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An Interactionist View of African American Males In Educational Leadership

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AN INTERACTIONIST VIEW OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

by

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(Under the Direction of Paul Brinson)

ABSTRACT

During the segregation era, African American males held positions of leadership in schools in African American communities. When schools were integrated as a result of Brown v. The Board of Education, the number of African American males in positions of educational leadership began a rapid decline. Even as the demographics of the United States have become much more diverse, the gap between African American male educational leaders and their white male counterparts remains significant. This study examines the perceptions of African American male K-12 educational leaders about their positions, why they chose to become educational leaders, and the paths they travelled in attaining those positions.

The researcher will use a semi-structured interview protocol to collect data from eight African American male educational leaders from within the state of Georgia who hold, or have held the position of principal or assistant principal. The participants will be selected using a stratified purposeful sampling strategy, and come from urban, rural, and suburban districts. Each interview will be recorded and transcribed in order to accurately reflect the perceptions of each participant. The researcher will utilize the modified Van

Kaam phenomological approach to analyze the perceptions and attitudes of participants collected during the interviews.

Through the interview process, the researcher will be able to correlate the experiences of the participants into common themes and ideas related to the perceptions that African American males bring to the position of educational leadership. These common themes and ideas will be organized in such a manner as to provide school districts insight for providing strategies, services, or support systems that may help African American male educators move into positions of educational leadership.

INDEX WORDS: Principals, African American males, Symbolic interactionism, Diversity, K-12 education, School administration

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If you can keep your head when all about you

Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,

If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,

But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,

Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,

Or being hated, don't give way to hating,

And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;

If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster

And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken

Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,

Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,

And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings

And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,

And lose, and start again at your beginnings

And never breathe a word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew

To serve your turn long after they are gone,

And so hold on when there is nothing in you

Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,

Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,

If all men count with you, but none too much;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,

And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

This poem has held a special place in my heart for many years. When I pledged my fraternity in undergrad, we were required to memorize and recite this poem whenever told to, or during times of extreme duress. As my research comes to a close, I see this poem in a new light. First, it speaks to the perseverance one must have to complete a dissertation. During the course of my doctoral studies I have lost my mother, my grandmother, and I have been in intensive care with a life threatening ailment.

Perseverance is a must. More importantly, I see how this poem speaks directly to the theory of symbolic interactionism. That we must all be aware of the feedback and cues we get from those around us, but we must temper the urge to change who we are based solely on those opinions. Ultimately, we must remain true to ourselves, while allowing the influences of our environment to help us grow accordingly. If we do that, then "Ours is the earth, and all that's in it; and what's more, we'll be men" (Kipling, 1895). I want to thank God for granting the patience to see this task through to the end. I'd also like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people: My mother Gloria Coffman, who was and is an inspiration in this world and beyond. To my father Samuel Dasher Sr., I did it! My sons, Kyle and Shawn Dasher; remember boys, with perseverance anything is possible. To my family in and from Ardmore, Norristown, Lancaster, Pottstown, and Charlotte – "We are descendants of slaves…". S. Catherine Green, my anchor, my grounding, I love you. Dr. Molly Howard, thank you for teaching me the true meaning of leadership, being my mentor, and more importantly, being my friend. Dr. Devon Jensen, the foot on my butt that I needed from time to time. Dr. Paul Brinson, the architect who helped me tie this all together. Dr. Cynthia Chance, my rock, my mentor, and so, so much more. Finally, to all of my friends, family, and colleagues who are too many to mention, but so very important to me, I love you and thank you!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Though the concept of an educational system that was separate but equal did not

provide an equal opportunity for most African Americans, the segregated system of

schooling that existed as a result of this divided educational system provided the

opportunity for African American educational leaders to rise to prominence in African

American schools. When desegregation occurred, it was the African American male

principal who was most adversely affected by the combining of schools, particularly in

the southeast United States (Brown, 2005). In effect, as the American educational

landscape became more and more diverse, the face of educational leadership in America

became less diverse as evidenced by the significant decline in the number of African

American school leaders since the 1954 *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision

(McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2005). The lack of diversity in educational leaders has

resulted in few role models in educational leadership for African American male students

and African American male teachers. The impact is that there is a significant

underrepresentation of African American males in educational leadership roles,

specifically as principals and assistant principals. The reason for this underrepresentation

is partially because of the limited number of qualified African American male candidates.

However, the small population of African American male educators cannot fully explain

the underrepresentation of African American male principals and assistant principals.

The decline in African American males in educational leadership has become

almost epidemic in its scope. Approximately 11% of the certified teaching population in

the United States is African American; comparatively, only 1.8% of the certified teaching

populace is made up of African American males (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). When examining educational leadership positions, the absence of African American males is just as pronounced. Only five percent of secondary school administrators are African American males, compared to Caucasian males, who hold close to 76% of secondary school administrative positions. When elementary positions are factored in, the underrepresentation of African American males becomes even more noticeable (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). The absence of African American male administrators may seem less significant because of the apparent 3.2% gain from teachers to administrators. However, when the statistical factor of the size of the population in question is examined, the shortage becomes more apparent. There are far fewer principal and assistant principal positions than there are teaching positions; as such, it does not take a large number of participants to influence the results.

African American principals might provide the opportunity for students of all races to have a role model that may be unique for many of them. It provides these young people with images of black men who are a successful, professional African American male outside of the scope of athletics or music. Brown (2005) found that many African American male principals were able to act as role models for African American students in their schools. It should also be considered that the experiences of African American male principals may provide a unique lens through which they might provide support to all students. African American principals might also provide a unique base of support for African American teachers. Brown (2005) found that African American teachers felt a unique bond to African American principals that might encourage retention of teachers.

Additionally, the existing achievement gap that exists between African American students and their Caucasian counterparts begs a different view of African American students, males in particular (National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 2014). According to the 2014 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report, scores in reading and mathematics for students of all demographics increased. However, over a 23-year assessment period, the closing of the gap between African American and Caucasian student achievement was negligible. During this same time frame, the dropout rate for African American students remained above that of Caucasian students (NCES, 2014). This data suggests a correlation between lagging achievement and student dropout rates (NCES, 2014).

The absence of African American males in the positions of principal and assistant principal may be caused by many reasons. Those reasons may include a lack of qualified candidates, or it could be the result of decades old discriminatory practices that have served to deter African American males from moving into positions of educational leadership since the rendering of the *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision. Research has shown that African American male teachers often feel as if they are isolated in schools and school systems (Dee, 2005). These studies also indicate that African American males believe that because of deep seeded racist tendencies, they are limited in advancement possibilities and often serve as the only safe space for minority students (Lynn & Jennings, 2009). These findings indicate that African American males may not pursue positions of educational leadership because they feel thwarted from those pursuits.

The concern is that there has been limited exploration into how society and the interactions that African American males have in the education profession affect their

decisions about pursuing positions in educational leadership. Extensive research has been conducted from the standpoint of Critical Race Theory, examining how discrimination and events of the past have shaped the professional landscape in public education. These research studies rehash age-old issues of race that exist beyond public education. However, these studies do not examine the experiences of African American male principals and how those experiences affect their choices for professional advancement and their views of leadership.

Despite strong evidence that indicates a significant shortage of African American males in education, the research is very limited in determining what exactly motivates African American males to move into positions of educational leadership. Though research has shown that minorities in education, in general, believe that they have obstacles to overcome that Caucasian teachers do not (Lynn & Jennings, 2009). Research reviewed by this writer has not indicated if minority educators perceive the same obstacles as Caucasian educators when it comes to moving into a position educational leadership. A review of the literature also pointed to the fact that existing research has not considered the possibility that the discrimination and/or obstacles that African American males face in public education have discouraged them from attempting to move into positions of educational leadership (Carr & Klassen, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Almost 60 years after the *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision, public education is still a field that can be perceived as hostile to African American males. This perception can be derived from the fact that approximately two percent of all teachers and four percent of all principals are African American males (National Center for

Educational Statistics, 2012). There have been many different reasons that have

potentially played a role in channeling the few African American males in education

away from educational leadership positions and sometimes out of the profession

altogether. Since desegregation, African American males have had professional career

opportunities that previously had eluded them (Orley, Collins & Yoon, 2006). As a

result, many African American males pursue other career opportunities outside of

education. There are African American males in public education that often find

themselves the victims of passive racism within the educational community. Some of the

ways this passive racism is manifested is being over-looked for specific assignments for

which these African American male principals are qualified, being relegated to

underachieving schools without the necessary resources to make academic gains, and

having faculty members seek confirmation of direction from another administrator when

given a directive from an African American male principal (Lumby & Morrison, 2010).

The researcher has had the experience as a principal of giving a teacher a directive and

having that teacher state that, "I will listen to him (referring to my Caucasian assistant

principal), but I'm not listening to you." Issues of discrimination that exist in education

are not limited to one type of school or one area of the country, but they may serve as a

potential deterrent to some African American males who might consider a career in

education, or deter some others of those African American males who seek to move into

positions of educational leadership.

Problem Statement

    According to the National Center for Educational statistics (2012), there are 89,

810 principal positions P-12 in the United States. In this, African American males only

hold 3,730 (4%) of those positions. The small number of African American male

principals in schools creates a vacuum of positive African American male role models

with whom African American male students (and all students) might have first person

contact. If there are to be African American male principals to be those positive school

leaders and role models, school systems are going to have to find ways to recruit and

retain qualified and effective African American male principal candidates (Oppenheimer,

2013). There is an existing achievement gap in reading and mathematics, as well as a gap

in on-time graduation from high school in African American males and other

demographics sub-groups (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2012). There is

also a significant disproportional gap in African American males and other demographic

sub-groups when looking at discipline (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012).

Recruiting and retaining African American male principals in our nation's schools may

provide the positive visage necessary to provide positive change for some African

American male students. However, recruiting and retaining African American male

principals will require understanding of their experiences and how those experiences

affected their views on leadership and their decision to pursue a principal position.

Further to this, the literature review revealed that there is a legitimate need to a have a

larger research voice on this topic.

Purpose Statement

African American males make up less than two percent of the teaching force

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010), and four percent of principals in the

United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). African American

males are underrepresented in every aspect of education from the classroom to positions

in educational leadership (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). The professional employment opportunities for African American males that came as a result of desegregation resulted in a steady decrease in the number of African American males in education from the 1960s through to 2015 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). As desegregation came to an end, African American males were able to make a living in professional careers outside of education (Orley, Collins, & Yoon, 2006). African American males who have chosen careers in public education are not staying in the field and are not pursuing leadership positions (Oppenheimer, 2013). The absence of African American male principals restricts the number of African American male role models in education for African American male students. A significant achievement gap still exists between African American male students and their Caucasian and female counterparts in reading and mathematics (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2012). African American male students are disproportionately written up for disciplinary infractions more than other demographic sub-groups (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012). African American male principals might provide much needed direction and modeling for African American male students; however, these needed role models will not be available without African American male principals to provide those services. The purpose of this study will be to explore the experiences of African American male principals to gain an understanding of how those experiences affect African American male principals' views on leadership and their decision to pursue a position in educational leadership.

Research Question

This study will be guided by the following overarching research question: How do African American males view themselves as educational leaders through the lens of symbolic interactionism? This question will be explored through the theoretical lens of symbolic interactionism.

Significance of the Study

Many school districts around the United States have significant African-American student populations, yet administrators in public schools do not reflect that demographic. This research will provide the basis for professional learning directors to build programs that specifically address the needs of African-American male educators who may seek leadership positions. Professional learning directors will gain an understanding of the experiences of some African American male educators that will allow them to develop professional learning opportunities directly related to those experiences. The research may also encourage professional learning directors to explore the validity of these experiences with other educational leader demographics.

School systems, more specifically superintendents and recruiters, will find merit in this research to support their leadership induction. As potential African American male leaders are recruited and groomed, it would be beneficial for systems to understand the experiences that either encourage a candidate to put themselves into consideration for leadership, or discourage them from considering a pursuit of leadership. Understanding these experiences would allow school systems to develop inductions programs that are more personal than generic, and eliminate any unforeseen obstacles that might hinder the system's ability to recruit and retain African American leaders.

Some African American male educators will find benefit in this research as well. The research will allow African American male administrators to realize that they are not alone in their experiences. African American males make up 4% of school principals in the United States (NCES, 2012), so understanding that there are other administrators who share their experiences may provide support for some African American male administrators. The research may also encourage some African American male principals to take mentoring roles to support other African American male principals.

Instructors of graduate level principal preparation programs will find value in the research. Graduate level instructors may find that an understanding of some of the experiences and resulting choices of African American male principals will provide them insight to provide individualized instruction and/or support to address the specific needs of this demographic. Instructors may also be able to create course content that allows for this knowledge to be shared with all principal candidates. The sharing of this knowledge may set the foundation for a new generation of principal who is more culturally aware as a result of his understanding of the experiences of his colleagues.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions are provided to ensure clarity and a consistency of understanding throughout the research. Definitions that are not cited are the creation of the researcher and all other definitions are cited appropriately.

Achievement Gap – The difference in achievement scores on a specific measure of student achievement between one demographic sub-group and another. This is the term used by the Georgia Department of Education to describe the academic difference between demographic sub-groups.

Disproportionality Measures – A measure by the state of Georgia that compares suspension, referral, and event statistics on K – 12 students by race and gender.

Hyper-Invisibility – The negative feeling identified by some minorities that result from perceptions of being overlooked, or feeling like their opinions do not matter. This feeling equates to the perception of the individual that they do not matter to the organization as whole.

Opportunity Gap – The difference in the exposure to academic, financial, and early learning resources that may directly affect the achievement gap.

Symbolic Interactionism - A research perspective that focuses on the individual, and accounts for the influence of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes on that individual's present state of being (Benokraitis, 2010).

Limitations and Delimitations

The study has delimitations because the researcher will only examine the perceptions of African American male educational leaders instead of all educational leaders. Further, the study will only be conducted within particular school districts in Georgia. Even though this study will include a small group of participants, the transferability of information gathered and analyzed from the respondents' answers, should prove beneficial to districts across the country.

The researcher will operate under the assumption that participants will respond honestly to the interview questions.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Chapter two will provide an expansive look at the history of African American males in public education and some of the variables that might affect them as school principals. The chapter will begin with a review of the achievement gap in schools in the United States. This will include an overview of graduation rates, dropout rates, and academic achievement gaps that may or may not exist. The next section of chapter two will provide research about several of the various types of leadership. The researcher was not able to find literature related to leadership styles that African American male principals are more likely to use. Therefore, this section of chapter two provides a generalized look as some of the leadership styles that all principals in public schools might use. Following the examination of leadership styles, chapter two will conclude with a history of African American males in educational leadership. This literature review has been designed to provide background to understand why it is important to identify and understand how the experiences of African American male principals has affected not only their decision to become a principal, but their view of leadership as well.

Outline of Chapter Two

      I.   The Achievement Gap

           a. A look at the numbers

                i. Achievement rate

                ii. Graduation rate & dropout rate

           b. Reasons for the achievement gap

      c. Trends in the achievement gap

II.   Leadership Styles

      a. Definition of leadership

      b. Types of leadership

            i. Servant leadership

           ii. Transformational

         iii. Transactional

         iv. Democratic/shared governance

III.   African American males in educational leadership roles

      a. History of African American males in leadership since *Brown v. The Board of Education*

      b. The need for African American male leaders

      c. Obstacles facing African American male educational leaders

The Achievement Gap

Achievement Scores

African American students' achievement scores lag behind their Caucasian counterparts, although those gaps are showing signs of closing (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). The comparisons in question are derived from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment. The NAEP assessment is a standardized nationally normed test used to compare student performance across the country. When comparing achievement scores using the NAEP assessment for reading and math, the African American and Caucasian sub-groups both show signs of increasing scores; however, the gap between their scores shows little sign of closing. Fourth grade

math scores showed an increase for Caucasian students from 220 points to 250 points from 1990 to 2013. Over that same time span, African American students showed gains from 188 points to 224 points. The scores show that what started as a 32 point gap between the groups, reduced in size to a 26 point gap over a period of 23 years. African American students only picked up six points over that time (NCES, 2014). The eighth grade scores indicate the same lack of progress in closing the achievement gap. From 1990 to 2013, Caucasian students' scores increased from 270 to 294 points, a gain of 24 points. Over that same period of time, African American students' scores grew from 237 to 263 points - a gain of 26 points (NCES, 2014). Impressive as these gains may be by this sub-group, the gap in achievement between African American students and Caucasian students was only reduced by two points. The gaps are just as pronounced in reading. Scores on the NAEP assessment indicate that from 1990 to 2013 Caucasian fourth grade students' scores in reading increased from 224 points to 232 points. African American fourth grade students over that same time frame increased scores from 192 to 206 points. African American students showed a slightly higher growth over the 23-year period, however, their scores in 2013 were still not on par with their Caucasian counterparts initial scores from 1990 (NCES, 2014). The gap holds true in eighth grade reading scores as well. Scores for Caucasian students from 1990 to 2013 in reading grew from 267 points to 276 points, while African American students' scores grew from 237 points to 250 points. These scores show a reduction in the eighth grade reading assessment gap of only four points over the course of 23 years. Dees (2005) found that African American male principals often take on the issues of African American male

students as a personal mission. Many of these principals believe that their experiences make them uniquely qualified to address the needs of African American students.

Graduation and Dropout Rate

The graduation rate refers to students who graduate from high school with an academic diploma within four years (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). The dropout rate identifies students who have terminated their attendance in a school; including those students who choose to enroll in a non-school system affiliated trade school, or alternative completion program (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

Leadership Styles

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) have found that what is called leadership in education has changed over time. Until the 1990s, most principals operated more as managers of the education environments for which they were responsible; however, after the 1990s leaders were expected to act as change agents in teaching and learning (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). There is very little research to be found on African American male principals overall, and research related to the leadership styles used by African American male principals is virtually non-existent. Therefore, for the purpose of this section of the literature review, the researcher chose to look at those leadership styles that are most likely to be used by modern school principals (Marzano, Waters & McNutty, 2005). This section of the literature review will examine servant leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and democratic leadership, which is also referred to as shared governance.

Servant Leadership

As the name indicates, servant leaders make addressing the well being of their employees the focus of their leadership (Letizia, 2014). Robert Greenleaf is the generally accepted founder of this form of selfless leadership in which the principal places their focus on building the capacity of individual employees (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). A servant leader's effectiveness may be contingent on their ability to serve others, for only then will they make a conscious effort to lead (Shaw & Newton, 2012). These leaders know their employees, know how to communicate with their employees, and are willing to learn from their employees. With this knowledge, servant leaders tend to be especially adept at helping their employees reach their full potential, and as such, they often prove to be strong developers of leaders (Shaw & Newton, 2012).

Servant leaders are found to have several of the same personality characteristics. In general, a servant leader will demonstrate love for employees and others in the organization that they lead. They also demonstrate humility with their employees and a willingness to empower their employee to take the initiative on projects. The servant leader is one who subordinates himself for what he considers to be a higher purpose - that of building the organization through the building of people (Shaw & Newton, 2012)

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders are more often referred to as 'change agents' for the manner in which they motivate followers by enabling them to see the benefit in the task at hand (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). Similar to servant leaders in their desire to develop leaders, the transformational leader is different in that they seek to tie their followers' sense of being to the organization's mission (Langston, 2014). By tying their

followers' beliefs and being to the organization's mission, the transformational leader is able to inspire their followers to achieve the organization's mission (Beno & Judge, 2004). Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) have suggested that transformational leaders possess traits that are best suited to meet the potential challenges of the 21st century. Those traits include:

- Individual Consideration – This consists of a leader taking the time to get to get to know her employees; understanding their motivations and moral center.

- Intellectual Stimulation – The leader allows his employees the opportunity to challenge the established norms of the organization in order to improve processes.

- Inspirational Motivation – The leader motivates employees from a position that is grounded in a strong internal vision and based on a solid set of personal values and ideals.

- Idealized Influence – The leader gains the trust of followers by demonstrating personal behavior that is motivated by high moral and ethical standards.

Transformational leaders are able to spur employees to successfully navigate change by allowing a sense of empowerment to develop (Hendricks, 2014). Rather than feeling helpless as change occurs, the employees of the transformational leader feels that they have great influence over the change; as though they are controlling the change (Langston, 2014).

Transactional Leadership

Where transformational leaders change and manage employees through motivation and inspiration, transactional leaders seek to control their employees through

economic or rational methods (Beno & Judge, 2004). Instead of creating an environment

that motivates employees through empowerment, the transactional leader seeks to

motivate employees by answering the question, "What's in it for me?" (Jing & Avery,

2008). It is just as important for transactional leaders to get to know their employees as it

is for a transformational leader although the purpose behind that understanding is for a

different purpose. Transactional leaders seek to understand the needs and desires of their

employees and then communicate to the employees how completing their work will meet

their specific needs (Jing & Avery, 2008). Appealing to the needs and desires of their

employees, the transactional leader creates a basic win – win scenario, however, the

change that might be achieved through transactional leadership may potentially not be

permanent or long lasting without true buy-in from employees (Beno & Judge, 2004).

According to Jing & Avery (2008), there are three central foci of transactional

leadership:

- Contingent – Based on give and take. This is the basic exchange of work for
  benefit between the leader and his followers.

- Management by Exception – The proactive observation of employee behavior
  while working, anticipating trouble before it arises, and taking corrective
  action before the mission is compromised.

- Management by Exception Passive – Waiting until employee behavior results
  in problems that might compromise the mission before interventions are
  taken.

There are times when the transactional method of leadership is warranted and

effective. In situations in which employees are unwilling or unable to follow the vision

of a leader, transactional leadership becomes an appropriate leadership style to employ to complete the mission (Jing & Avery, 2008).

Democratic Leadership/Shared Governance

Shared governance is an inclusive leadership style in which the employees and leader work together to achieve the mission (Simplicio, 2014). In the democratic system of leadership, there is an understanding that the knowledge and input of the employee is intrinsic to the decision making process and achievement of goals by the organization (AFT, 2014). The understanding that the inclusion of all employees is valued, results in open lines of communication between employees and leadership that results in effective feedback and inspires innovation and creativity (Simplicio, 2014). A number of school systems employees use this leadership style, or a semblance of it; however, they do not always see the positive results associated with democratic leadership (AFT, 2014).

When implemented properly, democratic leadership stimulates a sense of ownership and pride in employees (Simplicio, 2014). This sense of ownership is encouraged by the leadership actively working with faculty and staff to make transparent decisions concerning the operation of the organization (AFT, 2014). However, there are times due to a lack of trust, or a lack of fidelity in completing assignments that democratic leadership may morph into transformational, or even transactional leadership (Simplicio, 2014).

African American Males in Educational Leadership Roles

History of African American Males in Educational Leadership Since Brown

The absence of African American males in positions of administrative leadership in public education has been an ongoing phenomenon since the *Brown v. The Board of*

Education ruling that struck down desegregation in 1954. Following that ruling, schools whose student bodies had been predominantly African American and had been run by mostly African American male administrators, became desegregated and run by mostly white male administrators (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004). This landmark change in public education created a solid foundation for equality in educational opportunity. However, this change may have also been responsible for the startling reduction in the number of African American male principals and educational leaders. The unemployment rate in 1954 was 4.8% for Caucasian males over 16, and 10.3 % for African American males over 16 (Hirschman, 1988). There was also a significant difference in the number of years of education obtained. Caucasian males averaged about 11.8 years, while African American males averaged about 8.1 years (Hirschman, 1988). The unemployment rate presented a very real obstacle to African American males who were displaced from positions of leadership after the *Brown* decision. This disparity in employment and education became an important, but often overlooked platform in the fight for civil rights, that equality had to not just address equality in terms of public accommodations, but must also address economic issues as well (Oppenheimer, 2014). The employment trends in education also had influence on the availability of jobs in public education. The student enrollment numbers in education from the 1950s through the 1970s were directly correlated to those children identified as baby-boomers. Student enrollment numbers in the 1950s experienced a decline that was reversed in the 1960s and 1970s with the arrival of the baby-boomers into public education (Wyatt & Hecker, 2006). This increase in student enrollment brought with it more job opportunities in education. However, public education saw another decrease in student enrollment later in

the 1970s as the boomers began to exit the public education system (Wyatt & Hecker, 2006).

The 1960s brought on an era of employment possibilities for African American males in the United States the likes of which had not been seen before (Oppenheimer, 2014). The effects of these changes were not the same for African American males in every region of the country. Southern African American males after the *Brown* decision fared poorly comparatively in education and salaries with their northern African American male counterparts (Ashenfelter, Collins, & Yoon, 2006). African American males in the south tended to work in the field of agriculture; outside of that field racial segregation drove unemployment rates higher than even the national rate (Hirschmann, 1988). In 1954, the unemployment rate for Caucasian males was 4.8%, while for African American males the rate was 10.3%. In 1963, that rate was relatively unchanged showing a 4.7% unemployment for Caucasian males and a 10.5% rate for African American males (Hirschmann, 1988). However, for those African American males who did benefit from the changes in the American employment environment in the 1960s and 1970s, there were generally increases in the amount of money that they earned. African American males who came of employment age during this change saw 3% to 4% increases in salary over African American males a generation earlier (Orley, Collins & Yoon, 2006). In fact, during the period of the civil rights movement, the number of African American males the unemployment rates of African American males began a steady decline (Borjas, Grogger, & Hanson, 2009). Unemployment rates from 1958 to 1969 showed a decrease in unemployment for African American males from 13.7% to 5.3% (Hirschmann, 1988). These trends in the African American employment landscape

of the 1960s and 1970s created opportunities for African American males that lured them away from the principal and teacher positions that they held in education prior to the civil rights movement (Oppenheimer, 2014). An unintended consequence of this shifting in employment trends was a reduction in the number of African American males in the education profession.

Carr and Klassen (1997) noted that many minority teachers believe that they experienced obstacles in hiring and advancement to leadership positions that Caucasian educators did not face. Adding to these feelings of discrimination was an impression from Caucasian administrators that racist practices related to hiring were not prevalent and that fair and diverse hiring practices were being followed in education (Aveling, 2007). This context doubled the challenges faced by African American educators to advance in their careers. As a result of the general disparity in views about discrimination, African American male teachers often feel like they are hindered from progressing to leadership positions in schools and school systems. Due to this educational reality, black educators redirected their energies to giving minority students the best possible opportunity to succeed academically based on their understanding of the barriers these students would face (Lynn & Jennings, 2009).

The Need for African American Educational Leaders

As the cultural balance of the United States shifts to reflect greater numbers of minorities in the populace, there will be a need for leaders who are able to work with and teach individuals from different ethnic and racial backgrounds and who are familiar with the various cultures that will make up the changing school community (Brown, 2005). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2010), only 1.8% of

the teaching populace and 4% of school principals are African American males. In the

state of Georgia, 5.8% of teachers are identified as minority males (Georgia Professional

Standards Commission, 2015). Georgia makes no designation within the minority

category, so there is no way to determine the race or ethnicity of those represented within

the minority male category. Teacher attrition rates indicate that minority males leave the

profession at a higher rate within the first three years of teaching as well. The Georgia

Professional Standards Commission (2015) stated that 18.7% of minority male teachers

did not return to the profession after their first year, second only to white females at

32.6%. However, in the second year of teaching 29.7% of minority male teachers left,

while 37% left in the third year of teaching. In years two and three, minority male

teachers were followed by minority females in attrition rate. Many educators and

government officials realize that change is needed in the ethnic structure and makeup of

educational leadership today. As such, this underrepresentation of African American

males in education and educational leadership presents an opportunity for the educational

industry to recruit minority leaders that might prove as valuable role models to young

African American males (Brown, 2009). The literature does indicate that this must be an

organized process with specific infrastructures in place to avoid a haphazard approach

limiting any potential benefits. Those candidates who hold principal positions have

likely shared similar experiences during their career or while making their decision to

pursue leadership. As a result, they may share a set of experiences that are unique to

them as African American male principals. Valuing these unique perspectives might

allow existing educational leaders the opportunity to build successful recruitment and

retention policies for African American male candidates (Kohli, 2009). Paying attention

to these perspectives also allows for young minorities to benefit from the instruction and informal mentoring provided by teachers who share similar characteristics and backgrounds to them (Brown, 2009). When some African American men teach African American male students, they approach the experience as a true commitment, feeling like they understand the students in their charge in a unique way, and as a result of their unique understanding, allow those students opportunities for academic success (Lynn & Jennings, 2009).

Prior to the *Brown v. The Board of Education* ruling of 1954, there were a significant number of African American teachers and school leaders who headed the all black schools of a segregated America (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004). After the Supreme Court struck down the separate but equal laws for education in this country, the face of education changed forever (Brown, 2009). There were those African American educational leaders in place prior to the Brown decision that viewed educational leadership as a direct parallel to social justice and as an opportunity for African Americans to become productive members of a democratic society by way of a quality education (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). They saw in education the opportunity for African Americans to take relative control of their lives by being educated and productive members of a democratic society. This was not very different than the image held earlier in the century by William Edward Burghardt, DuBoise, and the early founders of the NAACP (Horsford & McKenzie, 2005). The serious nature of education held by African Americans at this time, and the resulting position of authority granted to those in education, made African American school leaders a significant force in the African American community (Brown, 2005). More than just school leaders, these administrators

were community leaders. Their roles in the community gave them a sense of identity as leaders whose experience and education made them valuable to their neighbors.

After the passing of the Brown decision, significant numbers of African American teachers and principals lost their positions, were forced to retire, or had to relocate due to the restructuring of the newly integrated public schools (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004). Though specific numbers are not available, research by Brown (2005) indicated that Caucasian males took the principal positions in most schools post segregation, even those schools that were predominantly African American. This sudden shift in the complexity of school leadership, particularly in the south, decimated the number of African American males working in education to exceptionally small numbers (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Some of the impact on these low numbers came from the fact that many African American teachers, administrators, and other school leaders were either demoted or fired following the Brown decision (Horsford & McKenzie, (2008). African American principals were much less likely to be named to lead an integrated school that was predominantly white, while their Caucasian counterparts were tagged to lead schools regardless of the racial makeup of the school (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004)). These men, who once were school and community leaders, were diminished to an almost insignificant status by the tactics of desegregation (Brown, 2005). It is important to understand that in this time period, desegregation was a conscious cultural reality in education. Many leaders were making conscious choices about who could and could not lead in public schools. This intentional reality sent a strong message to black men and black students about who were the faces of educational leadership. Perceptions of leadership were being formed through these experiences and have carried forward into

our current realities. In many ways, the current shortage of African American leaders in public education can be linked to the practices of the past. A general shortage of African American male teachers resulting from the loss of African American male educators after the post-Brown decision has resulted in an extremely small pool from which to cull candidates for educational leadership positions (Brown, 2005).

Research by Dees (2005) indicated that there are many advantages to having African American men return to the classroom and to positions of leadership within the field of education. Lynn and Jennings (2009) found that African American male principals provide positive role models for minority students, and often provide effective support to teachers working with minority students, particularly African American male students. Unfortunately, it has been shown that teachers in general have lower expectations for African American male students (Strayhorn, 2008). Caucasian teachers were revealed in a study by Strayhorn to have preconceived ideas about the academic shortcomings of African American male students versus Caucasian male students. Caucasian teachers are also more likely to support the weaknesses of Caucasian students than those of African American male students (Strayhorn, 2008). However, this tends not to be the case with African American males in teaching or leadership. Researchers have shown that students who share similar racial characteristics with their teachers and school leaders operate at an increased level of student performance (Dees, 2005).

On one level, what the research also indicates is that African American men in education are able to connect academically and socially with African American male students in ways that teachers from other demographics cannot (Brown, 2009). These African American male educators described their work with minority students as a

mission and a way of giving back to youth who often remind them of themselves and the struggles that they had to go through to attain academic success (Brown, 2009). Additionally, there is research that indicates that just having a teacher in the classroom that looks like the students in the room raises the motivation and expectation levels of those students (Dees, 2005). When African American male students see a teacher who looks like them in the classroom, they look at that teacher as a role model (Dees, 2005). Since African American educators tend to understand and address the experiences of African American male students, there tends to be an increase in student achievement (Dees, 2005). Some research suggested that African American men tend to be uniquely committed to the academic growth of African American male students and generally hold that educators have to understand the unique needs that Black male students bring to the table while remaining cognizant of issues with poverty and racism (Lynn & Jennings, 2009).

It should also be noted, however, that despite the positive impact that having an African American male teacher in the classroom may have on African American students, there may also be a negative effect on students of other demographic backgrounds (Dees, 2005). African American teachers may work so hard at saving African American students that they overlook or ignore students of other races (Dees, 2005). However, Brown (2009) found that just because a teacher or principal is of a particular racial background, it is not a guarantee that they will have a positive effect on students of the same racial background. The benefits of quality teaching and sound educational leadership are better indicators of student success according to Brown. Yet if the findings of Dees are true, then it begs examining the potentially negative effects that

African American male students have as their reality by being in classes taught by teachers of a different race backgrounds. In reflecting on these matters, this researcher has learned that the overall discussion in the literature is more about how educators can work more effectively during the educational experience because it is impossible for students to be taught completely by teachers or lead by administrators who look like them, nor would this be the ideal.

Many African American educational leaders hold that the unique needs of African American students are the result of the integration movements that resulted from the Brown decision and as such require methods of intervention that are unique to those students and their situations (Horsford & McKenzie, 2008). For instance, from this ideology came the notion of leadership as a modicum of social justice, a view that allows current African American educational leaders to reclaim some of their community presence lost in the wake of the Brown decision. Within the educational community, there are many modern African American school leaders that view the role of leadership as one of social justice much like the leaders prior to the Brown decision did (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). These are educational leaders that seek to change the position of African American youth through quality education and are unusually committed to this mission (Brown, 2009). However, the severe shortage of African American male principals and teachers in public education greatly reduces the ability of schools to provide African American male role models for students (Jay, 2009).

Obstacles Facing African American Male Leaders

In addition to the results of the *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision, there are other reasons for the shortage of African American males educators. Jones (2002)

explained that there is a strong professional and emotional bond that African American teachers associate with school leaders who share their racial identity. African American teachers have indicated that they are much more comfortable talking to and working with African American principals than they do with Caucasian principals. These teachers also look to minority principals as examples of what might be professionally attained in the field of education (Brown, 2009). African American male principals are in such short supply that African American teachers are rarely afforded the opportunity to work with them. This prevents African American teachers from working with educational leaders with whom they feel a connection. The lack of African American male educational leaders also creates a situation that limits the role models for African American male teachers and African American male students. There is an already small pool of African American teachers from which to cultivate educational leaders; therefore, whatever can be done to cultivate and mentor prospective African American male educational leaders should be done (Jones, 2002).

Kohli (2009) indicated that the perception of African American males is that they are not being recruited for positions in leadership and that they are placed in positions that discourage them from moving into administrative roles. African American male educators have described feeling overlooked and virtually ignored as they pursued positions in educational leadership (Kohli, 2009). It is the feeling of many African American male educators that they are relegated to teaching the students that no one else wants and in the schools in which no one else wants to teach (Kohli, 2009). African American male participants in a study by Brown (2009) described situations where they felt physically isolated in their work environment and lacked the benefit of a mentor who

could identify with their experiences. As a result, African American males often move into other career fields, or fail to seek educational leadership positions in the school systems in which they work. The idea that African American men believe that they are overlooked in regard to recruitment is interesting considering the specific attention that school systems believe that they are giving to the recruitment of minority candidates for teaching positions and positions of educational leadership (Carr & Klassen, 1997). Once minority teachers are in place, it is important to make them feel as though they are a part of the process, particularly when it comes to issues pertaining to diversity. African American male candidates and minority candidates in general, feel overlooked when it comes to creating and implementing diversity initiatives within schools and systems (Jay, 2009). By not including minority teachers and leaders on diversity panels and/or committees, the educators develop feelings of hyper-invisibility and begin to feel that their opinions, feelings, and experiences are irrelevant leading to discouragement and the potential for teacher turnover (Jay, 2009).

African American educators also become discouraged when they are not viewed as individuals and instead are viewed as one category of teacher with similar characteristics and skills and no real regard to the strategies they use to reach the students that they do (Brown, 2009). This passive racial generalization also extends to students and schools. Researchers have indicated that Caucasian teachers tend to label particular groups of students as difficult without regarding the circumstances that might affect the way that the student performs (Kohli, 2009). There are also some findings from research that indicates African American male educational leaders feel that Caucasian school

leaders and colleagues are not sensitive to the racism that exists in schools that is directed at teachers and students of color (Jay, 2009).

The insensitivity of current educational leaders is evidenced in the way in which most leaders do not want to address issues of racism when they arise (Lumby & Morrison, 2010). When exposed to this type of activity, African American male teachers, leaders, and potential leaders become disillusioned with the education system and view themselves as being engaged in a more complicated and disheartening situation than just educating the children they are committed to teach. As a result, many African American male educators opt to either not pursue educational leadership positions, or leave the profession of education altogether (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

There is also evidence to support the idea that African American administrator's of schools with faculties that are predominantly Caucasian face struggles that their Caucasian counterparts in similar circumstances do not face (Brown, 2005). According to Jones (2002), the legitimacy of African American leaders by Caucasian teachers is perceived differently than the legitimacy of the leadership of Caucasian administrators by Caucasian teachers. There is also a body of research that indicated the legitimacy of Caucasian leaders is rooted in the teachers' belief that those leaders are knowledgeable and competent (Lumby & Morrison, 2010); however, Jones (2002) found that White teachers could not truly articulate the legitimacy of African American educational leaders.

These differences in how leadership is viewed based on race create vast differences in the way that African American administrators are required to function in environments that are predominantly nonminority. When faced with situations in which

they find their power eroded, African American administrators have learned to use skills that allow them to build influential teams within their buildings and utilize the leverage from those teams to influence decisions within the school (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). African American educational leaders seek to build trust and bonding with teachers to solidify their positions as educational leaders, just as other educational leaders do. However, they go about building these relationships in a much different manner than Caucasian principals. Caucasian principals generally build their relationships from a position of innate respect. African American principals generally have to build their relationships as they demonstrate their competency for their position (Murtadha & Watts).

If educational systems are to address the shortcomings caused by the passive racist tendencies in schools, then leaders need to aggressively recruit and retain a diverse group of teachers and educational leaders including African American males (Kohli, 2009). Educational leadership preparation programs need to provide new leaders with necessary skills to deal with diverse student and teaching staff, encouraging them to use the experiences of minority teachers as a basis for developing effective diversity programs (Brown, 2005). Jay (2009) described the importance of addressing diversity issues by using panels or groups that consist of a multi-cultural team and not just the majority. Colleges and others who train educational leaders also need to be aware of the need to develop cultural sensitivity skills within their students to help address the issues raised by leading and recruiting for a diverse group of educators (Lumby & Morrison, 2010). Aveling (2007) explained the need for leaders and teachers to realize that in the field of diversity that fair is not always equal and equal is not always fair. When leaders

and recruiters become truly sensitive to the differences between cultures, races, and genders, then they will be able to provide a truly fair working environment for all.

Summary

Four percent of the principals in this nation are African American males (NCES, 2013). This is a remarkably small representation considering the make up the student population in the United States, with the percentage of Caucasian student numbers falling and minority students making up a continually growing portion of the student population. Various factors contribute to this low number of African American principals, from perceived racism in schools that may serve to deter African American male teachers from leadership, to the pull of more fruitful financial opportunities outside of education.

The African American male principal started out a leader not just in school, but a respected leader in his community. Desegregation saw significant numbers of African American male principals removed from their positions of leadership and replaced with Caucasian male principals. This resulted in a change in identity for the African American male principal and the community that respected him.

Achievement gap numbers show that African American children consistently score below their Caucasian counterparts with the gap closing only minimally over time. These lagging academic skills may result in the higher number of dropouts represented by African American student, males in particular. Many African American male principals look at their work with African American children as a mission and find themselves failing at their mission. Ultimately, the high number of African American male dropouts means fewer candidates eligible for college and even fewer candidates eligible for teaching positions.

These experiences and so many more that may remain undocumented due to the lack of research on the African American male principal create a convoluted picture of the African American male principal that begs research into how those experiences have affected his decisions regarding leadership and his views on leadership. The literature on African American male principals is limited at best, leaving the issue of the experiences of African American male principals and the effect of those experiences on those leaders still very much in question.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As the United States moves further into the 21st century, students in American

schools are becoming more diverse. Unfortunately, administrators in public schools do

not reflect that diversity. It is important that the perceptions and ideas of African

American educational leaders be understood to identify common themes, ideologies,

and/or perceptions that may hinder them from becoming educational leaders; thus

contributing to the shortage of African American males in educational leadership

positions. The thoughts, ideas, and experiences of minorities in American society is often

hidden and unrecognized where it is many times buried by social scientists who do not

know which questions to ask that will actually present useful information (Becker &

McCall, 1990). Symbolic interactionist theory provides a framework that examines the

experiences of individuals in the past and how those experiences affect their behavior and

attitudes in the present (Mead, 1912). In order to best reflect the thoughts of African

American males in this study, the researcher chose to use a phenomenological qualitative

study method, and a framework based on Symbolic Interactionism. Phenomenological

researchers should approach their topics without preconceived ideas or suppositions, and

be clearly focused on a topic or idea that will potentially lead to further research on that

topic (Moustakas, 1994). With that idea in mind, Moustakas' modified Van Kaam

method of phenomenological study was used in order to allow the researcher to

effectively marry the two concepts by creating a methodological vehicle through which

participants could relate their experiences, thoughts, and reactions. The researcher was

then be able to organize and align those thoughts and experiences into common themes, experiences, and reactions.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to explore how African American male educational leaders view themselves in their roles as leaders. Interactionist theory has been effective in researching groups who have been suppressed, or overlooked, by allowing them to speak in their own voice about their experiences (Becker & McCall, 1990). The phenomenological research style was appropriate for this study as it seeks to understand reality as it appears to individuals (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). In this study, the researcher allowed the participants to share and describe their reality as educational leaders and determine whether or not there were commonalities between those expressed realities. The purposive sample of eight to twelve African American male educational leaders were selected as participants because of their common phenomenon of being African American males in the field of education who pursued and obtained educational leadership positions in the state of Georgia. The information and experiences gathered from the research informed the researcher's exploration into the views that African American male educational leaders have of themselves.

This research study was conducted using a phenomenological qualitative research design. Specifically, the researcher used Moustakas' modified Van Kaam method of phenomenology in conducting this study. The modified Van Kaam method is designed to allow participants to clearly describe their unique experiences and how those experiences show themselves in the respondents' current situation(s) (Moustakas, 1994). The method allows for these descriptions through the use of open-ended questions that seek to allow

for a comprehensive description of an individual's experiences and what those experiences mean to them (Moustakas, 1994). Under Moustakas' modified Van Kaam method, the researcher was able to conduct interviews and record descriptive statements communicating how environment and background influenced each participant's phenomenological experience relating to the study (Creswell, 2006). The method also allows for the researcher to explore his own experiences within the context of the study (Creswell, 2006). Through these interviews, the researcher was able to correlate the experiences of the participants into common themes and ideas; thus juxtaposing the perceptions and practices that African American males bring to their leadership positions. The information gathered during the interviews was used to better understand how the constructs of the public education profession, and those who play a role in it, affect the perceptions that African American males in educational leadership positions have of themselves, those around them, their environment, and how those influences affected their decisions about leadership and their actions as educational leaders. The resulting information may provide useful insight to strategies, services, or support systems that may help African American male educators move into positions of educational leadership.

Theoretical Design

Symbolic Interactionism

Looking at the small number of African American educational leaders through the scope of symbolic interactionism allows the researcher to examine the question from a unique perspective. Researchers who subscribe to interactionist theory tend to write about the effect that ideas and experiences have on individuals and groups in their current

situations (Denzin, 1992). This lens will allow examination into the experiences and events that may have influenced African American male educational leaders, and whether there are common themes in those experiences. Symbolic Interactionism is a research perspective that focuses on the individual and accounts for the influence of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes on that individual's present state of being (Benokraitis, 2010). At the core of interactionist theory is the idea that virtually everything that people do can be attributed in some way to their exposure to certain groups of people in certain situations. In essence, the actions of the individual are reflective of the actions of others, and the actions of others in response to what they may have done at an earlier time (Becker & McCall, 1990). Blumer (1966) clarified symbolic interactionism from non-symbolic interactionism by explaining that symbolic interactionism deals almost exclusively with the interpretation of stimuli, while non-symbolic interactionism provides a direct response to stimuli with no interpretation. The interactionist views society as having been developed by the interpretation of events by the individual; in effect, each person's understanding of their experiences determines their reality (Benokraitis, 2010) and those meanings that people attach to things, gestures, or actions comes from within themselves (Blumer, 1969).

The interactionist is interested in the meaning that objects, gestures, actions, and the general environment have on individuals or groups of people. Blumer (1969) looked at meaning as either being intrinsic to the object in question; that the object is identified by its natural makeup; or that meaning is brought to the object by the person who views it. The interactionist believes that these objects do not only have definition and affect as the objects they are, but that they also elicit a response from the stimuli they produce that

affects conduct (Mead, 1912). These responses that objects might cause are also reflective in human interaction as well, in that the gestures and actions that individuals show towards one another act as a stimulus that elicit a response (Mead, 1934). The response is often based on how the individual interprets the initial gesture or act. There is the potential for the reception of the act to be misinterpreted, there is the chance that individuals may become self-conscious or overly self-critical based on the gestures received (Mead, 1934). These misinterpreted reactions may result in individuals reacting to perceived stimuli inappropriately. Mead (1922) explained how behavior is essentially a response that people have to their environment.

The Symbolic Interactionist movement grew out of the pragmatic school of philosophy (Charon, 2007). The researchers given credit for actually initiating the idea of interactionism is George Herbert Meade and those of the Chicago School, including John Dewey, Robert E. Parks, and Herbert Blumer; however, it is commonly accepted that George Meade is the father of interactionism (Becker & McCall, 1990). There were four ideas considered important to the pragmatist ideology: 1) the idea that people interpret their environment rather than react to it; 2) an individual's belief is directly influenced by its usefulness to them in various situations; 3) the idea that people choose what they will see and take from each experience; and 4) what people actually do in situations, rather than their personality, their status, or any other trait or quality defines meaning for the individual (Charon, 2007). These central pragmatic ideas gave way to the basic premises for symbolic interactionist theory.

Symbolic interactionism looks at how individuals interact with one another and how those interactions and communications are influenced by individual interpretation of

different factors such as symbols, words, and getures (Benokraitis, 2010). Charon (2007)

identified five central ideas to interactionist theory: 1) that it is our interactions with

others that pervasively influence our actions; 2) that interaction occurs not just with other

individuals, but within the individual as well; 3) how we define our environment is more

important than the actual environment; 4) what is currently happening in our environment

directly influences our actions; and 5) individuals are active participants in their

environment. This ideology leads one to consider the concept of the self-fulfilling

prophecy. The idea that if the individual acts based on their environment, but is at the

same time an active player in their environment, they are in some way responsible for

their environment and their actions. This apparent quandary is addressed by the nature of

personhood. The concept of personhood accepts the idea that individuals are influenced

by themselves and others and that they respond to current situations in a manner

determined by their past experiences. The individual is then able to act based on their

environment, the other individuals around them, and his/her past experiences (Hewitt,

1976). This is not to say that individuals are unwilling participants in situations

influenced by experience and other individuals; rather, that the interpretation of those

relationships and experiences strongly influences the actions of the individual. This

interpretation does lend itself to the possibility of misunderstanding. The gestures,

expressions, and actions that may be used in communicating how individuals see one

another may not be taken in the same context by the receiver (Mead, 1934).

Weaknesses in Interactionist Theory

Some of the strongest limitations to symbolic interactionist theory as a lens for

research rest with how interactionist researchers conceptualize the idea. Interactionists

believe that society and environment are abstract ideas that are constantly moving and reshaping; because they change so much, it hard to use them as theoretical frameworks and instead should be studied at the current time of research (Denzin, 1992). This frame of thinking leads some researchers to believe that it is impractical to generalize individuals' actions in the past with current environmental occurrences. It has also been said that symbolic interactionism has been followed more than it has been studied and proven (Denzin, 1992). Additionally, when specifically using interactionist theory as a lens through which to examine racial or ethnic inequality, shortcomings become evident because interactionist theory reveals very little about societal structures at the time of the research (Benokraitis, 2010). There is also the possibility for individuals to misinterpret the actions that influence their thoughts or behaviors. The potential effects of this misinterpretation becomes magnified when it is understood that interactionist theory provides for groups of like individuals to develop social reactions that are almost predetermined based on the interactive experience of other members of their group (Mead, 1922). This aspect of symbolic interactionism provides clarity as to why some African American males may react in particular fashion despite not having experienced the same phenomena as other African American males.

Population and Sample

The participants of this study consisted of a purposive sampling of eight African American male educators who hold the position of principal or assistant principal. The participants for this study were selected using a stratified purposeful sampling strategy. The participants in the research were African American male educational leaders from a

predominantly urban school system in east central Georgia. There was no delimitation set based on the level of experience or age of the participants.

According to the standards of the Georgia Southern Institutional Review Board, consent was obtained from the district and from all interview participants. Only the researcher had knowledge of the identity of the participants. The identities of the participants were kept confidential from all other parties. All rules set by the participants' district were followed in terms of asking for permission to conduct a study in their school district. As permission was obtained, the identities, schools, positions, and any other identifying characteristics of the interviewees remained unknown to anyone except the researcher.

After obtaining IRB approval from Georgia Southern University, the researcher made phone calls to three districts to inquire about how to request permission to conduct a study. Based on the response from the largest district, the researcher sent an email to the appropriate district level contact with the required documentation to obtain approval to conduct the study. Within three days approval was granted from the district office with an attachment of rules. The researcher was provided a list of administrators who fit the demographic requirements of the study. Using that list, the researcher sent out emails to request that individuals participate in the research study. As responses came in, the researcher followed up with phone calls. The first eight respondents who agreed to participate became the subjects of the research.

Instrumentation

This research study consisted of semi-structured interviews with African American male educators who hold leadership positions. Each interview was conducted

in a formal manner and recorded electronically with the participant's knowledge and permission. The researcher used guided questions with each participant. Using guided questions allowed the researcher to direct and manage the interview process in an organized manner, while allowing for individualized follow up questions as necessary. Despite the intended possibility for individuality, the process was kept centralized enough to compare emergent themes and thoughts. The questions for the interviews were developed based upon the literature collected by the researcher. The interview questions were piloted for construct validity by being administered to individuals who work in the same system as the researcher and are not part of the study. Their identities and responses were also kept confidential.

Interview Questions

The research study consisted of nine open ended questions that allowed for potential follow up questions if needed. The questions focused the responses on the research question and were supported by documentation from the literature. The first question in the survey was, "Where are you from?" This question was based upon literature by Hirschman (1988) that focused on cyclical patterns for unemployment based on race and geographic location. The second question was also based upon Hirschman's (1988) literature. Question number two was, "Where did you graduate high school?" Hirschman (1988) references that most African American youth lived in the south and very different experiences growing up than their counterparts from other sections of the country. The unemployment rates of African American males have always exceeded the rate for white males after the age of 20 (Hirschman, 1988). Hirschman (1988) also

describes the unbalanced rates of salaries and unemployment numbers in the south from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Question number three was developed in two parts. The question was more for demographic purposes than any other, but also loosely referenced the Hirschman (1988) literature as well. The first part of question three was, "What decade were you born in?" This question allowed the researcher to pose potential follow up questions based on the era in which the respondents grew up. The second part of question three asked, "What is your current position?"

The fourth question began to get into the context of the research study. The fourth question inquired, "How do you define yourself as an individual?" This question was a result of Mead's (1912) work about the definition of self-based upon external gestures and experiences. Question four explored the concept of how each respondent defined themselves, and allowed for follow up questions that encouraged deeper exploration into the reasons, or external influences that helped the respondent define himself in a particular way.

The fifth question tied in aspects of Mead (1912), and Blumer (1966). The fifth question was, "What led you to pursue leadership in education?" In respect to Mead (1912), this question seeks to find the influence that the perceptions of others had on the respondents in their quest for leadership, if any. Likewise, Blumer (1966) looks at how interactions with others influences individuals in positive ways, or in negative ways. The use of follow up questions will be important in establishing the effects that interactions had on individuals as they climbed the ranks of educational leadership.

Question number six also was based on Blumer's (1966), and Mead's (1922) literature. Question number six was, "How do you view yourself as an educational leader?" This question revisited the idea of how the respondents see themselves; only this time the question asked how they see themselves in a professional setting. As with question number four, the researcher was seeking to discover how external influences have affected the view each respondent has of himself as an educational leader.

Question number seven was, "How do others define your leadership?" This question tied to Blume's (1966) literature centering on the how human interaction plays a significant role in how we define ourselves. There are also aspects of Mead's (1912) research in this question. In his research, Mead (1912) examines how the gestures and experiences of the individual can help shape who the individual defines himself to be.

Question number eight explored in depth how external influences and experiences may or may not affect African American male educational leaders. Question number eight was, "How did others perception of your classroom leadership affect your decision to move into leadership (if at all)?" This question tied together the literature of Blumer (1966) and Mead (1912) and encouraged respondents to reflect upon and describe how their interactions with others in their past may have affected their decision to move into educational leadership.

Question number nine wqas, "How do you deal with potentially contentious or negative situations? This question is focused on the research of Mead (1922). The idea behind this question was to get respondents to reflect upon how they handle negative gestures or interactions if they arise.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected from semi-structured interviews with eight

African American male participants. The interviews were conducted at the convenience

of each of the participants. Four of the participants chose to meet in their office after

school while waiting for the start of a sporting event. Two of the participants chose to

meet after school in their office while waiting for after-school parent events to begin.

The final two participants chose to meet off campus after school hours. Both candidates

chose public venues that housed private areas conducive to carrying out the interview.

Prior to each interview, the participant was reminded that their participation was

completely voluntary and in no way required. The participants were also offered a final

version of the research upon completion. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for

the duration of the study in order to ensure their anonymity. The interviews were

recorded using an electronic recording device. After each interview, the recorded

statements were transferred to an external hard-drive for storage. The interviews were

downloaded one at a time to a hired transcriptionist who transcribed the audio recordings

from each interview within three days after the interview. The transcripts were then

coded and grouped to identify common themes from the interviews. Moustakas (1994)

suggests clustering responses into coordinating themes to support efficient analysis.

Moustakas (1994) goes on to suggest that the researcher compare the thematic responses

of the participants to their overall interview responses, checking for inconsistencies. If

responses are found to be incompatible, or inconsistent with the respondent's general

answers, the responses should be discarded (Moustakas, 1994). These themes will

include each of the respondents' initial perceptions of educational leaders, their

perceptions of educational leadership and barriers, if any, they faced getting to their

leadership positions, their reasons for wanting to become educational leaders, anyone

who motivated them, final perceptions of leadership and any perceived obstacles that

respondents saw to them moving into leadership. The recordings of the interviews will

be properly destroyed at the end of the study.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity refers to the measures put in place to ensure the

accuracy of research and a high degree of quality and rigor in the research practice (Gall,

Gall & Borg, 2007). It is important to have sound validity and reliability

countermeasures in place to protect against researcher bias, coding errors, or any other

potential threats to the research validity or reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In

order to eliminate threats to the research, the following measures were implemented:

1. Member Checking: Allowing each research participant to review their

   transcribed interview for accuracy will aid in the elimination of problematic

   transcription. Should participants find errors in the transcripts, they will

   immediately relay those errors to the researcher.

2. Epoche: Setting aside all bias and judgement based on the experiences of the

   researcher to allow for an objective review of participant responses. The

   Epoche will support the elimination of researcher bias. Since this research

   study has a base in race theory, the researcher will make every effort to

   eliminate any bias from his part by engaging fully in the Epoche. The Epoche

   brackets the phenomenological research data and presents it objectively

   without any external influence (Moustakas, 1994). The Epoche encourages

viewing all information with openness and seeing that information as exactly what it is, without pretense; it should allow the information to be viewed in a completely new and different way (Moustakas, 1994). The Epoche will prevent the researcher from including his potential bias related to race theory as an African American educator in the research data collection.

3. Use of field testing of research questions: The researcher will receive peer feedback on the clarity and effectiveness of questions and follow up questions by selected individuals who meet the demographic requirements of research participants.

The researcher followed the phenomenological model outlined by Moustakas 1994) to provide a validity countermeasure in carrying out the research interviews. Moustakas' model (1994) for data collection from interviews includes the following four step methodology that will be followed by the researcher (p.181):

1. Formulate the research question: Define terms of question

2. Conduct literature review and determine original nature of study

3. Develop criteria for selecting participants: Establish contract, obtain informed consent, insure confidentiality, agree to place and time commitments, and obtain permission to record and publish

4. Develop instructions and guiding questions or topics needed for the phenomenological research interview

The researcher has developed interview questions that will be asked of each of the research participants in order to evoke responses that will enable the researcher to gain insight into the experiences of each research participant. This method should insure a

consistent collection of data from each research participant. Follow up questions will be used to allow the researcher to extract complete answers and stories from the research participants.

Data Analysis

One of the strengths of Interactionist Theory is that the participants are able to speak in their own voice about their own experiences (Becker & McCall, 1990). Moustakas (1994) provided 8 specific guidelines for the analysis of data using the modified Van Kaam method (p.120-121):

1. Listening and Preliminary Grouping: List every expression relevant to the experience (Horizontalization)

2. Reduction and Elimination: To determine the Invariant Constituents; test each expression for two requirements:

    a. Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?

    b. Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. Expressions not meeting the above requirements are excluded.

3. Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents: Cluster the invariant constituents of the experience that are related into a thematic label. The clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience.

4. Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application Validation: Check the invariant constituents and their

accompanying theme against the complete record of the research participant. (1) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? (2) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? (3) If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the co-researcher's experience and should be deleted.

5. Using the relevant, validated invariants constituents and themes, construct for each co-researcher an Individual Textural Description of the experience. Include verbatim examples from the transcribed interview.

6. Conduct for each co-researcher an Individual Structural Description of the experience based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation.

7. Construct for each research participant a Textural-Structural Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes.

8. From the Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions, develop a Composite Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole.

Conducting interviews allowed the researcher to record the experiences of each participant and to look for common themes in their related experiences. The phenomenological qualitative research design effectively supported the Interactionist Theory in that it takes into account the unique experiences of the participants as they describe them. The research design allowed for respondents to describe their experiences by responding to open-ended questions in an interview format (Moustakas, 1994). The

respondents' experiences were grouped together thematically to allow for more efficient

and comprehensive analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher reviewed the recorded

comments of the participants with the purpose of finding common themes and

experiences that they share relating to their journey to educational leadership. The

researcher coordinated common ideas and thoughts from participants in order to find

those experiences that are common to African American male educational administrators.

The coordination of these ideas will provide the researcher a platform to better

understand and analyze the results of the interviews

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how African American male

educational leaders view themselves in their roles as educational leaders. Interactionist

theory has been effective in researching groups who have been suppressed, or

overlooked, by allowing them to speak in their own voice about their experiences (Becker

& McCall, 1990). The phenomenological research style was appropriate for this study as

it seeks to understand reality as it appears to individuals (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). In

this study, the researcher identified reality as it applied to each participant and determined

whether or not there were commonalities between those expressed realities. The

purposive sample of eight African American male educational leaders was selected to

participate because of their common phenomenon of being African American males in

the field of education who pursued and obtained educational leadership positions in the

state of Georgia. The information and experiences gathered by the research informed the

researcher's exploration into the views that African American male educational leaders

have of themselves.

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data collected from interviews with

each of the eight participants. In order to analyze the results of the interviews the

researcher used Moustakas' modified Van Kaam method of phenomenology. The

modified Van Kaam method is designed to allow participants to clearly describe their

unique experiences and how those experiences show themselves in the respondents'

current situation(s) (Moustakas, 1994). The method allows for these descriptions through

the use of open-ended questions that seek to allow for a comprehensive description of an individual's experiences and what those experiences mean to them (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas' modified Van Kaam method allowed the researcher to conduct interviews and record descriptive statements communicating how environment and background influenced each participant's phenomenological experience relating to the study (Creswell, 2006). The method also allowed for the researcher to explore his own experiences within the context of the study (Creswell, 2006). Through these interviews, the researcher was able to correlate the experiences of the participants into common themes and ideas; thus juxtaposing the perceptions and practices that African American males bring to their leadership positions. The information gathered during the interviews will be used to better understand how the constructs of the public education profession affect the perceptions that African American males in educational leadership positions have of themselves, those around them, and their environment, and how those influences affected their decisions about educational leadership and actions as educational leaders.

The interview responses were organized and presented by themes. The first theme is background and historical data. This theme provides a glimpse into the youth and background of each of the leadership participants. The second theme was rooted in the self-image each of the participants; examining how they view themselves outside of their roles as educational leaders. Theme three focuses on each participant's professional reflection. Their professional reflection provided an in depth look at the participants' experiences as teachers, and what led them to their position of leadership. The fourth and fifth themes examined how each respondent views himself as an educational leader and the path that they took to reach that goal. The final theme was related to the interactionist

impressions of each participant; how they believe that others view them as educational leaders and how that influences them and their behavior as educational leaders.

This study included interviews with eight African American male educational leaders who were all either principals or assistant principals. The respondents are all from districts that would be classified as urban or suburban. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for all potentially identifiable demographic information in order to protect and maintain confidentiality. A description of each participant follows.

Mr. Roberts

Mr. Roberts is the principal of a middle school in a suburban area of a large school district in east central Georgia. Mr. Roberts is was born in the 1960's in a rural community in Georgia, and was raised in that same community. Mr. Roberts went away to college, joined the military and traveled the country prior to entering the field of education. The middle school over which Mr. Roberts presides is predominantly minority with a low socio-economic background. Prior to assuming the position of principal, Mr. Roberts was the principal of an elementary school in the same county.

Mr. Andrews

Mr. Andrews was born in the 1960's in the city that houses the district in which he works. The only time that he has left that city was to attend college. Mr. Andrews works for a large school district in east central Georgia. Mr. Andrew is currently the principal of a High School, having been the principal of a middle school for several years prior to assuming his role as high school principal. Mr, Andrew's school is not a Title I school and is relatively affluent for the area.

Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones was born in a state out west, and moved to Georgia as a result of his father being stationed here. Mr. Jones was born in the 1970's, and travelled and lived in different places because of his father's position in the military. Mr. Jones is currently an assistant principal at a high school in a large east central Georgia school district. Mr. Jones has held a position in school administration for two years. His school is not Title I, and is relatively affluent for the area. This is his first administrative position.

Mr. Wilson

Mr. Wilson was born in the 1970's in a rural Georgia town. He was raised in that town and graduated from its high school, going away to college immediately after graduation. Mr. Wilson is currently and assistant principal at a high school in a large district in east central Georgia. He has been in administration for three years. His school is Title I, and has a low socio-economic student population.

Mr. Brantley

Mr. Brantley was born in the 1970's in a rural town in Georgia. Mr. Brantley was raised in that town and graduated from its high school. The only time that Mr. Brantley left his town was to go to college. Mr. Brantley currently serves as an assistant principal at an elementary school in the very town in which he grew up. He has been in administration for 4 years. His school is Title I and has an above average socio-economic student demographic.

Mr. Jackson

Mr. Jackson was born in a western state and moved to the southeast late in his teen years. Mr. Jackson has been a principal for 12 years with the last 7 being at his current school. Mr. Jackson is currently a high school principal in a large school district

in east central Georgia. His school is a Title I school and has a low socio-economic

student demographic.

Mr. Anderson

Mr. Anderson is the principal of an elementary school in a large school district in

east central Georgia. He was born in a rural town, and was raised in that town and

graduated from its high school. Mr. Anderson has been an administrator for fourteen

years, with the last two and half years being spent as a principal. His school is a Title I

school with a low socio-economic student demographic. Mr. Anderson assumed the

principal position from a principal who held the position for twenty-two years.

Mr. Stevens

Mr. Stevens has spent virtually his entire life in the geographic area of the rural

town in which he was born. Born in the 1970's, Mr. Stevens went to college less than 50

miles from the school from which he graduated. This is his first year as an assistant

principal in the high school in which he taught for 17 years. Mr. Stevens' serves at a

Title I school with a low socio-economic student demographic.

Summary of Background/Historical Data

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the interview protocol served to give the interviewer

an understanding of the background of the participants. This background information

included the decade of their birth, and the location of their birth, and the location of their

upbringing including where they graduated from high school. This information also

included each respondent's current position as an educational leader. These questions

were included based on the research by Hirschman (1988) that indicated a very different

youth experience for African American males growing up in the south versus other parts of the nation. All of the respondents except for Mr. Jackson and Mr. Jones were born in the state of Georgia. Mr. Jackson was born in state, while Mr. Jones was transient throughout his youth. In reference to their leadership position, four of the respondents were principals, while four were assistant principals.

Table 1.

Participant Demographic Data

Name	Region Born	Region Raised	Decade of Birth	Position
Mr. Roberts	Rural	Rural	Mid 1960's	Principal
Mr. Andrews	Urban	Urban	Mid 1960's	Principal
Mr. Jones	Suburban	Moved	Mid 1970's	Assistant Principal
Mr. Wilson	Rural	Rural	Early 1970's	Assistant Principal
Mr. Brantley	Rural	Rural	Early 1970's	Assistant Principal
Mr. Jackson	Urban	Moved	Late 1950's	Principal
Mr. Anderson	Rural	Rural	Mid 1970's	Principal
Mr. Stevens	Rural	Rural	Mid 1970's	Assistant Principal

Table 2.

Statements of Relevance: Theme 1 Background/Historical

Interview Questions	Statements of Relevance							
1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Mr. Roberts	Mr. Andrews	Mr. Jones	Mr. Wilson	Mr. Brantley	Mr. Jackson	Mr. Anderson	Mr. Stevens
	I was born in the mid 60's	I was born in the 1960's	I was born during the 1970's	I was born in the 1970's	I was born in the 1970's	I was born in the 1950's	I was born in the 1970's	I'm a child of the 1970's
	I am currently a principal	Currently, I'm a principal	I am an assistant principal	My current position held is Assistant Principal	I am an assistant principal	I hold the position of principal	I am a principal	I'm an assistant principal
	I was born and grew up in the same town	I was born and raised in the same town, I even went to college there	My father was in the military, so we traveled to different places throughout the world	I was born and raised in the same town	I was born and raised in the same town, I went away for college	I was born and partially raised in the same town. We moved when I was a teen-ager	I was born and raised in the same town and went away to college	I was born and raised in the same town

FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS

Theme 2 Self-Image

Theme two focused on how each respondent viewed them-self outside of their role as an educational leader. This theme's responses are presented based on the question(s):

How do you view yourself as an individual?

Describe a few key events that have impacted your perception of yourself.

Mr. Jones' and Mr. Stevens' based their views of themselves in their faith. Mr. Jones (2016) stated, "I see myself as a God fearing Christian". While Mr. Stevens (2016) expressed finding his "peace in (his) faith". Mr. Jones didn't expand on his professions of faith, however Mr. Stevens went on to express, "I see myself as a provider for my family and friends", and "I love helping people realize their dreams". While not directly mentioning his faith, Mr. Brantley (October 22, 2016) identified himself as being, "very friendly". He followed that up with descriptions of himself that included being, "analytical" and "operating best by a schedule". Mr. Roberts (August 18, 2016) viewed himself a wanting to "provide opportunities for people who haven't had a great start". He admitted that he has been "impacted by seeing the disproportionate things that happen according to social status, maybe race and class, and those sorts of things".

Mr. Andrews (October 28, 2016) identified himself solely by leadership stating, "I am a natural born leader, highly motivated and intelligent". Mr. Wilson (September 16, 2016) emphasized his focus on being the best, "I am a very energetic person, I strive to be the best at everything I do". Mr. Wilson also puts emphasis on others as well stating, "I put others' needs before my own". Along those same lines, Mr. Anderson (September

23, 2016) identified himself as being, "hard-working and dedicated", while admitting that

he "loves to laugh", and "consider(s) himself a people person".

Mr. Jackson (August 28, 2016) describes himself as, "Competitive to a fault;

passionate, and compassionate". He went on to express how, "success in education and

sports have given me confidence in life". He described how, "Sports was a big part of

my life growing up" and that "growing up the way he did made him compassionate".

Table 3.

Statements of Relevance: Theme 2 Self-Image Personal

Interview Questions	Statements of Relevance							
6	Mr. Roberts	Mr. Andrews	Mr. Jones	Mr. Wilson	Mr. Brantley	Mr. Jackson	Mr. Anderson	Mr. Stevens
	The things I want for my own children translates to the same things that I want for the kids who are under my charge as principal. I've been impacted by seeing the disproportionate things that happen according to social status, maybe race and class and those sorts of things. I see the opportunities afforded to students who had a better start compared to those who didn't have that great start.	I am a natural born leader, highly motivated and intelligent	I see myself as a God fearing Christian I am career driven	I am a very energetic person I strive to be the best at everything I do I put others' needs before my own	I'm very friendly I think I'm very analytical I operate best by a schedule	I'm competitive to a fault, passionate and compassionate Success in education and sports have given me confidence Sports was a big part of my life growing up Growing up the way I did made me compassionate	I'm hard working, dedicated I consider myself a people person I love to laugh	I find peace in my faith I see myself as a provider for my family and friends I love working with students, helping them to realize their dreams

Theme 3 Professional Reflection

Theme three allowed participants to share their professional experiences and any thoughts that they might have related to those experiences. This theme was focused on five questions:

Was education the first professional field in which you entered?

If so, why?

If not, what was?

As a classroom teacher, did you accept positions (or take the initiative) to be a teacher leader?

Why were you willing to take those positions?

Two of the respondents, Mr. Roberts and Mr. Brantley said that education was not their initial professional choice. Mr. Roberts explained that he, "was not planning to become and educator. I got into the field after being recruited by a principal was a client when I was doing sales". Sharing in that ideology, Mr. Brantley stated, "I originally went to work in the medical field. I had a friend who was an administrator who encouraged me to enter the field of education because of the lack of African American males in the field and dealings with kids in the community". Education was not Mr. Jones' first choice, but for a very different reason. "I wanted to get into education while is was in college, but my partying lifestyle prevented me from having the GPA necessary to get into the school of education", stated Mr. Jones. He went on to say, "I started working at the bank and wasn't happy, so I decided to go back to school to get my degree in education".

The other five participants all indicated that education was their first career choice. Mr. Andrews stated, "I started working in a post-secondary position. My love for the kids and wanting to motivate them is what inspired me to move to k-12 education. I felt like the children might benefit from my experiences in post-secondary education". Mr. Wilson indicated that, "Education was my career of choice from college. I had some teachers who were positive role models and inspired me to get into the field of education. I wanted to provide that same inspiration to other youth". Mr. Jackson expressed simply, "I always wanted to be in education so that I could teach and coach". Mr. Anderson stated, "I was inspired to get into education by my parents and siblings. I always planned to get into education". Mr. Stevens shared those sentiments, "I studied education in college and always wanted to be an educator. I wanted to help students realize their dreams".

In sharing experiences regarding leadership when in the role of a classroom teacher, whether initiated or assigned, Mr. Roberts shared the following anecdotes from his time as a classroom teacher:

> "I didn't do a leadership things as a teacher because we were so compartmentalized. I was inspired to leadership through the urging of my principals as well as my own experiences with leadership in college. I wanted to be a very, very good teacher, and when I did that, others around me pushed me towards leadership."

Mr. Andrews shared:

> "I took several leadership roles as a teacher. I was a team leader, a department chair, football coach, and athletic director. I served on several committees in the school, as well as serving on the SACS committee. I was teacher of the year once."

Mr. Jones added:

> "As a teacher I always took the initiative to to be a teacher leader because I thought I had something to say and share. People have always followed me in some form or fashion. I wanted to share all of the knowledge that I have with others to possibly motivate and inspire them."

When looking at his past as a teacher, Mr. Wilson stated:

> "I took initiative as a teacher whenever something needed to be done, I went ahead and completed those tasks."

Mr. Brantley commented:

> "I took the lead as a teacher because I thought that was what was needed. I have no fear of failure and to lead you can't fear failure. "

Mr. Jackson:

> "I had to take intiitative as a teacher. As a coach, I had to be responsible for my teams, and other teachers would often come to me to help them with problems."

Mr. Anderson stated:

> "I took responsibility as a teacher because I was always up for a challenge. I took those challenges because I wanted to make myself better for the children I worked with."

Finally, Mr. Stevens added:

> "I had leadership positions as a teacher. I was science department chair for several years, and served on the school improvement team. I accepted those roles because I felt like I needed to act rather than complain, and do nothing. If I didn't do something, then the kids would suffer."

Table 4.

Statements of Relevance: Theme 3 Professional Reflection

Interview Questions	Statements of Relevance							
7, 8, 14, 16, 17	Mr. Roberts	Mr. Andrews	Mr. Jones	Mr. Wilson	Mr. Brantley	Mr. Jackson	Mr. Anderson	Mr. Stevens
	I was not planning to be an educator, I got into the field after being recruited by a principal who was a client	I started working in a post-secondary position. My love for the kids and wanting to motivate them is what inspired me to move to k-12	I wanted to get into education in college, but my partying lifestyle prevented me from having the GPA to get into the program	Education was my career of choice from college	I originally went to work in the medical field.	I always wanted to be in education so that I could teach and coach	I always planned to get into education	I studied education in college and wanted to be an educator
	I didn't do a lot of leadership things as a teacher because we were so compartmentalized	I took several leadership roles as a teacher, I was a team leader, department chair, football coach, and athletic director	I started working at the bank and wasn't happy, so I decided to go back and get my education degree	I had some teachers who were positive role models and inspired me to get into the field of education	A friend of mine who was an assistant principal encouraged me to move into the field of education	I had to take initiative as a teacher. As a coach, I had to responsible for my teams; and other teachers would often come to me to help with problems	I was inspired to get into education by my parents and siblings	I wanted to help students realize their dreams
	I was inspired to leadership through the urging of my principals as well as my own experience with leadership in college	I served on several committees, and the SACS committee	As a teacher I always took the initiative to be a teacher leader because I thought I had something to say and share	I wanted to provide that same inspiration to other youth	I took the lead as a teacher because I thought that was what was needed	I avoid negative situations through lots of conversations and communication	I took responsibility as a teacher because I was always up for a challenge	I took leadership positions as a teacher; I was science chair.
	I wanted to be a very, very good teacher, and when I did that others around me pushed me towards leadership	I was teacher of the year	People have always tended to follow me in some form or fashion	I took initiative as a teacher, whenever something needed to be done, I went ahead and completed those tasks	I have no fear of failure and to lead, you can't fear failure	As a leader you have to combine salesmanship with taking confrontation head on while remaining flexible enough to listen to people before making judgments	I wanted to make myself better for the good of the children	I believed I needed to act rather than complain, because if I didn't do something the kids would suffer
	I try to explain the big picture to staff and help them see that I am trying to be open with them	In dealing with negative situations, I look at how they might affect the child first	I wanted to share all of the knowledge I have with others to possibly motivate and inspire them	I try to escape negative people and situations because that's a virus that can affect you negatively in the long run	I try to listen closely to specific details when dealing with any given problem	I find this to be one of the most challenging things I do	In dealing with negative situations, I try to remain calm at all times.	I'm a quiet person by nature, so I tend to listen more than talk anyway. So when I deal with contention, I listen.
	I try to head off contentious situations by keeping open lines of communication with parents, teachers and students	Then I look at how the situation falls within the policies and procedures of the school and district	As a servant leader, I believe in	I try to correct others by voicing my opinion in	I try to listen and provide a positive solution when at all possible I try to make sure there is a clear understanding before the party leaves		I try not to react and listen to understand, not respond I choose my words wisely and demonstrate empathy with the other person At all costs, I try to forge a connection with the individual	I try to talk the person through their problem and encourage their professional growth through that process

| | | being empathetic and making sure that I am serving the stakeholders and doing what is right for the students

I always go back to what is right | a positive way so that they might see a different perspective other than the negative one they displayed | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I like to include staff members. That makes the situation inclusive, but also helps grow the teachers | | | | | |

Theme 4 Leadership Reflection

The fourth theme of the interview was centered on Leadership Reflection. The theme was presented in the interview through the use of the following two questions:

What led you to pursue leadership in education?

Was it your intention to pursue educational leadership when you entered the

profession?

In reflecting on his pursuit of an educational leadership position, Mr. Roberts shared the following:

> "I was led to educational leadership through the encouragement of a principal that I worked for. He encouraged me to pursue leadership, however my time at that school was cut short due to my wife being transferred. I left the school, but started taking leadership classes as a result of his encouragement. It was not my initial intent to move into leadership; but the influence of my principal, coupled with my overriding desire to influence kids to do their best led me to pursue a position in educational leadership."

Mr. Andrews reflected on the following:

> "It was not my intent to pursue leadership, it was my goal to teach at the collegiate level. Like I said, I was led to k-12 education by a desire to help students to do their best and pursue their dreams. I had success in k-12 education, and several mentors encouraged me to pursue a position in educational leadership. As a result of that encouragement, I looked into leadership."

Mr. Jones shared:

"I was coaching and building relationships with my colleagues, students, and their families and principals told me that I should consider leadership. He told me that I was already doing all of the things necessary for leadership. I went into leadership so that I could positively affect as many children as possible, however I never saw myself as a leader because of all of the responsibility associated with it."

Mr. Wilson's experiences leading to leadership were as follows:

"I wanted to be a leader from the beginning, I've always been a true leader. I wanted to make positive changes and motivate people who looked like me. I initially wanted to change the world, but I realized that I needed to change myself first. That change took me into leadership."

Mr. Brantley's shared the following in reference to his path to leadership:

"I never wanted to move into leadership. I wanted to remain the classroom where I felt I had the most impact on the students and their learning. I was encouraged to pursue leadership by a former administrator for whom I worked. The idea began to appeal to me when I considered the potentially positive effect I could have on the children in my community."

Mr. Jackson was more concise with his explanation of moving into leadership:

"I never intended to pursue leadership when I started teaching, all I wanted to do was coach. I had professional mentors who encouraged me to move into leadership. Over time, I realized that I was taking on leadership roles through my coaching and support of my colleagues when they came to me. I realized that leadership would give me the opportunity to "coach" on an even larger scale."

Mr. Anderson was equally as concise:

"It was not my intent to pursue public leadership when I entered into public education. I entered into leadership to make a difference for the children in my community. I was perfectly happy to stay in the classroom and work with the children; but I had success in the classroom. That success led me to be considered for leadership positions. I became an administrator in the very school that I taught in."

Finally, Mr. Stevens shared his path to educational leadership:

"I never dreamed that I would be an educational leader. I was content with my success as a science teacher and enjoyed seeing the "light come on" when my students grasped a concept. I accepted my first position of leadership as a department chair at the urging of my principal. I had some success as department chair and at the continued urging of my principal, took classes to prepare myself for the role of school administrator."

Table 5.

Statements of Relevance: Theme 4 Leadership Reflection

Interview Questions	Statements of Relevance							
9, 10,	Mr. Roberts	Mr. Andrews	Mr. Jones	Mr. Wilson	Mr. Brantley	Mr. Jackson	Mr. Anderson	Mr. Stevens
	I was led into educational leadership through the encouragement of a principal I left the school, but started taking leadership classes as result of his encouragement It was not my initial intent to move into leadership, however the overriding idea for my career has been to influence kids to do their best	It was not my intent to pursue leadership, it was my goal to teach at the college level I had success in k-12 education and several mentors who encouraged me to pursue leadership As a result of that encouragement, I looked into leadership	I was coaching and building relationships with my colleagues, students and their families and my principal told me that I should consider leadership He told me I was already doing all of the things necessary for leaders I went into it so that I could positively affect as many children as possible I never saw myself as a leader because of the responsibility	I wanted to be a leader from the beginning, I've always been a true leader I wanted to make positive changes and motivate people who look like me I initially wanted to change the world, but I realized I needed to change myself first	I never wanted to move into leadership, I wanted to remain in the classroom where I felt I had the most impact on the students and their learning I was encouraged to pursue leadership by a former administrator for whom I worked	I had professional mentors who encouraged me to move into leadership I never intended to pursue leadership when I started teaching, I wanted to coach	It was not my intention to pursue leadership when I entered pubic education I entered leadership to make a difference for the children in my community	I never dreamed that I would be an educational leader. I accepted my first position of leadership (grade level chair) at the urging of my principal I had some success as grade chair and at the urging of my principal and mentor, I took the role of school level administrator

Theme 5 Leadership Self-Image

The fifth theme that the interviews examined was related to the participants' thoughts about themselves as leaders. This theme focused specifically on their views of themselves as it related to their professional persona. This theme was addressed by the following question:

How do you view yourself as an educational leader?

Mr. Andrews had the most to say about how he viewed himself as an educational leader. He shared the following:

> "I am hands on and perpetually visible throughout the school. I try to get to know each one of my students and teachers, and speak to each of them every day. By getting to know my staff, I can figure out which folks need to be placed on which seat of the bus in order to insure our success and ultimately develop teacher leaders. It's my job to figure out where people fit in best in order to have the best impact on our students."

Mr. Roberts shared the following about his thoughts concerning who he is as a school leader:

> "I see myself as an inspirational leader. I try to talk to every teacher and student every day. I try to inspire those around me by making sure I work hard each day. I don't believe it looks good to have high expectations for your staff and not meet those expectations yourself. I believe in hard work, a good work ethic, and being honest and fair."

Mr. Jackson referred back to his comfort zone of coaching and sports in describing his reflection on who he is as a leader:

> "As a leader, I'm driven, competitive, passionate, and see the need for leading by example. I think it is important for me to provide direction for the school and lead by walking that path myself. I'm a life-long learner who tries to provide what is needed for students so that in the end, I am able to provide a great high school experience for my students and their teachers."

Mr. Jones shared the following in his reflection:

> "I see myself as a teacher supporter, on the side of the parent, and a champion for the students. There are times when those goals conflict, and when they do I always try to look at what's right for the students first, parents, second, then the teachers. I pride myself on hearing my students and listening to them with an empathetic ear."

Mr. Wilson views himself in the following way:

> "I'm a team player. I'm a believer in shared leadership. I see myself as a good and positive leader who is able to lead when given the opportunity and I am supported by my superior. There are times that I don't necessarily feel that support, but I try my best to work through it. I feel that I'm at my best when I am praised for a job well done."

Mr. Anderson shared the following view about himself:

"I try to put students first above all else. After that, I try to support my staff, and share responsibilities in order to promote the leadership growth of teachers. There are so many teachers who feel underappreciated; I was surprised at the fear some teachers had when I initially tried to share leadership tasks with them. I'm a passionate, empathetic, goal oriented leader. It's important to me to address the needs of others."

Mr. Brantley focused more on his philosophy of leadership in response to this

question rather the relationship aspect of leadership:

"I think of myself as a visionary. I try to think ahead, almost like a game of chess. I like to try to figure out the outcomes of my decisions before I make them. I also find it important to think outside of the box when addressing growth for my students and the school. Students can't be confined to a box, nor should our plans for their growth be. I do try to empower others in the building, but everyone isn't ready for that responsibility. I try my best to be an effective, respectful, positive role model for the students and teachers of the school."

Finally, Mr. Stevens shared the following about his reflection:

"I think that I am an empathetic leader and that I put the students' and staff's needs ahead of my own. I try to give an ear to all stakeholders who feel the need to talk to me. I believe that listening to them will encourage their growth and positivity within the school."

Table 6.

Statements of Relevance: Theme 5 Self-Image Leadership

Interview Questions	Statements of Relevance							
11	Mr. Roberts	Mr. Andrews	Mr. Jones	Mr. Wilson	Mr. Brantley	Mr. Jackson	Mr. Anderson	Mr. Stevens
	I see myself as an inspirational leader, I try to talk to every teacher and student every day	I am hands on and visible throughout the school.	I see myself as a teacher supporter, on the side of the parent, and a champion for the students	I'm a team player and share my leadership	I'm a visionary	As a leader, I'm driven, competitive, passionate and see the need for leading by example	I try to put students first, support my staff, and share responsibilities in order to promote the leadership growth of teachers	I think that I am an empathetic leader, and I put the staff and students ahead of myself
	I try to inspire those around me by making sure I work hard	I try to get to know my students and teachers		I see myself as a good and positive leader who is able to lead when given the	I try to think ahead and outside of the box for growth	I'm a life long learner who tries to provide	I'm passionate, empathetic, goal oriented,	I try to give an ear to all stakeholders to encourage
		I can figure out what folks need to be	I always try to look at what's right fro the	opportunity and I am supported by my	I try my best to empower others in the building	what is needed for students so that I might	and	their growth and positivity

	I believe in hard work, a good work ethic, and being honest and fair	put on what seat of the bus in order to insure success and grow leaders I figure out where people best fit to have the best impact on our students	students I hear students and listen to them because I'm empathetic	superior I feel that I am at my best when given praise for a job well done	I try to be an effective, respectful, positive role model	provide a great high school experience for my students	incorporate shared leadership whenever possible	

Theme 6 Interactionist Impressions

The final theme of the interviews focused on the interactionist impressions of

each participant. These are the impressions that the participants believe that others have

of them. The Interactionist Impressions theme is driven by the following three questions:

How do others view you as an educational leader? What evidence gives you that

impression?

How did others impression of your classroom leadership affect your decision to

move into leadership (if at all)?

How do you deal with potentially contentious or negative situations should they

arise?

In thinking about how others viewed him as an educational leader, Mr. Wilson

had the following to say:

"I'm certain that others define me as a good and fair leader that shows them
dignity and respect no matter what position they hold in the school. I they'd say I'm not
afraid to get in there with them and get my hands dirty. People often thank me for my
positivity and willingness to listen to them and help them."

In respect to the influence others may have had on his choice to move to

educational leadership:

"I was motivated to become a leader because of the positive comments that were inspiring of my leadership qualities. My colleagues and my administrators were very complementary of my work as a teacher and encouraged me to pursue leadership."

Mr. Jones' idea of how others viewed him was related as such:

"My main guide of what others see me as in terms of a leader comes from my evaluation surveys. My initial scores were not below average, but on the border. I took those scores to heart thinking about how I could improve. I was actually surprised because that meant that the teachers didn't necessarily see me as a leader the way that I viewed myself. I adjusted my focus as a leader to helping and supporting teachers; that became my new emphasis. Just knowing that others think you are doing something right….I always want to stay innovative."

Mr. Jones revisited his story about his principal when referring to how he was

motivated to pursue leadership:

"My principal was the catalyst to my moving into leadership. He was constantly commenting positively on what I was doing as a teacher and then as a teacher leader. It was his encouragement that led me to pursue leadership in education."

Mr. Stevens provided this anecdote related to this theme:

"I initially had trouble building trust with the teachers when I moved into leadership. After having been a teacher in the same building, it was hard for some colleagues to view me as an administrator. (However) now I am described through leadership surveys as being a good listener and attentive to the needs of the teachers and students. I have been described as a good problem solver and a "go-getter" because I am intent on getting the job done."

In reflecting what the motivation was to move into leadership:

"It was definitely the encouragement from the leaders in my building and other leaders that I respected from around the district that gave me the drive to pursue leadership."

Mr. Roberts' ideas of how others view him as an educational are stated in the

following fashion:

"When I was in my first leadership position as an elementary principal, I was placed on a Professional Development Plan because of the negative evaluations my teachers gave me. I think it's fair to say that I was not viewed in a very positive light as an educational leader. I reflected on those responses and did my

best to improve as a leader. I currently have positive feedback from my teachers and our professional relationships are strong. I believe that it is safe to say that I am respected as an educator and as a leader."

In regard to his motivation to pursue leadership, Mr. Roberts states:

"I think my overall experience with leadership along with the encouragement of others pushed me towards leadership in education."

Mr. Brantley shared these statements regarding the perceptions his staff has for

him:

"Most of the teachers in my building will tell you I put the students first; and that doesn't always sit to well the teachers. Others will say that I'm helpful, professional, and a good listener. I've had teachers to say those things to me personally."

Mr. Brantley revisited his memories of the assistant principal who urged him

towards a position in leadership:

"I was encouraged to move into leadership by my assistant principal at the time. She would always tell me that I had leadership qualities and potential. I didn't realize those qualities in myself until she encouraged me."

Mr. Jackson shared the following about how he believes the teachers in his school

view him as an educational leader:

"Others see me as a workaholic who has exceptionally high expectations for himself. I have been told that I put too much pressure on myself, and sometimes set unrealistic goals. I'm not sure that I believe that, but that's what's been told to me."

He related the following in regards to how he came to pursue leadership:

"Other administrators pushed me towards leadership as a result of the work I did in the classroom. I believe the same expectations that others say I have now are what resulted in me being urged to pursue leadership. Maybe it's not high expectations, it's just a very serious drive to succeed."

Mr. Andrews shares his beliefs about how others see him as an educational leader:

"I believe they (the teachers) think that I am a passionate, motivated, flexible leader who is willing to take risks. I feel like my teachers view me as someone

who works hard and is passionate about what he does. I believe the relationship I have with my staff lends itself to them trusting me when I take risks that I think will benefit the school."

Mr. Andrews went on to share these statements about his motivation to pursue

leadership:

"It was definitely the encouragement of my principal that inspired me to move into educational leadership. He helped me see things in myself that I hadn't seen before. I'm not sure I would have made the transition without his encouragement."

Finally, Mr. Anderson shared this story about how he believes his staff views him

as a leader:

"I've been told by teachers, and I've seen on my surveys, that I am easy to talk to, approachable, and understanding. I have also been told that I am a strong leader who loves children and is trustworthy. It took me some time to gain the trust of the staff. Our first couple years were rocky to say the least."

He had this to say in regard to his pursuit of a position in educational leadership:

"I think it was the urging of my principal and family that motivated me to move towards a position in educational leadership. I was perfectly content to be a good classroom teacher, but the motivation from my leaders and family was inspiring."

Table 7.

Statements of Relevance: Theme 6 Interactionist Impressions

Interview Questions	Statements of Relevance							
12, 13, 15	Mr. Roberts	Mr. Andrews	Mr. Jones	Mr. Wilson	Mr. Brantley	Mr. Jackson	Mr. Andrews	Mr. Stevens
	When I was an elementary principal I was placed on a PDP for teachers evaluations of me

I currently have positive feedback from my teachers

I believe I am | I believe they think I am passionate, motivated, flexible and willing to take risks

I feel like my teachers view me as someone who works hard and is passionate about what he | My main guide of what others see me as comes from my evaluation surveys

My initial scores were not below average, | I'm certain that others define me as a good and fair leader that shows them dignity and respect no matter what position they hold | Most will tell you I put the interest of the students first

Others will say that I'm honest helpful, professional, and a good listener

I've had | Others see me as a workaholic who has high expectations for himself

I have been told I put too much pressure on myself

Not sure I believe that, | I've been told by teachers (and seen on my surveys) that I am easy to talk to, approachable, and understanding

I have also been told that I am a strong leader who loves children | I initially had trouble building trust with the teachers

Now I have been described through surveys as always having an ear for teachers and students

I have been described as a |

respected as an educator I think my experience with leadership along with the encouragement of others pushed me towards educational leadership	does It was the encouragement of my administrators that inspired me to move into educational leadership	but on the border, I took those scores to heart, thinking about how I could improve My focus was on helping and supporting teachers, so that was where I put my emphasis Just knowing that others think you are doing something right …..I always wanted to say innovative	I think they'd say I'm not afraid to get in there with them and get my hands dirty People often thank me for my positivity and willingness to listen to them I was motivated to become a leader because of the positive comments that were inspiring of my leadership qualities	teachers say these things to me personally My assistant principal would always tell me I had leadership qualities but I didn't realize those qualities within myself	but that's what has been said Other administrators pushed me towards leadership as a result of the work I did in the classroom	and is trustworthy I think it was the urging of my principal and family that inspired me to move towards leadership	problem solver and a "go-getter" because I am intent on getting the job done It was definitely the encouragement from leaders I respected that made me pursue leadership

SUMMARY

In Chapter four the researcher described the phenomenological qualitative research study that was conducted using the responses of eight African American male administrators to ten interview questions that were analyzed using Moustakas' Modified Van Kaam Method. The purpose of this study was to explore how African American male educational leaders view themselves as educational leaders through the lens of symbolic interactionism. The study was conducted through interviews with each participant. The interviews were conducted face to face, one on one, and consisted of semi-structured interview questions that allowed for the individual aspects of each participant's response to be included. The interviews were taped using an electronic recording device and transcribed. The responses were organized into themes with responses from participants used to provide supporting explanations. Chapter five will

provide further interpretations, conclusions and implications based upon the conducted

research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In chapter five the researcher expands upon the findings and examines the themes of Symbolic Interactionism that were evident from the interviews. The researcher will also discuss how the findings might be used to affect practices, policies, and current procedures relating to the recruitment and retention of African American males in educational leadership positions. Chapter five will close with recommendations for future research concerning African American males in educational leadership positions.

Summary of Findings

There has been limited study as to how society and the interactions that African American males have experienced in the education profession, have affected their decisions about pursuing positions in educational leadership. In Georgia, 37% African American male teachers leave the education profession altogether by the end of their third year teaching (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2015). There is extensive research that has been conducted from the standpoint of Critical Race Theory, examining how discrimination and events of the past have shaped the professional landscape in public education; however these research studies rehash age-old issues of race that exist beyond public education and do not dig deep enough into the perceptions of educators as a group or by demographic that might affect their decisions and actions. Specifically, the existing studies do not examine the experiences of African American male educational leaders and how those experiences affect how they view themselves as leaders; and how that view of themselves may affect their choices for professional

advancement and their views of leadership. As an African-American male educational

leader, the researcher found it remarkable how few studies had been conducted

concerning the experiences of African American males in educational leadership, or

African American males in education at all. The lack of research is even more profound

considering that African American males make up less than 2% of the teaching

population, while African Americans make up more than 12% of the nation's population

(National Center for Educational Statistics, 2010). In the state of Georgia, 5.8% of

teachers are identified as minority males (Georgia Professional Standards Commission,

2015). Georgia makes no designation within the minority category, so there is no way to

determine the race or ethnicity of those represented within the minority male category.

Teacher attrition rates indicate that minority males leave the profession at a higher rate

within the first three years of teaching as well. The Georgia Professional Standards

Commission (2015) stated that 18.7% of minority male teachers did not return to the

profession after their first year, second only to white females at 32.6%. However, in the

second year of teaching 29.7% of minority male teachers left, while 37% left in the third

year of teaching. The researcher was led to question whether there were common stories,

themes, or ideas shared by African American males in position of leadership. Looking

further, the researcher questioned that if indeed there were common views, experiences,

and ideas shared by African American male administrators, then that might those

common views shed light on the effective recruitment and retention of African American

educational leaders in public education.

To obtain permission for this study to be conducted, an email was sent to a

superintendent's representative in a large east central Georgia school district.

Documentation was submitted to the district office representative as requested, and once permission was granted for the study to be conducted, emails were sent out to African American males who were either principals or assistant principals. The first eight respondents were chosen to participate in the study. Though it was offered, none of the participants requested the completed study, nor did they request the approval documentation from their district office. The participants' length of time in leadership varied from one participant who was a first year administrator, to another participant who thirty years of experience. The length of times for the interviews lasted from 12 to 25 minutes. The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured fashion, and the participants were not given access to the questions or protocol prior to the interview. Each of the participants agreed to be recorded electronically, and none of them requested a copy of the transcript.

The analysis of the data was carried out using Moustakas' modified Van Kaam method of data analysis. Conducting interviews allowed the researcher to record the experiences of each participant and look for common themes in their related experiences. The phenomenological qualitative research design effectively supported the Interactionist Theory in that it took into account the unique experiences of the participants as they described them. The research design allowed for respondents to describe their experiences by responding to open-ended questions in an interview format (Moustakas, 1994). The respondents' experiences were grouped together thematically to allow for more efficient and comprehensive analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher reviewed the recorded comments of the participants with the purpose of finding common themes and experiences that they shared relating to their individual journey to educational

leadership. The researcher coordinated common ideas and thoughts from participants in order to find those experiences that were common to the selected African American male educational administrators. The coordination of these ideas provided the researcher a platform to better understand and analyze the results of the interviews.

The researcher identified five central themes through the interview process: 1) Personal self-image, 2) Professional reflection, 3) Leadership reflection, 4) Leadership self-image, and 5) Interactionist impressions. It was around these themes that the researcher centered his analysis.

Conceptualization of Each Theme

Professional Reflection

The Professional Reflection theme allowed participants to communicate their path to public education, whether or not they acted as teacher leaders when in the classroom, and any other anecdotes the participants may have wanted to share. Mr. Roberts, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Brantley did not choose education as their first career choice. Mr. Roberts was initially in sales, and was actually recruited by a principal who was one of his clients. Mr. Brantley started his professional career in the medical field and was swayed into public education by an administrator who he identifies as a friend. Mr. Jones was forced to pursue a different career path initially as he did not score high enough to be admitted into his college's school of education. The choices of these three respondents is supportive of the research by Oppenheimer (2014), who noted that the trends in the African American employment landscape of the in the 60's and 70's provided greater opportunities for African American males. Oppenheimer's research, along with that of Borjas, Grogger, & Hanson (2009), suggest that the increased number of African

American male college graduates and a more diverse field of professional opportunities after desegregation played a role in the decrease of African American men in education.

The other five respondents intended to enter into public education with Mr. Andrews leaning more towards a career in post-secondary education. Mr. Anderson identified his motivation to move into public education coming from home. "I was inspired to get into education by my parents and siblings", he stated. The others took their inspiration from teachers in their youth, or simply the fulfillment of personal desires.

Once employed in the field of education, all of the respondents indicated that they were involved in education as teacher leaders in some way. All of the respondents also indicated that they took the initiative when necessary to accomplish tasks. The initiative that they demonstrated as teachers, coupled with the success they each indicated they had in the classroom seemingly caught the eye of an administrator, colleague, or mentor who encouraged them to pursue leadership.

Personal Self-Image vs Leadership Self-Image

The participants identified themselves in a number of different ways. The views they held of themselves personally did not necessarily reflect in how they viewed themselves professionally. The existing literature on African American males in educational leadership focus more on the image of those individuals as professionals. The personal line of questioning in the interview permitted a unique look into the personal views of African American educational leaders. Regardless of upbringing, or struggles they may have encountered prior to becoming educational leaders, every respondent save one identified themselves as "friendly", "compassionate", "putting others before

(themselves)", or some other warm and supportive description. Only Mr. Andrews identified himself as, "a natural born leader, highly motivated and intelligent".

Mr. Roberts and Mr. Jackson were the only two participants to directly tie their youth to their current description of themselves. Mr. Jackson hearkened back to his days playing sports stating, "Success in education and sports have given me confidence", and sharing that, "sports was a big part of my life growing up". He alluded to this love of and participation in sports being the reason for his admitted competitive nature. Mr. Roberts stated that he was, "impacted by seeing the disproportionate things that happened according to social status, maybe race and class, and those sorts of things." His experience echoes the research of Lynn and Jennings (2009), who found that African American teachers often believe that they give minority students the best chance to succeed academically based on their understanding of the barriers these students will face. He even went on to say, "I saw the opportunities afforded to students who had a better start compared to those who didn't have this great start". By comparison, when Mr. Roberts describes himself professionally, he looks at himself as, "an inspirational leader…I try to inspire those around me by making sure I work hard". The other five respondents described themselves in similar tones when comparing their personal self-image to their professional self-image. The all used warm terms to describe themselves professionally, just as they had when describing themselves personally. Mr. Stevens, Mr. Anderson, and Mr. Wilson described their professional selves as, "empathetic". Even when not using the term directly, respondents described their professional behavior as being empathetic. Mr. Jones stated, "I see myself on the side of the student. I always try to do what's right for the students". Mr. Brantley describes, "I try my best to be an

effective respectful role model". It was evident through the interviews that supporting

the teachers, and the students was important to each respondent. They each seemed to

carry over the supportive traits that they identified in themselves personally to their

professional identities.

Interactionist Impressions

The questions centered on interactionist impressions allowed participants to

describe how they believed others viewed them as educational leaders and why they

believe that others have those feelings. The district in which the respondents are

employed utilize the Teacher Keys Evaluation System to evaluate teachers and

administrators. As a part of this evaluation process, teachers fill out surveys about their

administrators. Charon (2007), identifies five central themes to interactionist theory: 1)

that it is our interactions with others that pervasively influence our reactions; 2) that

interaction occurs not just with other individuals, but within the individual as well; 3)

how we define our environment is more important than the actual environment; 4) what is

currently happening in our environment directly influences our actions; and 5)

individuals are active participants in their environment. In their responses to the

interactionist questions, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Jones and Mr.

Jackson refer directly to the evaluation surveys and the negative feedback that they

received from teachers at some point in their leadership career. Mr. Roberts states, "I

was placed on a professional development plan for teachers' evaluation of me". He

claims to have heeded the responses of his teachers and said, "I currently have positive

feedback from my teachers". Mr. Anderson shared, "I've been told by my teachers, and

seen on my surveys that I am easy to talk to, approachable, and understanding". These

are traits that Mr. Anderson has sought to maintain. Mr. Stevens admits, "I had trouble building trust with the teachers".   He now claims, "I have been described through more recent surveys as always having an ear for teachers and students". Mr. Jones stated, "My main guide of what others see as comes from my evaluation surveys. My initial scores were not below average, but on the border. I took those scores to heart, thinking about how I could improve". Mr. Jones also indicated an improvement in scores.

Based on the survey responses, it appears that the participants were indeed influenced by the feedback they received. However, they did not allow themselves to be identified by the negative responses they received from teachers; instead they took the information and used it to improve themselves. The participants also seemed to internalize the results of their survey findings and make a choice to improve. Mr. Wilson even went so far as to say, "I feel that I am at my best when I am praised"; a direct indication that the influence of his environment does indeed affect how he identifies himself.

This theory can also be applied to the reasons that the respondents entered in to the field of educational leadership. All of the participants except for Mr. Wilson expressed that the influence of a mentor or principal is what inspired them to pursue educational leadership. Six of the eight respondents (Mr. Andrews, Mr. Brantley, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Jackson, and Mr. Jones) went as far as to say that they had no intention of pursuing a position of educational leadership. The influence, the praise, the motivation and the inspiration provided by someone in their professional life led these six respondents to pursue a career in educational leadership.

Leadership Reflection

The leadership reflection theme was focused on why each respondent entered into the field of education. Seven of the eight respondents indicated that a mentor, previous administrator, or a combination of people influenced them to pursue educational leadership. Mr. Wilson was the only participant to suggest that the decision to move into leadership was solely his. "I wanted to be a leader from the beginning. I've always been a true leader. I initially wanted to change the world, but I realized I needed to change myself first".

The other seven respondents found inspiration in the words and encouragement of mentors, colleagues, and principals. Mr. Jones, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Stevens, and Mr. Brantley all spoke specifically of administrators who encouraged them to think about pursuing educational leadership. Those encouragements usually came with support and praise of what they were doing in the classroom as teachers. Mr. Andrews spoke about mentors who "encouraged him to pursue leadership". He gave them credit for his decision to move into educational leadership.

There is a great deal of research that supports the theory of African American male educators being mentors for their students and wanting to help them achieve their goals. The information collected from the respondents indicates that African American male teachers and administrators would benefit significantly from a mentor or colleague who served to support their professional efforts. Five of the seven respondents stated that they received praise during their time as a classroom teacher, but did not recognize the potential for leadership until it was mentioned by a mentor or administrator.

RECOMMENDATIONS

African American males in positions of educational leadership is an under researched topic. However, the research is relevant in that it gives a voice to a demographic that for so long has been silent. The research stands to provide insight as to how this demographic views itself in the role of leader, and common experiences that participants may have shared as they ascended to positions of leadership. This insight may serve to increase the number of African American males pursuing positions of leadership in education, and potentially the number of African American male educators in general.

Educational Policy and Practice

In recruiting and retaining African American male administrators, the research revealed some key points. The Symbolic Interactionist Theory seems to be carry significant influence with the participants of the study. The influence of a positive mentor, or respected supervisor proved critical to the progress and retention of the participants and may prove equally as a critical to retaining and recruiting African American males in leadership. Virtually every participant gave credit to a mentor, or an administrator who encouraged and supported their endeavors in education. The influence of a mentor can be strong as in Mr. Roberts' case; even after he left the field of education he continued to pursue his educational leadership degree. Other participants gave their mentor/administrator credit for revealing unrealized talent for working with, inspiring, and guiding others. Regardless of the manner of the influence, there was no way to underestimate the significance of a strong, positive mentor relationship for African American males pursuing positions educational leadership.

To make sure that this practice becomes the norm in districts and leadership training programs, it might prove wise to consider providing aspiring leaders with a positive mentor who might follow them through the process of attaining their degree/certification. The mentor would be able to provide positive feedback to the prospective leader, in addition to modeling leadership skills and practices. However, the emphasis for this position would be on building a positive relationship with the prospective leader. The relationship would allow aspiring leaders to build a relationship with someone who would provide direction, guidance, and the necessary motivation to help them achieve their goals.   Building a relationship of this sort also helps the aspiring leader realize the importance of relationships from a leadership perspective, as several of the participants discussed how important it was to them to inspire others, and support others in their endeavors.

The influence and feedback of a mentor is an indicator that the theory of symbolic interactionism affects the way that African American males view their roles as educational leaders; however the most telling indicator of the influence of symbolic interactionism is in how the participants responded to the feedback from the teachers in their charge when they became leaders. The way that the participants viewed themselves was directly affected by how they were viewed by their staff. Mr. Roberts indicated that the way his teachers perceived him was different than the way that he perceived himself, and as such he changed his behavior. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Stevens tell a similar story of teacher feedback being different than their perceptions and their realization that a change needed to be made. The feedback these administrators received through their

evaluation surveys proved to be critical factors in how these administrators viewed

themselves, and more importantly, how they behaved.

The revelation of the impact of symbolic interactionism on the views that African

American male educational leaders hold for themselves indicates the importance of a

vehicle for African American male administrators to be provided feedback. The district

in question provided this feedback through anonymous evaluation surveys that all staff

members fill out annually. The research indicates the potential for positive results if

districts implement a means by which to provide their educational leaders with feedback.

This feedback will allow the leaders the opportunity to reflect upon and refine their

behavior.

Research

This research focused on eight participants in a large district in east central

Georgia. It would be beneficial if continued research were to be conducted that

broadened the scope of the initial research. A larger sample of educational leaders from

various parts of the country could be used in the extended study, as well as educational

leaders of different races and genders for comparative purposes. The comparative studies

would indicate whether the experiences captured by the research were exclusive to

African American male educational leaders, or is able to be generalized. The small

sample and central location make it difficult to generalize the study.

The researcher also questioned whether or not there would be differences in

leaders based on their generational demographic. More specifically, would there be

significant differences between those in Generations X and Y (and theoretically Z) versus

the rising demographic of Millenials? Examining the research from this perspective

potentially brings into question the attitudes and ideologies of each generational group and how those attitudes and ideologies affect the participants as individuals and as leaders.

The lack of research available to support the study demonstrates that the study of African American male administrators is a field open for various research studies. The lack of research in this area makes it difficult to explain why the number of African American males in education and leadership are so low, and provide even more insight into methods and strategies to recruit and retain African American male educational leaders. Following the *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision, African American communities witnessed a significant decrease in the number of African American males serving as educators and as educational leaders. The resulting desegregation opened the door to better paying professions for African American males; and though that impacted career choices, research is needed to determine if that is the sole purpose for African American males leaving, and never returning to, education and educational leadership positions.

Researcher Reflections

Looking back over the totality of the research a clear but surprising picture is painted by the responses of the participants. When looking at how participants identified themselves through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism, the participants ultimately viewed themselves as leaders; not as African American leaders. The participants identified themselves using common terms such as "empathetic", "inspiring", and "motivational". The participants spoke of the encouragement and motivation provided by their mentors; and to a person, whether consciously or not, they emulated their mentor as

a leader. Each participant seemingly embodying the best attributes of the individuals they looked to as a mentor. Each participant found it important to be supportive of others and to help others attain their goals, whether the individual was a student or teacher. Being considered an effective and productive servant leader was clearly important to the participants. This underscores the point that regardless of how the participants viewed themselves as leaders and individuals, their race never came into play; each participant ultimately identified themselves as a leader.

CONCLUSION

The void left by the exodus of African American males from positions of educational leadership after the Brown v. The Board of Education decision is still present. The reasons for the void may vary, but there is no denying its existence. As America becomes more diverse in the 21st century, it is important that the face of educational leadership reflect that diversity. The importance of that diversity in mentoring, being role models, and examples to those who might follow into the education profession cannot be measured. The participants in this study have demonstrated the importance of mentoring in the decision to not just enter into educational leadership, but for some, the basic decision to enter the field of education. In addition to mentoring, the participants have also demonstrated how the opinion and views of their colleagues and the teachers with whom they work, directly affected their behavior and ultimately, how they viewed themselves. It is time that research take a deeper look at African American males in positions of educational leadership.

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APPENDIX A

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-478-5465		Veazey Hall 3000
		PO Box 8005
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Dasher, Samuel
       Jensen, Devon

From: Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
        Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees
        (IACUC IBC IRB)

Approval Date: 5/18/2016

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research
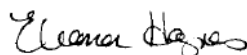
After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H16410** and titled **"An Interactionist View of African American Males in Education."** it appears that your research involves activities that do not require full approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) according to federal guidelines. In this research project research data will be collected anonymously.

According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

B2   Confidential research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (I) information obtained is used in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (II) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Any alteration in the terms or conditions of your involvement may alter this approval. *Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research, as submitted, is exempt from IRB approval. No further action or IRB oversight is required, as long as the project remains the same. If you alter the project, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB and acquire a new determination of exemption. Because this project was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, this project does not require an expiration date.*

Sincerely,

Eleanor Haynes
Compliance Officer

APPENDIX B

864 Broad Street
Augusta, Georgia 30901-4295
(706) 826-1129– Fax: (706) 826-4626

Maria M. Brown, Ed.D.
Executive Director of Student Services

Angela Pringle, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Matthew Johann, Ed.S.
Coordinator of Assessments &Research

February 15, 2016

Dear Samuel Dasher, Jr.:

I am pleased to inform you that your request for research titled *"An Interactionist View of African American Males in Educational Leadership"* has been approved with certain stipulations outlined below. This authorization simply means that you are able to conduct your research as described in your application.

Stipulations of this approval include:

- For purposes of this specific research, please make certain that you clearly identify yourself in your capacity as a researcher rather than as an agent of the RCSS.
- Further, you will need to work closely with the building-level supervisors to ensure that:
  - Instructional time is not being negatively impacted; and,
  - School personnel are not being subjected to undo burdens as a result of this research being conducted.

Please note that the RCSS follows these general procedural guidelines:

1. Research that is approved by the Department of Student Services does not guarantee that schools, departments, school personnel, parents, students, community leaders, others, etc. will participate. Participation is strictly voluntary and should be neither expected nor anticipated. Each entity will need to agree to participate, and they have every right to decline to do so without consequence;
2. No research involving RCSS students will be approved without the express written consent of Parent/Guardian. In other words, Parent/Guardian must "opt-in"- in writing prior to being included in any outside research;
3. No research will be approved that interferes with instructional time;
4. The district will assume no responsibility for accepting, disseminating, collecting, warehousing, and/or forwarding of any materials for researcher;

5. All costs associated with approved research are the sole responsibility of the researcher;
6. No RCSS equipment or resources are to be used to facilitate your research. These include (but are not limited to):
    a. Email;
    b. Fax Machines;
    c. Copiers;
    d. Phones/Long Distance;
    e. General Office Supplies;
    f. Postage;
    g. Stationary/Letterhead.
7. A copy of the approved research proposal and completed research is kept on file at the Department of Student Services for review;
8. Once research proposals are approved, any modifications to the approved methods, research instruments, populations, score, etc. are to be immediately brought to the attention of the Department of Student Services prior to continuing with said research;
9. Parents and staff members shall have the right to inspect such studies, and materials used in connection with such studies, on request;
10. Any data collection, reporting, and/or related research activity undertaken within, or by the Richmond County School System shall protect the privacy of students, parents, and employees;
11. Researchers are required to submit electronic copies of their competed research to the Department of Student Services upon successful completion of their defenses;
12. The RCSS reserves the right to revoke Research Approval at anytime. For your information, the Student Services Office is maintaining a copy of your approved research application which is available for review by RCSS personnel.

I wish you much success with your research!

Yours most truly,

Matthew Johann
Coordinator of Assessments and Research
Richmond County School System

APPENDIX C

Greetings!

My name is Samuel Dasher and I am working on my dissertation in educational leadership at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting a study examining how African American educational leaders view themselves through the lens of symbolic interactionism. In order to complete my study, I am requesting your permission to interview you anonymously concerning your career in education and your experiences as an educational leader.

I sincerely appreciate your potential willingness to be an interview participant in this study, however your participation in is completely voluntary, is in no way mandatory, and will have no effect on your professional position. There will be no kind of compensation for your participation in this interview; however, I am willing to share the results of this study with you upon its completion.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you in the near future. If you are willing to participate in an anonymous interview for this research study, you may contact me by phone or email and we will set a convenient time to meet for the interview. Again, thank you so much for your consideration.

Warmest regards,

Samuel Dasher, Jr
Assistant Superintendent
Jefferson County Schools
Louisville, GA 30434
Office: 478-625-7626
Cell: 706-726-5832

APPENDIX D

THEMES	Main and Probing Questions	Supporting Lit/Theory
Background/Historical	Where are you from originally? a. Did you grow up there? b. Did you move much; if so, when and where?	Hirschman (1988) references that most African American youth lived in the south and very different experiences growing up than their counterparts from other sections of the country.
Background/Historical	Where did you graduate high school?	Hirschman (1988) references that most African American youth lived in the south and very different experiences growing up than their counterparts from other sections of the country.
Background/Historical	A) In what decade were you born? B) What is your current position?	Question is more for demographic purposes than any other, but also loosely ties back to the Hirschman (1988) literature.
Self-Image - Personal	How do you view yourself as an individual? a. Describe a few key events that have impacted your perception of yourself.	This question is based on Mead's (1912) work about the definition of self-based upon external gestures and experiences. Question four is an exploration into the concept of how each respondent defines themselves, and follow up questions that allow for deeper exploration into the reasons, or external influences that helped the respondent define himself in a particular way.
Professional Reflection	Was education the first professional field you entered? a. If so, why? b. If not, what was?	This question is a general background question that allows for deeper questioning and provides the interviewer a more detailed look at the respondent's background.

Leadership Reflection	What led you to pursue leadership in education? a. Was it your intention to pursue educational leadership when you entered the profession?	This question seeks to find the influence that the perceptions of others had on the respondents in their quest for leadership, if any. Likewise, Blumer (1966) looks at how interactions with others influences individuals in positive ways, or in negative ways. The use of follow up questions will be important in establishing the effects that interactions had on individuals as they climbed the ranks of educational leadership.
Self-Image - Leadership	How do you view yourself as an educational leader? a. Please give some examples to support that view.	This question revisits the idea of how the respondents see themselves; only this time the question is how they see themselves in a professional setting. As with question number four, the researcher is seeking to discover how external influences have affected the view each respondent has of himself as an educational leader.
Interactionist Impressions	How do others define you as an educational leader? a. What evidence gives you that impression?	This question ties to Blume's (1966) literature centering on the how human interaction plays a significant role in how we define ourselves. There are also aspects of Mead's (1912) research in this question. In his research, Mead (1912) examines how the gestures and experiences of the individual can help shape who the individual defines himself to be.
Professional Reflection	As a classroom teacher, did you accept positions (or take the initiative) to be a teacher leader? a. Why were you willing to take those positions?	This question ties together the literature of Blumer (1966) and Mead (1912) and encourages respondents to reflect upon and describe how their interactions with

		others in their past may have affected their decision to move into educational leadership.
Interactionist Impressions	How did others perception of your classroom leadership affect your decision to move into leadership (if at all)?	This question also ties together the literature of Blumer (1966) and Mead (1912) encouraging respondents to reflect upon and describe how their interactions with others in their past may have affected their decision to move into educational leadership.
Interactionist Impressions	Do you mind giving me examples of how do you deal with potentially contentious or negative situations?	This question is focused on the research of Mead (1922). The idea behind this question is to get respondents to reflect upon how they handle negative gestures or interactions if they arise.