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Administrators' Perceptions of Transformational Leadership Practices Influencing African American and Hispanic High School Graduation

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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by

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MA, Lamar University, 2011

MA, Texas State University, 2001

BS, Texas State University, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

High school graduation is a gateway opportunity for higher education and economic self-sufficiency. Ethnic minority students face challenges accumulating academic credits to graduate high school within 4 years. Researchers found that school leaders are second only to classroom teachers in the influence they have on student achievement. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving high school graduation in the southwestern United States. The transformational leadership framework of Burns and Bass guided this study. The research questions focused on the transformational leadership practices of high school administrators to support African American and Hispanic academic achievement and high school graduation. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with a purposively-selected sample of 11 urban high school administrators with a minimum of 3 years' experience at the high school level. A priori, open, and pattern coding were used to support content analysis. Participants perceived that cultural dynamics, collaboration, and increased student involvement are needed to improve African American and Hispanic academic achievement and graduation. Time should be allocated for staff development, including common planning and goal setting, for extracurricular opportunities that address diverse interests, for fostering genuine relationships, and for building capacity within the school and the community. High school administrators have the unique opportunity to offer positive social change and hope for African American and Hispanic students by using transformational leadership practices to increase graduation.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my family including my two sons, Anthony and Frank, my parents, and my sister. Your never-ending love and support of me through this journey has been the light to see me through.

To my boys, thank you for the time you gave me to complete this milestone. I know we may have missed some moments, but I hope my experience helps you realize when you have a dream to always persevere.

To my parents, thank you for giving the fortitude and the belief that I can accomplish anything with hard work.

Finally, to my sister, you have always been there for me and been my cheerleader - even when I wanted to give up.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

High school graduation is an important element for society as an opportunity for higher education and economic self-sufficiency. Students who graduate from high school tend to be more involved in their community and less likely to be a burden on society. A direct connection exists between high poverty and dropping out of high school (Robertson et al., 2016). The U.S. government spends approximately $250,000 for social welfare programs over the course of a lifetime for each student who fails to graduate from high school (Stark & Noel, 2015). In educational settings, graduation and other positive student outcomes can only be achieved through effective administrative leadership. School leadership is second only to classroom instruction influencing student achievement and academic outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2020). This study centered on gaining an understanding of administrators' transformational leadership practices and how leadership practices influence African American and Hispanic high school graduation.

To focus on the achievement gap of African American and Hispanic graduation in urban schools, I conducted a qualitative case study of administrators from three urban high schools in the southwestern United States. The findings of this study regarding leadership practices of administrators who have the potential to influence African American and Hispanic graduation may increase career opportunities for ethnic minority students and affect social justice. In this chapter, I discuss the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, and conceptual framework of the study. I describe the nature of the study, provide the definition of specialized terms, and state the

assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations for the study. Additionally, I offer potential positive social change implications that may result from this research.

Background

Researchers found that school leaders are second only to classroom teachers in the profound influence they have on student achievement (Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). In the southwestern United States where this study occurred, the largest ethnic minority groups are African Americans and Hispanics. Ethnic minority students face challenges accumulating academic credits to graduate high school within 4 years. High school administrators are responsible for continually increasing accountability for test scores, student progress, and graduation (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). As reported by the state education department in which this study occurred and shown in Table 1, African American and Hispanic student graduation rates were significantly below the rate for White students. The state also reported that 4-year graduation rates in large urban districts with high proportions of African American and Hispanic groups fall 10%–15% below the state average.

Table 1
Four-Year Graduation Percentages in the Southwestern State by Race/Ethnicity

Student race/ethnicity	2015	2016	2017	2018
White	93	93	94	94
Hispanic	87	87	88	88
Black/African American	85	85	86	87

Note. This table was compiled using state education public data.

Leadership is about influencing people in a way to achieve specific goals and outcomes. Effective leadership in an educational setting positively influences the school community to increase student learning outcomes and student achievement (Hutton, 2018). Graduating high school is an important academic outcome leading to opportunities for higher education and economic self-sufficiency (Stark & Noel, 2015). Students who graduate from high school are involved in their community and less likely to be a burden on society (Cook & Kang, 2016). The connection between dropping out of high school and poverty has been well established (Atwell et al., 2019; DePaoli et al., 2018; Robertson et al., 2016). Lower high school graduation rates for African American and Hispanic students and increased dropout rates in urban schools lead to problems for their communities, including unemployment, lower wages, higher levels of poverty, increased crime rates, and possible incarceration (Stark & Noel, 2015).

Transformational leadership practices have the potential to create substantial school reform because administrators play an important role in student achievement and graduation (Allen et al., 2015; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Transformational leadership practices positively influence school environment and organization, which builds positive relationships that include teachers using highly effective instructional practices leading to increased student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). This study addressed the gap in the research about transformational leadership practices and the influence on African American and Hispanic high school graduation.

Problem Statement

Successful leadership practices have a significant influence on improving student learning, especially in underperforming schools (Dutta & Sahney, 2016). Transformational educational leaders guide by focusing the academic environment through restructuring the teaching and learning environment in schools (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). These leadership practices empower people to participate in change by creating a collective feeling of effectiveness that builds personal self-confidence and meaning within their lives (Burns, 2003). This empowerment builds a positive school environment and school organization that help to increase student academic achievement (Dutta & Sahney, 2016; N. Wang et al., 2016).

Researchers' findings have focused on the effect of transformational leadership on student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020; N. Wang et al., 2016). However, little is known about specific high school administrator transformational leadership practices that may positively influence high school graduation for African American and Hispanic students. The findings of this qualitative case study provide evidence to address the gap in research about practice concerning urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices to increase ethnic minority graduation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation. I

collected qualitative data from 11 high school administrators in a large urban area within a southwestern U.S. state regarding their transformational leadership practices to increase African American and Hispanic graduation. The findings from this study may inform district and school leaders about school administrator leadership practices that help increase African American and Hispanic high school graduation.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the qualitative study to investigate the perceptions of 11 urban high school administrators from a southwestern state:

1. How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement?
2. How do urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation?

Conceptual Framework

I based this qualitative case study on the conceptual framework of transformational leadership. Burns (1978) stated leadership is a social process that allows leaders to influence followers so that both develop a higher level of moral and ethical character. Transformational leaders support and develop people to inspire followers to bond together for a common goal (Burns, 2003). This leadership tradition promotes a system that values collaboration, builds trust, and encourages individualized choices to increase motivation and progress toward a shared vision (Burns, 2003).

Bass (1999) expanded the transformational leadership paradigm by defining specific components and explained that the core of transformational leadership is a focus on an internal drive to create change. This change comes from a group's shared vision of a mutually respectful organization that considers each individuals' microcosmic development to improve the macrocosmic whole of the group. Transformational leadership derives from moving beyond self-interest into four areas of (a) charisma, (b) motivation, (c) scholarly development, and (d) attention to followers' needs above one's own requirements (Bass, 1999). The followers then align their self-interest with that of the organization, creating power teams that promote positivity, focus on the organization, and creativity of process (Bass, 1999). A transformational leader is a person who (a) motivates, (b) exemplifies moral standards, (c) creates an ethical work environment with clear standards for all, (d) builds a mindset of working towards a common goal, (e) emphasizes open and clear communication, and (f) provides a method to coach and mentor others (Colaco, 2018).

Leithwood expanded transformational leadership further and analyzed the effects of leadership practices on the various characteristics in a school setting (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Leithwood and Sun (2012) included four distinct characteristics of transformational leadership within an educational context: (a) setting directions, (b) developing people, (c) redesigning the organization, and (d) improving the instructional program. In education, transformational leaders develop a clear vision for creating a positive culture and climate on campus to ensure success for all students and staff (McCarley et al., 2016). Through transformational leadership practices, administrators

restructured their schools to positively influence student achievement through school climate and organization (Sun et al., 2017).

I designed the research questions for this study based on the premise of the transformational conceptual framework. I investigated the perceptions of 11 high school administrators regarding their transformational leadership practices and the influence these practices might have on African American and Hispanic graduation. When analyzing the data, I used a priori codes based on the transformational leadership paradigm to inductively develop categories and look for emerging themes. I also used the framework, along with additional peer-review literature, to align the interview questions of this study to answer the research questions. In Chapter 2, I provide a thorough review of transformational leadership and present pertinent peer-reviewed literature regarding high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research focuses on a specific phenomenon to solve a problem and asks "how" or "why" questions that provide generalized answers to the problem (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2016). I used a basic qualitative study to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and the influence of these practices on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation.

A basic qualitative study was a beneficial approach for this study because I wanted to explore an underresearched topic to ascertain effective leadership practices using a purposeful sample of knowledgeable administrators who could provide a

background of experience to answer the research questions. Quantitative studies are based on numeric approaches; however, qualitative research provided the ability to add a subjective dimension concerning an issue that might not be obtained through the measurement of variables (Yin, 2016). Through interviews, researchers collect information about the participants' real-life insights and experiences concerning the topic and questions within the research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I used semistructured one-on-one interviews with 11 urban high school administrators with a minimum of 3 years' experience as a high school administrator to gather data on transformational leadership practices that could affect graduation of African American and Hispanic high school students. I developed the research questions based on the conceptual framework of transformational leadership practices that aligned with peer-reviewed literature. The interviews took place on a video conference call to ensure a positive, comfortable, and safe environment. I was an observer in this collection of data. I recorded and transcribed each interview.

After the interview and transcription process, I analyzed the data using content analysis and incorporated the five-step process described by Yin (2016) to guide the coding process of the interview raw data. After several phases of open and pattern coding, I categorized the information into emerging themes. After analysis of the data, I sent a copy of the findings of the study to all participants to member check the developed themes to increase the trustworthiness of the study. I used reflective journaling (see Yin, 2016) prior to and during the collection of data and bracketing (see Ahern, 1999) during the interview process to limit my biases. By using this process of data collection and

analysis, I stayed grounded within the scope of the study, provided a dependable association of the data to the purpose of the study, and remained consistent to reflect on any biases that could impede the interpretation of the data and subsequent findings. I explain the design and methodology in further detail in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Terms unique to the study are defined as follows.

African American students: In the southwestern state where the study was conducted, African American students are classified as person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The definition is from a state education report from 2018.

Four-year cohort of graduates: A 4-year longitudinal graduation rate is the percentage of students from a class of beginning ninth graders who graduate by their anticipated graduation date, or within 4 years of beginning ninth grade. The definition is from a state education report from 2018.

High school graduates: This term refers to the total number of graduates for a school year, including summer graduates, as reported by districts in the fall of the following school year. The definition is from a state education report from 2018.

Hispanic: In the southwestern state where the study was conducted, Hispanic students are of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The definition is from a state education report from 2018.

White: In the southwestern state where the study was conducted, White students have origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Assumptions

Assumptions are essential to qualitative research because they are the assumed truths of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Inaccurate assumptions may lead to faulty conclusions. As a researcher, I was responsible for the design, collection and analysis of data, and the design of this qualitative study. As such, providing the following assumptions is important to the trustworthiness of this study.

The first assumption of this study is that the criteria by which I selected participants for this study would lead them to having sufficient experience to respond to the semistructured interview questions. The second assumption I made was that the participants would be willing to share their leadership practices and provide open and direct responses to the interview questions. Without participants' honesty regarding their practices, I would be unable to draw reliable conclusions from the data. The final assumption was that the findings of the study could provide positive social change within the district and be transferable to other school districts.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of a qualitative study establishes the parameters of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). I conducted this study in one district in the southwestern United States. I included a purposeful sample of 11 high school administrators because the study's research questions focus on improving high school graduation of African American and Hispanic students. Participants had a minimum of 3 years' experience as a high school

administrator in the partner district. I conducted one 45- to 60-min interview with each participant by video conference call.

Delimitations narrow the scope of a study regarding who will participate, the amount of time the study will require, and location of the research (Burkholder et al., 2016). The first delimitation of this study defined the selection of participants to urban high school administrators. I did not include elementary or middle school administrators. I also did not include teachers in this study. Administrators with fewer than 3 years of experience were not included because I required experienced participants who have explicit high school leadership knowledge to provide answers to the research questions. The second boundary I set for this study established data collection as one 45- to 60-min interview. Finally, this study was bounded by the geographic parameters to one specific urban school district in a southwestern state.

Limitations

Each research approach has limitations the researcher cannot control and that contribute to the weakness of a study. A researcher should recognize these limitations in relation to the study to strengthen the work (Yin, 2016). Confirmability, transferability, and researcher bias were possible limitations of this study.

Confirmability is a process I used to ensure that information was an accurate reflection and representation of the environment studied. In this study, I focused on the information, experiences, and ideas from the participants rather than my viewpoints or biases. A researcher shows confirmability by developing an audit trail that allows others to understand how the researcher made decisions and how the research was done at each

stage (Shenton, 2004). To ensure confirmability, I provided a detailed plan of the research process by using reflective journaling and bracketing and using content analysis to examine the data collected.

Transferability is the extent to which a study may be applied to other situations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative studies are conducted within a small community or specific to a set of participants. Although each study may be unique, the sample used could mirror a larger group (Shenton, 2004). To support transferability, I provided thick descriptions regarding the context of the study to enable those who read it to observe findings that may be transferable in a different setting. I collected the data from a small number of high schools in the southwestern United States. Data analyzed from this study might not be applicable to other regions of the country because of the limited participation size. Also, the purposeful sample group of high school administrators might be a limitation because of their varied types of experiences.

Personal bias could be a limitation of this study. Qualitative research has the epistemological assumption that knowledge is revealed through the lens of the researcher and their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As such, analysis in qualitative research is subjective because the researcher creates the codes, categories, and themes for the data (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). I was the main instrument of the research, and the analysis filtered through personal experiences and thinking (see Yin, 2016). To limit bias, I used reflective journaling (see Yin, 2016) and bracketing (see Ahern, 1999). I discuss creating a trustworthy study in more depth in Chapter 3.

Significance

This study addressed the gap in literature about practice concerning school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic graduation in urban high schools in the southwestern United States. Effective leadership in an educational setting influences the school community to increase student learning outcomes and student achievement (Hutton, 2018). With transformational leaders influencing school environment and teachers, positive relationships create effective practices that increase student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016).

The contribution of this study to educators was to provide insights concerning administrators' perceptions of transformational leadership practices that may benefit the academic achievement and graduation of African American and Hispanic students. The lack of research relating transformational leadership practices and student achievement to include ethnic minority graduation requires further study (Allen et al., 2015; Dutta & Sahney, 2016). The connection between dropping out of high school and high levels of poverty has been well established (Atwell et al., 2019; DePaoli et al., 2018; Robertson et al., 2016). The implications for positive social change include the potential for school and district administrators to use the findings from this study concerning transformational leadership practices to increase the graduation of African American and Hispanic students.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. Achievement gaps between various demographics have been problematic in the educational system since the inception of national data collection in the 1960s (Barton & Coley, 2010). The increased accountability for state and federal governments requires the achievement gap to be decreased. In a southwestern U.S. school district, an achievement gap exists between African American and Hispanic students and their White peers, specifically with regards to high school graduation. Leithwood et al. (2020) stated school leadership is second only to classroom instruction in influencing student achievement and outcomes. The conceptual framework of transformational leadership was the basis for the research questions in this study. In Chapter 2, I review pertinent peer-reviewed literature addressing leadership practices that may help to increase African American and Hispanic high school graduation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. A gap in the research about practice exists regarding transformational leadership practices and their influence on ethnic minority academic achievement. I designed this qualitative study to determine practices that may assist administrators in increasing African American and Hispanic graduation rates.

Principals use transformational leadership practices to build collaboration and cultivate an academic culture within the school to increase instructional effectiveness. These practices allow the campus administration and staff to work together to construct an effective environment in their classroom for positive student outcomes (Morris et al., 2017; Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Researchers' findings have shown a relationship between transformational leadership practice and increased student academic achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020; N. Wang et al., 2016). The gap in practice that I addressed in this study is the connection between administrators' transformational leadership practices and the influence of these approaches to help increase graduation among African American and Hispanic students.

Chapter 2 is a critical review of literature related to current research and peer-reviewed information on transformational leadership in the educational setting. In this chapter, I discuss the conceptual framework of the study and address the literature

concerning transformational leadership that may influence school administrator leadership practices to increase African American and Hispanic graduation.

Literature Search Strategy

I completed the literature review for this study using a variety of education and educational databases within the Walden University library. The databases I used were Thoreau, SAGE, Educational Source, EBSCO, ProQuest, ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. I also used government websites including the state education agency in which this study was conducted and the National Center for Education Statistics. I reviewed relevant research articles, dissertations, and books to find additional references. Additionally, I read books of trustworthy authors and researchers in the fields of education and leadership. In various searches, the keywords I used were *transformational leadership*, *at-risk graduation*, *minority graduation*, *African American graduation*, *Hispanic graduation*, *drop out*, *graduation*, *high school*, *secondary level*, *high school leadership*, *high school administrators*, *secondary graduation*, *impact on achievement*, *Hispanic and African American students*, *Black students*, *transformational leadership and achievement*, *leadership and graduation*, and *student achievement*. I limited the search to peer-reviewed articles from 2016 to 2020, except for sources addressing the conceptual framework. I used an iterative process to obtain pertinent articles and used scholarly books and texts to provide additional sources for this study until I reached saturation.

Conceptual Framework

Transformational leadership was the conceptual framework for my study. Because transformational leaders inspire and motivate followers to adapt and change (Burns, 1978), this framework was appropriate to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and the influence of these approaches to increase African American and Hispanic students' graduation. Transformational leaders set an example to create a strong sense of culture, inspire employee ownership of the vision, and create a feeling of independence in the workplace (Bass, 1999).

Leadership is misunderstood yet vital to organizations, which is why it is a widely studied phenomenon. Leadership is a social process that intentionally influences people to achieve a specific purpose (Bush & Glover, 2014). The power of leadership emerges through relationships based on motivation and resources (Burns, 1978). An effective leader aligns all stakeholders to common goals and values (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In the educational setting, the introduction of high accountability since 2002 started a new area of research on effective administrative leadership in school. The changes of high-stakes testing as the result of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) forced schools to analyze student achievement and provide strategies to increase academic learning (Allen et al., 2015). However, society is changing. Schools have had to adapt to new social, political, economic, and cultural experiences infiltrating the student learning environment (Hajisoteriou et al., 2018). As schools develop to meet changing or increased demands, educational administrators must

also evolve and use leadership practices to increase student achievement and school success (Allen et al., 2015). A school is not successful in increasing student achievement without an effective leader (Leithwood & Sleegers, 2006). Transformational leadership is one method chosen by school administrators to lead the improvement.

The concept of transforming leadership began with Weber. Weber (1947) developed the idea of charisma as an important element for leaders, especially in times of crisis. According to Barbuto (1997), leaders with charisma present a solution to the crisis and display special abilities of appealing to followers, who powerfully identify with the leader and trust in the goal. Transformational leadership expanded with Burns in the 1970s. Burns (1978) analyzed transforming leadership within political leaders. Burns described the ideas of transformational and transactional leadership as two main forms of how leaders yield their power. Transformational leaders use their social influence to increase the morale levels of the leadership and the followers (Burns, 1978). Leaders possess qualities to deal with a variety of situations and through those processes transform not only situations but also the people around them (Burns, 2003). Transactional leadership practices, conversely, involve exchanging something of value, and therefore include the qualities of bargaining, persuading, and manipulating to promote the goals of the organization (Burns, 1978).

Burns (1978) described power as an essential component of leadership, and leaders must understand the ethical principles of power to engage followers to achieve common goals. Leadership and power have a special relationship built on two essential characteristics: motivation and resources. These two essential items are interrelated, so if

one is missing, the power disintegrates. Motivation stems from an intrinsic desire to succeed, and resources are derived from practices of leaders who provide external support. Burns stated this complex interplay of wants and needs requires a fluid balance of transformational leadership practices between people who want to lead and their potential followers. The wants and needs of the leaders and their followers connect to the core of a leader's special power built on a relationship of trust among the various people of the organization; a transformational leader uses collaborative relationships to improve the entire system. This type of transformational leadership is empowering and inspires followers to exceed individual interests and work in partnership to move toward a higher goal for the organization.

Bass (1985) expanded the idea of transformational leadership by defining crucial components and explaining the core of transformational leadership is motivation and inspiration. The internal drive of transformational leaders is to make change, which comes from their vision of augmenting the effectiveness of the organization to increase capacity. Transformational organizations have unique bonds where people care about each other, help each other grow intellectually, and work toward common goals for the organization (Bass, 1999).

Bass and Riggio (2006) established specific guidelines for transformational leadership that differentiate this practice from other leadership paradigms. Transformational leaders work to define themselves through motivation. Through encouragement, leaders move followers to believe in themselves, collaborate efforts, and share responsibilities to achieve the common goal of the organization (Bass & Riggio,

2006). These leadership practices have implications in developing a diverse organization to increase outcomes. Bass and Riggio characterized transformational leadership into four factors labeled (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) individualized consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation.

The first practice of a transformational leader is idealized influence, where the charisma of the leader influences the entire ideals of the organization. This factor is one of the core elements of transformational leadership because it influences followers to share and collectively own the goals of the organization. A leader with idealized influence sets (a) a vision for the future, (b) a plan to reach the goals, (c) an example for followers to help reach goals, (d) high standards for implementation of the process, and (e) a model of dedication and tenacity (Bass, 1999). Idealized practices include transformational leaders exhibiting good citizenship-type behaviors such as patriotism, sportsmanship, civic virtue, and selflessness while weighing moral and ethical consequences of decisions and having a strong sense of purpose and vision (McCarley et al., 2016). This factor develops a sense of trust and respect with all members of the organization and creates a sense of collaborative teamwork in followers.

The second practice of a transformational leader is inspirational motivation that helps build commitment to the organization. The leader shares the excitement of the vision, sets high expectations for everyone, and inspires confidence that the vision can be accomplished, which builds a team quality about the work. Members of the organization grow through mentoring, coaching, and individualized growth planning to help followers maximize their individual potential (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Bass and Riggio (2006) stated

that this transformational leadership practice meets the individual needs of followers and ensures each individual is valued within the organization.

Intellectual simulation is the third practice of transformational leadership, exhibited by a leader who encourages the staff to creatively problem solve and think independently. The focus of this practice emphasizes previous accomplishments to encourage change to create new attitudes, beliefs, and ways of doing things to ensure successful progress. Transformational leaders assist followers to become experts in their fields through mentoring and use their expertise to influence the people around them. Munir and Aboidullah (2018) found that intellectual stimulation, when appropriately exhibited by a leader, not only helps followers prepare for swift changes but also develops them to handle changes by challenging the status quo.

The last factor of transformational leadership practice is individualized consideration, which is a leader's ability to inspire individuals in the organization by knowing and understanding a person's unique needs (Bass, 1999). The leader serves as a mentor and coach to help individuals meet their own individual growth potential (Bass & Riggio, 2006). McCarley et al. (2016) stated that when transformational leaders clearly communicate the organization's vision and goals, the leader models behaviors that challenge followers to achieve individual performance.

Bass (1999) completed research on the influence of transformational leadership in various professional organizations, but Leithwood (1993, 1994) expanded the studies of transformational leadership within the educational setting. These studies revealed transformational leadership practices can help to restructure schools to improve

educational achievement and outcomes (Leithwood, 1993, 1994). McCarley et al. (2016) corroborated Leithwood's findings and revealed the development of a focused vision assisted transformational leaders to cultivate a positive organizational structure and climate that increased staff effectiveness and student achievement. School organization and climate are an important part of a transformational process. However, the transformational leader must build a belief in the academic objectives of the school and empower the entire school community to focus collaboratively on achieving the vision.

The transformational leader seeks innovation to help increase the organization's capacity to support the changes and accomplish the purpose (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Leithwood (1994) found that transformational leadership practices focus on using innovation to restructure instructional procedures and student learning. In an educational context, researchers examined leadership within four conditions: (a) setting directions, (b) redesigning the organization, (c) developing people, and (d) guiding the culture of the organization (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The following seven dimensions are used to describe educational transformational leadership practices: (a) creating school goals and vision, (b) promoting creativity and innovation, (c) supporting individuals, (d) demonstrating values and best practices, (e) emulating high expectations from all followers, (f) developing a positive school culture, and (g) creating school process for collaborative decision making (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). These transformational leadership practices help to build positive environments to increase student outcomes.

These transformational leadership practices in schools can lead to substantial organizational change, which can increase the success of a high school campus. Transformational leadership practices work in tandem with staff to develop and sculpt a positive school culture, which contributes to successful teaching and learning on the campus (Munir & Aboidullah, 2018). Leadership practices may need to adjust to various situations, but transformational leaders not only can build their school community but also rely on the collective staff, teachers, and community to achieve performance goals (Hutton, 2018). One performance goal of high schools is graduation. In this qualitative study, I investigated the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices that may influence African American and Hispanic students to achieve graduation in the southwestern United States.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

Transformational leadership in education has evolved with studies and research into practices that comprise effective leadership. Transformational leadership is the most studied leadership style within the educational context (Berkovich, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020; Quin et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2017). Researchers have found transformational leadership practices are an effective leadership model in the era of high-stakes accountability and the need for increased student achievement (Leithwood, 1994; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017; Quin et al., 2015). However, transformational leadership practices vary based on the diverse needs of the school environment (Gurr et al., 2018; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Menon, 2014). Urban school settings present administrators and teachers with unique circumstances that require leaders and followers to evolve and adjust

leadership practices based on constant changes in the school environment to help students succeed academically.

In the first section of the literature review, I present the urban school setting context of this study and then discuss leadership practices within transformational leadership. In the second section, I present research on positive school climate and positive school organization, which are two transformational practices that influence increased student outcomes (see Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Shatzer et al., 2014). In the final section, I present a synthesis of peer-reviewed literature regarding the transformational leadership practices of school climate and school organization and findings related to urban high schools and graduation of African American and Hispanic students.

Urban High Schools

Schools centered in an urban environment frequently experience specific challenges servicing students from a low-socioeconomic environment and ethnic diversity. Students in urban centers have additional considerations that influence educational progress, such as lower parental involvement, fewer educational resources, and lack of basic physical needs. Additionally, Hispanic students may feel a distrust of the educational system, particularly if they are illegal immigrants (Robison et al., 2017). These factors lead to higher absenteeism and school interruptions, which leads to lower student academic achievement. DePaoli et al. (2018) revealed students in urban schools perform below their suburban and rural counterparts. Ethnic minority students, especially those in poverty with limited English proficiency or disabilities, tend to perform below their White peers (Atwell et al., 2019; DePaoli et al., 2018). African American and

Hispanic communities are the primary minorities in the large urban centers in the southwestern United States, where this study took place.

Within these urban centers, public and private schools work to increase the educational level of the communities to open opportunities for students. High schools are distinctive entities within the secondary education system because high schools have older students who require instruction that encourages autonomous learning (Preston et al., 2017; Sebastian et al., 2017). Academic subjects at high schools are organized by department with the objective to prepare students for college and future careers. Because of this unique environment, urban high schools experience problematic cultures and higher dropout rates (Sebastian et al., 2017). Administrators in urban high schools require leadership skills to orchestrate a large urban school environment to ensure students meet their goal of graduating high school.

Principals are held accountable for outcomes generated by students and teachers within the building. Leaders in education must be flexible in their practices based on a variety of circumstances, including teacher and student ethnic diversity, various levels of socioeconomic status, teacher levels of knowledge, and school community. Effective transformative leadership practices positively influence student academic achievement.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders empower teachers and staff to use professional skills to enhance learning in their classrooms and build teacher morale, which both support increased student achievement (Allen et al., 2015; Tan, 2018). Transformational leaders in an educational setting exhibit four practices: (a) setting directions, (b) redesigning the

organization, (c) developing people, and (d) building the culture of the organization (Adillo & Netshitangani, 2019; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Setting Directions

The first condition of transformational leadership practice is setting directions. For this condition, the leader participates in activities to pursue a goal by involving teachers to create a shared vision and expectations for the school (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). By incorporating teachers in the development of the goals and vision of the campus, the leader increases support for the school improvement plan (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Direction setting allows leaders to give staff a purpose for their work through development and communication of shared vision that sets attainable goals for the school (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). The creation and communication of this common vision focus on high expectations for all stakeholders. Although challenges are present within a school environment, transformational educational leaders must develop a clear vision to promote a school culture supporting success for all students (McCarley et al., 2016). This vision provides a distinct direction for all components of the school, and as the school moves toward the goal, the culture towards high achievement for all students will develop.

Redesigning the Organization

Redesigning the organization is the second condition of transformational leadership practice. Transformational leaders use various methods to align the educational environment, to develop organization capacity, and to realize the goals and

visions of the school (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). The transformational leader works to improve the entire system by creating a strong school culture that builds collaboration between teachers, staff, and community. Leaders create a supportive, creative environment, which promotes teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). This organizational culture builds trust between the teachers and the administration. Through the improvement of the instructional program and teacher classroom practices, the school should increase student achievement. In redesigning the organization, the leader includes all the stakeholders, staff, students, parents, and community to strengthen the overall organization with collaborative decision-making procedures (Hitt & Meyers, 2018). Leaders providing professional and emotional support help motivate teachers to maintain commitment to the vision and the organization (Hitt & Meyers, 2018). When the teachers collectively experience effectiveness, student achievement grows, and teacher and student commitment to the school rises (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Developing People

The third condition of transformational leadership practice is developing people. The transformational leader models values that provide individualized support and intellectual stimulation to develop personnel on their campus (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). The leader also provides professional development and support to teachers and staff, leads planning in collaborative meetings, supervises instruction on campus, and shields teachers from outside distractions that could hamper instruction in the classroom (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The leader must evolve alongside teachers to develop the

learning culture of the school. An important of aspect of developing people is the leader's ability to ensure the protection of teacher instructional planning time (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Building professional capacity by developing teachers is an important element to improve the school.

Building Positive Climate

The fourth and final condition of transformational leadership practice is building the climate of the organization. The transformational leader develops shared meaning and values, and the establishment of these beliefs and norms influences school effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). The expansion of these collaborative efforts requires guidance from leadership practices, and this motivation is an important element for effective leaders to inspire followers. Transformational administrators develop teachers to work together collaboratively, thereby constructing an environment where teachers feel comfortable sharing ideas, identifying problems, and offering solutions (Ch et al., 2017). The positive climate promotes staff and student learning and engagement that increases student achievement and teacher job satisfaction (Day et al., 2016). Transformational leaders provide a positive school climate for all faculty and students to succeed.

These four conditions of transformational leadership practices encompass how leaders organize their practices to guide the development of staff and students. Effective leadership consists of the ability to manage these various conditions effectively within a school (Hutton, 2018). Based on the four conditions, seven dimensions are created that provides greater specificity to transformational leadership in a school setting. These dimensions include (a) creating school goals and vision, (b) promoting creativity and

innovation, (c) supporting individuals, (d) demonstrating values and best practices, (e) emulating high expectations from all followers, (f) developing a positive school culture, and (g) creating school process for collaborative decision-making (Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). These dimensions are a microcosm of the conditions that educational leaders need to exhibit to effectively lead a school that permit administrators to be responsive to the circumstances of their school community (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Effective administrators empower the staff in the school to be leaders within their realm. This empowerment allows structures to be created to improve school climate that are monitored by teachers and provides support for their work in the school (Sebastian et al., 2017). The effectiveness of a transformational school principal requires establishing and maintaining vision, leading instructional improvement, facilitating a generative learning environment for teachers and students, and engaging all stakeholders related to issues of capacity and student achievement (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Student achievement is a significant objective of educational policy that emphasizes the importance of administrative leadership on school staff. A transformational principal has an influential role to increase student achievement by building the capacity of school staff and teachers through two of the most effective conditions—positive school climate and positive school organizations (Robertson et al., 2016; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016).

Positive School Climate

Positive school climate requires a transformational administrator to create a quality environment on a school campus where teachers and staff build trusting interpersonal relationships that provide structure and academic expectations for students.

Transformational leaders are change agents who build confidence in their organization, and staff members are comfortable making suggestions about improving the organization (Dutta & Sahney, 2016). High-performing school leaders transform their school by improving the campus through culture, motivation, and performance (Adillo & Netshitangani, 2019; Smith & Shouppe, 2018). Research findings have shown that solid leadership and positive school climate are significant to the success of every principal, student, and school (Back et al., 2016; McCarley et al., 2016; Smith & Shouppe, 2018). With transformational administration positively influencing school climate, constructive relationships are built between administration, teachers, and students; such relationships create highly effective teachers who can create and use best practices, increasing student achievement (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016). Student achievement increases while behavior problems and dropouts decrease because students feel comfortable and safe at school.

In schools comprised of students from low socioeconomic levels, often including ethnic minority populations, the school environment helps to maintain a safe zone where external problems within the community do not directly affect programs and structures inside the school environment (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Kraft et al., 2016; M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016). High school environments are different because of the departmentalized nature of the subjects and older students who need instruction to promote more autonomous learning. The uniqueness of urban high school environment requires a combination of several integral factors to improve school climate and increase student achievement (Back et al., 2016). Positive school climate builds opportunities for student

success with reduced behavior problems, decreased dropout rates, and increased student success (M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016). School climate is multifaceted, and any combination of factors can help schools can create pathways to student success. The facets of trust, relationships, and teacher job satisfaction work together to build a positive school climate.

Trust

Within a positive school climate, administrators must build a community of trust. Disenfranchised communities encompassing racial minorities, language differences, and questionable immigration status need school leaders to understand differing community perspectives to build trust between the community and the school (Green, 2017). When individuals work collaboratively, perceive their organization as trustworthy, and view themselves as being respected, they are more likely to feel comfortable in their environment (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). As administrators build trust with teachers in the organization, the teachers feel safe to innovate novel teaching practices in the classroom, thereby increasing self-efficacious beliefs in their positive influence on student academic achievement (Ng & Lucianetti, 2016). This development allows the school administration to retain effective teachers because their belief in self-efficacy contributes to student achievement.

Trust between school leaders and staff is an important element to increase student outcomes. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that when leaders were approachable and welcomed group participation, staff members believed they could trust the leader, and this confidence transferred to colleagues on staff. The increased level of

trust between the principal and the teachers expanded their commitment level to student achievement and enthusiasm for teaching and learning. Academic achievement also increases when the faculty trust each other. As trust between the faculty developed, the teachers created a positive learning environment where student attitudes and beliefs about learning increased (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). Responsible practices of transformative administrators created a positive school climate that helped build the success of the academic achievement of the school (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). The connection between trust in school leadership and student academic achievement helps struggling schools and diverse student populations to succeed.

Strong positive relationships between the school leaders and teachers is an important element for school improvement in high-poverty schools. High poverty and a variety of environmental factors that influence student achievement can be altered by positive student interactions, which are created by the trust (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). High poverty schools with racial minorities have lower achievement scores and require teachers to maintain positive organizational structures comprised of academic supports, including collaboration among teachers and students (Seashore Louis & Murphy, 2017). Creating trust requires leaders to promote and develop professional and positive connections that create positive climate, structures, and behaviors within the organization (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Seashore Louis & Murphy, 2017). Collective faculty trust in the school leadership and campus vision creates the potentiality of increased academic achievement for all students but especially for those students in high-poverty urban schools.

Building a positive climate requires trust in the organization to build a safe space for students to learn and achieve academically. Santamaría (2014) examined leadership and culturally responsive practices and posited that school leaders must lead by example to build trust in the organization for equity and social justice in schools with diverse populations. Creating a positive climate of acceptance of the individuality of all students and cultures helped to promote a constructive transformation throughout the school that improved academic achievement for all students (Santamaría, 2014). Another finding in a qualitative study in an urban city in the United States was that trust was an important factor to develop positive academic achievement (Rhoden, 2017). Constructing a strong trust within the school environment encourages high expectations for student achievement and provides a strong support system that facilitates collaboration in student's own learning that leads to high academic achievement (Rhoden, 2017). Positive climate requires trust to help students achieve academically in school.

Relationships

Building mutual relationships is another integral element of positive school climate. Transformational school leaders improve teaching and learning throughout the school by focusing on increasing the motivation of teachers through positive working conditions (Ch et al., 2017; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017) that include positive relationships. The administrators lead the teachers and staff through the process of collaborating to move toward accomplishing the school vision. Transformational leadership practices provide opportunities for shared leadership between administrators and teachers; in turn, teachers building respectful relationships with each other may

increase student achievement (Minckler, 2014). Strengthening the professional community through collaboration and positive relationships develops pedological practices that improve student engagement and learning (Minckler, 2014). Collaborative teacher relationships create a positive school climate, which encourages student achievement to increase (Back et al., 2016; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). For low-socioeconomic urban communities with large populations of ethnic minority students, the effects of school leaders who build positive relationships are significant.

Transformational leaders build relationships with their staff, and these relationships filter into student classrooms. Studies by Back et al. (2016) and DePaoli et al. (2018) revealed a correlation between schools located in low-socioeconomic areas and unsatisfactory academic achievement. Urban Title I schools, frequently located in poverty-stricken cities, educate a high number of ethnic minority and disadvantaged students, and achievement gaps exist between students in high-poverty urban areas in multiracial neighborhoods compared to achievement scores in suburban areas (DePaoli et al., 2018). Back et al. found that positive relationships and positive climate are significant factors in urban schools with low academic achievement because of the challenging backgrounds and home environments of the students. Transformational administrators seek to build positive relationships that encourage positive instructional classroom practices of teachers to influence growth in students' academic achievement.

In urban environments, administrators' and teachers' relationships with students are important because of the socioeconomic environment of the students. Students enter

school with academic and behavioral challenges that manifest in classroom disruptions, which interrupts instructional time (Back et al., 2016). Students may perform off-task behaviors that create disruptions in the classroom setting (Hirn et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2019). Hirn et al. (2018) studied 22 urban, high-performing schools and found teachers provided one verbal negative response to students in 100 minutes; however, in low-performing schools, teachers gave negative feedback to students at double the rate, once every 42 minutes that increased discipline problems in the classroom. In a similar study, Scott et al. (2019) found that African American students who experienced increased numbers of negative interactions with the teachers achieved lower academic grades because of decreased time for instruction, poor relationships between students and teachers, and a diminished trust in school. Teacher interactions with students at low-performing schools were not instructional in nature, but rather involved communication redirecting behavioral issues, which lowered academic achievement; whereas high-achieving schools promoted positive student relationships that encouraged student engagement and interactions, which increased student achievement (Hirn et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2019). The construction of positive relationships between all stakeholders in the school building allows the collective focus to be on increased outcomes for all students, without one group carrying total responsibility (Back et al., 2016).

A sense of belonging is a connection of acceptance with others and is important to students in school because school belonging supports learning in the classroom and social interactions on campus. This student identification with the school is a means for leaders to build positive relationships in school. In a qualitative study of African American

women in a community college, Booker (2106) found a positive connection between student sense of belonging and student academic achievement. Reynolds et al. (2017) studied middle-level students and found student identification to the school was an important factor in academic achievement. Instructors who showed a personal interest and provided a safe space to be an individual in their class created a feeling of belongingness in students (Booker, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017). When education leaders and teachers create time to build relationships, these staff create a safe space for the students to express their beliefs and backgrounds and to collaborate with other students in their classroom (Booker, 2016). When this identification and sense of belonging develops, student engagement with school and learning rises, increasing student achievement (Booker, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017). A sense of community and belonging in the educational environment builds relationships that create a positive climate where all students can succeed.

Transformational leadership practices create positive relationships leading to teacher effectiveness and thus student engagement and achievement. Boberg and Bourgeois (2016) conducted a quantitative study of students and teachers in Grades 3–12 to examine how positive administrator, teacher, and student relationships influence achievement on standardized test scores. The teachers' perceptions of administrators' transformational leadership practices indirectly influenced students' emotional engagement and achievement through the direct connection of teacher collective efficacy (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). Finding from the study showed students' academic achievement in reading and math increased when positive relationships between

administrators, teachers, and students were present. As the collective potential and optimism of teachers to influence student achievement developed, teachers also cultivated student identification with the school culture (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). The researchers associated these relationships with teachers' increased instructional effectiveness in the classroom because of the school leader's transformational leadership practices.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Another integral factor of positive school climate are transformational practices that support teachers' instructional freedom in the classroom that increases job satisfaction and retention. When administrators stimulate collaborative environments that permit flexibility for teachers to plan creative lessons that relate to students, teachers are free to focus on the academic success of each student (Baptiste, 2019). A positive school climate increases learning opportunities and academic growth for students, reduces teacher turnover, and decreases student discipline concerns and attendance issues (Smith & Shouppe, 2018).

A positive school climate increases teacher job satisfaction and student achievement by creating a high level of trust and positive relationships with staff, administrators, and students. Kouali (2017) conducted a mixed method study and found that principals who addressed a positive school climate, rather than emphasizing specific instructional practices, significantly influenced student academic outcomes. In a similar study, Dicke et al. (2020) found a significant correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and student achievement. A positive climate promoted teacher collaboration

to innovate and create unique classroom learning experiences for their students, which increased student achievement (Kouali, 2017). A strong correlation also existed between the job satisfaction of teachers and principals. Transformational administrators who build strong relationships in the school community not only increase teacher job satisfaction but also influence student achievement.

In summary, transformational administrative practices that establish a positive school climate include (a) building trust, (b) developing positive relationships, and (c) providing teacher job satisfaction. Positive school climate is a multifaceted mechanism that can increase student academic achievement and help improve graduation rates (M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016). As a school climate progressively becomes a positive environment on a campus, teacher effectiveness increases. Teachers then innovate in their classroom to build relationships that may increase student achievement. This collective effectiveness of teachers motivates students to graduate high school and become productive citizens in society (M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016).

Positive School Organization

Transformational leaders understand the school context to build a positive school organization to improve student academic achievement. A positive school organization includes supports and processes a school leader puts into place to improve the school mission and vision and differs from the aspects of positive school climate that relate to teaching and learning practices and interpersonal relationships. Through the creation of collaborative teams, a transformational organization creates groups that (a) care about each other, (b) inspire creativity, (c) align with the organizations goals, (d) perform to

high standards, (e) maintain flexibility, and (f) exhibit pride and loyalty (Bass, 1999). Positive school organization requires an administrative leader who establishes a collaborative network of teachers and student groups to create an environment to improve learning for all stakeholders within the school (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016). Leaders need to be responsive to the unique conditions of their school (Leithwood et al., 2020) by adapting responsive practices to their staff and school challenges to build a positive organization (Day et al., 2016). Positive school organizations are significant for schools with student populations from a lower socioeconomic status comprised of higher racial minorities because schools exhibiting positive learning strategies develop teaching and learning techniques that are relevant and engaging to students (Klugman et al., 2015). Transformational leaders play a fundamental influence on developing a mission and vision, motivating their staff, and creating the innovation capacity of teachers to adapt their instructional practices to increase student achievement (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). Leaders build a positive school organization with vision and mission, motivation, collaborative practices, and teaching and learning.

Vision and Mission

Transformational leaders set directions for their schools to build a shared vision and mission; as the school advances towards the goal, achievement of all students tends to increase. A positive organizational environment of a school begins with a strong vision that all stakeholders know and understand (Green, 2018). This leadership practice of developing the school vision, values, and goals creates an environment where positive interaction and culture between the school leaders, staff, and students increases teacher

effectiveness (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). In a qualitative study of a high school in the southeastern United States, Green (2018) found that a strong vision promoted by the transformational principal provided opportunities for student success. A solid vision for the school contributed to increased participation to incorporate change and adapt the school environment to create new possibilities for community involvement and student success (Green, 2018).

Transformational leaders use the school's vision to change the structure of the school to improve school processes. Teachers develop efficacious beliefs when they have a sense of trust in the leadership and the objectives of the organization align with their personal goals (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). This trust influences their motivation and work ethic when they are provided opportunities to develop professionally and are valued as members of the organization. Lai (2015) conducted a qualitative study revealing that the leadership practice of fostering a vision is important to develop teachers to accomplish the common organizational goal, to create change, and to increase school achievement. When teachers focus on the vision and mission of their school and develop a high level of confidence and autonomy in teaching, student academic achievement and positive perceptions of the culture of the school increase (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). A positive vision builds shared values and goals that help teachers feel supported. Educators are encouraged to develop creative learning environments within the positive school organization to improve student outcomes.

School improvement necessitates a strong mission and vision. In a qualitative study in Canada with 27 school principals, Mombourquette (2017) examined the

connection between school vision and student learning and found high-performing schools had a clear vision communicated to stakeholders. The educational leaders invited others to participate to develop and refine the campus vision. Mombourquette found building relationships and trust within the organization was important in helping to turn the vision into reality at the school.

When administrators build a positive school organization, they must analyze the campus demographics to understand the backgrounds of the staff and students. In a mixed methods study in New York, Knight-Manuel et al. (2019) examined 18 school staff members who developed and implemented a culturally relevant vision to increase education opportunities for ethnic minority students. Ethnic minority students, especially those living in poverty, may have lower expectations of academic achievement. A common vision of culturally relevant teaching and learning throughout the campus is important to engage ethnic minority students and increase their academic success (Green, 2018). Mission and vision are important elements to building a positive school organization that leads to increase student achievement.

Motivation

Transformational leaders create a supportive, creative environment that motivates staff to work to improve the entire system. Administrators shape the positive organization of their school by influencing the motivation and working conditions of their staff (Leithwood et al., 2020). The success or failure of change depends on the transformational practices of the campus principal (Back et al., 2016; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Day et al., 2016). When an administrator attended to teachers' needs in

an empathetic manner and challenged teachers to use creative innovative teaching practices, school leaders were able to motivate the staff to develop confidence that exceeded the goals set by the organization (Abdullah et al., 2018).

School leaders need to motivate their staff to build positive school organizations. Adillo and Netshitangani's (2019) qualitative study of 28 school leaders and teachers examined transformational leadership practices and the connection to school culture. The researchers found that the implementation of transformational leadership practices inspired and motivated staff to achieve the goals to provide effective education. In a similar narrative study, Abdullah et al. (2018) determined a significant positive relationship between administrators' transformational leadership practices and the motivation of teachers. Administrators need to exhibit inspirational motivation to their staff and model how organizational goals may be accomplished. Teachers in turn then feel accomplished and motivated to implement strategies that raise expectations for their students in the classroom and increase academic achievement (Adillo & Netshitangani, 2019). When the administrators focused on motivating their staff, the quality of teaching and learning increased in the school, which influenced student achievement (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). School leaders' positive motivation of their staff leads to increased student achievement.

Urban schools in low-socioeconomic areas have concerns with low teacher motivation and student academic achievement. Kalman and Arslan (2016) found school leaders have an indirect influence on student achievement through teacher motivation and job satisfaction. Tichnor-Wagner et al. (2016) in a qualitative study corroborated Kalman

and Arslan's results and found that effective schools need intentional structures and norms with supportive leadership and shared values among the school community. Administrators must be flexible in adjusting structures and processes of the school to improve the culture of learning. The shared goals and values help teachers to feel motivated and thus increase their capacity and effectiveness in the classroom. To increase teaching and learning, the leadership of the school needed to (a) encourage teachers through a supportive environment, (b) motivate teachers through fair and equal treatment, and (c) create a positive climate through positive praise (Kalman & Arslan, 2016). The heightened motivation of teachers, along with the sense of purpose of the organization and positive work environment, created high expectations for everyone in the organization that increased student academic achievement (Kalman & Arslan, 2016; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016). In a positive school organization, when teachers are valued by the school administration, teachers are motivated to create engaging classroom instruction to increase student graduation rates.

Collaborative Practices

A positive school organization is essential for developing a shared vision because the focused common direction helps build staff skills (Hooper & Bernhardt, 2016). Effective leaders build a shared vision and understand the value of collaboration among teachers to strengthen their capacity within the classroom (Quin et al., 2015). The principal introducing new ideas and instructional practices through professional development helps to build the instructional pedagogy of the teachers. When the teachers know the principal is supportive of new concepts and innovative ideas, the teachers are

encouraged to work together and be creative to improve their instructional skills (Adillo & Netshitangani, 2019). Student motivation, achievement, and sense of belonging increase when principals support collaborative practices among staff (Day et al., 2016). Such collaboration encourages a positive school climate that helps to increase student achievement.

Principal transformational leadership practices are supportive and collaborative, positively influencing all aspects of teaching and learning. Smith and Shouppe (2018) found that when leaders built a collaborative team in which all leaders and staff took responsibility for the achievement of all students, student scores increased, particularly in reading. These findings are important in urban environments with significant poverty because students tend to have limited access to reading resources in the home. McCarley et al. (2016) found successful inclusive high schools had leaders who shared decision-making power and promoted collaborative practices throughout the campus. The school leader used transformational practices to create high-quality collaborative learning communities throughout the school to improve the teaching practices of teachers. Teachers then provided engaging lessons and increased the learning for all students.

A positive climate with a collaboration of power between school leaders and staff influences the learning of students. Khan and Shaheen (2016) surveyed teachers and principals from 90 schools and found the importance of empowering teachers to improve student learning. Administrators who employed collaborative decision-making practices increased autonomy and opportunity for educators to use creative innovation instructional techniques (Khan & Shaheen, 2016). When leaders in these schools collaboratively

shared power, everyone in the organization became involved and committed to raising the academic standards of the campuses. Similarly, Sebastian et al. (2017) found leaders of large effective urban high schools focused on building positive school organizations by encouraging teachers to collaborate. By incorporating teachers into decision-making processes, campus leaders and teachers cooperatively created a positive climate that improved student academic achievement at the school. The increased instructional strategies and collaborative practices of the entire organization created a positive school climate for teaching and learning, which increased student academic outcomes (Khan & Shaheen, 2016; Sebastian et al., 2017). Shared decision-making in transformational leadership creates positive organizational structures that can improve student achievement.

Collaborative practices are essential for schools in high-poverty areas with large ethnic minority populations. These schools of necessity require school leadership to address the culture of learning in the school. Murakami et al. (2018) used a single case study approach to analyze public data and interviewed stakeholders in a high-needs school focused on retaining high-quality teachers. The researchers recommended that administrators create a culture of learning by using collaborative practices with teachers and parents. In a similar study, Hajisoteriou et al. (2018) interviewed and observed teachers, school leaders, students, and parents and found collaboration, communication, and networking to be significant components of change within a school with a diverse student population. By creating positive collaborative learning groups, the teachers learned from each other and empowered new teachers to build their capacity in the

classroom. These groups contributed to teachers' beliefs that they were part of a positive organizational structure and helped to retain educators at the school. Building collaborative practices with teachers and student groups increases inclusiveness across cultures and creates collegial networks that promote student achievement.

Diverse multicultural schools require leaders to understand cultural contexts of the students in the educational setting. Edeburn and Knotts (2019) examined Hispanic students' transition from middle school to high school and investigated structural and institutional factors of a high school that challenged academic achievement. The researchers found a perceptional disconnect that hindered communication between teachers, counselors, and students, which undermined academic progress and achievement. Edeburn and Knotts found that school leaders needed to provide professional development opportunities to provide cultural awareness of the student population and build collaborative teams to improve Hispanic students' transition to high school and facilitate graduation. School leaders who create a strong climate and an organizational structure through teacher and staff collaborative practices influence the academic achievement of students.

Teaching and Learning

The pedagogy of teaching and learning is an important element to develop in a school's organizational structure to improve the academic achievement of students and increase graduation rates. In urban schools, transformational leaders must create changes in the school organization by adjusting concepts, building new routines, and developing practices to increase student achievement (Hitt et al., 2018). These adjustments by the

leaders empower teachers to make effective decisions to help improve teaching and learning and thus increase student achievement (Sebastian et al., 2017; Tan, 2018). The improvement of student achievement leads to overall school improvement, including lowering dropout rates and increasing graduations rates, especially for ethnic minority populations.

In a positive school environment, creating systems and processes that allow teachers and students to be successful allows transformational administrators to use responsive leadership practices rather than reactive actions. Kraft et al. (2016) studied how organizational structures in the school manage the uncertainty of the peripheral community environment. In the study, school administrators created an organizational approach that supported teachers in ethnic minority, low-poverty communities through school-wide organizations including (a) using collaborative teams across the school to ensure vertical alignment, (b) creating a safe learning environment, (c) supporting mechanisms for struggling students either academically or emotionally, and (d) engaging the community to help bridge the gap between home and school. These four organization structures created greater opportunities for teaching and learning in their classrooms and increased student achievement.

High-achieving schools focus on a culture of teaching and learning. In a qualitative comparative case study of four high schools in Texas, Cannata et al. (2017) explored the differences between low- and high-achieving high schools on economically depressed urban campuses with large enrollments of African American and Hispanic students. The study revealed three areas that the high-achieving high schools

implemented to create a strong culture of teaching and learning to increase students' ownership of learning: (a) maintaining high academic standards for students, (b) building systems to provide academic support, and (c) creating strong student engagement and culture of learning. Overall, principals of urban turnaround schools need to provide high-level organization systems that include innovation, collaboration, and a strong vision to create an environment that builds capacity with the teachers and high expectations for student success (Hitt et al., 2018). A culture of teaching and learning increases graduation rates through positive school organizational structures.

A teaching and learning environment should extend to how students would use their high school education. Jackson and Knight-Manuel's (2019) study used observations and focus groups to interview 24 educators of color in an urban school district in the northeastern United States who had participated in professional development to help African American and Hispanic students prepare for the world beyond high school. The researchers found educators of color had numerous experiences that could help build an environment of teaching and learning for a school culture promoting college and career readiness. Real-world experiences and college or career connections showed ethnic minority students the opportunities available to them after high school. These experiences and connections related to the students and assisted them to understand how their high school education was relevant to opportunities beyond high school, helping motivate ethnic minority students to graduate high school (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019). The links of teaching and learning to the life opportunities after

high school in a positive school organization help to increase high school graduation rates, particularly for ethnic minority students.

Graduation

Positive climate and positive school organization help to increase academic achievement for students, but achievement gaps continue to exist between European American, African American, and Hispanic students. Achievement gaps between races have not decreased substantially since 2010 despite efforts by all levels of society and government; the growing economic inequality in urban areas leads to increased academic inequality (David & Marchant, 2015). Most large urban high schools have a large number of ethnic minorities, with the majority of students living in poverty (DePaoli et al., 2018). When ethnic minority students also have a disadvantaged socioeconomic status, the expectations of teachers are lower, increasing the importance of provided a positive learning climate and organization for these students (Sebastian et al., 2017). Transformational leadership practices of creating a positive school climate and culture may help ethnic minority students achieve graduation.

Roth (2015) conducted a qualitative exploratory study of 20 Hispanic immigrants in Chicago concerning factors that influence the educational attainment of Hispanic students in urban high schools. Most ethnic minorities from urban schools have lower academic expectations stemming from the low assumptions of teachers and staff. However, findings from studies have provided evidence that transformational school leaders who create learning environments that are supportive and culturally relevant enable Hispanic students to make positive connections and increase educational

attainment (Roth, 2015). Positive climate and relationships with school leaders, teachers, and students help increase graduation rates for Hispanic youth.

Leavitt and Hess (2019) conducted a quantitative study in 323 elementary, middle, and high schools in Colorado to examine the connection between school climate and the achievement gap between White and Hispanic students. Colorado had a large achievement gap between White and Hispanic students. The researchers focused on analyzing various organizational structures of schools and school climate. When strong consistent, positive organizational structures were present in the school, academic achievement improved for all students, providing evidence that a positive school climate was an important element for ethnic minority students to achieve academically. According to the researchers' findings, administrators who created a positive environment for teaching and learning that included professional development for the staff experienced significant academic achievement for ethnic minority students (Leavitt & Hess, 2019). Positive school climate helps improve achievement gaps of ethnic minority populations.

Similarly, other researchers have suggested that academic achievement leading to graduation is related to cultural acceptance of ethnic minority students within the school climate. Boston and Warren (2017) used a quantitative approach to study of 105 African Americans from urban high schools to examine the relationship between the sense of belonging, racial identity, and academic achievement. A major finding of the study was the significant relationship between a sense of belonging and academic achievement. In school environments with ethnic minority populations, creating a positive culture and

building relationships using mentors and collaborative student teams are imperative. This school setting provides a safe school environment and a feeling of belonging to the school and its environment (Boston & Warren, 2017). In urban areas where the community milieu can be difficult for students, the school campus provides a sense of belonging and a safe place to learn and grow that will lead to increased academic achievement and graduation rates for ethnic minority students.

Detachment from school can lead to ethnic minority students dropping out of school. A generic qualitative study of 15 African American male students in a southern state examined why Black students dropped out of school. According to Bell (2014), teachers generally have lower expectations of academic achievement for African American students who have social, academic, and cultural issues that challenge their academic potential. The researcher discovered only a small number of African American male students dropped out of school for academic reasons; most dropped out for other reasons such as not fitting into school, home or community problems, and medical concerns (Bell, 2014). The participants in the study desired to achieve academically but felt detached from their teachers and the school. Bell's findings revealed that African American male students required teachers to set high academic expectations, needed quality academic supports, desired distinct emotional supports, and wanted to feel a sense of belonging within the school. Providing these resources to ethnic minority students may increase graduation rates.

In summary, achievement gaps and gaps in graduation rates exist in ethnic minority student populations throughout the United States, and large urban areas have a

disproportionate number of ethnic minority and economically disadvantaged students (DePaoli et al., 2018). The common theme of the research to increase academic achievement and graduation rates of ethnic minority students is their need to feel a sense of belonging at school and build relationships with teachers and other students. If school leaders build positive organizations and positive climates and provide a community of trust, student academic achievement likely will increase, particularly for groups of ethnic minority students who have been marginalized or stigmatized in schools.

Summary and Conclusions

Achievement gaps exist in urban schools in the United States between students of color and White students. Strong school leaders are needed for urban schools with large ethnic minority populations to build an environment for student success (Murakami et al., 2018). Urban schools deal with diversity in ethnic and economic factors that require leadership practices to vary widely to accommodate the distinctive needs of the school environment (Gurr et al., 2018; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Menon, 2014). Leaders in these school must possess a unique disposition and leadership practices to engage each stakeholder to increase student academic success. Transformational leaders need to create caring communities that motivate faculty and students to achieve the common vision and mission of the campus (Bass, 1999). When the school staff focuses on a specific goal and create trusting relationships with students, the staff create a positive climate and organization that may increase student outcomes. Transformational leadership practices create school change because school administrators are instrumental in improving student

achievement (Allen et al., 2015; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Achievement gaps can be closed through these leadership practices.

Positive school climate and school organization help to develop a culture of achievement in urban high school settings. Transformational leaders build positive school environments that create positive relationships to increase teacher effectiveness, leading to increased student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). Through these relationships, effective leaders empower their staff through various school structures to improve school climate (Sebastian et al., 2017). Strong relationships built with trust increase teacher job satisfaction. When administrators create a strong mission and vision to motivate teachers to increase their practices for teaching and learning, student achievement increases. Positive school climate helps build the capacity of staff and teachers to increase student achievement and ultimately increase graduation rates (Robertson et al., 2016; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016). African American and Hispanic students are often stigmatized in their community and school environment. Therefore, when school personnel create a sense of belonging and safe place for teaching and learning, these students' achievement increases (Boston & Warren, 2017; Leavitt & Hess, 2019). These two elements help create an environment where students can be successful.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. The findings of this study may inform district and school leaders about how to increase African American and Hispanic high school graduation rates through specific leadership

practices. The research methodology for this study was a basic qualitative study. A basic qualitative case was a beneficial approach for this study because I wanted to discover effective leadership practices using a purposive sample of knowledgeable administrators who could provide a background of experience to answer the research questions. In Chapter 3, I discuss the design and rationale of the study approach used to understand the influence of transformational leadership practices on Hispanic and African American graduation in the southwestern United States.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. Schools in urban areas with large ethnic minority populations require effective leadership to increase student achievement that leads to an increase in high school graduation rates (Murakami et al., 2018). Large urban areas have extensive ethnic minority populations who are economically disadvantaged, and these conditions have helped to produce achievement gaps and gaps in ethnic minority graduation rates (DePaoli et al., 2018). Using transformational leadership practices, the administration can build a positive school climate and positive school organization (Robertson et al., 2016; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016). With these practices influencing school culture, positive relationships are created between school leaders, staff, and students that influence the effectiveness of teachers' instructional practices to increase student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). The relationships create a sense of belonging in the school environment for ethnic minority students that helps to increase academic achievement (Boston & Warren, 2017). In this qualitative case study, I explored an under researched area regarding effective leadership practices that influence ethnic minority graduation by interviewing a purposeful sample of knowledgeable administrators who could provide evidence through their experience to answer the research questions.

In the first part of Chapter 3, I explain the qualitative methodology used, the rationale for choosing a basis approach, and the role of the researcher. I address, in the

remainder of Chapter 3, the participant selection; instrumentation; procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and the data analysis plan. In the final sections of the chapter, I discuss the trustworthiness and the ethical procedures of the study and conclude with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

The foundation of qualitative research is the conceptual framework, the research questions, and the scope of the study. A research study must create boundaries for the scope of the research through research questions (Yazan, 2015). The central phenomenon of this study concerns understanding effective transformational leadership practices that may increase ethnic minority graduation rates in urban high schools in the southwestern United States. Two research questions guided this study:

1. How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement?
2. How do urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation?

I based this qualitative case study on the conceptual framework of transformational leadership of Burns and Bass. Leaders who exemplify transformational practices create a supportive environment to develop and inspire their followers to bond together for a common goal (Burns, 2003). Bass (1999) broadened the concept of transformational leadership by defining specific practices and developed the concept of the focus of internal drive to create change within the organization. Change stems from the creation of

a common vision and goal of a positive climate and positive school organization within the institution. Transformational leaders empower followers to coordinate personal visions with the mission of the school to create a community that promotes positivity, creativity, and advancement of the organization (Bass, 1999).

Two main methods of conducting research studies exist: one approach uses an inductive approach and the other a deductive approach. Quantitative, the deductive approach, pertains to numeric data, whereas qualitative research, the inductive approach, relies on the insight and perspective of the researcher to analyze the evidence to draw conclusions (Coy, 2019). Quantitative research is objective and studies phenomena by controlling the environment and variables to test the validity of theories (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Researchers using quantitative methods use large sample sizes to ensure a broader generalization of the research conclusions (Coy, 2019). Quantitative research focuses on numbers within a clearly defined context. I did not choose a quantitative study because the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of administrators rather than obtaining statistical data (Yin, 2016).

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods use scientific methods to help increase the knowledge base of various areas (Coy, 2019). Qualitative research has generally not been viewed as objective science but as a soft science that involves interpreting social behavior based on measures that no not require scientific rigor, like quantitative measures (Cope, 2014). Qualitative research permits a researcher to study how humans interact to inductively observe and interpret participants' perceptions to obtain general principles of the study. Qualitative approaches emphasize individual

experiences, describe phenomena, and develop potential theories (Cope, 2014). Qualitative researchers use a small sample size and analyze data from multiple perspectives to draw conclusions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Qualitative research was conducive to answering the semistructured research questions in this study.

Qualitative approaches are used in a broad range of disciplines and topics of research. A succinct definition for qualitative research is difficult to determine because of the comprehensiveness of this methodological approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). Yin (2016) identified five components that make qualitative research distinctive: (a) studying the real world and the people within it, (b) focusing on participants and their perspectives, (c) analyzing conditions of people in the real world, (d) investigating social behaviors to find new understandings, and (e) using many evidence sources instead of one source. The "how" and "why" questions of a specific phenomenon provide generalized answers to a problem that are the focus of qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2016). Qualitative research permits a great diversity of phenomena to be studied.

Different forms of qualitative research exist. One type of qualitative research is phenomenology and addresses the uniqueness of lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose not to use a phenomenological approach because I decided to investigate perceptions of administrators concerning transformational leadership rather than studying the contextual relationship of the participants of this study. Another type of qualitative research is an ethnographic approach. Ethnography is the study of cultural subjects in the field that helps the researcher understand human culture and history (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). I did not use this type of research study because this study did not focus on culture or history of an organization or community. A third type of qualitative research is grounded theory and focuses on building a theory from the collected data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I did not choose this type of research because I did not intend gather data to discover a new theory. A case study is another type of qualitative research that allows the researcher to investigate a real-world idea within its context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose the case study approach because the study was bounded and investigated an issue through a specific setting (see Yin, 2016).

As such, a case study is the best method used for this investigation of the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. A case study approach is a frequently used type of qualitative research in education to explain how people make sense of and reflect on the process of their experiences (Merriam, 1998). A qualitative case study approach was beneficial for this study because I wanted to explore an underresearched topic with a purposeful sample of knowledgeable, experienced administrators who understand leadership practices and could answer the research questions. By using a qualitative study, I could examine the concept in unique ways that allowed me to investigate the research questions and explore the topic with flexibility rather than defined by a particular system (see Caelli et al., 2003; Kahlke, 2014). To ensure quality research, I aligned the data collection process with the research questions and research purpose (see Caelli et al., 2003).

Qualitative research required me, as the researcher, to interpret the data from the study. Identifying findings from the data and determining the connections to the concept is the focus of qualitative research (Coy, 2019). Data could be gathered through interviews, which allowed me to assemble real-world information concerning the research questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For these reasons, a qualitative case study approach was the best approach to answer the research questions of this study.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument to collect data (Yin, 2016). I was the primary instrument of gathering and interpreting the data. I created interview questions, gathered data, analyzed the data, and drew conclusions for findings based on the research questions. I also was the sole interviewer for the study.

The positionality of a researcher is important to identify the perspective of the researcher and the potential influence on the outcomes of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Positionality can influence the access and relationship to the participants and affect the findings. In the district where this study was conducted, I have been employed for 26 years in various roles, including a high school teacher, social studies specialist, and an assistant principal. My current role is principal at a Title I middle school in the district. All participants of this study were people I have interacted with in various capacities; however, I was never the supervisor for any of the participants.

One of the main differences between qualitative and quantitative research is the possibility of researcher bias in a qualitative study. As the researcher, I had to discern between the descriptions of the data and the interpretation of the data. I recorded and

transcribed the data and examined the information through personal experiences and knowledge. As such, I identified and explained any bias (see Yin, 2016). Because researchers are human beings, qualitative researchers must understand their position, beliefs, ideas, attitudes, personal experiences, and any other concepts that may influence the research (Wall et al., 2004).

Understanding the possibility of bias was important. Bracketing is a method where the researcher maintains a reflexive diary to ensure self-awareness through the process of gathering and interpreting data (Wall et al., 2004). This process validates the data collection and analysis process (Ahern, 1999). I used bracketing in the research process by having a research journal to reflect my feelings and thoughts throughout the process, so I was aware of any bias.

I used a four-step procedure to help me be aware of potential bias in this study: (a) prereflection, (b) reflection, (c) learning, and (d) action from learning (see Wall et al., 2004). In the prereflection stage, I organized any initial thoughts or preconceived ideas regarding concerning transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation. In the second reflective step, I bracketed my biases during the interview process; I made notations about possible biases I might encounter. Because I am a principal in the partner school district, I needed to be conscious of any biased thoughts I had and contemplated the circumstances of the interview, including the location, participant, or other factors that might contribute to my biases. When I was analyzing the data from the transcripts, I sought to be conscious of any bias so that I analyzed the data to determine new information and allowed categories

and themes to emerge from the data. Finally, I used the content of the reflexive journal to identify and report the results of the study with minimal bias, allowing information to be transferred to new situations. These four steps provided a method to limit bias in this research development and ensure the trustworthiness of the research process and results.

Methodology

I used a qualitative case study research approach to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic graduation in the southwestern United States. I gathered information from 11 urban high school administrators using semistructured one-on-one interviews to investigate their perceptions of leadership practices. I transcribed the administrators' responses to organize and analyze the data to provide results to contribute to research on transformational practices of school administrators. Administrators may be able to use the findings of this study concerning transformational leadership practices to increase the graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students.

Participant Selection

As the researcher, I chose participants with extensive knowledge of the circumstances within the scope of the study to discover and gather data towards an understanding of the student phenomenon. Purposeful sampling provides sources of information-rich participants who are able to answer the research questions of a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose participants who have specific experiences that would help answer the research questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The purposeful sample

for this study included 11 high school administrators with a minimum of 3 years of administrative experience at the high school level and an administrative state certification. A small sample was appropriate because these purposively selected participants were closely connected to the phenomenon of this study. Small samples are appropriate in qualitative studies because a small number of participants who match the goals and purpose of this case study can provide redundancy and data saturation (see Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Seidler (1974) stated that a sample size can be as small as five participants when participants have experiences that will answer the research questions of a study. The participants of this study permitted me to gather information across various experiences within the high school environment of the partner school district.

I purposively chose 11 participants from the partner school district. Five high school campuses include three comprehensive schools and two specialty schools serving high school students in the district. I invited the five principals from these campuses to be participants in this study. Additionally, I invited all assistant principals who met the criteria from these schools to participate. Each administrator chosen also held a state license as an educational administrator.

I obtained a letter of permission from the superintendent of the partner district to conduct the study. Walden University and the district selected for the study have a partner organization agreement that permitted me to interview participants from the district once the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) preapproved the study. This agreement outlined the participants of this study, who included administrators within the

district, and required me, as the researcher, to follow all guidelines and standards as mandated by the IRB.

I submitted the paperwork to Walden University to obtain formal permission from the IRB to begin the collection of data. Upon receiving Walden IRB approval, I contacted the human resources department to request the names of potential participants who met the criteria of assistant principal and held an administrative state certification with a minimum of 3 years of high school administrative experience. I then invited the five high school principals and all qualified assistant principals to participate in the study based on list created with the help of the district human resources department.

I sent the qualified potential candidates a request to participate through my Walden email with the voluntary consent form attached. I used my Walden email because I am employed with the district of study and did not want the participants to feel obligated or pressured to participate in the study. I placed a clearly denoted request to participate in the study in the subject line of the email. I waited 6 days for participants to respond before sending a follow-up email. If a sufficient number of participants did not respond, I would continue to email the administrators to encourage participation. Should I not receive enough volunteers to participate in this study to answer the research questions, I would have contacted the district human resources department to see if other administrators might qualify to meet the minimum requirements. Once participants responded, I set up a date and time convenient for each participant to be interviewed through teleconferencing. I sent a reminder to the participant at least 48 hours prior to the appointment time. This process of participation selection aligned with the qualitative case

study approach that allowed me to gather data from high school administrators about transformational leadership practices to increase graduation rates among African American and Hispanic students.

Instrumentation

My intention with this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation. As the qualitative researcher, I gathered the data by conducting semistructured one-on-one interviews with 11 urban high school administrators. The interview process of a qualitative study required a specific protocol to collect the data in a valid manner (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The interview protocol and semistructured open-ended questions allowed me to obtain data from the participants that represented their views of the world and possibly engender novel ideas related to the research topic (see Merriam, 1998).

Once I identified the participants, I began to collect data. The interview permitted me to gather information from participants regarding their real-life experiences based on the research questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For this study, I conducted 45- to 60-min virtual interviews using 10 semistructured questions. A reliable interview process is about asking quality questions derived from the focus of the study (Merriam, 1998). I developed the interview questions aligned to the conceptual framework of this study addressing transformational leadership practices from Burns's (1978) and Bass's (1985) paradigm. Additionally, I incorporated peer-reviewed literature to augment the interview questions to establish sufficiency of the data collection process and answer the research

questions of this study regarding transformational practices and graduation among African American and Hispanic students (see Appendix A).

Organizing the structure of the interviews and the sequence of questions would have a direct influence on the information gathered from the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I asked open-ended questions that allowed the viewpoint and knowledge of each participant to be represented in the data. As the qualitative researcher, I held my biases apart so I could learn about the world through the participants' expertise and experiences (see Yin, 2016). I used probes to ensure the participants understood the interview, as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012). Additionally, I used probes and follow-up questions to allow participants to expand their answers and provide additional information (Yin, 2016).

I did choose to rephrase or change the order of the questions based on the responses received to gather additional information. I took notes during the interview and added additional reflective comments after the interview process to capture any biases and assumptions, including notes concerning participants' body language or verbal clues that I noticed (see Merriam, 1998). No follow-up interviews were required with the participants because the purpose of a case study is to have a sufficiently wide and varied selection of participants to provide broad insights and answer the research questions (Kahlke, 2014).

After creating the interview protocol and interview questions, I had two colleagues review the documents to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument. The colleagues are employees in the participating school district but were not participants

in the study. The first colleague has an educational doctoral degree and is a district chief communications officer with 15 years of experience as a classroom teacher and district office testing coordinator. The second colleague is a middle school assistant principal who has 2 years of experience as an administrator with extensive high school teaching experience. Both administrators reviewed the interview protocol and questions for clarity, validity, and alignment to the research questions. After receiving comments from these administrators, I modified the protocol and interview questions based on their feedback to ensure the appropriate gathering of data of this study.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Qualitative research is about studying the participants within a natural world (Yin, 2016). An important factor of a qualitative approach is not about the number of participants in a study but concerns how the participants may contribute to the insight and knowledge of the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants' responses helped to understand the perceptions of administrators' transformational leadership practices to increase African American and Hispanic graduation rates in the southwestern United States. In the next section, I explain the process for recruiting participants and collecting the data.

Procedures for Recruitment

For this study, I chose 11 participants who are state-certified administrators with a minimum of 3 years of experience as a high school administrator in an urban school in a southwestern state. The partner school district of the study has three comprehensive high schools and two specialty high schools. Principals and assistant principals from these

high schools, purposively chosen to be part of the study, exhibited a strong connection to the phenomenon (see Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; Tongco, 2007).

Participation in this study was voluntary, and no incentives were provided to participants. The steps I used to invite participants in this study were as follows:

1. I obtained a letter of permission from the superintendent to conduct the study in the district.
2. I obtained approval from Walden University IRB to conduct the study.
3. I determined the administrators in the district who met the eligibility criteria by consulting the district human resources department.
4. I contacted the potential participants by Walden email to provide information about the study and included the consent form.
5. I sent follow-up emails, as necessary, to request participation.
6. I obtained informed consent from the administrators who agreed to participate in the study.

After receiving the partner organization agreement letter from the superintendent to conduct the study in the school district and Walden IRB approval as previously explained, I met with the human resources department of the partner school district to obtain a list of candidates who met the qualifications for participation based on the criteria of eligibility for the study. The criteria were certified administrator in the southwestern state and a current high school administrator with a minimum of 3 years of experience at this level. Once I had a list of qualified administrators, I individually emailed each participant an invitation to participate in this study using my Walden email.

The email was clearly marked in the subject line regarding a request to participate in the study, to avoid appearing an unsolicited bulk email. The email included an invitation to participate in the study, a short synopsis of the purpose of the study, and an attached consent form. I waited 6 days for participants to respond before sending a follow-up email. To obtain informed consent from each participant, I asked the volunteers to send a response email with the words "I consent" in their responses.

Procedures for Data Collection

The process for data collection was as follows:

1. I scheduled interviews at a convenient place and time for the participants.
2. I reminded the participant at least 48 hours prior regarding the established time for the interview.
3. I ensured receipt of consent from each participant volunteering for this study.
4. I conducted semistructured one-on-one interviews by teleconference.
5. I sent a thank you email after the interview.

I scheduled the semistructured one-on-one interviews at the convenience of the participants through teleconferencing. The teleconference call interviews took place in a place that allowed for privacy without interruptions. Interviews were not scheduled during the instructional day of the school so as not to interrupt the participants' duties on campus or the learning environment of the students. Once the interviews were scheduled, I reminded participants of the date and time 48 hours in advance through a follow-up email from my Walden account. I then conducted the interviews.

At the beginning of the interview, I reviewed the informed consent. Then, I collected all necessary background information. Next, I reviewed the interview protocol, ethical procedures, and the purpose of the study. I scheduled the interviews for 60 min, with the interview time projected to last 45–60 min. If an interview were interrupted because of an emergency or other unpredictable circumstance, I would reschedule the interview to be completed at a later convenient time for the participant.

I recorded the interviews with an audio digital recorder and used my cell phone as a backup recording device. I began with the semistructured questions and asked probing questions based on the responses. I used the interview protocol sheet to notate observations of the participants and bracket any bias I experienced during the interview. At the end of the interview, I thanked the participants for their participation.

Only one interview was required with each participant of this study. I later sent a draft of the findings for the study to participants for their review and comments. I used the digital recording device to download the audio recording to my laptop to transcribe the interview. The recording allowed me to replay and transcribe the interviews. I transcribed the interviews as soon as possible after the completion of the interview to ensure accurate collection of the data. I chose to transcribe each interview because this process allowed me to internalize the information collected from the participants. Although transcription is a long and detailed process, this process provided insights into the data as I relived the interview experience and allowed me to mentally begin the analysis process (see Yin, 2016). After transcribing, I analyzed the data as described in the next section.

Data Analysis Plan

After all the interviews and transcribing were completed, the next step in the process was to analyze the data in a method to answer the questions of the research study. Data analysis within qualitative research is about making sense of the information collected. Yin (2016) stated that qualitative research data analysis is not a strictly established process but may change based on the research phenomenon. However, the process must be methodological and carefully documented to ensure the process is valid, confirmable, reliable, and free from bias.

I used content analysis to analyze the data. Content analysis process is "a method that provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena" (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p. 314). Content analysis allowed me to inductively make meaning of the raw data and correspond the data with the context of the research questions and purpose of the research study (see Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

I used the five-step process described by Yin (2016) to guide the analysis process of the interview raw data. These steps were (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I did not use a software program in this process. I analyzed all the data, including transcribing each interview, entering the data into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, coding the data, creating categories, observing emerging themes, and writing a narrative conclusion to complete the process.

Compile

The first step in the data analysis process was compiling, which required me to organize all data into a practical, useful order, as described by Yin (2016). As I conducted the interviews, I made notes on the interview protocol sheet about specific comments, body language, or other items that could be used in the data analysis process. Additionally, I bracketed my thoughts and possible biases on the protocol form. After the interviews, I transcribed the interviews into a Microsoft Word document that allowed me to read each interview. While transcribing the interviews, I internalized the information and began to mentally analyze the information shared by the participants (see Yin, 2016). I listened to the audio recording of the interviews and read through the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the content. As a researcher, I needed to read and reread the interviews to understand and make sense of the data as part of the whole study before I broke the data into smaller parts (see Bengtsson, 2016). I began hand marking the transcripts, making notes in the margins and highlighting key terms related to the conceptual framework of transformational leadership.

Disassemble

In the disassembling phase of the data analysis process, I took the data I collected and broke them into smaller, coherent pieces of information and began assigning codes to these pieces (see Yin, 2016). As I read and reread the manuscripts, I started the process of precoding by using the transformational leadership of Burns (1978) and Bass (1999). This a priori coding helped formulate and arrange my thoughts to assist me to answer the research questions of this study. Next, I began coding the data using open coding to

observe common words and phrases. This inductive analytical process permitted me to section the data into shorter words and phrases and allowed me to determine if the open codes answer the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Subsequently, I made connections between the smaller words and phrases to identify patterns among the data. Pattern coding helped me build further relationships among the data, as described by Bengtsson (2016) and allowed me to understand how the concepts were related to the study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The disassembling process was cyclical in nature and required me to comb the data several times, focusing on specific phrases and words each time to ensure I did not miss details in the data. I also confirmed that the words and phrases aligned with the research questions, as recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2016) and Yin (2016).

Reassemble

Reassembling is categorizing the smaller pieces of data into groups and arranging them in a method that is logically based on the purpose of the study (Yin, 2016). Reassembling allowed me to develop the coding completed in the compiling and disassembling stages to create categories and observe emerging themes. This phase is called recontextualization in content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016).

In content analysis, the process for labeling categories is not standard across studies; the researcher creates categories and themes based on the most applicable rationale established through the data collected (Bengtsson, 2016). I organized the codes to begin developing categories that answered the research questions of the study. In this process, I saw the need to create subcategories before categories. Subcategories allowed

me to organize categories and themes based on the concept of the study. I continued to use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to organize the codes, develop categories, and identify themes. The reassembling process is not a linear exercise and similar to the disassembling phase of content analysis, may require several attempts to use the data collected and relate the findings to the research questions of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2016).

To ensure consideration of discrepant data that did not support the themes, I analyzed the data multiple times by questioning and challenging the data while also looking for other possible explanations (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By considering discrepant cases during the analysis of the study, I presented valid, reliable findings of this study.

Interpret

In the interpretation stage of data analysis, I began to connect the ideas and structure the information to create themes (see Yin, 2016). Themes emerged from the combined coding and category processes that permitted me to explain the findings of the study. I created a draft outline in my journal to organize my thoughts and ideas to interpret the data and answer the research questions. I created a narrative of the reassembled data. While writing the narrative, I returned to the transcripts and analysis to ensure accuracy of the data as presented by the participants in the interview, within the context of the narrative, as related to the research questions. I used quotes from the interviews in the narrative. The importance of using the actual words of the interviewees is significant to ensure the original meaning and intent of the data (Bengtsson, 2016).

Conclude

In the last phase of the data analysis process, I drew conclusions based on the interpretation of the data. The process of drawing conclusions for the study should be connected to all previous phases and interpretations (Yin, 2016). In the conclusion phase of content analysis, I used specific words and phrases from the interviews as evidence to support the conclusions drawn from the data. During this phase, I repeatedly reviewed the interpretations to ensure validity. Also, in this section, I checked to see whether the findings corroborated the peer-reviewed literature. The goal of the research was not only to follow the purpose of the study by discussing the findings of the data collected but also to highlight new ideas and themes emerging from the data (Yin, 2016). These new revelations led to unexpected social results not apparent in prior research. With the conclusions of this study, I could present possible novel implications to advocate for positive social change to increase graduation rates among African American and Hispanic students.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is subjective because the researcher is the main instrument in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). For this reason, trustworthiness is an important component of a qualitative study. Studies need to be scrutinized throughout the process from data collection to development of the findings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The study must have solid research questions, alignment of the research design to the research questions, purposeful sampling, and systematic collection and analysis of data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Trustworthiness is the way the

researcher stays true to the participants' experiences, contributing to the quality and rigor of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Research must be trustworthy, especially in areas that involve the lives of people in education (Merriam, 1998), because education is a professional field where the findings of a study affect student outcomes. As a researcher, I understood the delicate nature of the trust built between the school, parents, community, and staff. The essence of trustworthy research within the field of education requires an explanation of the process I used to build trust as the researcher and the procedures during the investigation to provide results that may influence educational policy (see Merriam, 1998).

A qualitative study is considered trustworthy when the researcher adheres to four main criteria when conducting the research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). In the next sections, I address how I used trustworthy procedures in this study. Using these processes grounded me within the scope of the study, supported a dependable relation of the data to the purpose of the study, and provided a consistent understanding of the biases that could impede the interpretation of the data and subsequent findings.

Credibility

Credibility, also known as internal validity, ensures the findings of a study are true to the data collected and the purpose of the study (Cope, 2014). When the researcher analyzes the data, the process needs to be completed in a way so relevant data are not eliminated (Bengtsson, 2016). In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of collecting and analyzing the data; therefore, information about the

researcher and the process followed in the study is disclosed to ensure the credibility of the research (Patton, 1999). I used reflexivity and member checking to ensure credibility of the study.

Qualitative studies require that I provide context for the reader to understand the objective processes I used to address my biases to ensure trustworthiness in the study. As the researcher, I am a part of the world I am studying. I used reflexivity to acknowledge possible biases as I collected and analyzed the data (see Yin, 2016). I kept a journal during each step of the study. Prior to conducting the interview process and collecting data, I began a journal to reflect on my biases concerning administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation. Because I am a 26-year veteran of the partner district of this study, I have experiences that required me to think about my bias. When I began collecting data in the interviews, I used bracketing to make notes during the interview process with the goal of clearing my mind and setting aside any preconceived notions (see Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). As I began analyzing the data, I used the reflexive journal to consider possible bias I experienced during the data analysis process (see Ahern, 1999). Using the journal, I reflected on my feelings and actions as I analyzed the data. Keeping track of the process and method for all coding decisions ensured the study could be duplicated if necessary (see Bengtsson, 2016). The journal helped me understand my subjectivity and possible biases through this process.

Member checking is a process used at the end of the data collection and analysis to increase credibility. I shared the draft findings of the study with the participants to

elicit feedback on the summaries and conclusions to ensure accurate representation and analysis of the data of the study (see Cope, 2014). Member checking is an important step to verification of the intent of the interviewees and the data provided (Shenton, 2004). Reflexive journaling and member checking helped to ensure the credibility of this study.

Dependability

Dependability concerns the reliability and stability of a study's findings. Dependability focuses on the extent the data changed over time and the process used by the researcher to collect and analyze the data (Bengtsson, 2016). In qualitative research, a detailed account of data collection, categorization, analysis, and conclusions throughout the data analysis process is necessary to ensure dependability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To ensure dependability, I used audit trails.

Through journaling, I created an explicit audit trail. The audit trail is a detailed, step-by-step account of the research process from the beginning through the findings, including all choices and analyses made through the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). My journal began prior to the data collection process. Based on my history within the partner district, I made notes regarding how I collected the required paperwork, set up the interviews, gathered consent forms, and created my interview protocol (see Ahern, 1999). During the interview process, I used bracketing to notate possible subjectivity during the interview and then added notes to my journal about each interviewee and interview to annotate any issues, problems, concerns, or insights.

After the interview, I transcribed and analyzed the data. An audit trail is important to provide dependability to the data analysis process of a qualitative study. During this process, I also made regular entries into my journal about the process including any new insights in the analysis, bias, or frustrations about the analysis process (see Ahern, 1999). In the concluding stage of analysis, I wrote the narrative to include the findings and conclusions of the study. In this portion of the audit trail, I developed the narrative and conclusions, ensuring I mitigated subjectivity within my writing and appropriately used responses from the participants (see Ahern, 1999). Audit trails recount why I made choices and decisions and provide the reader with a rigorous description of how the findings of this study developed to ensure a trustworthy study.

Confirmability

Confirmability provides trustworthiness of a qualitative study by showing the data represent the participants' views and not the biases of the researcher who collected the data (Cope, 2014). In this process, I ensured the data collected and findings are an accurate representation of the environment that I studied. I used reflexive journaling and peer debriefing to focus on the information and experiences of the participants rather than my biases or viewpoints.

To provide confirmability for this study, I developed a comprehensive account for others to understand how and why I made decisions at each stage of the process (see Shenton, 2004). Using my reflexive journal, I provided a detailed plan of the research process: choosing the participants, developing the interview protocol, analyzing the data, interpretating the findings, and presenting the conclusions. I used bracketing throughout

the interview process to ensure my biases and subjectivity were not part of the process (see Ahern, 1999).

The second way I provided confirmability was by using peer debriefers. The purpose of peer debriefing is to share findings with fellow researchers to analyze and evaluate the interpretations made regarding the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I invited two colleagues to review the data coding, categories, and developed themes to ensure the findings aligned with the data and research questions. Both colleagues have doctoral educational degrees and over 10 years of experience in the field of educational administration. Together, we confidentially reviewed the data and the analysis process to provide observations concerning the findings of the study. Debriefing allowed me to share the emerging themes of this study with knowledgeable peers to reduce any potential bias of the interview and the analysis processes of this study. Reflexive journaling and peer debriefing were two means by which I ensured the confirmability of this study and increased trustworthiness.

Transferability

Transferability provides external validity in qualitative research and refers to the ability of a study to be applicable to other settings or groups (Bengtsson, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Transferability escalates the value of the research (Yin, 2016). Even though the participant pool may be small, the goal of the study is to increase the broader understanding of ideas and practices (Walters, 2001). I used thick descriptions and two participant sources, principals and assistant principals, in this study to increase transferability.

The first method to ensure transferability is to provide thick descriptions of the process of the study and use excerpts from the raw data. I clearly and succinctly provided a detailed description of the (a) procedures implemented to select the participants; (b) the setting and environment used for the interviews; (c) a description of the participant demeanor, as appropriate; and (d) all details of the data collection and analysis process employed to provide the findings of the study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By providing a detailed account of the process, a reader of this study can decide which of the concepts and ideas from this study may be transferable to a different setting.

The second way to ensure transferability was that I used a variation of participants. Although each qualitative study conducted may be unique, the sample chosen can mirror a broader group that allows transferability to a similar situation (Shenton, 2004). I used purposeful sampling of principals and assistant principals in this study to provide two participant sources who have a direct connection to the study's purpose and provided a variation of responses (see Patton, 1999). A variance of viewpoints could provide rich data from a small sample (see Patton, 1999). By presenting thick descriptions and providing two participant sources able to answer the research questions, I increased the transferability of the study to other contexts and settings.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical considerations in qualitative inquiry concern maintaining confidentiality, providing for the welfare of the participants, and establishing integrity by the researcher in all processes of the research. Ensuring trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as discussed previously, assists a

researcher to follow ethical guidelines while conducting a study (Merriam, 1998). Confidentiality, safety, and well-being of the participants should be the primary concern of a qualitative researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). An ethical challenge in qualitative research is to set a framework of methodological processes and procedures to follow in the research to protect the data from undue bias and prejudice from the researcher's own experiences. I completed the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research course on protecting human research participants to prepare me to conduct an ethical study. This training discussed and taught the ethical treatment of participants, the collection of data, and issues related to human interaction during the research process.

The school district in which this study took place has a partnership agreement with Walden University that allowed me to conduct the study in the district. According to Walden IRB policy, I waited to contact participants of the study until I receive formal IRB approval. The IRB approval number for this study is No. 02-19-21-0749713.

After receiving IRB approval, I contacted the human resources department of the partner school district to identify administrators who met the criteria for the study. After receiving the list of all eligible participants, I contacted the five high school principals and all assistant principals who met the criteria for the study. Using my Walden email account, I corresponded with each potential participant to explain the purpose of the study, attach the consent form, and invite them to participate. When they agreed to volunteer to be part of this study, I asked them to send their agreement by return email and place the words "I consent" in their response.

Another ethical practice concerns my role as an employee in the school district. My role as a middle school principal is not connected to the study, and I have no influence on promotions, monetary prizes, incentives, or rewards based on individuals' participation or nonparticipation in the study. At the beginning the interview process, I explained the process for the study to the participants by clarifying my role in the study, my independence from the school district with the study, and the purpose for the study. I explained that the focus of the study is to investigate administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation. Before asking any interview questions, I explained their voluntary participation in the study and reviewed the consent form. An ethical consideration of the interview process was to inform the participants that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. I would not include any collected data from a participant who decided not to continue with the interview process. Should a circumstance arise causing the interview to be halted, I would work with the participant to resolve the issue, if possible, and continue the interview. If the appointment needed to be postponed, I would reschedule as soon as possible at the convenience of the participant.

An ethical consideration in qualitative research is maintaining the confidentiality of the participants (Yin, 2016). I assigned each participant a number code to replace their given names to ensure the privacy of their interview responses. No other individuals had access to the names or codes for the participants. I keep all written documents in a locked filing cabinet at my home office and all digital files on my password-protected personal

laptop. All documents from this research project will be maintained for 5 years, after which all paper documents associated with the study will be shredded and digital files deleted.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the procedures and processes I used to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators' transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. I discussed the research design and rationale for a qualitative case study. I also explained the role of the researcher, the participant selection, the data collection process, and the data analysis process. The last portion of the chapter discussed the procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical standards throughout the research process. In Chapter 4, I discuss the data analysis process and the results based on the transformational leadership framework.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving high school graduation in the southwestern United States. The results of this study may influence transformational leadership practices of administrators to increase the graduation of African American and Hispanic students. The contribution of this study to educators was to provide insights concerning administrators' perceptions of transformational leadership practices that may benefit the academic achievement and graduation of African American and Hispanic students. Using a qualitative case study method, I gathered data and examined 11 high school administrators' experiences. From the data, I analyzed the information and created categories and themes to understand transformational leadership practices that could help to increase the graduation of African American and Hispanic students in urban high schools.

I used the transformational leadership paradigm of Burns (1978) and Bass (1999) as the conceptual framework for this basic qualitative study. The two research questions used to guide this qualitative study to investigate the perceptions of 11 urban high school administrators from a southwestern state were as follows:

1. How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement?

2. How do urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation?

In this basic qualitative study, I interviewed 11 participants who volunteered to be part of this study using semistructured interview questions and a video conference call. After completing the interviews, I transcribed them and read them multiple times to identify connections with the conceptual of transformational leadership of Burns (1978) and Bass (1999). To reflect on biases during the process, I used bracketing (see Ahern, 1999) during the interviews and reflexive journaling (see Wall et al., 2004) throughout the process.

In this chapter, I review the setting, data collection, and data analysis. I explain the results of the analysis related to each research questions and provide evidence of trustworthiness of the study. I conclude with a summary.

Setting

I conducted this study in an urban school district of a southwestern U.S. state. The district serves a diverse student population. In 2019, the district-reported demographics were 58% Hispanic, 21% African American, 15% White, and 6% other ethnicity. I conducted the semistructured one-on-one interviews with 11 urban high school administrators who had a minimum of 3 years' experience as a high school administrator.

The human resources department of the urban school district provided a list of 15 administrators who met this criterion. The 15 possible participants were principals or assistant principals from the five high school campuses within the district. Of the 15 possible participants I contacted to participate in the study, 11 administrators expressed

their interest to participate. I was able to obtain saturation from the data provided by the 11 participants to answer the research questions regarding how administrators use leadership practices to assist African American and Hispanic students.

This pool of high school participants included four principals and seven assistant principals. The administrators who were willing to participate had a wide variance in experience and knowledge. The years of experience as an administrator ranged from 4 to 16 years, and the high school experience of the same administrators ranged from 3 to 15 years. The mean number of years of experience as an administrator was eight. The participants included seven female and four male administrators. Six were Hispanic, four African American, and one White. The demographic details are included in Table 2.

After receiving email responses from a satisfactory number of participants, I established mutually agreed-upon times for the interviews. The data collection initiated by conducting the interviews via video conferencing. No personal or organizational conditions occurred at the time of this study that affected the collection of data or the interpretation of the results. I present the data collection process in the next section.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	*n*
Demographic	
Female African American	4
Female Hispanic	3
Male Hispanic	3
Male White	1
Administrative experience	
4 years	2
5 years	2
6 years	3
9 years	1
13 years	1
14 years	1
16 years	1
Administrative experience at the high school level	
3 years	1
4 years	3
5 years	2
6 years	1
7 years	3
15 years	1

Data Collection

The process for data collection began when I received the IRB approval number from Walden University (# 02-19-21-0749713). To collect data for this study, I followed the plans defined in Chapter 3 to collect data for this study. I sent an email through my Walden University account to the first individual on the list I obtained from human resource department of qualified participants. I was interrupted before I could send out emails to the other participants. This first potential participant responded within in 1 hour stating they were willing to participate, and I set up a time for the interview. I sent the remainder of the individual emails the next day to the other 14 identified participants who met the criteria for the study through my Walden email account. Of the 15 eligible administrators, 10 responded after the first email sent. After waiting 6 days, I send a follow-up email to the potential participants who had not yet responded. A total of 11 participants volunteered for the study.

Prior to each interview, I sent a follow-up email with the agreed date and time along with the videoconferencing link for the interview. Videoconferencing was a recommendation because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Before the interviews, I reviewed the interview protocol sheet and practiced the interview questions with a fellow doctoral student and another administrator who was not part of this study. I created the interview questions to be aligned to the research questions to help me understand how transformational leadership practices influence African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement and graduation. The interview protocol and semistructured open-ended questions allowed me to obtain data from the participants representing their

experience and possibly discover new ideas related to the research topic (see Merriam, 1998).

I recorded the interviews using the video-conferencing software and a digital recorder. Before the interview, I checked the batteries of the digital recorder to ensure I would be able to record the entire interview. Both methods ensured I had a recording of the interview. As I began the interviews, I explained the purpose of the study, how I would maintain the participant's confidentiality, the participant's ability to withdraw from the study at any time, and that I would transcribe the interviews. I allotted a time of 60 min for each interview. The interviews lasted from 27- 60 min. While conducting the interviews, I used bracketing to make notes during the interview process with the goal of acknowledging any bias I might have exhibited during the interview (see Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007).

Upon completion of the interview, I downloaded the file from the video-conference software and assigned the file a number. I also downloaded the copy of the interview from the digital recorder that allowed me to have two copies of the interview. I saved both files to my computer and an external storage device to ensure the safety of the information. Then, I deleted the files from the digital recorder. I completed the interviews over 2 weeks. I did not experience any extenuating issues during my data collection. The administrator participants answered the questions and shared their experiences openly throughout the interview. I did not require any follow-up interviews with the participants.

After the conclusion of each interview, I used a template I created to transcribe the interviews. I did not use any software or other computer program for the transcription

process. I listened to the interviews and transcribed them. After the original transcription, I listened to the interview again to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. In the next section, I discuss the process for data analysis.

Data Analysis

In the next step of the process, I analyzed the data in a cyclical manner to answer the questions of the research study and establish trustworthiness (see Bengtsson, 2016; Yin, 2016). I completed all the interviews within 2 weeks and transcribed the interviews as soon as possible after each interview. I transcribed each interview, which allowed me to interact with the content of the interviews (see Bengtsson, 2016). The transcribing process is also the first step to analyze data (Yin, 2016). As I read the transcripts, I began to observe similarities in the data that corresponded to the conceptual framework. I made notes in the margins of the transcripts and also wrote reflections in my journal when I was reminded of the tone, body posture, timing, and pauses I observed during the interviews.

Using content analysis, I inductively made meaning of the raw data and linked the data with the context of the research questions and purpose of the research study (see Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). The analysis process involved using Yin's (2016) five-step process: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I used a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to enter the data, code the data, create categories, and observe emerging themes. As I entered the data into the spreadsheet, I used pivot tables to observe the emerging patterns, categories, and themes.

Coding Strategy

Compiling Data

I started the beginning analysis process while compiling the data as I read the transcripts multiple times and made notes in the margins of the hard copies of the transcripts (see Yin, 2016). As a researcher, I needed to read and reread the interviews to understand and make sense of the data as part of the whole study before I broke the data into smaller parts (see Bengtsson, 2016). I printed copies of the research questions and the section of Chapter 2 regarding the conceptual framework to refresh my thought process and relate the paradigm to the interview data. I studied those two items and made a list of the terms that applied to the research questions and the conceptual framework. I then reread the transcripts, highlighting words and phrases based on the list I had made.

Next, using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, I began the analysis process by placing words and phrases from the interviews into columns of the spreadsheet. I observed similarities in the data that related to the conceptual framework of Burns (1978) and Bass (1999) and began the process of a priori coding. Transformational leadership may be categorized into four factors, labeled (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) individualized consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). A sample of the coding in Table 3 illustrates how I established a priori codes based on the raw data of the participants' responses.

Table 3

Sample a Priori Coding From Participants

Participant	Interview text excerpt	A priori code
A	I really feel like when you're talking about minority populations and that kids that are normally marginalized on campus you have to make them [students] feel like they matter. That starts with embracing who they [students] are and all of their diverse ways, and then finding out what matters to them and making it a priority in your interactions with them.	Idealized influence
B	We [administrators] have found that increasing communication has been a lot more beneficial because they [teachers] know the expectation. People [teachers] know what the expectations are, and there is nothing hidden from them.	Individualized consideration
C	Hoping to get teachers to understand the importance of building relationships with all of their students.	Inspirational motivation
E	In regard to the mission and vision, we [administrators] talk about producing excellence, we talk about making sure everyone is successful, and that means everyone.	Inspirational motivation
H	We decided to do an instructional showcase to show everyone [teachers] those high-yield instructional strategies. We didn't target African American or Hispanic but just targeting our kids, because we are 80% of color.	Intellectual stimulation
K	I also work with them [teachers] on providing them relevant literature that can help guide the decisions on goal creations, and then after that we [administrators and teachers] work on strategies to meet the goals.	Idealized influence

Disassembling

In the disassembling process (see Yin, 2016), I broke down the collected data into smaller, comprehensible pieces of information and began assigning codes to the pieces (see Bengtsson, 2016). In the previous phase, I had printed the conceptual framework from Chapter 2 and the research questions of my study. From these two items, I made a list of the common words and phrases that applied to the research questions and the conceptual framework

After the a priori coding, I examined common words and phrases and entered the open codes into the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I then used pivot tables to analyze the open codes and their relationship to the a priori codes. I sectioned the data into shorter words and phrases through an inductive analytical process that allowed me to determine if the open codes answer the research questions (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The spreadsheet helped me manage the data and I created filters that helped me observe the raw data, a priori codes, along with the open codes (see Bengtsson, 2016). A sample of the coding process from a priori codes to open code is in Table 4.

Table 4

Sample a Priori Codes to Open Codes

A priori code	Open codes
Idealized influence	Fair and consistent
	Common planning
	Goal setting
	Collaborative decision-making
	Pushing people
	Sense of belonging
	Family
Inspirational motivation	High expectations
	Supporting kids
	Build relationships
	Motivate students
	Trust
	Self-reflection
	Building connections
	Cultural dynamics
	Cultural diversity
	Student involvement
	Speak positive
Individualized consideration	Cultivate leaders
	Coaching and mentoring
	Build capacity
	Book study
	Mission and vision
	Good communication
	Social and emotional
	Instructional observations
	Share thoughts and ideas
Intellectual stimulation	Innovative instruction
	Instructional leadership
	Professional development
	Instructional planning
	Student involvement
	Motivation of students
	Struggling students

During this first round of open coding, I connected the open codes directly to the a priori coding without looking at the overall data. Subsequently, in the second round of open coding, I analyzed the connections between the smaller words and phrases to identify patterns within the data. I used the first round of open coding to see the terms used frequently within the pivot tables that connected to the a priori coding. The next round of coding narrowed the words used in the open coding process to begin to organize the data into broader ideas. The disassembling process was cyclical in nature and required me to examine the data several times focusing on specific phrases and words each time to ensure I did not miss details in the data; the process also confirmed that the words and phrases aligned with the research questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2016). Examples of the first open codes to second open codes are in Table 5.

Table 5

Sample of First Open Codes to Second Open Codes

First open codes	Second open codes
Common planning	Collaboration
Build capacity	
Instruction	
Positive environment	
Supporting kids	
Building relationships	Student involvement
Family	
High expectations	
Positive environment	
Supporting kids	
Mission and vision	
Cultural dynamics	Cultural dynamics
Barriers to education	
Positive environment	
Build capacity	
Building relationships	
High expectations	High expectations
Build capacity	
Supporting kids	
Instruction	Instruction
Barrier to education	
Build capacity	
Supporting kids	

Reassembling

In the reassembling phase, I categorized the smaller pieces of data into groups in a rational manner based on the purpose of the study (see Yin, 2016). The coding completed during the compiling and disassembling phases allowed me to reassemble the data to

create categories and observe emerging themes. In the content-analysis process, this phase is called recontextualization (Bengtsson, 2016).

In the next step, I began the reassembling process. Using the open codes to see patterns in the information helped me build further relationships among the data (see Bengtsson, 2016) and allowed me to understand how the concepts were related to the study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Reassembling is not a linear process. I required several attempts to relate the collected data to the research questions of the study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2016). Throughout the process, I used the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with pivot tables. I reread the a priori codes, open codes, and pattern codes, using the functions of the spreadsheet to regroup data into meaningful units to build categories. Examples of the open codes to categories are in Table 6.

Table 6

Sample Open Codes to Categories

Open codes	Category
Sense of belonging	Student involvement
Family	
Supporting kids	
Mentoring	
Build relationships	
Positive role models	
Teacher support	
Coaching	
Conversations	
Create connections	
Student involvement	
Good communication	Collaboration
Real world	
Instructional planning	
Build capacity	
Instructional leadership	
Teaching and learning	
Mission and vision	
Instructional observations	
Self-reflection	
Innovative instruction	
Common planning	
Goal setting	
Student success	
Motivation of students	Cultural dynamics
Cultural diversity	
Barriers to educations	
Graduation	
Positive influence	
Struggling students	
Lack of diversity	
Cultural norms	
High minorities	
Fair and consistent	
Low expectations	
Lack of support system	

Interpreting

The next step of Yin's (2016) five-step process is the interpretation stage. In this stage of data analysis, I began to connect the ideas from each coding process and categories into structures of information to observe emerging categories (see Bengtsson, 2016; Yin, 2016). I used the completed spreadsheet and pivot tables with open codes, pattern codes, and categories to determine themes from the data. During this process, I returned to the transcripts to ensure accuracy of the data as presented by the participants in the interview, as related to the research questions. I continued to review and analyze the data in a variety of ways using the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and pivot tables until themes emerged. I used the content-analysis process for labeling categories. This process is not standard across studies but permitted me to create categories and themes based on the most applicable rationale established through the data collected (see Bengtsson, 2016).

I observed three themes and wrote sentences for each theme. I contacted participants from the study and had them review the collected data and themes and make recommendations for changes. Member checking is a process to verify the findings of a study (Shenton, 2004). Based on the feedback from the participants, I finalized the three themes. The categories to themes are represented in Table 7.

Table 7

Categories to Themes

Categories	Theme
Cultural dynamics Positive school environment Culturally responsive staff Cultural interactions Community mindset	1. Transformational leaders create cultural dynamics by building a positive school environment, developing a culturally responsive staff, establishing positive cultural interactions, and altering the community mindset to increase African American and Hispanic academic achievement.
Collaboration Common planning Mission and vision Building capacity	2. Transformational leaders must build collaborative practices including common planning for instruction, strong mission and vision, and development of capacity within the organization to increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students.
Building relationships Extracurricular opportunities	3. Transformational leaders increase student involvement on campus by providing a sense of belonging and genuine relationships for African American and Hispanic students and offering extracurricular opportunities that address diverse interests to increase ethnic minority graduation.

Concluding

I drew conclusions based on the interpretation of the data in the last phase of the data analysis process. The process of drawing conclusions for the study is connected to all previous phases and interpretations (see Yin, 2016). I used specific words and phrases from the participant interviews as evidence to support the themes and conclusions drawn from the data. I repeatedly reviewed the interpretations to ensure validity of the understandings from the data. I examined the data to answer the research questions

regarding transformational leadership practices to increase African American and Hispanic academic achievement and graduation.

Themes

In analyzing the data, three themes emerged based on the research questions as follows:

1. Transformational leaders create cultural dynamics by building a positive school environment, developing a culturally responsive staff, establishing positive cultural interactions, and altering the community mindset to increase African American and Hispanic academic achievement.
2. Transformational leaders must build collaborative practices including common planning for instruction, strong mission and vision, and development of capacity within the organization to increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students.
3. Transformational leaders increase student involvement on campus by providing a sense of belonging and genuine relationships for African American and Hispanic students and offering extracurricular opportunities that address diverse interests to increase minority graduation.

I analyzed the data multiple times by questioning and challenging the data while also looking for other possible explanations to ensure I considered discrepant data that did not support the themes (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I reviewed the themes and the interview data several times to evaluate whether any of the data conflicted with the themes determined by the content analysis. After I examined all the data, I found no

discrepant data that conflicted with the emerging themes. In the following section, I discuss the results of the data analysis.

Results

I included 11 high school administrators from the partner district in this study, four principals and seven assistant principals. All participants had a minimum of 3 years of experience at the high school level.

I analyzed the data using a five-step process described by Yin (2016) to guide the analysis process of the interview raw data. These five steps included: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. The research questions, conceptual framework, participants interviews and relevant literature provided valuable and abundant data to develop themes. The research questions for this study were the following:

1. How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement?
2. How do urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic minority graduation?

In the following section, I analyze the themes with supporting documentation from the participant interviews. Themes 1 and 2 answered Research Question 1. Theme 3 answered Research Question 2.

Theme 1: Cultural Dynamics

Theme 1 answered the first research question: How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement? The first theme that emerged from the data of the participants was transformational leaders create cultural dynamics by (a) building a positive school environment, (b) developing a culturally responsive staff, (c) establishing positive cultural interactions, and (d) altering the community mindset to increase African American and Hispanic academic achievement. I discuss each of these components of cultural dynamics in the next sections.

Positive School Environment

The first category that emerged from Theme 1 was the importance of creating a positive school environment. A positive school environment develops by administrators creating a school climate where the organization has built a safe space for students to learn and achieve academically. Positive school climate has various different components that can increase student academic achievement and help improve graduation rates (M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016). Positive school environment increases teacher effectiveness through creativity and innovation within instruction to build an environment that increases student achievement. In the study, 10 participants emphasized the importance of administrators needing to build a positive school environment and engage with students and staff.

Participant H, a principal, described a positive school environment as follows:

> A welcoming place not just the minority kids, but all kids in general. Demographics have changed at the campus, but even though populations change, the expectations are still the same [when] it comes from a culture, if you are monitoring what you are expecting.

Similarly, an assistant principal, Participant E, stated the importance of the positive school environment through the "need to be fair and consistent with students because sometimes they think they are being treated unfairly" or inconsistently. Participant H also articulated that a positive environment builds variety and creativity of instruction by teachers "not necessarily [targeting] African American or Hispanic [students] but just targeting our kids because we are 80% of color."

The administration cannot be the sole source for the positive environment at a campus. The leadership begins the process, but for the culture to disperse throughout the campus, the staff needs to play a role in creating the positive environment. Participant C, an assistant principal, explained how everyone on staff worked to plan a school culture that was inviting for students.

> It is where we want to get to. [We want] to create that positive environment. Work backwards from there if it is teacher created . . . [or] staff created. [Eventually] a lot of the input and the buy in comes from them [students].

Participant K, a principal, communicated that the leadership and staff at the campus are "big on doing celebrations, and we tie [the celebrations] to academics [to] create a positive experience." Positive school environment helps to build academic achievement for all students.

This finding is supported by the conceptual framework of this study, Bass's (1999) transformational leadership theory. A transformational leader helps to create change in the organization by creating unique bonds where people care about each other, help each other grow intellectually, and work toward common goals for the organization. The acceptance of the individuality of all students and cultures helps create a positive environment where a transformation can occur throughout the school to help improve academic achievement for all students (Santamaría, 2014). Quality instruction and student achievement increase in a positive school environment.

Solid leadership and positive school climate are important to every administrator, student, and school (Back et al., 2016; McCarley et al., 2016; Smith & Shouppe, 2018). Increasing student success, decreasing dropout rates, and reducing behaviors problems are opportunities built through creating a positive school environment (M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016). School environment and climate include many various components, and any combination of these factors can help schools create avenues to student success.

Culturally Responsive Staff

Theme 1 revealed a second category of cultural dynamics: developing a culturally responsive staff. Ensuring that school staff members understand and can relate to students through culturally relevant instruction and curriculum is vital to helping African American and Hispanic students achieve academically. Researchers suggested that academic achievement leading to graduation is related to cultural acceptance of ethnic minority students within the school climate (Boston & Warren, 2017). In the data

analysis, seven of the participants described the importance to develop culturally responsive instructors and all staff members in their school to support student success.

Principals observed that teachers and staff experienced difficulty interacting and planning instruction to engage ethnic minority students. Participant D, a principal, stated that some teachers may have a difficult time relating to African American and Hispanic students and commented,

> It is very hard to relate something to kids that [doesn't] look like you. . . . I think a lot of the students, they'll look at a teacher and immediately tune them out thinking this person is not going to know anything about what I'm talking about because none of the examples match [personal experiences or background of an ethnic minority culture].

Participant C, an assistant principal, stated that teachers may not consider cultural differences and learning styles when planning for instruction in the classroom and shared,

> [It's important to] understand cultural differences [because]students in classes learn [in] different ways and not to be caught up in a lecture-only lesson or a kinesthetic lesson . . . It needs to be a combination of each, so you get those students [African American and Hispanic] involved.

An assistant principal who frequently assisted teachers in classroom settings shared another example of the importance of developing a culturally responsive staff. Classroom management always presents challenges, particularly in urban high schools where the student population is diverse. Some students will deflect their behavior in the classroom by using race as an instrument to disengage the teacher from the lesson.

Participant E conveyed, “Kids look right away at color. ‘She is White and I’m Black, so is that what the issue is?’ I think teachers do some of that [correct students of color more than other students] sometimes and don’t realize it.” Participant I, an assistant principal, described the necessity of teachers to “align your practices with the demographics, the student population that you service.” Another assistant principal, Participant B, reported, “Our lack of diversity in our work force. . . . It is not that people are discriminatory, but it is easy to understand people that you identify with.” Based on the administrators’ observations and perceptions, teachers and staff may struggle relating to African American and Hispanic students.

These experienced administrators enjoyed collaborating with classroom teachers and recommended a variety ideas and lesson plans that would help teachers connect with the African American and Hispanic students. Participant D, a principal, shared that teaching skills that appeal to “culturally conscious and out-of-the-box teaching skills [help] all students benefit.” Some subjects may be particularly challenging for ethnic minority students, as Participant B, an assistant principal, explained:

> It is a little hard [to teach science], but you can think about things like the scientific inventions of African American [to add to a lesson]. [Teachers need to be] culturally diverse in [their] curriculum. So, thinking outside the box of the [state testing standards and] incorporating some of those cultural items or people or influences inside lessons [is important].

Participant I, an assistant principal, reported, “As a campus, we have done a lot to develop our teachers and give them better toolkits with better tools and activities that can

really help with the engagement" of African American and Hispanic students. Participant G, an assistant principal, conveyed,

> The challenge [is that] not all teachers are trained and supported in incorporating their [African American and Hispanic students'] background and their culture [into their curriculum and instruction]. I'm a huge advocate of culturally responsive training and professional development to see things through different lenses.

Participant B, an assistant principal, concurred that presenting culturally relevant lessons in the classroom was vital for Hispanic and African American students and stated, "Training has to be done on understanding the culturally [diverse] dynamics. The same thing with any other culture. You need to understand the cultural dynamic in order to understand the student."

Building a culturally responsive staff capable of presenting culturally relevant instruction and a curriculum that engages student learning is vital for African American and Hispanic students to achieve academically. An element of trust must be built through developing positive relationships between school leaders and teachers to create culturally responsive staff and administrators. Professional and positive connections create trust within the organization that develops positive behaviors and structures (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Seashore Louis & Murphy, 2017). By creating trust, the teachers build positive interactions that mitigate factors of high poverty and a variety of environmental factors that influence student achievement (Adams & Forsyth, 2013). Administrators who support teaching and learning by providing professional development for the staff create

a positive climate for diverse classroom instruction, and schools experience significant academic achievement for ethnic minority students (Leavitt & Hess, 2019).

A culturally responsive staff is important to increase the academic success of African American and Hispanic students. The findings of this study are consistent with the individualized consideration component of transformational leadership practices (see Bass, 1999). A principal can inspire followers in the organization by knowing and understanding a person's unique needs and being a role model for teachers. School leaders need to inculcate, in the classroom, a diverse cultural awareness of the student population to improve student academic achievement and increase graduation (Edeburn & Knotts, 2019). Positive cultural interactions with high expectations within the school environment can lead to increased academic achievement for ethnic minority students.

Cultural Interactions

The third category of Theme 1 was that transformational leaders need to establish positive cultural interactions with students and staff in the school environment. Ten of the 11 participants agreed a culturally supportive environment was important to increase academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students. Administrators increased cultural interactions in their schools by understanding, acknowledging, and celebrating the differences of the students on the campus.

Transformational leaders need to guide and support their students and staff in meeting the needs of a diverse student population. Participant E, an assistant principal, shared, "We [administrators and staff] need to sit down and make sure we are inclusive in all areas." Similarly, Participant F, an assistant principal, stated, "Every student is

important to us, no matter what the race." A high school principal, Participant D, communicated,

> There is a time to realize that maybe we're the ones losing touch, maybe we are the ones [who] need to come around to this, the norm [acceptance of the diverse campus population] for our kids. Unless we embrace and accept the kids where they are at, they are really never going to truly feel like they belong in our school.

Similarly, reflecting the importance of establishing positive cultural interactions, Participant E, an assistant principal, related,

> Some of the Hispanic and African Americans are struggling, are outliers. [For] those kids—we need to make more of an effort, and we have to work on [cultural interactions] because sometimes students segregate themselves. They have the same likes and dislikes, same culture, same customs, but that's sometimes divisive.

Students need to understand how to interact with each other. Administrators and staff must model culturally appropriate interactions for students. Participant I, an assistant principal, agreed and stated, "We need talk to our faculty and staff about their mindful practices, diverse student populations, and how to service the needs of these kids," referring to African American and Hispanic students. Participant D, a high school principal, articulated the need to develop appropriate cultural interactions and said, "We go beyond the color, but instead we acknowledge and honor the colors that make us all one family . . . We celebrate each other's differences." When administrators and staff

help recognize and acknowledge student differences, students feel they belong to the school, which helps to increase the academic achievement of all students.

Positive cultural interactions originate from understanding, acknowledging, and celebrating the differences of all students on campus. Culturally supportive environments are equally important for African American learners as well as Hispanic students. Transformational school leaders who create learning environments that are supportive and culturally relevant enable Hispanic students to make positive connections and increase academic achievement (Roth, 2015). Bell's (2014) research revealed that teachers need to set high academic expectations, provide high-quality academic and emotional supports, and promote a sense of belonging within the school to increase African American male students' academic achievement. According to Bell, only a small number of African American male students drop out of school for academic reasons; most drop out for other reasons such as not fitting into school, home or community problems, and medical concerns.

These results support individualized consideration of transformation leadership practices in the leader's ability to inspire individuals in the organization by knowing and understanding a person's unique needs (Bass, 1999). A sense of awareness of cultural interactions is important to a successful school environment. Positive cultural interactions with high expectations within the school environment can lead to increased academic achievement for African American and Hispanic students.

Community Mindset

Theme 1 had a fourth component that revealed the concept of altering the community mindset to increase African American and Hispanic academic achievement. Administrators, faculty, and all campus staff must agree with the goals and vision of the school. Administrators must create a system where the school organization supports teachers in ethnic minority, low-poverty communities through school-wide community-based organizations (Kraft et al., 2016). In urban schools, the organizational structures of the campus must incorporate the community environment into the educational setting.

Creating a community mindset includes the expectation that all students are to graduate from high school—an expectation that may be foreign to African American and Hispanic students. Participant A, a high school principal in the district, described, "Graduation is not seen as something that is paramount, and [we are] fighting against generational poverty [and a] generational mindset." Participant E, an assistant principal, expressed these students "cannot see the end goal and so there is nothing there to motivate them to do well in high school. [It is] not necessarily about being Hispanic or African American. I think it's about their experience [in school]." Participant E, an assistant principal, also explained that students do not "have a foundation of reading . . . [or] math, . . . and so those high school classes are challenging for them . . . Their families don't push college . . . There are no goals." Another principal in the district, Participant H, shared

> In a community of color, you value effort, good athleticism, getting a job rather than the value of the diploma. [It is a] generational thing where the expectation is,

> you can have a job before you have a diploma, rather than making the diploma the goal for a better job and a better car. The fact that parents just don't know what college is about and how to go about researching college and researching scholarships.

Participant A, a high school principal, agreed: "It is really hard for kids of color. They don't have the support system that other kids have. It takes a special person to take that on." Three participants, two assistant principals and one principal, mentioned that ethnic minority students had difficulty delaying instant gratification and were not able to envision how a high school or postsecondary education could improve their lives. Participant I, an assistant principal, also shared, "There's not the expectation about college until they get into school and come across a counselor or coach" who speaks to the students about college. By setting the standard that all students graduate from high school, administrators can alter the community mindset for African American and Hispanic academic achievement.

Administrators need to envision and promote graduation standards for all students. Since 2010, achievement gaps between races have not decreased despite various efforts of educational and government entities; therefore, the growing inequality in urban areas has led to an increased academic inequity (David & Marchant, 2015). The majority of students living in poverty attend large urban high schools with a large number of ethnic minorities (DePaoli et al., 2018). Making connections with ethnic minority students to help them understand how their high school education is relevant to opportunities beyond high school can help motivate them to increase academic

achievement and graduate high school (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019). A school leader needs to build trust between the community and school by understanding the community perspectives, especially in disenfranchised communities encompassing racial minorities, language differences, and questionable immigration status (Green, 2017). Shaping trusting, transparent communication between the home, community, and school is important to ensure students receive a consistent message concerning graduation expectations.

These results also support the conceptual framework of this study. The individualized consideration element of transformational leadership practices is a leader's ability to inspire individuals and understand the uniqueness of people on campus and in the community (Bass, 1999). Building positive interactions with the community and helping the community understand the barriers to an education is an important element to help increase academic achievement of ethnic minority students in large urban schools.

In summary, Theme 1 answers the first research question: How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement? Through the data analysis of the responses of the 11 administrators, four practices and activities emerged. The leadership practices and activities used to increase African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement are (a) building a positive school environment (b) developing a culturally responsive staff, (c) establishing positive cultural interactions, and (d) altering the community mindset.

Theme 2: Collaborative Practices

Theme 2 also provided a response to the first research question: How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement? The second theme that emerged was transformational leaders must build collaborative practices including (a) common planning for instruction, (b) strong mission and vision, and (c) development of capacity within the organization to increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students. I describe each of these components of collaborative practices in the next sections.

Common Planning

The first category of Theme 2 was that transformational leaders value collegiality and collaboration in the educational setting. An effective administrator needs to understand the importance of collaboration among teachers to build their capacity in the classroom (Quin et al., 2015). When principals support collaborative practices among staff, student motivation, achievement, and sense of belonging improve (Day et al., 2016). Successful inclusive high schools have leaders who build collaborative practices and share decision-making power throughout the campus (McCarley et al., 2016). Staff collaboration in an urban high school encourages a positive school climate that helps to increase student achievement.

Collaboration and common planning are essential in urban high school to ensure the consistency of instruction. Participant A, a high school principal, explained. "Getting everyone involved in the conversation, not like a top-down leadership, but starting at the

grass roots and having conversations," provides a sense of community and collegiality among faculty. This principal also conveyed staff use collaborative decision- making processes and "work as a team." Participant K, a principal at an alternative high school, communicated collaboration works on the campus but may look different because of the fewer number of staff and students at the alternative campus. This participant reported that teacher "collaboration has to come across at the whole student level" for students to succeed academically.

Ten of the 11 participants specifically stated that their teachers meet at least once a week to plan for instruction. Eight participants expressed they met monthly for professional development as a campus. Participant B disclosed, "We build collaborative practices with our teachers through PLCs [professional learning communities] once a month." Three high school principals described similar situations regarding creating a master schedule that allows teachers to have common planning times together. Participant A shared the "priority with the master schedule to make sure our content teachers have the same conference [time], so they can meet during the school day to plan." Participant D, another high school principal, explained that in the master schedule, administrators set aside times for common planning for state-testing-level courses. Collaborative practices and common planning were evident at all campuses of the participants.

Collaborative practices allow the campus administration and staff to work together to construct a positive environment in their classroom for increased student outcomes (Morris et al., 2017; Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). These results for this study also support the transformational leadership

conceptual framework of this study, which emphasized the practice of idealized influence that administrators use to build trust and respect to encourage followers to collaborate to meet the goals of the organization (Bass, 1999). Principals use transformational leadership practices to build collaboration and cultivate an academic culture within the school to increase instructional effectiveness.

Mission and Vision

Theme 2 revealed a second category, that a school mission and vision are necessary for the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students. A school builds a strong, positive organizational environment through a strong vision that all stakeholders know and understand (Green, 2018). A focus on the mission and vision of the school helps teachers develop confidence and autonomy in teaching, increases positive perceptions of the culture of the school, and promotes student academic achievement (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). Building a purposeful mission and vision for a campus provides a sense of direction for the leader to create attainable goals, increasing teacher efficacy and student achievement.

The partner district of this study has a district-wide mission and vision created over a decade ago by administrators, with little teacher input, that promotes excellence on all campuses. Participant H, a high school principal, honestly shared that in a discussion with staff earlier that year about the mission and vision, teachers “had to return to [what was meant by] the district producing excellence, [which] did not mean anything, because they [the staff] really didn’t take part in what it meant” in the original vision statement.

The campus thus is disconnected from the district mission and vision statement because staff were not a part of its creation; the mission was not relevant to their campus.

One principal conveyed, however, “A vision and mission statement needs to be something that is reviewed every year with the staff.” Participant B, an assistant principal, articulated the mission and vision of the school district need to be known by all staff and “practiced on a daily basis in the classroom with practical skills and higher level thinking skills.” Participant F, another assistant principal, detailed how administrators “post the mission and vision around the school, give them examples, [ask teachers] to incorporate into their class, [and] talk about it in faculty meetings.” The mission and vision statement of a school communicates a clear goal for the leadership, staff, and students.

Administrators need to embed a strong mission and vision statement on high school campuses to increase teacher efficacy and student achievement. A successful leader develops a school vision, values, and goals to create an atmosphere where positive culture and interaction between the school leaders, staff, and students increases teacher effectiveness (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). The results of this study reflect the transformational leadership practice of inspirational motivation that helps build commitment to the organization. Through this practice, the leader builds excitement for the vision and inspires confidence in its attainment; the leader models a team concept where the staff connect to achieve a common goal. As the school advances towards the mission and vision of the campus goals, achievement of all students increases.

Building Capacity

The third category identified for Theme 2 is that transformational leaders must build the capacity of their staff on campus to increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students. When principals of urban turnaround schools create highly effective systems that that involve creativity, collaboration, and a strong vision, they construct an atmosphere that develops capacity with the teachers and creates high expectations for student success (Hitt et al., 2018). A supportive principal with innovative concepts and ideas establishes an atmosphere where teachers are empowered to collaborate and be creative to improve their instructional skills (Adillo & Netshitangani, 2019). Principals who build a culture of teaching and learning increase academic achievement of all students through positive school organizational structures.

Building capacity, using various strategies for teachers, improves the effectiveness of each staff member and increases academic achievement for all students. Participant D, an assistant principal, articulated a practice used in their school of having teachers observe other teachers in the classroom to increase collegiality: “Once they see other teachers doing it [a teaching strategy], then they know a teacher is willing to coach them.” Participant H, a principal, explained they had created an “instructional showcase to show everyone those high-yield strategies that work in the classroom, . . . our teachers teaching our teachers.” Another principal, Participant A, stated, “If you expect teachers to collaborate, [if] you expect teachers to work together and build capacity with each other, you have to build the time into the schedule and dedicate time to that.” Participant I, an assistant principal, articulated leaders “need to be able to demonstrate and model

[effective instructional strategies] for both the teacher and the students." Similarly, Participant A shared that capacity could be enriched when teachers are trained by peer teachers who model practices for other teachers. This African American administrator disclosed leaders need to find "master teachers that are already doing it [effective instructional practices] and feature them in a training session for the teachers." Participant H, a principal, shared, "I think when you tap into the resources you have locally, there's a wealth of experience within your campus, and we use that in order to teach each other how to use these skills." Building capacity on campuses using the skills of current staff is one means to increase instructional effectiveness to increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students.

Building capacity is an important aspect of using collaborative practices on school campuses with the instructional staff. Developing a shared vision in a positive school organization focuses the common goals of the organization to help build staff skills (Hooper & Bernhardt, 2016). The results of this study corroborate the transformational leadership conceptual framework of this study. Transformational administrators use intellectual simulation to encourage staff to creatively problem solve and think independently (Bass, 1999). Transformational leaders also assist their staff to become experts in their fields, through mentoring and using their expertise to influence the people around them. Leaders who build capacity using leadership practices that capitalize the expertise of their staff not only enhance a positive school environment but also influence academic achievement for all students.

In summary, Theme 2 provided a response to the first research question: How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement? The data analysis of the 11 participants revealed the theme of collaborative practices. These collaborative practices included (a) common planning for instruction, (b) strong mission and vision, and (c) development of capacity within the organization. These collaborative practices are an important element to increase African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement

Theme 3: Increase Student Involvement

Theme 3 answered the second research question: How do urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation? The theme that emerged from the data of the participants is that transformational leaders increase student involvement on campus by (a) providing a sense of belonging and genuine relationships for African American and Hispanic students and (b) offering extracurricular opportunities that address diverse interests to increase ethnic minority graduation. In the next section, I discuss the process for how school administrators in this study provided increased student involvement on their campus.

Building Relationships

For Theme 3, the first category developed in the analysis was building relationships between all stakeholders. Building relationships by school leaders and staff creates a safe place for students to express their beliefs and collaborate with other

students in the classroom (Booker, 2016). A student's identification with the school is an important element that fosters a student's academic achievement (Reynolds et al., 2017). When a student feels a sense of community and belonging in the educational environment, relationships are built that create a positive climate where all students can succeed.

Every participant except for one made direct statements about the importance of administrators building relationships for students to succeed on campus. Participant C, an assistant principal, shared that an administrator's role is to "build relationships with teachers, staff, and students, first and foremost." Participant A, a principal, was passionate about students coalescing with other students, faculty, and principals on the campus:

> I really feel like when you're talking about minority populations and that kids that are normally marginalized on campus, you have to make them feel like they matter. That starts with embracing who they are and all of their diverse ways, and then finding out what matters to them and making it a priority in your interactions with them.

Participant B, an assistant principal, shared administrators at their school created a "sense of belonging [where] everybody is treated the same, fair, and consistent," which conveyed respect for diversity and inclusion.

In discussing the concept of building relationships, six of the 11 participants emphatically supported the sense of making school a home and family setting for students. Participant A, a principal, shared,

> Every kid should find a home on the campus . . . letting kids know that they belong and creating a place where people care about them, make them feel like they matter. We produce excellence because we care about each other. We are family because we care about each other.

Participant E, an assistant principal, concurred and stated family belonginess begins in the classroom when students "work together and communicate in a classroom, debate in a healthy manner—because that creates a family, and they [students] can go into the real world and work with everyone." Participant D, a principal, agreed: "You can say we go beyond the color. . . . We acknowledge and honor the colors [of ethnic diversity] that make us all one family. . . . We create an environment that is a family atmosphere and provide a sense of identity." Participant I, an assistant principal, elaborated,

> If they [students] feel you are willing to do that [take time], and they know you care, they are going to come to school. They're going to give it their best because they don't want to let you down.

Participant K, a principal, shared, "Dealing with any struggling student is building those connections, honest connections, [to make students] feel comfortable talking to you. . . . We expect a lot from them, making them understand that everyone makes mistakes, that everyone struggles."

In urban high schools, most students are from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, and building relationships and sense of family with teachers and administrators is important. Positive relationships within a familial school climate are significant factors to assist students from problematic home environments to succeed academically (Back et

al., 2016). Student engagement and student achievement increase when school leaders develop a strong sense of belonging (Booker, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017). This feeling of belonging to the school campus develops when instructors show a personal interest and build safe places in their classrooms for the students as individuals (Booker, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017). When transformational leadership practices positively influence a school climate, relationships and a family atmosphere between administration, teachers, and students are constructed. These relationships produce highly effective teachers who can innovate and use best practices helping to increase student achievement (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016).

These findings of this study are supported by transformational leadership practices of inspirational motivation (Bass, 1999) when leaders build a team concept where the staff connect to achieve a common goal within the organization. This sense of family constructs the idea that each individual is important to accomplish the goal of the organization. Similarly, building relationships and a sense of family helps students make a connection to the school, thus increasing ethnic minority student graduation.

Extracurricular Opportunities

Involving students in clubs and interests on campus, outside of the academic curriculum, addresses the diverse interests of African American and Hispanic students to help increase graduation. Because of ethnic and economic factors of an urban school setting, administrators must exhibit leadership practices that provide student choice to meet the diverse needs of the community and students at the school (Gurr et al., 2018;

Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Menon, 2014). Bell's (2104) study found high academic expectations, quality academic supports, distinct emotional supports, and a sense of belonging within the school for African American male students increased student success. Building a positive environment by increasing student involvement on campus through a variety of clubs and organization on campus increases student attendance, academic achievement, and graduation rates.

All administrator participants agreed that extracurricular opportunities were a leadership practice that improved student participation on all levels in the school. Participant C, an assistant principal, stated that at their school they "bridge gaps with clubs and organizations to help students be successful." Participant D, a principal, articulated, "Clubs and organizations [are] open [and we are] working on faculty sponsoring more." Participant E, an assistant principal, communicated that the school has "lots of clubs and organizations [that are] very diverse, so you [students] can really fit into any group." Participant H, a principal, stated,

> Part of the expectations is for our kids to still be involved . . . just something to where the kids feel that they have ownership of their own education and they are part of something bigger than themselves. So, really actively pushing that involvement in our kids and truly just showing them what they can do.

Teachers sponsor extracurricular organizations, and Participant J, an assistant principal, explained, "Clubs keep them [students] on campus longer and gets them to see teachers as a person." Participant A, a principal, expressed that clubs and organizations help make "kids feel like they belong even if they are not in the traditional pathway,

because every kid should find a home on campus." An assistant principal, Participant J, pointed out the importance of extracurricular opportunities on campus to increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students:

> Of course, you've got your athletics, and all that good stuff. We do also have clubs on our campus that kids can participate in, such as an anime club, a robotics club, there's even a gaming club. . . . Also, we've had kids that have come to us in the past couple of years wanting to form new clubs. At the end of the day, all they need is a teacher sponsor, and they can go ahead and have that club.

Participant H, a principal, shared they have many clubs and organizations on campus, including a gaming club, Japanese anime club, and a quilting club. This principal also described how students could start a new club or organization on campus:

> Kids just . . . say, "I have this interest, and somebody help me start this club." . . . Because the kids want it, they market it themselves, they pull in the friends. [They] want to be part of something bigger than what you are doing. It [extracurricular opportunity] has taken off and has helped significantly with our kids.

The creation of varied opportunities for student involvement on the campus expands a student's sense of belonging to the school. The data show that offering extracurricular opportunities addressing diverse interests helps to increase ethnic minority graduation.

Urban areas tend to marginalize African American and Hispanic students in their community and school environment. When school administrators and staff create a safe place to belong for teaching and learning, student achievement for those students

increases (Boston & Warren, 2017; Leavitt & Hess, 2019). Creating a positive environment and building relationships are significant in school environments with ethnic minority populations to build a safe school and sense of belonging (Boston & Warren, 2017). School environments with large ethnic minority populations need to create a connection with students to the school to help them feel a sense of belonging to the school and the staff. Extracurricular activities and clubs help students become more involved on school campuses and connect with the teachers on a personal level, which helps to increase academic success.

These results from this study confirm the inspirational motivation practices of transformational leadership (see Bass, 1999). Without strong relationships and a sense of belonging at the school, ethnic minorities tend to detach from school and are at risk of dropping out. Leaders of urban schools, where the community environment can be difficult for students, must provide a variety of options to keep students engaged on campus and to provide a sense of belonging and a safe place to learn and grow. Providing extracurricular opportunities provides a positive learning environment that can lead to increased academic achievement and graduation for ethnic minority students.

Theme 3 answered the second research question: How do urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation? After analysis of the data of the 11 participants, the theme that emerged was that transformational leaders must increase student involvement on campus to help increase graduation of African American and Hispanic students. The participants shared two meaningful ways to include student involvement: providing a

sense of belonging and genuine relationships for African American and Hispanic students and offering extracurricular opportunities that address diverse interests. Ethnic minority students who create strong relationships with faculty through extracurricular campus organizations become actively involved on campus. Thus, African American and Hispanics students may feel a greater connection to the school and the organization, leading to increased academic learning and graduation.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. High school administrators use a variety of transformational leadership practices to increase achievement and graduation of African American and Hispanic students. These practices include creating positive cultural dynamics, building collaborative practices, and increasing student involvement on campus. In the next section, I explain the evidence of trustworthiness of the study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is an important element in qualitative research because the researcher is the main instrument in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Solid research questions, alignment of the research design to the research questions, purposeful sampling, and systematic collection and analysis of data are necessary elements of trustworthiness in a qualitative study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Building trust in research, particularly in the area of educational research, is

significant for qualitative studies. A researcher must observe credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to present a trustworthy study (Shenton, 2004). I applied these four criteria to increase the trustworthiness of my study.

Credibility

Credibility, in qualitative research, ensures the findings of a study are true to the purpose of the study and the data collected (Cope, 2014). Because the researcher is the primary instrument in collecting and analyzing data in a qualitative study, the researcher must share personal information and delineate the steps of the entire process to ensure the credibility of the findings (Patton, 1999). For my qualitative study, I used reflexivity and member checking to establish credibility.

Reflexivity is the process of considering possible bias in the data collection and analysis processes (Ahern, 1999). I used bracketing and journaling to provide credibility throughout the entire process of this study. During the interview process, I bracketed any internal thoughts and assumptions that might have reflected my bias (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). I used a journal process while analyzing the data to ensure my thoughts, reflections, and feelings did not interfere with the results of the analysis and emerging themes.

The second element I used to establish credible results of this study was member checking. After the completion of the data analysis, I developed summaries and conclusions from the data. I shared a draft of the findings with the participants to elicit feedback to ensure I had accurately represented their perceptions in the analysis of the data (see Cope, 2014). Member checking to verify the data and responsibly report the

intent of the interviewees was an important process to ensure the credibility of my study (see Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Transferability provides external validity in qualitative research and refers to the ability of a study to be applicable to other settings or groups (Bengtsson, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). The participant pool was small, consisting of 11 high school administrators, but the goal of the study was to increase the broader understanding of ideas and practices related to transformational leadership practices (see Walters, 2001). Using 11 participants allowed me to gather rich, in-depth data sufficient to understand the transformational practices that principals use to influence African American and Hispanic academic achievement and graduation.

To increase the transferability of this study, I used thick descriptions and provided two participant sources in the study: principals and assistant principals. Thick descriptions ensure that the readers gain a true understanding of the process used to decide its applicability in their own environment (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). I clearly described the process used to conduct the study, including participant selection, the interview process and procedures, and the data collection and analysis process using raw data from the participant interviews (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). By providing a detailed account of the process, a reader of this study can decide which of the concepts and ideas from this study may be transferable to a different setting. By using two participant sources, principals and assistant principals, I provided a direct correlation to the study's purpose and offer a diversity of responses (see Patton, 1999). Presenting thick

descriptions and providing two participant sources able to answer the research questions could increase the transferability of this study to other settings and contexts.

Dependability

A study's findings require reliability and stability to ensure dependability. Because the researcher is the primary collector of data, the researcher needs to provide a detailed account of data collection, categorization, analysis, and conclusions throughout the data analysis process to ensure dependability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used audit trails to ensure dependability in this study.

I used journaling to create an explicit audit trail. An audit trail is a comprehensive account of the research process from the beginning of the research through the findings to show the reader all choices made throughout the process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). The audit trail began prior to the data collection as I gathered the required paperwork, including consent forms; set up interviews; and created my interview protocol. During the interviews, I used bracketing to notate any bias during the interview (see Ahern, 1999). The journaling process continued after the interviews to record any concerns, problems, or insights. As I transcribed and analyzed the data, I used the journal to make notes about insights, bias, or challenges I experienced during the analysis process (see Ahern, 1999). The function of audit trails creates an understanding of the choices and decisions I made as a researcher and furnishes the reader with information concerning how I developed the findings to ensure a trustworthy study.

Confirmability

In a qualitative research study, to ensure trustworthiness of research, the researcher must provide confirmability to show that data represent the participants' views rather than the bias of the researcher who collected the data (Cope, 2014). The researchers must trace and explore possible ways that personal prejudice might have permeated the collection and analysis of the data, to the greatest extent possible, through reflexive processes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used reflexivity and member checking to ensure confirmability of the study.

In qualitative studies, the researcher is a part of the world they are studying. Reflexivity is the process I used to acknowledge the possible bias through the collection and analysis of the data (see Yin, 2016). I am a 26-year veteran of the partner district of this study and, therefore, my educational experiences could have led to bias in the process. I maintained a journal at every stage of this study, including organizing, conducting, and transcribing interviews. I also used bracketing in the interviews to make notes about bias or preconceived notions I experienced (see Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). As I analyzed the data, I used the journal to reflect on my thoughts, feelings, and actions. The detailed process I described of the coding decisions I made allows the possibility of the research being duplicated or corroborated by others (see Bengtsson, 2016). The reflexive journal during the process allowed me to understand my subjectivity during the research process.

At the end of the data collection and analysis, I used member checking to increase credibility. I completed the findings for the study and then sent the summaries and

conclusions of the findings to the participants in the study to obtain feedback to ensure accurate representation and analysis of the data of the study (see Cope, 2014). The process of member checking is important in ensuring the intention of the interviewees and not the bias of the researcher in the data (Shenton, 2004). Reflexive journaling and member checking helped to ensure the credibility of this study.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic minority students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. Over 2 weeks, I interviewed 11 high school administrators—four principals and seven assistant principals—using video conferencing with semistructured interviews. Two research questions, aligned to the purpose of the study, helped to guide the collection and analysis of the data.

In reference to the first research question, the high school administrators shared two important ideas about transformational leadership practices. Transformational leadership practices should create cultural dynamics in a positive school environment and build collaborative practices to increase African American and Hispanic academic achievement and graduation. Cultural dynamics includes building positive school environment, developing culturally responsive staff, establishing positive cultural interactions, and altering the community mindset. Building collaborative practices includes common planning, mission and vision, and capacity building. In reference to the second research question, the high school administrators referred to increasing student

involvement by building relationships and creating varied extracurricular opportunities to increase African American and Hispanic graduation. In Chapter 5, I discuss the implications, interpretations, and the recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. I gathered data through semistructured videoconference interviews of 11 high school administrators. Through the interview protocol and questions, I explored the transformational leadership practices of these 11 administrators in the partner district.

The research questions for this basic qualitative study derived from the conceptual framework of transformational leadership of Burns (1978) and Bass (1999). I developed two research questions to investigate the transformational leadership practices of the partner district high school administrators and their influence on African American and Hispanic academic achievement and graduation:

1. How do urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement?
2. How do urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation?

I used the transformational leadership framework of Burns (1978) and Bass (1999) to analyze the data. Using content analysis, three themes emerged based on the research questions, as follows:

1. Transformational leaders create cultural dynamics by building a positive school environment, developing a culturally responsive staff, establishing positive cultural interactions, and altering the community mindset to increase African American and Hispanic academic achievement.
2. Transformational leaders must build collaborative practices, including common planning for instruction, strong mission and vision, and development of capacity within the organization, to increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students.
3. Transformational leaders increase student involvement on campus by providing a sense of belonging and genuine relationships for African American and Hispanic students and offering extracurricular opportunities that address diverse interests to increase ethnic minority graduation.

The findings of this study uphold and reinforce existing research on the influence of transformational leadership practices on African American and Hispanic academic achievement and graduation. The research process has given me new insight into leadership practices involving cultural dynamics, collaborative practices, and student involvement at high school campuses in the partner district. Three themes emerged that provided answers to the two research questions for this study. In this chapter, I review the study, interpret the findings, and provide connections between the research questions and the conceptual framework and peer-reviewed literature. I also discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and implications for social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

Researchers have discovered that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction in influencing student achievement (Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). Because administrators play an important role in student achievement and graduation, transformational leadership practices may create positive social change in schools (Allen et al., 2015; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Building a positive school environment and organization permits transformational leaders to establish positive relationships within the school that influence teachers to use highly effective instructional practices, leading to increased student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). The 11 high school administrators who were participants of this study provided their perceptions and experience concerning transformational leadership practices at their campuses. The interviewed administrators gave insight that developed into three themes. I explain each theme in the following sections.

Cultural Dynamics

The theme of cultural dynamics emerged from the participants' responses to the interview questions based on Research Question 1, related to how urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement. Administrators transform cultural environments by providing school values and principles that develop culturally responsive staff members, encourage respectful cultural interactions between teachers and students, and shape the community mindset. High school administrators who create cultural dynamics help increase the academic

achievement of all students on the campus. African American and Hispanic students also benefit academically because of the transformative culture of the high school campus.

Administrators should create a positive school environment for the academic achievement of all students. For students to be successful, they must have a welcoming school environment where they know they are treated fairly and consistently by the staff. Administrators build practices necessary to create a positive environment; however, for the culture to grow and to be endemic, the campus staff needs to emulate the practices to build meaningful connections with students. When transformational leaders build a positive school environment, students become engaged with learning, academic success increases, dropout rates decrease, and behavior problems decrease (M. T. Wang & Degol, 2016).

Administrators of urban high schools need to develop culturally responsive staff members to help African American and Hispanic students be academically successful. Administrators observed that campus staff experienced difficulty relating to various ethnicities of students in an urban campus setting. Through professional development and administrator modeling of behaviors, staff could incorporate culturally relevant curriculum and instruction into the classroom. By exhibiting personal behaviors that communicated acceptance of diversity and inclusion and by providing targeted training for teachers, the administration helped to develop trust between the staff and leadership of the school, supporting previous research (Adams & Forsyth, 2013; Seashore Louis & Murphy, 2017). Increasing the instructional toolbox of staff through culturally responsive instruction allows for creativity and innovation in teaching and learning that can assist all

students to be successful academically. School leaders need to create culturally diverse awareness to improve academic achievement and increase graduation in urban schools (Edeburn & Knotts, 2019).

Cultivating a campus environment that provides diverse social and ethnic dynamics includes encouraging positive cultural interactions between faculty and students. Administrators with a diverse student population need to promulgate practices that acknowledge and celebrate the differences of the students on an urban high school campus. The findings of this study suggest that culturally supportive environments are important elements for academic achievement for both African American and Hispanic learners. Transformational leaders who build learning environments where staff members understand the differences and diversity of the students on campus create a culturally supportive atmosphere enabling students to make positive connections with each other and increase academic achievement (Roth, 2015).

Administrators must use transformational practices to inform and reshape community perspectives concerning the value of academic achievement, thereby influencing African American and Hispanic students to achieve graduation. The high school administrators expressed the challenge of a generational mindset in the community that failed to grasp the importance of graduation. Transformational leaders emphasized the value of educating and providing support to families to develop a common goal of graduation as a necessary milestone in a student's life. African American and Hispanic students had less of a support system at home that provided them information regarding the significance of high school graduation goal. Building

connections and common goals beyond high school is relevant to help motivate students to increase academic achievement and graduate high school (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019).

Building good leadership practices and creating a positive school environment are important procedures for all the stakeholders of a school (Back et al., 2016; McCarley et al., 2016; Smith & Shouppe, 2018). According to Bass (1999), individualized consideration was a leadership practice directly correlating a leader's ability to inspire individuals and to understand the uniqueness of people on campus and in the community. Transformational leadership practices that build a positive school environment include hiring instructors who provide engaging lessons and respect students' cultural backgrounds. Such practices help alter community perceptions and increase academic achievement for all students. Integrating cultural respect on an urban campus and in the community is a necessary transformational leadership practice for school leaders to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement.

Collaborative Practices

The second theme also answered Research Question 1 about how urban high school administrators describe their transformational leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement. Transformational administrators who encourage collaborative practices with teachers and staff help to increase academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students. These collaborative practices include teachers communicating about creating engaging

lessons during a common planning time, emphasizing a strong mission and vision for the campus, and building the instructional capacity of the instructional staff.

To increase collaborative practices for teachers, transformational administrators need to schedule weekly common planning periods into the high school master schedule. During the interviews, the high school administrators discussed how the common planning among various departments allows teachers to prepare creative, innovative instruction to engage all learners. Transformational leadership emphasizes the practice of idealized influence, which administrators use to build trust and respect and encourage collaboration to meet the goals of the organization (Bass, 1999). Transformational leadership practices help build effective urban high schools by encouraging teachers to collaborate to build positive school organizations (Sebastian et al., 2017). Collaboration helps to strengthen the professional organization by developing instructional practices that improve both student learning and engagement (Minckler, 2014). Using collaborative practices such as common planning, administrators apply transformational practices that may increase academic achievement for all students.

Transformational leaders must have a strong mission and vision in place to help increase the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic students. A focused mission or vision helps guide the direction of an urban high school campus. The participants mentioned the importance of having the teachers and staff create the mission and vision as well as an opportunity to revisit goals annually. Transformational leadership practices promote a strong vision to influence teachers to strive for the common goal of the organization, make changes towards a goal, and increase academic

achievement for students (Lai, 2015). By creating a clear mission and vision, administrators and faculty become united as a team to achieve a common goal. Student academic achievement and positive school culture develop when teacher instructional practices are built around the mission and vision of the school, because autonomy and confidence in their teaching grows (Ninković & Knežević Florić, 2018). As the campus progresses towards the common goal, academic achievement of all students increases.

Collaborative practices are also about high school administrators building capacity of staff. Transformational leaders use the skills of current staff members to increase the instructional effectiveness of other members of the organization. Using this system of building capacity with various strategies shared by fellow teachers on campus, the participants identified feelings of connectedness. The teachers understood the success of the strategies and could increase their effectiveness in their instruction for all students, including African American and Hispanic students. Transformational leadership practices that advance organizational members' skills through mentoring, coaching, and individualized growth planning assist members to maximize their individual potential (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Student achievement increases when collaborative teacher relationships create a positive school climate (Back et al., 2016; Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Collaborative practices, including building capacity on a school campus, are transformational practices that are essential for leaders to use to improve academic achievement of all students.

In summary, collaborative practices provide opportunities for urban high school administrators to use transformational leadership practices and activities that support

African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement. By creating collaborative practices within an organization, a positive school climate develops and increases student academic outcomes (Khan & Shaheen, 2016; Sebastian et al., 2017). Administrators who facilitate transformational leadership practices that include building collaborative practices through common planning, a strong mission and vision, and development of capacity help to increase academic outcomes for all students.

Increase Student Involvement

The third theme answered Research Question 2 regarding how urban high school administrators perceive their transformational leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation. Increasing student involvement on campus is a fundamental factor in an urban high school to increase graduation rates. By providing a wide variety of opportunities for student involvement, school leaders can increase the graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students. Transformational administrators increase student involvement at urban high schools through building relationships and offering a variety of extracurricular opportunities on campus.

Transformational high school administrators must foster relationships with members of the organization, including students and staff. Administrators should create a feeling of family on the campus, especially in low-socioeconomic environments. When students have difficult family environments, positive relationships in a family-based climate at school help students succeed academically (Back et al., 2016). A strong sense of belonging, created by school leaders at the school, helps increase both student engagement and achievement (Booker, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2017).

Transformational leaders in urban high schools must offer a variety of extracurricular activities for students on campus to address the diverse interests of the students, particularly African American and Hispanic students. The participants provided insights that recommended offering diverse extracurricular opportunities that appeal to ethnic minority students, establishing strong relationships with the staff, and creating a formidable affiliation with the school. These relationships help increase student attendance, academic achievement, and subsequently graduation rates. These inspirational motivation practices of transformational leadership (see Bass, 1999) increase students' sense of belonging to their school. Leaders in urban settings with diverse ethnic and economic influences must offer student choice to meet the needs of the student and community populations of the school (Gurr et al., 2018; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Menon, 2014).

Administrators of urban schools need to use transformational leadership practices that catalyze student involvement to increase graduation for African American and Hispanic students. Student achievement increases when school administrators and staff create a safe place to belong and for teaching and learning to occur (Boston & Warren, 2017; Leavitt & Hess, 2019). Leaders should create a positive environment with strong relationships so all students, including ethnic minority students, feel safe and a sense of belonging (Boston & Warren, 2017). Creating a sense of belonging with strong relationships and offering diverse extracurricular opportunities to students are two methods to increase African American and Hispanic graduation.

In summary, three themes emerged based on the data collected from the 11 urban high school administrator interviews. The findings of this study support the importance of transformational leadership practices that (a) create cultural dynamics on the school campus, (b) provide collaborative practices for educators, and (c) facilitate student involvement and belongingness. These themes corroborate with the peer-reviewed literature and the ideals of the conceptual framework of this study. Transformational leaders create supportive environments to develop and inspire their followers to bond together for a common goal (Burns, 2003). By creating a common vision and mission, transformational leaders develop a positive climate and school organization. This positive school environment helps transformational leaders build collaboration and a sense of community that empowers followers to promote positivity, creativity, and advancement of the organization (Bass, 1999). These transformational leadership practices encourage increased student engagement and learning that support increased academic achievement and graduation for African American and Hispanic students.

Limitations of the Study

Every study has limitations that cannot be controlled by the researcher and that may weaken the study. Recognizing these limitations within a study is important to strengthen the findings (Yin, 2016). Possible limitations of this study were confirmability, transferability, and researcher bias.

To recognize the limitation of confirmability and ensure the results of this study may be confirmed by others, I conducted an extensive audit trail to describe the decisions I made during the study and how I analyzed the data. I also used reflective journaling

before, during, and after the interviewing process (see Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). I used bracketing during the interview process (Ahern, 1999). These procedures helped me accurately establish the experiences and concepts shared by the participants rather than subjectively identifying my viewpoints or biases. Although, I used audit trails, self-reflection, and bracketing during the interview and data analysis processes, limitations of bias still might have occurred.

Personal bias may be a limitation. In this qualitative study, I was the person responsible for collecting and analyzing the data. As noted, I maintained a reflective journal and monitored my bias as appropriate during the interview process, by bracketing my thoughts to ensure I was only reflecting the perceptions of the participants perceptions (see Wall et al., 2004). Although I completed these measures to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, personal bias and viewpoints could have emerged in the data analysis and findings, which could be a limitation to this study.

Another limitation of a qualitative study is transferability and the degree to which the results of this study may be applicable in another context. I collected data from 11 high school administrators in a southwestern U.S. school district. Although a small sample size is acceptable in this basic qualitative study based upon a broader ideas and practices (see Walters, 2001), the findings may not be transferable to other regions or school districts because of the limited participation size. Transferability also may be limited because of unique practices of the participants as experienced in the setting of this study. Additionally, the background experiences of the participants may not be similar and applicable to other school settings or regions of the country.

Recommendations

Other research studies have been conducted in the literature concerning increasing the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic high school students. Most studies performed research on teachers' classroom instructional techniques and student engagement. Although researchers have articulated educational leaders are second only to classroom teachers to influence student academic achievement (Leithwood et al., 2020), most studies regarding leadership in high schools are about comprehensive approaches to improve the overall school. Minimal number of studies have focused on leadership practices that influence academic achievement and graduation of students in urban settings.

In this study, I wanted to investigate and identify integral transformational leadership practices that can increase graduation rates of African American and Hispanic students in urban high schools. The urban high school administrators indicated several components that help ethnic minority students increase academic achievement and graduation. In a diverse school environment where the cultural dynamics of students and staff are essential, cultural interactions between staff and students can be problematic. Therefore, leaders and staff in urban high schools should receive training on cultural interactions to help create a more positive environment on campuses. However, further research in cultural interactions at high school campuses may be necessary to determine how specific practices for cultural diversity training would help to increase academic achievement and gradation for ethnic minorities.

Second, opportunity to provide collaborative outcomes was a common theme with all participants. Administrators and teachers working together to create a common goal for the school, common planning, and development of capacity for teachers are important practices to help develop and implement instructional strategies for teaching African American and Hispanic students. However, the participants of this study had reservations about how to instigate collaborative teams on their school campus. Professional development on collaborative practices and modeling of these practices should be studied to foster change and develop leadership practices to increase collaborative practices.

Another recommendation for further investigation would be to study urban high school administrator transformational practices in other areas of the United States. This research was only conducted in one urban partner district located in the southwestern United States. The findings are limited by the size of the participant sample and experiences described for one school district. Additional studies in other classifications of schools such as rural areas and small school districts may increase the understanding of this gap in practice. The results from additional research could contribute the body of research regarding transformational leadership practices to increase ethnic minority graduation.

Implications

This study contributes to the research about practice concerning the perceptions of urban high school administrators and their transformational leadership practices that influence African American and Hispanic students' graduation in the southwestern United States. On a local school district level, findings from this study may provide

insight into training for administrators to (a) build relationships and create cultural dynamics to provide a positive school environment, (b) create collaborative practices within the organization, and (c) develop student involvement on campus to increase student belonging. Social change may occur by using these transformational leadership practices to increase African American and Hispanic graduation in the local school district. Increasing graduation can improve economic opportunities of families in the community and allow students to become more productive members of society.

The findings from this study also may be applicable on a larger level. Social change is a responsibility within the public school system of the United States. Administrators have the ability to affect transformational practices on their campuses as well as influence change for educators in the classroom. High school graduation is an important requirement for societal advancement because education provides the possibility for economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for further learning. A correlation exists between dropping out of high school and elevated levels of poverty (Atwell et al., 2019; DePaoli et al., 2018; Robertson et al., 2016). Graduating from high school makes citizens more involved in their community and less likely to be a burden on society (Cook & Kang, 2016). A gap exists between African American and Hispanic students and other ethnicities graduating from high school (Stark & Noel, 2015). By increasing the graduation of African American and Hispanic students, communities gain educated citizens who can contribute to the economic growth and productivity of their urban environment.

Educational leaders have the potential to influence the social change by ensuring students graduate from high school. The findings of this study may help high school administrators alter leadership practices to help African American and Hispanic students graduate. Positive social change may occur on urban high school campuses, increasing African American and Hispanic academic achievement and graduation, when administrators use transformational leadership practices that create positive cultural dynamic interactions, develop collaborative practices, and provide opportunities for increased student involvement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of urban high school administrators concerning their transformational leadership practices and their influence on African American and Hispanic students achieving graduation in the southwestern United States. High school administrators play an important role in student achievement and graduation by creating substantial school reform through transformational leadership practices (Allen et al., 2015; Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Transformational leadership practices promote a system that values collaboration, builds trust, and encourages individualized choices that increase motivation and progress toward a shared vision (Burns, 2003). The literature suggested transformational leadership practices occurred through a shared vision of positive school climate and positive school organization that can influence academic achievement.

I conducted this study to address the gap in practice about the influence of transformational leadership practices and African American and Hispanic high school

graduation. I collected data using semistructured interviews with 11 urban high school administrators who had 3 or more years of experience. The findings of this study indicate leadership practices must focus on a positive school environment that includes understanding the cultural dynamics of campus, collaboration among administrators and teachers, and increased student involvement on campus.

Using these transformational practices, urban high school administrators can create educational change within their campuses and communities to increase ethnic minority academic achievement and graduation. An increase in achievement and graduation, especially for African American and Hispanic students, can improve economic opportunities and create productive citizens within the community. Administrators in the partner district of this study should review these findings to increase high school graduation for African American and Hispanic students. High school administrators have a unique opportunity to offer positive social change and hope for ethnic minority students by using transformational leadership practices.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Date: _____

Interview Start Time: _____

Interviewee Code: _____

Interview Outline	**Observations and Reflections Notes**
I. Introduction and Greeting Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I am interested in gaining information regarding transformational leadership practices and African American and Hispanic graduation. In a moment, I will ask you some questions to guide our discussion. This interview is confidential but will be audio recorded as stated in the interview consent form. I will ensure your identity is kept confidential by assigning you a pseudonym to maintain your identity. Are there any questions before we proceed?	
II. Review of Consent Form Before I begin the interview, I would like to review the consent form.	
III. Research Questions I realize you work at a challenging high school campus. Here are the research questions for this study. 1. How do urban high school administrators describe their leadership practices and activities in their effort to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement?	

2. How do urban high school administrators perceive their leadership practices to influence African American and Hispanic graduation? I'm going to ask you to share your views on the characteristics and practices of transformational leadership you think would be effective leadership to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement to increase graduation.	
IV. Background Information Before we begin the interview, may I ask some background information that will help me with my study? 1. Name: 2. Male/Female: 3. Ethnicity: 4. Current role: 5. Number of years as an administrator: 6. Number of years at the high school level:	
V. Interview Questions I have 10 interview questions to guide our discussion. I may occasionally ask for clarification. This interview is being audio record so I can review your answers later and I will take notes during our discussion. Do you have any questions before we begin?	
1. Tell me briefly about your educational experiences and background.	

• How many schools have you been in a leadership role? • How many high schools? • How many Title I schools? • Have the schools had a large percentage of minorities?	
2. Tell me briefly about your leadership practices. • Tell me more about… • Give me a specific example of a time when...	
3. How do you create a positive school culture on your campus to support African American and Hispanic students' academic achievement? • Do you have any examples of…? • Tell me more about… • Can you elaborate on… • What did you mean by…?	
4. How do you incorporate the mission and vision of the school into your leadership practices with the staff? • Tell me more about… • Can you elaborate on… • What did you mean by…?	

5. How do you motivate your teachers to experiment with innovative ideas to help minority students increase academic achievement?
 	
• Do you have any examples of…
  ○ Teaching/instructional practices
  ○ After school clubs or organizations	

○ Tutoring opportunities • Tell me more about… • Can you elaborate on… • What did you mean by…?	
6. How do you build collaborative practices with your teachers? • Do you have any examples of… ○ Shared decision making ○ PLCs ○ Collaborative learning groups • Tell me more about… • Can you elaborate on… • What did you mean by…?	
7. Describe your perceptions concerning academic challenges minority students (African American and Hispanic) face reaching graduation. • Tell me more about… • Can you elaborate on… • What did you mean by…?	
8. What are some leaderships practices and activities that you have led to help minority students on your campus? • Do you have any examples of…? • Tell me more about… • Can you elaborate on… • What did you mean by…?	
9. How do your leadership practices help minority students feel a sense of belonging at your campus? • Do you have any examples of…? • Tell me more about… • Can you elaborate on…	

• What did you mean by…?	
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?	
VI. Close of Interview I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your personal experiences and knowledge will provide me insight into transformational practices and minority graduation. You will have an opportunity to review my preliminary findings to make sure I convey your experiences accurately. Is there a specific email you would prefer me to use to send you the document? **Turn off the recording**	
VII. End of Interview Interview end time _____	