, they are often misunderstood, and they are treated like castaways. Consequently, Black males are not excelling within schools. It is incumbent upon school principals as leaders of their buildings to make all students feel welcomed, and to ensure the success of all students within the school. Culturally proficient leaders focus on the strengths of the individuals they serve and take the time to understand the sub-

populations. When sub-populations are heard and principals make a concerted effort to listen to students and families, academic achievement follows (Ford, 2012). Culturally proficient leadership was the most effective framework used in this study because it best illuminated the underlying problem that causes Black males to be disproportionately suspended and receive failing grades. Culturally proficient leadership sheds light on issues within schools that are not being addressed from a principal's perspective within the literature.

Statement of Purpose

School principals can have a positive impact on student achievement (White-Smith, 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies being used by school principals in successful high schools, specifically those who are increasing student achievement among Black males. The study identified the elements of culturally responsive leadership that increase student achievement among Black males and establish a supportive school environment.

As stated previously, principals are being held accountable to increase the achievement of all students within their schools (Quin et al., 2015; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Although Black males and White males occupy the same buildings, there is a significant disparity between the two races in treatment and graduation rates (Schott, 2012; McGee, 2013; Noguera, 2008). Black males graduate from high school at the lowest rate in the country. This is a concern for us all. Billions of taxpayer dollars have been allocated to decrease the achievement gap between Black and White males, to no avail. The achievement gap of Black and White males is an issue for all educators (Quin et al., 2015; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

This research helped determine how increasing student achievement among Black males in high school may be influenced by using strategies embraced by culturally proficient leaders. The current research on successful secondary schools for Black males has not clearly identified which leadership strategies may be contributing to their success.

Research Questions

The following three research questions guided this dissertation study about using culturally proficient leadership as the theoretical framework:

1. What, if any, leadership strategies are secondary school principals using in successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males?

2. For those strategies identified, how are they being implemented, and how might they be replicated in other schools?

3. What, if any, aspects of culturally proficient leadership are being employed by successful principals?

Potential Significance of the Study

School principals can have a positive or negative impact on student achievement. Black males need help academically. The research indicates that principals can help change the course for Black males by implementing effective strategies. There are not enough details on how to complete this feat in secondary schools. Most of the research related to strategies that principals are employing within schools is coming from the elementary level. There remains a significant gap of research between elementary school principals and secondary school principals (Sebastian et al., 2017).

Findings from this study help guide secondary school principals in New York State and the nation by identifying successful strategies principals are employing to

increase the graduation rate among Black males. The research also helps superintendents

hire and develop secondary school principals who practice such strategies. Secondary

schools are complex, and this study equips superintendents with knowledge to better

prepare secondary school principals with culturally proficient strategies they can use in

the field. The research added to the literature, from a qualitative perspective, by

interviewing school principals.

The research provided an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of culturally

proficient strategies pertaining to Black males within urban schools, or schools close to

urban centers. The research examined practical methods secondary school principals use

to increase student graduation achievement among Black boys.

Definition of Terms

The terms specific to this study include:

Black males – all male students from the African Diaspora, including African

American, Haitian, Bahaman, and all Black and Brown males other than the Latino male

students (Jackson et al., 2003).

Males – children in grades 9-12. Black males are often viewed as a man at a

young age, consequently, are treated in a hostile manner and expected to behave as an

adult very early. This can be seen in the slaying of the Black males within the country,

where adults treated them as adults and killed them, or with the stereotypes Black males

are given or how they are demonized at a young age (Tyler et al., 2016; Lynn et al., 2010;

Lopez, 2014).

Cohort graduation rates – a four-year graduation rate with an Advanced New

York State Regents Diploma or a Regents Diploma (Schott, 2015). Local diplomas and

CDOS Diplomas (Career Development and Occupational Studies Commencement

Credential) will be excluded.

   Achievement gap – the graduation gap that exists between White and Black males

(Schott, 2015).

   Cultural proficiency – a model for shifting the culture of the school or district; a

model for individual transformation and organizational change. Cultural proficiency is a

mind-set, a worldview, and a way a person makes assumptions for describing, responding

to, and planning for issues that arise in diverse environments. Cultural proficiency is a

paradigm shift that views cultural differences as a benefit and not a negative (Lindsey et

al., 2009).

   Culturally proficient school leadership – leadership that creates a mission and

vision that serves the needs of all students. A culturally proficient leader knows about the

cultural issues that affect all students and work with people within their buildings to

guide others in challenging assumptions and translating perspectives, perceptions, values,

and goals into agendas for school change (Lindsey et al., 2009).

   Successful schools – a school with a graduation rate for Black males that exceeds

the national 59% graduation rate for Black males (Schott, 2015).

Chapter Summary

   School principals have an impact on student achievement. The research

demonstrates that what principals do within their schools matters. Strong school

principals who set a clear direction for their students have demonstrated that they will

have success within their school (Aguilar, Kearney, & Herrington, 2012). When

principals take ownership of their data and focus on instruction, achievement increases

(White-Smith & White, 2008). When school principals are successful, they understand that they are developing a healthy culture in their school buildings by developing teachers, creating a safe culture for students, and focusing on the instructional needs of their students (Shatzer et al., 2013).

School principals are under a lot of pressure (Drysdale et al., 2016). Several accountability measures for school principals and mandates such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Every Student Succeeds Act demand high academic achievement for all students (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013; McGuinn, 2018). Unfortunately, although principals are being held accountable for increasing student achievement among all students, there is a subgroup of students that principals across the country are leaving behind. This subpopulation is Black males.

Principals are second to teachers in influencing how students perform within the classroom. The majority of principals are having difficulty assisting Black male students with their graduation rates. Black males have the lowest four-year cohort graduation rate within the country (Schott, 2015). This has created a growing achievement gap among Black and White male students within this country. From the 2009-2010 cohort to the 2012-2013 cohort, the graduation rate gap has grown from 19% to 21%. Principals across the country are struggling to create a school culture that leads to high academic success for this population. Principals are also having a difficult time keeping Black males out of special education classes and in school. On average, Black males are suspended and placed in special education classes at a rate three times higher than any other race in the country (McGee, 2013, Noguera, 2008; Schott, 2015).

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Although most principals are having a difficult time closing the achievement gap for Black male students, this not the case for every principal. More than one million Black men are in college, and more than two million Black men are college educated (Schott, 2015). These statistics demonstrate that Black males can excel academically (McGee, 2013). Principals in New Jersey are having high success rates with Black males. New Jersey's graduation rate for Black males is significantly higher than the national average of 59%. Moreover, even though this achievement statistic is available to the public, there is no research demonstrating what principals of these Black students are doing to obtain this higher-than-average graduation rate. Secondary school principals need more information so that they can replicate what is working for others.

This study addressed the practices of successful high school principals using cultural proficiency as the theoretical rationale. Using a culturally proficient paradigm, Black males are accepted, valued, and appreciated for who they are. In this model, principals learn Black males' culture and don't assume they know the culture, creating systems to make Black males feel accepted (Lindsey et al., 2009). Cultural proficiency does not negate instructional strategies and allows principals to incorporate culturally relevant practices in their schools.

As stated previously, Black males are graduating at high rates from some high schools within the country. Some secondary school principals are having a high success rate among a population of students that statistics show is failing. Most research examines Black males using a deficit model. This study added to the literature by examining what successful secondary school principals are doing to improve the

graduation rate for Black males. The purpose of the study was to discover why these

principals are succeeding.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

School principals can have a positive impact on student achievement (White-Smith, 2012). This study examined the strategies being used by school principals in successful high schools to increase student achievement among Black males. This study identified the role culturally responsive leadership played in increasing student achievement among Black males and establishing a supportive school environment.

The literature review examined the strategies successful urban secondary school principals are using to increase student achievement among their Black male student populations. The literature review also examined the culturally proficient leadership strategies principals can employ or are employing within schools and the effects those strategies have on schools. In addition, the literature review looked at leadership strategies and determined best practices within schools. Lastly, the research examined the comparisons between Black male and White male graduation rates to demonstrate the disparities within the educational systems between both parties.

The research questions used as the basis for this dissertation include:

1. What, if any, leadership strategies are secondary school principals using in successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males?

2. For those strategies identified, how are they being implemented, and how might they be replicated in other schools?

3. What, if any, aspects of culturally proficient leadership are being employed by successful principals?

An Underserved Population

Roderick (2003) examined the lived experiences of African American males who transition from middle school to high school. Roderick (2003) examined one of the largest urban school districts within the country, the Chicago Public School System. The research indicated that in high schools, there is a decline in academic motivation and student engagement (Roderick, 2003). The study explained that Black male disengagement is seemingly more pronounced (Roderick, 2003). In secondary schools, students are asked to work more independently. They are expected to do this with less teacher supervision, more academic freedom, and more autonomy, transitioning to classes without oversight (Roderick, 2003). Although data demonstrate that Black males on average struggle in secondary schools, adults in secondary schools believe that at age 13, students should be able to work with very little guidance and supervision (Roderick, 2003). Unfortunately, Black males on average come into secondary schools at a significantly lower academic level than their peers (Roderick, 2003). More academic autonomy, less teacher oversight, and academic struggles may be a catalyst for academic failure.

Furthermore, when Black males enter secondary schools, they are faced with adult hostility (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Khalifa et al. (2016) synthesized the literature on culturally responsive school leadership and concluded that school leadership is important to school reform and social justice education. The synthesis review provided a framework to make school leaders responsive to the schooling needs of "minoritized"

students (Khalifa et al., 2016). What is clear from the synthesis is that there is a growing achievement gap between White and Black males in test scores and graduation rates (Khalifa et al., 2016). As a result, this study focused on the graduation rate gap between White and Black males.

The high school graduation gap between Black and White males is not a new phenomenon, but it is a serious one (Khalifa et al., 2016). The research is clear that school principals matter, and that successful leadership leads to higher academic achievement (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Another qualitative study about culturally responsive leadership discovered that the current literature does not inform secondary school principals on the strategies they can employ to help minority students, including Black males (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) focused on the experience of an assistant principal's journey in creating a culturally responsive community within her high school (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). The study found that this assistant principal enacted six culturally responsive leadership strategies within her school building, including: caring, building relationships, being persistent and persuasive, being present and communicating, modeling cultural responsiveness, and fostering cultural responsiveness among others (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). This resulted in students and parents feeling more included within the school, fewer discipline issues, and increased student achievement (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Although some schools have embraced the concept of being inclusive for all students, many schools within the United States have remained static (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Static leadership may be one of the causes of low graduation rates for Black males.

Black males aren't succeeding in secondary schools. More than 40% of Black males in this country will not graduate from high school. Black males drop out of high school at a rate of 10.6% as compared to their White classmates' rate of 6.3% (Tyler et al., 2016). Tyler et al. (2016) examined if Black males in high schools internalize racial stereotypes that cause them to be academically handicapped. The study discovered that internalizing racist stereotypes by Black Americans was a predictor of self-handicapping behaviors by Black male high school students (Tyler et al., 2016). These self-handicapping behaviors contribute to the high dropout rates for Black males.

According to a recent article, Jeffers (2017) conducted a qualitative study examining the educational experiences of African American males who attended urban schools and have been incarcerated (Jeffers, 2017). Jeffers (2017) demonstrated how school experiences contribute to the school to prison pipeline. According to the article, which aligns with Tyler et al. (2016), Black males may be placed in remedial classes that make them feel incapable of achieving academic success (Jeffers, 2017). Furthermore, with the high rates that Black males are suspended, they are made to feel like enemies of education (Jeffers, 2017). Jeffers (2017) discovered that Black males who dropped out and were later incarcerated felt frustrated with the educational process. They believed teachers were predictors of their academic success, and they felt more valued in lower grades and less valued through middle and high school (Jeffers, 2017).

Jeffers findings are somewhat contradictory to another study that suggested that students who eventually dropped out of school performed more poorly in lower grades like kindergarten (Hickman, Bartholomew, Mathwig, & Heinrich, 2008). Hickman, Bartholomew, Mathwig, and Heinrich (2008) suggested that students who drop out of

school demonstrated signs of dropping out by their reading levels in third grade (Hickman et al., 2008). This quantitative study examined the developmental pathways between high school graduates and dropouts (Hickman et al., 2008). Nevertheless, this study's findings are different from the qualitative experiences of Black male students in high schools who point out the reasons for dropping out of school were because of cultures within schools that made them feel devalued as students (Jeffers, 2017).

Teaching males in school. When educating Black males, there must be an understanding that being Black presents barriers for students. Black students cannot shake off their Black skin to fit in. Likewise, when educators are teaching males in school there must be an understanding that males and females may learn differently (Hodgetts, 2010). According to the Hodgetts' study, there are biological differences that point out that males learn differently than their female counterparts (Hodgetts, 2010).

Hodgetts (2010) introduced the concept of examining boy-friendly interventions in classroom practices. This study underscored the need for teachers to develop critical thresholds of knowledge in relation to gender and schooling (Hodgetts, 2010). The study discovered that teachers must understand the basis of students needs if they are to deal with them effectively (Hodgetts, 2010).

In another study, Gurian and Stevens (2006) echoed the beliefs of Hodgetts (2010). Gurian et al. (2006) stated that boys' brains are hardwired differently than girls' brains. According to the researchers, there are three stages of how gender happens in the brain. Chromosome markers for gender are included in the genomes at conception. These chromosome markers create the XX brain for females and the XY brains for males, and the child is born a boy or a girl. The result sends nonverbal and verbal cues to parents, the

nurturing community, and the larger community (Gurian et al., 2006). According to

Gurian et al. (2006), the brain of a boy cannot be changed into the brain of a girl just as a

shy person cannot be changed into an extrovert (Gurian et al., 2016). The issue is that

teachers aren't trained to teach males and are taught that being a boy or a girl is culturally

insignificant.

Noguera (2012) provides a different school of thought than that of Hodgetts

(2010) and Gurian et al, (2006). Noguera (2012) examined single gender schools that

house Black and Latino males and concluded that single gender schools were not the only

key to creating success for Black and Latino males. Noguera's research contended with

the fact that boys learn differently than females (Noguera, 2012).

Noguera (2012) identified 20 New York City high schools with graduation rates

for Black and Latino males that exceeded 80%. He discovered that for Black and Latino

males to be successful in schools, there must be a strong positive relationship with

teachers, personalized learning that included mentors and counselors, and effective,

strong school principals (Noguera, 2012).The concept of effective, strong principals does

not equate to strong disciplinarians, but to leaders who are more like big brothers and

father figures to the students (Noguera, 2012).

Moreover, in a study that mirrors Noguera's findings (2012), Patterson (2012)

discussed single-sex schools, their success, and the criticism they received. In this article,

the researcher spoke with the principal of Claremont Academy, which is in a tough

Chicago neighborhood. The school had a population of 540 students, 97% of whom were

Black and 96% of whom came from low income homes that qualified for free or reduced

lunch (Patterson, 2012). The principal stated that she went to single-gender classrooms

for seventh- and eighth-grade students when she realized that her students placed academic achievement second to social interactions with peers (Patterson, 2012). Her decision led to student test scores that exceeded state standards. Her students' scores were 76% higher for 8th graders in math and reading, and 82% higher for 7th graders in math, reading, and science (Patterson, 2012). Like Noguera's study, the teachers at this school did not believe that single-gender classes alone created academic success for their students (Patterson, 2012).

Furthermore, teachers believed that such a high level of academic success for males was because their students had the same four teachers for their academic subjects in 7th and 8th grades, and the teachers knew all of their students (Patterson, 2012). The teachers believed that boys and girls did not necessarily learn differently, but their interests were different (Patterson, 2012).

At Urban Prep Academy, an all-male Black secondary school in Chicago that was touted by former U.S. Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan as a flagship school, the founder of the school explained how they maintained success among their Black males (Patterson, 2012). The school had something they called "pride," which provided the young men with a sense of self-possession and responsibility (Patterson, 2012). The pride activity took place in a group of 25 students, and students received accolades for right behavior and admonished for negative behaviors (Patterson, 2012). The school staff mirrored the student population. At Urban Prep, 40% of the staff was Black men, plus they had a Black principal and Black assistant principal. The founder of the school believes that adults can create an environment where students must perform tasks to remain a member of the school and to counteract the allure of gangs (Patterson, 2012). It

is also important for Black male students to see other Black men in education to model that education is important.

In another article, Husband (2014) examined strategies teachers can implement in and across curriculum and social contexts to assist with reading engagement among Black males. Knowing that there is a reading gap between White and Black males, a multi-strategic framework is needed to increase reading engagement with Black males (Husband, 2014).

Husband (2014) identified several strategies to increase reading engagement among Black males. Husband (2014) included curriculum-based strategies to increase reading engagement. These strategies are: including texts that reflect the interests and preferences of Black males, including texts with positive male characters as the main characters, finding reading materials that reflect themes and characters in popular culture, and having texts with real-life themes and objects (Husband, 2014).

Two pedagogical strategies were examined to increase Black males' engagement. The first strategy was active literacy (Husband, 2014), which consists of active participation in reading, including high energy, action, and high degrees of stimulation. This strategy may include but is not limited to rapping, dancing, dramatic role playing from readings, and/or participating in debates from readings (Husband, 2014). The second strategy was culturally responsive literacy instruction. This consists of literacy with cultural knowledge and sensitivity, high expectations for all learners, and student-centered literacy (Husband, 2014).

Although the research is seemingly split on whether males learn differently than females, what is clear is that males are outperformed academically more often by females

(Tyre, 2008). Tyre (2008) echoed previous studies that indicate that males in general are lagging behind female students. Schools are often biased toward female students, and there is a crisis with the learning of males (Tyre, 2008). Further, Black males perform the lowest in all categories, especially regarding graduation rates (Schott, 2015).

Males are not second-class citizens academically, and with the right strategies employed by schools, Black and White males can excel academically (Tyre, 2008; Husband, 2014; Patterson, 2012; Noguera, 2012; Gurian et al., 2006). There have been schools that have high success with males, especially Black males. Some of the successful strategies include: having more male staff, creating reading programs for Black males, encouraging more men volunteers in school, encouraging male to male friendships, encouraging competition within schools for males, challenging males academically to do more, rewarding intellectual growth over compliance, and rule following. These are just a few of many strategies that have shown to have success with Black males, and males in general (Tyre, 2008; Husband, 2014; Patterson, 2012; Noguera, 2012; Gurian et al., 2006). It is important to note that although some may lean toward single-sex schools as the silver bullet for Black males' success, it is not simply pedagogical (Tyre, 2008; Noguera, 2012). For Black males to have success in schools, there must be a school leader who produces a school culture that values them, understands them, and cares about their academic success, all features of culturally proficient leadership (Khalifia et al., 2016; Noguera, 2012; Tyre, 2008, McGee, 2013).

Myths of Black males in schools. Many educators also believe that if Black males had greater parental involvement, they would be successful (Lynn et al., 2010). Although many educators make this claim, there is a great deal of ambiguity as to what

parental support means. Lynn et al. (2010) examined the thoughts and perceptions of teachers and administrators about Black males within the school. In the study, teachers asked for more parental involvement but could not articulate how it would assist in increasing student achievement (Lynn et al., 2010). Another myth is that Black males allegedly fail academically due to lack of motivation in school. There is a stereotypical belief that Black males are lazy and unmotivated (Lynn et al., 2010; Tyler et al., 2016). Relying on stereotypes is a common practice for adults when relationships with students are not built (Roderick, 2003).

Due to an achievement gap between Black and White students, a hostile culture may arise within the school that promotes negative stereotypes about Black males and their families (Noguera, 2008). Noguera (2008) agreed with Tyler et al. (2016) about the powerful negative stereotypes that plague Black students within schools. Tyler et al. (2016) stated that underachievement by students of color can become normalized when educators and others accept low performance as the byproduct of factors they cannot control. Noguera (2008) analyzed two suburban school districts. The study examined the achievement gap between Black and White students and looked at why some districts are closing the achievement gap between White and Black students. Two of the major stereotypes within schools that have a graduation gap are that Black males have parents who do not care for them, and that socio-economic status is a predictor of academic success (Noguera, 2008). Although this argument has some merit, it is not one that can stand as causation. Countless impoverished Black males graduate from high school (Noguera, 2008).

An additional stereotype is that Black males are failing academically due to their culture (Noguera, 2008). Some believe Black males' culture does not support hard work or education (Noguera, 2008). According to Noguera (2008), some individuals attempt to normalize the achievement gap for Black males because it has been there so long, so they come up with rationales for why this problem exists. Schools that are striving to close the achievement gap between White and Black students increase rigorous learning programs for their minority students, improve mentoring and counseling for students, and increase stakeholder involvement (Noguera, 2008). Schools that are not focused on closing the achievement gap blame children and families (Noguera, 2008).

McGee (2013) and Noguera (2008) examined the same area, stating that there are many examples of Black males excelling all over the United States. When Black males are placed in an environment that is inclusive of their culture, they excel (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Unfortunately, Black males are more often placed in hostile school environments in cultures that are not accepting to them as learners (Khalifa et al., 2016; Noguera, 2008; McGee, 2013). In most culturally static schools, Black males are often forced to become resilient and overcome academic obstacles despite the pitfalls and stumbling blocks they face by the hostile culture created or fostered by some school leaders (McGee, 2013; Khalifa, 2016). McGee (2013) examined the lives of 11 high-achieving Black males in four different charter high schools that all maintained high academic success. The study examined how these young men overcame the challenges and threats they faced in the walls of their high schools (McGee, 2013). Some of these risks included strong negative stereotypes about them by administrators and teachers (due

to their race, tone of voice, and style of dress), low academic expectations, no access to college readiness courses, and being viewed as threats (McGee, 2013).

In another example, Roderick (2003) completed a longitudinal study in Chicago that compared the gender differences of Black males and females in school performance from 8th to 12th grade. The study suggested that adults in schools with these negative stereotypes implore Black males to work harder in school, assimilate to the rules of the school, be resilient, and do homework. In addition, parents are told to be more involved so their children can hope to succeed in school (McGee, 2013; Noguera, 2008). Although schools ask Black males and their parents to push harder, be resilient, and overcome obstacles, those same expectations are not placed on the school and its leadership (Roderick, 2003). Finnigan (2012) examined principal leadership strategies in low-performing schools from the perspective of teachers. This research indicated that failing leadership produces failing schools, which consequently produces failing students (Finnigan, 2012).

The reality is that some schools and states have found a way to graduate Black males, and others have not (Schott, 2015). The Schott Report, a national report that tracks graduation rates for Black, Latino, and White males in the United States, stated that millions of Black males have graduated from high school and are college educated (Schott, 2015). The problem is that there are not enough studies to provide leaders with strategies to consistently graduate Black males from high school. This is evident from the dismal graduation rate for Black males and the growing graduation gap between White and Black males (Schott, 2015; David & Marchant, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016).

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The experiences of Black males in secondary schools. When Black males enter schools, they are treated differently by their teachers and administrators. Black males are disproportionally suspended and expelled due to zero tolerance policies enacted by administrators to keep the school safe (Khalifa et al., 2016; Roderick, 2003). In a recent quantitative research study of Chicago Public Schools by Sebastian et al. (2017), the researchers examined integrated leadership systems and student outcomes. The researchers discovered that for urban schools to appear successful, the school must feel safe (Sebastian et al., 2017). To create this appearance, punitive measures are employed by administration, rather than proactive or restorative strategies that view Black male students as members of the school community (Roderick, 2003). The data demonstrated that 50% of Black males in grades 6-12 had been suspended, compared to 21% of White males (McGee, 2013). In addition, 17% of Black males had been expelled from school compared to only one percent of White males (McGee, 2013).

Darensbourg et al. (2010) completed another study of the overrepresentation of Black males in exclusionary disciplinary practices. The study suggested that when students are suspended at a high rate, they become disengaged from the school community (Darensbourg et al., 2010). Most Black males who had not come to school had been forced out through suspension (Darensbourg et al., 2010). Consequently, they were not having academic success (Darensbourg et al., 2010). When school personnel force Black males out of the school, the students feel alienated and often attempt to find success in other areas.

Darensbourg et al. (2010) examined how disciplinary strategies in schools are creating a school-to-prison pipeline. It is a result of pushing students out of school over

and over until they check out and begin to engage in activities that can get them arrested, or many times they are arrested at school as part of their punishment. The school-to-prison pipeline develops as a result of favored disciplinary practices such as detention and out-of-school suspension (Darensbourg et al., 2010). Darensbourg, et al. (2010) stated that when principals observe their suspension data as being disproportionate, there is a need for cultural competence training within the school.

Darensbourg et al. (2010) noted that when schools throw Black males into the streets to find success, they usually revert to unsavory activities, such as crime. Black males are three times more likely to be incarcerated than any other race (Darensbourg et al., 2010). Although Black males make up 12.4% of the United States population, they make up more than 35% of the prison population. Black males 30 or under have a 52% chance of being put in jail (Darensbourg et al., 2010). There are three contributing reasons for the 35% of Black males who are in prison: behavior, academic problems, and academic disengagement (Darensbourg et al., 2010).

Black Males Can Excel

Although the statistics for Black males and their principals may seem daunting, Black males can achieve academic success. To date, there are over one million Black men in college. These young men would not have made it into college without the support of their principals (Schott, 2015). Secondary school principals in states such as New Jersey have a 70% graduation rate for Black males (Schott, 2015). However, most principals across the country are having a difficult time increasing the achievement rates among their Black male population (Schott, 2015). Black males are lagging academically behind their White male classmates in reading scores, math scores, and graduation rates.

Lived experiences of Black males in high school. It is easier to find the incarceration rate of Black males than it is to find their graduation rate (Schott, 2015). Although the majority of Black males lag in many content areas, some Black males in high school are excelling in key content areas such as math and science (Thompson & Davis, 2013). In a qualitative phenomenological study, Thompson and Davis (2013) described four themes for the lived experiences of high-achieving Black males in math within secondary schools, namely: teacher influence, peer influence, success in sports, and belief in economic mobility (Thompson & Davis, 2013). The qualitative study of Thompson and Davis (2013) demonstrated that some Black males experience a positive school experience in urban schools. The study showed that some Black males experienced teachers who consistently pushed them academically. One Black male said the teacher challenged him to get nothing less than scores of 100% in math, and because of that he rose to the occasion (Thompson & Davis, 2013). Teacher motivation and high expectations transformed these Black males into believing they could earn high academic grades (Thompson & Davis, 2013). Another interesting finding, which is contrary to other studies, is that parents were not found to be necessary for high-achieving Black males to excel academically (Thompson & Davis, 2013).

Conversely, other Black male students traditionally experience teachers who have low expectations for them. Unfortunately, many Black males attend secondary schools that give them little or no exposure to advanced placement classes and higher-level sciences (Thompson & Davis, 2013). Black males often have teachers, especially in more advanced classes, who have lower expectations for them (Thompson & Davis,

2013). Black males in urban schools have limited exposure to science fairs and college preparatory classes (Thompson & Davis, 2013).

Another qualitative study demonstrated how students dread coming to class because their teachers have low expectations for them (Pringle et al., 2010). Students associate their beliefs about how much their teachers cared for them with their own expectations (Pringle et al., 2010). It is imperative that Black male students feel like they belong in the school they attend and that teachers care for them (Pringle et al., 2010). When Black males feel indifferent, uncared for, or like they do not belong, a barrier to their academic success forms (Pringle et al., 2010). To exacerbate the point, in some urban schools, Black males are not encouraged and are even discouraged from taking advanced placement classes (Pringle et al., 2010). Taking such courses is imperative to prepare students for college exams and college-level rigor.

How Black males overcome the odds. Black males encounter several social and emotional obstacles in schools, and some are still overcoming the odds. Such obstacles include: stereotypes, such as being perceived as a threat; being discouraged to take college readiness coursework; and being in a threatening environment. Despite this, several Black males have still been able to overcome and graduate at the top of their classes (McGee, 2013). Some Black males who have overcome these obstacles have chosen to either ignore the negative stereotypes or prove the negative stereotypes wrong by excelling academically in school (McGee, 2013; Thompson & Davis, 2013). However, each strategy for Black males, according to McGee (2013), comes at a psychological cost. Black males were cited as saying "they felt pressured to continually prove their intellectual worth to their teachers" (McGee, 2013 p. 460). Other strategies

that Black males use to be deemed satisfactory in the eyes of their teachers include smiling often, appearing friendly, hanging with smart kids, and dressing preppy (McGee, 2013). Although those activities have nothing to do with academic abilities, Black males feel that they must fit in. School staff and teachers, through the power of relationships with students, can make Black male students feel emotionally connected. Black males feeling connected emotionally without fear of being judged may create a culture where students can be successful (Pringle et al., 2010).

Low expectations in schools produce low results. Skiba & Rausch (2016) conducted a qualitative research study with seven school districts that surround a large Midwestern city. Each district had a disproportionate number of Black students in special education. Researchers discovered was that when Black males misbehave in school, they may be referred for special education services in addition to suspension (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). In an article on the disproportionate referrals of Black students to special education and zero-tolerance disciplinary strategies, one special education teacher stated that "whenever we are having chronic behavior problems, it is a little Black boy. We call them the 'Duwans'" (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). "Duwan" was the term the special education coordinator used to refer to Black males. Black males are disproportionately referred to special education and classified as emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Black males are referred to special education classes three times more than other student populations in the country. Most teachers refer students to special education classes for behavior problems and blame poverty and the males' behaviors to rationalize their referrals (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Consequently, Sebastian et al. (2017)

noted that students in urban schools often encounter teachers who set low expectations for them.

Principals Need Training for Urban Education

Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) completed a survey of five reputable principal leadership programs across the nation. This research sought to gauge what reputable principal leadership programs were doing to increase the skill set of principals in the real world. They believed that successful programs should exhibit the following characteristics:

1. The preparation program should have a clear focus.

2. There should be standards-based curriculum.

3. They should have field-based internships, cohort groups, active instructional strategies, rigorous recruitment, and strong partnerships with schools and districts to support quality field experiences (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

One of the most rigorous principal preparation programs surveyed was at the University of San Diego. According to data from the University of San Diego, 45 of its 53 graduates in the year of the survey became administrators in urban education within San Diego. Between 2000 and 2005, 60% of their graduates became principals (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

In addition, after careful examination of five principal preparation programs, Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) discovered that good preparation programs had similar characteristics. One continual thread among the programs was the importance of principals being trained properly in their educational field to ensure they are prepared for

the rigors of working in an urban school (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The reality is that all school programs are not properly preparing principals to be successful in their jobs (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The graduation rates among Black male students demonstrate that principals need assistance with this population.

In their study, Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) stated that principals who complete their training program should be able to do several things, including:

1. Establish a culture that fosters a positive environment for teaching and learning.

2. Promote professional collaboration.

3. Promote the instructional abilities and professional development of teachers.

4. Focus resources and systems toward the development of teaching and learning.

5. Enlist the support of the community and parents (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

In good preparation programs, principals are trained to own the data and include parents and the community in instruction (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). In turn, these strategies create successful schools. In contrast, the research has shown that in unsuccessful schools, principals do not understand the value of parents, and they blame students, parents, and the community for why their students are not graduating and being successful in school (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Researchers have yet to complete a deep dive into the measurable outcomes of school principals in the following areas: student learning, persistence in school, graduation rates, high-quality learning

experiences, school climate, teacher retention, and teacher capacity (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Two separate studies supported the belief that principals are not being properly trained to enter the field of administration (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Backor & Gordon, 2015). Principals are being trained more in the day-to-day operation of schools as managers and less as leaders. They do not learn how to create a vision, ask questions about good instruction and curriculum, or properly lead in urban schools (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Backor & Gordon, 2015). This is concerning because the research clearly demonstrates that principals matter. To fix this national crisis and close the achievement gap for Black males, there is a need for a strong principal preparation program that properly trains new principals for the work they are pursuing (Backor & Gordon, 2015).

Backor and Gordon (2015) echoed the same sentiments as Davis & Darling-Hammond (2012), stating that a good school preparation program must emphasize teaching and learning. Principal training programs must ensure that principals are ready to encounter the challenges they will face (Backor & Gordon, 2015). School principals should walk out of their educational programs understanding the importance of influencing teacher feelings of efficacy, motivation, and satisfaction (Backor & Gordon, 2015).

Accountability for principals. Although accountability has been part of the educational climate for at least five decades, there has been a growing push for administrators to demonstrate their ability to increase student achievement (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Finnigan, 2012). Federal initiatives such as No Child Left

Behind and Race to the Top were introduced in the early 2000s to increase all student achievement, including that of underperforming children (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). In the 2017-2018 school year, the United States implemented the Every Student Succeeds Act. McGuinn (2018) describes how the country has evolved from No Child Left Behind to the Every Student Succeeds Act. With this act, schools are still held accountable for the academic achievement of their students.

To assist principals in meeting expectations at the state and federal level, aspiring principals must attend training programs that prepare them for the work ahead of them, particularly in urban schools (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Finnigan, 2012). Principals need to have consistent and ongoing opportunities to develop leadership skills (Finnigan, 2012). Colleges must also recruit quality aspiring principals for their training programs (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Furthermore, aspiring principals need to attend colleges that produce quality leaders (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Principals must be given the best opportunities to succeed (Backor & Gordon, 2015). In a recent study, a research team decided to take a deeper dive into principals' practices through a transformational leadership lens. The research team wanted to compare the transformational leadership strategies employed by principals in high-performing schools to those used by principals in poor-performing schools (Quin et al., 2015).

When examining the differences between schools in good standing and poorly performing schools, the study found that leaders in high-performing schools enacted all five leadership practices in Kouzes and Posner's transformational leadership model (Quin

et al., 2015). Kouzes and Posner's model served as a guideline for their study (Quin et al., 2015). The five transformational leadership practices include:

1. Inspiring a shared vision

2. Modeling the way

3. Challenging the process

4. Enabling others to act

5. Encouraging the heart

The two practices that had the greatest positive impact on student achievement were inspiring a shared vision and challenging the process. The researchers suggested that principals improve in all levels of leadership, but especially in inspiring a shared vision and challenging the process (Quin et al., 2015).

Aspiring principals need quality educational training facilities (Quin et al., 2015). Over the past ten years, traditional educational preparation programs have failed to prepare school principals as leaders (Quin et al., 2015). The research has demonstrated that principal programs are not preparing new principals for the job at hand because they fail to connect theoretical concepts with practical application (Quin et al., 2015). In examining good principal preparation programs for aspiring principals in the real world, it is essential that schools provide future school principals with a set of prescribed practices. Scholars in the field believe that there is a disconnect in the field of practice about what principals do on a day-to-day basis versus what principals are taught to do in college classrooms (Quin et al., 2015).

Successful and Unsuccessful Schools

In a recent study, Sebastian et al. (2017) looked at the most impactful strategies used by secondary school principals to increase student achievement in a large urban school district in Chicago. Sebastian et al. (2017) claimed that most of the research on the impact of school principals on academic achievement takes place at the elementary school level (Sebastian et al., 2017). However, there is a distinct difference between the challenges faced by secondary and elementary schools. Urban secondary school principals deal with low graduation rates, lack of college readiness, and problematic school climates (Sebastian et al., 2017).

The role of the principal. In addition to principal training, it is important to examine the role of the principal. This allows for greater conceptualization of the strategies principals can use to increase the graduation rates of Black males. Most of the research on school principals has demonstrated that school principals have an indirect impact on student achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017). Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2009) examined the lived experiences of secondary school principals of Dade County, one of the largest and most diverse districts in the country. Horng et al. (2009) shadowed 65 principals in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), each over the course of a full school day. The research team collected detailed information on time use at five-minute intervals. According to Horng et al. (2009), principals spent almost 30% of their day taking care of administrative responsibilities, such as supervising students, managing schedules, and fulfilling compliance requirements.

Furthermore, the study showed that principals spent 20% of their day engaging in organizational management activities, such as hiring and managing staff, and managing

budgets (Horng et al., 2009). Although most of the research speaks to the belief that principals are to be instructional leaders, Horng et al. (2009) pointed out that principals on average spent only a little over ten percent of their day on instruction-related tasks. Instruction-related tasks consist of conducting classroom observations and implementing professional development for teachers (Horng et al., 2009).

Horng et al. (2009) discovered that principals who spent more time on organizational management activities demonstrated higher academic achievement within schools, better school climate, and more parental support for the school. The results of this study aligned with other researchers who demonstrated that school principals have an indirect impact on the achievement of their students (Sebastian et al., 2017). These results are a contradiction to other researchers who found that instructional leadership is one of the sole mechanisms for increasing student achievement.

The direct impact principals have on academic achievement. One of the research questions for this study centered on the leadership strategies secondary school principals use to increase student achievement among Black males. Although the research points out that school principals have an indirect impact on student achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017), these findings were contradicted (Horng et al., 2009). One purpose of the research conducted by Sebastian et al. (2017) was to demonstrate the direct affect secondary school principals have on student achievement. A second purpose was to attempt to provide urban secondary school principals with strategies to increase student achievement. Sebastian et al. (2017) stated that since principals assume multiple responsibilities, much of which does not directly involve instruction, it is not surprising

that principal leadership does not directly relate to student learning (Sebastian et al., 2017).

School leadership matters, and school principals make a difference in student achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017; Finnigan, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013). Unfortunately, there is little to no research at the urban high school level that can serve to provide secondary school principals with strategies to increase their student achievement, especially among Black males (Sebastian et al., 2017; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; McGee, 2013). Secondary school principals have very difficult tasks, and they need assistance with specific practices and pathways that lead to better student learning (Sebastian et al., 2017). Knowing and understanding these strategies may help principals focus their efforts within the school (Sebastian et al., 2017). Sebastian et al. (2017) found that principals should concentrate on the learning climate, school safety, and teachers' expectations. Like Horng et al. (2009), the findings of Sebastian et al. (2017) contradicted other findings that suggested principals should focus most of their time on teacher professional development, professional learning communities, and relationships with parents.

Where secondary school principals should focus their time. Horng et al. (2009) and Sebastian et al. (2017) addressed the strategies secondary school principals in urban schools have used to increase student achievement in large districts. Horng et al. (2009) demonstrated that principals who spend more time on organizational management positively affect student achievement. Horng et al. (2009) showed that single-minded principals who focus purely on instruction through contact with teachers via classroom visits may be less effective if principals forsake being organizational leaders.

Sebastian et al. (2017) understood that there are several complexities at the high school level and attempted to provide secondary school principals with leadership strategies that have the biggest impact on student achievement. Sebastian et al. (2017) and Horng et al. (2009) both suggested that a focus on school climate and school safety has the biggest impact on the school. Sebastian et al. (2017) echoed Horng et al. (2009) in that day-to-day instructional activities should not draw secondary school principals away from the global organizational structure of the school.

Both studies addressed principals within secondary schools. The research gives an overview of theoretical concepts that some secondary school principals are using to increase student achievement. Although both studies addressed the complexities of secondary schools, the studies failed to address the clear strategies secondary school principals can employ to increase student achievement among urban students.

This study examined the strategies secondary school principals employed to increase student achievement among Black males. The Sebastian study was conducted in Chicago Public schools, and the Horng study was conducted in Miami-Dade County public schools. Knowing that both school districts are in urban areas, it is safe to infer that Black males attend these schools. Although the research is clear that there is a national crisis in graduation rates for Black males, the studies never addressed specific strategies that secondary school principals can employ to increase the achievement of Black males within those schools. There is a 23% high school graduation gap between Black males and White males in the Chicago Public School District, and a 25% graduation gap between Black and White males in the Miami-Dade Public School District (Schott, 2015). Black males in Chicago graduate at 41%, and 38% in Miami-

Dade (Schott, 2015). Although Black males not graduating from high school is a national

crisis, the school leadership research community has seemingly ignored this concern.

Culturally Proficient Leadership

One of the questions driving this study is what, if any, aspects of culturally

proficient leadership are being employed by successful principals. Researchers who

explore leadership practices address leadership operationally, but not culturally. Cultural

proficiency is imperative because "minoritized" students have been at a disadvantage for

a significant amount of time, and schools have been intentionally and unintentionally

complicit in reproducing this form of oppression (Khalifa et al., 2016). With all the

complexities of being a secondary school principal and the high suspension rates for

Black males, cultural competency training is a must (Darensbourg et al., 2010).

Culturally responsive school leaders have a principled, moral responsibility to

counter this oppression (Khalifa et al., 2016). To be a culturally proficient leader is not

unique to the United States. Although Madhlangobe and Gordon (2012) completed a

study in the Midwest, another study conducted in New Zealand also focused on culturally

proficient leadership strategies (Ford, 2012). This qualitative study focused on a principal

who decided to change the oppressive culture between the Maori and non-Maori students

in the school (Ford, 2012). There was a significant achievement gap between those

groups of students, which became a major problem for the government. The government

in New Zealand expected that schools would raise the academic achievement of Maori

students. As in New Zealand, the United States also verbalizes that achievement among

all students is important, especially closing the achievement gap between Black and

White males. Unfortunately, strategies for how principals can raise the achievement of

Black males are not documented in the literature (Pringle et al., 2010; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013).

What culturally responsive leadership looks like in action. The non-Maori principal in this urban New Zealand elementary school examined the fact that the Maori students were performing lower in all achievement levels, including reading (Ford, 2012). The principal created a personalized learning framework (Ford, 2012) that consisted of teachers recognizing the prior knowledge and experiences of students and responding accordingly through constructed teaching and learning practices. Students in this model brought their cultural knowledge and sense-making to the table. In this model, students were encouraged to establish their own learning goals, choose their own strategies to solve learning problems, and contribute to decisions about curriculum content. Five years later, the principal increased the reading achievement rates for Maori students to 72% above the national average.

The principal in this urban school did three things:

1. She prioritized the importance of face-to-face relationships with the Maori students and facilitated its practice.
2. She established systems and structures to support the development of relationships.
3. She created a culture of learning within the entire school community (Ford, 2012).

To create a link with Maori families and students, the principal emphasized the importance of face-to-face conversations. She emphasized listening to the Maori students and understanding their wants, goals, and dreams. This allowed the principal and the

teacher team to better understand who the students were and where they were coming from. Listening was also emphasized with parents to better understand the community and determine what was important to the culture (Ford, 2012). Ongoing professional development was provided to teachers so they could work with leadership to create policies and guidelines that increased student achievement. The leadership team used policies to create clear expectations within the classroom related to teaching practices.

Even though this study was completed in another country at the elementary level, the principal used several culturally proficient strategies to increase student achievement among minority students. In the United States, Black males are failing and marginalized at high rates (Noguera, 2008; McGee, 2013; Lynn et al., 2010).

Chapter Summary

Mandates such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Every Student Succeeds Act are calling for principals to increase the achievement for all students (Quin et al., 2015; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013; Finnigan, 2012; Noguera, 2009; McGuinn, 2018). It is important that principals be held accountable for academic productivity for all their students, but they must be given the right tools to do so. Accountability measures help, but they need reform. These reforms have made the achievement gap between White and Black males a national issue and priority for all schools and principals (Quin et al., 2015; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013; Finnigan, 2012; Noguera, 2009; Pringle et al., 2010). Unfortunately, secondary school principals are expected to address a long-standing task without proper training or empirical research to meet expectations.

Data show that the achievement gap between White and Black males is growing. Regrettably, some failing schools have reverted to blaming students and parents for this national crisis (Tyler et al., 2016; McGee, 2013). Some have chosen not to examine the systems in place within their schools or seek answers for such high failure for Black males, but instead shift the blame from the local school system to the child (Tyler et al., 2016; McGee, 2013; Noguera, 2008; Pringle et al., 2010). The achievement gap is not about students who are failing; it's about a system that is failing students (McGee, 2004).

Barriers in today's schools, consciously or unconsciously, promote a hostile school environment for Black males (Khalifa et al., 2016). This environment is causing Black males to be suspended at a disproportionate rate, which in turn causes them to fail at high rates and have little academic success (Khalifa et al., 2016). For schools to have academic success, principals must create a culture that is inclusive of all students. This culture must produce high academic achievement among all students (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Sebastian et al., 2017).

In addition, principals are accountable for the growth of achievement for all students. Principals are expected to close the achievement gap, decrease dropout rates, and increase college and workplace preparation among their disadvantaged students (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Understanding the role and impact principals have on student achievement rates is important. Black males in the 2009-2010 school year averaged 28 points lower than their White male classmates in reading and math scores (Tyler et al., 2016; Fantuzzo et al., 2012). In the 2009-2010 school year, Black males achieved lower reading scores in 4th, 8th, and 12th grades than their White counterparts in the same grades who were labeled as academically disabled (Tyler et al., 2016; Howard,

2013). It rests on the shoulders of principals across the country to discover success strategies to increase the achievement rates among this population. There is a need for secondary school principals to learn more strategies to increase the graduation rate among Black males. The next chapter will discuss the methods that were used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

School principals matter because the academic success of students is important in ensuring that young people meet their potential. Principal leadership is critical because it influences academic decisions, policies, engagement efforts, funding, initiatives, and priorities. Furthermore, it sets the stage for the academic year, the student experience, staff selections, and the focus of the school's efforts in attaining, sustaining, and increasing student achievement (Aguilar & Herrington, 2012). A school principal's vision and strong leadership skills are key in creating a school environment that fosters high academic success (Aguilar & Herrington, 2012). In other words, principals are a vital factor in bolstering student achievement. Dutta et al. (2016) suggested that principals are key to moving schools forward along a positive trajectory. Principals are second to teachers in their impact on increasing student achievement (Quin et al., 2015; Leithwood, 2005).

Although principals play a key role in the achievement of all students, most school principals are having a difficult time ensuring the academic success of Black males and their high school graduation rates. Due to several interconnected factors, Black males currently have the lowest graduation rates in the United States (Schott, 2015), and there is an achievement gap between Black and White males that continues to widen. Since 2009, the graduation gap has grown to 21 percentage points between White and Black males. Black males continue to graduate at a lower percentage rate than their

White classmates, and this gap has been widening since the 1980s (Schott, 2015; David & Marchant, 2015). The data suggest that the graduation gap between White and Black males will continue to grow.

Some scholars have deemed the graduation rate discrepancy between White and Black males a national crisis (Schott, 2015). The urgency to close the achievement gap between Black and White students is a half-century concern that is costing taxpayers billions of dollars as evidenced by the major legislative initiatives that have attempted to fix this issue (Khalifa et al., 2016). Although initiatives such as Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind demanded that the gaps in graduation rates between White and Black students decrease, the legislation has not worked (Khalifa et al., 2016).

New legislation was signed by President Obama in 2015 to reauthorize the former No Child Left Behind Act. The new Every Student Succeeds Act enacted in the 2018 school year is less controversial and less prescriptive when dealing with accountability for poorly performing schools (McGuinn, 2018). However, secondary schools are still expected to be held accountable for high graduation rates for all students (McGuinn, 2018). The biggest difference between No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act is that there are more remedies states can enact when schools are failing to achieve high success (McGuinn, 2018). It is still imperative that secondary school principals be given strategies to increase the graduation rates for Black males within their schools. Furthermore, some researchers indicate that to truly make a difference, the school culture must change (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lindsey et al., 2009). This change can occur much more easily with a school leader who is culturally proficient (Khalifa et al., 2016; Lindsey et al., 2009).

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this dissertation study about using culturally proficient leadership as the theoretical framework:

1. What, if any, leadership strategies are secondary school principals using in successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males?

2. For those strategies identified, how are they being implemented, and how might they be replicated in other schools?

3. What, if any, aspects of culturally proficient leadership are being employed by successful principals?

Methodology

This qualitative study intended to provide a voice to successful secondary school principals of Black males in urban schools, or near urban schools, within New York State. Some principals are successfully answering the call of the national crisis plaguing Black males. They are increasing the graduation rates of Black males and graduating them at a higher-than-average rate of 59% (Schott, 2015). The research is saturated with quantitative studies on elementary principals and the strategies they are employing to increase student achievement within their schools. This study gives the educational community the opportunity to hear what secondary school principals are doing on a day-to-day basis to positively impact the education of Black males in their schools.

Research Context

The study collected information by interviewing principals in secondary schools in New York State that are in or near urban centers. However, principals from New York City schools were not included because of New York City's size and variability

compared to other New York State regions. Currently, there are 733 districts within New York State: 4,453 schools, and 320 charter schools (data.nysed.gov). To better understand the relationship between secondary school principals and Black male students, the study examined principals' experiences in urban and near-to-urban school districts in New York State. Urban school districts enroll 45% of New York State's public school students (big5schools.org). Urban schools within New York State serve populations with diverse needs. For an example, within Buffalo Public Schools, 6,487 of their students are English Language Learners, not including pre-K. Buffalo Public Schools serve approximately 31,398 students (big5schools.org). Urban school districts are also responsible for many students who live in poverty and have the highest rates of student mobility, student homelessness, and students living in temporary shelters (big5schools.org). For example, the Syracuse City School District has the highest percentage of homeless students outside of New York City, with 2,464 of their students identified as homeless (Eisenstadt, 2017).

Urban schools typically see higher failure rates of students, graduation rates below the national average, higher teacher turnover, and less capital spending per pupil (data.nysed.gov). These school districts serve a significant number of Black males. In urban school districts, Black males represent about more than 20% of the school district. Within districts such as Buffalo Public Schools, the Rochester City School District, and the Syracuse City School District, enrollment for Black males is more than 24% of the population. Unfortunately, for most urban school districts, the graduation rates for Black males is less than the national average of 59% for Black male graduation (data.nysed.gov).

Research Participants

In this study, a purposeful sampling model was used to select the six-to-eight secondary school principals who participated in the study. Six interviews in a qualitative phenomenological study is an acceptable sample size for saturation (Creswell, 2007). Purposeful sampling is a qualitative method that allows individuals from a subpopulation to be studied to understand the research problem and central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2007). For this study, pseudonyms of the schools, principals, and school districts were used to protect the confidentiality of each participant.

Secondary school principals were selected from urban schools, or schools close to urban centers, based on criteria such as a graduation rate for Black males that exceeds the New York State average of 63%. Schools were part of the selection pool only if the school awarded Local, Regents, and Advanced Regents diplomas. For students to be considered college ready, they must have obtained a Local, Regents, or Advanced Regents Diploma (nysed.gov).

Although other factors, such as school spirit, student's math scores, English scores, and parental involvement, create a successful school, the target for this study was Black males who are not graduating from high school with their four-year cohort (Schott, 2015). This study was undertaken to better understand the current graduation rates for Black males. The data that helped determine which schools were selected was obtained from the New York State Education Department website (data.nysed.gov).

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The instrument used in this study was an interview protocol with a semi-structured interview approach. Semi-structured interviews allow for an understanding of

the phenomenon from the subject's perspective (Brinkman, 2015). In the semi-structured interviews, the researcher attempted to identify the central themes of the lived experiences of secondary school principals (Brinkman, 2015). The researcher attempted to understand the strategies secondary school principals use to increase the graduation rates of Black males. Creswell (2007) explained that phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common when they experience this phenomenon. The interviews took place in each secondary school principal's school.

The interview questions included elements of a culturally proficient leadership perspective (Lindsey et al., 2009). Culturally proficient leaders look to understand the culture of the students they serve and understand the students as individuals (Lindsey et al., 2009). The five essential elements of culturally proficient leadership include assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Lindsey et al., 2009). These elements helped form the a priori codes that assisted with data analysis.

Interview protocol. The interview protocol for this study consisted of scripted questions that engaged secondary school principals in a discussion related to the study's research questions. Semi-structured interviews allowed for deeper understanding of the phenomenon that secondary school principals are experiencing, and the study identified which strategies are being employed to increase the graduation rates for Black males (Appendix A). The interview protocols were pilot tested with a secondary school principal who is not part of the study in order to test for clarity and make revisions.

Interview memos. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Each interview was recorded and transcribed for accuracy and legitimacy. In addition, the

researcher recorded brief notes throughout the interview to capture observations. Detailed

interview memos were used to document secondary school principal insights.

Researcher connection. It is imperative that researchers clarify their biases

(Creswell, 2014). The researcher in this study was a Black male who serves as a

secondary school principal within New York State. To minimize bias, the researcher did

not use data from his school. The researcher also worked with an administrative

colleague when developing themes to assure that no biases would be reflected in the

study and to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Confidentiality. In this study, all confidentiality guidelines of the St. John Fisher

College Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed. Participants were provided

with the necessary measures needed to protect their confidentiality. Each participant

signed informed consent forms prior to the interview process. Secondary school

principals received a copy of the consent form for their own record keeping. Audio

recording of the interviews was kept confidential by using pseudonyms as identifiers

during the interview recordings. All transcriptions and notes from the interview were

stored in a password-protected computer in a locked office. Audio recordings will be

discarded after three years, and all notes from the interviews will be shredded after three

years from the interview. To ensure confidentiality and participant protection for the

research study, the researcher submitted documentation to IRB at St. John Fisher College

for approval, ensuring that this study protected all study participants.

Data Analysis

To ensure the validity of the research, the researcher obtained transcripts from the

audio-recorded interviews. The researcher listened to each audio interview multiple times

and read the interview transcripts line by line. Reading over the transcript notes provided a clearer picture of what was stated in the interview. To understand and capture the complexity of the phenomenon in the data, two types of coding methods were used: Emotion Coding and In Vivo Coding (Saldaña, 2016). Before using these coding methods, a priori codes were created to harmonize the study and directly answer the research questions (Saldaña, 2016). One of the a priori codes used was school "culture" (Lindsey et al., 2009).

Emotion Coding was used to explore the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences and actions related to the secondary school principals' reasonings, decision-making, and judgments toward Black males (Saldaña, 2016). Although emotions are a universal experience, this coding process allows for understanding the participants' approaches to increasing the graduation rates among Black males (Saldaña, 2016). Once emotion codes were defined, analytic memoing was explored to determine what the emotion code had in common or what the emotion story was telling (Saldaña, 2016).

In Vivo Coding is literal coding that allowed the researcher to capture the meaning of the participants' experiences in working with Black males within their schools (Saldaña, 2016). In Vivo codes provided a crucial check on important issues for secondary school principals (Saldaña, 2016). Using both Emotion Coding and In Vivo Coding allowed the researcher to analyze the actual words each participant used, along with the emotion behind their words.

Lastly, after completing the first two cycles of coding, pattern coding was used to identify similarly coded data (Saldaña, 2016). Pattern coding was used to develop a sense of categorical thematic codes (Saldaña, 2016). This coding style not only organizes the

data but provides meaning to it (Saldaña, 2016). Pattern coding is a way of grouping

summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts (Saldaña, 2016).

Research Procedures

For this research study, the following procedures were used:

1. Submit required information and paperwork for approval from the IRB at St. John Fisher College.

2. Utilize purposeful sampling to determine prospective superintendents for the initial email communication (Appendix F).

3. Pilot test the interview protocol with a principal before initiating phone call or email correspondence with prospective secondary school principal participants.

4. Revise and finalize interview questions based on feedback from the pilot interview.

5. Make an initial phone call to a secondary school principal who meets the study criteria to arrange an initial interview.

6. Scheduled a time for the interview.

7. Supply each secondary school principal (Appendix F) the consents to be signed the day of the interview.

8. Facilitate interviews with each secondary school principal participant using the interview protocol.

9. Obtain transcripts of interview sessions. This step occurred concurrently with step 10.

10. Using member checking, review early coding notes and clarify any questions with participants.

11. Code interview data using established a priori codes and open coding.

12. Complete data analysis.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study adds to the literature related to successful academic strategies for Black males used by secondary school principals. Currently, there is very little literature on secondary school principals (Sebastian et al., 2017). The majority of the research on principals has been conducted at the elementary level (Sebastian et al., 2017). No literature seeks to understand the phenomenon of how secondary school principals are increasing the graduation rates for Black males. Furthermore, there is an abundance of research on Black males that views them from a deficit model (McGee, 2013). Literature is scarce in answering the question of what successful principals are doing to increase the graduation rates among Black males (Schott, 2015).

This qualitative research provides information and a voice to secondary school principals working with Black males. Some secondary school principals are using strategies that are working to increase the graduation rates of Black males, but the research to identify their approaches has not been completed. This dissertation expands the limited research on secondary school principals.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Secondary school principals are only second to teachers when it comes to increasing student achievement (Leithwood, 2005; Quin et al., 2015). Several studies have noted that principals can positively or negatively impact student achievement data from an indirect position (Shatzer et al., 2013; Sebastian et al., 2017). Nationally, there is a 21 percentage point graduation achievement gap between White and Black males that continues to widen (Schott, 2015). Black males continue to lag behind their White male classmates regarding graduation rates (Schott, 2015).

In contrast to high school graduation gaps, there are over two million Black males who have graduated from college (Schott, 2015). However, the research is currently silent on what strategies secondary school principals are employing to assist Black males with high school graduation. For that reason, this study gathered qualitative data from secondary school principals whose graduation rates exceed the New York State average of 63% for Black males. This study looked to establish the strategies secondary school principals used to increase the graduation rates for Black males. Culturally proficient leadership (Lindsey et al., 2009) was the framework that guided the research questions for this study:

1. What, if any, leadership strategies are secondary school principals using in successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males?

2. For those strategies identified, how are they being implemented, and how might they be replicated in other schools?

3. What, if any, aspects of culturally proficient leadership are being employed by successful principals?

Data Analysis and Findings

Chapter 4 begins with an overview of the demographic profile of the six principal interview participants. Following that subsection, the process used to analyze the interview data is described. Next, the chapter presents the analysis of each research question by introducing the themes and subthemes that emerged. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research findings.

Demographic profile of the six interview participants. Data for the study were collected using six separate interviews conducted over a one-month period. Each of the interviews occurred in the secondary school principal's office. The size of the schools represented ranged from 300 to more than 1,100 students. The participants' experience as secondary school principals ranged from one year to 16 years and is shown is Table 4.1.

Three participants were male secondary school principals and three were female. Two of the principals were Black females, one was a White female, and three were White males. The researcher selected the participating principals from data collected from NYSdata.org. Most of the schools were in upstate NY. The schools were all 9-12 schools except for one, which was a 10-12 building.

Table 4.1

School District Principal Information

School Name	Principal	Years as Principal
Mia Central High School	Mr. Jordan	14
Emanuel Honors High School	Mrs. Johnson	3
Mariah Technical High School	Mr. Wade	7
Duplessy-Johnson High School	Mrs. Etchika	2
Dayton Central High School	Mr. Pierre	1.5
Dennis Vocational High School	Mrs. Michelle	16

Note: Schools and participant names are pseudonyms.

Analysis procedures. Each secondary school principal participated in an interview and was asked questions using a protocol as a guide (Appendix A). Participant responses to the interview protocol questions were transcribed and coded individually. In total, 87 codes were assigned across the six transcripts. Early in the coding process, interrater reliability was established by having another person, experienced in both K-12 education and the coding process, code a section of a transcript that the researcher had also coded (Saldaña, 2016). By analyzing the codes in their totality, themes and subthemes emerged across all interviews. While there were significant differences in school sizes and principal experience, there were many similarities in the shared experiences of principals regarding increasing graduation rates for Black males.

Research Question 1: What, if any, leadership strategies are secondary school principals using in successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males? Protocol questions were aligned to gather data on question 1. Follow-up questions were also part of the protocol to provide insight into strategies secondary school principals employed to increase the graduation rates among Black males.

Participant responses focused on strategies that increased graduation rates for all students. Principals shared information that applied to all students as well as Black males. In the analysis of participant responses, three overarching themes emerged. The first was "Keep everybody on track." This theme is broken down into an additional subtheme, "You've got to own it." The second theme was "We care." This section communicates the culture of care secondary school principals create for their students. This theme was then broken down into three additional subthemes:

1. Make school fun again.

2. Diversity is celebrated, not tolerated.

3. Student voice, and

4. Staff are valued.

The third theme was "Clear discipline." This theme provided evidence that successful secondary school principals understand the importance of discipline within a school. This section included one additional subtheme, "Hug it out." Table 4.2 presents the three themes for the first research question, the key concept for each theme, and sub-themes.

Table 4.2

Research Question 1 – Themes, Key Concepts, and Subthemes

Theme	Key Concept	Subtheme
Keep everybody on track	Strong focus on graduation	You've got to own it
We care	Creating a school culture where students and staff know they are important	Make school fun again
		Diversity is celebrated, not tolerated
		Student voice
		Staff are valued
Clear discipline	Discipline must be fair, and students must still feel welcome at the school	Hug it out

Keep everybody on track. A key concept that arose in each interview was the understanding that graduation was the most important task at hand. Principals spoke with conviction and confidence that it was their responsibility to ensure all students graduate from high school. In response to the first research question, secondary school principals mentioned the importance of graduating from high school more than 20 times. Mr. Wade from Mariah Technical High School spoke about his passion and leadership strategy to assure all students graduate by saying, "I don't know how many principals call every kid down that's not passing everything at the end of the second quarter and say, 'Hey, you're not on track to graduate. What's the plan here?'" (T4, 78-83).

In addition to calling every student down to his office, Mr. Wade spoke confidently that because of the strategies employed at his school, Black males will have

all the necessary credits to graduate. He said, "If we're talking about Black males, if a Black male didn't graduate, it wasn't because he didn't have his 22½ credits, because maybe they struggled with an exam" (T4, 111-112). Mrs. Michelle from Dennis Vocational High School echoed a similar sentiment:

> Again, all special ed students regardless of their gender, their ethnicity, find Global in particular as a stumbling block. It's the Regents from our experience, that's the Regents exam the kids have difficulty with. We get 'em through ELA, we get 'em through U.S. history, Algebra, we've gotta get them through that. But Global seems to be a stumbling block. We will do some targeted AIS with students as well (T1, 115-119).

When referring to leadership strategies secondary school principals are using for Black males to graduate, Mrs. Michelle spoke about using data to put in safety nets for students to catch them before they fall, saying "I think there's safety nets there that before we lose 'em, and they're too far behind, and you just get that feeling of, 'I'm never gonna be able to make this.' We will do some targeted AIS with students as well" (T1, 104).

Another leadership strategy Mrs. Michelle used is having her school counselors and assistant principals loop with cohorts:

> Again, structurally, we have 10, 11, 12. I have an assistant principal that meets a class when they are in 10th grade and stays with them. And there are two counselors that are assigned to that grade as well, and we rotate off. My current senior class working with Steven, he knows 'em, inside and out, (and) the family. This is his third-year relationship with them (T1, 223-227).

Mr. Pierre of Dayton Central High School did not emphasize looping as a strategy for getting students to graduate, but he did speak about the importance of adult relationships to keep students on track for graduation. His leadership strategy aligns with Mrs. Michelle's regarding understanding the importance of relationship-building with students, saying, "And that right adult at the right time allows us to tap into what we think is the single most crucial piece to getting kids to the finish line, that are at risk, and that is building quality relationships" (T3, 28-30).

In order to keep students on track, Mrs. Etchika from Duplessy-Johnson High School stated that the leadership strategy she uses is along the same lines as Mrs. Michelle and Mr. Pierre:

> We have something called "Extended Class" that meets four times a week for an hour and a half. In that class [there] is a lot of things that happen. That advisor relationship is built, and it's sort of like a small family, within the family of this school (T3, 142-143).

The secondary school principals demonstrated that to keep students on track, relationships must be built with children.

You've got to own it. As a subtheme of "Keeping everyone on track," secondary school principals spoke about their responsibility as leaders of the building. Mr. Wade stated, "You're here and you're ours; we take responsibility for you and our number one goal is growth" (T4, 35-36). This relentless belief that it's the principal's responsibility to own his or her students' educational experience is a recurring theme throughout the interviews. The secondary school principals believe that their students have success because of the strategies they employ. This belief can also be heard by Mrs. Michelle:

"This is the direction we need to go, because we wanna get you across this stage" (T1, 305-309). Mrs. Johnson mirrors the sentiments of Mrs. Michelle when referring to her students graduating from high school and her expectations as a leader:

It is steady, the expectations don't waiver. And they know not to waiver with them. And it's somewhere that they want to be. They know that if they keep the course, that they're going to graduate. And we're going to do what we can by having the afterschool program (T6, 207-210).

We Care. The second theme that emerged in response to research question 1 was "We care." When examining the leadership strategies that secondary school principals use in successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males, a theme that arose was that secondary school principals cared for their students. Mrs. Etchika stated: "They know that when they come here, the adults here care about them" (T2, 29).

The culture produced in her school was one where teachers, faculty, and administration cared about their students. She further states:

It is important that you build relationships between adults, between students and adults. It doesn't apply only to the boys, African American, whatever, it's all students. We focus largely on building relationships, and I think that makes a huge difference in how our students perform (T2, 24-27).

Mrs. Etchika furthers her point by stating, "We understand if you don't get to a child's heart, and mind, and help them deal with whatever's going on in life, they're not gonna focus on the academics" (T2, 151-152). Mr. Pierre talked also about the importance of showing students they care by building relationships, stating: "So, we spent a lot of time talking about things like accountability, and having a strong mindset,

and how to build the relationships, and how to, you know, having the courage to lead others, and these core values" (T3, 264-266).

Make school fun again. This was a subtheme of "We care". Along with showing students that they care, secondary school principals spoke about the importance of inspiring students to want to be in school. One way to do this is to make school fun. Mr. Jordan stated the following:

> We value academics, we value the arts, we value athletics, and we value just the overall school culture and climate that we want it to be dynamic, vibrant, nurturing, supporting, challenging. I personally want kids to have fun in education. I think school should be fun (T5, 123-126).
>
> Mr. Pierre agreed with Mr. Jordan, stating:
>
> …so, you can either keep trying to give them more work, and more stuff to do, more assignments, and try to think that that's going to make them study harder and work more, or you know, you can kind of go backwards, and just try to make school fun again, and make it so that they like it so much that they'd rather be here than not (T3, 286-290).

Both principals talked about making school fun by running contests, pep-rallies, and other engaging activities. Mr. Pierre stated:

> We run different contests, and we call kids down, we take their picture and we put it on Twitter and all that, we make big deals about it. We do stuff at the pep-rallies and try to get the kids here and feel like when they come here that it's special (T3, 296-298).

Other principals discuss making school fun or connecting students to school by implementing clubs and other fun activities for them. Mrs. Michelle stated:

I do think…that we have a wonderful… this full, very full, we're blessed… extracurricular activities. Kids have different interests, and I think those offer opportunities to connect kids to school. We've got all kinds of clubs and activities. We say, "If there is an interest and 10 kids, well, there could be a club here" (T1, 309-314).

Another principal referred to her ability to make school fun by allowing students to participate in classes that align with what they wanted to do in life. Mrs. Johnson stated, "…two periods a day, you're not sitting in the classroom being lectured to. You're actually up and doing something that you wanted to do. I think that brings about our success" (T6, 36-38).

Diversity is celebrated, not just tolerated. Celebrating diversity was a subtheme of "We care". The principals of these schools made it abundantly clear that they believed that diversity was important. Principals demonstrated the importance of diversity by using their leadership strategies to support their beliefs. Mr. Jordan stated:

I understand that the second an African American boy walks in the door of this school, he has a strong chance of not graduating if you follow the numbers. So they're at risk just by being African American. So my goal is to beat the odds, so we just pay extra attention to them and we put extra effort into creating things that speak to them (T5, 234-240).

Mrs. Michelle echoed a similar statement when she stated, "I think they find that, and we celebrate that diversity. It's not tolerated. It's something that's… celebrated (T1,

155-160)." The leadership strategies these principals use to celebrate diversity include African American History programs, targeted counseling interventions to assure Black males feel supported, and activities such as allowing students to speak to students and staff about their hijabs and cultural backgrounds.

   Student voice. This was a subtheme of "We care". In addition to the other strategies being employed to increase the graduation rates for Black males, these principals were very particular about allowing the students to have a voice. According to Mrs. Johnson, every student needs a voice: "I think it's so important that no matter where we are with our students, because we have so many diverse students that they all need a voice" (T6, 87-90). Mr. Jordan does not call it student voice, but it is the same concept. He believes that, "you've got to nurture their creativity and entrepreneurial mindset and they need to have fun" (T5, 179-181). The belief that student voice is important was echoed by Mr. Pierre in establishing a new student government: "This year, we also built a brand-new student government to try to provide authentic voice for the kids and make them feel engaged in what we're doing and all that kind of stuff" (T3, 277-279). The principals believed that hearing the student's voice was important, and that they should be a part of the decision-making process.

   Furthermore, according to Mr. Jordan, "it's a give and take where you're giving students opportunities to build their culture" (T5, 186-187). Although the principals used different strategies, they value knowing what students had to say and believe it is imperative for the growth of the school. One of the biggest points every principal made was that nothing within a school is possible without teachers.

Staff are valued. Staff value was a subtheme of "We care". In his interview, Mr. Jordan spoke strongly about how important it was for teachers within their organizations to feel valued: "A school is not successful unless their faculty's moving forward and feeling supported" (T5, 130-131). All the principals felt it was extremely important that their teachers felt valued. The leadership strategy that Mr. Wade used to make his teachers feel valued was to recognize them:

> We have a staff member of the month every month that we put out there on the wall. We do a PA announcement about them which creates a little bit of competition, which is nice. We're always walking around thanking them (T5, 582-584).

This was one of many strategies that secondary school principals used to make sure the culture they wanted for students was also modeled for their teachers.

Clear discipline. The secondary school principals spoke clearly that they believed if schools are going to be successful, every person in the school must feel safe. Clear discipline creates safer schools. Mrs. Michelle mentioned how important it is for students to know the expectations in her school:

> We do have expectations about what it means to be a citizen here in the building; a level of stability that we're gonna conduct ourselves with. I mean, that's ultimately what our goal is. Everybody has the right to come to school here, and feel free from being afraid, or being bullied or harassed (T1, 290-294).

What was apparent was that every principal took a different approach to discipline. Mr. Jordan articulated this position by saying, "But we're going to be creative about the type of consequences you get" (T5, 302).

Although, discipline for each principal differed, a couple consistencies were that discipline will be restorative in nature, and academics were never lost as a focus in disciplining students. According to Mr. Jordan, if he must suspend a student, he puts resources in place to accommodate academics: "If we have to suspend you, I am going to hire you a tutor and you better be there when he knocks on your door" (T5, 300). Mr. Jordan furthers his point by saying, "We've always supported the extra expense that comes with discipline. You want to run a safe school but you're going to create a snowball effect if you don't have the educational components somehow rolling" (T5, 302-303). Mr. Pierre furthered the point that academics are important through discipline by saying, "We have in-school suspension" (T3, 73). Each principal had their own strategy regarding discipline, but what they all had in common was they believed restorative practices were the most effective practice when dealing with negative behaviors.

Hug it out. This was a subtheme of "Clear discipline". The secondary school principals in this study believed that punitive measures like suspensions, although used in some cases, are not the answer to decreasing negative student behaviors. Mrs. Etchika stated, "We know that suspension really doesn't work" (T2, 294). Mrs. Michelle talked about the importance of not promoting a highly punitive experience for students because of the effects it has on the academics of the school: "And, if you get in that discipline realm, things start to get close, because you might get behind in credits. I mean, and all that whole rigmarole. Ultimately, our goal is to keep everybody on track for graduation" (T1, 219-222).

Although these principals were not big on punitive discipline measures, they still hold students accountable for their actions. The main strategy used for discipline was the implementation of restorative practices. Mr. Wade spoke about his hesitation in using restorative practices when he was first introduced to it: "I would be the first to admit I was kind of skeptical. We're all going to sit in a circle, we're going to hug it out, right?" (T4, 252-253). After much professional development and training, Mr. Wade stated that he came around and experienced a major shift in the discipline in the school:

> And that was my ignorant viewpoint of restorative practices when I first came upon it. I'm like, "No, we have structure, this is how we do things." And, for me, it was a real growth ... I had a fixed mindset when I was introduced, watched it a little bit, developed a growth mindset, and now it's our assistant principals, that's their practice (T4, 253-255).

In addition, other principals talked about how they implemented restorative practices in their schools. Mrs. Etchika uses peace circles in her school, while Mrs. Michelle uses mediation and encourages students to talk about their disagreements:

> But we do try to talk our way through and make sure that everybody's heard, and that there's understanding about whatever the offense was perceived, or real, and try to bring an end. We have done mediations that have involved whole families (T1, 281-286).

Again, the strategies principals use differ when dealing with discipline for students, but the framework being applied is restorative practices. This answers more questions about the strategies being used to increase graduation rates for Black males. Principals want students in school and not suspended. Mrs. Johnson stated: "I am not a

punitive-minded person, which is another reason our suspensions are very low" (T6, 262-263).

The three themes (Keep everybody on track, We care, and Clear discipline) demonstrate that secondary school principals in this study are very cognizant of the effects their leadership strategies have on the success of Black males in their school. In addition, although each principal used different methodologies to increase the graduation rates for Black males in their schools, there is a very strong focus on academics and graduation. Lastly, each principal also owned their results and did not make excuses for results in their building.

The next section will present the two themes that emerged as a result of analyzing the data collected to answer Research Question 2.

Research Question 2: **For those strategies identified, how are they being implemented, and how might they be replicated in other schools?** Protocol questions were aligned to gather data on Question 2. Follow-up questions were also part of the protocol to provide insight into which strategies secondary school principals employed can be duplicated in other schools to increase Black male graduation rates. In the analysis of the participant responses, two overarching themes emerged as shown in Table 4.3. The first theme was "Really embracing that PD". The subthemes were "Collaboration is a practice", and "We're always thanking them". The second theme that emerged was "Every student has someone", and the subtheme was "We're taking you higher", which highlights the importance of everyone working together for the good of every student. Table 4.3 presents the three themes, subthemes, and key concepts for Question 2.

Table 4.3

Research Question 2 – Themes, Key Concepts, and Subthemes

Theme	Key Concept	Subtheme
Really embracing that PD	The importance of training for teachers	Collaboration is a practice
		We're always thanking them
Every student has someone	Being loving to all students	We're taking you higher

Really embracing that PD. The data in the interviews revealed the importance of embracing professional development (PD), both to increase graduation rates for Black males and to replicate as a strategy in other schools. Mrs. Johnson stated, "It is important to make sure your staff has the professional development that is needed" (T6, 360-362). Mrs. Michelle described how important it was for her school to embrace Carol Dweck's research on growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). The PD she provided for her school changed some practices for the better: "Mindset change was really important. We read Mindset, Carol Dweck, as a faculty… I think those activities [in the book and] really embracing [the] PD, [made us say] we [really] gotta change some instructional strategies to meet kids" (T1, 348-351).

In addition, Mr. Wade talked about the importance of university partnerships to increase cultural awareness. They partnered with colleges to increase cultural awareness for all staff: "We had NYU in here, we had a lot of services come into help us. And we got to this harmony where we are now of everyone gets along" (T4, 526-528). Each

principal used some sort of continual professional development to implement strategies to increase graduation rates among their students. In conjunction with professional development, principals spoke about the importance of collaborating with teachers and valuing them as professionals. They also spoke about strategies that can be implemented at other schools to increase Black male student performance.

Collaboration is a practice. Collaboration was the subtheme of "Really embracing that PD". Mrs. Johnson spoke of her belief that teacher collaboration should be a practice that all schools adopt for the success of their students:

> That's a practice I think that may not be easy, but it should be done everywhere. Because that's part of making sure that you're successful. Collaboration is a practice that you need to make sure that you are doing (T6, 392-392).

Mrs. Johnson furthered the point by giving an example of how she collaborates with all of her teachers:

> At the end of every marking period, I meet with my teachers. I call them in one by one and we talk about where maybe they were successful. What can we do? How are we going to do that? And we make note of it to see who met their goal... (T6, 256-259).

In addition, Mrs. Etchika talked about how she builds time into teacher schedules for meeting time: "We have time with our staff every Thursday to meet for two hours" (T2, 593-594). Mrs. Etchika discussed some key components that this time encompasses:

> We talk about kids. It's not just talk randomly about whatever with a kid. "Oh, this one drives me up the wall," it's not that. It's what issues does everyone see who teaches Mark, "I'm seeing this, this, and this, that's a severe issue for him."

"What are you guys seeing?" What can we do collectively as his teachers to help address that, so he can be successful, right? (T2, 596-603).

Although Mrs. Michelle allows for common planning time to meet with students like other secondary school principals, she provided a deeper explanation of what she does and how she uses data in these collaboration meetings to increase student achievement. According to Mrs. Michelle:

The teachers they have time, they review data, they preview unit exams. Where did kids have difficulty last year? What can we do to pre-teach this to help kids be successful along the way? And then when they are finished, and if they give a unit assessment, they will review that data as well (T1, 96-99).

Furthermore, secondary school principals believed that student-focused collaboration can be used to increase student graduation rates. Principals believed that focusing on creating positive culture for teachers is also very important.

We're always thanking them. This subtheme emerged as a subset of "Really embracing that PD". Mr. Wade specifically discussed the strategy of thanking teachers as a technique he uses to increase graduation rates among his students: "The only thing for me is, if you want your kids to be successful, your teachers need to be successful. That's, at the end of the day, that's who's going to affect them the most, not me" (T4, 378-383). He furthers his statement by giving an example of what he does in his school:

We're always walking around thanking them. Thank you for what you do, thank you for what…you know, the people that volunteer, I'll stop them, "Hey I just want to thank you." One thing I learned here is that if you appreciate people, they're going to show up and work not for me, but for the kids (T4, 582-590).

Mrs. Johnson echoed the sentiments of Mr. Wade, stating she understands how important teachers are to her students:

Our teachers come in and a lot of them give their all in all on a daily basis, give more than their all in all. Sometimes we just take that for granted and I always want to acknowledge what they do and be thankful for that. Because for them to come every day and to keep pouring into our students, it's a wonderful thing (T6, 432-435).

The research demonstrates that school principals have a direct impact on teachers and an indirect impact on student achievement (Leithwood, 2005; Shatzer et al., 2013). The secondary school principals demonstrated their understanding of this point to create a culture of care for their teachers so that their students can also be a recipient of that type of experience.

Every student has someone. The principals believed that for their students to have high success in their schools, each student must feel like they have someone for them, and that relationships with students matter. Mrs. Etchika stated the strategy she uses to provide each student with an advisor:

That goes back to that relationship building. Every advisor has about 18 students on average, that they are responsible for. Your advisor is someone who you have an individual one-on-one meeting with that person every other week. Every student has someone that they are communicating with about any, and everything, involving them (T2, 131-1340).

Mr. Wade implemented a similar strategy that assigns every new student a teacher as well:

When you come in [as a student] there's an entry… plan. So, if you registered

here today, you would come in, you would meet with a guidance counselor, you

would meet with one of the administrators, you would have an ambassador to

walk you around. For five weeks you have a teacher that you're just meeting that

day, for five weeks you report to that teacher at the end of every week (T4, 427-

432).

Mrs. Johnson agreed that all students should have someone, but what she does

differently is to assign students who are in need with peer tutors instead of teachers:

I found that students sometimes learn best from other students because there's just

the way that students sometimes can reach other students that we just can't... so, I

wanted to implement a peer tutoring program. This is the year that we did that for

the first time. And teachers are saying the results are pretty good. Kids are doing

better. And I don't know if it's because they're working with some of their own

peers but I'm finding out that that's working well for us (T6, 247-252).

Each student is provided with assistance in order to increase student achievement.

We're taking you higher. This subtheme was revealed as part of the larger theme

of "Every student has someone". In New York State, students need to accumulate a

specific number of credits to graduate and pass required Regents exams. Mr. Wade

articulated this concern directly:

But we started looking at the exams and that's our focus because that's, from our

day, that's been the biggest hurdle of, and if we're talking about Black males, if a

Black male didn't graduate it wasn't because he didn't have his 22½ credits

because maybe struggled with an exam (T4,108-112).

To further that point, Mr. Wade also was very creative with how he used study halls:

> Maybe it's a deficiency in reading. What can we do to help you? Or maybe it's just truly, you know, we put in a lot of effort in the content, we're going to put you in Academic Intervention Services, so we're taking you out of an elective, we're taking you out of study hall and we start pigeonholing them to make sure, hopefully, they're prepared for that next assessment (T4, 113-117).

Principals in the study used a variety of leadership strategies to increase graduation rates among their Black male students and all students. Mrs. Johnson talked about giving her students personal care time, which gives her students the liberty to leave lunch to meet with a teacher for a class they are failing: "It's an hour every day instead of lunch, it's your time to go and work with your social studies teacher because you have work you need to make up" (T6, 369-373).

Mrs. Michelle implemented something like Mr. Wade's strategy at her school. Her students are on a block schedule, and she leaves 45 minutes at the end of the day for all teachers to be available. According to Mrs. Michelle, the strategy she employs for her students is as follows:

> Teachers are all available, kids are all available, and we need to do some intervention at that time, we do that as well. Kids can make appointments to see different teachers, sometimes we place kids in particular study halls with like, "You're going with your math teacher three days a week, and you're gonna go with your global teacher the other three days of the cycle." We will do some

targeted AIS with students as well. If they haven't been successful, we do a test

prep block for them as well (T1, 125-128).

Each principal used several strategies to ensure that Black males graduate, but

each strategy is data-focused and strategic.

As shown in the two themes, "Really embracing that PD" and "Every student has

someone", secondary school principals in this study were very aware that the strategies

needed to increase graduation rates for Black males include creating a culture for teachers

and students that is positive and lets them know others care.

Furthermore, teachers need to be allowed to collaborate, use data, and have

student-driven conversations. Students need to have relationships with the adults in the

building to keep them engaged and be placed in the best position possible to pass all of

their classes and, most importantly, their NYS Regents exams. Lastly, each principal

articulated strategies they were implementing to assure the success of Black males and all

students within their school.

Research Question 3: **What, if any, aspects of culturally proficient leadership are**

being employed by successful principals? The next section presents three themes that

emerged as a result of analyzing the data for Question 3. Protocol questions and follow-

up questions provided insight on the aspects of culturally proficient leadership strategies

implemented by secondary school principals. In the analysis of the participant responses,

three overarching themes emerged, as shown in Table 4.4. The first theme was "Adapt to

diversity". The subthemes are "They're all our kids" and "It's just what we do". The

second theme is "Value diversity", and the third theme is "Manage the dynamics of

difference", with one subtheme called "Courageous conversations". Table 4.4 presents

the three themes, subthemes, and key concepts for Question 3.

Table 4.4

Research Question 3 – Themes, Key Concepts, and Subthemes

Theme	Key Concept	Subtheme
Adapt to diversity	Changing beliefs	They're all our kids It's just what we do
Value diversity	Diversity is a benefit for all	
Manage the dynamics of difference	How to manage cultural differences within the school	Courageous conversations

The framework of culturally proficient leadership was used for this study and was

targeted specifically in Question 3. The five essential elements of culturally proficient

leadership are: assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference,

adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Lindsey et al., 2009).

These elements were revealed in the themes and subthemes in responses analyzed for

Question 3.

Adapt to diversity. When examining the strategies of culturally proficient

leadership, leaders need to change the organization to appreciate the difference that is

present in their students (Lindsey et al., 2009). Mrs. Michelle's school adapted to

diversity by changing the staff's mindset: "We do professional development as well, and

tomorrow, our students from the diversity club are going to lead six different workshops.

And, culture, what it means to be an exchange student, what it means to be an African

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American student, how does it feel to be a woman of Islam (T1, 177-178)." To further this point, Mr. Wade and Mr. Jordan partnered with New York University to assist with celebrating diversity. Mr. Wade stated: "We had a lot of services come in to help us. And we got to this harmony where we are now of a place where everyone gets along…now we are this huge community that celebrates diversity" (T4, 519-527).

When examining the specific strategies that principals employed, culturally responsive teaching and restorative practices were two that stood out. Mr. Jordan adapted to diverse populations in his building by changing teaching practices: "So culturally responsive teaching was one of the big leads for this district" (T5, 54-55). Mr. Jordan's school began training cohorts of teachers in that model.

In addition, Mrs. Michelle adapted to diversity in her school by addressing it in the school's discipline strategies: "We have, as a district, adopted restorative practices recently, and I have about 35 members of my faculty that have gone through three-day pretty intensive training, and are engaging in circle activities" (T1, 190-195). Secondary school principals adopted the paradigm that every student in their schools belongs to them.

They're all our kids. As a subtheme of "Adapt to diversity", Mr. Wade stated, "They're all our kids. I don't care what color, what religion, what they wear here, I do not care. They're our kids" (T4, 641-642). The position that every student is theirs, and that all kids matter is further explained by Mrs. Etchika, who stated:

> Whether they be male, female, Black, White, Chinese, whatever, it's just the same
> attention is given, in terms of making them feel comfortable, making them feel
> loved, and cared about, and letting them know that they can achieve, and do

whatever it is they want to do with their life, and that we're here to support them (T2, 808-810).

Mrs. Michelle also adapts to diversity with a leadership strategy for her students: "You say hello to every kid, doesn't matter who they are. Every kid you pass in the hallway, you talk to, and you say hello to. You go into classrooms to interact with kids" (T1, 567-571).

It's just what we do. The second subtheme of "Adapt to diversity" is "It's just what we do". One aspect of adapting to diversity is developing skills for intercultural communication (Lindsey et al., 2009). Mrs. Johnson spoke about how important it is for her to be able to talk with the families she serves no matter what culture they come from, stating, "I don't want people translating for me. I don't, that's one of my thing[s] I will get on Google Translate and try to do it myself or I do it through our translation line" (T6, 405-409). Mrs. Etchika talked about how important it is for her to hear the stories of her students:

> Yeah, it's really nice, and then give us an opportunity to talk to them and ask them questions about what their life was like. Were they in their country before they came here? That has been a really, really nice thing for the staff (T2, 749-751).

Taking time to allow for students to tell their stories enables the principal and staff to truly promote intercultural communication.

Value diversity. One of the major strands of culturally proficient leadership is the importance of valuing diversity (Lindsey et al., 2009). Each principal spoke with a sense

of joy and excitement in describing how their school values diversity. Mrs. Johnson talked about the benefits diversity provides for her students when she stated:

I think it's a great advantage. I think it's a phenomenal thing. I think that because when we are talking about students, our kids, and we're preparing for them to go out into the world, what better way to prepare them than for them to be next to a huge diverse [population] (T6, 458-460).

Mr. Wade furthered this sentiment by saying:

I think our kids are a little more prepared because they've been dealing with diversity since kindergarten -- and culture and different cultures. And our school does do a good job at ... especially in the younger schools, promoting it and doing different things to keep people together. And I say that at every graduation, our kids are at an advantage because of where they go. We're very eclectic, we're very diverse and this is what the real world is like (T4, 785-790).

Furthermore Mrs. Etchika discussed how she values diversity in her school by focusing on culture and Black males:

I think there are definitely sometimes things that are specific to, that you want to try, maybe, to do with Black males, like the mentoring program, or something like that. It's just the same attention is given, in terms of making them feel comfortable, making them feel loved and cared about, and letting them know that they can achieve, and do whatever it is they want to do with their life, and that we're here to support them. I think most of all, they really want to feel that they matter (T2, 803-810).

Although the secondary school principals believed in what they were doing, their leadership strategies also included the need to have courageous conversations with others who have a different culture than Black students.

Manage the dynamics of difference. Culturally proficient leadership emphasizes strategies leaders must use to resolve conflict among people interacting with other cultures (Lindsey et al., 2009). Mrs. Michelle explained what she does when there are cultural issues, which she stated doesn't happen often:

> I don't think we have a conflict like, whole group to whole group. I think there are individual conflicts that happen. Some of them are person to person, and I don't think it's culturally related, and if they are culturally related, I think we have to say, "This is a cultural issue." We just have to put it on the table and say what it is and get it out there (T1, 582-584).

Although Mrs. Michelle mentioned the conflicts she deals with on a student basis, some of the other principals talked about how they manage the dynamics between teacher and student.

Courageous conversations. Courageous conversations was a subtheme of "Manage the dynamics of difference". For example, Mrs. Etchika described what she encounters when some teachers are be resistant to cultural changes in her school:

> I've had some teachers come to me and say, "I don't understand why I have to go." And they don't understand. I try to explain, but they just don't get it. Students know who those teachers are. They know who they are, I know who they are, because we can watch the way that they treat students (T2, 441-447).

She explains the strategies she uses to help move teachers along when they have conflict:

I send them to trainings; I talk to them and I let it be known that sometimes I know you've done it. Maybe that's not your intention to, but this is what it sounds like when you did this. And this is what it makes that person feel when you do this (T2, 452-454).

Similarly, Mr. Wade talks about conversations he must have with adults in his school when there are cultural issues between students and teachers:

Where we have the conflict with the staff and student, and not racial conflict, I call it an understanding conflict… when a conflict happens it's because we have staff members that just ... they're probably relatively new (T4, 684-685).

In order to manage the dynamics of difference, Mr. Wade stated that he uses two strategies:

…have an honest conversation with the teacher. So, there's two things I go with here. I call them honest conversations and I call them three people in a room. You know that you're coming down for a meeting about somehow, you're in the mix of two stories that don't add up. Somebody's bending the truth (T4, 704-707).

Moreover, Mr. Wade further stated that he even attempts to manage the dynamics of difference within the community:

When I go out in the community, "Oh you're the principal [of that] school? [That school has] changed [a lot] so [now it's a] tough place." And the first word out of my mouth, I say, "Why, because we've got Black kids?" Not many kids get removed for disrespect to a staff member. Come check it out because it's not a

tough place. And by the way, yeah, you're right, we do have Black kids but they're not bad kids (T4, 765-770).

Mr. Wade was adamant about defending his students of color, not only in the school but out in the community as well. Each principal spoke about the importance of having courageous conversations with adults to protect the students in their buildings, and especially their Black males.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of the qualitative data analysis of six interviews, each with a successful secondary school principal from an urban or inner-ring suburban school. The interviews addressed three research questions. The first question was: "What, if any, leadership strategies are secondary school principals using in successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males?" Three themes emerged from the study results. First, keeping students on track for graduation was a major focus in all six interviews. The principals spoke with a great deal of confidence and assurance that it was their responsibility to own the results of their school. A theme that arose from the first question was "We care".

During the interviews, every answer showed a spirit of caring for students. Each principal spoke with a genuineness that what they were doing mattered, and that they were willing to take the extra step to create a culture of caring for everyone in their school. The secondary school principals spoke about the importance of building relationships with teachers so that each student had a caring environment that pushed them to academic excellence.

The second interview question examined the strategies that secondary school principals identified as key strategies to increase Black male graduation rates. This question also explored how strategies were being implemented and how might they be replicated in other schools. There were two overarching themes that emerged from this section: "Really embracing that PD", and "Every student has someone". From these two themes it was discovered that the adults within the school had to be trained on culturally responsive strategies, the importance of having a growth mindset, and how to practice restorative rather than punitive disciplinary strategies.

From information collected for Question 2, it was evident that each student was assured that every student had someone in the building that he or she could trust. Principals strongly promoted the strategies of quality professional development and connecting students with caring adults. They felt these strategies should be implemented in all schools to increase the graduation rates for Black males.

The third research question addressed the aspects of culturally proficient leadership and how culturally proficient leadership was being employed by these successful principals. There were three themes that emerged from this section: "Adapt to diversity", "Value diversity", and "Manage the dynamics of difference". All of the secondary school principals were very cognizant of the different cultures within their schools and led the way to support those cultures through programs, initiatives, and different activities within the school. Each principal clearly found that diversity within the school should be welcomed and embraced, not frowned upon or simply tolerated.

Chapter 5 discusses the research implications based on the results presented in Chapter 4 and provides recommendations for increasing the graduation rates for Black males intended for superintendents, principals, and others.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The data are clear that Black males are not graduating from high school at rates as high or equal to as their White male counterparts (Schott, 2015). The four-year graduation gap between Black and White males was 19 percentage points in the 2009-2010 school year and increased to 21 percentage points in the 2012-2013 school year (Schott, 2015). Black males have the lowest graduation rates among any population in the country. Within New York State, an average of 63% of Black males graduate from high school. Despite these statistics, there are some high schools within New York State that are graduating Black males at a higher rate than the state average. The schools within this study averaged a graduation rate for Black males of approximately 80%. While most of the research for Black males is presented from a deficit model (McGee, 2013), this study looked to gain insight on strategies used by secondary school principals with high graduation rates for Black males. This study sought to explore this phenomenon and determine the strategies secondary school principals are using to increase the graduation rates among Black males.

By using a purposeful sampling model to identify the principals within this study and conducting semi-structured interviews, this research provides new insights on what secondary school principals are doing to increase the graduation rates for Black males. Sections of this chapter include: a) implications of findings; b) limitations; c) recommendations; and d) study summary.

To understand the lived experiences of the secondary school principal's

perspective for the strategies they employed to increase graduation rates for Black males,

a qualitative phenomenological approach was employed (Creswell, 2007). Several

themes emerged from the data that were collected. The three research questions for this

study were:

1. What, if any, leadership strategies are secondary school principals using in
   successful schools to increase student achievement among Black males?

2. For those strategies identified, how are they being implemented, and how
   might they be replicated in other schools?

3. What, if any, aspects of culturally proficient leadership are being employed by
   successful principals?

Implications of Findings

As a result of the research, three key findings emerged from this study. The first

was that each successful principal knew that they were the orchestrators of the success

within their schools. The secondary school principals within this study demonstrated that

they were responsible for the success of the school at a macro level. Essentially,

principals viewed the success of the school from the balcony and worked through others

to assure their students were successful (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Leading from the

balcony refers to a leader operating above the fray. Leading from the balcony allows the

leader to work through others, see the larger picture, and reflect on overall practices

(Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). The secondary principals were able to metacognitively

understand the procedures and the structures of their schools which allotted for more

understanding about what was needed for the success of the Black males students within their buildings.

The second key finding was that successful secondary school principals support and hold teachers accountable for high academic achievement among Black males. Principals do this by building relationships and modeling their expectations. All secondary school principals in the study knew consciously that student achievement happened at the hands of the teachers, but that it was incumbent upon them to build strong relationships with teachers and hold them accountable for creating high success for students. Successful secondary school principals modeled daily what they expected from their teachers.

The last key finding was that students must be treated as stakeholders in their own success. In each school studied, the principals spoke about how important it was for students to have a voice within their school. Students need to be heard and must have a say in their academics.

Orchestrators of success. Secondary school principals are responsible for the success and culture of the school (Bradshaw, 2000; Dutta et al., 2016). Secondary school principals who took part in this study demonstrated that their major goal was to graduate every student on time. Secondary school principals within this study understood that success was intentional and did not occur through happenstance. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) described this skill as maintaining the capacity for reflection. Furthermore, secondary school principals articulated the fact that although they were on the balcony, they also understood the importance of building strong relationships with their teachers and students, remaining relatable, and understanding the pulse of the building. This

understanding demonstrated secondary school principals' ability to go from the balcony to the dance floor (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

One of the leadership strategies used by secondary school principals in this study was the implementation of school committees. Committees operated as instruments for success within the school. The committees allowed principals to make decisions within the school by being part of a team rather than leading in isolation. For Black males to achieve high graduation rates, the secondary school principals created buy-in from all adult and student stakeholders, thus empowering them to act. A committee allows a voice for each person within the school and lets them know they are heard. Each committee member speaks for a particular group within the building. On each committee, there is representation from teachers, parents, students, administrators, and community groups. Principals in this study understood that graduation was important, but they equally understood that there must be a team approach to support successful outcomes for Black males.

As orchestrators for success, principals in this study set the tone by:

1. Using positive morning announcements

2. Empowering teachers to create attendance breakfast incentives

3. Empowering staff to create student recognition assemblies

4. Working with teachers to identify and target students who may benefit from student intervention

5. Assisting with teacher and student relationship building

Some of the secondary strategies, such as greeting every teacher, may seem informal and second nature. Each secondary school principal spoke candidly and

passionately about how methodical and intentional they were in supporting graduation outcomes for Black males and all students. Horng et al. (2009) had a similar finding, stating that secondary school principals need to focus primarily on the global organizational structure of the school, not day-to-day instruction. Secondary school principals in this study spoke about how their actions affect the broader aspects of their school.

Moreover, principals in this study stated that it was their responsibility to ensure that Black males graduated from high school. Secondary school principals emphasized that they strategized with all stakeholders to create plans that positively affected graduation rates for Black males. Principals did not look to shift blame for anything negative that occurred in their schools. Principals spoke from a position of confidence that, good or bad, whatever happened in their schools circled back to them as the leader of the building. Principals who own their data stands in stark contrast between what principals believe and do in successful schools versus what they believe and do in poor-performing schools (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

In poor performing schools, unlike those in this study, principals do not orchestrate success but blame other factors for why their schools are not successful (Ford, 2012; Noguera, 2008; Shatzer et al., 2013; White-Smith, 2012). Successful schools have principals that are involved with the instruction of the school, have a purpose, provide a clear vision of where the school is going, and share a belief that all students can learn (Ford, 2012; Dutta et al., 2016; White-Smith, 2012; Shatzer et al., 2013). In contrast, research indicates that in poor-performing schools, principals do not own their data but will look to blame students and families for lack of success with Black males (Davis &

Darling-Hammond, 2012). Again, this is not the case for the successful schools in this study. In order for a secondary school principal to orchestrate success, he or she must acknowledge the his or her influence on whatever happens within the schools.

To that end, principals in this study with fewer years of experience were not quite at the "balcony level" in implementation. The less experienced principals spoke about the implementation of techniques with a narrower view of the impact their strategies might have on the entire building. In contrast, principals with the most experience had a broader conceptual understanding of the consequences of their actions and orchestrated ways to implement system-wide strategies that are most impactful on Black male graduation rates.

For example, principals with less experience spoke about how they mentored students one-on-one. This is an effective strategy. However, principals with more experience spoke about how they created mentoring programs by empowering teachers to connect with every student within the building. The principals with more experience focused more time on team and system approaches, with the understanding that teachers have a direct impact on students. This is also found in the research; principals are the second most important factor impacting student achievement, with teachers as the first factor (Quin et al., 2015; Leithwood, 2005).

Each principal in this study felt that Black males can be successful and that they must work through their staff to create a culture that proves it. While experienced principals promoted this more stridently, the belief was still present in all the principals in the study. According to the research, in successful schools, the principal believes that all students can learn (Ford, 2012; Dutta et al., 2016; White-Smith, 2012; Shatzer et al.,

2013). As the leader in the school, principals are the maestro for creating a culture that promotes the success of Black males.

Principals must support and hold teachers accountable for student success. The principals in the study all believed that teacher involvement was essential in creating a positive culture that welcomes Black males. Teachers must feel good about coming to work and experience success so that students feel successful and positive about coming to school. These principals helped orchestrate success and modeled a positive approach to demonstrate to their teachers what they expected. To support teachers and hold them accountable for Black male success, principals in these successful schools did the following:

1. Provided culturally relevant teacher professional development related to teacher pedagogy

2. Assured that all teachers felt welcomed and celebrated

3. Allowed for teacher voice

4. Maintained a strong focus on academic achievement for Black males through grade level meetings, common planning time, a clear vision, and hosting principal meetings with groups of teachers

Research on successful schools indicates that principals are employing similar strategies. According to Finnigan (2012), in successful schools, principals must set high standards, support and encourage teachers to take risks, implement what they have learned from professional development, and communicate a vision. This study found that modeling positive and inclusive behavior was emphasized the most by principals. That modeling helped create high graduation rates for Black males by ensuring that all

teachers were welcomed, celebrated for their success, and held accountable for high academic success. Strategies to promote inclusiveness for all cultures embody the values of a culturally proficient leader (Lindsey, et al., 2009).

Black males often experience feelings of not being welcomed in schools (Khalifa, 2016). Black males report school environments that are hostile, prejudiced, and judgmental (Khalifa, 2016). McGee (2013) stated that Black males are often forced to change their behaviors or style of dress to assimilate into the dominant culture (McGee, 2013). The secondary school principals in this study were aware that Black males are treated unfairly in schools and realized it was their job as leaders to manage the dynamics of difference within the school, both of which exemplify the principles of culturally proficient leadership (Lindsey et al., 2009).

Moreover, the principals within this study understood that teachers have a direct impact on students and their achievements. With that understanding, the secondary school principals assured that every teacher felt welcomed, appreciated, heard, held to a high standard, and valued. Doing this as the leader of the building demonstrates that principals modeled what they want to see teachers do within the classroom. Another culturally proficient leadership strategy used by the principals within this study was creating systems within their schools to ensure that their teachers responded positively to diversity (Lindsey et al., 2009). Secondary school principals understood that their actions indirectly impacted student achievement through the direct impact they have on teachers (Leithwood, 2005; Shatzer et al., 2013).

Although the majority of the secondary school principals did not talk about documenting teacher practice through classroom observations, they did speak about

supporting teachers through professional development, common planning time, modeling the way, and having one-on-one meetings with teachers. Principals spoke about the need for training, the importance of nurturing a growth mindset, and focusing on culturally relevant strategies to increase graduation rates among Black males. Principals taught their teachers about the ways to effectively deal with cultural differences through training and coaching, also characterized as adapting to diversity, an essential element of culturally proficient leadership (Lindsey et al., 2009). What these principals have done to increase graduation rates at the secondary level for Black males complements the strategies some researchers have suggested for increasing student performance.

As a counterpoint, some studies indicate that to increase student achievement within urban elementary schools, the principal needs to be the chief teacher or instructional leader. In urban elementary schools, principals did not focus on being culturally proficient leaders and acted more as instructional leaders (White-Smith, 2012). This strategy involved constant classroom visits and a robust amount of teacher feedback (White-Smith, 2012). At the elementary level, this study found that when principals primarily focused on classroom visits, it was a catalyst to increase student achievement (White-Smith, 2012). This study is important, and although their findings differ from the ones found in this study, it is important to show the differences between the roles of secondary school principals and elementary principals.

Sebastian et al. (2017) and Horng et al. (2009) did their research at the secondary level and their findings align with the outcomes of this study. Horng et al. (2009) and Sebastian et al. (2017) stated that although secondary school principals should have an instructional focus, successful secondary school principals should spend less time

observing classrooms and more time developing the climate and culture of the school. Although the successful secondary school principals within this study did not spend an inordinate amount of time in teacher classrooms, it was clear through the interviews that the culture of their schools was that diversity matters, all students should feel included, and graduation for all students was a priority.

The principals in this study made their teachers feel welcomed, let them know that they were valued, and held them accountable for the success of Black males. As a result, teachers in these schools made all their students feel valued, heard, celebrated. They also held all their students to high academic standards. Black males graduating from these schools do so at significantly higher rates than the New York state average. A recent study revealed that when Black males had teachers who believed in them and held them accountable, they had higher academic success (Thompson & Davis, 2013). The teacher's belief that Black males can achieve transformed Black males into also believing they could learn and earn high academic marks (Thompson & Davis, 2013).When successful principals support teachers and expect them to perform at a high level, teachers internalize these strategies and replicate this philosophy with their students.

Students are stakeholders. When discussing the success of students, every principal spoke about how important it was to listen to students. Each principal not only asked for students' voices; they welcomed them and created programs that encouraged all students to speak. The secondary school principals proudly described all sorts of clubs, mentor programs, student supports, online surveys, and extracurricular activities that supported the notion that the student's voice mattered. There was a resounding belief and theme through the interviews that if students are going to have success in the school, they

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must be a part of the fiber of the school. Culturally proficient leaders believe in student voice and foster practices that provide opportunities for effective communication among students, educators, and community members (Lindsey et al., 2009).

The importance of student voice is also studied in the literature, where a principal turned around a failing urban school assuring the students felt heard (Ford, 2012). The principal in the New Zealand study emphasized the importance of listening to Maori students and understanding their wants, goals, and dreams (Ford, 2012). As a result, students experienced significant academic success. The principal and her teacher team gained a deeper understanding of who the students were and where the students were coming from.

When students are stakeholders within schools, it demonstrates to them that they are cared for and valued (Ford, 2012). The Pringle et al. (2010) study addressed why Ford's (2012) study was so important for Black males. This study indicated that when Black males feel uncared for or that they do not belong, their academic success is curtailed (Pringle et al., 2010). The studies by Pringle et al. (2010) and Ford (2012) support one of the major findings in this study, which shows that the secondary school principals thought it was important to treat Black males as stakeholders, give them the space to be themselves, and treat them with dignity.

Three major findings resulted from interviewing the secondary school principals in this study. The first finding was that secondary school principals must be the orchestrators of success. This suggests that secondary school principals must work to establish themselves as the leader of their buildings. They must be able to see the big picture and empower others to act. Secondary school principals have many

responsibilities, and they must have a high level of trust in their team so that success can happen for their Black male students.

The second finding in this study was that secondary school principals must hold teachers accountable for the success of their students. Each secondary school principal spoke in depth about the importance of modeling the way for teachers. Secondary school principals indirectly impact student achievement for Black males, but they have direct impact on their daily interactions with their teachers. The secondary school principals emphasized the importance of providing teachers and staff with professional development on culturally relevant teaching strategies. The second area of importance for each principal was for every teacher to know that they were accepted. The secondary school principals created a warm, inviting culture for teachers while consistently communicating that success for all students was important. Secondary school principals understood that it was important for them to treat their teachers the same way they expect the teachers to treat all students, including Black males within the school.

The last finding was that students must be treated as stakeholders. The strategies of culturally proficient leadership indicate the importance of removing barriers for minority cultures. Minority cultures must be allowed to speak and have a voice. Doing this allows for them to feel appreciated, valued, and welcomed in the school. Secondary school principals are responsible for creating a culture that gives Black males the space to feel valued. In such a culture, these schools experience a high level of success for Black male students.

Limitations

There was one limitation in this study: only traditional public schools were included. Charter schools and private schools were not examined. Principals in traditional public schools were selected as opposed to those in private and charter schools because they contend with factors such as unions, larger organizations, and requirements to serve all students regardless of program offerings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Topics for future research include examining the voice of the student. Another study could examine the perspective of all students. A study could be designed to discover how all students feel about low Black male graduation rates, and whether they feel schools are doing enough to engage the Black males in their schools. Another study could examine the role of the parents of Black males as stakeholders within secondary schools: What role do parents play in assuring that schools are practicing culturally proficient leadership strategies for their children?

Each secondary school principal spoke about the important role their superintendents had in the success of the Black male population of their schools. Future research may want to examine the role the superintendent in supporting secondary school principals to increase graduation rates for Black males. This study focused on Black males; another study could also focus on Black females. Although Black female graduation rates are higher in New York State than Black males, some Black females are exhibiting issues that could impede their academics.

Recommendations for Administrative Preparation Programs

This study demonstrated that secondary school principals play a key role in the success of Black male graduation rates. The secondary school principals in this study all understood the importance of being a culturally proficient leader. Administrative preparation programs can provide future secondary school principals with culturally proficient leadership training. However, preservice training is not enough. Superintendents need to follow up with professional development in their districts. Principals and other administrators should clearly understand the essential elements of culturally proficient leadership: assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. Previous researchers agree with this finding, stating that school principals are ill-equipped out of college to deal with the national crisis of low Black male graduation rates (Backor & Gordon, 2015). Secondary school principals are struggling to close the graduation gap between White and Black males (Backor & Gordon, 2015).

There is a need for stronger principal preparation programs to better equip principals and other administrators when they exit college and begin serving teachers and students in schools (Backor & Gordon, 2015; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Each secondary school principal spoke about how important it was for teachers to have training on culturally linguistic pedagogy. The successful secondary school principals in this study knew how important it was for them to model the way for their teachers. In order for secondary school principals to truly model the strategies of culturally proficient leadership, they must know the framework thoroughly.

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The strategies of culturally proficient leadership should be taught in administrative preparation programs to aspiring administrators and should be supported by districts through professional development for secondary school principals. Culturally proficient leadership strategies support and assist in high graduation rates for Black males. For secondary school principals within New York State, annual performance evaluations are associated with how well Black males graduate from their high schools. Black male students have shown to have the lowest graduation rates of any other students in the country, measuring at a dismal 59% (Schott, 2015). It is imperative that districts reinforce the elements of culturally proficient leadership as in-service training for secondary school principals. For Black males to have high graduation rates, districts need to align their systems with local administrative preparation programs to ensure that secondary school principals have the proper response to diversity (also known as institutionalizing cultural knowledge) (Lindsey et al., 2009). This study indicates several additional recommendations for improving the graduation rates among Black males.

Recommendations for Superintendents

To create high graduation rates for Black males, superintendents should devote resources to assure that secondary school principals are trained in culturally proficient leadership. Each secondary school principal interviewed demonstrated an understanding of the five elements of culturally proficient leadership: assessing the culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge. Their understanding contributed to the difference in student performance.

For this study, each secondary school principal spoke about the importance of the support of the superintendent in successful graduation rates for Black males. For example, it is critical that superintendents support their secondary school principals in areas of curriculum and infusing diversity. As a culturally proficient leader, principals ensure that diversity is celebrated in the curriculum and Black males have an opportunity to see themselves in the curriculum. Essentially, when Black males read, they must see that they are represented in history and that their contributions matter. Superintendents also need to set priorities with the Human Resources department to assure that hiring practices reflect the student body. Black males need to have role models through the teachers and administrators in their schools, and they need to have an opportunity to communicate with staff that may have similar backgrounds.

Recommendations for Secondary School Principals

Secondary school principals need to create spaces for Black males to have a voice. The research is clear that Black males are disproportionally suspended from school, are made to feel unwelcome within schools, and as a result have the lowest graduation rates among any population in the country (McGee, 2013; Schott, 2015). Black males need to be allowed to have their cultural values appreciated, heard, and welcomed as a stakeholder in the school. Hearing the voice of Black males may also reduce stereotypes. This study intentionally used the term Black male versus African American. When allowing Black males to have a voice, it lets others to know that Black does not simply mean African American. Black includes any student who derives from the African diaspora. All Black males do not have the same background or cultural values.

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Secondary school principals should work on creating clubs that allow for the Black male voice. Such clubs could be an African American History club, Our Story Program, My Brother's Keeper Initiative, which was created by President Barack Obama to assure the academic success of males of color (Obama, 2014), or any other club that students may find interesting. These areas should be explored to provide Black males a voice within the school.

Secondary school principals must also look to recruit students and faculty members to help assist with promoting Black males' interest in clubs. In addition, secondary school principals can hold one-on-one conversations with their students, develop a leadership structure for students, and create a teacher/student mentoring program. In this study, principals provided students with the names and contact information for key faculty members and ensured that each student was paired with an adult in the building.

Another recommendation is for secondary school principals to get everyone to work as a team in increasing the graduation rates for Black males. Team activities that distribute ownership and action within the school can take many paths. Principals should establish interdisciplinary teams, student support team meetings with school counselors, and school social workers to kick-start initiatives and follow up on student leadership initiatives and student involvement. Principals should also form data committees to track grades, suspension data, office discipline referral data, and Regents exam credits. Secondary school principals should help establish volunteer support meetings for Black males and other subpopulations within the school while recruiting mentors to work with students who need a constant adult influence in their lives. Secondary school principals

are responsible for creating the culture for schools, but it takes the entire school. working together, to create success for Black males. Each secondary school principal in this study spoke about the importance of their teachers, staff, volunteers, and students working together as part of a team to create success for Black males. Staff in schools working as a team can share the responsibility for the graduation rates for Black males, as well as their successes.

   Culturally proficient leadership alignment table. Although secondary school principals in this study did not specifically mention being a culturally proficient leader, it is clear is that their strategies align with this leadership framework. Table 5.1 lists the five pillars that make up culturally proficient leadership: assessing culture, valuing diversity, managing the dynamics of difference, adapting to diversity, and institutionalizing cultural knowledge (Lindsey, 2009). Strategies identified by principals in this study are listed with each pillar. These strategies were used consistently in their schools to increase graduation rates among Black males and all students alike. Table 5.1 also lists strategies that apply to district-level administrators and teachers.

   Table 5.1 outlines some of the culturally proficient leadership strategies that effective principals are using to positively impact Black male graduation rates. These strategies also positively affect the graduation rates for Black females, Muslim students, White females, Latino females, Latino males, and any other subgroup within the school. Culturally proficient leadership strategies are impactful and serve as effective tools for all students.

Table 5.1

Culturally Proficient Leadership Strategies

Pillar	Strategies
Assessing culture	• Create districtwide surveys for staff, parents, and students in order to assess the culture and climate of the district. • Create staff, student, and parent surveys at the school to assess diversity strengths and needs and understand the needs of students and families. • Encourage teachers to have ongoing conversations with students to develop a responsive class culture.
Valuing diversity	• Create opportunities for Black males to have a voice. • Celebrate diversity and cultural activities related to African American history, National Hijab Day, Women's History Month, Latino Heritage Month etc. • Make public address announcements that demonstrate support for and celebration of diversity. • Develop curriculum so that Black males and students from other cultures see themselves within the text. • Display pictures of different cultures and flags within the school. • Hire staff that represents the student population. • Create opportunities to have ongoing conversations with Black males to gain an understanding of their values to better represent their culture and others' cultures within the school setting. • Foster positive relationships with teachers to positively impact Black males. • Create mentor programs for Black males. • Create and support different student-led clubs that increase Black male and other cultures' participation.
Managing the dynamics of difference	• Have courageous conversations with staff, teachers, and community members if, and when, they see or hear diversity is not being celebrated. • Establish ongoing training for teachers and staff on how to deal with racial, and cultural conflict.

Pillar	Strategies
	• Allow opportunities for teachers, and administrators to collaborate on best practices for serving Black males and students of all cultures. • Create systems within the school so that every Black male feels safe and has someone in school to talk to. • Make discipline strategies restorative, not punitive. Restorative practices give Black males, and all students, the opportunity to have a voice and express their concerns through the discipline learning process. • Give students of all cultures the opportunity to share their experiences with each other and staff.
Adapting to diversity	• Change subjective policies that have racial bias, such as suspending students for dress-code violations. • Provide teachers with professional development that is culturally relevant and responsive. • Ensure that teaching strategies and curriculum content are culturally relevant.
Institutionalizing cultural knowledge	• Create policies that do not penalize students for cultural differences, such as style of dress, tone of voice, and any other subjective practices. • Review curriculum for culturally relevant content and revise as needed. • Partner with local universities or professionals that are leaders in diversity and cultural awareness.

Chapter Summary

There is a 21-percentage point four-year graduation gap between White and Black males (Schott, 2015). This achievement gap continues to grow. Secondary school principals are held accountable for the graduation rates for all students under the Every Student Succeeds Act (McGuinn, 2018). Throughout the country, secondary school principals are struggling with closing the graduation gap between White and Black males and are having a difficult time graduating young men of color. Several studies analyze

effective strategies elementary principals can use to increase student achievement among their students, but very little to no studies have been done at a secondary level to provide secondary school principals with strategies to increase graduation rates among their students.

In addition, there are no studies that examine the strategies secondary school principals can employ to increase the graduation rates among Black males, the lowest graduation sub-population in the country. Although statistically it is true that Black males have the lowest graduation rates in the country, some schools are graduating Black males at a higher rate than the national average of 59% and the New York State average of 63% (Schott, 2015). Understanding that secondary school principals are responsible for Black males' graduation success, this study looked to examine which strategies successful secondary school principals use to increase graduation rates among Black males.

What the literature shows is that in schools where Black males are not graduating, the principals and staff have chosen not look at best practices to increase graduation rates and have relied on blaming the students for their failure (Tyler et al., 2016; McGee, 2013; Noguera, 2008; Pringle et al., 2010). The research also discusses that Black males are often suspended at a higher rate and are forced to remain in hostile schools (Khalifa et al., 2016). The research shows that it is incumbent on secondary school principals to create a welcoming, inclusive environment so that Black males can have an opportunity to achieve high academic success (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Sebastian et al., 2017). What the literature failed to show is the specific strategies secondary school principals can use to increase graduation rates among Black males. To understand the

strategies secondary school principals are employing, a phenomenological qualitative study was done.

Six secondary school principals were interviewed for this study. The six interviews revealed overarching themes that secondary school principals used to increase graduation rates among Black males. These themes reflected the assurance that graduation was always the main focus, that teachers and staff were trained in cultural relevant pedagogy, and that every student knew that they had someone in the building that they could talk to. These overarching themes acted as the foundation for the findings.

This study demonstrated that Black males can graduate from high school at a rate higher than 63%. Black males can graduate from high school at a rate equal to or above their White counterparts. For that to happen, secondary school principals must be culturally proficient leaders. Each secondary school principal interviewed operated out of the lens of the essential elements that are part of culturally proficient leadership.

For decades, the narrative has been that Black males are not succeeding in schools due to:

1. Their parents

2. Their neighborhoods

3. A lack of intelligence

4. Too much anger

5. A lack of value for education (Noguera, 2008; McGee, 2013)

This study provides evidence that Black males can graduate from high school at a higher rate than the New York State average of 63%. Secondary school principals matter.

Black male graduation rates increase in schools where there is a secondary school principal who is culturally proficient and creates an environment that demonstrates that Black male education is important.

Many secondary schools are struggling with helping Black males graduate on time. This study changes the narrative that Black males are incapable of graduating from high school at a rate higher than the New York State average. The study provides clear strategies for secondary school principals to use in supporting the success of Black males within their schools.

To be a leader, one must be courageous. In order to change the decades of hostility within a school or school district that Black males face, there must be a leader courageous enough to stand through the adversity of change. Each secondary school principal spoke about how they openly advocated for the Black males within their schools. They spoke about how they pushed back on myopic views of some educators and negative community members who attempted to speak against the Black males at their schools. Attempting to change the status quo for Black males may invite some adversity. If a leader can push through those growing pains, Black male success will result.

Lastly, the driving force for these secondary school principals to create success for Black males in this study was not a fear of failure. What drove these secondary school principals to create high graduation rates for Black males was their love of humanity and their belief that every student deserves a quality education no matter their race.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Tool – Principal Interview Protocol

Opening Statement:

        Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me today. You are being interviewed because your school has demonstrated success leading Black males to graduate at a higher rate than the New York State average of 63%.

        All of the information shared with me will remain confidential. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used for you, your school, and district. I will also avoid linking statements to individuals, schools, or districts.

        In order to capture all of your responses, I would like to use two voice recorders. One recorder is serving as a backup. Do I have your permission to voice record you? Again, as a reminder, I will be the only one reviewing these audio tapes.

Principal Interview Question 1:
Tell me about your experiences as a successful secondary school principal. As you know, your school has been able to lead Black males to graduate at a higher rate than most schools.

    a) How do you define success for your school?
    b) In what ways, if any, does the culture of your school and the cultures of your students contribute to success?
    c) Is there anything in particular you do as a leader that is especially helpful for the young men of color at your school?
    d) What are some discipline strategies do you use with your students?
    e) Are there ever situations where cultures clash or are misunderstood? How do those situations get resolved? Tell me about your leadership strategies. How might these strategies support Black males and others in your school? What do you think has been most significant in increasing the high graduation rate within your school?

Principal Interview Question 2:
There are a lot of great ideas out there that don't get implemented. What steps did you take to ensure that your ideas around achievement and graduation rate were implemented?

    a) Were there any challenges around implementation?
    b) In a diverse student population, are there proactive strategies that you put in place to help with smooth implementation?
    c) How do you encourage all the students in your school to appreciate each other and celebrate other cultures?
    d) If you were mentoring another principal around increasing the graduation rate, what would be advice for replicating your ideas in other schools?
    e) Are there some practices in your school that would be easy to implement elsewhere? Explain.

Principal Interview Question 3:
Talk about the various cultures in your school. How does your style of leadership intersect with the number of different populations in your school?

a) Are there ever any conflicts? If so, how is cultural or racial conflict addressed with teachers, students, others?
b) Are there ways that culture and diversity are celebrated in your school? Explain.
c) What are the advantages, if any, of leading a school with many cultures and populations? Are there changes that have occurred at your school in this regard?
d) Are there any mentoring or community organizations that assist with teachers understanding the students they are teaching?

Our interview is ending. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your experience as a secondary school principal in an urban school that has a high graduation rate for Black males?

Thank you for taking this time and meeting with me.

Appendix B

Alignment of Research Questions and Culturally Responsive Leadership Elements to
Interview Questions

Research Question	Culturally Responsive Leadership Elements	Interview Question and Sub-questions
RQ1 RQ2	Embrace other cultures Assess culture Value diversity	Tell me about your experiences as a successful secondary school principal. As you know, your school has been able to lead Black males to graduate at a higher rate than most schools. a. How do you define success for your school? b. In what ways, if any, does the culture of your school and the cultures of your students contribute to success? c. Is there anything in particular you do as a leader that is especially helpful for the young men of color at your school? d. Are there ever situations where cultures clash or are misunderstood? How do those situations get resolved? e. Tell me about leadership strategies. How might these strategies support Black males and others in your school? What do you think has been most significant in increasing the graduation rate in your school?
RQ2 RQ3	Challenges will arise Understand cultural clashes Be a lifelong learner of other cultures	There are a lot of great ideas out there that don't get implemented. What steps did you take to ensure that your ideas around achievement and graduation rate were implemented? a. Were there any challenges around implementation? b. In a diverse student population, are there proactive strategies that you put in place to help with smooth implementation? c. How do you encourage all the students in your school to appreciate each other and celebrate other cultures?

Research Question	Culturally Responsive Leadership Elements	Interview Question and Sub-questions
		d. If you were mentoring another principal around increasing the graduation rate, what would you advise for replicating your ideas in other schools? e. Are there some practices in your school that would be easy to implement elsewhere? Explain.
RQ3	Assess culture Value diversity Embrace differences	How would you define the culture in your school building? a. How was that culture created? b. What is important to you as a leader with regards to school culture? c. In what ways do you as the leader express your vision of your school culture to your teachers, students, and staff?
RQ2 RQ3	Challenges will arise Understand cultural clashes Be a lifelong learner of other cultures Embrace other cultures Teach others to embrace other cultures	Talk about the various cultures in your school. a. How does your style of leadership intersect with the number of different populations in your school? b. Are there ever any conflicts? If so, how is cultural or racial conflict addressed with teachers, students, others? c. Are there ways that culture and diversity are celebrated in your school? Explain. d. What are the advantages, if any, of leading a school with many cultures and populations? Are there changes that have occurred at your school in this regard?

Introduction Email and Study Information – Principal

Date

Dear Principal _____,

My name is Marck Abraham I am a high school principal in Buffalo, NY. I am also a doctoral candidate in the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher College. As a requirement of my Ed.D degree in Executive Leadership, I am conducting a research study involving secondary school principals. I would like to invite you to participate in the study by allowing me to interview you.

The topic of my study is an examination of strategies secondary school principals use to increase the graduation rates among Black males. In order to gain insight, I would appreciate the opportunity to ask you some questions about the approaches you use to gain success.

The interview may take place at your school and will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded. There is no preparation needed for the interview. Your participation or non-participation in this research study will not impact any current or future professional relationships or collaboration with your institution.

If you participate and become uncomfortable answering the questions, you can choose not to answer. In addition, this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time.

In appreciation of your willingness to meet with me for the interview and your time, you will receive a $25.00 Visa gift card for your time and effort to participate in the interview.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at 716-248-7648 so I can start the process of scheduling the interview. In addition, you may contact me with study related questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Marck Abraham

St. John Fisher College
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: An examination of principal practices and successful outcomes for Black male high school students

Name(s) of researcher: Marck Abraham
Contact Information:

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Marie Cianca
Contact Information: mcianca@sjfc.edu

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to learn about approaches secondary school principals use to increase the high school graduation rate of Black males.

Place of study: Secondary within NYS.

Length of participation: One interview lasting no more than 60 minutes

Risk and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of this study are explained below.

Minimal risk exists, as the probability of and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during routine tests. Participants will be audio-recorded during interviews. There are no additional anticipated emotional or physical risks associated with participating in this study. Participation or non-participation in this research study will not impact professional relationships or collaboration with the researcher or research institution. By participating in this study, participants will contribute to study results, which will add to the current body of research on the principal-superintendent working relationship.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy of data collected: All consent is voluntary. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants. Participants' name and identifying information will remain confidential and will not appear in transcripts, analysis, or the final study. Written transcripts will be stored in an office in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher for a period of three years after the successful defense of the dissertation and then shredded. When not in use, the audio and electronic files of the data, as well as interview transcriptions, will be secured in the same cabinet with access only to the researcher for a period of three years after the successful defense of the dissertation and then destroyed.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

_____   _____   _____

Print name (Participant)   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____

Print name (Investigator)   Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher(s) listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your personal health care provider or an appropriate crisis service provider

The Institutional Review Board of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study/or if you feel that your rights as a participant (or the rights of another participant) have been violated or caused you undue distress (physical or emotional distress), please contact Jill Rathbun by phone during normal business hours. She will contact a supervisory IRB official to assist you.

All digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews will be maintained using a private, locked, and password-protected file and password-protected computer stored securely in the private home of the principal researcher. Electronic files will include assigned identity codes and pseudonyms; they will not include actual names or any information that could personally identify or connect participants to this study. Other materials, including notes or paper files related to data collection and analysis, will be stored securely in unmarked boxes, locked inside a cabinet in the private home of the principal researcher. Only the researcher will have access to electronic or paper records. The digitally recorded audio data will be kept by this researcher for a period of five years following publication of the dissertation. Signed informed consent documents will be

kept for five years after publication. All paper records will be cross-cut shredded and professionally delivered for incineration. Electronic records will be cleared, purged, and destroyed from the hard drive and all devices such that restoring data is not possible.