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**AN EXPLORATION OF AFRICAN – AMERICAN MALES AND THE
INFLUENCE OF RACE, GENDER AND TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT THEIR
ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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AN EXPLORATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES AND THE INFLUENCE
OF RACE, GENDER AND TEACHER QUALITY ON THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

BY
CONRAD E. HAMLET

Abstract

There has been no shortage of calls to improve teaching. Even the federal law, the No Child Left Behind Act, has mandated high quality teaching in the nation's public schools. But the question still remains "What makes an effective teacher, particularly of African - American males in an urban environment?"

African- American males in public schools are the hardest hit, having the lowest achievement rates on standardized tests and the highest dropout rates of approximately 50% or more. The majority comes from low social economic status and single parent families having limited learning resources and facilities at home. Their behavior leads to frequent suspensions, transfers, and eventually many of them drop out from school before graduating. Many find themselves in situations that warrant them to be placed in special education classes.

There has been no greater challenge than how to improve the academic success of African - American males in public schools. All facets that affect African - American males stem from such ideas as educational inequities, denial of education, substandard inner city schools, the race and gender of teachers and finally teacher quality.

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe how race, teacher gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African -American males. It was hoped that this study explored the idea that race, the gender of teachers, and teacher quality

were important factors that determined the academic success of African - American males.

The methodology used was based on the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory begins with a research situation about a phenomenon. The data collection process that I used was interviews. I interviewed six (6) student participants who were African – American males. The student participants in this study were chosen from the “Hopeful Academy”, a pseudonym name, which was a local high school in an urban setting. These participants are drop-outs and potential drop-outs that re-entered academia. I interviewed six (6) teachers employed by this urban school district. They were of different ethnic backgrounds and of different genders. The data collected was analyzed to determine emerging themes.

The results of this study contributed to the vast amount of research done on African - American males and their academic success.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Overview

Schools serving inner-city students face the challenge of preparing children from disadvantaged neighborhoods to be productive citizens. The task, always difficult, is more daunting today than ever. Although the United States has made important economic progress over the past half century, many of the nation's children remain impoverished. In 2004, according to the Census Bureau, 13 million American children under age eighteen live in poverty – an overall child poverty rate of 17.8 percent. Perhaps more important, structural changes in the economy have dramatically raised expectations for public schools over the past several decades. Although it was once possible for adults to earn a productive living with only rudimentary academic skills, recent technological advances have made it increasingly difficult for those with anything less than a college degree to find a job that offers a living wage, (Jacob, 2007). Today even manufacturing and other blue-collar jobs require knowledge of algebra, as well as

sophisticated reading comprehension and problem solving skills. In this environment, schools are being asked to provide all students an education once enjoyed by only a select few.

School failure among African-American high school males is a complex issue. These students often drop out of school, not because of learning problems, but because of the consequences of behavior problems. For many African-American students, high school represents an institution where unequal opportunity prevails. Lawrence (1997) contends that white teachers who have more fully developed racial identities can help multicultural students to empower themselves, and thus stay in school. In some cases teachers undergo antiracist training in their preparation to become a teacher. Before the training, the teacher education students were reluctant to learn about racism, their white privilege, and their participation in the ideology of Whiteness. When these teachers had wide latitude of choice, they chose to teach in monocultural settings, rarely incorporated Afro-centric instruction into the curriculum, and rejected addressing issues of race in the classroom. After the training, the majority of the teachers grew more comfortable when confronted with racial issues. Lawrence (1997) expressed hope that antiracist training would translate into improved teacher attitudes in the classroom, “Although teacher education students initially resist learning about racism and their own racial privilege, in time they become more willing to talk about race and begin to accept the challenge of taking responsibility of racism” (Lawrence, 1997).

Over the past twenty years, the importance of the classroom teacher has emerged as a key component of school reform. In 1987, the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards was established with a mission of advancing the quality of learning by

advancing the quality of teaching. In 1989, the National Board issued a policy statement, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do* (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), 1989, which posits five core propositions to guide the certification of National Board Teachers:

- commitment to students and learning,
- knowledge of the subject taught and effective methods of teaching it,
- responsibility for managing and monitoring student learning,
- systematic reflection on practice that leads to improved practice, and
- membership in a learning community.

Teachers will only work effectively with African-American students if the teachers enter service with a school improvement mentality. Too many teachers enter the profession with the belief that all that is required is love for their subject matter, and the ability to transfer this enthusiasm to their students. Teachers in urban schools must also be concerned with school climate and culture. They must be willing to collaborate with their colleagues, and to assume a leadership role where necessary. “Schools need to recognize that preparing exceptional future teachers means extending the sites for beginning teacher development beyond the classroom door” (Anderson, Rolheisor, and Gordon, 1998). Teachers are the professionals who work closest to students and are thus more aware of their needs. Teachers must be empowered to facilitate change, as well as recognize the barriers to change.

Teachers possess the ability to change the bureaucratic processes of the institutions where they teach. For example, fighting is often grounds for suspension or even expulsion, particularly for minority males. Teachers can help prevent these outcomes by

creating a climate of civility in the classroom. “At a minimum, the social climate we envision is one in which everyone, teachers and students alike, treats others with consideration and respect and in which mannerly behavior and small courtesies are the norm.” (Kauffman and Burbach, 1998). Teachers themselves must think beyond aggressive responses to problems, such as the hypersensitivity that demands student suspension, even for the slightest provocation. Teachers must be aware that student behavior often reflects the norms of society, which condones the use of aggression. Creating a classroom environment that counteracts these norms is critical

Teacher effectiveness has an impact on academic achievement. In fact, in my opinion, it is the most important school related factor influencing student achievement. Moreover, teacher compensation represents a significant public investment. In the United States, \$192 billion is invested in teacher pay and benefits. (Rice, 2008).

While some studies have demonstrated that teacher expectations can affect students’ achievement and attitudes, Bamburg, (1994); and Cotton and Wikelund, (1997), showed that some teachers do not expect much from the students in their schools. According to Tauber (1998) the effects of verbal and nonverbal expectations can be detrimental. Early childhood and elementary age children are most at risk in believing teachers consistently delivered evaluations as either positive or negative.

Other factors have been identified that differentiate opportunities for students, in turn influencing their academic achievement. Good and Brophy (1972) observed that teachers interact differently with low and high achievers in the classroom. Low achievers, generally, experience sometimes insincere praise, less feedback, more interruptions, less attention, more criticism, less time to answer questions, were called on less often, smiled

at less, given fewer nonverbal indicators of support, (such as head nodding), and were seated farther away. These negative teacher interactions may be conscious or unconscious and reflect biases.

Fine (1991) contends that school failure is often not a decision that is made by African-American students; it is a decision that is thrust upon them. Teachers routinely opt to suspend African-American students for the sake of classroom management, regardless of the potentially disastrous effect on future educational outcomes. Disciplinary action is too often a form of silencing voices of dissent. “Extraordinary rates of suspensions, expulsions, and discharges experienced by African-American and Hispanic youths may speak to this form of silencing” (Fine, 1991). Teachers consciously or unconsciously support the bureaucratic practices and policies of their educational institutions when they disproportionately suspend African-American students. In taking the easy route to classroom management such teachers are denying students an education.

The subject of whether or not teachers discriminate in the classroom has received much debate. Hurrell (1995) addresses the issue in a study of four comprehensive schools in Oxford, England. The age range of the students was 11 – 14 years. Information was gathered on the social profile and ethnic background of the students as well as student behavior. Several minority groups were identified, but all students were classified broadly as African-American and white. It was concluded that there is little evidence of teacher discrimination: “Apart from sex, social characteristics such as ethnicity and social class played only a limited role in determining teachers’ reactions” (Hurrell, 1995). It was found that African-American males are more likely to be punished for misbehavior than girls, probably because various studies have shown girls to

be less aggressive in their acting out behaviors in the classroom than males. In concluding that teachers respond to students' behavior rather than racial and social class, Hurrell (1995) admits that a wide range of factors such as the students' attitudes, values, and socioeconomic status often determines the acting out behavior itself. These factors contribute to the students' behavior patterns, their social relations in school, and their interaction with teachers.

The extent to which teachers believe they are able to affect student performance is known as teacher efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Efficacy is related to setting goals and to exercising effort and persistence in their attainment (Bandura, 1997). It has been linked to teachers' instructional practices and attitudes toward students (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995; Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Current reform issues in education place great emphasis on raising the achievement level of all students, particularly the low performance of minority students. Research on the efficacy of teachers report significant relationships between teachers' sense of efficacy and higher student achievement and test scores. Teachers with high levels of efficacy are more likely to expect that all students can learn, and to feel responsible for that learning, rather than those teachers with low efficacy levels (Ashton & Webb, 1986, Tacz & Gibson, 1986)

As principal is an urban school, I find that many of the schools in my urban environment to be overcrowded, understaffed and under funded. Many students, particularly African-American males, have serious barriers to learning such as absenteeism, truancy, indiscipline, and defiance and generally show a negative attitude

towards school and learning. Their behavior leads to frequent suspensions, transfers and eventually many of them drop out from school before graduating. (Rich, 2005).

Education in the African-American community was always viewed as the key to living the “American dream.” Indeed, the social and economic opportunities available to them. Unfortunately, too many young African-American males view education as an unnecessary barrier that stands between them and making fast money.

Studies show that an increasing number of African-American males are being incarcerated, dropping out of high school, and fewer are going to college. (Kunjufu, 1989). The repercussions of this phenomenon can be felt in nearly half of African-American households today, where the responsibility of being the breadwinner and provider has shifted from men to women. The shift in power dynamics has spurred increasing rates of divorce and single motherhood in the community leaving children without a father figure. Tyre shows that the loss of a father is especially tough on boys. Research shows that boys require a father figure or a positive role model in their lives, for them to successfully complete high school (Tyre, 2006).

My experience as an urban principal shows that African-American males are much more influenced by the streets than by any other factors. The biggest competitors to education are rap, drugs and sports. It is no wonder why the number of African-American males in college make up a large proportion that is involved in athletics. (Hampton, 2005).

In an article written by Makebra M. Anderson, “Why Don’t Black Men Achieve As Well Academically”? Anderson states in 2004, there was a large gap between male and female teachers, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Of the

6.2 million teachers, approximately 4.5 million (71%) were women and 1.7 million (29%) were men.

This research project examined the concept of gender teachers' efficacy and how it relates to African-American males and their academic success in an urban school setting. It is hoped that this research project showed or dispelled the idea that gender effectiveness is an important factor in the academic achievement of African-American males.

Statement of the Problem

It is important to explore the influence of gender on the academic achievement of African-American males. Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu's book, *Countering The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (Kunjufu 1995), states that an important factor that determines the future of black boys is predicated on the gender of teachers.

While some studies have demonstrated that the gender teachers have some effect on student achievement, this research project explored the academic effect of the gender of teachers on African-American males. Teachers in urban schools increasingly find themselves guiding students who are very different from them. Gender teachers who exhibit such different attitudes may not even be aware of their perceptions, yet some African-American males may feel that they are at a disadvantage in the classroom.

When measuring teacher effectiveness, precisely which measure most accurately predicts "teacher effectiveness" remains a continuous source of debate. I will use this term interchangeably with "teacher quality". There is considerable academic discussion over the value of widely used proxy measures such as teacher certification status, education level, and experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber 1999; Hanshek,

1986, 1997; Walsh 2001). Measuring teacher quality can be based on two measures of academic proficiency: teacher performance and teacher value added contribution toward student achievement when using standardized tests.

Purpose of the Study

Changing the academic trajectory of African-American males can appear overwhelming and, at times, impossible. Developing and nurturing excellence in African-American males represents an educational challenge, especially as recent reports from the College Board (2006) and the Education Trust (2003) continue to reflect the dismal participation rates in this population in and matriculation through post-secondary education. Even more disturbing are statistics from the Schott Foundation for Public Education's 2004 study (Holzman, 2004), that reflect the absence of African-American males from high school graduation ceremonies across the United States, highlighting the large percentage of African-Americans who leave high school without graduating.

To reverse this trend, it is important for professionals working with African-American males to employ effective strategies designed to encourage African-American males to reach their academic potential.

I proposed to develop research questions that validated or dispelled my theory. It was my hope to interview African-American males that attended the "Hopeful Academy", pseudonym name, which is a school for students that are in high school and are eighteen to twenty-one. These students are fulfilling the graduation requirements of the district. I further intended to interview gender teachers that are employed by this urban school district.

Limitations of the Study

No research project is without limitations and surely this will be no exception. It is my intention to use African-American males attending the “Hopeful Academy”, pseudonym name, as my student participants. These students participating in this study were eighteen to twenty-one and have exited the school system but are able to return and finish high school. Another limitation was the size of the sample population selected for this study. The most apparent limitation was that the participants of the study were selected from an alternate high school with a specific intent to provide intense support for academic success within one metropolitan area. In order to derive a more definite response to the research questions (which are located at the end of this chapter), this study would have to be repeated in other urban high schools and in other metropolitan school districts.

Delimitations

The following delimitations should be considered when interpreting the results of the study:

1. The study was focused on an urban schools setting in northeast Ohio. The results will be from respondents that will represent male and female teachers in urban schools at various levels and content areas.
2. The study was focused on those African-American males that have exited from the school system but are able to finish high school. The alternate school may have offered for students to be more deliberate in thinking about student success.

The school is located in northeast Ohio and the specific impact of their gender teachers.

Definition of Terms

Urban Schools – For the purpose of this study a definition of urban schools are those schools located in a metropolitan area that reflects the social economic status of that city.

Grounded Theory – Grounded Theory begins with a research question. The researcher is to understand what is happening and the roles of the participants. This is done through observation, conversation and interviews. Data is then collected about each session. (Denzin and Lincoln (2000)).

Teacher Quality – The Educational Testing Services in an article “Where we Stand on Teacher Quality defines teacher quality at different levels. This depends on the level of students being taught and whether the teacher is new or already teaching. They state that new elementary teachers must demonstrate their knowledge and teaching skills by passing a rigorous state test in reading, writing, math, and other areas of the elementary curriculum. New middle/secondary teachers may demonstrate competency in each academic subject they will teach by having a major or equivalent coursework, a graduate degree, or an advanced credential – or, alternatively, by passing a rigorous state academic subject test – in each subject to be taught. Current teachers at any level may demonstrate competence as noted above or by meeting a “High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation,” also know as HOUSSE. (ETS, 2004).

Teacher Effectiveness (Efficacy) - Teacher efficacy is defined as a sense of personal accomplishment, positive expectations for student behavior and achievement, personal

responsibility for student learning, strategies for achieving objectives, positive affect, sense of control, sense of common teacher/student goals and democratic decision making.

(Ashton, P. 1984)

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the study by stating the concept that gender efficacy and how it relates to the academic achievement of African-American males. The problem statement indicated the importance of exploring the influence gender teachers have on the academic achievement of African-American males. The purpose of this study was fold: (1) to determine the influence of the gender of teachers have on academic success of African-American males and (2) to determine to what extent does race have on the academic success, (3) and how does teacher quality affect academic success of African – American males.

Following this introductory chapter, a detailed literature review focused on teacher efficacy; the academic relationship of African-American males and the influence of gender teachers have on their success in school.

Finally, I explored the grounded qualitative theory associated with this study.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is the most important factor impacting academic achievement? “While I feel that teacher expectations is the most important factor, parental involvement is the second most important factor, followed by student self-esteem, curriculum quality, learning styles, test bias, and peer pressure.” Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (1989).

Introduction

It is the researcher’s belief that academic success is tied to who teaches African-American males and the conditions under which they are taught. Thus, the researcher’s belief is that all African-American males are capable of achieving academic success if given the same opportunities. Female teachers comprise a large majority of teachers educating students of African-American descent. They can affect their academic success. (National Center for Education Statistics, (2005).

Furthermore, it is the researcher’s belief that the role of teachers is to provide an atmosphere for socialization and mentoring of all African-American males under their care. School failure among African-American males is a complex issue. One of the most critical issues facing the African-American community is improving the future of African-American males.

It is this researcher's belief that improving the future of African-American males is tied to the concept that race; teacher gender and teacher quality can have a profound affect on their students.

Has the feminization of schools driven a widening gap between African-American males and white males? Orr (2007), in her article "The truth about our "feminized" society," points out that in some parts of the country, this domination is extremely high.

As an urban educator, this researcher believes it is his obligation and responsibility to understand the lives of his students, most of whom are African-American males. Sometimes this researcher asks the question, are African-American males becoming extinct in the education world? As I ponder statements such as this, the researcher begins to ask himself, "How were you able to achieve all that you have achieved"? In retrospect, as he recalls his educational experiences as a child, young adult and college student, the researcher was constantly motivated to "be all that you can be." This motivational aspect of this researcher's life came from his mother.

I believe that teaching requires a sound reasoning about what is occurring in the teaching process as well as an adequate base of facts, principles, and experiences from which to reason. The exchange of ideas and teacher consciousness must fully be engaged in this process. Negative attitudes and stereotypes render the mind inflexible and can reduce an individual's awareness of reality. Therefore, for African-American males to succeed in the educational process motivation must be present. African-American males must regain a sense of pride and self-worth. Thus the intent of the research was to analyze data collected from African-American males that have had teachers of different races, both male and female teachers for, the majority of their educational career.

Chapter II reviews the literature pertinent to African-American males and their academic success as it relates to the race and gender of teachers as well as teacher quality. This chapter will further discuss the trends in African-American male academic success. It will also examine the drop – out rate of African-American males within the last decade. It will look at how cultural fluency has an effect on the African-American male. Finally, this research looked at female and male efficacy and teacher quality related to African-American males.

FEMALES AS TEACHERS

Teacher workforce policies have become central to debates regarding how to improve student outcomes. The push for higher academic standards and expanded student testing translates into higher expectations both for teachers and the students they teach. This increased emphasis on student outcomes has intensified concerns regarding the overall quality of the teacher workforce and underscored the need that all students are taught by high-quality teachers. At the same time, issues regarding teacher recruitment and retention are receiving increased attention as a result of two demographic trends. Recent increases in K – 12 enrollments and the continuing retirement of the “baby boom” cohort of teachers have resulted in many districts needing to hire substantially larger numbers of new teachers, predominately female teachers, and a pattern which will continue for the remainder of this decade. (NCES, 2005).

Each year teachers enter, leave and move within K – 12 teacher workforce in the United States. Such movement affects not only the composition of teachers at individual schools and the institutional stability of these schools, but also the demographics and qualifications of the teacher workforce as a whole. Understanding this inconsistency in

the teacher workforce is important for policymakers weighing competing policies regarding such issues as teacher shortages, teacher attrition, and teacher quality.

The gender of teachers may play a role in the educational process. Kunjufu (2002) believes that there are not only racial, but gender mismatches in schools for African-American males who are taught by an overwhelming white female teaching population. There are issues of teacher expectations and learning styles that may contribute to the failure of African-American students. Leet-Pellegrini (1980) states that men are more comfortable in a lecturing mode while women use a listening mode where there is the desire to cooperate, bond and be liked. Ong (1989) asserts that men are more adversarial while women are encouraged to keep the peace. There are gender differences based on teaching experience. Inexperienced male teachers tend to compensate by ignoring problems and over lecturing. Inexperienced female teachers tend to be less clear in their instructions than inexperienced male teachers (Bress, 2000).

In a study done by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2005, they found that historically, females made up the majority of the teacher workforce in 1999 – 2000. In that year, a total of 2,590,000 teachers were female, while 860,000 teachers were male. The percentages of female and male teachers were similar in both public and private schools. Female teachers made up 75 percent of the public school teachers and 76 percent of private school teachers. However, the distribution of teachers by sex differed widely by grade level. Among those teaching in the elementary grade levels, 1,340,000 teachers were female and only 140,000 teachers were male. In contrast, at the high school level, 570,000 teachers were female, while 470,000 teachers were male. In the middle school grades, there were 600,000 female and 250,000 male teachers. Even today,

the number of female teachers in the workforce is not too different from those findings in the National Center for Educational Statistics of 2005. Given these statistics, it appears that women dominate the public and private community.

There are those who subscribe to the view that the apparent variability among female and male teachers is an over representation that females dominate the teacher workforce. The conservative higher education spokesman, Boris Johnson (2007) is one such subscriber. To Mr. Johnson and many others this philosophy points to the vexing idea that the underachievement of African-American males correlates specifically to the lack of African- American male teachers.

It is not difficult to understand why women are far more likely to dominate the education workforce. Pay is certainly a factor, even though teachers earn quite a bit more now than they did ten years ago. Women, generally, will accept lower salaries in return for part-time or flexible work that accommodates their family commitments. Longer holidays that coincide with their children's calendars and work hours that are broadly though not entirely compatible with having school-age children, are attractive to women who want or need to work but who want to do their best by their families as well. (National Center for Education Statistics, (2005).

MALE TEACHERS

The value of a racially diverse staff is a recurrent subject, but gender diversity is just as important. Stereotyping, low pay, and few mentors are among the reasons that the percentage of male teachers is at a forty-year low, according to Newsweek. (2007). In light of Thomas Dee's findings in Newsweek "learning from a teacher of the opposite

gender has a detrimental effect on students' academic progress," it is undisputable that children need strong male role models from an early age.

"The Status of Male Teachers in Public Education Today," written by Shaun P. Johnson, a graduate research assistant at Indiana University, further concludes that the lowest percentage of male teachers in decades – only one in 10 elementary school teachers is a man – is a threat to gender equality, social justice and other democratic values.

Just a quarter of public school teachers in the United States are men, according to the latest data from the National Education Association. Indiana has one of the highest percentages of male teachers at 30.5%, more than six percentage points above the national percentage. The portion of men who are teachers is even lower in early childhood education.

Johnson however, dismisses the notion that the so-called "boys crisis" – the idea that boys are failing U.S. education because of lower standardized test scores – would be remedied by more male teachers. Nevertheless, he also points out that there is a great disparity in the teacher workforce and that children will continue to form sexist gender relations, based on the implication that "women teach and men manage."

Historically low teacher salaries have certainly contributed to why men do not enter the workforce as teachers. Pay scales did not increase dramatically when compulsory education and population growth required more teachers at the turn of the 19th century. Johnson's research found that education reformers often advocated for teaching as better suited to women, who could be paid about third as much as male teachers. His research concludes that teaching is more appropriate for women than men, (Johnson, 2008).

August 19th, 2009 in the Chicago Tribune an interesting article appeared that addressed male teachers. Joel Hood, the writer, stated that men often cite obstacles to taking a teaching job. He asserted that many educators believe the trend has had a profound impact on the way young boys and girls learn. This is particularly true in urban communities where more and more children are growing up without a steady positive male influence.

A sense of urgency in the need to redress the gender imbalance of teachers in primary schools has led to the implementation of a wide range of strategies designed to attract men to the teaching profession. While some marketing and recruitment projects have emphasized the need to appeal to a wide range of well-qualified male and female aspiring teachers, a disconcerting number have prioritized gender considerations over applicant quality. The wider societal issue of providing male role models for children from single parent families has been widely debated elsewhere (Cushman, 2006), but to place the responsibility for such issues on the shoulders of the school, and in particular on male teachers, signals a lack of understanding regarding both the role of teachers and the construction of gender.

Commonly accepted reasons for increasing male numbers, such as the underachievement of boys, have also been the subject of recent debate. The 2005 Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization, 2005) found pupils taught by females scored higher than pupils taught by male teachers. Despite the widespread view that boys need male teachers, students have emphasized that their preference was for teachers who had sound

pedagogical practices and with whom they could develop relationships, regardless of gender, conducive to effective learning (Francis, 2005; Lahelma, 2000; Lingard, 2002).

CULTURAL FLUENCY

Educators have an obligation to prepare young people for the future. The future is predicted to host a culturally pluralistic nation and a rapidly shrinking world. Therefore, we need to prepare all students to be culturally literate citizens of the world. Teaching students using a multicultural perspective is one way to achieve that goal. All educators need to become sensitive to learning needs and abilities, to personal interests and motivation and to ethnic and cultural differences and similarities.

Catherine Yamamoto, a professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, states that the first and maybe the most difficult stage in bringing about cultural awareness is defining exactly what is included within the scope of culture. She asserts that most people would agree with a general definition that culture is a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors shared by a group of people and communicated from one generation to the next. This definition allows for culture to include eating habits, spiritual practices, family values, educational values, clothing, language; and attitudes concerning land, government, and money and gender roles. However, there is nothing within this definition that establishes what “labels” can or should be used to identify or classify a, “group of people.” (Yamamoto, 1999).

Consequently, different academic disciplines and levels of education have established their own appropriate categories for determining cultural identity. For example, educational standards for high school multicultural curricula center almost exclusively on

race and ethnicity. Therefore, “a group of people” refers to those who share certain racial and ethnic characteristics (skin color, hair texture, facial features, stature, etc.).

Cultures, however, include more than language, dress and food customs. Cultural groups may share race, ethnicity, or nationality, but they also arise from cleavages of generation, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, ability and disability, political and religious affiliation, language, and gender. (LeBaron, 2003).

Cultural fluency means familiarity with various cultures, how they work, and the ways they intertwine with relationships in times of conflict and harmony.

Though largely below the surface, cultures are a shifting, dynamic set of starting points that orient us in particular ways and away from other directions. Each of us belongs to multiple cultures that give us messages about what is normal, appropriate, and expected. When others do not meet our expectations, it is often a cue that our cultural expectations are different. We may mistake differences between others and ourselves as the lack of common sense on the part of others, not realizing that common sense is also cultural.

TRENDS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES ACADEMIC SUCCESS

African-Americans males face many challenges that may compromise their success in school. They are often victims of negative stereotypes, such as “lazy”, “uneducable”, or “dangerous” which reinforces disparity (Strayhorn, 2008). Prejudices still exist and discrimination remains a reality. This is perhaps incredibly evident in the field of education as it relates to African-American males. Although there are many other educational issues that abound today in the United States which illustrate that many

people are not receiving an adequate education, the fact remains that African-American males have been miseducated, and generally seen as different, in terms of educational ability throughout the history of the United States. This researcher will present the trends in the academic success of African-American males.

Dr. Pedro A. Noguera, (2003), a Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, points out that there is an ominous array of social and economic hardships that African-American males experience in education, which have an adverse affect on their academic performance, and elicit signs of stress and trouble. He states that in many school districts throughout the United States, African-American males are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from school. Moreover, from 1973 – 1977 there was a steady increase in African-American enrollment in college, but there has been a sharp and continuous decline, especially among males since 1977.

More recently, George and Aronson (2003) point out that according to the U.S. Department of Education (1998), the proportion of minority college students has been increasing primarily because of rising numbers of Hispanic and Asian students. While this is good news, the gap between the percentage of black students and white students who enroll in postsecondary institutions is still alarmingly wide. According to Dr. Noguera, (2003) African-American males are more likely to be absent from advanced placement and honor courses. In contrast to most other groups where males commonly perform at higher levels in math and science related courses, the reverse is true for African-American males. Trends such as these often indicate that it impossible for African-American males to achieve successfully.

While there are significant gaps between African-American students and their counterparts, gaps also exist between African-American female and male students. Graham (1998) examined the significance of the interracial disparities between African-American females and males and discovered that at every socioeconomic level, African-American females outperformed African-American males. Many urban African-American students attend high schools that are predominately black and have an enrollment with a large number of students on free and reduced lunch. In most every category of academic failure, African-American males are excessively overrepresented (Dallmann-Jones, 2002; Martin, Martin, Gibson, & Wilkins, 2007). They tend to be underrepresented in advanced and honors courses and more likely to be placed in special education programs and suspended or expelled from school (Garbarino, 1999; Strayhorn, (2008).

The results above beg the question – what factors contribute to the academic success of African-American male students? Case and Katz in 1991 offered evidence that a wide variety of factors impact the academic success of African-American males and could be evaluated through three different ways;

- Individual factors such as socioeconomic status, nutrition, and self – esteem/identity issues.
- Parental factors involving the level of parental participation in the child’s education.
- School factors related to teacher expectations/perceptions, teacher quality, lack of culturally responsive instruction, and limited funding and school resources.

Socioeconomic factors such as household income, nutrition, and self – esteem are all significant elements that have an impact on the academic success of African-American males.

One socioeconomic factor that has been consistently associated with the achievement gap is the issue of poverty. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, African-Americans have much higher poverty rates compared to other racial and ethnic groups. In 2005, 30 percent of African- American children under the age of 18 were living in poverty, compared to 10 percent of Caucasian children (National Center of Education Statistics, 2005). By the time a student enters kindergarten and first grade, math and reading achievement gaps between poor students and their more affluent counterparts are already present (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2005). Those students in poverty were said to have weaker language skills as they enter the school system due to lack of proper exposure to language development within the home. In many cases, students from poverty-ridden environments do not always have educational or reading material available in the home, which is also an essential factor that impacts school readiness.

Case and Katz points out that nutrition is another factor that impacts achievement. In the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation survey, the relationship between nutrition and achievement was assessed. The study used a Health Behavior in School – Age Children (HBSC) dataset, where 13 foods and beverages were tested to determine their relationship with academic achievement among African-American males. Results indicated that African-American students with low-academic success were more likely to eat junk food (potato chips, cakes, hamburgers, sweets and cola) frequently and were less

likely to regularly eat healthy food (cooked vegetables, raw vegetables, fruits and whole wheat) compared to Hispanic and Caucasian males. As a result of the study, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation emphasized the importance of incorporating good nutrition, or “brain food” into the academic achievement of African-American males.

Within the same study, the effects of students’ attitudes were also considered in order to determine the relationship between academic success of African-American males and how they viewed themselves. The study denoted that students’ attitudes could impact achievement. Fryer (2006) reported when minority students exhibited negative attitudes about school and their own lives, this tended to translate into a negative impact on achievement. African-American males’ attitudes are derived from various entities and can severely impact how they view the world around them.

For example, minority students who were perceived as “acting white,” (making good grades) were excluded from social interactions or ridiculed by their peers. Peer culture among African-American youth may oppose academic achievement and instead reward nonconformity (Ferguson, 2001). For example, African-American males who were perceived as low – achievers, who did not follow the rules, or did not try hard were viewed as “cool” and were more likely to be respected by their Caucasian male peers (Graham, Taylor, & Hudley, 1998).

Another element that influenced students’ attitudes about academic achievement is school safety. If an African-American male student attends a school that he feels is unsafe and dangerous, he is less likely to focus on academic success and more likely to focus on his own safety and ways to protect himself (Barton, 2003; Poliakoff, 2006). As

a result of low expectations, peer pressure, stereotypes, and safety issues, some African-American males go through a process of academic disengagement, which morphs into negative attitudes regarding achievement (Ogbu, 1994).

In addition to factors related directly to the individual student, parental involvement is another factor that could impact a child's education and achievement. Toldson found that parent-child interactions were the most robust predictor of African-American adolescent success (Toldson, Harrison, Perine, Carreiro, & Caldwell, 2006). Mandara's (2006) article indicated that when African-American parents are actively involved in their son's academic efforts by monitoring homework as well as other academic pursuits, limiting nonproductive and destructive activities (e.g. television, radio, and video games), and creating a constant and positive dialogue with the teachers and school officials, they increased the odds of their son succeeding in school (Mandara, 2006).

Teacher attitudes and expectations could also impact student achievement (Evans, 2005; Kober, 2001; Varlas, 2005). Evans found that in schools that had high academic success, the teachers had consistently high "expectations for all students." This was strengthened by a belief that all students could and would learn (Chenoweth 2006; Moore 2005; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Chenoweth described a phenomenon known as the "stereotype threat," which impacts the way teachers view students and the way students view themselves. Stereotype threat influenced teachers' low-achievement expectations for poor and minority students.

Stereotype threat is a stress caused by fear that a person's own behavior may confirm a negative stereotype about a specific group or race (Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master,

2006; Ferguson, 1998). Specifically, African- American males are affected by the negative stereotypes and perceptions about them found in our culture.

In addition to teachers' perceptions, expectations, the curriculum and instruction impact achievement. What teachers teach (curriculum) and how teachers teach (instruction) represent interrelated factors that impact achievement. Educational standards that delineate what students are supposed to know shape the curriculum. The curriculum shapes classroom instruction. Instruction is assessed with tests that measure how well students learned the standards (student achievement). This researcher contends that a litany of research can focus on the lack of culturally responsive instruction found in the classroom. Culturally responsive instruction pertains to classroom practices that draw meaningfully on culture, languages, and experiences that students bring to the classrooms in order to increase engagement and academic achievement for students of color (Au, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Scholarly work related to culturally responsive instruction also assessed the cultural mismatch between teachers and students, or the tendency of teachers to misunderstand the behavior of African-American males, which could severely impact the process of over identification for special education referrals and the underachievement of students (Howard, 2001; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003). This idea relates to the mismatch between school culture and home culture.

For example, the home culture for many African-American males consists of a firm parental-controlled environment. Whereas African-American parents tend to be more demanding and less agreeable to their child's demands, one often finds a more permissive, nonassertive, authoritative style in many classrooms run by female teachers,

“who have been socialized to speak softly, to be nondirective, and nonassertive, thereby being perceived to lack authority by African-American males” (Baumrind, 1996; Bondy, Ross, Galligane, & Hambacker, 2007, Mandara, 2006).

TEACHER QUALITY

Teacher quality is essential to raising achievement; therefore, students need high-quality teachers (Emerick, Hirsch, & Berry, 2004) Teacher quality is an accurate indicator of a student’s performance in school (Carter, 2000). Teachers “affect students, what they learn, and how much they learn” (Stronge, 2002). Good teachers make lasting imprints on student achievement and those imprints (either good or bad) can last for at least three years (Stronge, 2002). Teacher quality has a “huge effect on how well students fare in school” (National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) 2001). High quality teachers exhibit characteristics of commitment to students and learning, knowledge about the subjects they teach and how to teach them, responsibility for student learning, systematic thought, and advocacy for students and the teaching profession (Hopkins, 2004).

Yet all students are not fortunate enough to have high quality teachers. In fact Haycock reviewed data that indicated students of color, regardless of their socioeconomic level, were more likely to be taught by teachers with lower test scores and less academic preparation than white students (Haycock, 2004). According to Sanders and Rivers, students who are assigned to several ineffective teachers in a row have significantly lower achievement and gains in achievement than those who are assigned to several highly effective teachers in sequence (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Although defining and measuring teacher quality remains difficult, a growing consensus is developing about some of the characteristics of high-quality teachers. Ehrenberg and Brewer 1994 found that teachers more effectively teach and improve student achievement if they themselves have strong academic skills. Some indicators of quality, such as education, certification, and subject matter knowledge, are components in the definition of highly qualified teachers in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Some evidence suggests that college graduates who enter the teaching profession tend to have lesser academic skills. Using the National Longitudinal Study of 1972 high school seniors, Vance and Schlechty (1982) found college graduates with low Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores more likely than those with high SAT scores to enter and remain in the teaching force. In 2001 the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study yielded similar findings. Recent college graduates who taught or prepared to teach were underrepresented among graduates with college entrance examination scores in the top quartile.

Although teachers' knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical methods does not guarantee high-quality teaching, this knowledge is a necessary prerequisite. Therefore, teachers' educational attainment and certification status traditionally have been used to gauge teachers' preservice preparation and qualifications (NCES 2005).

An important measure of teacher qualifications is certification, or licensure by the state in which one teaches. This includes requirements for formal education (usually a bachelor's degree with requirements for special courses related to teaching, clinical experience (student teaching), and often, some type of formal testing (Mitchell, 2001).

The enhancement of teacher quality is likely to be costly. Increases in teacher incentives such as loan-forgiveness programs, heightened teacher preparation requirements other effort to prepare, recruit and retain high-quality teachers are all associated with a cost factor. Nevertheless, having a clear sense of which teacher attributes can really lead to improved educational outcomes for African-American males.

Education is the compilation and product of many and varied resources. Among these, teachers stand out as a key to realizing the high standards that are increasingly emphasized in schools and school systems across the country. Despite general agreement about the importance of high-quality teachers, researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and the public have been unable to reach a consensus about what specific qualities and characteristics make a good teacher. This researcher has found an array of policy statements regarding teacher preparation that have been set forth in the face of volumes of inconclusive and inconsistent evidence about what teacher attributes really contribute to desired educational outcomes.

Policy makers are left with questions surrounding what counts as a quality teacher, information that could be valuable in guiding policies regarding whom to hire, whom to reward, and how best to distribute teachers across schools and classrooms. Answers to these questions have potentially important implications for the efficacy and quality of public education. This researcher does understand that teacher quality is an important factor in the academic achievement of African-American males in an urban environment.

TEACHER EFFICACY AND EXPECTATION

Teacher efficacy has been defined as teachers' "belief in their ability to have a positive effect on student learning" (Ashton, 1985). Teachers with higher teaching efficacy find teaching meaningful and rewarding, expect students to be successful, assess themselves when students fail, set goals and establish strategies for achieving those goals, have positive attitudes about themselves and students, have a feeling of being in control, and share their goals with students (Ashton, 1985). Gibson and Dembo (1984) mentioned that teachers with high efficacy devote more class time to academic activities and focus less on discipline as a prerequisite to student learning.

Woolfork and Hoy (1990) stated that teacher efficacy is considered as one of the few teacher characteristics that consistently relates to teaching and learning. Studies on teacher efficacy suggested that pre-service teachers in different countries have varying degrees of beliefs about themselves to be effective in teaching (Campbell, (1996). Lin and Gorrell (2000) found that the concept of teacher efficacy might be culturally oriented and must be carefully examined when applied to teachers in different countries.

Teacher expectations are particularly important in the development of the African-American male. Positive racial attitudes by the teacher can boost achievement. Low teacher expectations tend to reduce the motivation of students. This contributes to low self-images or self-esteem. Teachers often ignore requests from them and sometimes even shun their presence.

Many colleagues perceive minorities as having inferior abilities. This perception translates into an expectation of low achievement, which is communicated to and internalized by the African-American male. For many African-American youth, factors

such as negative stereotypes, low teacher expectations and cultural bias in schools offers a defeating, discouraging experience. African-American youth can be victimized by low teacher expectations, which are often based on a teacher' preconceived ideas about the potential students of a particular race, rather than performance of individual students (William and Muehle (1978).

It is without a doubt that low teacher expectations destroy egos. Irvine (1985) found that African-American student receive more negative behavioral feedback and more mixed messages than do white students (Irvine, 1985).

As previously mentioned, the extent to which teachers believe they are able to affect student performance is known as teacher efficacy (Gibson & Dembo, (1984). Efficacy is related to setting goals and to exercising effort and persistence in their attainment. (Bandura, (1997). It has been linked to teachers' instructional practices and attitudes toward students (Bender, (1995).

Current reform issues in education place great emphasis on raising the achievement level of all students, particularly the low socioeconomic minority students. Teachers with high levels of efficacy are more likely to expect that all students can learn, and to be responsible for that learning, than are teachers with low efficacy levels (Ashton & Webb, (1986).

While research has demonstrated that teacher expectations can affect students' achievement and attitudes, Brumburg, (1994) showed that some teachers do not expect much from the students in their schools. According to Tauber (1998) the effects of negative verbal and nonverbal expectations can be detrimental.

Other factors have been identified that differentiate opportunities for students and in turn influence their academic achievement. Good and Brody (1972) observed that teachers interact differently with low and high achievers in the classroom. Low achievers received general, sometimes insincere praise; less feedback; more interruptions; less attention; more criticism; less time to answer questions; were called on less often; smiled at less; given fewer nonverbal indicators of support (such as head nodding); and were seated farther away. Alvidrez & Weinstein' (1999) suggestion that the higher the socioeconomic status, the higher the teacher rates a child's intelligence indicates that teachers' preconceptions and beliefs can have an adverse effect on a child's level of achievement. The misconceptions may be conscious or unconscious and reflect societal biases.

Teachers in urban schools increasingly find themselves guiding students who are very different from themselves. Cotton and Wikeland (1997) assert that educators differentiate among students based on gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language, tracking and negative comment about students. Teachers who exhibit such differential attitudes may not even be aware of their perceptions, yet some children will continue to be at a disadvantage in the classroom. Ethnic minority and poor children have been documented to be largely over-represented as targets of low expectation (Weinstein, 1995).

Teachers, in general, expect more from middle and upper class students than from working and lower class backgrounds (Caruthers, 1997). It is easy to assess the socioeconomic status of students in schools where a majority of the students are enrolled in free and reduced lunch programs. Poverty becomes one more factor, along with race

or ethnicity, to be associated with a low-status background. This can influence teacher expectations of children who belong to groups long impeded by legal and social discrimination, as well as historically poor records of academic achievement.

Richard J. Murnane and Jennifer L. Steele point out in their article “What Is the Problem? The Challenge of Providing Effective Teachers for All Children” (2007), that it is clear that teachers in urban schools, particularly urban schools serving poor and minority students, are less qualified than their suburban colleagues in terms of such conventional measures as experience and educational background. But are they less effective teachers and are they less able to promote the learning and the development of their students? They also reported that a growing body of research is linking individual teachers to student achievement scores to provide a direct measure of teacher effectiveness. Their study attempted to control student background characteristics (including past achievement scores), as well as classroom and school characteristics that likely influence a student’s performance but should not be “counted” for or against the particular teacher.

Another finding of particular importance for urban districts involves the interaction between teacher and student race. Teachers appear to be more effective with students of their own race or ethnicity (Pianata, 1999). Exactly why this is so is unclear, but observers suggest that both passive teacher effects, such as the teacher’s simply serving as a role model, and active teacher effects, such as communication styles, pedagogy, and curriculum design.

Teachers will only work effectively with African-American males if the teachers enter service with a school improvement mentality. It is this researcher’s opinion as an urban

school principal, that too many teachers enter the profession with the belief that all that is required is a love for the subject matter, and the ability to transfer this enthusiasm to their students. Teachers in urban schools must also be concerned with school climate and culture. They must be willing to collaborate with their colleagues, and to assume a leadership role where necessary: “schools need to recognize that preparing exceptional future teachers means extending the sites for beginning teacher development beyond the classroom door” (Anderson, Rolheiser, and Gordon, 1998). Teachers are the professionals who work closest to students and are thus more aware of their needs. Teachers must be empowered to facilitate change, as well as recognize the barriers to change.

Teachers must also be aware that African-American males often exhibit different learning styles than their white counterparts. Shade (1992) sampled African-American and European-American ninth grade students who attended the same schools and lived in the same general neighborhoods, and found differences in the cognitive style of each. The African-American males were more perceptive whereas the European-American students were more judging. The African-American males were more spontaneous, flexible and less structured in their perceptions whereas the European-American males were more self-regulated and judgmental. The difference in cognitive styles between the two groups has implications for learning and performance pattern in the classroom.

Willis (1992) reviewed the literature on African-American learning styles. He contends that learning styles are an important aspect of a student’s school experience. Culture affects this learning style, particularly among groups who are strongly affected by racial or ethnic heritage, African-Americans being one such group. Classroom

interventions such as instructional methods, curriculum, classroom organization, and assessment methods are warranted if teachers want to address the difficulty that some African-American males encounter in school.

Teachers' sense of efficacy is a little idea with a big impact. Teachers' judgment of their capability to impact student outcomes has been consistently related to teacher behavior, student attitudes, and student achievement. More is needed to be known how these beliefs are formulated and sustained throughout the teaching career. Further research has stated, compared to career teachers, novice teachers' self-efficacy does seem to be more influenced by contextual factors such as verbal persuasion and the availability of resources. If future research confirms that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are most malleable early in learning and are resistant to change once set, then it would behoove teacher educators and school leaders to provide preservice and novice teachers the kind of support that would lead to the development of a strong academic program to improve the academic success of the African-American male.

SUMMARY

Many African-American males are trapped at achievement levels that leave them terribly unprepared either for the next level of education or the world of work. In addition to the socioeconomic differences among racial and ethnic groups, experts say that parental involvement, peer culture, student motivation, teacher expectation, teacher quality, trends in the education of the African-American male, teacher efficacy and other factors all have an effect on this problem (Education Week, 1999).

This literature review has provided insight to the question of whether race, the gender of teachers, and teacher quality have an effect on the academic success of African-American male. It also probes why teachers stay, exit and how they are involved with African-American males. Further literature review investigated the trends of educating African-American males in an urban school setting. And finally, other aspects of the education of African-American males were reviewed by looking at cultural fluency, teacher quality as well as teacher efficacy and expectation.

Teaching is not merely giving information and students receiving that information. If it were that simple anyone could read a book, memorize information, and teach. But teaching is an adventure, a process that takes place between a student and instructor; it is a set of circumstances, a milieu that takes hold of the mind and elevates a student to a higher level of idea discovery, manipulation, processing, and appreciation. It is a type of ethereal art on a canvass of the mind, and as a student paints, carves, or performs in growth, an instructor too is elevated to new realms of epiphanies and delight as teachers imbibes the beauty of truth unfolding in the mind of an African-American males' hungry spirit.

In the chapter that follows, you will review the specific research methodology that was used to conduct this research. Included in Chapter III is an overview of the process used, the subjects' selection process, and the questions used in the interview, the protocol used for the research, and finally the data analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to examine and describe how race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males. This study explored the idea that race, the gender of teachers, and teacher quality are important factors that determined the academic success of African – American males.

Chapter III examined the research setting. It described the type of school the sample population attended. It discusses the participants of the study and how they were selected for the study. Furthermore, Chapter III discusses the method of data collection and how the researcher used the data to answer the research question. Chapter III explains how the data was analyzed. Lastly, the chapter examines the ethical issues of the study, the validity of the study and the importance of building a rapport with the participants

Chapter II examined existing literature related to female teachers and their impact on African – American male’s success in school. It also probed the literature on male teachers and the impact teachers can have (male and female) on the success of African –

American males. Chapter II investigated the issue of cultural fluency when dealing with African – American males in an urban school. I also studied teacher quality and its profound impact raising academic success. Finally, Chapter II looked at teacher efficacy and expectation as it related to the success of African – American males.

Research Setting

The school system selected for this study is located in northeast Ohio. The students were recruited from this urban downtown site. The school uses an online curriculum called NovaNET. NovaNET is a computer based academic program designed to provide students with an alternative method of earning credit toward high school graduation. All courses and assignments are online. Students come to the school to work in one of the labs, to off-site satellite locations through-out the city, or to one of the local library branches. It is mandatory that all students attend in person on a regular basis to benefit from the one-on-one attention from teachers. After a probationary period, students are given instructions to allow access from any computer in the world with internet access.

Students were required to work on their courses a minimum of 15 hours per week; however, students can earn course credit faster by choosing to work more than the minimum requirement. The average student earns 3 credits per semester or 6 credits per school year. The more time a student spends working on NovaNET, the more credits the student can earn toward graduation requirements.

All classes were comprised of modules which are similar to chapters or units in a textbook. Most modules began with a pre-test which checks the students' knowledge of the topics covered by the module. Lessons are automatically assigned to a student

according to the pre-test scores. After the lessons were completed, a score of 70 was required on a post test for the student to move on to the next module. In order for a student to earn credit, the student must complete all of the modules in the class section. After completion, the student must take a final exam on site. Once the examination was completed, the student must verify with the teacher that he indeed finished the module and then a final grade was assigned to that student. The counselor records the student's credit and tracks the progress toward graduation.

An instructional day is broken up into three hour sessions. Students are free to choose any time slot that fits their need. These consist of three hour time slots plus a lab time. The school offers ACT and SAT prep courses for those students that wish to pursue higher education. The urban school's guidance counselor developed with the student and parents a personalized plan which addresses their requirements for graduation, instructional levels and multiple intelligences. The school also offers an after-school tutoring program for students that may need extra help. Students at the school are also given the Ohio Graduation Test preparation course so that they can pass all five parts of the OGT.

The student enrollment is 448 students of which 92.1% are African – American, 3.4% Hispanic and 2.8% are White, non-Hispanic. The school has 58% of the student body that is considered economically disadvantaged by the State of Ohio. It also has 3.3% of the student body with disabilities. The attendance rate for the school is 64.6%. This means that at least 64% of the students attend school on a regular basis. In comparison to the district attendance's goal of 93%, the school falls below the district and the state attendance rating.

Design of the Study

This study explored African-American males and the influence of race, gender and teacher quality on the academic success of African – American males. Six African-American males were chosen for this study by volunteering to participate in the study. The participants provided rich information through interviews. The African-American male participants were all students at the school. They were from eighteen to twenty-one years of age. Six teachers were chosen from urban high schools in this metropolitan school district. They too added rich information through interviews. Key stakeholders in education should find this study helpful in creating academic success in African-American males.

In conducting this research, various applied qualitative methods were utilized which consisted of interviews. Applied researchers work on human and societal problems (Patton, 2002 p. 224). The purpose of applied research is to contribute knowledge to help people understand the nature of a problem in order to intervene, thereby allowing human beings to more effectively control their environment. Applied interdisciplinary fields, such as education, are especially problem oriented rather than discipline oriented.

How race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males is a major social problem. Grounded theories have the potential to elicit moments in time. The open-ended nature of grounded theory captures basic social processes which the students have experienced in the classroom by contributing to the

understanding of the academic problems of African – American males. By choosing qualitative research, it allows me to explore the feelings of the participants in the study and to draw some conclusions.

The research approach employed by the study is qualitative. As noted by Patton (2002), “Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases. Qualitative methods permit inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context, and nuance; that data collection need not be constrained by predetermined analytical categories contributes to the potential breadth of qualitative inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 224). This approach is applied to this study because the participants can provide in-depth and detailed information. They were given the opportunity to discuss their experiences in school.

Sample

The student participants of this study included six African – American males. They were high school students that have been given a chance to graduate through an alternative curriculum. These students had been in a previous high school but failed to complete the requirements for graduation. The possibility of them being a drop –out is prevalent or there could have been other reasons why they did not complete high school. The participants were students from eighteen to twenty-one years of age.

The teacher participants of this study also included six teachers from urban high schools. I used a cross section of teachers from various geographic areas of the metropolitan school district. I interviewed two African – American males, one Caucasian male and one Bi-racial male. I also interviewed one African – American

female teacher and one Caucasian female teacher. By choosing a predominately African – American high school, it was hoped that the teachers gave me information about the success of African – American males in that kind of setting.

The ability to interview teachers from various backgrounds and different areas of curricula provided me with diverse data. In choosing teachers from different ethnic backgrounds I gathered dissimilar information to build a database on how race, gender and teacher quality that impacted the academic success of African – American males. Finally, by choosing teachers (African – American, Caucasian, male and female) from high schools, provided a different perspectives on their approach and education of the African – American male.

Method of Data Collection

In this study, data collection methods included semi-structured interviews with urban teachers, and with African – American male students. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to examine the participants' perception of their learning experiences in high school and their experiences with both male and female teachers. The first groups of questions for the students were very open-ended to learn what students initially wanted to talk about as it relates to their experiences of schooling. The last groups of questions were more specific to elicit their view as it relates to their encounters with teachers across race, gender and teacher quality. After the interviews, an in depth analysis was used to clarify themes and elicit additional data. This allowed the researcher to validate the data collection through the one – on – one interviews. It also allowed the researcher to probe underlying themes that may have surfaced during these interviews. This allowed the researcher to analyze central themes.

The students at the school had the opportunity to choose to participate in this study. A flyer explaining the study was given to the guidance counselor and posted in the school. The students had the opportunity to respond to me, the researcher, through my email address or a phone number on the flyer. At no time did I as the researcher wish to interrupt the education of any of the participants.

To recruit teacher participants, a flyer was sent to the principals in the various high schools. Those teachers that showed an interest in the study was notified through emails and or letters from me the researcher. The teachers were sent a letter from the researcher explaining how their confidentiality and anonymity was preserved. The interviews were held at a place that was mutually agreed upon by both the participant and the researcher. This was their place of work at their request. Once the participants were selected, participants were engaged in a face-to-face semi-structured interview with the researcher to gather the data for this study. The timeline for gathering this data was September 2011. The data from the semi-structured interviews was recorded, with participants' permission, on audio tapes and also fully transcribed.

All information gathered during the study in interviews was kept confidential. Once the interview process was completed for each participant, the researcher transcribed each interview. Only I, the researcher, had access to the consent forms that links subjects' names with the subjects' code numbers. Their identities were disguised through this specific coding. To get more detailed information from the subjects, which increases the strength of the study, the subjects were audio taped in several sessions.

At the conclusion of this study, the information gathered and audiotapes, identifiable only by subject number, were stored in a locked file and the key that related their name

with the assigned subject number were destroyed. The information obtained from this research were used for the publication or educational purposes of this researcher only and not for any other purpose.

The researcher began to categorize the data collected. The researcher looked for themes in the findings. At this point the researcher explained or defined what exists in the content, using the grounded theory methodology.

The participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could at any time during the study decide to discontinue without reservation. Participants were also told there is no potential physical or mental risk to them. They were told their role is simply to inform and their participation is limited to exchanging information through interviews. There was no cost to the subjects for participating in this study. The subjects were asked to share their thoughts and feelings with me on this project. The benefits for their participation was the contribution these students and teachers made toward improving the academic success of other African-American males' education and helping to improve society as a whole.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was used in this study to examine the central question, "How do race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males?" Grounded theory begins with a research situation. Within the situation, the task of the researcher is to understand what is happening. Data to be analyzed came from interviews. The researcher looked for themes in the findings. At

this point the researcher explained or defined what exists in the content, using the grounded theory methodology.

What most differentiates grounded theory from much other research is that it presents emergent themes. It does not test a hypothesis nor does it set out to find what theory accounts for the research. In this respect it is like action research. Its aim is to understand the problem as it is evident in the research setting. (Glaser, 1997).

Ethical Issues

It is important to clarify how the research deals with ethical issues presented within this study. Throughout the study certain guidelines were followed to ensure protection of the human subjects studied, to aid in the validity of the data, and to minimize bias from my role as the researcher. The students and teachers were asked to sign a consent form, agreeing for their participation. The consent form explained the ethical issues and study procedures.

The interview questions were designed to address the research question and to provide information. In preparing the interview questions, the researcher consulted with a professor specializing in qualitative research from Cleveland State University to ensure the questions were appropriate for this study. A copy of the release forms were signed by each participant and returned to the researcher before the interview took place.

Once all the consent forms were received from the prospective interviewees, the interviewing stage was scheduled. The interviewees signed the consent forms at the time of the interviews. The interviews took place at the participants' place of work (school) for all teachers or a mutually agreed upon location. The students' interviews took place

at the school or a private off – site location mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the student. The interviews took forty-five to sixty minutes to complete. A small tape recorder was used during the interviews.

Building Rapport with Participants

According to Glesne (1999), “rapport describes the character of effective field relationship.” In qualitative research, rapport is a “distance reducing, anxiety-quieting, trust-building mechanism that primarily serves the interest of the researcher”. When a researcher and interviewee have established rapport, the relationship is marked by confidence and trust. (Glesne, 1999).

A researcher who is “sensitive, patient, nonjudgmental, friendly, and inoffensive” (Glesne, 1998, p. 96) is more likely to establish rapport. . Glesne also recommended having “sense of humor, high tolerance for ambiguity, wear appropriate dress and maintain confidentiality” (p. 96). She also suggested “your appearance, speech and behavior must be acceptable to the research participants” (p. 96). Using these methods to build a strong rapport and relationship vital information and data would be obtained.

Validity

In this study, multiple sources of data collection were utilized including semi-structured interviews among teachers and students. Triangulation aids in the validity of this study, assists in avoiding biases that may arise through research, and leads to a better understanding of the findings. Triangulation also assists in gathering information through multiple data sources (Glesne, 1999). Each source may reveal different features of the

study. “Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors than studies that use multiple methods in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks”(Patton, 2002, p.248). In this study, the multiple sources used to triangulate was the following: six teachers and six African-American male students. The multiple methods were semi-structured interviews for students and teachers. These sources and methods helped provide different viewpoints and understanding of the academic success of African - American males.

As an educator, I was able to comprehend and relate to a great deal of the issues discussed, and this aided in providing a clearer concept of the information. Merriam (1998) emphasized the researcher being aware of any personal biases and how they may influence the investigation. As an educator, I believe African-American males have the ability to have academic success and learn to their fullest potential. Therefore, I have a pre-existing theory that African-American males can be successful in any program. I will clarify my biases within the study by stating what they were and by keeping a journal to write my thoughts as I interview the participants.

Summary

This chapter provided a general overview of qualitative research while outlining the data collection methods and research methodology that was used during the process of this project. The research design discussed here allowed for the exploration of the influence of race, gender and teacher quality on the academic success of African – American male students. The data collected and analyzed and the results was discussed in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

A teacher affects eternity, he can never tell where his influence stops.

Henry Brook Adams

Introduction

This study sought to examine and describe how race, gender and teacher quality impacted the academic success of African – American males. This study also explored the idea that race, the gender of teachers, and teacher quality are important factors that determine the academic success of African – American males. The data was used to determine if these factors affected the academic achievement of African – American males. Additionally the researcher used the data to see to what extent, if any, teacher gender and teacher quality determined the academic success of African – American males.

Research Findings

Research finding are presented in the remaining part of this chapter. The findings are provided in the original order of the research questions for this study. The African – American male participants were volunteers from the alternative high school in

Cleveland. The teachers selected for this study were also volunteers from three high schools. They included a magnet school, and two eastside high schools. Both sets of the participants were interview and audio taped.

Student Participants

The student participants were a convenience sampling and selected to be interviewed at their alternative school. They were chosen in order as they showed interest to the guidance counselor who had posted the student flyer on the student information board in the student lounge. Each participant was given an opportunity to read the student consent form and asked if he had any questions about the procedures/interview before he signed the form. This made it possible for me to explain that the interview was confidential and that no one in the school would listen to the audio tapes except me the researcher. This also gave me the opportunity to entertain any questions the participants might have before the actual interview. I was given a private room and the guidance counselor helped in getting the students to be interview at the appropriate time. My initial fear was that I would not be comfortable interviewing the students and that they would not want to share their experiences with me. I also had a fear that the students wouldn't be honest with me as the researcher. To my surprise each student participant was eager to share his experiences in school, about school and its impact on his academic successes. I coded the students as P1 – P6. The “P” indicated the Promise Academy and the numerical value indicated the order in which the African – American males were interviewed.

Twelve questions were read to the participants. Each was asked to be truthful and that at any time if they did not feel comfortable answering the question(s) they could decline to do so. For the purpose of gathering the data and reporting the responses of each participant, I decided to write each question and the responses of the participants in order that the participants were interviewed. I felt that this would give me the opportunity to view the responses in a collective way and it would help me to collect the data more accurately.

Emerging Themes - The Students' Perspective

The primary purpose of this study was to examine and describe how race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males. It also explored the idea that race, gender of teachers, and teacher quality are important factors that determine the academic success of African – American males.

The researcher examined the responses of each of the six students that participated in the study. Several themes were revealed in the analysis of the data. First, the majority of the participants did not have preference to the race of the teacher; some did care about the race of their teacher. One student stated, “race don’t bother me”, and another said, “it doesn’t matter”. This is quite significant because as the researcher reviewed the transcripts, academic success was not narrated as tied to the race of the teacher.

Many of the students were interested in whether the teachers “cared” or “understood” them. What surfaced was not race but whether the teachers were caring. As one student said, “they like to take care of us and make sure we did our work”. This led to another theme that many thought was important to their academic success. The understanding of

the student on the part of the teachers seemed important to many. Students had a sense of “self” of who they were, and it was complex. Students appeared to want teachers to understand that “self” to have a feeling of whether the teacher knows them, not as student but as a person. The student participants were interested in whether the teacher saw them not as a student but as a person who had self worth and was given another chance to achieve academic success.

Students wanted their teachers to see them as a multi-dimensional, with complicated lives, as a person who had a child to take care of, and had lived on their own. Students wanted teachers to understand that students worked at night in order to attend school in the day and to see them as a student who had made a multitude of mistakes before enrolling in school for maybe the last time. Particularly for this group of students when all the odds were against them, they still realized that a high school diploma is the way to make the dreams of being a businessman, owning a business, joining the Army and the Navy, and going on to college, becoming an electrical engineer and becoming a tattoo artist. The teachers’ understand of “self” is important to these participants because they felt it enabled them to academically succeed.

The understanding of the self theme goes deeper with these students. In their narratives, I found students that speaking of developing a “new self” rather than the old self. What I saw and felt from their words was that the students wanted the world, so to speak, to look at the new self – the new person they were developing within their complicated lives. I got the distinct feeling from their body language as well as their responses that they wanted the teachers to notice that they too have feelings and emotions. My analysis was influenced by not only their words but their presence. I saw

the look in their faces a vision of hope and despair. It is a hope that let's everyone know that it was hard to come to school everyday but he is here to complete his high school education. But is was also despair in the last night he had a fight with his baby's mama about papers or not being able to make it to work because he didn't have bus fare. Not only did I feel the hope and the despair of these students but that they were proud that I had chosen them as part of my research. They wanted me, the researcher, to hear their story. As the researcher, I ascertained that the development of self was just as important as their wanting to complete high school and have academic success.

To African – American males how the teacher sees them is important to their self-esteem. As a teacher of African – American male students, I saw many African – American males come to school because they had no place to go other than school. Some were hungry, some were willing to please me as their teacher. Later, as a building administrator, they were willing to please me because I was their role model. The feeling of self – being able to function without punitive consequences meant a lot to those African – American males who just wanted to be recognized as a student of worth. It only meant that each of them wanted to be respected by the teachers who taught them. The student participants I interviewed wanted to show me a new self. During the interviews, I could hear this new self in their voices when they answered questions particularly when they began to talk about what their career goals and how they were going to pursue that goal. I also saw it in their faces the development of self and how it could change their lives and others in their lives.

It would appear that the students wanted their teachers to care about their academic success and to make sure learning was foremost in their agenda to reach their academic

goal. One participant said, that one of his teachers helps him get to his potential cuz we got along good and that I understood him as a teacher who cared. Another student stated, everyone had an understanding, there was no slacking off, and yet another participant linked understanding and connection together to help him succeed. The evidence showed that high expectations from their teachers were coupled with their endeavor to find academic success.

Often, African – American males are not given the opportunity to develop their skills with high expectations from their teachers. They are placed in classrooms with other African – American males and with teachers that do not explain what is expected of them and they do not experience high expectations. They are not told what is expected of them and how they can meet the expectations to be successful academically and in their classroom. Expectations are often given to the female students in the class or what the teacher thought to be the brighter students. The African – American males are told just enough to get by in the class. Many African – American male students who exhibit a masculine behavior will often be placed in the back of the classroom. This masculine behavior is usually disruptive because it creates a tension in who has authority in the room. Those males wanted to take over by their dominating the conversations with other students and disrupting the class. These students are generally placed in the back of the room and the teacher will teach to the students that are in the front of the room. The African – American males placed in the back of the room will often experience academic failure.

The concerns raised by students about wanting teachers to have high expectations resonates with my experiences. As a former teacher and as an administrator, I

experienced the lack of high expectations toward black male student by many teachers. They failed to explain to many African – American males what was expected of them in the classroom. Those that came to me for disciplinary action would tell me that he/she (teacher) “didn’t tell me what I did wrong, was expected of me and I just didn’t know what to do”. Some would even say to me that all I learned from the teacher was to look at the board for the assignment, or they would say that the teacher said to them, “Can’t you read? It’s on the board”. When I visited classrooms, I found African – American males located in the corners of rooms, sitting by themselves, isolated outside the classroom and finally looking at a blank wall with no chance to interact or take part in cooperative learning groups.

High expectations is a trait that is associated with teacher qualities. If African – American males are not allowed to mingle with other classmates, these expectations are never developed or even activated. Yet, one of the concerns of the student participants was that they wanted their teachers to have high expectations to help them succeed and graduate.

The African – American males were glad to share stories about their favorite teacher who had high expectations for them as far back as elementary school. Even though they often got into trouble, could not sit with the group or could not work well with others and preferred to work alone, they still wanted their teachers to have high expectations and they wanted them to raise the bar in academics.

Throughout the interview process, the students’ view of the gender of the teacher as it related to academic success was indicated in many ways. One participant shared that “both genders helped me succeed academically”. Another had conflicting views on

gender. He stated, “I really don’t feel a certain way”, but later he said, “I feel more comfortable with female teachers”. While another thought gender didn’t make a difference, he felt that male teachers can be problematic because they are too authoritative – “reigns over your wills.” Another participant thought female teachers were weak. He wanted to make them a little stronger.

The third component of the study centered around whether teacher quality had an effect on African – American male academic success. When the researcher examined the transcripts, several words or phrases surfaced related to teacher quality. Words and/or phrases such as “control of class”, “high expectations”, “powerful”, “handle the class”, “ability to help me learn”, “help me get to my potential”, “talk it out with me”, view yelling as a lack of control, caring, being like warriors, and constantly being on you were viewed by the participants as some of the qualities the teacher must have to help them achieve academically.

Throughout the interviews teacher quality seemed to be related to teacher control. One participant said that teacher quality was connected with whether “the teacher can handle the class and the teacher is strong and he makes sure you got what he said”. Clearly control was a quality he wanted in the teacher. Yet another student saw “yelling” to be a sign of the lack of control particular with female teachers. He felt that “most female teachers don’t have control over the room”. But he did have many teachers that helped him succeed. As one participant put it, he “enjoyed the iron curtain of the male teachers, I mean don’t get me wrong they get on your nerves from time to time but them constantly being on you, I mean they give you something to work for”.

The idea of control in the classroom became a concern of many of the student participants. African – American males want to control a situation particularly in the classroom because it exhibits their manhood. In the research, they were quick to remind me that female teachers often lacked the control necessary to teach. I have seen masculine African – American males dominate the classroom, yet they still want a controlled environment. This dominant trait of African – American males may stem from the fact that in a single parent home, and they are often looked at as the “man” of the house. They constantly hear – be the man or be a man – men don’t cry – show me how strong of a man you can be in spite of everything that happened. From the administrative perspective, African – American males are given the opportunity to control because some teachers are intimidated by their size or their manly voice. While this was not discussed in the data, the size of an African – American male can make a great difference in a classroom. These are several considerations that may be related to the issue of control that emerged in the data. Just imagine having five or six young men in your classroom that are six feet or taller and weighing one hundred and eighty pounds or more. Many times, I was asked as a teacher, how I coped with the oversized African – American males in my classroom. I responded by saying I got to know my students and they knew that I cared about them. Therefore, size didn’t make a difference when the African – American males understand you as their teacher. Teachers may not want to take the time to understand the background of the students. Getting to know and understand the students creates an atmosphere that makes learning happen.

A sense of control appears to be linked with teacher quality. Student narrated that teachers must have control in order to help students reach academic success.

Administrators look for classroom control as part of teacher evaluation. Teachers that have no classroom control are sent to other schools to observe teachers that have that teacher quality. Sometimes they are placed in a teacher plan until they develop good classroom control. A teacher that has a quiet classroom has the assumption that the students in that room can achieve academically. This may or not be true. There is no doubt that the students want control and they speak of it as one of the characteristics they feel can make a good teacher.

Associated with control is the ability for teachers to care about the students and what they learn. The research showed that all students are different. Their way of thinking about a topic can link them together. They care about who (teacher) is before them helping them to succeed. As a teacher, I heard students say that I would rather be in a classroom where the teacher cares about me and what I do. Some even stated they would rather have the opportunity to choose their teacher. Teachers are in a unique position to shape and mold attitudes and opinions of students. As an administrator, I saw the caring about the students first hand. I saw how teachers spoke to students and took time to listen to their problems as well as the academic woes. I thought to myself all it took was for that teacher to lend an ear and listen to that student. I have also heard them talk one-on-one about their academic progress and how they can improve their grades. This caring nature nurtures the students to want to do better in school. I cannot be reminded enough about the amount of baggage a child brings to the classroom from home. Often the only caring person is the teacher who will exhibit the compassion necessary to help this child succeed. This is not to say that parents don't care, it merely points out that young parents don't have the parenting skills to cope with the needs of their own child. Maybe the child

doesn't feel that parents care. This is where the teacher steps in and understands what the student needs. My research reflected that the student participants referred to the caring nature the teacher had for them by helping them succeed and by wanting to take care of us as one participant stated. This characteristic, the quality of teaching, was reverberated throughout the interview process. Good teachers are not good by accident. Good teachers are deliberate and intentional and choose what they want students to do base partly on their understanding of the student and of their culture and their own personal beliefs and experiences.

Understanding the students was revealed in the research as another theme for discussion. The student participants stated they wanted teachers that had an understanding of them and what they learned. The understanding of the students appears to create relationships that improve the students' academic success. The importance of knowing a student interest can help teachers create a positive teacher-student relationship. The understanding of the student will lessen the potential conflict needed by the teacher and possibly promote increase academic performance. The research points out that the participants wanted their teacher to spend time individually to get to know them better. They wanted their teachers to understand their interests and what motivates them. This allowed teachers to tailor their instruction to increase academic achievement. If a student feels a personal connection to a teacher, experiences frequent communication with a teacher and receives more guidance and praise than criticism from the teacher, then the student is likely to become more trustful of that teacher, show more engagement in the academic content presented, display better classroom behavior and achieve at a higher level academically.

Caring about “me” as the student and understanding student’s development self, having control in a classroom, and having high expectations for students are viewed by the student participant as qualities a good teacher must have in order to promote academic achievement. To these participants, these teacher characteristics are important to them and they surfaced during the interview process.

These characteristics come together and shape the students’ perception of teacher qualities that they want in order to help them succeed. They see these as attributes contributing to high expectations from students. Importantly, the notion of teacher quality must be expanded to recognize that teachers can have more success with student performance but for this study it is evident that caring and understanding for the students, control of the teacher, and high expectations of the student are examples of good teacher qualities which enable students to be successful in school.

Teacher Participants

The teachers who volunteered for this study were from every area of curricula in local high schools. Two were African – American males, one Caucasian male and one Bi-racial male. I also interviewed one African – American female teacher and one Caucasian female. They included a special needs teacher, a librarian in a magnet school, English language arts teacher, visual arts teacher, history teacher at a magnet school, and finally a regular education teacher. The special needs teacher was a bi-racial male. The media specialist was an African – American female teaching in a magnet school on the eastside of Cleveland. The English language arts teacher was Caucasian female. The visual arts teacher was an African – American male. Finally, one Caucasian male

volunteered for the study that taught history and an African – American male that taught regular education in local high schools. Each participant was assured that the information shared with the researcher was completely confidential and that at no time will the information be shared with supervisors or principals. Each participant was labeled with a code. The code was the letter “T” and a number denoting the order of the interview. The participants were given the code of T1 – T6. Each participant was given the opportunity to read the consent form before signing assuring them of confidentiality. They also were told that if they felt uncomfortable in answering any question(s) they could decline to answer. They were also told that the interview would be audio-taped and the tape would be confidential. Twelve questions were used in the interview process for the participating teachers. The researcher reported the data by writing the question(s) and the responses of all the participants in order that they were interviewed. This was done to view the data and collect the data easily.

Emerging Themes – Teacher Perspective

This researcher found that the teachers that responded to the flyer were mature teachers with 25 years or more experience. They taught in magnet schools as well as regular high schools in the city. Many reported that they used whole group, life skills, praise and incentives to motivate their students. One stated that the “use of sticker charts for motivation with younger students” seemed to help with academic success. Another used praise to help them know what they were doing was the right thing, while another “communicated high expectations and a belief that students can succeed in class”. Based on the data, the researcher surmised that motivation was a key to academic success of

African – American males they taught. The majority understood that motivation was a key factor to help African – American males achieve some academic success.

Many of the teachers experienced defiance when working with African – American males. They found that they had to have a connection with their students to build trust. Often they found that African – American males wanted to control the classroom environment.

When the theme of classroom control surfaced, several teachers viewed this as a vital part of ensuring students' academic success. They attributed structural conditions as a challenge in order to be an effective teacher. The size of the pupil/teacher ratio becomes a “frustrating” factor as one teacher stated. “Unfortunately in large classes”, individualized instruction “doesn’t happen as much as you would like it to happen”, said one. Another said, “I dealt with antics that they use to get out of doing work in the classroom, high absenteeism, their perception that school is a waste of time, gang problems in the classroom and school, being the know it all, on drugs, being the ring leader or bully in the school, and just having a low self-esteem and wanting to be important.” All these comments solidified that control was an important factor to teachers. Yet another took the initiative to change seats, call parents, and remove students from the classroom as a method to gain better classroom control.

Several methods to gain control of the classroom were used by the teachers. Changing the seats of the African – American male students is a method used to re-direct the focus of the students who are not focused or paying attention to the teacher. This method sometimes works because it sends a signal to the student that he is talking too much and generally is disrupting the flow of education for the rest of the students. Another strategy

teachers narrated was to the student is to move the student next to a student who is working to his or her potential. This was used as an example to the student who needed to change his behavior. It was hoped that this would give him an opportunity to see why/how other students in the classroom gets good grades. Finally, moving the male student closer to the teacher is a prompt that teachers use to cut down on the inappropriate behavior. Sometimes the student would quiet down and begin to focus on the work the rest of the class is doing.

Another way to change behavior of the students is to make the all important phone call home to inform the parent(s) of students' academic failures or disruptive behavior in school. This may or not work depending on how active the parent is in the students' school life. The engagement of the parent in the education process of the student makes it possible to involve them in the school environment and it is hoped that the parent will speak to the student and become a change agent for the teacher.

Finally, if the above methods of gaining classroom control don't work then there is no choice but have the student removed from the classroom. This is done by a school security guard in high schools and an administrator in the lower grades. The removal by an authority figure sends a message to the student that his behavior will not be tolerated by adults in the school. This action will invoke an administrative decision to remove the student from the classroom for a limited amount of time or even a suspension from school if the problem persists.

From these responses, I found that many teachers were successful with their African – American male students if they understood, bonded, used encouragement, supported them as well as used life skills in their efforts to help them be successful. I found that

many teachers had many significant struggles when working with African – American males. The students often wanted to be in control of the environment, lacked a focus level, and stabilities in their academic life as well as their family life. The teachers that participated in the study used various teaching strategies to help the males become successful.

Some of these strategies included a reward system, reading strategies, good discipline, group work that was often project based were effective in attaining success. Finally, many teachers reported that moving the seat of the African – American males helped those to focus, concentrate and helped with the discipline in the classroom. This made it possible for the teacher to teach and control the classroom.

Similarly, many teachers narrated that they used bonding as a feature to develop a better understanding of how learning was instigated in academic success. One said, “I took the TV shows, movies, music, events, sports and the news to make what they were doing relevant as possible.” Another agreed, that using a wide array of experiences when teaching African – American males made success possible. Still many thought having a type of relationship with the students where eye contact was necessary made it possible to curtail poor behavior.

In terms of maintaining control, a good number said they dealt with conflict one on one but at least one teacher said, “I had to say harsh words to them to show them that I could play the game with them.” This meant that the name calling was not going to be tolerated even when it was focused on me.” And still another teacher commented that struggles of the male students was that they often are the “man” of the house, which they understood to mean, that they were somehow equal to teachers. The concept of “being a

man” reoccurred during several teacher interviews. One teacher mentioned that “the black males want to be stronger to prove a point that they are a man.” Another pointed out that “black males wanted attention of self because of the level of manhood,” and “He wanted to act like a man.” Clearly the act of wanting to be a man has potential to interfere with the ability to succeed academically.

The “man” syndrome is difficult to explain and understand unless you are an African – American male raised in an African – American household. I will explain this concept from my perspective in order for you to understand this idea. Today’s urban African – American male frequently comes from a single parent home. The mother is usually young and a working parent. Some of the mothers do not work and collect government assistance. The home is associated with a single African – American male that is the male friend of the mother. He may or not be an active participant in the life of the young African – Americans life. He may or may not live with the mother. The African – American adult male may or not be well liked by the young African – American male attending school. Mainly there is an attachment to the biological father that may or may not be in the home. African – American males want to imitate their father or want to be close to them. This gives you some idea of what the African – American male deals with at home before he comes to school.

I give you this picture as a background to help explain the “man” syndrome. African – American adult males are totally masculine. To understand this, is the beginning stages of understanding the “man” concept. The adult African – American male does not show emotions and/or compassion to/for other African – American males. It is not manly to do so. Therefore, the idea of being a “man” is transferred to young African – American

males from a young age to a developing young man. Being the “man” of the house and acting manly is an important part of growing up. That being the case, when an African – American male comes to school they are pre-destined to be as manly as possible because they have been molded for that role. They dress as if they were adult African – American males.

For the African – American male being/playing the “man” role is a reflection of his home environment. It is something that has been embedded in him from a small boy. This is carried over into school life. This is a situation that many African – American males bring to school and they deal with it everyday. In school it becomes a competition between other African – American male students. Each male student is vying to be the “man” of the classroom. Of course this creates an unsettled classroom situation.

The issue of race and gender of a teacher proved to be very interesting. As the researcher, I was interested if race impacted the academic success of African – American males. The thoughts on this theme evinced from one teacher that “quite often our black males had white teachers who cannot or did not teach them.” Still another stated, “I do believe that race does have an affect of African – American males.” While another teacher thought, “So many African – American males need that role model of another male as well as a teacher that really cares about their well being.” This suggests that the presence of other African – American males on the faculty may contribute to their academic success. It is apparent to this researcher that the African – American teachers felt connected to the African – American students. One African - American teacher said, “I feel I relate to African – American and interact with them in a positive manner.”

After analyzing the data given by the teachers, this researcher deduced that the race of a teacher plays a role in the academic success of African – American male students. The evidence that a male role model is necessary for African – American males is also supported by the data. The feeling that an African – American male teacher would benefit an African – American male student was articulated by both male and female teachers. Using myself as an example, I often felt that I presented myself as a role model for my African – American male students. The way I dressed, spoke and even my mannerisms created a positive role model for my African – American male students.

Another comment shared by an African – American teacher suggested that “white” teachers cannot teach “black” males. However, this is not supported by the data. The unsupported statement was merely a belief shared by an African – American teacher. It only pointed out that this teacher believed that African – American students should only be taught by African – American teachers.

It seemed that the race and gender of a teacher was both a concern of all the teachers interviewed. However, the data showed that over-whelming, the majority of the teachers, both “black” and “white” taught predominately African – American students and it further showed that the majority of those students were African – American males. As one teacher put it, “I love teaching African – American males! I like the creativity, their energy, and their style.”

This researcher concluded that race did have a beneficial effect on the academic success of African – American males according to the information shared during their interviews. There was an issue that white teachers cannot teach and are negative against African – American males. Others felt that it is controversial and that African – American males

need a strong male image in order to have success. Role models play an important part in the academic success of African – American males.

Summary

The results presented in this chapter indicate clearly from the students' perspective that gender of the teacher does not affect the academic success of African – American males. The results also showed that race has no effect on their success level and that the students didn't care whether the teacher was African – American or White. It also showed that African – American males were concerned about making sure that teachers were caring and made sure that there was learning in the classroom. They did, however, think that female teachers lack control over the classroom. The three key areas of focus were understanding of students, control of the classroom, and high expectations. On the other hand, the teacher participants had much more to say than the African – American male students. The results showed that they used a wide variety of motivation techniques with their students. Praise, rewards, as well as life skills were used to encourage young black men to be more successful. It also revealed that there were many struggles when working with African – American males especially when dealing with discipline. They found the students to be angry, defiant, and sometime hard to control. They also viewed student focus/concentration level as a primary problem when teaching the African – American male students. The results showed that many teaching strategies were used to help motivate the students, some more successful than others. Finally, the results showed that teachers felt that race does play a part in the academic success of African – American males because they believed that there was a connection between being African –

American and teaching students of the same race. Some felt that African – American males needed a role model to help them become successful. Chapter V provides a discussion of the findings, suggestions for further research and recommendations to educators.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Research Question #1:

Could you tell me about yourself? (your education, things you like to do, your career goals?).

P 1 – I am eighteen years old and I'm about to be 19 next month on the 30th. I'm an eleventh grader, I thought I was gonna be a senior but my credits wasn't right. So I came to Promise to get my credits right and now I'm struggling with this OTT. I like to play football and eat. My career goal I would like to go to the Navy. That's what I wanted to do since I was a kid. I'm definitely going to the Navy after I'm out of school.

P 2 - I'd say that a career goal that I do want to achieve, I wanna be a director of movies you know, director or camera man just to get into movies, acting, uh I want to be like a comedian, do stand up, if not a comedian something like a, that is fun, real and genuine is comedy to me. I attend school at Promise Academy. A few years ago I went to Greater Heights Academy they closed down and before then it was Hope High.

P 3 - Uh, stuff I like to do basically draw probably like just sit around sleep at the house, I don't really do nothing. Pre-school all the way until I think 2nd grade I went to Mt. Pleasant when it was the Catholic School where Hope Academy is on 131st. And I transferred from there to Moses Cleveland. Around 4th grade I went to Jamison all the way until my 8th grade year from there I went to Kennedy and now I am here. Probably I want to be a tattoo artist or something like some kind of career involving art.

P 4 - Okay well, I wouldn't say that I had a rather complex childhood, but I had a hard time finding myself and as I got older school was a kind of way to cope or vent; it something I was good at so I just leaned back on that and further along the line, sports and well, girls and stuff like that; typical teenager stuff. Um, I am into music. I like to play the guitar and I occasionally play video games, and sport. Well I plan on actually going to CSU to be an Electrical Engineer and minor in music performance with the guitar.

P 5 - I 'm a student at Promise Academy. I want to major in Business Tech, I plan starting my own business one day.

P 6 - I like basketball, games and girls. I want to finish high school and go on to college. If I can't get into college I will join the army.

Research Question #2

Describe the time of classroom you enjoy and have been successful in learning.

P 1 - The type of classroom that I enjoy is the type of classroom where kids not, you know, running over the teacher. The teacher can handle the class and the teacher is strong and he makes sure you got what he said; he or she said.

P 2 - I like to watch movies and read a little bit.

P 3 - A small class.

P 4 - I've been pretty successful in, I wouldn't necessarily say fast paced environments, but an environment whereas everyone is on the same page and we don't have to really do so much as review we just do the lesson, pretty much everyone gets it, do the work and keep it moving. I really don't like to hang on one subject for too long or I'll tend to get bored with work.

P 5 - Science

P 6 - I like a exciting classroom I get bored quick. I like to be loud in class; I guess you would call me a class clown.

Research Question #3

Could you talk about the type of things that have motivated you and helped you learn?

(probe: type of classroom activities-lectures, group work, partner work, technology, independent work in the classroom).

P 1 - Well my sister actually, my older sister we had like she'll have a class one year and then I come and have the same teacher and they would know my sister cause we went to the same school and they would be like well your sister got an "A" and I want you to get an "A" too. So I kinda really wanted to push and strive to be you know as good as my sister was in school.

P 2 - Um, my mother. She motivates me in way by knowing how I did and what I'm supposed to do and to get out there and got out of high school.

P 3 – Things that motivate me and help me learn just wanting to know, like something that if I had ask like something and I want to know it I want to learn the answer. Just if I don't, you know, if I do really want to know. But something that motivates me a topic that I am interested in and know about it, I'll start to look into it myself.

P 4 – I mean I just, seeing where other people come from and seeing where some people ended up, it just motivates me for the better and some, most of my teachers, I wouldn't necessarily say were non-compliant with students but they were just ignorant of where we grew up. And they don't understand some of the situations that we go through. And most of the teachers that I've had can relate to those situations so---it kinda flowed.

P 5 – My religion makes me wanna soar higher and succeed, I also have a good friends that look out for me and they build my confidence.

P 6 – My mom motivates me. I never really know my father, and I need him but it is what it is. I guess I like group work so I can talk a lot. I really do like working alone.

Research Question #4

Tell me about those learning situations that got in the way of you learning and succeeding in school.

P 1 – Well I just like to do my work in class and I don't really like, you know a lot of activities and group work and stuff like that. (Do you like partner work?) Sometimes, it depends though but it got to be right partner. Cause I don't wanna be the only on that is doing all the work.

P 2 - I work better with lectures, someone helping me to work that way and we all talk it out with and get it together. As long as I have someone to talk it out with and I can understand my work a lot better.

P 3 – Classmates and teachers.

P 4 – Well I like diverse types of learning and we can do activities, lectures and group work and all of that. But, when it really came down to it, I would like to be technical and on my own with a little support from the teacher here and there. But I never had a problem working with others if they were able or capable of doing the work. Uh, let's see. I was never really a fan of waiting on others. I get the no child left behind thing to where if we don't move on until just about everyone gets it. I support it in a way but then again it kind of slowed me from moving on because I had to work at another's pace instead of my own.

P 5 – I never really struggled. I always was a focused student.

P 6 - I struggle with reading since I don't like reading. I guess I like group work because I can talk a lot in them.

Research Question #5

Can you take a few minutes and talk about your favorite teachers. What is it about them that make them your favorite? (probe: What did they do? How did they relate to the students? Can you tell me a story about that teacher – a time when she/he made a difference?

P 1 – My favorite teacher, well one of my favorite teachers is Mr. Cobb at my last school which is Martin Luther King. Well 8th grade I had him for Math and then I thought I was done, you know and I wasn't going to see him again and I thought you know was gonna push me on and I had an "A" in his class; and 9th grade I came back and he was the 9th grade Math teacher, so that was cool too, Algebra 1. And then I had him the next year, you know, No, I had him in the eighth and ninth grade. He made sure you understood the work. He made sure you understand the curriculum and he made sure you understood everything. And if you didn't he would help you, you know he would go those extra steps to help you or you might have to stay after class to help, he would tutor you on his lunch break or whatever. How did he relate? Everyone had a understanding with Mr. Cobb. He just wanted to make sure that everyone had an understanding. It wasn't a lot of slacking off, if he saw you slacking off he would put you to the side and let you know what he was doing and what he wanted you to do, you know. And then hopefully you would come around.

P 2 - My favorite teacher they were here, one he is more understanding, child out and cool. The others one she, she's really smart, she is the smartest teacher to me here and she helps me out with my math real easy shows me everything, talks it out and help me through it. She goes over problems where I would be good; she really talks to me so that I do know what I need to know. Just their quality basically someone you can relate to you can talk to them even though their age is different from us. They weren't just so strict but they are on it. They're not completely strict teachers going by all the rules but they know what you are doing. As long as you try to do your best they're there to help you out and whenever you fall back they are going to come at you. I think a lot of other students liked those two teachers too.

P 3 – Most of the female teachers in the past it was always kinda like, for a female teacher they get over. I feel like students don't really respect female teachers. If there was something to change about it like, I feel like they should like handle a situation to get rid of all the distraction students that don't really want to learn instead of just like get ran out. Like all the other students it's always the female teachers that get you ran out of school. That's all.

P 4 – Okay, well one of my favorite teachers was Mr. Bolden back at Louis Pastor which is closed now. I think he is over at FDR now and coaching Glenville football. He was a History teacher. Now the thing about Mr. Bolden was he grew up in the neighborhood in which the school was and still lives there until present day. He can relate to every student out there. He lives in the heart of where we come from. It wasn't that more so of him trying to tell us like “hey – you see me”, this is what you can be you can be better then these streets.” It wasn't like that, it was him basically saying like “I know where you

coming from and it don't have to end that way. I ain't necessarily telling you to be me but do something better for yourself." Mr. Bolden was on of those teachers you would say was if you grew up without a father, he was one of those people you could connect with in a way to whereas he can put you on life's situation to help you make better decisions inside and outside of the classroom. He was just a positive influence throughout.

P 5 – My teachers were like warriors, they were tough on me but it made me better they would take the time to make sure I was learning.

P 6 – I guess my favorite teachers were in elementary school they like to take care of us and make sure we did our work. I really didn't have a favorite teacher until six grade I can't remember his name but he just believed that we all could make it. He was real light skin we didn't know whether he was black or white but I think he was mix. He dressed real cool, and smelled good all the time. I think he really liked kids.

Research Question # 6

How do you feel about female teachers? Male teachers and teacher of a different race?

P 1 – Females teachers are powerful but sometimes they could lose control over a class, you know because of the size and the guys you know. Well Mr. Cobb was a white guy. So I math really you know—race don't bother me. Race don't bother me.

P 2 – Race is really not help you try to learn or how to read. Most female teacher have control over the room, over the whole classroom. It they didn't try to like have too much control and they can yell. To me I don't just like someone to holler and yell at me. Yes I have many teachers that helped me. Both.

P 3 – Never had them. I just like, for one I just, I guess I don't tolerate a lot of people. Teachers don't happen to be at the top of my list, I have a low tolerance for them. Like depending on who the female teacher is. Like, really don't feel a certain way about any teacher, male or female. I just feel like that's your job, that's how I feel about it. In a way like people of a different race depending because as far as I think of people like teachers of a different race like certain races like teachers feel like they know it all. Or they just feel like they done in a way like..... I feel more comfortable with a female teacher. It really doesn't matter what race she is.

P 4 - Oh uh, like I said female or male it really doesn't make so much of a difference if they can relate to the students, if they can relate to the students then the connection will be just as IT would with a male they can be female or male. If they can relate and understand to where that student is coming from just about anyone can get along with anyone. Well it depends there are certain type of male teachers. You got some teachers that will work with you, your have some that became a teacher because they feel as if they know it all and some tend, I don't know, they look down on you, you know, that they know it all because I guess they feel as if that if their authority out reigns your will or whatever you feel as if you are there for. Well I was never really on of those types, but enjoy all of my teachers, if it was where you could sit down with me and you can understand what I am talking about, not necessarily judging me or assuming, we can really get along, all you got to do is listen and relate, anyone can get along. It's all about understanding.

P 5 – It does not matter what race, gender, color. We can learn from each other.

P 6 - **They** are ok. I like black teachers I just think they understand me.

Research Question # 7

What things would you change about female teachers you have had in the past that might have help you to learn better?

P 1 - I don't know actually.

P 2 – Most female teachers don't have control over the room.

P 3 – Not that I know of right now I can't really think of.

P 4 - I can say this --- all my attractive teachers I went to class.

P 5 – No. A person can only change oneself.

P 6 – They can be weak so I would make them a little stronger.

Research Question # 8

Were there any female teachers in school that help you to reach your goals, complete assignments, work to your potential, and help you succeed?

P 1 – Well I don't really know. Well certain male teachers like Mr. Cobb you know he was perfect. Not saying that he was perfect but he helped me learn and I learning a lot from him. With math and OTT I shot through it the first time.

P 2 – Yes I have many teachers that helped me. Both.

P 3 – Not that I know of, I can't really think of any.

P 4 - To be honest I actually enjoyed the iron curtain of male teachers, I mean don't get me wrong they get on your nerves from time to time but them constantly being on you, I mean they give you something to work for. Like back at Empire we were 3rd, 4th and 2nd grade we were children and we couldn't understand everyday why they made use come to school, shirt tie and dress shoes, we could not understand it, we couldn't but now I

understand it. I don't have a problem throwing on shirt, tie and dress shoes and go for job interview and something like that; it is almost routine now.

P 5 – Yes, a few they would call me help me study and were role models.

P 6 – I can't remember any at least no one I can think of.

Research Question # 9

How and where do you prefer sitting in a classroom and why?

P 1 – I always like to sit in the front of the classroom; because I learn better and you know in the back of the class people talking and really don't, I can't focus when a lot of people talking.

P 2 – I will sit anywhere. I can interact with people that's around me pretty much just from my feeling of not wanting to not be alone, or whatever.

P 3 - If I was failing in the classroom I'd probably sit in the back. I really don't like to be noticed. It help me see better because like I don't be like having my glasses, I can see from that distance. I just like the back of the class. It's just the whole thing like I don't want to be in the front or the middle and be noticed.

P 4 – Well I was one of those students where people would call scared to be smart. So I was real she and I didn't want people to really know it as much. I usually sit towards the middle back, I used to sit in the middle but all the way back in the classroom so I can see just about everybody so when I was to answer her question I was like everybody would turn around and look at me like who answered back and I would just be sitting there.

P 5 – In the front, because I wanna focus and pay attention.

P 6 – I like to change me seat all the time maybe the teacher won't remember me and leave me alone.

Research Question # 10

Tell me about your favorite female or male teacher, and why they are your favorite.

(probe: what race was the teacher).

P 1 – Mr. Cobb. Yes. When I slacked off he got me together. Well not my full potential because you know when I got to the 9th grade I had Geometry and I had a different teacher. But when I needed help in Geometry I'd always go back to him; so he kinda help me get to my potential. Cuz, we got along good and that I understood him. White.

P 2 - A complete understanding of what it is I needed to do and if I couldn't understand it they made it simple enough for me to get through. Black, Black.

P 3 - Never had one.

P 4 – Well I talked about Mr. Bolden. I going to talk about Ms. Gholson, she was an Algebra teacher at Louis Pasture as well. She was down to earth, I mean she didn't take anything from you, she let you have it when you deserved it but she was always there for you she made sure that you understood the work. She always checked up on you, I mean she seen that if you have one of the accelerated student she would always have a lesson plan to the side whereas if you were to run over the lesson have, she made sure you always had something to do. She was African – American.

P 5 – No response.

P 6 – Like I said before it was a male and I don't remember his name but he looked good dressed good and smell good all the time. I think he was mix. He just like me and the rest of the kids.

Research Question # 11

What other information would you like to share for this interview that will help me to understand your feelings about teachers that have helped you succeed?

P 1 – In a sense but not really because some teachers they just might have that understanding that connection currently another student might not have.

P 2 – No. A tad bit, yeah. Because they went through a lot of things I've been through and they know what I'm doing right now. They see if I'm messing up they know there is a pretty good reason why I this problem messed up in school.

P 3 – No verbal response.

P 4 – No I believe that we needed female and male teachers. I mean we needed the support of a female teacher but we needed to rod of the male teachers. We needed discipline and comfort. We needed both, we had to have a balance.

P 5 – Life and its surroundings is what you make it and racial things should not matter.

P 6 – I wish I could read better. I like black teacher better I think they care and understand us.

Research Question # 12

Do you believe that you succeeded more with a male teacher rather than a female teacher? Do you think having the same racial background provide a sense of connection? Can you talk about this feeling?

P 1 – About what? Well I really need my help in Science because I just got my results back from my OTT that I took back in October and I missed it by eight points. Alright you got it. That's it? Clean, cut and dry.

P 2 - They are generous people they very generous and very, very caring.

P 3 - I'd probably say a female teacher. Like in a way it does but then or you start to actually talk to the person you can figure out things like that connection you thought you would have with the teacher the connection that you want like it can be somebody of a different race like Hispanic, like you can have or you might have a connection with them and sit down and talk to them and like see her explain something to you and you actually understand it then you would with a teacher of the same race and it really doesn't matter like what kind connection.

P 4 - Well I can say just about every teacher that I had.

P 5 - The only thing the teachers should instill is the fact that the children are the future....Knowledge is power.

P 6 - I think some teacher should be fired. I don't think all of them like us and especially when we are black.

TEACHER RESPONSES

Research Question #1

Tell me about yourself by explaining your teaching experiences in an urban district.

How many years of teaching? In what schools did you teach?

T 1 - This teacher taught for 30 years in the Cleveland Metropolitan School district in Elementary and Junior High Schools. She was a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, reading/Title 1 teacher and a Literacy Specialist.

T 2 - This teacher was a Special Needs teacher with the district for 35 years. Her first approach to teaching was to teach what she learned in college. She felt that she was frustrating the students and everyone was at odds with each other. She eventually threw away all lesson plans and theories she learned in college and began to listen to her

student's likes and dislikes and thing about their culture. She also realized that many students were turned off by school. She learned about urban living through her students because she came from a suburban background.

T 3 - This teacher began as an Art teacher in the late seventies in a Junior high school in Cleveland. She felt that all the junior high were difficult situations. She was laid off in the early 80s and this is when she became certificated as a Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorder teacher. She taught SBH students for 16 years. Ten of those years she taught at the Youth Development Center – a residential treatment facility in Hudson, Ohio for delinquent and drug abuse teens.

T 4 - This teacher is a Visual Arts teacher for 30 years. He taught in Junior high schools, detention homes as well as high school in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

T 5 - This teacher is an English teacher at a Magnet school. She has been teaching 15 years and has been on the Westside as well as some Eastside school. Prefers to work on the eastside.

T 6 – Began teaching in the Cleveland Heights – University Heights School in 1992. Started in Cleveland at C.W.Eliot in 1999 was there for 7 years. Currently at John Hay Architecture and Design for 6 years.

Research Question # 2

What grade level/subject areas have you taught?

T 1 - Reading – grades 1 – 12.

T 2 – Ninth and tenth grader reading and math (special needs).

T 3 - Pre-school to twelfth grade. Art, Severe Behavior Handicapped, Reading, Home Instruction to pregnant teens, emotionally disturbed and hospitalized students and all students as a magnet school librarian.

T 4 - Art – kindergarten through grade twelve.

T 5 - I have taught 9th grade through 12th grade English.

T 6 - I teach American History, African – American History, Modern World History, Government and Street Law. Grades 7 – 12.

Research Question # 3

Could you talk about your approach in the classroom in general in terms of teaching your subject and motivating your students? What practices do you use to motivate your students?

T 1 - Whole group instruction, small group, center activities, peer teaching and individual instruction. I used incentives such as sticker charts for motivation with younger students. Setting and reaching goals for the older children – contests. Self – worth and instill in students to always do your best. Feeling good about yourself.

T 2 - My approach was making reading and math relevant to real world situations to motivate my students. I took the TV shows, movies, music, events, sports, and the news to make what they were doing as relevant as possible. I had to show them how reading and math was important and that it was something that they needed and how it related to everything that they do in life.

T 3 - Used many tools that worked when I worked with teens with behavior issues. I walk around the room to see what they are doing. I used praise to help know that they were doing the right thing. I have a wide array of experiences with teaching African –

American males. I wanted them to see me as a parental figure. I try to be consistent with rules. By the end of the school year I have the type of relationship with the students where eye contact is all that is necessary when I see a student doing an infraction – for example sitting on a table instead of a chair.

T 4 - I used the approach of trying to further a child's' education rather than just doing pictures. My practices were to display their work; promote their art in galleries, libraries, and community malls.

T 5 - I feel that students should come to me ready to learn. I try to motivate them by giving them the chance to use their skills to enhance what they already know. I sometimes encourage them to broaden their experiences.

T 6 - I communicate high expectations and a belief that students can succeed in my class. They understand the class is meaningful; they are being taught 21st century skills, i.e. critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Research Question # 4

Because the focus of the study is the success of African – American male students could you talk about your experiences with this group of students? Tell me about your experiences of connection and success with African – American male students. Did you experience struggles with African – American male students? Tell me about your struggles with them.

T 1 - Honesty and trust. Two major components being open and sincere with these students are very important. Struggles – lots of anger in our male students, those who are the “man” of the house and they think they are equal to you.

T 2 - I struggle at first with African – American males. They were defiant and wanted to have total control of the classroom. They would compete with each other for the control. I stood my ground. I had to say harsh words to them to show them that I could play the game with them. They would call me names – I told them to put Miss in front of it. The motivation practices that I used were inspirational sayings that I said daily to remind them that they can achieve. I was fair so that they could trust me. I taught them to be honest with me and showed them honesty. It didn't happen overnight. It took time to build that type of relationship. It took me two years to gain their trust and the word spread that I was okay.

T 3 – The students I teach come from Cleveland and nearby suburbs. To be accepted at John Hay they must have letters of recommendation for their 8th grade teachers and principal, fill out an application, be interviewed by a team of faculty and pass an entrance exam. Approximately ½ of our students are African – American, the other students Hispanic, Asian, Islamic and European American.

T 4 – African – American are challenging, they do not have mentors to motivate them. I have struggled – I have been “hit” by an African – American male to prove a point that they are a man. Sometimes in their private life, family members are incarcerated, under educated, or on drugs. The black males want to be stronger to prove a point that they are a man. I tried one on one with them to gain their trust.

T 5 - When I was on the Westside of Cleveland, I found it a different world. I found the students to be motivated and wanted to work. There was a family connection. I found they wanted to learn. On the eastside of Cleveland I found a different type of student. They are more incline to be less motivated. It was hard.

T 6 - I work very well with African – American males. Since we share a culture and history, it is easier to understand their issues.

Research Question # 5

What can you tell me about students you teach? What percentage is African – American?

T 1 – One hundred percent.

T 2 – I taught developmental delayed, learning disabled, Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disabled, Attention Deficit Disabled and Asperger Syndrome, and at-risk students.

T 3 - I work with all the students at John Hay.

T 4 - They come from a variety of background – parents are incarcerated, low socio – economic scale, some sold drugs, many put in a position of becoming an adult before their time. 65 – 70% are African – American.

T 5 – I teach students from all over the city. They are hand chosen to be at this school. They do have skills that only need to be helped along. Majority of the students are African – Americans. I would say that 40% are African – American males. I find that many African – American males do not apply to a magnet school.

T 6 – 98%.

Research Question # 6

How many African – American males do you teach?

T 1 – 65%

T 2 – 80% of my class was African – American males and 5% Hispanic males.

T 3 – 75%

T 4 – Majority are African – American, 50% male students.

T 5 - 40%

T 6 – I teacher 55 African – American males.

Research Question # 7

Can you talk an experience or two where you felt you really contributed to the success of an African – American male student? What strategies seem to work best teaching African- American males? Is there anything else beyond strategies that make a difference (knowledge of student personality; understanding cultural dimensions; particular types of interactions that lead to positive engagement versus types of interaction that lead to negative engagement?)

T 1 – In general I would say that finding out as much as I can about the student is at the top of the list. Once you know the student then you can decide what the best strategy to use is. You also get a better understanding of why the student acts the way he does.

T 2 - I ran into one of my students and he told me that I never lied to them. Life skills were very important to them. One worked at Jaguar Cleveland as a mechanic. Once worked at Giant Eagle. I allowed my students to debrief quietly when were angry and to join the group when they were ready. I observed body language. I praise them when they did something good.

T 3 – I currently have a library page that has worked in the media center since freshman year. He currently a senior on his way to college. When he first came to my school he needed to earn community service because of a juvenile court issue. He was in foster care and had to change homes because he tried to harm his brother. He was soon diagnosed as bipolar and when he can to me they were trying to regulate his medicine. While he spent time in the library I taught him organization skills, how to control his temper and helped him with his homework.

T 4 - Effort gave them some kind of attention making sure they did their work. I had 19 students in classroom some disruptive. I had one that was large he did not want to give way to control of an adult was very confrontational but had desire to do art I made contact with him and gave him opportunity to show off his art work. When teachings make sure you are aware of the cultural differences and the learning styles of the students.

T 5 - I think that I have contributed to the success of African – American male students by encouraging them to make the most of their high school education. I have had conferences with them when I see the need to push them. I try to connect with them by always being available to talk to them. I find that the ones that a just getting by never ask for help. I find this strange.

T 6 – I became a mentor to students when he was in the 7th grade at Eliot. He will graduate from Morehouse College this year with a degree in Finance. I continue to encourage and support him and communicate a belief in his abilities.

Research Question # 8

What kind of teaching strategies have you used with African – American males students? Which did you find more effective in helping them attain success? Did anything get in the way?

T 1 – The teaching strategies I have used are numerous. Quite often getting past barriers became the major focus. Why is Johnny acting like this?

T 2 - I taught them phonics so that they could sound out unfamiliar words. We read the newspaper and used everyday experiences for debates and discussions. I used song of today. I praised them. I told them that nobody controls their destiny. Being proud of their

African – American heritage. We talked about African – American males that were sent to jail and later found innocent of the crime.

T 3 - Most of my special education strategies were variations of Premack and Control theory. Premack is a reward system that the teacher designs based on the students like and desires. Control theory teaches you how to control you emotions by taking ownership of them and not let them control you. The reward could even be something much less complicated like watching a movie.

T 4 – Discipline got in the way of teaching. Black males wanted attention on self because of the level of manhood. They wanted to act like a like a man. I would get their attention when I did a one on one and displayed their work. I would call their parent about their successes.

T 5 - I have tried group work with them particularly those that need that extra push. I have used the strategy of lecture, technology centers, group, and individual learning. I think what I try to do is to reach everyone in my classroom.

T 6 - I use project based collaborative learning with all of my students. Group activities provide students with choice and a number of activities that increase critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Research Question # 9

What have you struggled with in terms of teaching African – American male student?

What types of interactions and approaches have worked in your classroom? It is entirely a matter of teaching strategies or is there something else that makes learning happen (getting to know students personally; relating to them)?

T 1 – Once again the teaching strategies sometimes can't be determined until you know the student. Individualized instruction and interaction is needed. Unfortunately in large classes, this doesn't happen as much as you would like it to happen. Therefore, it is frustrating to you as well as the student.

T 2 – I have struggled with African – American males running the show. I dealt with antics that they use to get out of doing work in the classroom, high absenteeism, their perception that school is a waste, gang problems in the classroom and school, being the know it all, on drugs, being the ring leader or bully in the school, and just having a low self-esteem and wanting to be important. I found out that when students like you they would do their best to please you. Once students understand that they can learn and no one is making fun of them their self-esteem needle goes to the positive side.

T 3 – Unfortunately many of my students over the years come from families with serious stability issues. The homes they come from frequently lack father or positive male role models. Getting to know a student and showing interest in their likes, dislikes are tantamount to being able to teach them. Being able to diagnose their learning styles is also important.

T 4 – My struggle is to get black males to focus. Not allowing black males to sit together in classroom and causing a disruption like they do. Changing their seat calling the parents, taking them out of the classroom, telephoning parents is very important. I do not believe you have to get to know your students. I must understand their cultural differences so I can relate to the black male and to get my job done which was to teach.

T 5 – I think that when I was on the Westside I struggled with students that were in the minority and they need to see more African – American males in the school. I think this

would have given them a sense of togetherness. On the eastside, I found them to be a little more open; this is to say that they seem to be more comfortable with their own kind of students. I think that I try to bond with all of my students to show that I care and are willing to speak to them anytime they want someone to talk to them.

T 6 – African – American males, as with all students, need teachers with who they can relate. They need to know their teachers care about them and that they are dedicated to helping them reach their goals.

Research Question # 10

Have you ever moved the seat of an African – American male because you thought they were off task? What were you thinking in using this as a strategy? How did it work?

T 1 – Yes I have moved a students' seat. Depending on the student and the class and how the room is set up, it did work. Sometimes it didn't work.

T 2 – I have moved the seat of my male students and separated them from the others so that they would concentrate on doing their work. When I separated them, I sat down with them and helped them with their assignment. They were the problem. They were keeping other from doing their work. The thing I refused to do was to kick them out of the room. Once I separated them and sat down with them and worked with them, their behavior changed they were able to join the rest of the class.

T 3 – Seating is very important. I have moved many students for many reasons. Some need to be closer to the teacher to be able to focus, attend and pay attention longer. Some just like being closer, it makes the feel special. Some like working with certain people in their class.

T 4 – Yes I have put black males in the front of the room, and corners. Too many students are difficult to teach and make it difficult for others to learn.

T 5 – I think I have particularly when they are disruptive and won't let other learn. I think I tried this strategy because I want to have control of my classroom and I do think this works.

T 6 – I've done this with all my students. I tell them it is good for the classroom dynamics.

Research Question # 11

What other information would you like to share with me about experiences of teaching and interacting with African – American males?

T 1 – I feel quite often our black males have had white teachers who cannot or did not teach them.

T 2 – African – American males fare from single family home where the mother is the head of the household. The males become leaders in the household. The mothers depend on them for so many things. Their role at home is to be charge and in school is to be part of the charge.

T 3 – I always prefer teaching not only African – American males but any males in general instead of any females at all grades. They are more respectful possibly because they see me as a mother figure. When I taught classes with only females the results were better because they didn't see me as someone to compete for attention from males in their class.

T 4 – It is important to black males to have a strong image. Students only black athletes to look up to and other only have women in their lives that are not married.

T 5 – I feel I relate to African – American and interact with them in a positive manner. I think that many African – American males look for someone to take an interested in what they are doing and how they do it. They need to be stroked.

T 6 – I love teaching African – American males! I like the creativity, their energy and their style.

Research Question # 12

This study has a particular interest in how race, gender and teacher quality affect African – American male students’ academic success. Do you have any additional thoughts/feeling on this?

T 1 – I feel that quite often our black male have had white teachers who can not or did not teach them. Instead they were constantly put out of class and or recommended for testing. Even some black teachers do the same. It is very important to get to know the student first, and then you try to do your best to help the student overcome the barriers that prevent him from learning. Sometimes it’s the small things like keeping something to eat for the student who never make it to breakfast on time and you know he hasn’t had anything to eat since the night before.

T 2 - I believe that African – American males can be successful in spite of the neighborhood environment has far greater impression upon them than school has but when they find a teacher that turns them around, they become very successful.

T 3 – **To** be able to remove negative external environment helped students immensely when they were at the youth center. After 6 – 8 months their reading and other skill were markedly improved from their intake pretesting. They weren’t exposed to drugs, abusive parenting, poverty, or negative peer pressure and given breakfast, lunch dinner and a safe

environment. Often once they returned to their communities even with an aftercare program, they would commit another crime so they could come back to the youth center.

T 4 - African – American or white teachers should make sure that these students succeed and make sure they need the vocabulary, reading, math skills to succeed in today's world.

T 5 – I do believe that race does have an affect on African – American males. So many African – American males need that role model of another male as well as a teacher that really care about their well being.

T 6 – One missing factor I African – American males academic focus is a severe lack of role models who are educator, i.e. other African – American males.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

As stated in Chapter I of this study, there have be no greater challenge than how to improve the academic success of African – American males in public schools. All facets that affect African – American males stem from such ideas as educational inequalities, denial of education, substandard inner city schools, the race and gender of teachers and finally teacher quality.

Previous studies have demonstrated that the perceptions of low achievement of African – American males have recently exposed an astonishing nationwide “boy crisis” in schools. It is no wonder that African – American males faces many challenges. Social and economic issues have indicated that many drop out of school and realize that a high school diploma is necessary to succeed in today’s society.

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into what issues affected the academic achievement of African – American males. The researcher identified several components that could affect the achievement of African – American males in their academic plight. Among these components were race, gender and teacher quality. All of these

components were useful to the researcher because they provided the framework from which the study was conducted. In addition, as the researcher analyzed the data through the questions/answers of the participants, he was able to conclude that all of the above mentioned components played a significant role in the conclusions.

As explained in Chapter III and demonstrated in Chapter IV, the methods used to collect and analyze data were semi-structured interviews. This type of method of collecting data was useful to this study because it gave the researcher multiple sources of data to collect and analyze. The use of the interviews (face to face) enabled this researcher to explore with student and teacher participants their experience.

The collection method used in this study was qualitative. Qualitative research is concerned with non-statistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena. It draws on an inductive process in which themes emerge through analysis of the data collected by such techniques as interviews and in this case, observations. Samples are usually small groups in a population in which the participants are purposely selected. The researcher of this study compared the responses of all the participants with considerations to how race, gender and teacher quality impacted the academic success of African – American male students.

Data interpretation and analysis involved making sense of what people have said, looking for similarities and dissimilarities, putting together what was narrated in one interview with narratives from other interviews synthesizing the experience of teachers and students on the research topic. (Patton, 2002). This researcher used this analysis technique when analyzing the information gathered during the individual interview of all the participants. The candid remarks of both the students and teachers provided the

ground work necessary for the researcher to determine central themes germane to the theory of the researcher. The data collection method used in this study assisted the researcher in comparing the responses of both groups (students and teachers) in formulating central themes on how race, gender and teacher quality impacted the students' academic success. This method use to collect and analyze data was one-on-one interviews. This data collection method was very useful to this study because it disclosed the rich, full and detailed stories of both African – American male students and their teachers.

In this study, I explored African – American male student's perception of how race, gender and teacher quality was evident within the classroom and how it affects their academic success. Each of the 6 student participants provided rich information through the interview process and well as the 6 teachers that participated in this study. This information provided the framework to develop conclusions for the study. Educators and other stakeholders who are interested in the welfare and future of our school systems should find critical and valuable information for future planning from these conclusions. This information may also assist educators and policymakers in closing the achievement gap of African – American males and improving academic success for African – American male students.

The findings in this study add to the body of knowledge about educating African – American male students, in that it focused on high school African – American male students and their perception of race, gender and teacher quality. This study added the important stimulation from educators as well as administrators to collectively understand and listen to students' concerns and ideas regarding their academic successes.

Summary of Findings

Throughout this study, the researcher identified several ideas that affect the academic success of African – American males in school. Race, gender and teacher quality became the central focus of this study. The findings of this study build on previous research of by suggesting that race, gender and teacher quality does influence the academic success of African – American males. This research is important because it helps to determine how African – American male students’ best learn and develop in ways that will ensure their success not only in society but after graduation from high school.

After interviewing six student participants and six teacher participants, it was revealed to this researcher, that race was a consideration to many of the students and teachers when asked about their experience in the classroom. The evidence showed that to the students race didn’t matter to them in their quest for academic success. The research showed however, that there were several ideas that existed under this umbrella of the race of a teacher and how to achieve academic success.

These findings connect with literature on the education of young black men. In 2002, Kunjufu theorized that there are not only racial, but gender mismatches in schools for African – American males who were taught by white females. He felt that the race of the teacher contributed to the failure of African – American students. Lawrence (1997) expressed hope that antiracist training would translate into improved teacher attitudes in the classroom, though teacher education students initially resist learning about racism and their own racial privilege, in time they become more willing to talk about race and began to accept the challenge of taking responsibility of racism. (Lawrence, 1997). It would appear that in my study, the student were not willing to talk about racism in the

classroom and many skirted the issue that race had anything to do with their academic success. When asked about the race of a teacher, those that were willing to share their thoughts stated that they did not care about the race of the teacher who taught them. The students just simply wanted someone (teachers) who cared and understood them.

Some researchers believe that African - American students need to see more teachers who look like them to raise their self - esteem and to help them know they can succeed. There may be some sort of comfort zone that is established between an African - American teacher and an African - American student; this might have implications for students performing better in the classroom when they are being taught by teachers that share their racial identity.

In the literature review, Pianata, (1999), argues similarly by stating that teachers appear to be more effective with students of their own race or ethnicity. My research points out that many teachers thought they could relate to African - American males when they too were of the same race or ethnic background.

Secondly, the results also indicated that the gender of the teacher has little or no affect on the learning outcomes of the African - American male students. Yet in an article in Newsweek (2007) written by Thomas Dee, Dee states “learning from a teacher of the opposite gender has a detrimental effect on students’ academic progress.” “It is undisputable that children need strong male models from an early age,” (p. 26). When asked by this researcher, the students pointed out that they wanted a male role model. Additionally, many felt that female teachers lack the control necessary to teach effectively. However, African - American male students wanted a caring type of teacher that understood how learning should take place within the classroom environment.

Many stated that it was more important to them to have a teacher that was caring. They really didn't worry about the gender of the teacher.

Moreover, the students that participated in this study attributed a great deal of their success to not just one gender but to those teachers who helped them develop a feeling of self as well as an understanding of themselves as the students. Many felt that if teachers understood them as a person, they tended to want to succeed in school. The "self" concept appeared several times when the student participants began to get personal about their life outside of school. They reflected that their outside life had an impact on their school life and how successful they were in school. They also reiterated that their hopes and dreams gave them motivation to complete their high school education. Their reflection of "self" and the wanting to be understood surfaced several times during the interviews.

Some researchers found that teachers of the opposite gender had a detrimental effect on students' academic progress. (Dee, 2007). Dee also pointed out that teachers interact differently with students of similar gender than they do with students of opposite gender. This includes evidence suggesting disciplinary procedures and proclivity to discipline vary by both student and teacher gender. Likewise, a teacher's perception of student characteristics and abilities appear to systematically vary by gender. Evidence suggests that male teachers tend to be more authoritative whereas female teachers tend to be more supportive and expressive.

When the topic of gender surfaced in the study, the gender of the teacher wasn't relevant as to the academic success of the African – American males. The sample population did not care about the gender of their teacher. They did, however, share that

they viewed male teachers as role models. These role models were the ones that wanted them to succeed and were often authoritarian. Many of these male teachers contributed to helping them learn.

Third, the impact of teacher quality was another concern when the researcher examined how the teachers helped the students succeed. It was clear that the students wanted the support of the female teachers and expected the discipline of the male teachers to help them succeed academically.

Teacher quality is essential to raising achievement: therefore, students need high-quality teachers (Emerick, Hirsch & Berry, 2004). Teacher quality is an accurate indicator of student's performance in school (Carter, 2000).

Some indicators of good teacher qualities were suggested in the No Child Left Behind Act. It stated that being educated, certified and having knowledge of the subject matter as qualities a teacher must possess. It is no doubt that the teachers in this study were educated and highly qualified in their field of teaching, which is required by state law (HQT) and therefore have a knowledge the subject matter in their field. Within the framework of teacher quality lays a belief in teachers' ability to have a positive effect on students learning. As one student stated, "I had a connection with my teachers." These teachers used life skills, set goals and established strategies and expected high standards from the students.

One theme that emerged through this investigation was the concept of their favorite teacher caring for them. Most of the participants in the group spoke of their favorite teacher as someone who helped them improve a great deal in school. Several spoke

about how that teacher brought out the best in their performance and inspired them to reach higher goals.

The students felt the teachers they selected as favorites had provided more than just teaching. The teachers encouraged the students and expected them to do well. One said his favorite teacher lived in the neighborhood as was described as a person who did more than just help him. One stated “I had one math teacher that helped to understand math the way that I understand it now.” It was evident that caring about them was significant.

The teachers used several tools to motivate the students. Student praise and other rewards were used as well as attention given to life skills to encourage African – American males to become more successful. Overwhelmingly, there was a great concern with discipline when dealing with African – American males students. The students were often found to be defiant and sometimes angry. This was exhibited in their inability to do their work and/or focus on their teachers

Value of Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology was selected to conduct this research and to summarize the data in this study. It was also use to examine the central question, “How does race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males? Grounded theory begins with a research situation. Within the situation, the task of the researcher was to understand what is happening, and how the participants respond to the question. This was done through interviews and observations. For this researcher, the aim of this narrative research was not to bring about change, but to listen to the responses of both the students and the teachers to collect data. This researcher then took the collected data, which were audio-taped, and transcribed the tapes. From the previous

steps the arduous tasks of looking for commonalities in the transcriptions took form. This analytical process helped this researcher determine emerging themes and conclusions to supported or deny the beginning hypothesis that race, gender and teacher quality has an impact of the academic success of African – American males.

Race – Gender – Teacher Quality - Impact on Students

While the challenges of life presented itself to many of the students, this study provided many informative perspectives about African – American males regarding their preferences to male/female teachers, instructional strategies that worked with them, and the type of learning environment that made success possible.

An important factor the African - American males emphasized throughout the study is the influence of their teacher, whether male or female, had on their ability to learn. Many students discussed how critical it was for their teacher to encourage and offer words of support to them throughout the day. Many wanted just to be recognized as a person with self – worth. Too many times teachers do not realize the magnitude of their words and how their words may alter a child’s perception regarding school. These male students talked about how motivation and high expectations from the teachers who cared about them and helped them developed a positive attitude toward their academic success.

The male students in this study talked about how important it was for learning to be fun and engaging. They wanted the teachers to develop an understanding of their lives which would enable the teachers to increase the relevance of learning and make examples of the learning more meaningful. Teachers should enthusiastically and positively appreciate and accommodate the similarities and differences among the students’

cultures. Baer (1999) noted the crucial need for teachers to get to know their students in order to help make learning meaningful. Students can assist the teacher in determining the types of learning that can increase their academic potential by answering questions regarding their preferred learning styles at the beginning of each school year. Teachers must know what students enjoy and deem important. Educators should attempt to include students' interests in the planning stage to provide an array of joyous learning opportunities for students. Teachers may need additional training so they understand how to approach and gather this type of information and how to apply it to their learning environment.

How does race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males? It was hoped that the male students in this study now have an awareness of how race, gender and teacher quality can and did affect their academic success. It was hoped that this awareness of race, gender and teacher quality gave the student participants an opportunity to think about these characteristics as they are connected to high school. This awareness offered the students a chance to reflect and clarify their previous views on education and presented a reasonable explanation if race gender and teacher quality had an impact on their education.

Race, Gender and Teacher Quality – Impact on Teachers

How did race, gender and teacher quality influence the academic achievement of young black men, according to the teacher's narratives? The interviews of the teachers in this study revealed that the teachers, if female, viewed the African – American male as a discipline problem. Many saw the African – American male as trying to be equal to the teacher which created problems with classroom control. It was revealed that many of the

students came from a home environment in which the African – American male is the dominate figure. They control the lives of the female(mother) and other family members. This carryover is often exhibited in the classroom. Many teachers revealed that they preferred to teach students of their own race and ethnicity. While the issue of race and gender of the teacher appeared to be less important to the students, it was more present in the narratives of the teachers. The narratives of the teacher remind us of the struggle that persists in crossing racial boundaries. It also disclosed that the students had their favorite teachers as well as those they considered role models. According to several students their favorite teacher was someone who demonstrated care for them and their learning. The students felt that certain actions by their teachers portrayed this concern. To promote and develop successful teacher – student relationship, Ford (1995) argued that teachers should exemplify determination and commitment in teaching African – American children. This act of caring demonstrated by the teacher to the student is essential in creating this profound relationship. It is the opinion of this researcher that teachers should learn to identify characteristics that help students, particularly African – American males such as who they are, what they value, and how to set and reach for realistic goals. Many students shared their career goals in the interview process. Some had high expectations for themselves and other just wanted to finish high school.

Given the data from students and teachers, it is clear that having motivation to succeed and increase academic performance was something all of the participants felt they needed. The students discussed several sources of motivation, including teachers, family members, and other students and how those sources encouraged them.

Teachers cannot have negative feelings about minority students and expect them to maximize their full potential. For minority or at-risk students to achieve their goals and objectives, teachers have to change their mental framework. When students seek praise as a vehicle to succeed then it is up to the teacher to note what is praiseworthy and encourage students to perform well. The students' comments in this study supported the importance of teacher attitude to student performance and motivation.

Recommendations for Educators

There are three key recommendations for educators to consider when teaching African – American male students. First, consider the African – American male student as a person. It was revealed in this study that the male students wanted their teachers to see them as young adults that had problems beyond the scope of school. The students wanted their teachers to understand that they had to live adult lives outside the school environment. Some had night jobs as well as families to support. Many revealed they had career dreams/goals and graduation was part of that dream/goal. Second, create a classroom atmosphere that makes a connection with African – American males. Several students shared that they wanted a classroom atmosphere where the teachers made a connection with them. The students wanted the teachers to see that learning was important to them and they wanted the teachers to care about what and how they learned. They also wanted their teachers to understand that they had made mistakes in the past but wanted to build a better future. They wanted their teachers to make that connection in the classroom to help them become more successful. Third, for male teachers, try to become a role model for African – American males. The students in this study pointed out those male teachers played a pivotal role in their education. A student divulged that one of his

male teachers took an interest in his learning because he insisted that he succeeded by staying on him to do his school work. He also stated that he was attached to the teacher by revealing that the teacher lived in the neighborhood. He then felt closer to the teacher because of this connection to school and the neighborhood. This helped him build a relationship with the teacher as his male role model.

Suggestions for Further Research

Suggestions for further research would be to repeat this study in other urban school districts throughout the county and state to get more definitive data. By doing so, the researcher can begin to generalize the influence of race, gender and teacher quality on the academic success of African – American males by noting any differences and similarities per county and state.

Concluding Thoughts

The participants in this study provided significant insight regarding race, gender and teacher quality. Some perceptions the students presented are excellent as a backdrop for future studies. The qualitative data yielded more information on what African – American males think about their learning abilities, teachers and their future.

In the beginning, urban high schools were established to serve the educational needs of the general public, but high schools have not always met the needs of every student. Some students were turned off by the attitude and connection of many teachers. Some students were not interested in the curriculum the district provided because it too didn't meet the needs of many students particularly the African – American male students. Alternative schools seem to be the answer to meet the demand of many students. These

alternative schools ranged from single gender schools to work/school type of high schools. Alternative high schools for at risk students became the focus of many school districts. It was not surprising that among the majority of students to attend these alternative high schools was the African – American male.

Teacher expectations are particularly important in the development of the African – American male. Positive racial attitudes by the teacher can boost achievement. Low teacher expectations tend to reduce the motivation of students. This contributes to low self-image or self-esteem. Teachers exhibiting low expectations of African – American male students often ignore requests from these students and sometimes even shun their presence. For many African – American youth, factors such as low teacher expectations and cultural bias. This produces a defeating, discouraging experience.

The problems that plague high schools is to look at successful alternative high schools for a model for better meeting the needs of today's African – American males. This is not to say that African – American males students need an alternative school setting it only says that success can be obtained in an alternative school setting for some. The learning community formed in those schools is a viable alternative. Common-bond learning communities can be the central idea around which can be developed the complex balance of environment and forces needed to really meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's emerging generations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

STUDENT PARTICIPATION NEEDED IN A
DISSERTATION STUDY

*“An Examination of African – American Males and the
Influence of Race, Gender and Teacher Quality on their
Academic Success”*

The purpose of the study is to provide insight and describe how race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males.

- **There is no compensation for your participation in this study.**
- **Six Males students will be chosen.**
- **All interviews will be audio – taped, with your permission.**
- **The researcher will interview each student that participates for about 45 minutes.**
- **Your participation will not interfere with your academic schedule.**
- **If interested – please contact Conrad Hamlet at 216-389-1536 or through email at Conrad.E.Hamlet@cmsdnet.net**

APPENDIX B

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Student Consent Form for Participation in an Examination of African American Males and the Influence of Race, Gender and Teacher Quality on their Academic Success

My name is Conrad E. Hamlet. I am a doctoral student in the Urban Education Ph.D. program at Cleveland State University, and I am working with Dr. Anne Galletta, who is a member of the College of Education and Human Services faculty and the principal investigator for this research project. The purpose of this study is to provide insight into the success of African – American males and also to describe how race, gender and teacher quality on their academic success. The findings from this study will be helpful in considering current and future teaching practices to address the academic success of African – American males. This study will collect perspectives from African – American male students. I am seeking your participation in the following: an interview that will take approximately 45 minutes.

I will, with your permission, audiotape the interview. You may at any point during the interview request that I turn the tape recorder off.

The interview will be given a code number and will be transcribed. Only I the researcher will have access to the transcript and audio tape. This is to ensure your confidentiality and privacy. Excerpts from the interview may be included in a final dissertation after the study. Your name will not be mentioned or attached to the transcript or in any other reports.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to stop at any time or to decline to answer a question. Your participation may involve benefits, such as an opportunity to reflect and gain additional insights concerning your experience in the classroom. It may also involve risks, such as your revisiting of experiences as they relate to this topic.

If you have any questions regarding this study and/or would like to receive the completed study, please call Dr. Anne Galletta at 216-802-3044.

There are two copies of this letter. After signing them, keep one copy for your records and return the other one. Thank you in advance for your participation, cooperation and support. Please indicate your agreement to participate by signing below.

I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate in this study by being interviewed.

Yes No

I agree to have my interview audio taped.

Yes No

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research participant I can contact the CSU Institutional Board at 216-687-3630.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE (Student)

Informant Name: _____

Grade _____

Date _____

1. Could you tell me about yourself? (your education, things you like to do, your career goals?)
2. Describe the type of classroom you enjoy and have been successful in learning.
3. Could you talk about the type of things that have motivated you and helped you learn? (probe: type of classroom activities-lectures, group work, partner work, technology, independent work in the classroom).
4. Tell me about those learning situations that got in the way of you learning and succeeding in school.
5. Can you take a few minute and talk about your favorite teachers. What is it about them that make them your favorite? (probe: What did they do? How did they relate to the students? Can you tell me a story about that teacher – a time when she/he made a difference?)
6. How do you feel about female teachers? Male teachers and teachers of a different race?
7. What things would you change about female teachers you have had in the past that might have help you to learn better? Are there changes with the males teachers you had that could help you learn better?
8. Were there any female/male teachers in school that help you to reach your goals, complete assignments, work to your potential, and help you to succeed?
9. How and where do you prefer sitting in a classroom and why?
10. Tell me about your favorite female or male teacher, and why they are your favorite. (probe: what race was the teacher)
11. What other information would you like to share for this interview that will be helpful me understand your feelings about teachers that have helped you succeed?

12. Do you believe that you succeeded more with a male teacher rather than a female teacher? Do you think having the same racial background provides a sense of connection? Can you talk more about this?

APPENDIX D

Research Question #1:

Could you tell me about yourself? (your education, things you like to do, your career goals?).

P 1 – I am eighteen years old and I'm about to be 19 next month on the 30th. I'm a eleventh grader, I thought I was gonna be a senior but my credits wasn't right. So I came to Promise to get my credits right and now I'm struggling with this OTT. I like to play football and eat. My career goal I would like to go to the Navy. That's what I wanted to do since I was a kid. I'm definitely going to the Navy after I'm out of school.

P 2 - I'd say that a career goal that I do want to achieve, I wanna be a director of movies you know, director or camera man just to get into movies, acting, uh I want to be like a comedian, do stand up, if not a comedian something like a, that is fun, real and genuine is comedy to me. I attend school at Promise Academy. A few years ago I went to Greater Heights Academy they closed down and before then it was Hope High.

P 3 - Uh, stuff I like to do basically draw probably like just sit around sleep at the house, I don't really do nothing. Pre-school all the way until I think 2nd grade I went to Mt. Pleasant when it was the Catholic School where Hope Academy is on 131st. And I transferred from there to Moses Cleveland. Around 4th grade I went to Jamison all the way until my 8th grade year from there I went to Kennedy and now I am here. Probably I want to be a tattoo artist or something like some kind of career involving art.

P 4 - Okay well, I wouldn't say that I had a rather complex childhood, but I had a hard time finding myself and as I got older school was a kind of way to cope or vent; it

something I was good at so I just leaned back on that and further along the line, sports and well, girls and stuff like that; typical teenager stuff. Um, I am into music. I like to play the guitar and I occasionally play video games, and sport. Well I plan on actually going to CSU to be a Electrical Engineer and minor in music performance with the guitar.

P 5 – I ‘m a student at Promise Academy. I want to major in Business Tech, I plan starting my own business one day.

P 6 - I like basketball, games and girls. I want to finish high school and go on to college. If I can’t get into college I will join the army.

Research Question #2

Describe the time of classroom you enjoy and have been successful in learning.

P 1 - The type of classroom that I enjoy is the type of classroom where kids not, you know, running over the teacher. The teacher can handle the class and the teacher is strong and he makes sure you got what he said; he or she said.

P 2 - I like to watch movies and read a little bit.

P 3 - A small class.

P 4 - I’ve been pretty successful in, I wouldn’t necessarily say fast paced environments, but an environment whereas everyone is on the same page and we don’t have to really do so much as review we just do the lesson, pretty much everyone gets it, do the work and keep it moving. I really don’t like to hang on one subject for too long or I’ll tend to get bored with work.

P 5 - Science

P 6 - I like a exciting classroom I get bored quick. I like to be loud in class; I guess you would call me a class clown.

Research Question #3

Could you talk about the type of things that have motivated you and helped you learn?

(probe: type of classroom activities-lectures, group work, partner work, technology, independent work in the classroom).

P 1 - Well my sister actually, my older sister we had like she'll have a class one year and then I come and have the same teacher and they would know my sister cause we went to the same school and they would be like well your sister got an "A" and I want you to get an "A" too. So I kinda really wanted to push and strive to be you know as good as my sister was in school.

P 2 - Um, my mother. She motivates me in way by knowing how I did and what I'm supposed to do and to get out there and got out of high school.

P 3 - Things that motivate me and help me learn just wanting to know, like something that if I had ask like something and I want to know it I want to learn the answer. Just if I don't, you know, if I do really want to know. But something that motivates me a topic that I am interested in and know about it, I'll start to look into it myself.

P 4 - I mean I just, seeing where other people come from and seeing where some people ended up, it just motivates me for the better and some, most of my teachers, I wouldn't necessarily say were non-compliant with students but they were just ignorant of where we grew up. And they don't understand some of the situations that we go through. And most of the teachers that I've had can relate to those situations so---it kinda flowed.

P 5 - My religion makes me wanna soar higher and succeed, I also have a good friends that look out for me and they build my confidence.

P 6 – My mom motivates me. I never really know my father, and I need him but it is what it is. I guess I like group work so I can talk a lot. I really do like working alone.

Research Question #4

Tell me about those learning situations that got in the way of you learning and succeeding in school.

P 1 – Well I just like to do my work in class and I don't really like, you know a lot of activities and group work and stuff like that. (Do you like partner work?) Sometimes, it depends though but it got to be right partner. Cause I don't wanna be the only one that is doing all the work.

P 2 - I work better with lectures, someone helping me to work that way and we all talk it out with and get it together. As long as I have someone to talk it out with and I can understand my work a lot better.

P 3 – Classmates and teachers.

P 4 – Well I like diverse types of learning and we can do activities, lectures and group work and all of that. But, when it really came down to it, I would like to be technical and on my own with a little support from the teacher here and there. But I never had a problem working with others if they were able or capable of doing the work. Uh, let's see. I was never really a fan of waiting on others. I get the no child left behind thing to where if we don't move on until just about everyone gets it. I support it in a way but then again it kind of slowed me from moving on because I had to work at another's pace instead of my own.

P 5 – I never really struggled. I always was a focused student.

P 6 - I struggle with reading since I don't like reading. I guess I like group work because I can talk a lot in them.

Research Question #5

Can you take a few minutes and talk about your favorite teachers. What is it about them that make them your favorite? (probe: What did they do? How did they relate to the students? Can you tell me a story about that teacher – a time when she/he made a difference?

P 1 – My favorite teacher, well one of my favorite teachers is Mr. Cobb at my last school which is Martin Luther King. Well 8th grade I had him for Math and then I thought I was done, you know and I wasn't going to see him again and I thought you know was gonna push me on and I had an "A" in his class; and 9th grade I came back and he was the 9th grade Math teacher, so that was cool too, Algebra 1. And then I had him the next year, you know, No, I had him in the eighth and ninth grade. He made sure you understood the work. He made sure you understand the curriculum and he made sure you understood everything. And if you didn't he would help you, you know he would go those extra steps to help you or you might have to stay after class to help, he would tutor you on his lunch break or whatever. How did he relate? Everyone had a understanding with Mr. Cobb. He just wanted to make sure that everyone had an understanding. It wasn't a lot of slacking off, if he saw you slacking off he would put you to the side and let you know what he was doing and what he wanted you to do, you know. And then hopefully you would come around.

P 2 - My favorite teacher they were here, one he is more understanding, child out and cool. The others one she, she's really smart, she is the smartest teacher to me here and

she helps me out with my math real easy shows me everything, talks it out and help me through it. She goes over problems where I would be good; she really talks to me so that I do know what I need to know. Just their quality basically someone you can relate to you can talk to them even though their age is different from us. They weren't just so strict but they are on it. They're not completely strict teachers going by all the rules but they know what you are doing. As long as you try to do your best they're there to help you out and whenever you fall back they are going to come at you. I think a lot of other students liked those two teachers too.

P 3 – Most of the female teachers in the past it was always kinda like, for a female teacher they get over. I feel like students don't really respect female teachers. If there was something to change about it like, I feel like they should like handle a situation to get rid of all the distraction students that don't really want to learn instead of just like get ran out. Like all the other students it's always the female teachers that get you ran out of school. That's all.

P 4 – Okay, well one of my favorite teachers was Mr. Bolden back at Louis Pastor which is closed now. I think he is over at FDR now and coaching Glenville football. He was a History teacher. Now the thing about Mr. Bolden was he grew up in the neighborhood in which the school was and still lives there until present day. He can relate to every student out there. He lives in the heart of where we come from. It wasn't that more so of him trying to tell us like "hey – you see me", this is what you can be you can be better then these streets." It wasn't like that, it was him basically saying like "I know where you coming from and it don't have to end that way. I ain't necessarily telling you to be me but do something better for yourself." Mr. Bolden was on of those teachers you would

say was if you grew up without a father, he was one of those people you could connect with in a way to whereas he can put you on life's situation to help you make better decisions inside and outside of the classroom. He was just a positive influence throughout.

P 5 – My teachers were like warriors, they were tough on me but it made me better they would take the time to make sure I was learning.

P 6 – I guess my favorite teachers were in elementary school they like to take care of us and make sure we did our work. I really didn't have a favorite teacher until six grade I can't remember his name but he just believed that we all could make it. He was real light skin we didn't know whether he was black or white but I think he was mix. He dressed real cool, and smelled good all the time. I think he really liked kids.

Research Question # 6

How do you feel about female teachers? Male teachers and teacher of a different race?

P 1 – Females teachers are powerful but sometimes they could lose control over a class, you know because of the size and the guys you know. Well Mr. Cobb was a white guy. So I math really you know—race don't bother me. Race don't bother me.

P 2 – Race is really not help you try to learn or how to read. Most female teacher have control over the room, over the whole classroom. It they didn't try to like have too much control and they can yell. To me I don't just like someone to holler and yell at me. Yes I have many teachers that helped me. Both.

P 3 – Never had them. I just like, for one I just, I guess I don't tolerate a lot of people. Teachers don't happen to be at the top of my list, I have a low tolerance for them. Like depending on who the female teacher is. Like, really don't feel a certain way about any

teacher, male or female. I just feel like that's your job, that's how I feel about it. In a way like people of a different race depending because as far as I think of people like teachers of a different race like certain races like teachers feel like they know it all. Or they just feel like they done in a way like..... I feel more comfortable with a female teacher. It really doesn't matter what race she is.

P 4 - Oh uh, like I said female or male it really doesn't make so much of a difference if they can relate to the students, if they can relate to the students then the connection will be just as IT would with a male they can be female or male. If they can relate and understand to where that student is coming from just about anyone can get along with anyone. Well it depends there are certain type of male teachers. You got some teachers that will work with you, your have some that became a teacher because they feel as if they know it all and some tend, I don't know, they look down on you, you know, that they know it all because I guess they feel as if that if their authority out reigns your will or whatever you feel as if you are there for. Well I was never really on of those types, but enjoy all of my teachers, if it was where you could sit down with me and you can understand what I am talking about, not necessarily judging me or assuming, we can really get along, all you got to do is listen and relate, anyone can get along. It's all about understanding.

P 5 – It does not matter what race, gender, color. We can learn from each other.

P 6 - **They** are ok. I like black teachers I just think they understand me.

Research Question # 7

What things would you change about female teachers you have had in the past that might have help you to learn better?

P 1 - I don't know actually.

P 2 – Most female teachers don't have control over the room.

P 3 – Not that I know of right now I can't really think of.

P 4 - I can say this --- all my attractive teachers I went to class.

P 5 – No. A person can only change oneself.

P 6 – They can be weak so I would make them a little stronger.

Research Question # 8

Were there any female teachers in school that help you to reach your goals, complete assignments, work to your potential, and help you succeed?

P 1 – Well I don't really know. Well certain male teachers like Mr. Cobb you know he was perfect. Not saying that he was perfect but he helped me learn and I learning a lot from him. With math and OTT I shot through it the first time.

P 2 – Yes I have many teachers that helped me. Both.

P 3 – Not that I know of, I can't really think of any.

P 4 - To be honest I actually enjoyed the iron curtain of male teachers, I mean don't get me wrong they get on your nerves from time to time but them constantly being on you, I mean they give you something to work for. Like back at Empire we were 3rd, 4th and 2nd grade we were children and we couldn't understand everyday why they made use come to school, shirt tie and dress shoes, we could not understand it, we couldn't but now I

understand it. I don't have a problem throwing on shirt, tie and dress shoes and go for job interview and something like that; it is almost routine now.

P 5 – Yes, a few they would call me help me study and were role models.

P 6 – I can't remember any at least no one I can think of.

Research Question # 9

How and where do you prefer sitting in a classroom and why?

P 1 – I always like to sit in the front of the classroom; because I learn better and you know in the back of the class people talking and really don't, I can't focus when a lot of people talking.

P 2 – I will sit anywhere. I can interact with people that's around me pretty much just from my feeling of not wanting to not be alone, or whatever.

P 3 - If I was failing in the classroom I'd probably sit in the back. I really don't like to be noticed. It help me see better because like I don't be like having my glasses, I can see from that distance. I just like the back of the class. It's just the whole thing like I don't want to be in the front or the middle and be noticed.

P 4 – Well I was one of those students where people would call scared to be smart. So I was real she and I didn't want people to really know it as much. I usually sit towards the middle back, I used to sit in the middle but all the way back in the classroom so I can see just about everybody so when I was to answer her question I was like everybody would turn around and look at me like who answered back and I would just be sitting there.

P 5 – In the front, because I wanna focus and pay attention.

P 6 – I like to change me seat all the time maybe the teacher won't remember me and leave me alone.

Research Question # 10

Tell me about your favorite female or male teacher, and why they are your favorite.

(probe: what race was the teacher).

P 1 – Mr. Cobb. Yes. When I slacked off he got me together. Well not my full potential because you know when I got to the 9th grade I had Geometry and I had a different teacher. But when I needed help in Geometry I'd always go back to him; so he kinda help me get to my potential. Cuz, we got along good and that I understood him. White.

P 2 - A complete understanding of what it is I needed to do and if I couldn't understand it they made it simple enough for me to get through. Black, Black.

P 3 - Never had one.

P 4 – Well I talked about Mr. Bolden. I going to talk about Ms. Gholson, she was an Algebra teacher at Louis Pasture as well. She was down to earth, I mean she didn't take anything from you, she let you have it when you deserved it but she was always there for you she made sure that you understood the work. She always checked up on you, I mean she seen that if you have one of the accelerated student she would always have a lesson plan to the side whereas if you were to run over the lesson have, she made sure you always had something to do. She was African – American.

P 5 – No response.

P 6 – Like I said before it was a male and I don't remember his name but he looked good dressed good and smell good all the time. I think he was mix. He just like me and the rest of the kids.

Research Question # 11

What other information would you like to share for this interview that will help me to understand your feelings about teachers that have helped you succeed?

P 1 – In a sense but not really because some teachers they just might have that understanding that connection currently another student might not have.

P 2 – No. A tad bit, yeah. Because they went through a lot of things I've been through and they know what I'm doing right now. They see if I'm messing up they know there is a pretty good reason why I this problem messed up in school.

P 3 – No verbal response.

P 4 – No I believe that we needed female and male teachers. I mean we needed the support of a female teacher but we needed to rod of the male teachers. We needed discipline and comfort. We needed both, we had to have a balance.

P 5 – Life and its surroundings is what you make it and racial things should not matter.

P 6 – I wish I could read better. I like black teacher better I think they care and understand us.

Research Question # 12

Do you believe that you succeeded more with a male teacher rather than a female teacher? Do you think having the same racial background provide a sense of connection? Can you talk about this feeling?

P 1 – About what? Well I really need my help in Science because I just got my results back from my OTT that I took back in October and I missed it by eight points. Alright you got it. That's it? Clean, cut and dry.

P 2 - They are generous people they very generous and very, very caring.

P 3 - I'd probably say a female teacher. Like in a way it does but then or you start to actually talk to the person you can figure out things like that connection you thought you would have with the teacher the connection that you want like it can be somebody of a different race like Hispanic, like you can have or you might have a connection with them and sit down and talk to them and like see her explain something to you and you actually understand it then you would with a teacher of the same race and it really doesn't matter like what kind connection.

P 4 - Well I can say just about every teacher that I had.

P 5 - The only thing the teachers should instill is the fact that the children are the future....Knowledge is power.

P 6 - I think some teacher should be fired. I don't think all of them like us and especially when we are black.

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Research Question #1

Tell me about yourself by explaining your teaching experiences in an urban district.

How many years of teaching? In what schools did you teach?

T 1 - This teacher taught for 30 years in the Cleveland Metropolitan School district in Elementary and Junior High Schools. She was a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, reading/Title 1 teacher and a Literacy Specialist.

T 2 - This teacher was a Special Needs teacher with the district for 35 years. Her first approach to teaching was to teach what she learned in college. She felt that she was frustrating the students and everyone was at odds with each other. She eventually threw away all lesson plans and theories she learned in college and began to listen to her student's likes and dislikes and thing about their culture. She also realized that many students were turned off by school. She learned about urban living through her students because she came from a suburban background.

T 3 - This teacher began as an Art teacher in the late seventies in a Junior high school in Cleveland. She felt that all the junior high were difficult situations. She was laid off in the early 80s and this is when she became certificated as a Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorder teacher. She taught SBH students for 16 years. Ten of those years she taught at

the Youth Development Center – a residential treatment facility in Hudson, Ohio for delinquent and drug abuse teens.

T 4 - This teacher is a Visual Arts teacher for 30 years. He taught in Junior high schools, detention homes as well as high school in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

T 5 - This teacher is an English teacher at a Magnet school. She has been teaching 15 years and has been on the Westside as well as some Eastside school. Prefers to work on the eastside.

T 6 – Began teaching in the Cleveland Heights – University Heights School in 1992. Started in Cleveland at C.W.Eliot in 1999 was there for 7 years. Currently at John Hay Architecture and Design for 6 years.

Research Question # 2

What grade level/subject areas have you taught?

T 1 - Reading – grades 1 – 12.

T 2 – Ninth and tenth grader reading and math (special needs).

T 3 - Pre-school to twelfth grade. Art, Severe Behavior Handicapped, Reading, Home Instruction to pregnant teens, emotionally disturbed and hospitalized students and all students as a magnet school librarian.

T 4 – Art – kindergarten through grade twelve.

T 5 - I have taught 9th grade through 12th grade English.

T 6 - I teach American History, African – American History, Modern World History, Government and Street Law. Grades 7 – 12.

Research Question # 3

Could you talk about your approach in the classroom in general in terms of teaching your subject and motivating your students? What practices do you use to motivate your students?

T 1 - Whole group instruction, small group, center activities, peer teaching and individual instruction. I used incentives such as sticker charts for motivation with younger students. Setting and reaching goals for the older children – contests. Self – worth and instill in students to always do your best. Feeling good about yourself.

T 2 - My approach was making reading and math relevant to real world situations to motivate my students. I took the TV shows, movies, music, events, sports, and the news to make what they were doing has relevant as possible. I had to show them how reading and math was important and that it was something that they needed and how it related to everything that they do in life.

T 3 - Used many tools that worked when I worked with teens with behavior issues. I walk around the room to see what they are doing. I used praise to help know that they were doing the right thing. I have a wide array of experiences with teaching African – American males. I wanted them to see me as a parental figure. I try to be consistent with rules. By the end of the school year I have the type of relationship with the students where eye contact I all that I necessary when I see a student doing an infraction – for example sitting on a table instead of a chair.

T 4 - I used the approach of trying to further a child's' education rather than just doing pictures. My practices were to display they work; promote their art in galleries, libraries, and community malls.

T 5 - I feel that students should come to me ready to learn. I try to motivate them by giving them the chance to use their skills to enhance what they already know. I sometime encourage them to broaden their experiences.

T 6 - I communicate high expectations and a belief that students can succeed in my class. They understand the class is meaningful; they are being taught 21st century skills, i.e. critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Research Question # 4

Because the focus of the study is the success of African – American male students could you talk about your experiences with this group of students? Tell me about your experiences of connection and success with African – American male students. Did you experience struggles with African – American male students? Tell me about your struggles with them.

T 1 - Honesty and trust. Two major components being open and sincere with these students are very important. Struggles – lots of anger in our male students, those who are the “man” of the house and they think they are equal to you.

T 2 - I struggle at first with African – American males. They were defiant and wanted to have total control of the classroom. They would compete with each other for the control. I stood my ground. I had to say harsh words to them to show them that I could play the game with them. They would call me names – I told them to put Miss in front of it. The motivation practices that I used were inspirational sayings that I said daily to remind them that they can achieve. I was fair so that they could trust me. I taught them to be honest with me and showed them honesty. It didn't happen overnight. It took time to

build that type of relationship. It took me two years to gain their trust and the word spread that I was okay.

T 3 – The students I teach come from Cleveland and nearby suburbs. To be accepted at John Hay they must have letters of recommendation for their 8th grade teachers and principal, fill out an application, be interviewed by a team of faculty and pass an entrance exam. Approximately ½ of our students are African – American, the other students Hispanic, Asian, Islamic and European American.

T 4 – African – American are challenging, they do not have mentors to motivate them. I have struggled – I have been “hit” by an African – American male to prove a point that they are a man. Sometimes in their private life, family members are incarcerated, under educated, or on drugs. The black males want to be stronger to prove a point that they are a man. I tried one on one with them to gain their trust.

T 5 - When I was on the Westside of Cleveland, I found it a different world. I found the students to be motivated and wanted to work. There was a family connection. I found they wanted to learn. On the eastside of Cleveland I found a different type of student. They are more incline to be less motivated. It was hard.

T 6 - I work very well with African – American males. Since we share a culture and history, it is easier to understand their issues.

Research Question # 5

What can you tell me about students you teach? What percentage is African – American?

T 1 – One hundred percent.

T 2 – I taught developmental delayed, learning disabled, Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disabled, Attention Deficit Disabled and Asperger Syndrome, and at-risk students.

T 3 - I work with all the students at John Hay.

T 4 - They come from a variety of background – parents are incarcerated, low socio – economic scale, some sold drugs, many put in a position of becoming an adult before their time. 65 – 70% are African – American.

T 5 – I teach students from all over the city. They are hand chosen to be at this school. They do have skills that only need to be helped along. Majority of the students are African – Americans. I would say that 40% are African – American males. I find that many African – American males do not apply to a magnet school.

T 6 – 98%.

Research Question # 6

How many African – American males do you teach?

T 1 – 65%

T 2 – 80% of my class was African – American males and 5% Hispanic males.

T 3 – 75%

T 4 – Majority are African – American, 50% male students.

T 5 - 40%

T 6 – I teacher 55 African – American males.

Research Question # 7

Can you talk an experience or two where you felt you really contributed to the success of an African – American male student? What strategies seem to work best teaching African- American males? Is there anything else beyond strategies that make a difference (knowledge of student personality; understanding cultural dimensions;

particular types of interactions that lead to positive engagement versus types of interaction that lead to negative engagement?

T 1 – In general I would say that finding out as much as I can about the student is at the top of the list. Once you know the student then you can decide what is the best strategy to use. You also get a better understanding of why the student acts the way he does.

T 2 - I ran into one of my students and he told me that I never lied to them. Life skills were very important to them. One worked at Jaguar Cleveland as a mechanic. Once worked at Giant Eagle. I allowed my students to debrief quietly when were angry and to join the group when they were ready. I observed body language. I praise them when they did something good.

T 3 – I currently have a library page that has worked in the media center since freshman year. He currently a senior on his way to college. When he first came to my school he needed to earn community service because of a juvenile court issue. He was in foster care and had to change homes because he tried to harm his brother. He was soon diagnosed as bipolar and when he came to me they were trying to regulate his medicine. While he spent time in the library I taught him organization skills, how to control his temper and helped him with his homework.

T 4 - Effort gave them some kind of attention making sure they did their work. I had 19 students in classroom some disruptive. I had one that was large he did not want to give way to control of an adult was very confrontational but had desire to do art I made contact with him and gave him opportunity to show off his art work. When teaching make sure you are aware of the cultural differences and the learning styles of the students.

T 5 - I think that I have contributed to the success of African – American male students by encouraging them to make the most of their high school education. I have had conferences with them when I see the need to push them. I try to connect with them by always being available to talk to them. I find that the ones that a just getting by never ask for help. I find this strange.

T 6 – I became a mentor to students when he was in the 7th grade at Eliot. He will graduate from Morehouse College this year with a degree in Finance. I continue to encourage and support him and communicate a belief in his abilities.

Research Question # 8

What kind of teaching strategies have you used with African – American males students? Which did you find more effective in helping them attain success? Did anything get in the way?

T 1 – The teaching strategies I have used are numerous. Quite often getting past barriers became the major focus. Why is Johnny acting like this?

T 2 - I taught them phonics so that they could sound out unfamiliar words. We read the newspaper and used everyday experiences for debates and discussions. I used song of today. I praised them. I told them that nobody controls their destiny. Being proud of their African – American heritage. We talked about African – American males that were sent to jail and later found innocent of the crime.

T 3 - **Most** of my special education strategies were variations of Premack and Control theory. Premack is a reward system that the teacher designs based on the students like and desires. Control theory teaches you how to control you emotions by taking

ownership of them and not let them control you. The reward could even be something much less complicated like watching a movie.

T 4 – Discipline got in the way of teaching. Black males wanted attention on self because of the level of manhood. They wanted to act like a like a man. I would get their attention when I did a one on one and displayed their work. I would call their parent about their successes.

T 5 - I have tried group work with them particularly those that need that extra push. I have used the strategy of lecture, technology centers, group, and individual learning. I think what I try to do is to reach everyone in my classroom.

T 6 - I use project based collaborative learning with all of my students. Group activities provide students with choice and a number of activities that increase critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Research Question # 9

What have you struggled with in terms of teaching African – American male student?

What types of interactions and approaches have worked in your classroom? It is entirely a matter of teaching strategies or is there something else that makes learning happen (getting to know students personally; relating to them)?

T 1 – Once again the teaching strategies sometimes can't be determined until you know the student. Individualized instruction and interaction is needed. Unfortunately in large classes, this doesn't happen as much as you would like it to happen. Therefore, it is frustrating to you as well as the student.

T 2 – I have struggled with African – American males running the show. I dealt with antics that they use to get out of doing work in the classroom, high absenteeism, their

perception that school is a waste, gang problems in the classroom and school, being the know it all, on drugs, being the ring leader or bully in the school, and just having a low self-esteem and wanting to be important. I found out that when students like you they would do their best to please you. Once students understand that they can learn and no one is making fun of them their self-esteem needle goes to the positive side.

T 3 – Unfortunately many of my students over the years come from families with serious stability issues. The homes they come from frequently lack father or positive male role models. Getting to know a student and showing interest in their likes, dislikes are tantamount to being able to teach them. Being able to diagnose their learning styles is also important.

T 4 – My struggle is to get black males to focus. Not allowing black males to sit together in classroom and causing a disruption like they do. Changing their seat calling the parents, taking them out of the classroom, telephoning parents is very important. I do not believe you have to get to know your students. I must understand their cultural differences so I can relate to the black male and to get my job done which was to teach.

T 5 – I think that when I was on the Westside I struggled with students that were in the minority and they need to see more African – American males in the school. I think this would have given them a sense of togetherness. On the eastside, I found them to be a little more open; this is to say that they seem to be more comfortable with their own kind of students. I think that I try to bond with all of my students to show that I care and are willing to speak to them anytime they want someone to talk to them.

T 6 – African – American males, as with all students, need teachers with who they can relate. They need to know their teachers care about them and that they are dedicated to helping them reach their goals.

Research Question # 10

Have you ever moved the seat of an African – American male because you thought they were off task? What were you thinking in using this as a strategy? How did it work?

T 1 – Yes I have moved a students’ seat. Depending on the student and the class and how the room is set up, it did work. Sometimes it didn’t work.

T 2 – I have moved the seat of my male students and separated them from the others so that they would concentrate on doing their work. When I separated them, I sat down with them and helped them with their assignment. They were the problem. They were keeping other from doing their work. The thing I refused to do was to kick them out of the room. Once I separated them and sat down with them and worked with them, their behavior changed they were able to join the rest of the class.

T 3 – Seating is very important. I have moved many students for many reasons. Some need to be closer to the teacher to be able to focus, attend and pay attention longer. Some just like being closer, it makes the feel special. Some like working with certain people in their class.

T 4 – Yes I have put black males in the front of the room, and corners. Too many students are difficult to teach and make it difficult for others to learn.

T 5 – I think I have particularly when they are disruptive and won’t let other learn. I think I tried this strategy because I want to have control of my classroom and I do think this works.

T 6 – I’ve done this with all my students. I tell them it is good for the classroom dynamics.

Research Question # 11

What other information would you like to share with me about experiences of teaching and interacting with African – American males?

T 1 – I feel quite often our black males have had white teachers who cannot or did not teach them.

T 2 – African – American males fare from single family home where the mother is the head of the household. The males become leaders in the household. The mothers depend on them for so many things. Their role at home is to be charge and in school is to be part of the charge.

T 3 – I always prefer teaching not only African – American males but any males in general instead of any females at all grades. They are more respectful possibly because they see me as a mother figure. When I taught classes with only females the results were better because they didn’t see me as someone to compete for attention from males in their class.

T 4 – It is important to black males to have a strong image. Students only black athletes to look up to and other only have women in their lives that are not married.

T 5 – I feel I relate to African – American and interact with them in a positive manner. I think that many African – American males look for someone to take an interested in what they are doing and how they do it. They need to be stroked.

T 6 – I love teaching African – American males! I like the creativity, their energy and their style.

Research Question # 12

This study has a particular interest in how race, gender and teacher quality affect African – American male students' academic success. Do you have any additional thoughts/feeling on this?

T 1 – I feel that quite often our black male have had white teachers who can not or did not teach them. Instead they were constantly put out of class and or recommended for testing. Even some black teachers do the same. It is very important to get to know the student first, and then you try to do your best to help the student overcome the barriers that prevent him from learning. Sometimes it's the small things like keeping something to eat for the student who never make it to breakfast on time and you know he hasn't had anything to eat since the night before.

T 2 - I believe that African – American males can be successful in spite of the neighborhood environment has far greater impression upon them than school has but when they find a teacher that turns them around, they become very successful.

T 3 – **To** be able to remove negative external environment helped students immensely when they were at the youth center. After 6 – 8 months their reading and other skill were markedly improved from their intake pretesting. They weren't exposed to drugs, abusive parenting, poverty, or negative peer pressure and given breakfast, lunch dinner and a safe environment. Often once they returned to their communities even with an aftercare program, they would commit another crime so they could come back to the youth center.

T 4 - African – American or white teachers should make sure that these students succeed and make sure they need the vocabulary, reading, math skills to succeed in today's world.

T 5 – I do believe that race does have an affect on African – American males. So many African – American males need that role model of another male as well as a teacher that really care about their well being.

T 6 – One missing factor I African – American males academic focus is a severe lack of role models who are educator, i.e. other African – American males.

Emerging Themes

This researcher found that the teachers that responded to the flyer were mature teachers with 25 years or more. They taught in magnet schools as well as regular high schools in the city. Many reported that they used whole group, life skills, praise and incentives to motivate their students. One stated that the “use of sticker charts for motivation with younger students” seemed to help with academic success. Another used praise to help them know what they were doing was the right thing. While another “communicated high expectations and a belief that students can succeed in class”. The researcher surmised motivation was a key to academic success of African – American males they taught. The majority understood that motivation was a key factor to help African – American males achieve some academic success. Many of the teachers experienced defiance when working with African – American males. They found that they had to have a connection with their students to build trust. Often they found that African – American males wanted to control the classroom environment.

When the theme of classroom control surfaced, several teachers viewed this as a vital part of academic success. They attributed structural conditions as a challenge to be an effective teacher. The size of the pupil/teacher ratio becomes a “frustrating” factor as one

teacher stated. “Unfortunately in large classes”, individualized instruction “doesn’t happen as much as you would like it to happen”, said one. Another said, “I dealt with antics that they use to get out of doing work in the classroom, high absenteeism, their perception that school is a waste of time, gang problems in the classroom and school, being the know it all, on drugs, being the ring leader or bully in the school, and just having a low self-esteem and wanting to be important.” All these comments solidified that control was an important factor to teachers. Yet another took the initiative to change seats, call parents, and remove students from the classroom as a method to gain better classroom control.

From these response, I found that many teachers were successful with their African – American males students if they understood, bonded, used encouragement, supported them as well as used life skills in their efforts to help them be successful. I found that many teachers had many significant struggles when working with African – American males. The students often wanted to be in control of the environment, lacked a focus level, and stabilities in their academic life as well as their family life. The teachers that participated in the study used various teaching strategies to help the males become successful.

Of these strategies, a reward system, reading strategies, good discipline, group work that was often project based were effective in attaining success. Finally, many teachers reported that moving the seat of the African – American males help those to focus, concentrate and helped with the discipline in the classroom. This made it possible for the teacher to teach and control the classroom.

Similarly, many teachers use bonding as a feature to develop a better understanding of how learning was instigated in academic success. One said, “ I took the TV shows, movies, music, events, sports and the news to make what they were doing has relevant as possible.” Another agreed, by using a wide array of experiences with teaching African – American males making success possible. Still many thought having a type of relationship with the students where eye contact was necessary to curtail poor behavior. Dissimilarly, a good number said they dealt with conflict one on one but at least one teacher said, “I had to say harsh words to them to show them that I could play the game with them.” “This meant that the name calling was not going to be tolerated even when it was focused on me.” And still another commented the struggles of the male students those that are the “man” of the house meant that they somehow thought they were equal to you. The concept of being a man reoccurred during several teachers’ interviews. One teacher mentioned that “the black males want to be stronger to prove a point that they are a man.” While another pointed out that “black males wanted attention of self because of the level of manhood,” “He wanted to act like a man.” Clearly the act of wanting to be a man interferes with the ability to succeed academically.

The issue of race and gender of a teacher proved to be very interesting. As the researcher, I was interested if race impacted the academic success of African – American males. The thoughts on this theme evinced from one teacher that “quite often our black males had white teachers who cannot or did not teach them.” Still another stated, “I do believe that race does have an affect of African – American males.” “So many African – American males need that role model of another male as well as a teacher that really care about their well being,” was the comment from one teacher. This suggests that the

presence of other African – American males on the faculty may contribute to their academic success. It is apparent to this researcher that the African – American teachers felt connected to the African – American students. One teacher said, “I feel I relate to African – American and interact with them in a positive manner.” This researcher concluded that race did have an affect on the academic success of African – American males according to the information shared during their interviews. There was an issue that white teachers cannot teach and are negative against African – American males. Others felt that it is controversial and that African – American males need a strong male image in order to have success. Role models play an important part in the academic success of African – American males.

Summary

The results presented in this chapter indicate clearly from, the students’ perspective, that gender of the teacher does not affect the academic success of African – American males. The results also showed that race has no affect on their success level and that the students didn’t care whether the teacher was African – American or White. It also showed that African – American males were concerned about making sure that teachers were caring and made sure that their was learning in the classroom. They did, however, think that female teachers lack control over the classroom.

On the other hand, the teacher participants had much more to say than the African – American male students. The results showed that they used a wide variety of motivation techniques with their students. Praise, rewards, as well as life skills were used to encourage them to be more successful. It also revealed that there were many struggles when working with African – American males especially when dealing with discipline.

They found the students to be angry, defiant, and sometime hard to control. They also viewed student focus/concentration level as a primary problem when teaching the African – American male students. The results showed that many teaching strategies were used to help motivate the students, some more successful than others. Finally, the results showed that they felt that race does play a part in the academic success of African – American males because they believed that there was a connection between being African – American and teaching students of the same race. Some felt that African – American males need role model to help them become successful. Chapter V provides a discussion of the findings, suggestions for further research and recommendations to educators.

APPENDIX E

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

Teachers Wanted

To Participate in a Dissertation Study

“An Examination of African – American Males and the Influence of Race, Gender and Teacher Quality on their Academic Success”

The purpose of this study is to provide insight and describe how race, gender and teacher quality impact the academic success of African – American males.

The researcher will interview the participants individually.

If interested, please respond by e-mailing the researcher at c.hamlet@csuohio.edu.

There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

All interviews will be audio – taped, with your permission.

Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes.

APPENDIX F

Teacher Consent Form for Participation in an Examination of African – American Males and the Influences of Race, Gender and Teacher Quality on their Academic Success.

My name is Conrad E. Hamlet. I am a doctoral student in the Urban Education Ph.D. program at Cleveland State University, and I am working with Dr. Anne Galletta, who is a member of the College of Education and Human Services faculty and the principal investigator for this research project. The purpose of this study is to provide insight into the success of African – American males and also to describe how race, gender and teacher quality on their academic success. The findings from this study will be helpful in considering current and future teaching practices to address the academic success of African – American males. This study will collect perspectives from urban teachers at the high school level. I am seeking your participation in the following study through an interview.

I will, with your permission, audiotape the interview. You may at any point during the interview request that I turn the tape recorder off.

The interview will be given a code number and will be transcribed. Only I, the research will have access to the transcript and audio tape. This is to ensure your confidentiality and privacy. Excerpts from the interview may be included in a final dissertation after the study. Your name will not be mentioned or attached to the transcript or in any other report.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to stop at anytime or to decline to answer a question. Your participation may involve benefits, such as an opportunity to reflect and gain additional insights concerning your experience in the classroom. It may also involve risks, such as your experiences as they relate to this topic.

If you have any questions regarding this study and/or would like to receive the completed study, please call Dr. Anne Galletta at 216-802-3044.

There are two copies of this letter. After signing them, keep one copy for your records and return the other one. Thank you in advance for your participation, cooperation and support. Please indicate your agreement to participate by signing below.

I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate in this study by being interviewed.

_____ Yes _____ No

I agree to have my interview audio taped.

_____ Yes _____ No

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research participant I can contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Board at 216-687-3630.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate in this study by being interviewed.

Yes No

I agree to have my interview audio taped.

Yes No

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research participant I can contact the CSU Institutional Board at 216-687-3630.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (Teacher)

Teacher's Name _____

Grade Level/Subject Areas _____

Date _____

1. Tell me about yourself by explaining your teaching experiences in an urban district. How many years of teaching? In what schools did you teach?
2. What grade level/subject areas have you taught?
3. Could you talk about your approach in the classroom in general in terms of teaching your subject and motivating your students? What practices do you use to motivate your students?
4. Because the focus of the study is the success of African – American male students could you talk about your experience with this group of students? Tell me about your experiences of connection and success with African – American male students. Did you experience struggles with African – American male students? Tell me about your struggles with them.
5. What can you tell me about students you teach? What percentage is African – American?
6. How many African – American males do you teach?
7. Can you talk about an experience or two where you felt you really contributed to the success of an African – American male student? What strategies seem to work best teaching African – American males? Is there anything else beyond strategies that makes a difference (knowledge of student personality; understanding cultural dimensions; particular types of interactions that lead to positive engagement versus types of interactions that lead to negative engagement)?
8. What kind of teaching strategies have you used with African – American males? Which did you find more effective in helping them attain success? Did anything get in the way?
9. What have you struggled with in terms of teaching African – American male students? What types of interactions and approaches have worked in your classroom? Is it entirely a matter of teaching strategies or is there something else that makes learning happen (getting to know students personally; relating to them)?

10. Have you ever moved the seat of an African – American male because you thought they were off task? What was your thinking in using this as a strategy? How did it work?
11. What other information would you like to share with me about experiences of teaching and interacting with African – American males?
12. This study has a particular interest in how race, gender and teacher quality affect African – American male students' academic success. Do you have any additional thoughts/feelings on this?

APPENDIX H

Research Question #1

Tell me about yourself by explaining your teaching experiences in an urban district.

How many years of teaching? In what schools did you teach?

T 1 - This teacher taught for 30 years in the Cleveland Metropolitan School district in Elementary and Junior High Schools. She was a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, reading/Title 1 teacher and a Literacy Specialist.

T 2 - This teacher was a Special Needs teacher with the district for 35 years. Her first approach to teaching was to teach what she learned in college. She felt that she was frustrating the students and everyone was at odds with each other. She eventually threw away all lesson plans and theories she learned in college and began to listen to her student's likes and dislikes and thing about their culture. She also realized that many students were turned off by school. She learned about urban living through her students because she came from a suburban background.

T 3 - This teacher began as an Art teacher in the late seventies in a Junior high school in Cleveland. She felt that all the junior high were difficult situations. She was laid off in the early 80s and this is when she became certificated as a Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorder teacher. She taught SBH students for 16 years. Ten of those years she taught at the Youth Development Center – a residential treatment facility in Hudson, Ohio for delinquent and drug abuse teens.

T 4 - This teacher is a Visual Arts teacher for 30 years. He taught in Junior high schools, detention homes as well as high school in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

T 5 - This teacher is an English teacher at a Magnet school. She has been teaching 15 years and has been on the Westside as well as some Eastside school. Prefers to work on the eastside.

T 6 - Began teaching in the Cleveland Heights – University Heights School in 1992. Started in Cleveland at C.W.Eliot in 1999 was there for 7 years. Currently at John Hay Architecture and Design for 6 years.

Research Question # 2

What grade level/subject areas have you taught?

T 1 - Reading – grades 1 – 12.

T 2 – Ninth and tenth grader reading and math (special needs).

T 3 - Pre-school to twelfth grade. Art, Severe Behavior Handicapped, Reading, Home Instruction to pregnant teens, emotionally disturbed and hospitalized students and all students as a magnet school librarian.

T 4 – Art – kindergarten through grade twelve.

T 5 - I have taught 9th grade through 12th grade English.

T 6 - I teach American History, African – American History, Modern World History, Government and Street Law. Grades 7 – 12.

Research Question # 3

Could you talk about your approach in the classroom in general in terms of teaching your subject and motivating your students? What practices do you use to motivate your students?

T 1 - Whole group instruction, small group, center activities, peer teaching and individual instruction. I used incentives such as sticker charts for motivation with younger students. Setting and reaching goals for the older children – contests. Self – worth and instill in students to always do your best. Feeling good about yourself.

T 2 - My approach was making reading and math relevant to real world situations to motivate my students. I took the TV shows, movies, music, events, sports, and the news to make what they were doing has relevant as possible. I had to show them how reading and math was important and that it was something that they needed and how it related to everything that they do in life.

T 3 - Used many tools that worked when I worked with teens with behavior issues. I walk around the room to see what they are doing. I used praise to help know that they were doing the right thing. I have a wide array of experiences with teaching African – American males. I wanted them to see me as a parental figure. I try to be consistent with rules. By the end of the school year I have the type of relationship with the students where eye contact I all that I necessary when I see a student doing an infraction – for example sitting on a table instead of a chair.

T 4 - I used the approach of trying to further a child's' education rather than just doing pictures. My practices were to display they work; promote their art in galleries, libraries, and community malls.

T 5 - I feel that students should come to me ready to learn. I try to motivate them by giving them the chance to use their skills to enhance what they already know. I sometime encourage them to broaden their experiences.

T 6 - I communicate high expectations and a belief that students can succeed in my class. They understand the class is meaningful; they are being taught 21st century skills, i.e. critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Research Question # 4

Because the focus of the study is the success of African – American male students could you talk about your experiences with this group of students? Tell me about your experiences of connection and success with African – American male students. Did you experience struggles with African – American male students? Tell me about your struggles with them.

T 1 - Honesty and trust. Two major components being open and sincere with these students are very important. Struggles – lots of anger in our male students, those who are the “man” of the house and they think they are equal to you.

T 2 - I struggle at first with African – American males. They were defiant and wanted to have total control of the classroom. They would compete with each other for the control. I stood my ground. I had to say harsh words to them to show them that I could play the game with them. They would call me names – I told them to put Miss in front of it. The motivation practices that I used were inspirational sayings that I said daily to remind them that they can achieve. I was fair so that they could trust me. I taught them to be honest with me and showed them honesty. It didn't happen overnight. It took time to build that type of relationship. It took me two years to gain their trust and the word spread that I was okay.

T 3 – The students I teach come from Cleveland and nearby suburbs. To be accepted at John Hay they must have letters of recommendation for their 8th grade teachers and

principal, fill out an application, be interviewed by a team of faculty and pass an entrance exam. Approximately ½ of our students are African – American, the other students Hispanic, Asian, Islamic and European American.

T 4 – African – American are challenging, they do not have mentors to motivate them. I have struggled – I have been “hit” by an African – American male to prove a point that they are a man. Sometimes in their private life, family members are incarcerated, under educated, or on drugs. The black males want to be stronger to prove a point that they are a man. I tried one on one with them to gain their trust.

T 5 - When I was on the Westside of Cleveland, I found it a different world. I found the students to be motivated and wanted to work. There was a family connection. I found they wanted to learn. On the eastside of Cleveland I found a different type of student. They are more incline to be less motivated. It was hard.

T 6 - I work very well with African – American males. Since we share a culture and history, it is easier to understand their issues.

Research Question # 5

What can you tell me about students you teach? What percentage is African – American?

T 1 – One hundred percent.

T 2 – I taught developmental delayed, learning disabled, Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disabled, Attention Deficit Disabled and Asperger Syndrome, and at-risk students.

T 3 - I work with all the students at John Hay.

T 4 - They come from a variety of background – parents are incarcerated, low socio – economic scale, some sold drugs, many put in a position of becoming an adult before their time. 65 – 70% are African – American.

T 5 – I teach students from all over the city. They are hand chosen to be at this school. They do have skills that only need to be helped along. Majority of the students are African – Americans. I would say that 40% are African – American males. I find that many African – American males do not apply to a magnet school.

T 6 – 98%.

Research Question # 6

How many African – American males do you teach?

T 1 – 65%

T 2 – 80% of my class was African – American males and 5% Hispanic males.

T 3 – 75%

T 4 – Majority are African – American, 50% male students.

T 5 - 40%

T 6 – I teacher 55 African – American males

Research Question # 7

Can you talk an experience or two where you felt you really contributed to the success of an African – American male student? What strategies seem to work best teaching African- American males? Is there anything else beyond strategies that make a difference (knowledge of student personality; understanding cultural dimensions; particular types of interactions that lead to positive engagement versus types of interaction that lead to negative engagement?)

T 1 – In general I would say that finding out as much as I can about the student is at the top of the list. Once you know the student then you can decide what is the best strategy to use. You also get a better understanding of why the student acts the way he does.

T 2 - I ran into one of my students and he told me that I never lied to them. Life skills were very important to them. One worked at Jaguar Cleveland as a mechanic. Once worked at Giant Eagle. I allowed my students to debrief quietly when were angry and to join the group when they were ready. I observed body language. I praise them when they did something good.

T 3 – I currently have a library page that has worked in the media center since freshman year. He currently a senior on his way to college. When he first came to my school he needed to earn community service because of a juvenile court issue. He was in foster care and had to change homes because he tried to harm his brother. He was soon diagnosed as bipolar and when he can to me they were trying to regulate his medicine. While he spent time in the library I taught him organization skills, how to control his temper and helped him with his homework.

T 4 - Effort gave them some kind of attention making sure they did their work. I had 19 students in classroom some disruptive. I had one that was large he did not want to give way to control of an adult was very confrontational but had desire to do art I made contact with him and gave him opportunity to show off his art work. When teachings make sure you are aware of the cultural differences and the learning styles of the students.

T 5 - I think that I have contributed to the success of African – American male students by encouraging them to make the most of their high school education. I have had conferences with them when I see the need to push them. I try to connect with them by always being available to talk to them. I find that the ones that a just getting by never ask for help. I find this strange.

T 6 – I became a mentor to students when he was in the 7th grade at Eliot. He will graduate from Morehouse College this year with a degree in Finance. I continue to encourage and support him and communicate a belief in his abilities.

Research Question # 8

What kind of teaching strategies have you used with African – American males students? Which did you find more effective in helping them attain success? Did anything get in the way?

T 1 – The teaching strategies I have used are numerous. Quite often getting past barriers became the major focus. Why is Johnny acting like this?

T 2 - I taught them phonics so that they could sound out unfamiliar words. We read the newspaper and used everyday experiences for debates and discussions. I used song of today. I praised them. I told them that nobody controls their destiny. Being proud of their African – American heritage. We talked about African – American males that were sent to jail and later found innocent of the crime.

T 3 - Most of my special education strategies were variations of Premack and Control theory. Premack is a reward system that the teacher designs based on the students like and desires. Control theory teaches you how to control you emotions by taking ownership of them and not let them control you. The reward could even be something much less complicated like watching a movie.

T 4 – Discipline got in the way of teaching. Black males wanted attention on self because of the level of manhood. They wanted to act like a like a man. I would get their attention when I did a one on one and displayed their work. I would call their parent about their successes.

T 5 - I have tried group work with them particularly those that need that extra push. I have used the strategy of lecture, technology centers, group, and individual learning. I think what I try to do is to reach everyone in my classroom.

T 6 - I use project based collaborative learning with all of my students. Group activities provide students with choice and a number of activities that increase critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Research Question # 9

What have you struggled with in terms of teaching African – American male student?

What types of interactions and approaches have worked in your classroom? It is entirely a matter of teaching strategies or is there something else that makes learning happen (getting to know students personally; relating to them)?

T 1 – Once again the teaching strategies sometimes can't be determined until you know the student. Individualized instruction and interaction is needed. Unfortunately in large classes, this doesn't happen as much as you would like it to happen. Therefore, it is frustrating to you as well as the student.

T 2 – I have struggled with African – American males running the show. I dealt with antics that they use to get out of doing work in the classroom, high absenteeism, their perception that school is a waste, gang problems in the classroom and school, being the know it all, on drugs, being the ring leader or bully in the school, and just having a low self-esteem and wanting to be important. I found out that when students like you they would do their best to please you. Once students understand that they can learn and no one is making fun of them their self-esteem needle goes to the positive side.

T 3 – Unfortunately many of my students over the years come from families with serious stability issues. The homes they come from frequently lack father or positive male role models. Getting to know a student and showing interest in their likes, dislikes are tantamount to being able to teach them. Being able to diagnose their learning styles is also important.

T 4 – My struggle is to get black males to focus. Not allowing black males to sit together in classroom and causing a disruption like they do. Changing their seat calling the parents, taking them out of the classroom, telephoning parents is very important. I do not believe you have to get to know your students. I must understand their cultural differences so I can relate to the black male and to get my job done which was to teach.

T 5 – I think that when I was on the Westside I struggled with students that were in the minority and they need to see more African – American males in the school. I think this would have given them a sense of togetherness. On the eastside, I found them to be a little more open; this is to say that they seem to be more comfortable with their own kind of students. I think that I try to bond with all of my students to show that I care and are willing to speak to them anytime they want someone to talk to them.

T 6 - African – American males, as with all students, need teachers with who they can relate. They need to know their teachers care about them and that they are dedicated to helping them reach their goals.

Research Question # 10

Have you ever moved the seat of an African – American male because you thought they were off task? What were you thinking in using this as a strategy? How did it work?

T 1 – Yes I have moved a students’ seat. Depending on the student and the class and how the room is set up, it did work. Sometimes it didn’t work.

T 2 - I have moved the seat of my male students and separated them from the others so that they would concentrate on doing their work. When I separated them, I sat down with them and helped them with their assignment. They were the problem. They were keeping other from doing their work. The thing I refused to do was to kick them out of the room. Once I separated them and sat down with them and worked with them, their behavior changed they were able to join the rest of the class.

T 3 – Seating is very important. I have moved many students for many reasons. Some need to be closer to the teacher to be able to focus, attend and pay attention longer. Some just like being closer, it makes the feel special. Some like working with certain people in their class.

T 4 - Yes I have put black males in the front of the room, and corners. Too many students are difficult to teach and make it difficult for others to learn.

T 5 - I think I have particularly when they are disruptive and won’t let other learn. I think I tried this strategy because I want to have control of my classroom and I do think this works.

T 6 - I’ve done this with all my students. I tell them it is good for the classroom dynamics.

Research Question # 11

What other information would you like to share with me about experiences of teaching and interacting with African – American males?

T 1 – I feel quite often our black males have had white teachers who cannot or did not teach them.

T 2 – African – American males fare from single family home where the mother is the head of the household. The males become leaders in the household. The mothers depend on them for so many things. Their role at home is to be charge and in school is to be part of the charge.

T 3 - I always prefer teaching not only African – American males but any males in general instead of any females at all grades. They are more respectful possibly because they see me as a mother figure. When I taught classes with only females the results were better because they didn't see me as someone to compete for attention from males in their class.

T 4 – It is important to black males to have a strong image. Students only black athletes to look up to and other only have women in their lives that are not married.

T 5 - I feel I relate to African – American and interact with them in a positive manner. I think that many African – American males look for someone to take an interested in what they are doing and how they do it. They need to be stroked.

T 6 - I love teaching African – American males! I like the creativity, their energy and their style.

Research Question # 12

This study has a particular interest in how race, gender and teacher quality affect African – American male students' academic success. Do you have any additional thoughts/feeling on this?

T 1 - I feel that quite often our black male have had white teachers who can not or did not teach them. Instead they were constantly put out of class and or recommended for testing. Even some black teachers do the same. It is very important to get to know the student first, and then you try to do your best to help the student overcome the barriers that prevent him from learning. Sometimes it's the small things like keeping something to eat for the student who never make it to breakfast on time and you know he hasn't had anything to eat since the night before.

T 2 - I believe that African – American males can be successful in spite of the neighborhood environment has far greater impression upon them than school has but when they find a teacher that turns them around, they become very successful.

T 3 - **To** be able to remove negative external environment helped students immensely when they were at the youth center. After 6 – 8 months their reading and other skill were markedly improved from their intake pretesting. They weren't exposed to drugs, abusive parenting, poverty, or negative peer pressure and given breakfast, lunch dinner and a safe environment. Often once they returned to their communities even with an aftercare program, they would commit another crime so they could come back to the youth center.

T 4 - African – American or white teachers should make sure that these students succeed and make sure they need the vocabulary, reading, math skills to succeed in today's world.

T 5 – I do believe that race does have an affect on African – American males. So many African – American males need that role model of another male as well as a teacher that really care about their well being.

T 6 – One missing factor I African – American males academic focus is a severe lack of role models who are educator, i.e. other African – American males.