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An Examination of the Positive Factors Impacting Graduation Rates of Minority Males at a Successful Secondary Urban School in New York City

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An Examination of the Positive Factors Impacting Graduation Rates of Minority Males at

a Successful Secondary Urban School in New York City

By

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Supervised by

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Biographical Sketch

Achil Petit is a Principal at a charter school in Harlem, New York. Mr. Petit attended the University at Albany from 1999 to 2001 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree Economics in May 2001. He attended the University at Albany from September 2002 to May 2004 and graduated with a Master of Science Degree in Education Administration in May of 2004. Mr. Petit enrolled in St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Petit pursued his research in *An Examination of the Positive Factors Impacting Graduation Rates of Minority Males at a Successful Secondary Urban School in New York City* under the direction of Dr. Ronald D. Valenti and Dr. Pamela Davis. He received his Ed.D. degree in 2012.

Abstract

The issue of minority achievement, as measured by graduation rate is a critical one, especially for African American males. This study seeks to provide a backdrop for the problem of high dropout rates, reviewing some of the reasons for low graduations rates, connecting theories of race and achievement, and relating student achievement to the theories presented. By studying one single-sex school where the graduation rate for minority males is relatively high, the researcher identifies and analyzes factors for high achievement and provides recommendations for application to similar settings. The research study uses a mixed method approach to gather and analyze data about participants' perceptions of achievement factors for minority males in one school. Participants completed a survey with questions about achievement factors and rated the degree of importance of each factor. The findings suggest that single-sex education is working at the study site. In 2011, 87% of the young men graduated high school and went on to college. The study identifies three important factors that positively impacted student graduation. Those factors are high student expectations, teacher quality, and a strong credit recovery program.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

It is hard to miss the education headlines these days about the achievement gap between whites and ethnic minority students. From the national level to the local, politicians, economists, education experts, psychologists, community members, and parents all weigh in on the factors they believe contribute to student achievement. Many reforms have been implemented to help address this issue, yet study after study cannot let us forget the glaring reality that minority males continue to show a high dropout rate for high school, one of the indicators of academic achievement. *New York Times* articles relay some of these statistics, such as that African American boys drop out at nearly twice the rate of white boys, and their SAT critical reasoning scores are on average 104 points lower (Gabriel, 2010). Worse yet, the *Times* reported nearly one in four young male dropouts are incarcerated or otherwise institutionalized on average a day (Dillon, 2009). When you look at what this means for African Americans in New York City, the statistics are even more disturbing with only 9.4% of African American students earning a Regents diploma (Herbert, 2005). However, some schools with high percentages of African American and Hispanic or Latino males are challenging these statistics. One such school is Eagle Academy for Young Men, a public all male high school in the Bronx, New York, which graduates a higher percentage of African American and Hispanic males than schools with similar demographics.

Problem Statement

The issue of minority achievement, as measured by graduation rate, is a critical one, especially for African American and Hispanic or Latino males. Past studies have provided information about and identified reasons for the high dropout /low graduation rate, such as socioeconomic status, educational opportunities, cultural expectations and norms, and race relations (Center for Education Policy, 2010; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Davidson, 1996; Lupescu, Allensworth, Moore, de la Torre, & Murphy, 2011; Maag, 2001). Many studies have contributed information about the education gap in America with implications for teacher education, school leadership, classroom teachers, parents, and community members (Aarons, 2010; African American Male Task Force Report, 1992; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009a, 2009b; Hernandez, 2011; Mezuk, 2009; New York State Education Department, 2010).

It is important to include information about achievement factors when analyzing graduation rates because they impact graduation rates as well as have consequences for students' future development in social identity, cognitive ability, emotional capacity, and social competence (Davis, 2005). These developmental factors can be negatively affected by the schooling students receive because "schools are critical sites for young minority males as they make meaning of who they are, what they are supposed to do, and how others perceive them" (Davis, 2005, p. 133). While there are many theories seeking to provide insight about minority male achievement, Davis cited three he deemed important: "student attitudes, social organization of school, and masculine identities" (p. 137).

Unfortunately, minority males are consistently at risk for academic failure for a number of reasons such as inadequate test scores, increasing referrals for special education services, and high rates of disciplinary action, such as suspension and expulsion (Davis, 2005). According to research some of the high rate of referrals to assessment for possible learning disabilities and requests to receive special education services can be linked to teachers misinterpreting academic performance and behavior of minority male students (Conchas, 2006). The way teachers perceive students can also have a negative impact on student ability and performance if the teachers view a certain ethnicity or race as not capable of high academic achievement (Conchas, 2006). Conchas also identified not having a culturally affirming curriculum as a factor affecting achievement. Motivation and student engagement play a role in academic achievement as well. Close adult-student relationships, personal connections, students working together on projects and to solve problems, small learning communities, cooperative learning, and authentic learning experiences such as real work, environment with clear and meaningful purpose, are factors that contribute to learning (Conchas, 2006).

This study identified and analyzed positive achievement factors for African American and Hispanic or Latino males in a secondary school with a high rate of achievement as measured by graduation rate. The study analyzed positive achievement factors by examining the relationship between theories of learning grounded in race and culture and current achievement for minority males in one school.

Theoretical Rationale

The research examined the issue through the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and teaching to find

the relationship between race, socio-cultural construction of learning, and student achievement, and to identify and analyze positive achievement factors linked to a high graduation rate for minority males at an all boys school in New York City. The research examined the issue of minority male's academic achievement and how it is situated within an education system that has failed to properly educate and graduate minority males at a high rate.

       Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an intellectual and politically committed movement that studies race, racism and power. According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), CRT is a way of looking at race relations, particularly within the United States, in a broader context than the traditional civil rights approach. From the CRT perspective, race is a social construction acting to divide people in society. Those who subscribe to this theory have been generally committed to social justice. Critical Race Theory grew as a response to some of the setbacks the 1950's and 1960's civil rights activists experienced in trying to promote a more expansive civil rights agenda with respect to African American equality under the law (Jones, 2002). Even though legislation had been passed to end segregation and grant African Americans the right to vote, some people felt that liberal ideology in the law was actually stalling and harming civil rights (Jones, 2002; Kumasi, 2011). Others felt that there were still many other forms of inequality in areas such as economics and housing that were not being addressed (Jones, 2002). Derrick Bell, an activist, lawyer, and early proponent of viewing the law and society through a more critical lens, was one of the people who pointed out the ways in which laws such as *Brown v. Board of Education* did not address some of the deeper equality issues Africans Americans were faced with the uneven allocation of

resources in society (Jones, 2002). CRT scholars noted that legal reforms primarily took

place when they coincided with the interests of white Americans rather than out of

genuine belief (Kumasi, 2011). As such, our legal foundation was being shaped by the

idea of white supremacy and was affecting other areas in society (Kumasi, 2011).

Delgado, (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001), one of the leading scholars in CRT studies

described the movement as

> a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the
>
> relationship among race, racism, and power. The movement considers many of
>
> the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take
>
> up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history,
>
> context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. (p. 3)

Critical Race theorists try to better understand how people see race, and part of how they

do so is by offering their own narratives and counter-narratives to the perspectives

offered throughout history (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Thus, CRT has an "activist

dimension" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, p.2) that tries to transform society in positive

ways.

CRT is grounded in core principles and strands and follows basic insights;

however, within the movement there have been differing perspectives. Delgado and

Stefanic (2001) described the materialist perspective, idealistic perspective, and structural

determinism. The lens of the materialist perspective considers the physical conditions of

minorities to effect change (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001) whereas the idealist perspective

looks at how words and representations of minorities affect how society views minorities

(Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Structural determinism includes aspects of materialism and

idealism and explains how the way the system is structured gets in the way of making good on previous societal wrongs. One example is the intentionally slow progress of civil rights law (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

According to Delgado and Stefanic (2001), racism and discrimination are ways of thinking, are constructed by society, and are categories that society defines or manipulates when convenient rather than being defined as physical conditions. Racism then becomes a form of society deciding who has the power (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States" (p. 95), especially when viewing how our education system has historically provided opportunities for some while denying access to others. As such, CRT has relevant applications in the education setting. To situate the problem of minority males graduating high school, it is important to understand the forces at work in the education system. CRT has become a valuable tool for addressing school inequities (Kumasi, 2011). One of the central CRT principles, according to Kumansi, is that of hegemony or "the dominance or power of one cultural group over another." Kumansi further explained that;

> this dominance is not necessarily maintained by force; it is also supported through the consent of the subordinate group, in that the members of the subordinate group begin to accept, adopt, and internalize the values and norms of the dominant group. (p. 209)

The concept of hegemony reveals an interesting dynamic in the power struggle at work when considering the equity of the education system with respect to minorities. Hegemony also makes a statement about how the way minorities view themselves can

impact achievement. Those with a nationalist perspective on CRT support all-male schools as a way to address the needs of minority males since the current education system as a whole is not doing so (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

In analyzing minority male achievement as defined by test scores, some argued that the nation's standardized tests favor students from a higher socioeconomic status, giving them an edge over other students such as African Americans and Hispanics or Latinos of lower socioeconomic status (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The problem with using standardized tests as a major indicator of student success is that scores are not necessarily a good predictor of other qualities and characteristics students bring to the table when it comes to academics. Such qualities include problem-solving skills and the ability to work cooperatively with others (Conchas, 2006; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

CRT, in essence, refers to a particular set of practices advanced primarily by African American, Latino, and Asian American legal scholars. Gillborn (2006) asserted, "CRT refers to a broad range of historical and contemporary theories that have actively engaged the prevailing racial theories of particular times and/or social contexts" (p. 8). Gillborn (2006) argued, "CRT has a central focus on racism in American society. Formal Equal opportunity rules and bylaws insist on treating blacks and whites on one accord, avoiding alienation to any one race" (p.9).

Educators have found critical race theory to be important to their understanding of classroom dynamics, academic testing, and curriculum bias (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Students of color have been overrepresented in special education (Bennett, 2002); this has been attributed to a variety of causes, including racism, the use of culturally and linguistically biased assessments, and power differentials between school leaders and

parents of color. This disproportionate representation has meant that students of color are attached to the stigma of special education and limited educational access. This stigma attached to the child has been one problematic area in the larger debate of race and education (Eitle, 2002).

Culturally relevant and responsive teaching. Irvine (2010) described learning as a "socially mediated process" that is "related to students' cultural experiences" (p. 58). As such, it is difficult to discuss achievement without also discussing some of these socio-cultural factors. Past studies showed that classroom environment, the student-teacher relationship, curriculum choices, and assessments used to determine academic achievement can impact student learning (Tatum, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Thompson and Bradford, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Campbell, 2003). This becomes especially noticeable when school practices, relationships, and curriculum are not aligned to what students value and know in their own lives, or what Delpit (1995) called a mismatch between school and home discourse. The mismatch between school culture and home culture has had educational consequences for Blacks (Hale-Benson, 1989).

Eagle Academy High School for Young Men. Eagle Academy for Young Men (Eagle Academy) is an all-boys school in the Bronx designed to provide intense academics and a supportive environment to young men of color who may be at risk of falling behind or dropping out of high school. Eagle Academy serves grades 9-12 with an annual attendance rate of 87% spanning from 2007-2010. At time this study took place, the total number of students at Eagle Academy was roughly 449, of whom 98% were minority students. Out of those students, 87% were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Table 1.1 shows detailed demographics of Eagle Academy. The school offers extra

academic help after school and on Saturdays as well as mentoring opportunities with One

Hundred Black Men, a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to outreach and

mentoring African American youth. According to Jager-Hyman (2009), Eagle Academy

graduated 82% of its seniors, compared to 51% in neighborhood high schools citywide in

2009. In 2010, 85% of seniors at the Eagle Academy graduated high school, more than

twice the citywide graduation rate for minority males that year. (See Appendix A for a

breakdown of the types of diplomas earned by Eagle Academy graduates). The school

has continued to demonstrate high African American and Hispanic or Latino male

academic achievement and graduation rates. Given the sociocultural factors at work in

school systems, the question arises as to what this school is doing that sets it apart from

similar settings, and how does the school perceive positive achievement factors?

Table 1.1

Eagle Academy for Young Men School Profile

School Year	Total Number of Students	Number of Students/Grade	Demographic	Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch	Annual Attendance Rate
2007-2008	402	9th- 108	66% - African	86%	87%
		10th- 97	American		
		11th- 89	32% - Hispanic or		
		12th- 77	Latino		
		Ungraded	4% - Other		
		Secondary - 31			
2008-2009	422	9th- 87	65% - African	80%	87%
		10th- 110	American		
		11th- 96	32% - Hispanic or		
		12th- 91	Latino		
		Ungraded Secondary - 38	3% - Other		
2009-2010	449	9th- 112	65% - African	87%	87%
		10th- 110	American		
		11th- 116	33% - Hispanic or		
		12th- 111	Latino		
			3% - Other		

Significance of Study

"Every nine seconds in America, a student becomes a dropout" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). With roughly 30% of American students dropping out before receiving a diploma, a rate that has been stable for several decades, assessing our schools' ability to graduate students has implications for the future. Education systems across the nation have shown similar statistics in terms of graduation rates for African American and Hispanic or Latino students versus white students. In Missouri, for example, the graduation rate for white students has been 87.4%; for black students, it has been 10 points lower at 77% (Lee, & Brodsky, 2006). In many other states the graduation rate for minority students has been even lower (Appendix B).

There are many reasons why studying the issue of high dropout rate among minority males is important. The implications of the achievement gap go beyond the economic to include the social, cultural and political. Specifically, the National Center for Education Statistics (2004) gave a concrete and detailed explanation on the problems dropouts present to the country and to themselves.

The earning power of dropouts has been in almost continuous decline over the past three decades. In 1971, male dropouts earned $35,087, a number that fell 35% to $23,903 in 2002, and continued to fall to $21,000 in 2011. Dropouts also face the following risks:

- Seventy-five percent of state prison inmates are dropouts as are 59% of federal inmates.

- Of all African American male dropouts in their early 30s, 52% have been imprisoned.

- The US death rate for persons with fewer than 12 years of education is 2.5 times higher than for those with 13 or more years of education.

- The US would save $41.8 billion in health care costs if the 600,000 young people who dropped out in 2004 were to complete one additional year of education.

- Dropouts cost the nation more than $260 billion dollars in lost wages, lost taxes, and lost productivity over their entire lifetimes.

It is not difficult to see the connection between studying high dropout rate and issues such as socio-economic mobility. The issue extends far beyond education and into society as we consider African American and Hispanic or Latino males as contributing individuals.

Purpose of Study

The study described in this dissertation sought to provide a backdrop for the problem of high dropout rates, reviewed some of the reasons for low graduations rates, connected theories of race and achievement, and related student achievement to the theories presented. By studying one school where the graduation rate for minority males has been relatively high, the research was able to identify and analyze factors for high achievement and provided recommendations for application to similar settings. The study included information gathered from surveys in one urban school with a high rate of graduation for African American and Hispanic or Latino males. Rather than focusing on deficit models for the problem of student achievement, the dissertation study contributed to existing research by more closely analyzing success factors of an underrepresented population and by sharing factors for success.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do parents rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do teachers rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do students rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do the administrators rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how does the group rate the importance of each of those factors?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this dissertation and are defined within the context of Eagle Academy for Young Men.

Teacher quality. Throughout this study, teacher quality and highly qualified teachers have been used interchangeably.

Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The IEP is a written document developed for each public school child eligible for Special Education. The IEP is created through a team effort and reviewed at least once a year. Before an IEP can be written, the child must be eligible for special education. By federal law, a multidisciplinary team must determine that the child (a) has a disability, and (b) requires special education and related services to benefit from the general education program.

Student assessment. A test or assessment intended to measure a student's knowledge, skill, aptitude, physical fitness, or classification.

Positive factors. Factors contributing to the success of minority students in high school.

Annual attendance rate. Annual attendance rate is determined by dividing the school's total actual attendance by the total possible attendance for a school year. A school's actual attendance is the sum of the number of students in attendance on each day the school was open during the school year.

Eligible for free and reduced lunch. Eligibility for free lunch and reduced-price lunch percentages are determined by dividing the number of approved lunch applicants by the Basic Educational Data System (BEDS) enrollment in full-day Kindergarten through Grade 12.

College readiness. Students are considered "college ready" when they have the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to complete a college course of study successfully without remediation.

Extended learning day/time. Extended-day programs, also called "after-school programs" are considered a significant opportunity to improve learning for students. High-quality extended learning time provides school-age youth with opportunities to belong, participate in enriching activities, receive targeted academic support, and forge meaningful connections with adults and peers outside the regular school day. Offered before and after school, on weekends, and during the summer months, these programs often serve the neediest children, those attending high-poverty schools, and those living in high-need communities (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2004).

At Eagle Academy, extended learning days are held until 5:30 p.m. daily, designed to maximize the success of the young men who attend the school. The students who participate in the extended learning day engage in various supplementary activities in an attempt to diminish the amount of frivolous time spent in a school day (Bowman & Gordon, 2011, p.3). The focus behind extended days is to keep the boys working diligently and out of trouble, thereby enhancing educational excellence. Being productive and accountable for their time is of utmost importance. In regard to CRT, some have argued that underprivileged minorities suffer from institutional and structural racism (Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005, p. 112). Bowman and Gordon (2011) asserted, "The main idea behind an extended learning day is to provide longer periods of academics in an effort to be successful" (p. 3). The assemblage of a strong foundation and support system for minority boys cultivates a successful program of all-inclusive support for overall development.

Mentoring programs. A confidential process through which experienced staff members share their craft knowledge and provide professional companionship, feedback, support, and assistance for the purpose of refining present skills, learning new skills, and/or solving classroom-related or work-related problems (Northcentral Technical College, 2012). A mentoring program provides a positive alternative for young men to develop supportive relationships with adult males outside of the home (Bowman & Gordon, 2011). At Eagle Academy, every young man takes part in a mentoring program. According to CRT, there are many beliefs, which can give guidance and insight, where communities of color are strong. In particular, Yosso (2005) argued, "one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in US schools is deficit thinking," (p. 75).

Bowman & Gordon (2011) asserted, "Eagle Academy is successful because the opposite approach is taken. Mentors do not believe that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance" (p. 4). Instead, focus is placed on exposing youth from challenging backgrounds to a wide-range of possible career paths. Moreover, the goal of the mentoring program is to empower positive cultural reproduction (Bowman & Gordon, 2011). Mentors learn to understand, enhance, and cultivate a child's lack of normative cultural knowledge and skills. Mentors also do not believe that parents neither value nor support their child's education. According to Bowman and Gordon, "A sense of community among the boys is cultivated, since there are not a lot of men of color to lead positive examples in schools" (p. 5). Ultimately, the goal of the mentoring program is to cultivate engagement, connection, and an orientation to the culture of school and work.

Parental involvement. The amount of participation, cooperation, and dedication that a parent has with the school in order to be involved in their child's education. Parental involvement is crucial to the success of the Eagle Academy boys. Bowman and Gordon, (2011) asserted, "Eagle Academy continues to benefit from allocating major efforts to have each parent take part in building a solid foundation in their child's education" (p. 7). The academy maintains an open-door policy and sends weekly communications home with students. Early in the admissions process parents know immediately what is expected of them (Bowman & Gordon, 2011, p. 7). The school makes clear very early on that parents are responsible for their scholars by contributing socially and academically both in school and at home. Yosso (2005) asserted, "Educators most often assume that schools work and that students, parents and community need to change to conform to this already effective and equitable system" (p. 75).

CRT affirms that many factors perpetuate deficit thinking, reproducing educational inequities for students from non-dominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds (Bell, 2008). When the young men come to Eagle Academy, a large part of decreasing deficit thinking focuses on helping students deal with any family issues and considering distractions that may stand in the way of success. Attention is paid to making it easy and rewarding for the families of the students to participate in every aspect of their child's education (Bowman & Gordon, 2011, p.8).

Credit recovery program. A structured means for students to earn missed credit in order to graduate. Credit recovery programs can be administered at the school, district, or state level. It is a highly decentralized, unregulated, and under-researched dropout prevention initiative (The Center for Public Education, 2010).

Credit recovery programs have been successful at Eagle Academy because students are motivated. With the credit recovery model, a student who is struggling becomes intrinsically motivated because he signed up for the extra work, is now liable for progressing forward, and has a solid support system to encourage his progress (Steele, 2003). Additionally, the program helps students who are in danger of not being promoted at the end of the year. The administration at Eagle Academy understands that through motivation the credit recovery program allows students to make up classes at a faster rate. These programs work extremely well with students who are able to go through the processes independently (Bowman & Gordon, 2011). The program works for the Eagle Academy boys because of motivation and the level of support available in order to move through the program successfully.

High expectations for students. Set realistic expectations for students when a teacher make assignments, give presentations, conduct discussions, and grade examinations. "Realistic" in this context means that standards are high enough to motivate students to do their best work but not so high that students will inevitably be frustrated in trying to meet those expectations. To develop the drive to achieve, students need to believe that achievement is possible, which requires early opportunities for success (Gurian & Stevens, 2005).

Schools that institute high expectations for all students and provide the support necessary to attain these expectations have high rates of academic success (Gurian & Stevens, 2005). At Eagle Academy, all students must be in attendance for the mandated family workshops that focus on learning skills and parenting styles. Students at Eagle Academy are expected to be responsible for their academic career, comply with the student code of conduct, and master Eagle Academy's performance standards.

Teachers also have the responsibility of following through with high expectations. Bowman and Gordon, (2011) asserted, "teachers at Eagle Academy are compassionate leaders who set limits, provide structure within the classroom, and push their students to achieve" (p.7). Furthermore, teachers with positive attitudes possess high expectations for success as expectation levels affect the ways in which teachers communicate and interact with students. In short, these behaviors drastically affect student learning and success rates in a positive way.

The faculty at Eagle Academy understands the expectations for their commitment and consistently acts in accordance with the mission of the school. CRT analyzed students' historical and contemporary efforts to transform unequal conditions in urban

schools, and Gurian and Stevens (2005) revealed that resistance might include different forms of oppositional behavior, such as self-defeating or conformist strategies that feed back into the system of subordination. At Eagle Academy, students are expected to adapt to the challenging, personalized learning experience that ensures the highest measure of intellectual potential and increased sense of self-esteem. CRT offers insight into why possessing high standards works: "Community cultural wealth involves a commitment from faculty to conduct research, teach and develop schools that serve a larger purpose of struggling toward social and racial justice" (Yosso, 2005, p. 82). In an effort to cultivate cultural wealth in the community, it is in the best interest of educators to not only motivate students but to set the bar high in an attempt to combat deficit views in the classroom (Chapman, 2007, p.159).

Highly qualified teachers. As defined by NCLB, a high-quality teacher is one who possesses at least a bachelor's degree and is either state-certified or licensed by having passed a state licensing exam. In addition, NCLB addresses teacher quality in subject knowledge, stating that:

- All new elementary school teachers must pass a state test of general subject knowledge and teaching skills.

- New middle school and secondary school teachers must have either studied their subject as an undergraduate or graduate major (or have advanced certification), or must pass a state subject test.

- Existing teachers must have either met the applicable subject matter knowledge criteria for new teachers or must demonstrate competence in all subjects taught based on a state standard of evaluation.

Successful teaching stems from building significant personal relationships. The teachers of Eagle Academy are academically qualified to be effective leaders in the classroom (Bowman & Gordon, 2011). As educators, there is a need to interpret misplaced anger, bitterness and emotions within the academic population. Utilizing positive reinforcements instead punishments to foster engagement and effort helps cultivate competence. Incorporating community-based activities within and outside of the classroom helps foster respectful relationships, a sense of belonging, and gives students and explicit role to take part in, (Bowman & Gordon, 2011, p. 12). The conclusion is that these community-based learning environments provide approaches that can be adapted to in school learning environments with positive results.

According to Dixson and Rousseau, (2005) "a highly qualified teacher is better equipped to tackle CRT challenges by those who refute the claims that educational institutions are making way toward neutrality, meritocracy, color- blindness, race neutrality and equal opportunity" (p.11). Furthermore, Yosso (2005) argued, "CRT recognizes that experiential knowledge in this area is critical to analyzing and teaching about racial relegation" (p. 74). The faculty at Eagle Academy recognizes that there have been strides toward eradicating these issues, and incorporate them into their curriculums.

Smaller class sizes. The legal class size in New York State is 34 students. Some schools not experiencing financial problems are able to create smaller class sizes averaging around 22 students.

In an attempt to bridge the achievement gap, Eagle Academy features small classes, which allow teachers to adjust quickly to curriculum without specialized training (Bowman & Gordon, 2011). According to Writer (2008), "Policymakers have an

enduring interest in identifying school reforms that will contribute to positive long-term social and economic outcomes" (p. 7). In fact, research indicated that minorities were willing to contribute their time, energies, and financial and material resources to support these educational institutions offering smaller class sizes because they knew they were important to the advancement of their group as a whole (Franklin, 2002).

A small classroom combined with the extended hours of contact between staff/faculty and students provides a more personalized approach to each student's development, (Bowman & Gordon, 2011, p. 10). Furthermore, smaller classes allow for a more personalized academic experience. The teaching and learning process is adapted to the characteristics of the learner, permitting both teacher and student to relate in transforming what is being learned (Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005).

Strong after-school program. After-school programs offer children a safe, supervised environment when school is not in session. They are designed as a supplement to in-class learning and a deterrent to violence or other negative behavior. After-school programs are offered for students of all ages from kindergarten through high school. Types of programs can include sports, church programs, reading groups or other specialized activity groups. Some programs are government-funded and free for students, while others are fee-based. In addition to providing adult supervision to children after school, these programs offer educational benefits. Children are encouraged to learn new skills, receive tutoring, and develop positive relationships. The positive atmosphere results in students' increased self-confidence and a desire to succeed in school. In addition, children not involved in after-school activities have a 49% increased risk of

drug exposure or drug use and 37% are more likely to experience a teen pregnancy (Nicholson, 2004).

The administration at Eagle Academy understands that students need more than a strong curriculum, competent faculty, and an adequate amount of time in the classroom to be successful. A strong after-school program provides support to children who would not otherwise have access to such activities. After-school programs provide an opportunity for students to engage in experiences that will help them learn academic, athletic, social and professional attributes. Eagle Academy understands the importance of extending day school into a strong after-school program. A young man who partakes in an after-school program is less likely to join a neighborhood gang, be a victim or a perpetrator of violence, or participate in inappropriate behavior.

Moreover, studies show that parents are less worried and more productive when students are in after-school programs (Franklin, 2002). Additionally, there is an exclusive after-school group called "Men of Strength" at Eagle Academy. The purpose of the group is to help students to avoid peer-pressure and reshape their concept of masculinity.

College preparation pathway. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2012),

> College preparatory programs aim to increase college access, particularly for
> those students who are least likely to enroll. These programs take many forms and
> serve a variety of students. Some start as early as elementary school, others in the
> senior year of high school. Some college preparatory programs focus on
> increasing academic readiness, while others specialize in college admissions or

financial aid. Some involve families and mentors, and others incorporate service

learning or recreational activities. (para. 1)

 The "Rites of Passage Program" at Eagle Academy prepares students for college.

According to Bowman and Gordon (2011), "students are required to attend two family

workshops, a college fair and various college field trips. They take test-prep classes, do

college prep on Saturdays" (p.4). Yosso (2005) asserted, "Social capital can be

understood as networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social

contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through

society's institutions" (p. 79). Through CRT, it is important to invest in an individuals'

social capital, as social contacts and community resources could assist a student

distinguish and achieve a college scholarship. Eagle Academy also employs a resident

college counselor to stress its college-prep mission. Program highlights include Saturday

Academy, College Now, and Eagle SOAR. There are also advanced placement courses in

Biology, English Language and Composition, World History. Finally, the College-Prep

Pathway efforts are grounded in the reality that the young men of Eagle Academy have

unique needs. It is the responsibility of the program to acclimatize the boys to the basic

foundations of college preparatory proficiencies.

Well-structured environment. Blum (2010), defined the school environment as

the social, academic and emotional contexts of a school, the "personality" of the learning

context, and how it is perceived by students, staff and community. This climate is

influenced by a broad range of factors, from disciplinary policies, to instructional quality,

to student and teacher morale. A positive school environment creates an optimal setting

for teaching and learning. Research shows that school can be a stabilizing force for young

people, both emotionally and academically, particularly when they are experiencing

transition or crisis. (p.2)

Providing a well-structured environment allows the students to focus solely on

their academic development. Bowman and Gordon, (2011) asserted, "a structured

atmosphere diminishes the amount of time that the young spend shiftless. On a consistent

basis, the young boys are kept occupied, diligent in work and being productive members

of the classroom" (p. 11). In fact, a positive, structured environment enhances

motivation, increases academic aspirations and enhances attendance and retention. An

unhealthy, unstructured school environment can lead to bullying, which can cause high

absenteeism, misbehavior and interpersonal aggression (Bowman & Gordon, 2011).

Structured school environments not only engage students academically but are

associated with a variety of positive health and behavioral outcomes. Research indicated

that students who have a structured environment in school are less likely to exhibit

disruptive behavior, carry or use a weapon, or experience emotional distress (Gurian &

Stevens, 2005).

Single-sex education. "Education at the elementary, secondary, or postsecondary

level in which males or females attend school exclusively with members of their own

sex" (Mael et al., 2005, p. ix). Single-sex education refers to an entire school with

members of one sex, or alternatively a school that offers single-sex classes such as

"separate classes for males and females in selected subjects for one or more years" (Mael

et al., 2005).

Chapter Summary

Despite the increased importance of a high school education, national high school completion rates have barely increased over the last 30 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). In the case of African American males across the nation, about 42% who enter the ninth grade actually graduate from high school (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). In large cities with high African American stud)ent enrollment, this number can be much lower (Lee, Kelcey Edwards, Menson, & Rawls, 2011) . In order to develop a model for academic achievement, this study described some of the race related factors contributing to minority males' alarming high school dropout rate as well as possible success factors previously identified by research on culturally relevant education.

The literature review in Chapter 2 provides different perspectives from which to more closely examine the issue of dropouts and high school graduation. It also provides a theoretical lens to use for analyzing the issue. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. It includes a synopsis of the research context and describes the research population as well as the proposed methodology. In Chapter 4, the data analysis is presented. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the findings and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and Purpose

The high school dropout rate for some high school students in the nation is alarming. "Every nine seconds in America, a student becomes a dropout" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). For a nation that boasts a high standard of living and opportunities for all, research has shown that 30% of American students dropout (Booker, Sass, Gill, & Zimmer, 2010), a number that points to the urgency of this situation. In the case of African American students, specifically male students, the statistics are even more alarming. Approximately 55% of African American male students do not receive high school diplomas (National Center of Education Statistics 2003/2004). The national on-time graduation rate for Hispanic males was 52% in 2005 (National Center of Education Statistics, 2005). In many public schools in an urban setting, there are insufficient resources, technology, and qualified teachers to educate students of color. In high schools where at least 75% of the students are low-income, there are three times as many uncertified or out-of-field teachers teaching both English and science than in schools with wealthier populations (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The research described in this dissertation examines the issue of African-American and Hispanic or Latino high school achievement as defined by graduation rate. It provides information about the high dropout rate as it relates to issue of race and classroom environment. Factors such as race, socioeconomic status, access to resources, and the mismatch between school culture and home culture is presented. The research

provides information about culturally relevant pedagogy and teaching as a framework for addressing the identified reasons for high dropout rate.

Review of the Literature

       Dropout rates. There are different ways to define and calculate dropout rates. Specifically, there are three kinds of dropout rate statistics: (a) event, annual, or incidence rate; (b) status or prevalence rate; and (c) cohort or longitudinal rate. Each rate has a different definition and produces a different statistic and slightly different picture of the magnitude of the problem (Coley, 1995). According to the National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES) (2006), the definition determines whether an individual is a dropout by his or her enrollment status at the beginning of the school year (the same day used for the enrollment count). Beginning in 1990, NCES defined a dropout as an individual who:

- was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year (e.g., 1999-2000).

- was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year (e.g., 2000-01).

- has not graduated from high school or completed a state- or district-approved educational program.

- has not met any of the following exclusionary conditions: (a) transfer to another public school district, private school, or state or district approved; (b) educational program (including correctional or health facility programs); (c) temporary absence due to suspension or school-excused illness; (d) death.

Individuals who complete one year of school but fail to enroll at the beginning of the subsequent year ("summer dropouts") are counted as dropouts from the school year and

grade in which they fail to enroll. Those who leave secondary education but are enrolled in an adult education program at the beginning of the school year are considered dropouts. Dropout status is determined by a student's status on October 1, and students who receive their GED certificate by October 1 are not counted as dropouts if the state or district recognizes this as an approved program.

The lack of insufficient data has caused states and school districts to use a variety of different rate of calculations for student dropouts that do not provide accurate measurements. Consequently, in 2005 all 50 governors signed the National Governors Association's (NGA) Graduation Rate Compact recommending that all states use the Cohort Method (as proposed by the USDE) to calculate graduation rates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009b). The cohort graduation rate is determined by the formula: On-Track Graduates divided by Cohort Total.

African American males. According to estimates based on the most recent data from the National Center of Education statistics, in 2003/2004, 55% of African American males did not receive diplomas with their cohort. In a report released by a national coalition, 23% of all young Black men ages 16 to 24 who dropped out of high school are in jail, prison, or a juvenile institution. 23 out of every 100 young Black male dropouts were in jail on any given day in 2006-2007 compared to only 6 to 7 of every 100 Asian, Hispanic or White dropouts (Center for Labor Market Studies, 2009). This is a national epidemic that has been ignored for far too long. The 2006 State Report Card (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010) showed that at 38%, New York was among the five states with the lowest African American graduation rates (Appendix B).

A report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2006), comprised a list of the top five reasons that led to dropouts: (a) Not interesting (47%), (b) Missed too many days and could not catch up (43%), (c) Spent time with people who were not interested in school (42%), (d) Had too much freedom and not enough rules in their life (38%), and (e) was failing in school (35%) (Bridgeland, DiIulio, & Morison 2006).

Hispanic/Latino males. In 2004, 28.4% of Hispanic/Latino males 16 to 24 years old were high school dropouts compared with 18.5% of Latino females, 7.1% of White males, and 13.5% of African American males (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). In 2005, Latinos made up 15% of the jail population, with an estimated 3.7% of all Latino males in the 20s incarcerated (Harrison & Beck, 2006). The national on-time graduation rate for Hispanic/Latino males was 52% in 2005; for white males, it was 74%. At 34%, Hispanic/Latino twelfth graders had the highest percentage of long-term absenteeism (three days or more) of any other racial or ethnic group. In a recent report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Bonczar, 2003), it was reported that unchanging incarceration rates yield a prediction for 1 in 6 of Latino males to go to prison during their lifetime, versus a prediction of 1 in 17 for White males. A more recent report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that Latinos make up 20.9% of the 2.1 million male inmates in federal, state, and local prisons (Sabol, Minton, & Harrison, 2007).

Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an intellectual and politically committed movement that studies race, racism and power. Critical Race Theory is a way of looking at race relations, particularly within the United States. The theory began in the mid-1970s, as a number of people in the legal profession began to worry about the slow rate at which laws were changing to promote racial equality

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(Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Although CRT began within the legal profession with the work of legal professor Derrick Bell, viewed as one of the most important thinkers within the movement, CRT has since spread to many other disciplines. CRT offers insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogies that guide efforts to identify, analyze, and transform the structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). CRT in education provides insight into social inequities that emerge as a result of racist practices within institutions and allow educators to challenge the current ways of knowing and doing (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

When considering CRT within the context of education, it is important to note how the education system took root in racist beginnings, that racism impacted past education policies, and that these policies have influenced the present day education system (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). In the past, African Americans were excluded from access to achievement due to lack of rights, a negative perception from educators, exclusion from high-level courses, and a perception of disengagement and disruption (Gregory et al., 2010). While overt racism marked the history of the education system and affected policies, the modern-day system demonstrates racism through policies such as that of school suspension (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). Noguera (2003) explained how rate of suspension is one of the predictors of increased academic failure among African Americans males. Furthermore, Black males are suspended at disproportionate rates as compared to other groups (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). In 21 states, disproportionality is so pronounced that the percentage of black suspensions is more than double their percentage of the student body (Witt, 2007). On

average across the nation, Black students are suspended and expelled at nearly three times the rate of white students. The federal data shows that no other ethnic group is disciplined at such a high rate. Hispanic students are suspended and expelled in almost direct proportion to their populations, and white and Asian students are disciplined far less (Witt, 2007). It is clear that the suspension policies in place put Black males at risk when it comes to academic achievement.

CRT is an important tool for educators in their understanding of classroom dynamics, academic testing, and curriculum bias (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The New York State Education Department (2010) claimed that although graduation rates for African Americans have been slowly increasing, Black students continue to be disproportionately classified to special education programs. For instance, minority students are often placed in special education classes by teachers who deemed "bad" behaviors to be a condition that needs to be addressed in a separate setting. Students of color are overrepresented in special education (Bennett, 2002); this is attributed to a variety of causes, including racism, the use of culturally and linguistically biased assessments, and power differentials between school leaders and parents of color. This disproportionate representation means that students of color are attached to the stigma of special education and limited educational access (Eitle, 2002). Therefore, special education programs and classes act as yet another barrier in access to higher-level courses, which in turn affects achievement rates.

Social and psychological achievement factors. Some researchers have subscribed to the idea that motivation is a huge factor in student achievement, especially for ethnic minority children, and that motivation is influenced by things like classroom

expectations, curriculum rigor, or student self perception. Through extensive reviews of past studies on minority students and motivation, and her comparative racial research, Graham (1989) asserted that, "Far too many minority children perform poorly in schools not because they lack basic intellectual capacities or specific learning skills, but because they have low expectations, feel hopeless, lack interest, or give up in the face of potential failure" (p. 40). Some studies showed that teacher expectations of student also matter when considering African American achievement and that providing professional development for teachers to address negative expectations of minority students can help address this issue (Delpit, 1995).

Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy and teaching. According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011), culturally responsive pedagogy, "maintains that teachers need to be non-judgmental and inclusive of the cultural backgrounds of their students in order to effective facilitators of learning in the classroom" (p. 66). For teaching to be relevant to the culturally diverse population of students, schools must integrate cultural experiences, values, and understanding into the learning environment (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 67). In other words, educators work toward balancing how they view and consider social factors, home-community factors, and school factors that can impact student achievement (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

A culturally relevant pedagogy builds on the idea that learning may differ across cultures, that teachers have the ability to enhance students' success by getting to know their cultural backgrounds, and that translating this knowledge into instructional practice can benefit students (Irvine, 2010). The implications of a cultural mismatch between home and school for students are great: "certain negative outcomes might occur, such as

miscommunication; confrontations among the student, the teacher, and the home; hostility; alienation; diminished self-esteem; and possibly school failure" (Irvine, 2010, p.59). This mismatch may be one of the factors leading to a focus on students' deficits, deeming students "at-risk", and in essence, causing teachers to make assumptions about students and their lives (Campbell, 2003). Tatum (2001) added, "In attempt to meet minimum standards, many minority students receive an indoctrination of basic skills that does not encourage them to achieve their maximum competency level" (p. 28). Tatum asserted that a more effective approach to teaching African American students is for teachers to value cooperation and use a culturally relevant approach to teaching students. In their studies of African American and Hispanic or Latino achievement for males and career attainment, Thompson and Bradford (2005) advocated for access to higher-level courses rather than focusing on remedial studies. Kirkland (2008) advocated for valuing students' home discourse and funds of knowledge. He explained that students come to school with their own ways of knowing and their own language, and by seeking to understand these ways, teachers can bridge the gap between home and school by using students' strengths to build and construct knowledge for classroom learning.

  Single-sex education as a factor of student achievement. In a systematic review of single-sex education versus coeducational education for the U.S. Department of Education, Mael, Alonso, Gibson, Rogers, & Smith (2005) defined single-sex education as "education at the elementary, secondary, or postsecondary level in which males or females attend school exclusively with members of their own sex" (p. ix). Single-sex education refers to an entire school with members of one sex, or alternatively a school that offers single-sex classes consisting of "separate classes for males and females in

selected subjects for one or more years" (Mael et al., 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education's reviews on single-sex education, it is difficult to determine whether or not single-sex education in public schools will benefit all children because the research available traditionally has not been in the public sector, nor has it focused on any one particular factor of single-sex education (Mael et al., 2005; Riordan, Faddis, Beam, Seager, Tanney, & DiBiase, 2008). Some supported the idea that single-sex education may benefit students (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Jones, 2010; King & Gurian, 2006; Mael et al., 2005), may especially benefit certain students (Gurian, Henley, & Trueman, 2001; Riordan, 2002), or recognized that success is a result of interrelated factors (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005), while others claimed there is insufficient evidence to support single-sex schooling (Halpern et al., 2011; Spielhagen, 2011), or that single-sex classes are discriminatory and harmful (Association of University Women, 2011). Whichever stance is taken, it is apparent that single-sex education is a debatable topic that has a long history in education. In an article for the *New York Times*, Weil (2008) stated that separating schoolboys from schoolgirls has long been a staple of private and parochial education. However, the idea is now gaining traction in American public schools in response to both the desire of parents to have more choice in their children's public education and the separate education crises girls and boys have been widely reported to experience.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 stated, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Thus, same-sex

education settings were identified as discriminatory. Title IX regulations were put in place to guard against sex discrimination across many facets of life; however, in 2006 when the government added regulations to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to provide more flexibility in implementing programs for students and more school choice for parents, single-sex schooling, if substantiated, became an option (Riordan et al., 2008). As a result of this legal flexibility in offering students more choice, there has been a renewed interest in single-sex education (Riordan et al., 2008).

With more flexibility in starting single-sex programs, different school districts began implementing either same-sex classes in coeducational schools, turning coeducational schools into single-sex schools, or launching new single-sex schools. Authors like Leonard Sax, executive director of the National Association of Single Sex Public Education, and Michael Gurian, co-founder of the Gurian Institute began to publish books and articles on the benefits of single sex education and to lead professional development programs aimed at providing teachers with the knowledge base and strategies to teach and lead same-sex programs.

Districts such as Rochester, New York decided to offer single-sex classes. In 1989, due to a push from a principal and backed by community support, the Rochester City School District provided parents with the choice of having children attend coeducational classes or single-sex classes despite reservations about single-sex education (Riordan, 2002). Rochester was considered a low performing school district and had primarily Hispanic, African-American, and low-income students when the district made the decision to offer the new classes at each grade level (Riordan, 2002). According to Riordan et al. (2008), students who enrolled in the single-sex classes

"showed greater gains on reading and mathematics tests, higher attendance rates, lower suspension rates, and higher parental participation rates than students in the coed classes" (p. 2). In this case, same-sex classes showed some benefit for certain students, specifically low-income minority students.

Other districts have claimed success with same-sex schooling. In Florida both single sex and coeducational classes were compared using the standardized Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores. Cable and Spradlin (2008) summarized some of the findings of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education in which it was reported that 37% of boys and 59% of girls in the coeducational classes scored proficient on the exam, while 86% of boys and 75% of girls in the single-sex classes scored proficient. King and Gurian (2006) noted how in Boulder, Colorado some schools were able to close the gender gap by having teachers make use of more boy-friendly teaching strategies in the classroom.

With different districts and schools claiming success, the central questions became and remains how can single-sex education benefit students, which factors contribute to student achievement, and how do they contribute? Those who have studied student academic achievement and social behaviors of students have drawn different conclusions about single-sex education. Some claimed that males and females learn differently and that separate, single-sex education opportunities may address the different needs of male and female students (Gurian & Henley, 2001; Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Sax, 2005) whether that be academically, socially, or both (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Jones, 2010; King & Gurian, 2006; Lee & Bryk, 1986; Sax, 2005; Weil, 2008). Others have remained opposed to single-sex education (Spielhagen, 2011).

Single-sex schools have existed in the United States for hundreds of years; however, as time has passed, single-sex schooling has diminished. According to Riordan (2002), co-educational institutions replaced single-sex schools not because they were regressive, "but rather because of financial constraints. Historically, mixed sex schools were economically more efficient" (p. 10). There is limited research and data regarding effects of single-sex schooling, however the data that is available showed that single-sex schooling has a greater impact on African Americans, Hispanics and low-income neighborhoods. Riordan further stated that because low-income and race/religion are inextricably linked, this affects students of particular social and economical backgrounds. Research has shown disadvantaged students in single-sex schools performing at or above performance levels in comparison to students attending co-educational schools.

> They [students at single-sex schools] show higher levels of leadership behavior in school, do more homework, take a stronger course load, and have higher educational expectations. They also manifest higher levels of discipline and order. Not surprisingly, they have a less satisfactory social life than students in coeducational schools (p 14).

However, simply placing African American and Hispanic students in single-sex schools is not enough to diminish the achievement gap. There are others factors that must be considered that affect the success of disadvantaged students in single-sex schools (Harker, 2000). Harker found that separation by sex did not guarantee higher test scores for minority and low-income students in single-sex and coeducational schools in New Zealand. Teachers, for example, play a vital role in student achievement. Hubbard and Datnow (2005) examined how in many co-educational schools African-American males

and Hispanics are more likely to fail because of the low expectations set for them by teachers in comparison to their white peers. Single-sex schools eliminated this barrier specifically when teachers and staff invested in the process of implementing challenging and rigorous courses for their disadvantaged students and serving as mentors. "Scholars have long recognized the important role teachers play in students' academic achievement" (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005, p.118). Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that when teachers are of the same socioeconomic background or have a common racial or ethnic identity, there has been a positive impact on student learning. In a case study of a single-sex school in California, Hubbard and Datnow found that the "positive bonds forged between students and teachers in their everyday interactions played key roles [in student success]" (p.118). Riordan (2002) also found that teachers of the same gender could serve as role models and have positive influences on children.

> In terms of academic outcomes, single-sex schools may be particularly advantageous for girls and minority males since the top students in all subjects and all extra-curricular activities will be their own gender, and hence, capable of serving as successful role models. (p.183)

A second important factor that helps makes single-sex schools successful are the grants and financial support received. For example, in 1997 12 single-sex schools were opened in several districts in California through state grants. All of the schools served low-income families and provided students not only with appropriate services and new technology but also smaller classroom sizes, extra teachers, special academic tutoring, and "authentic caring" between staff and students. These structures allowed for differentiated instruction and teacher-student relationships that helped build the students

social and emotional skills (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005). Hubbard and Datnow found that

public schools in the neighboring California area lacked adequate resources for years. A

principal of one of the single-sex schools in California said,

> "What's so great? It's a great opportunity. It's also money. I can do something…
> [Public schools] are on a bare-bones budget. They buy nothing. They've got
> nothing going on over there. They buy only paper and pencils, and even then, they
> are still in the red. (p.123)

According to Hubbard and Datnow, the single-sex schools provided the underserviced

and underprivileged children in those California areas with opportunities not provided in

public schools as well as respite from the distractions of the opposite gender. Hubbard

and Datnow noted that after the first year the state did not renew the grant money and the

schools were eventually forced to close because of lack of funding and grants.

Single-sex schools are also good at dispelling gender stereotypes. Hubbard and

Datnow (2005) found that single-sex schools eliminate the pressures both males and

females face in coeducational schools. Girls are more comfortable in participating in

activities that normally would be categorized as masculine and vice versa. There is also

less of a distraction from the opposite sex. Both Hubbard and Datnow and Streitmatter

(1999) found that boys and girls in coeducational schools are more distracted by social

pressures than academics. Boys and girls distract each other and through multiple forms

such as dressing to impress the other sex, sexual harassment, and vying for teacher time

and attention.

Riordan (2002) also found that African American males in particular benefited

from single-sex schools, although this concept has faced opposition from different

entities such as the NAACP. Riordan found that, "just as an interest in single-sex education for girls was taking off, inner-city schools were experiencing a simultaneous movement focused on the education of minority boys, particularly African American boys" (Herr & Arms, 2000 p. 531). These single-sex schools were seen as "possible solutions in efforts to reverse the downward educational spiral of this population" (p. 18) because coeducational settings were not conducive to black males and their learning. Riordan argued that

> single-sex schools will be effective in the public sector so long as they are
> earmarked for disadvantaged students [because] single-sex schools do not greatly
> influence the academic achievement of affluent or advantaged students, but they
> do for poor disadvantaged students. (p18)

However, the NAACP took the stance that segregation in any form could lead to resegregation, so they were opposed to single-sex schools (Hopkins, 1997). Herr and Arms (2000) noted that there have been many challenges to all-male or all-female initiatives, regardless of whether linked to specific cultural groups, and these challenges have resulted in the closure of many single-sex schools.

Overall, there appears to be insufficient longitudinal data for single-sex schooling. There is also limited data on public single sex schooling, as most single-sex schools exist in private sector. Although the debate continues, single-sex schooling for African American males in particular, continues to be an option for schools seeking to close the achievement gap and motivate African American students to learn. The limited data implies that minorities and students of low-income may benefit from single-sex schools, not only academically, but socially as well because of smaller class sizes and limited

gender distractions. Limited data and research however, cannot confirm nor deny the effects on student learning for at-risk youth. Also, legal challenges continue to rise (Singh, Vaught, & Mitchell, 1998).

In the past few years, the U.S. Board of Education has sanctioned extensive reviews of single-sex education studies within the U.S., abroad, within the private sector, and within the public sector (Mael et al., 2005; Riordan et al., 2008). Researchers have sought to collect information about single-sex schooling including what is currently known about its effects on student achievement, characteristics of single-sex schooling, perceived benefits or disadvantages, and what types of studies could contribute to current knowledge and instructional methodologies (Riordan et al., 2008). Riordan et al. surveyed school staff and visited some of the single-sex schools they studied, but the results of reviewing these studies were mixed. For instance, "Both principals and teachers believed that the main benefits of single-sex schooling are decreasing distractions to learning, and improving student achievement" (Riordan et al., 2008, p. x). They also found that "more positive academic and behavioral interactions between teachers and students (both boys and girls) were observed in the single-sex schools than in the coed comparison schools" (Riordan et al., 2008). Furthermore, Riordan et al. found that "[B]oys' and girls' academic time on task at both the elementary and middle school levels was also higher in the single-sex schools" (p.21). Mael et al., (2005) included Riordan et al.'s rationale for factors that may have contributed to successful single-sex settings. These include (a) the diminished strength of youth's cultural values, (b) a greater degree of order and control, (c) the provision of more successful role models, (d) a reduction of sex differences in curriculum and opportunities (e) a reduction

of sex bias in teacher-student interaction (f) a reduction of sex stereotypes in peer interaction (g) the provision of a greater number of leadership opportunities, and (h) a pro-academic parent/student choice, which is required by single-sex schools.

The state of California also attempted single-gender education on a larger scale., Datnow, Hubbard, and Woody (2001) conducted a longitudinal study to determine implications on student equity in six districts throughout the state. According to the study, it was unclear whether or not having same-sex schools led to student achievement increases. The study, which included information gathered though interviews, did show that administrators felt single-sex education could benefit students at-risk (Datnow et al., 2001). The study also showed that participants felt students in same-sex classes had fewer distractions and were therefore more focused on academics (Datnow et al., 2001).

Social and behavioral benefits to single-sex schooling. Some claimed that single-sex schooling can have other social and behavioral benefits that make this setting a viable one for some students (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Jones, 2010; King & Gurian, 2006; Lee & Burke, 1986; Riordan, et al., 2008; Sax, 2005). According to Riordan et al., single-sex education appears to yield positive academic behaviors linked to academic success. The results of Riordan et al.'s study showed that compared to students in a coeducational setting, students in single-sex environments exhibited behaviors such as completing homework and being more engaged in academic activities. In addition, teachers and administrators interviewed listed decreased distractions to learning and addressing male and female learning styles as other benefits or outcomes to single-sex education (Riordan et al., 2008). In their review of single-sex programs and data, Mael et al. (2005) listed increased student self-concept as a resulting factor of single-sex

education. Hubbard and Datnow's (2005) study revealed that teachers felt "the absence of students of the opposite sex made it possible to have candid conversations that were essential to their students' well-being" (p. 124). Their study also revealed that when separated, male and female students could not engage in certain ways of being or behaviors typical of coeducation classrooms that get in the way of learning, such as showing off, acting out, seeking out attention, competing with one another, or harassing the opposite sex (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005). Teachers reported that female students learned to collaborate, bond, and focus on work (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005). Jones (2010) added, "Particularly in secondary school environments, having single-sex classrooms may add to the academic effectiveness of the class as opposed to coeducational settings and the deterrents that they may include" (p. 2). Some of these deterrents or factors may include stereotyping, others' perceptions of the students, and social pressures (Jones, 2010).

Some research claimed that females especially benefit from same-sex schooling (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Lee & Bryk, 1986; Riordan et al., 2008; Sax, et al, 2009). Sax et al. concluded that high school females receiving single-sex education have higher S.A.T. scores, higher school and career aspirations, are more likely to interact with teachers outside of class, show more interest in graduate studies, demonstrate more self-confidence when it comes to academics, demonstrate more interest in engineering fields, do better in math and technology courses, and are more politically engaged. Riordan et al. (2008) reported that teachers who completed surveys for their study identified females as benefitting more than males from single-sex schooling because of social and behavioral opportunities.

As educators and researchers look to distinguish achievement factors for students, some have provided insight into possible achievement factors for boys. Sax and Gurian have both contributed a great deal of research in support of single-sex schooling based on gender differences. Sax (2005) cited various brain studies in support of the idea that the male and female brains function differently and should therefore have experiences in school to match those differences. He explained how things like lighting in a room, temperature, and teachers' communication methods affect males and females differently. Gurian, Henley, and Truman (2001) and Gurian and King (2006) asserted that by using boy-friendly teaching strategies, schools can help address the boy crisis in education. Some of these strategies include restructuring lessons and teaching methods to be more task-oriented, include more physical movement, and provide more student choice in schoolwork.

Wilhelm and Smith (2002) contributed to the discussion of boys' learning, especially in the area of literacy. They reviewed literature on the impact of gender on learning, sharing three essential concerns in the area of boys and literacy learning, and offered a lens for helping to address the needs of adolescent boys. They cautioned that research and studies, although helpful, tend to generalize and categorize groups in order to draw comparisons, and suggested to not losing sight of individuals and their needs. They also cautioned that current definitions or concepts of success are narrow, affecting who is deemed successful. They explained how appealing to boys' real-life interests at school can help bridge the gap between home discourse and school discourse and increase boys' engagement in their learning. Smith and Wilhelm (2002) supported a

social constructivist approach to considering boys as learners rather than a biological determinism approach. They stated

> Social constructivism emphasizes that changing instructional environments, methods, and expectations can change the experience of kids. It can also change how they act, behave, learn, and interact. Therefore, focusing on how society and school influence gendered behaviors like literacy seems to us to be a fruitful and promising avenue for educators. (p.7)

As schools continue exploring ways to decrease the achievement gap, some educators have identified single-sex education as one way to address the gap. Some believed that establishing these schools within the public school system can offer students who have not been successful in more traditional education settings a different learning environment (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005). As such, it is worth examining what research says about minority, low-income, or disadvantaged boys when exploring single-sex education since these groups have historically underperformed in schools across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Riordan's (1990) longitudinal study about the effects of single-sex education on different groups of students analyzed data by sex and race, examined academic outcomes, and outcomes relating to attitude. His findings showed that African American and Hispanic males and females in single-sex Catholic schools outperformed students in coeducational classes on standardized cognitive tests (Riordan, 2002). Hughes (2006) added that, "By providing single-sex education in the public schools, all students, including those in poverty and minorities, will have the same choices as those who can afford private schools" (p. 10). Hughes argument raises the issue of access to different types of learning environments for public school students,

such as single-sex schooling.

Hughes (2006) further asserted that, "Each public school district should act immediately in this educational reform effort providing the choice to families in order to improve student achievement among students in poverty and minorities" (p. 10). Hubbard and Datnow (2005) stated that achievement is a result of interrelated factors. They argued that, "the single-sex schools were successful in providing a system of social supports that addressed the serious and pressing needs of these students. The accomplishments of California's single-sex academies were the product of more than the separation of students by gender, however" (p. 118). They further stated, "we found that three important, interrelated conditions contributed to the positive experiences of low-income and minority students: the single-sex setting, financial support from the state, and the presence of caring, proactive teachers" (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005, p. 128).

Some all-male schools have reported many positive outcomes from the learning environments they have created. Eagle Academy for Young Men in the Bronx, New York boasted a high graduation rate of 85% in 2010 for its all-male primarily African American and low-income student population. This rate is significantly higher than the average graduation rate for similar populations across New York City (The Eagle Academy Foundation for Young Men, year). In a report to Mayor Bloomberg of New York City, Banks and Oliveira (2011) stressed that, "Young men of color need to be viewed in the context of their family, neighborhoods, and experiences" (p.6).

Criticism of and opposition to single-sex education. Single-sex education is not without its critics. Those opposed to or critical of same-sex education take that stance for different reasons. Some opponents, such as the American Association of University

Women (AAUW) claimed that single-sex schooling is discriminatory, especially for women (2011). Others claimed there is insufficient evidence to back up the claim that single-sex schooling is more advantageous for students (Spielhagen, 2011) or that current arguments are flawed (Cohen, 2009). Johnson (2004) explained, "Opponents contend that single-sex education presents the same legal issue as did *Brown v. Board of Education*: state-endorsed segregation of students. Segregation by gender, in opponents' eyes, threatens to erase the gains women have made over the past century" (p. 632).

In a position statement on single-sex education, the AAUW explained their position that single-sex education is not beneficial to women. The paper stated, "some policies that purport to improve student performance, such as…single-sex education in public schools—skirt critical civil rights protections" (AAUW, 2011, para. 2). Ultimately, they claimed that, "single-sex education without proper attention to civil rights protections can reinforce problematic gender stereotypes, increase discrimination, and restrict the educational opportunities open to both girls and boys" (AAUW, 2011,para 3). The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) also expressed concern over segregating students by sex for schooling. The organization has stood by the claim that separating students by sex is a form of segregation, and can have negative effects on students (ACLU, 2012). Critics such as Halpern et al. (2011) also claimed that single-sex education contributes to gender stereotyping and institutionalizes sexism.

In a study exploring the perceptions of single-sex classroom teachers, Spielhagen (2011) recognized that educators are trying to address student needs, but asserted that there is insufficient scientific evidence to back up the claim that this type of education is what increases student achievement. He stated that conclusions about single-sex

schooling "are often based on anecdotal reasoning and not on empirical evidence"
(Spielhagen, 2011, p.1). Halpern et al. (2011) further asserted that research does not
support the claim that single-sex education increases student academic performance
(2011). Spielhagen's study focused on teacher perception of same-sex education and adds
to the discussion of issues of school leadership and professional development as
contributing factors to the success or failure of single-sex programs.

Cohen (2009) described the issue of boys' achievement in education through the
lens of what he called the essentialist myth of masculinity. The myth, Cohen stated
explains that boys are different from girls by nature "…and they are different from girls
in ways that make educating both of them fairly and effectively in the same room
difficult, if not impossible" (p. 138). He disagreed with this "myth" and the popular idea
put forward by some that boys are distracted by girls, aggressive, and competitive
(Cohen, 2009) and must have a classroom environment to address those gender-specific
needs. Ultimately, with the recent interest in single-sex schools, research and data will
need to be collected from not only the private but also the public schools in order to
determine the advantages of such schools.

Conclusion

The issue of single-sex education versus coeducation for students is not a new
one, with a long history of both supporters and those in opposition. While some
emphasize the benefits single-sex schooling can have on males, females, or
disadvantaged and minority students, others are more cautious about drawing conclusions
from current bodies of study. Yet others consider single-sex education a form of
discrimination, reinforcing negative stereotypes about males and females.

As different school districts experiment with various learning opportunities such as offering single sex classes or devoting entire schools to same-sex students, they contribute to what is known about the impact of this type of learning environment. One thing the research made clear was that this field of study could benefit from more scientific studies to help better determine achievement factors (Mael et al., 2005; Riordan et al., 2008). It is difficult to separate achievement factors by gender alone. Supporters of single-sex education, such as Sax and Gurian, may cite brain studies or provide more insight into what is being described as the boys' crisis in education, but the issue of achievement is complex. One must consider factors such as school demographics, curriculum, teacher knowledge, professional development, leadership, number of students, gender, socioeconomic circumstance, class size, teacher perception, student self-image, motivation, funding, and much more when trying to determine what helps students increase achievement. There is also the practice of generalizing data and research to draw conclusions, which does not take the situation of individual students into consideration (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

It appears that single-sex education can work for some students some of the time. Just as with other strategies for increasing achievement, just because a practice may not be appropriate for all students does not mean it should not be used. As single-sex schools continue to experiment with their particular model by adjusting variables, new data should emerge to help add to the growing body of research on single-sex schools. This information can contribute to understanding how to address student needs, especially those of African American males. Schools like Eagle Academy for Young Men appear to

be addressing student needs in a variety of ways, one of them being by providing an all-male environment.

Chapter Summary

Studies across the nation showed that African American high school dropout rates are a cause for concern, especially when considering the implications for African American males trying to sustain a living in society. There are many factors that affect achievement, such as the historically rooted exclusionary practices and policies within the education system itself as well as social and school factors. In identifying and analyzing achievement factors, a model for increased graduation rate can be outlined.

The research design and methodologies description in Chapter 3 describes the setting for the dissertation study, the participants, and the methods that were used to collect and analyze data.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

The issue of minority graduation rate is a critical one, especially for African American males. Past studies have cited reasons for the high dropout rate/low graduation rate, such as socioeconomic status, educational opportunities, cultural expectations and norms, and race relations. Many studies have contributed information about the education gap in America with implications for teacher education, school leadership, classroom teachers, parents, and community members. This study builds on past research using a case study approach to find the relationship between theories of learning grounded in race and culture and current achievement for minority males in one school. The achievement gap appears to be especially prevalent in urban school districts, where percentages of African Americans can be high.

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do parents rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do teachers rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do students rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do the administrators rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do the group as whole rate the importance of each of those factors?

This research study used a mixed method to gather and analyze data about participants' perceptions of achievement factors for minority males in one school. Participants completed a survey with questions about achievement factors and rated the degree of importance of each factor. This study was conducted through the use of a case study of one school in New York City. The study included data about student achievement from students, parents, teachers, and school leaders.

Research Context

The study took place in Eagle Academy for Young Men. Eagle Academy for Young Men (Eagle Academy) is an all-boys school in the Bronx designed to provide intense academics and a supportive environment to young men of color who may be at risk of falling behind or dropping out of high school. Eagle Academy serves grades 9-12 with an annual attendance rate of 87% spanning from 2007-2010. At the time the research was conducted, the total number of students at Eagle Academy was roughly 449, of whom 98% were minority students. Out of those students, 87% were eligible for free and reduced lunch. Table 1.1 shows detailed demographics of Eagle Academy. The school offers extra academic help after school and on Saturdays as well as mentoring opportunities with One Hundred Black Men, a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing outreach and mentoring African American youth. According to Jager-Hyman (2009), Eagle Academy graduated 82% of its seniors, compared to 51% in neighborhood high schools citywide in 2009. In 2010, 85% of seniors at the Eagle Academy graduated high school, more than twice the citywide graduation rate for

minority males that year. The school has continued to demonstrate high African

American and Hispanic or Latino male academic achievement and graduation. The

school has graduated students at a high rate compared to other schools of similar settings

and demographics, making it valuable for the purpose of the study in determining

achievement factors among African American males.

    100 Black Men of America, Inc. The overall concept of the 100 Black Men

began in New York in 1963 when a group of concerned African American men began to

meet to explore ways of improving conditions in their community. The group eventually

adopted the name, "100 Black Men, Inc." as a sign of solidarity. These men envisioned

an organization that would implement programs designed to improve the quality of life

for African Americans and other minorities. They also wished to ensure the future of

their communities by aiming an intense number of resources toward youth development.

These members were successful black men from various walks of life. Today the

organization has grown to over 116 chapters with more than 10,000 members who

continue to strive to improve the quality of life in our communities and enhance the

educational and economic opportunities for African Americans. 100 Black Men of

America, Inc. has more than 100,000 youth participants annually in its mentoring and

youth development programs. With a mission to improve the quality of life and enhance

educational opportunities for African Americans, members continue to serve as a strong

force by overcoming the cultural and financial obstacles that have limited the

achievements of some African Americans, particularly young African American males.

Members of the 100 have made outstanding progress, proving that Blacks can, and do,

excel as corporate leaders, community leaders and as independent business owners (100 Black Men, nd).

Research Participants

The study population was minority males at Eagle Academy for Young Men. The research participants was a sample of randomly selected students, teachers, and parents, as well as the school administrators. The students were all minority males from Bronx, New York who had attended or were currently attending Eagle Academy. They were randomly selected to participate in a 20-question survey regarding positive factors impacting graduation. The parents were randomly selected as well from the list of students who were not part of the study population as to avoid communication and persuasions between parent and child. The gender of the participating parent was not collected. The teachers were randomly selected from the school personnel list. Data on their race and gender were not collected. The administrators, a male and a female, were purposively selected to participate in the survey. The participants voluntarily completed a survey for the purpose of this study.

Data Collection and Instruments

A case study approach provides insight and accounts of participants within their community and learning environments providing the relevant situations from which to identify and analyze achievement factors (Merriam, 1998; Stokrocki, 1997). For this study, the participants were asked to rate the top 10 factors that they feel have contributed to the success of Eagle Academy's high percentage of minority males who graduate. Surveys were used to collect the data. The researcher presented a pre-made survey of factors that contribute to the high graduation rate of minorities to participants who rated

the factors from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. All collected data was anonymous and in the possession of the researcher for three years. The data provided the researcher with data from students, staff, leadership, and parents that reveal some reasons why minority males have been successful graduating from Eagle Academy at a high percentage.

Data Analysis

Data from surveys were recorded on tables to show results. The tables had one column with the list of achievement factors. Other columns identified the degree to which each of the participants groups (students, teachers, parents, the administrators) valued each factor. The table of results accompanied a narrative describing the achievement factors for the different groups of participants identified in order of importance. The tables, together with the narrative description, helped to describe the relationship of the research to the data collected in the study.

Chapter Summary

The timeline of actions was recorded on an action plan with proposed deadlines for each phase of data collection and analysis.

- Phase 1: Defended the dissertation proposal in February 2012.

- Phase 2: Made necessary revisions to dissertation proposal and sent to dissertation chair and committee member. Sent the final documents to IRB for research approval by March 2012.

- Phase 3: Met with administrators at Eagle Academy to discuss research in detail. Explained the random selection process of all participants to participate in

a 20-question survey, except administrators. Administrators were purposively

selected to participate. April 2012 was the timeline date.

- Phase 4: Disseminated surveys to participants. The participants were briefed

on how to complete the survey along with a date for completion. There were on-

going discussions between the point person at Eagle Academy and the researcher

regarding updates of the surveys. The timeline date was May 2012.

- Phase 5: Collected the surveys. Grouped/divided the surveys by students,

teachers, parents, and administrators. A table was created on which to record

results (one column for achievement factors, another for each subgroup and

degree of importance). The data was analyzed and interpreted with a written

narrative describing the results. The timeline date was June 2012.

- Phase 6: Wrote chapters four and five in preparation for the dissertation

defense. Defended the dissertation in August 2012.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter is designed to answer each of the research questions and report the results in tables and charts. Each research question is represented with data reporting the statistical findings. Nationally, about two-thirds of all students who enter ninth grade graduate with a regular high school diploma four years later. For minority males, these figures are far lower. Three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts, as are 59% of federal inmates. In fact, dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be incarcerated in their lifetime. Furthermore, African American men are disproportionately incarcerated. Of all African American male dropouts in their early 30s, 52% have been imprisoned and 90% of the 11,000 youth in adult detention facilities have no more than a ninth grade education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). One school in the South Bronx is defying the norm and graduates minority males at almost double the city average. That school is The Eagle Academy for Young Men, located in South Bronx, New York.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do parents rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do teachers rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do students rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do the administrators rate the importance of each of those factors?

- Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how does the group rate the importance of each of those factors?

Data Analysis and Findings

There were 30 respondents to the 20-question survey. Among these, two were administrators, 14 were students, eight were parents, and six were teachers. All respondents answered all questions. The survey data were entered into SPSS and spot-checked for accuracy. The scores were reverse-coded for negative survey statements (questions 3, 7, 8, 9, and 13). Survey questions were grouped together, when possible, under a total of twelve concepts. The concepts and corresponding survey questions are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Research Concepts and Corresponding Survey Questions

Concept	Survey Questions
Teacher Quality	1, 20
Smaller Class Size	2, 3, 8
After School Programs	4, 7
Structured Environment	5
College Prep Pathways	6, 9, 18
Positive Student Behavior	10
Financial Support	11
Extended School Day	12
Mentoring Programs	13
Parental Involvement	14, 16
Credit Recovery Programs	15, 17
High Student Expectations	19

By computing the absolute value of the difference in responses for each respondent, scores from two different questions within the above conceptual groupings were compared in order to identify inconsistent responses. The pairs used for the consistency check are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Survey Question Pairs Used for Check of Response Consistency

Concept	Survey Questions
Teacher Quality	1, 20
Smaller Class Size	2, 8
After School Programs	4, 7
College Prep Pathways	6, 9
Parental Involvement	14, 16
Credit Recovery Programs	15, 17

Each difference of three or more was considered a sign of inconsistent response. Such differences were tallied for each respondent. A count of three or more inconsistent response pairs was considered cause for exclusion from analysis. One inconsistent response pair was found for two different respondents; the rest of the respondents had zero inconsistent response pairs. Therefore, responses from all respondents were considered to possess a consistent pattern and no responses were excluded from analysis.

For each respondent, a mean score was obtained for each conceptual grouping. When only one survey question represented a concept, that question was used alone. For each respondent type, a mean score under each concept was computed. These were ranked within each respondent type to find how the members of that group rated the importance of each factor relative to the other factors. These results are presented in separate tables and figures. For the individual group tables (Table 4.3 through Table 4.7), the mean ratings are sorted from highest to lowest and each table is followed by a bar

graph (Figures 4.1-4.4); for the conglomerate table (Table 4.8), the mean ratings are

sorted by survey-concept order and are also shown in Figure 4.5. Table 4.9, presents the

results of the entire group of respondents, sorted from highest to lowest mean score. This

data is also shown as a bar chart in Figure 4.6.

Table 4.3

Administrators' Mean Scores

Concept	Mean	SD
Teacher Quality	4.75	.354
Structured Environment	4.50	.707
Positive Student Behavior	4.50	.707
High Student Expectations	4.50	.707
Credit Recovery Programs	4.25	.354
Smaller Class Size	4.17	.236
After School Programs	4.00	.000
College Prep	4.00	.000
Parental Involvement	3.75	.354
Extended School Day	3.50	.707
Financial Support	3.00	1.414
Mentoring Programs	3.00	.000

Note. Administrators (n=2)

Research question #4. Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of

minority males, how do the administrators rate the importance of each of those factors?

The data showed that administrators believed teacher quality to be the most important factor impacting graduation at Eagle Academy. Just as important, with little statistical difference, they identified a well structured environment, high student expectations, positive student behavior, and the credit recovery program as important factors impacting graduation. Surprisingly, the administrators believed that the mentoring program and the financial support did not play a major role in the high graduation rate. The scoring was out of a five-point scale system with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest. The average scores, mean, of the administrators are ranked ordered from highest to lowest.
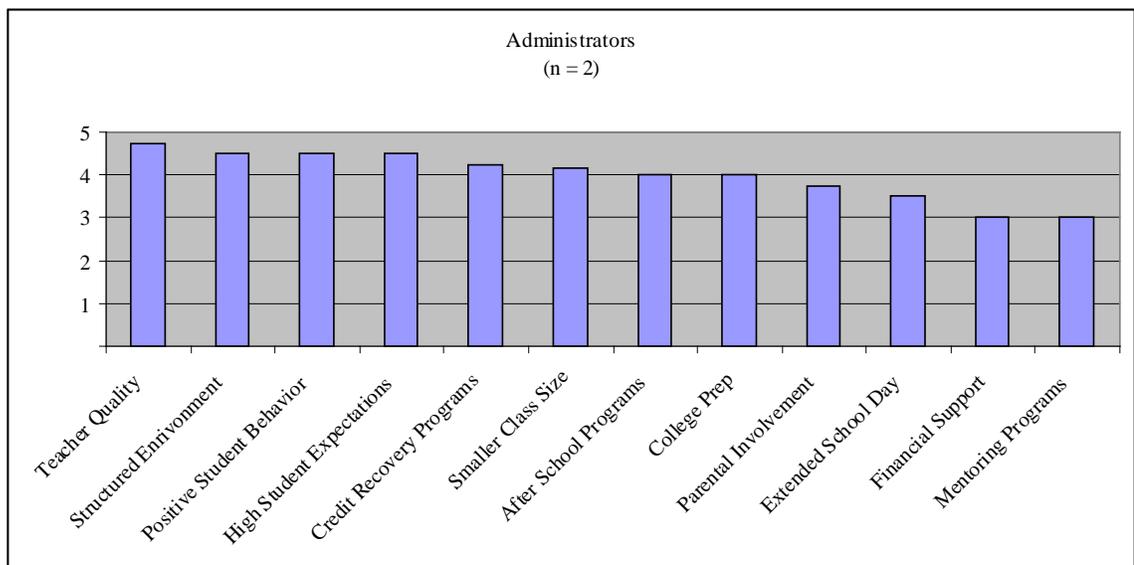

Figure 4.1. Administrators' bar graph.

Table 4.4

Students' Mean Scores

Concept	Mean	SD
Teacher Quality	4.25	.427
College Prep	4.21	.426
High Student Expectations	4.21	.893
Credit Recovery Programs	4.14	1.082
After School Programs	4.07	.550
Smaller Class Size	3.88	.549
Structured Environment	3.86	.864
Positive Student Behavior	3.86	1.099
Financial Support	3.79	.975
Parental Involvement	3.71	1.155
Mentoring Programs	3.64	1.008
Extended School Day	3.07	1.207

Note. Students (n=14)

Research question #3. Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of

minority males, how do students rate the importance of each of those factors?

According to the study, students deemed teacher quality as the number one factor

impacting graduation. Just as important, with little statistical difference, the data showed

college-prep pathway, high student expectations and credit recovery program as equally

important to students' high rate of graduation at Eagle Academy. However, on average,

the students believed that an extended school day had little to do with the high graduation

rate at the school. The scoring was out of a five-point scale system with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest. The average scores, mean, of the students are ranked ordered from highest to lowest.
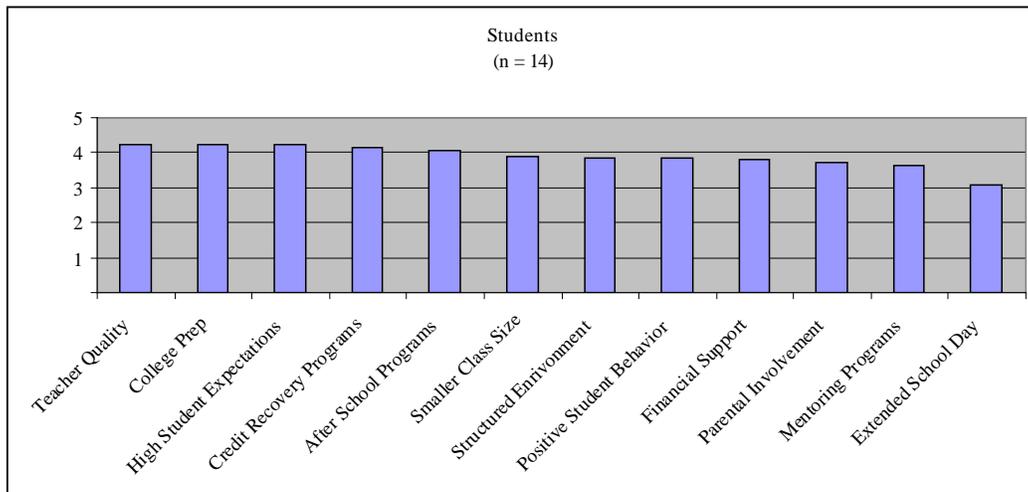

Figure 4.2. Students' bar graph.

Table 4.5

Parents' Mean Scores

Concept	Mean	SD
High Student Expectations	5.00	.000
Teacher Quality	4.81	.259
Financial Support	4.50	.535
Parental Involvement	4.44	.863
Credit Recovery Programs	4.44	1.050
College Prep	4.42	.527
Positive Student Behavior	4.38	.744
After School Programs	4.25	1.134
Structured Environment	4.25	.886
Extended School Day	4.13	.991
Smaller Class Size	4.00	.713
Mentoring Programs	3.50	1.414

Note. Parents (n=8)

Research question #1. Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do parents rate the importance of each of those factors?

The survey conducted showed high student expectations as the number one factor impacting graduation to parents. Parents also believed that the presence of a high quality teacher in the classroom is just as important as setting high expectations for students. However, parents did not believe mentoring programs to be an integral part to student's graduation success. The scoring was out of a five-point scale system with 5 being the

highest and 1 the lowest. The average scores, mean, of the parents are ranked ordered
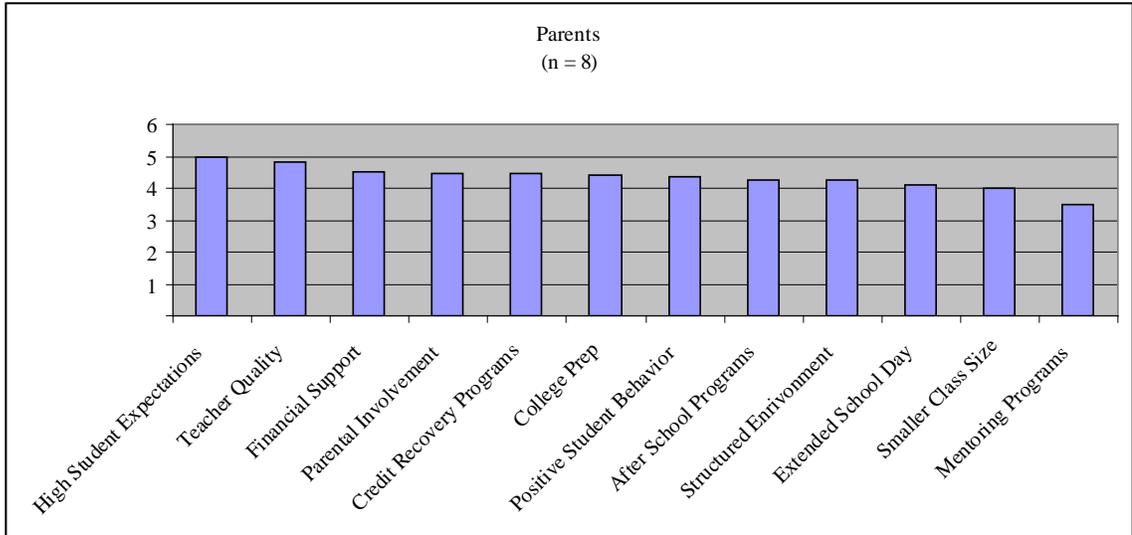
from highest to lowest.

Figure 4.3. Parents' bar graph.

Table 4.6

Teachers' Mean Scores

Concept	Mean	SD
High Student Expectations	4.67	.816
Parental Involvement	4.58	.204
Teacher Quality	4.50	.316
Positive Student Behavior	4.50	.548
After School Programs	4.42	.376
Credit Recovery Programs	4.33	.408
Smaller Class Size	4.22	.502
College Prep	4.17	.279
Extended School Day	4.17	.753
Financial Support	4.00	.632
Structured Environment	3.83	.753
Mentoring Programs	3.67	.516

Note. Teachers (n=6)

Research question #2. Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how do teachers rate the importance of each of those factors?

The results showed teachers consider high student expectations as the number one factor impacting graduation. Just as important, teachers believed that a strong parental involvement is imperative for the success of children in education. The study also confirmed that on average teachers agreed that after-school programs, teacher quality, and positive student behaviors are important factors impacting graduation. According to

the teachers, the mentoring program was the least important factor impacting graduation.
The scoring was out of a five-point scale system with 5 being the highest and 1 the
lowest. The average scores, mean, of the teachers are ranked ordered from highest to
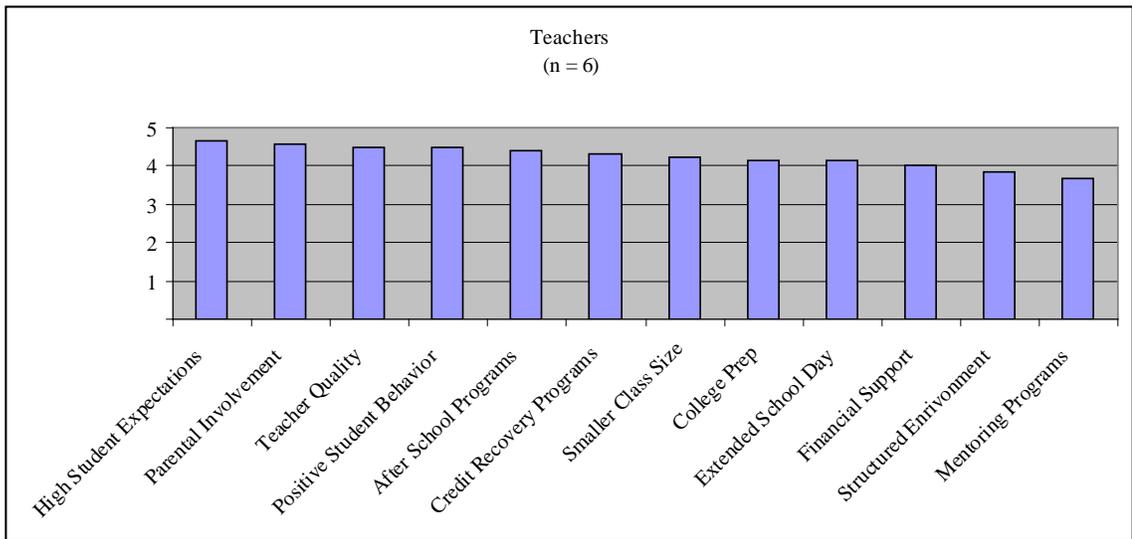lowest.

Teachers
(n = 6)

Figure 4.4. Teachers' bar graph.

Table 4.7

All Groups

	Administrators (n = 2)		Students (n = 14)		Parents (n = 8)		Teachers (n = 6)	
Concept	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Teacher Quality	4.75	.354	4.25	.427	4.81	.259	4.50	.316
Smaller Class Size	4.17	.236	3.88	.549	4.00	.713	4.22	.502
After School Programs	4.00	.000	4.07	.550	4.25	1.134	4.42	.376
Structured Environment	4.50	.707	3.86	.864	4.25	.886	3.83	.753
College Prep	4.00	.000	4.21	.426	4.42	.527	4.17	.279
Positive Student Behavior	4.50	.707	3.86	1.099	4.38	.744	4.50	.548
Financial Support	3.00	1.414	3.79	.975	4.50	.535	4.00	.632
Extended School Day	3.50	.707	3.07	1.207	4.13	.991	4.17	.753
Mentoring Programs	3.00	.000	3.64	1.008	3.50	1.414	3.67	.516
Parental Involvement	3.75	.354	3.71	1.155	4.44	.863	4.58	.204
Credit Recovery Programs	4.25	.354	4.14	1.082	4.44	1.050	4.33	.408
High Student Expectations	4.50	.707	4.21	.893	5.00	.000	4.67	.816

It is important to note that the teachers, on average, agreed that one of the most important factors to the success of the young men at Eagle Academy is parental

involvement. Conversely, on average, parents agreed that the success of their children
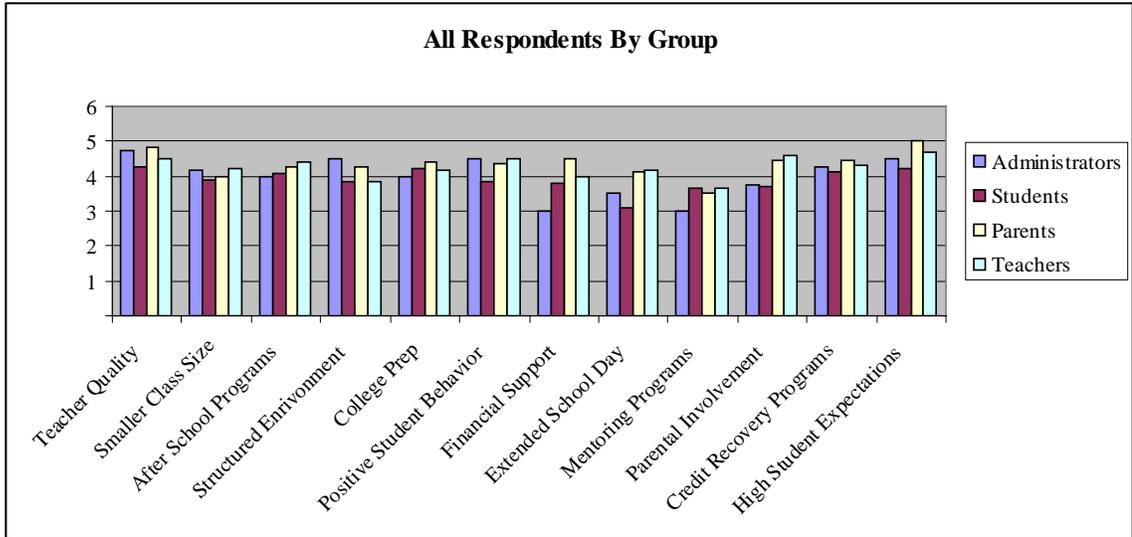
depends on the quality of the teacher.

Figure 4.5. All groups bar graph.

Table 4.8

All Respondents' Mean Scores

Concept	Mean	SD
High Student Expectations	4.53	.776
Teacher Quality	4.48	.425
Credit Recovery Programs	4.27	.917
College Prep	4.24	.419
After School Programs	4.18	.701
Positive Student BH	4.17	.913
Parental Involvement	4.08	.975
Smaller Class Size	4.00	.567
Structured Environment	4.00	.830
Financial Support	3.97	.890
Extended School Day	3.60	1.133
Mentoring Programs	3.57	1.006

Note. All Respondents (n = 30)

Research question #5. Given a list of factors that impact graduation rates of minority males, how does the group rate the importance of each of those factors?

According to the data, on average, the group believed that high student expectations and teacher quality were the two most important factors impacting graduation. However, the group did not believe the mentoring program and extended school day to be important factors impacting graduation. The scoring was out of a five-

point scale system with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest. The average scores, mean, of the group are ranked ordered from highest to lowest.
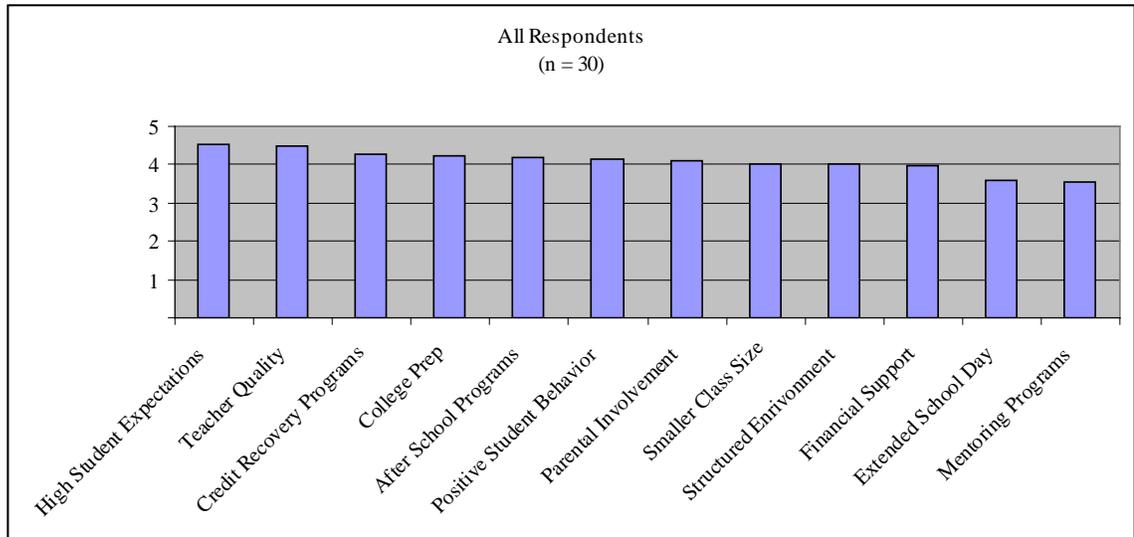

Figure 4.6. All respondents' bar graph.

Bivariate statistical testing was not possible because the groups of administrators and teachers were too small to produce normal distributions.

Summary of Results

The survey conducted at Eagle Academy for Young Men revealed that setting high expectations for students and hiring highly qualified teachers are important to students' success. Data also revealed that teachers and parents have opposing views on what the most important factors impacting graduation are. As a whole, the group did not believe the mentoring program and the extended school day to be important factors impacting graduation.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, the implications of the findings are discussed, along with the limitations of the research. Recommendations for future research are also provided along with a conclusion of the study. Despite the increased importance of a high school education, national high school completion rates have barely increased over the last 30 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). In the case of African American males across the nation, about 42% who enter the ninth grade actually graduate from high school (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2010). Eagle Academy for Young Men (Eagle Academy) is an all-boys, single-sex school in the Bronx designed to provide intense academics and a supportive environment to young men of color who may be at risk of falling behind or dropping out of high school. In 2010, 85% of seniors at the Eagle Academy graduated high school, more than twice the citywide graduation rate for minority males that year. Single-sex education is not without its critics. Those opposed to or critical of same-sex education are so for different reasons. Some opponents, such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW) have claimed single-sex schooling is discriminatory, especially for women (2011). Others have claimed there is insufficient evidence to back up the claim that single-sex schooling is more advantageous for students (Spielhagen, 2011), or that current arguments are flawed (Cohen, 2009).

Implications of Findings

The purpose of this study is to seek and provide a backdrop for the problem of high dropout rates, reviewing some of the reasons for low graduations rates, connecting theories of race and achievement, and relating student achievement to the theories presented. By studying one school where the graduation rate for minority males is relatively high, the researcher identifies and analyzes factors that positively impacted graduation rates. Extensive research shows that in some parts of the country, single sex schools are working. Students are performing at higher levels than those students in coeducational schools. In 2008, Florida single-sex students outperformed coeducational students on the FCAT exam. In some studies, administrators and teachers have claimed that students in single-sex schools are less distracted and do not have to show off or harass the opposite sex. Of course, there are studies that refute those claims. Some studies have claimed that it is difficult to determine whether or not single-sex education in public schools benefit all children. Others have claimed that there is no evidence to support that single-sex schools are successful. Some say that single-sex education is discriminatory and harmful.

The findings at Eagle Academy suggest that single-sex education is working so well that in 2011, 87% of the young men graduated high school and went on to college. The study conducted at Eagle Academy identifies three factors that have positive impact on student graduation. Those factors are high student expectations, teacher quality, and a strong credit recovery program.

Having high expectations for all students should be at the forefront of all schools. All staff should believe that every student can and does have the ability to learn. Setting

high expectations in not just academically but socially and behaviorally is imperative to student success. Having high quality teachers is also important. Too often in low-income schools, minority students are left with inexperienced teachers who are not qualified to teach. The parents at Eagle Academy believe that quality teachers are one of the most important factors to student's success. Interestingly, teachers believe that parental involvement is one of the most important factors impacting graduation. Thus schools should foster a positive relationship with parents because the collaboration between school officials and parents are necessary for the academic advancement of the student. Lastly, credit recovery is found to be an important factor that helps students attain missing credits necessary for graduation.

Limitations of Study

The ability to access data from schools across the state and country was a limitation of this study; the researcher did not have access to data from different institutions that would strengthen the validity of the study. Furthermore, the amount of time to conduct the study was a limitation. The researcher had 28 months to complete coursework and research, which constrained the ability to delve deeply into the issue. Another limitation is access to school administrators. The research was conducted at a time when the school leaders were busy preparing students for the Regents Examination and graduation. Retrieving the surveys was difficult, which limited the researcher's ability to code and disaggregate the data. Additionally, the focus of study was African American and Hispanic or Latino males. Using a population outside of that focus group was a de-limitation.

Some de-limitations to this research are an interest in an all male, single-sex school. The demographic of the school is 98% minority students, and the focus of the research is in a public school in New York City.

Recommendations

Academic standards allow scholars to excel while setting reliable expectations for students, parents, and teachers. Furthermore, such standards shape the child's abilities and knowledge helping to establish high goals for all students. Jeynes (2009) has asserted, "These standards assist in setting well-defined and consistent expectations for students, administration, teachers, and parents" (p.82). Standards aid in fostering a scholar's knowledge and skills; while helping set high goals for all students. Additionally, the daily classroom experience is marked by lively discussion, active experimentation, and creative participation. Diverse in background and interests, the students at Eagle Academy assume leadership roles, not only through guiding classroom discussions but also by participating in a multitude of clubs, committees, and service activities.

In order for a school to be considered successful, the following criteria should be met:

- Create a culture that focuses on the strong curriculum.

- Believe that every child has the capacity to learn.

- Provide students with real-world applications.

- Hire highly qualified teachers. What teachers know and do is extremely crucial to the development of the scholar. There is a direct correlation between teachers and student achievement. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) have

noted that students with the best prepared teachers make the greatest gains on standardized tests.

- Have high expectations for students. Give educators more time to devote to scholars in class. This, in turn, could positively affect students' expectations for themselves.

- Make all parents feel a sense of connection to the school, administration and each other. Schools need to provide various ways for parents to mingle and contribute to their scholar's academic environment.

- Drive success through the efforts of the administration, staff, teachers, student council, and the Parent Association.

- Provide students with extracurricular activities and focus on academic standards and learning.

- Measure success by how well administrators, teachers, and parents collaborate in an effort to make each scholar reach his or her academic goals.

Future research at Eagle Academy should focus on obtaining a larger sample size to see if the findings remain consistent. For instance, will the top three factors remain the same according to the group? An additional question is what is the impact on opposite sex teachers teaching single-sex students? Another approach could be a longitudinal study to track single-sex students' progress over a four or eight year period. Such a project would show how students are performing over the years. Research would show whether students' progress is increasing, decreasing, or remaining constant. Finally, a comparative analysis between two all female/male schools should be done to see if they share the same factors that positively impact graduation.

Conclusion

"Every nine seconds in America, a student becomes a dropout" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). With roughly 30% of American students dropping out before receiving a diploma, a rate that has been stable for several decades, assessing a schools' ability to graduate students has great implications for the future of this country. Eagle Academy for Young Men in the Bronx, New York boasts a high graduation rates of 85% in 2010, for its all-male, primarily African American, and low-income population. This graduation rate is significantly higher than the average graduation rate for similar populations across New York City. A study was conducted at Eagle Academy to explore what positive factors contribute to the school's success in graduating minority males. A survey consisting of a pre-made set of factors that contribute to the high graduation rate of minorities was distributed to participants who rated the factors from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. These participants were randomly selected from a group of staff members consisting of teachers, students (past and present), parents, and principal. According to the data, on average, the participants as a group believe that high student expectations and teacher quality were the two most important factors impacting graduation. However, the group did not believe the mentoring program and extended school day to be important factors impacting graduation. Based on the data from the study, the following are the top five factors that schools need to adopt in order to achieve a high graduation rate: (a) high student expectations, (b) highly effective teachers, (c) a strong credit recovery program, (d) college prep pathway, and (e) a well structured after-school program.

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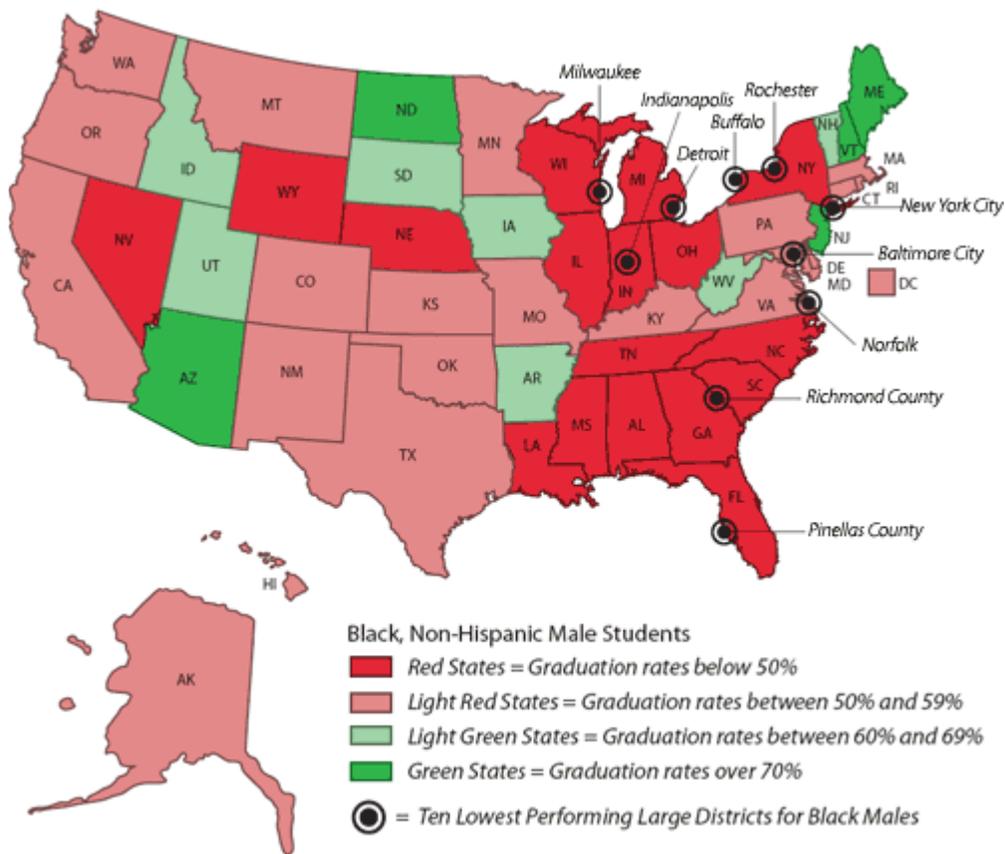
Appendix A

Types of Diplomas Earned by Eagle Academy Cohort Members
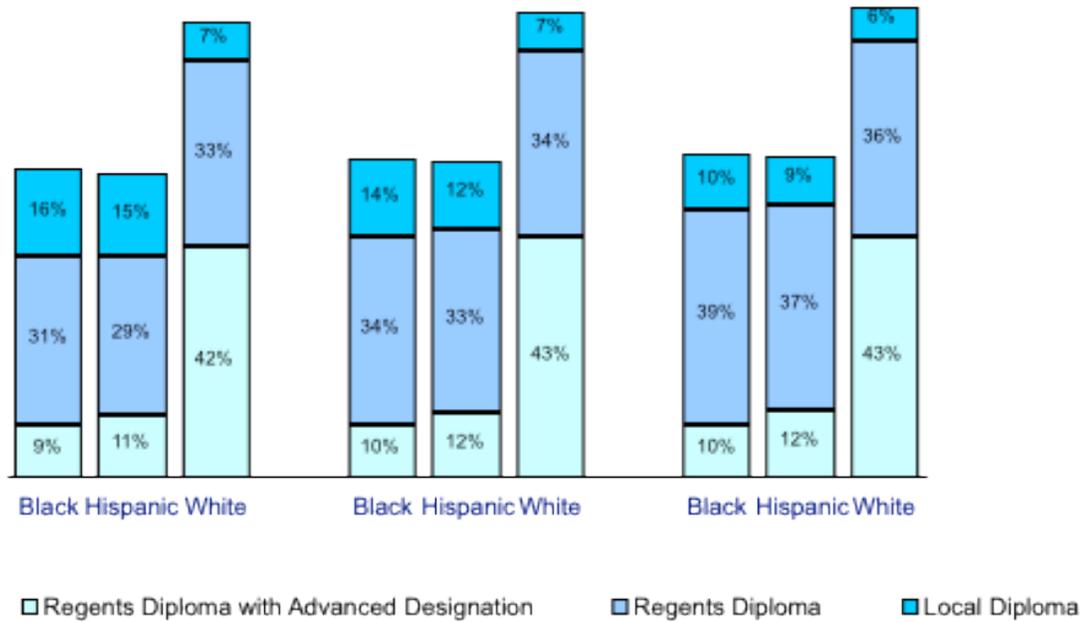
The percentage of cohort members earning a Local, Regents or Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation for selected racial ethnic groups after 4 years (New York State Education Department, 2012).

U.S. graduation rates of Black, Non-Hispanic males

Black, Non-Hispanic Male Students
- Red States = Graduation rates below 50%
- Light Red States = Graduation rates between 50% and 59%
- Light Green States = Graduation rates between 60% and 69%
- Green States = Graduation rates over 70%
- ◉ = Ten Lowest Performing Large Districts for Black Males

New York State graduation rates are below 50% and New York City falls among the ten lowest performing large districts. From *Given Half a Chance: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males (2008)*.