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Social Capital and Academic Achievement of African American Male High School Students

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Abstract

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MA, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, 2009

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Abstract

Although more researchers have focused on academic deficits of male African American students, it is also important to understand the social factors that contribute to those who perform at a proficient level. Drawing on social capital theory as forwarded by Coleman and Putnam, this qualitative case study of 3 African American male high school students examined how their parent(s), teacher, mentor, peer or sibling, and pastor or community leader influenced the creation of social capital surrounding the students' academic achievement. Interview protocols and research interview instruments were developed and used to collect data from a total of 16 research participants, including the 3 students. Collection of the data was done through one-on-one, face-to-face interviews that were audio-recorded. The researcher transcribed the data and coded for analysis using intuitively derived categories. The primary finding of this study indicated that social capital positively influenced the 3 students' academic achievement. Themes acknowledged within the data were: (a) relationships, including family and community; (b) culture, including core norms and future goals; and (c) student attributes, which related to students' interests and characteristics as described by themselves. These findings may be relevant for designing education policies and practices for improving the academic performance and outcomes of African American male high school students, providing professional development for teachers to build meaningful relationships with students, improving cultural sensitivity, and creating supportive classrooms. Implications for social change include the need for a strong social support system that engenders high expectations for the students and holds students accountable for their academic success.

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to all children who have been told that they would never make it, that they were nothing, and that they would not amount to anything, who were bullied, and who never felt loved. This is for YOU! It is also dedicated to every student whom I have had the pleasure of teaching and to every youth whom I have had the opportunity to encounter or to minister to over the last 10 years. Thank you.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to give all honor, glory, and praise to my Lord, my God, my Savior, Jesus Christ, for without Him, I would have never made it through these last eight years. I am forever grateful for every test, because now I have a testimony and can truly testify of His grace and goodness.

Second, I would like to acknowledge my mother, Ms. Marcia Henry, and my sister, Dr. Najah Barton. Thank you both for pushing me to greatness and for being my strength when I was weak.

Third, to all of my friends and family, thank you for praying for me and for believing in me even when I had my own personal doubts that this day would ever come.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Katherine Emmons and Dr. Felicia Blacher-Wilson for being patient with me and for walking me through this process.

Lastly, I would like to send a personal thank you to all my students past, present, and future. I loved you then, I love you now, and I will always love you. This one is for you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The purpose of education should be to foster the intellectual, personal, and social development of all students, and to provide them with the skills to access opportunities (Li & Hasan, 2010). High academic performance and educational attainment are valuable assets that enable students to compete for desirable employment opportunities within a growing global economy (Washington, 2010). Social capital consists of connections, which through accumulation of exchanges along with obligations and shared identities provide actual or possible support as well as access to valued resources (Yan & Lin, 2005).

Without social capital, African American students often experience cultural discontinuity, and these disconnections along with inconsistencies between the values of some students are usually those from nondominant cultures (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011Self & Milner, 2012). Such disconnection can produce apathy, academic disengagement, and school discontent (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). This discontinuity may be a main reason that African American students lag behind (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011).

For this research, I conducted a single case study with a total of 16 participants. Three African American male high school students were the primary focus of the case study. In addition to the three students, other individuals in their social capital networks also participated in the study, including a parent, a current or former teacher, a peer or sibling, a pastor or community leader, and a mentor. Social capital embodies resources

that are beneficial to an individual or group and goes beyond the individual to incorporate a wider network in which relationships are led by a higher level of trust and shared values (Coleman, 1988). I asked each student to identify and invite each of the types of individuals previously listed to participate in the study.

Rockworth High School (a pseudonym) is the only high school located within the small rural town of Rockworth, NC (also a pseudonym). At the time of the study, the high school served over 600 students, and the student population demographic was as follows: 48% Black, 25% White, 20% Hispanic, and 7% other. Within the last 5 years, the graduation rate has steadily increased. This high school was the most promising location for this research study because of the demographics of the school and the increase in the graduation rate. Many of the students at the high school live within the same neighborhood, are related, or grew up together. This has created a family-like culture at the high school.

I interviewed three African American male high school students and each of the students' constellation of several individuals, which yielded a total of 16 participants (see Figure 1). The three young men, who were the center of the study, were all high school seniors. All of the participants worked or resided in Rockworth. The three students who were the center of this research study were Phillip, Michael, and Charles (pseudonyms). Two of the participants overlapped due to the students' selections with Michael's mentor selection being the same individual Phillip identified as his teacher selection. Likewise, Phillip's mentor selection was Michael's teacher selection. This overlap reduced the initial number of total participants from 18 to 16. The two participants were able to speak

about each of the individual students according to the role they played in their lives.
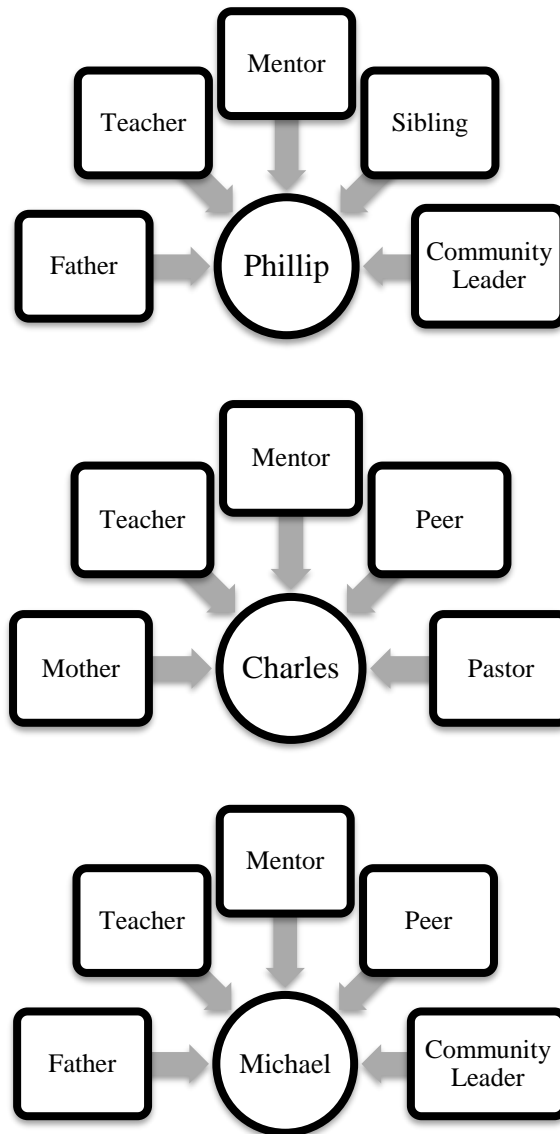
Figure 1. Research participants.

Background

National education reforms have produced *one-size-fits-all* accountability models

that do not work in all conditions. Such reforms have weakened teacher effectiveness and

have limited state management (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011). A prominent such reform

was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which was signed into law during

the administration of former president George W. Bush (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011).

The law was designed to hold the nation's schools at a higher level of accountability as

well as to reduce the achievement gaps between White and racial minority students

(Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011). NCLB emphasized a means of greater accountability and

compliance for states, districts, and school administrators through the development and

implementation of rigorous standardized assessments (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011;

Templeton, 2011). Since the implementation of NCLB, standardized testing practices

have continued to dictate what and how students learn (Cole, Hulley, & Quarles, 2010).

Emphasis has been placed on testing to measure a students' mastery level of a specific

content area (Cole et. al, 2010).

  According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2011), the lowest-achieving

quartile of students is 20 times more likely to drop out of high school compared to

students who are in the highest-achievement quartile. NCLB set forth strict federal

penalties to issue to schools not meeting the standards of the law (Zimmerman &

Dibenedetto, 2008). The Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) was created as a means of

reporting annually the academic progress of all students for each school (Rojas-LeBouef

& Slate, 2011). During the 2003–2004 school year, for example, it was reported that

schools with a higher poverty level and larger enrollment of racial minority students

failed to meet AYP at a higher rate (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011).

  A national study conducted by Li and Hasan (2010) projected that by 2050, at

least 50% of the U.S. school student population will be African Americans, Hispanic

Americans, and Asian Americas. The academic achievement gap continues to persist even though the score differentials between Black and White students in the fourth grade narrowed between 1992 and 2007 in the areas of math and reading (Vannerman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). In 2007, the gap became narrower compared to 1992 as Black students within 15 states demonstrated a greater gain in average scores than White students (Vannerman et al., 2009). Still, in 2009 and 2011, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that African American and Hispanic students in the fourth and eighth grades trailed behind their White peers by an average of more than 20 test-score points on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math and reading assessments (Vannerman et al., 2009). Such low reading achievement grades in elementary school have a lasting effect and may relate to poor academic outcomes later in high school, reduce educational attainment overall, and even increase delinquency (Harris & Graves, 2010).

Along with the racial gap in academic achievement, a gender gap also exists. Matthews, Kizzie, Rowley, and Cortine (2010) noted that African American girls tend to attain higher grades, form stronger relationships with teachers, receive a higher level of teacher rating, and obtain higher honors ranking than boys. As a result, African American girls tend to outperform boys regardless of the academic domain (Matthews et al., 2010). African American boys tend to be subjected to racial discrimination within the classroom, have disproportionally high representation in lower level classes, and experience lower teacher expectations (Institution of Education Sciences, 2012; Matthews et al., 2010). Research has shown that academic issues that hinder the educational progress of African

American boys begin as early as elementary school and impede their ability to graduate from high school (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010). Black male students tend to be more underrepresented in academically gifted programs or advanced placement courses and are more likely, in some educational settings, to be marginalized more than other racial and ethnic groups (Palmer et al., 2010). They are also more likely to be classified and labeled with a learning disability (Palmer et al., 2010).

Educational attainment is a form of human capital that translates directly into tangible socioeconomic dividends (Washington, 2010). African American students have alternative forms of capital that are usually not recognized by teachers and administrators that include aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, resistant capital, and navigational capital (McCray, Grant, & Beachum, 2010). However, for the purpose of this research study, social capital was the primary focus.

Social capital may stem in part from the idea of *othermothering*, a term that dates back to the days of slavery and was the concept used for displaced children who were sold separately from their mothers (Kenricks, Nedunuri, & Arment, 2013). These children were reared by others on the plantation where they resided, which resulted in a unique relationship between African American mentees and mentors that can be also summarized as "it takes a village to raise a child" (Kenricks et al., 2013). The notion that "it takes a village to raise a child," originally an old African proverb, is becoming more and more noticeable as well as imperative in modern society (Clinton, 1996). The village, however, no longer consists only of immediate and extended family members (i.e., mom, dad, aunt, uncle, in-laws, and others) but the village now consists of neighbors, teachers,

pastors, and other members of society. According to Hillary Clinton (1996), the village is a "network of values and relationships that support and affect our lives" (p. 7). In other words, the village is a system of values and relationships that provides support for individuals who are members of the village.

In sociology, the village represents social capital (Clinton, 1996). Bhandari and Yasunobu (2009) defined social capital as a complex multidimensional collection of assets that facilitate collaboration for a mutual benefit that creates shared norms, beliefs, networks, values, institutions, and social relations within a society. Thus, social capital is a collaborative set of norms, values, and/or beliefs that mutually benefits all of the members within a particular society.

Social Capital

Social capital stems from social relations and social norms that are as a result of relationships among individuals within a network (Plagens, 2010). Mangino (2009) stated that "in a community, as more adults come to know each other and each other's children … the more influence those adults have over the children" (p.147). In other words, the more parents within a community communicate, socialize, and get to know each other, the more influence he or she has over the children within that community.

Research has indicated that first generation children of parents with less than a postsecondary education were less likely to have experience participating in high school activities and getting along well with teachers (Grayson, 2011). Grayson (2011) found that first generation students had a relatively lower degree of expectations and received minimal family encouragement during their academic studies and spent relatively less

time interacting with their peers than other students. A growing number of research studies have consistently shown social factors impact student school motivation (Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012).

Problem Statement

African American students continue to lag behind their White counterparts in science, reading, and math (Institution of Education Sciences, 2012; Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011; Templeton, 2011). Researchers have found that students' family background was the overall predicator of their success and that social class influenced the academic achievement of students within a school (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011; Templeton, 2011). Understanding how to access and use social capital may be the key to improving achievement for African American students. However, social capital is often discussed in unclear terms that do not make clear the mechanisms through which relationships, such as student to parents or student to teacher, affect academic achievement.

There are researchers, including Payne-Scott (2013) and Oscar Lewis (1966), who have studied underachieving male African American high school students, but only a few, such as Gorski (2010) and Harper (2012) that have focused on those who are performing at a proficient level. According to Piazza and Duncan (2012), a focus on the underachievement aspects is known as a *deficit model*. The deficit model is a viewpoint that states racial and ethnic minorities are different because their culture is deficient in critical (e.g., socioeconomic status and cultural) ways from the dominant majority (Song & Pyon, 2008). The deficit model comes from theory that can be traced back to the 1600s and revolves around the notion that students fail in school because of internal deficits and

deficiencies (Valencia, 2011). The deficit model drives many education policies including NCLB (Valencia, 2011).

This deficit perspective has potentially created a one-sided view of what are actually complex processes involving the achievement of African American students, especially those with a low-socioeconomic status. Families and communities are blamed for failing to prepare children for educational advancement (Piazza & Duncan, 2012). For example, the model asserts that racial minority students, such as an African American male, would underachieve academically because his family culture lacks important characteristics compared to the culture of their White peers. Such blame generalizes complex issues and negatively reaffirms the stereotypes of the poor (Piazza & Duncan, 2012).

Not all students experience this gap or academic failure. Some do succeed, but their experiences have not been sufficiently studied, particularly for the role that social capital may play in their academic success. A need existed to help educators understand strategies that address the academic achievement gap between male African American high school students and their counterparts from other demographic groups. Therefore, I carried out this study with a focus on male African American high school students who have achieved academic proficiency and the role of social capital on their academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. The role of the

parent(s), teacher, mentor, peer or sibling, and pastor or community leader in creating social capital leading to the academic achievement of 3 African American male high school students was examined. It was assumed that students reached proficiency when they have demonstrated a level of competency over challenging subject matter (Aud et al., 2013). Several research studies have focused on underachieving African American male high school students; however, the deficit model has often dominated research and even media attention on ethnic and racial minority and low-income students (Piazza & Duncan, 2012). Such a perspective suggested that students from lower social strata have values and attitudes that hinder their academic achievement and that students from higher social strata do not share such values and attitudes, which are seen as negative (Piazza & Duncan, 2012).

There have only been a few studies that focused on students who perform at the proficient level or above, including how various forms of capital may support them in their success (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010; Goza & Ryabov, 2009; Harris & Graves, 2010). These researchers did not focus sufficiently on how social capital may help drive academic achievement or on the people in the lives of African American male students who help comprise this social capital. To assist with closing the academic achievement gap for these students, it is critical to explore the factors driving those who have achieved academic proficiency. More specifically, research needs to be conducted on the role of social capital on the academic achievement of such successful students. My rationale for using three students was to achieve depth and intensity in the research.

Research Questions

The review of the literature I conducted for this research study guided my focus and construction of the research questions that addressed the role of social capital on academic achievement for African American male high school students. The overarching research question that drove this research study was:

What is the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students?

I also developed the following additional research questions to further address the topic:

1. How do African American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence their academic achievement, such as community; culture; religion; and the involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?

2. What other influences do African American male high school students identify as important for their academic achievement?

3. How do other stakeholders in the education of African-American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students' academic achievement, such as community; culture; religion; and the involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study was the social capital theory. James S. Coleman originally placed the term firmly into academia and research in the late

1980s to emphasize the social context of education (Putnam, 2000). Coleman's (1988)

theory identifies three forms of social capital. According to Coleman (1988), the first is

based upon obligations, expectations, and the trustworthiness of social structures in

which one individual in the exchange benefits from the other because of built up

obligations and expectations to return the favor. The success of such an exchange is

based upon the trustworthiness of the social environment, which implies a greater amount

of social capital (Coleman, 1988). The second form of social capital is the information

channel, which results from social networks that use social relations to access

information that would not be quite as costly to access or share. Coleman's third form of

social capital derives from norms and effective sanctions adopted by members of a social

network with emphasis on the use of social norms, either internalized or rewarded, to

enhance specific actions.

Bourdieu (1986) expanded on the concept of social capital by relating social

capital to the size of a network and the quantity of accrued social capital controlled by an

individual where the profit is the main reason why the individual engages in and

maintains the network. A high level of social capital can assist in the prevention of

various high-risk issues such as risky sexual behaviors and the use of drugs, alcohol, and

tobacco (Smylie, Medagalia, & Maticka-Tyndale, 2006). Community struggles, including

racism, crime, and depleted social welfare programs, can be overcome with a high level

of social capital (Smylie, Medagalia, & Maticka-Tyndale, 2006).

One central theme in social capital theory is that social networks have value in the

form of connections between individuals (Putnam, 2000). This may be due in part to the

norms of reciprocity, which are an individual's expectation that others will respond

favorably to one another by returning favors for favors (Putnam, 2000). Social capital for

successful African American male students consists of their family and friends and their

socioeconomic position within their communities. Social capital theory focuses on social

relationships, particularly those embedded in the family and community, and how they

are useful in assisting with the development of children's cognitive and social abilities

(Alfred, 2009; Brisson & Usher, 2009). I will provide an in-depth description and

explanation of social capital theory in Chapter 2.

Research Perspective

The constructivist perspective was the basis of this research study. The

constructivist perspective is based upon the construct of knowledge through real life

experiences because it addresses the processes of interaction among individuals (Bruner,

1990; Dewey, 1938/1997; Piaget, 1972). While Dewey (1938/1997) is considered the

philosophical founder of constructivism, Piaget (1972) and Bruner (1990) are considered

the chief theorists of the perspective from the viewpoint of cognitive constructivists.

Social capital theory calls for a constructive perspective of learning to bring

attention to how people learn and construct knowledge because of an individual's

interaction with homogeneous and heterogeneous community networks (Alfred, 2009).

The development of social capital comes through interaction between individuals, groups,

communities, and organizations and depends upon the interest of the people for one

another (Smylie et al., 2006). Social capital tends to be higher when the individuals are

involved in the group or community (Alfred, 2009). Such relationships build trust,

expectations of reciprocity, access to knowledge along with resources through interpersonal channels, and the willingness to conform to the group or community norms (Smylie et al., 2006). Similar to the social capital theory, the constructivist perspective assumes that all knowledge comes from a learner's prior knowledge, regardless of how the learner is taught or learns (Bruner, 1990; Dewey, 1938/1997; Piaget, 1972). A constructivist perspective along with social capital theory provided the framework for understanding the role that social capital had on the academic achievement of African American male high school students in this study.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative, single case study, I explored how social capital related to the academic achievement of three African American male high school students. The study took place in a rural high school and the total number of participants was 16. These 16 individuals together represented the social capital networks of the three students, forming a cluster of five other individuals around each student. The qualitative research method allowed me to study these networks in depth. Qualitative researchers explore and describe the characteristics of relationships, activities, events, situations, and materials (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006), and aim to understand how a group of individuals react to a problem (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research is largely inductive, with the researcher generating meaning from the data collected in the field (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative research, the focus is on a single concept that is tested inductively, with participants collaborating with the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

A qualitative approach seeks to understand the context or setting of the

participants through observations and the gathering of personal information via interviews (Yin, 2009). A case study is a form of inquiry that does not depend solely on ethnographic data (Yin, 2009). The results of this case study have the potential to offer important evidence on how social capital influences the academic achievement of African American male high school students.

Three students who met the study criteria agreed to participate, and they in turn invited a cluster of other individuals in their networks, according to the study requirements, bringing the total to 16 participants. I collected data from the participants through interviews with the students and other individuals, who were their teachers, pastors or community leaders, mentors, parents, and peers or siblings. An invitation flier that included the necessary criteria to participate in the study was given to the Rockworth High School staff. The staff then provided this invitation flier to all African American male students in each of their classes, a total of approximately 100 students. The flyer provided directions for the students to e-mail me directly to express their interest in the study, and 13 students did so. These potential students received a brief survey to determine their eligibility, with 48 hours to respond. Of the 13, four were eligible to continue. Ultimately, I randomly selected three students and in turn, they invited teachers, pastors or community leaders, mentors, parents, and peers or siblings, resulting in a total of 16 participants.

<div align="center">**Definitions**</div>

For the purpose of this case study, I used the following definitions:

Academic achievement gap: The difference in achievement between all subgroups

of students (ethnic, ability, and economic) as determined by standardized test scores (Garrett, 2013).

Achievement levels: Specific achievement levels for each subject area and grade provide a context for interpreting student performance. Basic denotes partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade. Proficient represents solid academic performance. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter. Advanced signifies superior performance (Aud et al., 2013, p. 210).

African American: A citizen or resident of the United States who is of African and especially Black African ancestry. Americans of African descent have also been referred to as Blacks (Aud et al., 2013).

Social capital: Social capital theory focuses on social relationships, particularly those embedded in the family and community, and how they are useful in assisting with the development of children's cognitive as well as social abilities (Alfred, 2009; Brisson & Usher, 2009).

Assumptions

I made several assumptions concerning this study. The first assumption was that my own knowledge and experience working with African American male high school students would not manifest as bias in the research. As the researcher, I bracketed my own beliefs, feelings, and perceptions to be more open to the responses from the participants as they pertained to the role of social capital in the academic achievement of African American male high school students. A detailed journal was kept to record

personal reactions and any thoughts and/or feelings experienced during the research study.

My second assumption was that the scores from the North Carolina Math I, Biology, and English II End of Course (EOC) standardized examinations were a valid method for identifying three male African American high school students who possessed a proficiency level of academic achievement. This assumption was based on the use of the EOC scores by the local school district and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) as a means of sampling the knowledge of students of subject-related concepts as specified within the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCDPI, n.d.). The EOC was used as a means of testing students' mastery of the material taught within the specific subject content area (NCDPI, n.d.).

My final assumption was that all participants were sincere, open minded, and straightforward about their influence on the academic achievement of the selected student during their interview and interactions with me. Each of the participants represented a resource because the individuals were involved in the expectation of reciprocity, which goes beyond any given one person and involved a wider network (see Alfred, 2009). These networks were grounded in high degrees of trust and shared values among the networks participants.

Delimitations

The population of interest for this research study was comprised of African American male high school students in a rural southeastern school district, who had achieved proficiency on state-mandated examinations. Within this population, the sample

for the case study was a minimum of three students, along with the adults and peers, who had an important role in the students' academic achievement. While this sampling strategy confined the findings to a small group of participants, the results may be the foundation for further research. No other delimitations arose during the data collection and analysis phase of the research.

Scope

In this study, I examined students' relationships with his parents, teacher, mentor, peer or sibling, and pastor or community leader. Two primary criteria were essential to identifying and selecting the participants for the study: (a) the students had to be able to identify a relationship with each of the following: a parent, teacher, mentor, peer or sibling, and pastor or community; and (b) the students had to have scored a Level 3 or higher on their Math I, Biology, and English II state assessments. A Level 3 or higher is considered proficient according to the NCDPI Department of Accountability (n.d.). This study lasted over a period of 7 months, covering only the relationships specified. The scope included home, school, and other organizations with which people interviewed for the study were associated.

Limitations

I identified several limitations to this research study. First, I did not address the issue of the validity, reliability, or the ethics of using a standardized test, such as the EOC, as the only criteria for determining academic proficiency in this study. My use of the EOC was to identify students who had demonstrated academic capability; therefore, the validity, reliability, and ethics of using a standardized test was not the focus of the

study.

Secondly, the timeframe for the study was short, taking place over the course of 7 months. While a longitudinal study would have provided greater insight into the role social capital has on academic achievement, it was not feasible due to the time constraints and resources necessary for an in-depth analysis.

Finally, the population for this research study was a small sample size. This study was restricted to African American male high school students and did not include other racial groups. The study yielded 16 participants, which provided a wealth of knowledge and experience. I could have yielded a wider perspective by recruiting a larger sample for this study; however, broadening the study beyond an in-depth study of a relatively small sample was beyond the scope of this study. The focus of this study was on obtaining in-depth information from the subjects rather than studying a larger sample more superficially.

Significance

This research is unique because with it I aimed to expand upon existing research on social capital and the role social capital has on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. The results of this study may provide much-needed insight into the role of social capital, including why it is most imperative for African American male students' academic achievement during the students' high school years. Insight from this research could inform public school systems and educational agencies on the necessity of increasing parental and community involvement. This would increase academic achievement and close the academic achievement gap.

The results of this study expand on the limited amount of extant qualitative research that focuses on the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. The findings from this study fill the gap in the literature by adding a qualitative perspective to the body of quantitative research. Such research (quantitative) has already been conducted on the academic achievement gap and how social capital influence African American males' academic achievement.

The results of this research study have the potential to produce positive social change by informing future research studies and influencing education policies and practices whose main objective is to improve the academic performance and outcomes for underachieving African American male high school students. The exploration of the role relationships (i.e., parents, teacher, pastor or community leader, peer, and mentor) have on the academic achievement of African American male high school students provides an increased understanding of the influence social capital has on the development of other forms of capitals, such as cultural and religious capital, within this subgroup. The results of this research study can potentially create more opportunities and means of support necessary for all children to succeed.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I provided a background for the research study and stated the research problem, purpose, questions, and significance. I also identified the gap in the literature as it pertains to social capital and academic achievement from the perspective of African American male high school students. Given the amalgam of factors that place African American male students are at a higher risk of underachievement, dropping out

of high school, failure to attend college, unemployment, and/or incarceration, this study can add to the body of knowledge of how social capital can impact the academic achievement of these students. The problem was that social capital is often discussed in unclear terms that do not make clear the mechanisms through which the relationships affect academic achievement, especially as it pertains to African American male high school students.

In Chapter 2, I will present a review of the literature that will further build the foundation for the research study and provide a rationale for my selection of a qualitative, single case study methodology. Current research studies pertaining to social capital and academic achievement among African American male high school students will be summarized. In the literature review, I will also discuss the following themes: (a) academic achievement gap and African American males, (b) social capital, (c) culture, (d) religion; and (e) mentorship as well as (f) the effect of parental involvement on the academic achievement of African American students, and (g) the effect of socioeconomic status on the academic achievement of African American students. Coleman's (1988) social capital theory will also be examined in detail.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The extant literature demonstrated how the individual influences of cultural and religious capital affect the academic achievement of African American male high school students; however, there was a gap in the literature pertaining to the combined influences of community leaders, such as religious leaders, mentors, parents, and teachers, and their influence on students' school achievement. The purpose of this research study was to explore the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. In this case study, I focused on the relationship between three African American male high school students along with their parents, current or former teacher, mentor, a peer, and their pastor and how these relationships influenced the students' academic performance.

This literature review consists of four topics in relation to academic achievement and social capital: (a) the definition of social capital, (b) African American males, (c) the role of social capital to academic achievement, and (d) factors that affect African American male academic achievement. In this chapter, I will also cover the chosen qualitative methodology used for this research study. My main objective with this literature review was to explore current scholarly research on the role of social capital in increasing the academic achievement of African American male students. The following themes will be the primary focus of the literature review: (a) academic achievement gap and African American males, (b) social capital, (c) culture, (d) religion, (d) peers, and (e) mentorship. The following additional themes that materialized during the review process

will also be included: (a) the effect of parental involvement on the academic achievement of African American students and (b) the effect of socioeconomic status on the academic achievement of African American students.

Literature Search Strategy

For the purpose of this analysis, the terms African American and Black were used interchangeably to discuss the findings relevant to the research related to this specific population. Social capital is an emerging concept in the field of education in conjunction with academic achievement; therefore, the term *social support* was also utilized during the search. I accessed the following databases to search for peer-reviewed articles: Academic Search Complete; Education: Educational Resource Information Center, PsychInfo, ProQuest, Dissertation and Theses, Google Scholar, and EBSCOHost. The following keywords were used during the literature search: *social capital, academic achievement, academic achievement gap, African American, African American males, socioeconomic status, religious capital, peers, cultural capital, culture, religion, mentor, high school male students and achievement, cultural capital and academic achievement, academic achievement and mentoring, African Americans and mentoring, religion and academic achievement, literacy gap, social support, mentorship, sports, athletics, socioeconomic status and academic achievement, Blacks and academic achievement, academic achievement and social capital, Coleman social capital theory, Coleman and parental involvement, Bourdieu social capital theory, Bourdieu cultural reproduction theory, parental involvement and achievement, cultural discontinuity,* and *at-risk youth*. I used these terms in each database during the iterative search process to gather scholarly

articles and research. My search resulted in over 150 articles and books; however, only 85 articles and books were relevant to this research study.

Conceptual Framework

Social Capital

The core belief of the social capital theory is that the way an individual care for another is a valuable resource that should be harnessed (Plagens, 2010). Social capital derives from social norms, which appear from relationships among individuals within a network (Plagens, 2010). Social networks and the norms they produce are capable of facilitating actions in people (Plagens, 2010). The role of social capital on achievement can be seen through peer effects, quality communication, trust among families in communities, the safety of neighborhoods, and the presence of community institutions, which support achievement (Plagens, 2010). If goodwill is to be the substance of social capital, then goodwill affects the flow of the information, influence, and solidarity and therefore, comes with benefits and risks (Alfred, 2009).

Social capital was first introduced as a concept related to the family (CITE). There are two types of social capital as it pertains to family: social capital within the family and social capital outside the family (Madyun & Lee, 2010). Family social capital is the physical presence of adults within the family (Madyun & Lee, 2010). On the other hand, intergenerational closures are the social relationships among parents who knew and interacted with the parents of their children' friends' (Madyun & Lee, 2010). Intergenerational closure relies on an adult-child network that is built on trust norms and expectations (Plagens, 2010). The education of children is facilitated by the relationships

that adults within a community initiate and maintain with one another and with children within the same community who are not their own (Plagens, 2010). This allows for access to social capital that is somewhat compensated for the absence of the other parent within a single-family home. Poorer educational outcomes were linked to a lack of intergenerational closure (Madyun & Lee, 2010).

Social capital within the family consists of an investment of both time and energy (Alfred, 2009; Coleman, 1988). Stronger parent and child relationships tend to produce more social capital for the child, and this, in turn, prepares a child to move from the bonding, into bridging, and eventually into the linking of social capital networks (Alfred, 2009; Coleman, 1988). Social capital "represents a resource because it involves the expectation of reciprocity and goes beyond any given individuals to involve wider networks whose relationships are governed by a high degree of trust and shared values" (Alfred, 2009, p. 18). In other words, social capital goes beyond the individual and involves a broader network in which relationships are led by a higher level of trust and shared values.

Shared values and trust are the fundamental agents that bond members of a specific network together (Carolan, 2012). When parents know each other, valuable social capital resources are accumulated within those relationships, which in turn, contribute to adolescent academic achievement (Carolan, 2012). The theory infers, for example, that a student would more likely help another student if their parents know each other (Carolan, 2012). Social capital, as it pertains to social closure, is a pattern of social relations in which an individual is connected to others (Carolan, 2012). Social closure is

an aspect of social capital, which received considerable attention from adolescent

development researchers and educational policy makers, and consequently is more

widely discussed in education, specifically, related to school reform (Carolan, 2012).

     Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu saw social capital as another tool in the armory of

the elite that focused only upon the middle and upper classes to ensure that lower class

individuals do not enter into their immediate circle (Gauntlett, 2011). Bourdieu defined

social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual

or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized

relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Gauntlett, 2011, p. 2). In other

words, for Bourdieu, social capital was an accumulation of resources that was beneficial

to the individual or group that posed the resource. For Bourdieu, social capital was an

exclusionary device used by the upper class to hold onto their position through

employing various subtle strategies that result in supreme control (Gauntlett, 2011).

However, other researchers and sociologists have and continue to remain optimistic as it

pertains to the theory of social capital.

     Unlike Bourdieu, Putnam had a different viewpoint on social capital. For Putnam

(2000), social capital has both a collective and individual aspect. Individuals form

connections that benefit their interests such as finding a job or a shoulder to cry on when

in mourning (Putnam, 2000). Collectively, however, social capital may have externalities

that influence the community at large, leaving the benefits of social capital not just for

one, but also for all (Putnam, 2000). An individual who is poorly connected may not be

as productive as an individual who is well connected; however, the individual who is

poorly connected may derive some of the benefits of a well-connected community

(Putnam, 2000). Brisson and Usher's (2005) research supported Putnam's findings that

the more active and civically-engaged individual experiences are, the higher levels of

social capital they would produce. Brisson and Usher also suggested that the use of

empowering approaches to low-income neighborhood development has the ability to

affect the development of bonding social capital for families.

Social capital has shaped the development of children; hence, the trust, networks,

and norms of reciprocity within the child's family, friends, schools, and larger

community affect the behavior and development of children (Putnam, 2000). The state-

by-state Social Capital Index indicated that states with high social capital are the same

states that flourished (Putnam, 2000). Social capital can simultaneously be a private as

well as a public good, with some of the benefits from an investment of social capital

received by the bystander (Putnam, 2000). However, some social capital is rebound to the

immediate interest of the individual making the investment (Putnam, 2000).

Putnam's (2000) notion of social capital is that it is both a collective and an

individual investment. On the other hand, Woolcock and Narayan's (2000) social capital

model distinguished between two forms of social capital: bonding and bridging. Bonding,

which is a form of horizontal social capital, is strong social connections, including norms

and trust within a group or among like-minded individuals (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

Such connections exist within a family structure or within a community. As the relative

income of a neighborhood increases, Black residents experience a higher level of bonding

social capital (Brisson & Usher, 2005). According to Majee and Hoyt (2011), bridging

social capital, on the other hand, is the norms, networks, and the development of trust within networks. Research has shown that individuals that had a limited amount of resources tend to draw on opportunities that are provided as a result of close relationships (Majee & Hoyt, 2011). Bonding social capital allows families and communities alike to improve their welfare and well-being.

Social capital stresses the benefits that accrue to individuals or families and centers on individuals or small groups as the particular unit of analysis (Oates, 2009). Such benefits accrue from influential behavioral expectations as well as perceptions that are mutual obligations (Oates, 2009). There are four ways in which an investment in social capital produces a return: (a) social capital facilitates the flow of information within a network of relationships, (b) social ties within a network of relationships influence the use of resources which exist in that network of relationships, (c) social networks provide public reinforcement that a member of the network has claims to the network resources, and (d) social capital is an underlying theory for several initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty and related detrimental outcomes (Brisson & Usher, 2005).

Countries with a higher level of educational standardization and parent-child communication, which are typical measurements of social capital, are more beneficial to students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds than to those high-socioeconomic backgrounds (Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Al-Fadhli and Kersen (2010) found that social capital, in various forms, had a positive influence on eighth and 10th grade African American students' college aspirations and plans for the future. Young, Johnson, Hawthorne, and Pugh (2011) evaluated the perceived social support as a predicator for

academic motivation and academic success across cultures and found that the most significant predicators for intrinsic motivation for African Americans were perceived social support, generation of college, and socioeconomic status (SES) factors. This current study benefitted from social capital theory as the conceptual framework because I focused on determining the role of social capital on the academic achievement of male African American high school students.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

The academic underachievement of African American males has long been a recurrent theme in educational research. Achievement scores and state assessment instruments of African American students continue to support the evidence of academic disparity (Templeton, 2011). Grade retention for males appears to be centered on school detachment, which occurs when students are mentally and emotionally separated from school as well as their education, along with poor academics (Hickman & Wright, 2011).

Academic Achievement Gap: African American Males

The academic achievement gap that exists between Black male students and their counterparts (i.e., White males, White females, Black females) is evident. Demographic changes in the size of the populations involved could affect the changes in the size of the achievement gap between Blacks and White students at the state level. Policy changes within schools and communities could also affect the achievement gap (Vannerman et al., 2009). Oates (2009) noted that White students' access to better schools is a well-established pattern. White students typically enjoy a more substantial advantage over Black students in regard to several factors, including class size, per-pupil spending,

credentials, and teacher-salaries (Oates, 2009).

Race and social class stratify the characteristics of the modern public high schools, which are one of a highly differentiated intellectual environment of both educational opportunities and outcomes (Oates, 2009). For example, in Chicago, Black male students during the 2008 – 2009 school year comprised nearly ¼ of the public-school student population. The graduation rate, however, for Black male students was only 39% (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012).

Race and social class may have a negative impact on how Black males view social norms. Social structures, roles, and functions challenge Black male students, given they must matriculate within an atmosphere that feels hostile. This can result in defensive reactions that interfere with their academic performance (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009). As a result of these factors and realities, many Black males are victims of gang fights' urban violence, being disproportionally sent to the penal institutions, poor education, and other negative societal issues (Laing, 2010). The 2010 Schott report indicated that the 2007 – 2008 graduation rate was 47% for Black male students, with only half of the states reporting the educational attainment below the national average (Butler-Barnes, Williams, & Chavous, 2012).

A 2009 study indicates Black students' school identification has been shown to have an effect on their academic motivation, performance, as well as success. Academic identification, which is the extent to which academic pursuits along with outcomes creates the basis for global self-evaluation. This identification is especially relevant to Black males since this group disproportionately experience more tracking. Such tracking

includes being socially as well as economically isolated from their classmates. They receive more consistent and harsher disciplinary actions and tend to be held at a lower academic regard by their teachers (Gordon et al., 2009).

African American students are not encouraged to achieve academically during their primary and secondary education, resulting in the lowest high school grade point average (GPA). They fail to finish high school and are disproportionally placed in behavior disorder along with special education classrooms and are disproportionally targeted for disciplinary actions including expulsion. Many of those do make it to college lack the skills that are necessary for success including basic comprehension, reading, writing, and test-taking skills (Zell, 2011).

The Zell (2011) research study focused on the Brother2Brother (B2B) program, a peer-based academic and social integration program modeled after the nationally known Student African American Brotherhood. B2B facilitates academic integration and persistence while providing guidance as well as direction for newly enrolled students and countering the effects of prejudicial attitudes, especially at predominately-White colleges and universities. The program encourages persistence from freshman to sophomore years by addressing the social, emotional, and cultural needs of the participants.

The majority of teachers within the United States are White females, while the most vulnerable body of students in the classroom are often males (Lundy & Mazama, 2014). The pairing of lower class Black students with middle/upper class White teachers epitomized the phenomenon. Minority students are more likely to have teachers who are lacking a strong background in the subject content area that he or she is teaching (Palmer

et al., 2010). Teachers have rated African American children, especially males, at a lower level of academic capability, which in turn, resulted in lower academic success (Lundy & Mazama, 2014). One study noted schools, out-of-field teachers taught more than one in three core academic courses compared to approximately one in five courses in low poverty schools (Palmer et al., 2010). The lack of qualified teachers within poor, ethnic minority schools, has contributed to too many African American males being under-prepared academically and requiring more remedial education to strengthen their academic skills to succeed in elementary and secondary school settings (Palmer et al., 2010).

There is consistent research on whether a teacher's perception of a students' abilities. Black boys were more likely to experience punitive treatment from their teachers and other adults than other youths despite a lack of evidence that Black boys were more likely than their racial as well as ethnic friends to be disciplinary problems within the classroom (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). Teacher low expectations and negative treatment based upon racial and gender stereotypes have contributed to adolescent Black boys' lower academic success (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012).

Elementary and secondary education teachers and school counselors are more likely to impose negative expectation upon Black males as it relates to attending college than their White counterparts. School counselors and teachers disproportionately place African American males into low functioning classrooms while their White counterparts are placed into advance and college preparatory courses resulting in only 1 out of 15 African American males actually being prepared for college-level work (Palmer et al.,

2012). The low expectations and negative treatment that surrounds Black boys conveys a negative message regarding the usefulness of schools for boys' success in life (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012).

The constant academic underachievement of African American males continues because of racial stereotypes and lower teacher expectations within school systems. Washington's 2010 study focused on professional school counselors' role in the academic development of students with whom they interact. The study noted that school personnel's racially biased preconceived notions are responsible for the unequal disciplinary action African American males experience compared to their White counterparts. Studies overwhelmingly attribute African American males' academic issues to apathetic, ill-equipped, and unresponsive communities.

It is imperative that school/community collaborations are consistent, especially within the African American communities. Professional school counselors are pivotal when establishing collaborative relationships with community members that promote African America males' academic success. They should examine existing strategies as well as eliminate techniques that impede such relationships. Professional school counselors should play a catalyzing role in the development of African American males' academic performance; therefore, they must receive support from school administrators. The study found that professional school counselors must remain vigilant to produce the systematic changes that would enhance African American males' academic performance (Washington, 2010).

The racial discrepancy surrounding African American male students is

overwhelming. This population is more likely to experience several contextual risk

factors because of both their racial and their gender membership (Butler-Barnes et al.,

2012). Nationally, approximately 9% of the student population comprises of Black male

students; however, 20% of those students are enrolled in special education classes and

only 4% of these same students are in the gifted and talented program (McCray et al.,

2010). Black adolescent boys had a higher bravado attitude due to lower academic

expectations from adults at their schools (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). As a result, Black

male students are 2.4 times more likely to have been suspended and twice as likely to

repeat a grade compared to White males (Kirp, 2010).

Black boys, rather than Black girls, are especially more likely to be viewed in a

manner which reflects their gendered racial stereotyping, such as physical threatening or

non-intellectual, when experiencing more overt racial discrimination (Butler-Barnes et

al., 2012). African American males have problems in primary and secondary education,

leading to African American females outnumbering them in higher education as it

pertains to college attendance and graduation (Palmer et al., 2010). African American

males are not motivated to stay in school because they have not experienced success in

achieving literacy skills. A lack of teaching of literacy skills exist for African American

males because educational systems have failed to impart or inspire learning in African

American males of all ages. Many are graduating from high schools reading and writing

on a third or fourth grade level (Palmer et al., 2010). The Matthews et al. (2010) study

confirmed the existence of an achievement gap in literacy between African American

boys and Caucasian boys. The study also found an increase in the gap in literacy

achievement scores between African American boys and White boys from kindergarten through fifth grade. African American youth and boys, who had a lower literacy score than Caucasian youths and girls, diverge over time such that the achievement gaps increased over time. The results from the study confirmed prior research that a race and gender gap in literacy in kindergarten exist (Matthews, et al., 2010).

The Matthews et al. study also confirmed higher prevalence of behavior problems and lower levels of positive social and emotional skills among African American boys. A longitudinal survey found that 54% of 16-year-old African American males scored below the 20th percentile compared to 24% of White males (Kirp, 2010). The reality is that African American males with a lower educational attainment are predisposed to low wages, inferior employment prospects, and poor health, and are more likely to be in the criminal justice system (Palmer et al., 2010). Even though the number of African American males entering higher education has increased since the late 1960s to now, African American males continue to lag behind their female and White male counterparts as it pertains to college participation, retention, and degree completion rates (Palmer et al., 2010).

A strong sense of connectedness to their racial in-group may enhance the achievement of Black boys who are considered high-risk because such a connectedness provides them with a balance for traditional male gender socialization for autonomy (Butler-Barnes, et al., 2012). For example, in order for African American males to be successful in mathematics, there is need for positive early education experiences with the subject. These students need to be placed into high tacked mathematics groups. There is a

need for their families to serve as guardians of opportunities, standards setters, and mathematics resources.

The study also found the need for positive mathematics and academic identities, along with alternative identities related to co-curricular, sports, and religious activities. The development of a positive mathematic identity was the result of three components: (a) motivation in their mathematic success, (b) a strong belief in their mathematic ability, and (c) mathematic teachers who cared. To be successful within the classroom, African American males need to develop a rapport with their teacher. This allows them to be active participants within the classroom, ask high-level questions, and receive positive support along with interaction among students (Berry et al., 2011).

Building a strong rapport, which supports academic achievement, assists in the development of academic identity for students, especially African American males. Academic identity is not formulated in isolation from other identities; therefore, racial identity and academic identify are not formed in isolation of each other (Berry et al., 2011). For example, for African American learners of mathematics, their mathematic identities along with racial identities are constructed simultaneously because of racism and the raced experience they encounter throughout their mathematics education.

The Berry et al., (2011) qualitative study investigated the mathematics and racial identities of Black male students in fifth through seventh grade, who attend a school within a Southern urban school division. They found that racial identities within schools are connected to perceptions of other students' school engagement along with their interaction between racial and mathematic identities. This led to a sense of 'otherness'

and resulted in the redefinition of the students' racial and mathematic identities. Many of the students who participated in the study noted that their passion for mathematics began in the third grade. They noted several positive factors that contributed to their mathematic identities including their speed and accuracy in mathematic operations, student-teacher relationship along with support, and parent support and expectations. Extrinsic recognition, such as standardized test scores, tracking, and academically-gifted identification, were also vital to the students, as these recognitions provided the participants with proof of their mathematical success.

Low graduation rates are negatively affecting African American males. In many cases, the low graduation rate among them has led to a pipeline from the schoolyard to the prison yard. Such pipelines have had a detrimental influence on the African American family including economic potential (McCray et al., 2010). A 2014 study by Lundy and Mazama indicated the 'zero tolerance' policies of several school districts; the prison population has increased rapidly within recent decades. The study estimated that as much as one third of African American males who are their twenties are in prison, on probation, or on parole. This means that there are more African American males within the criminal justice system today than they were enslaved in 1850 (Lundy & Mazama, 2014).

Precepts of implicit and explicit racial bias undergird schools. This has resulted in the increasing harm and rapid decline in positive academic outcomes for African American students within the United States (McCray et al., 2010). Black male students are more disproportionately disciplined, more likely to face expulsions, and are

suspended longer than White students (Palmer et al., 2010).

According to Kirp (2010), Black boys are three times more likely than Black girls to be suspended have a high-school graduation rate that is 9% lower, and only half are likely to go to college. Some researchers have explained that the discrimination factor hindering Black males from advancing through the educational pipeline is because Blacks attend inferior schools, which has resulted in inferior skills (Palmer et al., 2010). However, some have argued that racism seems to be the culprit preventing Blacks from achieving educational parity compared to their White counterparts (Palmer et al., 2010).

Within a research study conducted by Palmer et al. (2010), the study found that, to encourage college participation and success among African American males, educators and policymakers should consider: (a) improving teacher quality for underrepresented minority students; (b) encouraging more African American males to enroll in college prep courses, especially within the areas of math and science prior to college; (c) advocating for change within the way schools are financed; (d) holding law makers as well as Congress accountable for ensuring that minority students have access to appropriate resources to assist financing the college education; (e) pressuring states to reserve remedial educational programs, which some researchers have suggested will assist with access to education for underrepresented minorities; and (f) encouraging better collaboration between local schools and colleges to foster minority students' academic readiness for college, resulting in the reduction of barriers to collegiate access and promote collegiate success.

Laing (2010) researched virtual learning/e-learning or distance learning as an

option for improving the education of African American male students. The study noted

that the virtual environment, if developed with the needs of Black boys in mind, has the

potential to influence how teachers instruct and how information is transmitted to Black

boys, which in turn can lead to an increase in graduation rates. The result found that

being technologically competent is not enough to improve education or graduation rates.

Educators therefore need to develop innovative approaches to employ during the

instructional delivery process to reach all students who schools have failed. This provided

several recommendations for teachers and parents including targeting African American

male students for virtual learning in elementary and junior high school, recruiting more

male teachers who are skilled to work with young male students, developing innovative

teaching/learning strategies to improve social interaction, and communicating more with

African American male students in a more effective manner.

     More recently, the James (2010) study noted that intrinsic motivation and internal

locus of control seemed to be the best predictors of resiliency and academic success

among urban students. One qualitative study referenced by James found that for three

African American male high school seniors, the practical value of education, such as

creating economic and employment opportunities motivated them to achieve

academically.

     James (2010) explored the experiences urban African American males at a first-

year single-gender charter school and found four critical instructional complexities: (a)

expectations dissonance, (b) disguised engagement, (c) differential engagement, and (d)

expectations overload. Teachers should conduct self-checks before teaching, utilize

whole-class instruction while avoiding moving from student to student addressing specific concerns, and teach to the outer edge while providing support to students as they struggle with new knowledge. When African American males' intellectual curiosity was smothered by years of poor instruction and irrelevant curriculum, no matter the students' ability, teaching to the proverbial middle will create behavioral problems.

Schools that begin with the goal of preparing all African American males to graduate with honors from the college of their choice demonstrate expectation overload. In other words, it is imperative that schools set achievable and measurable goals as it pertains to African American males. For example, instead of setting a goal of preparing all African American males to graduate with honors from the college of their choice, a more reasonable goal would be to increase college attendance and retention among African American males.

It is becoming more imperative that higher education educate diverse student population. Palmer (2010) noted that the 2004 U.S Census Bureau projected that African American, Hispanic, and Asian populations were expected to increase rapidly by 2050, with some doubling in percentages. With such a prediction, the biggest challenge will be increasing college access rates for low-income and ethnic minority students. Historically, the United States has been less responsive and supportive to the needs of African Americans within many social institutions, especially within the field of education. African American males tend to experience the poorest educational outcomes compared to other major demographic groups in the United States.

Educational neglect at the primary and secondary levels has affected the

participation and graduation rates of African American males in higher education,

particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

Improving the education outcomes of these students would improve the United States

domestically and better position the country in the global society. Increasing college

access and completion among African American males, especially within STEM majors,

would require increasing academic achievement at the secondary and elementary levels.

Culture

Cultural capital, formulated through nurture rather than nature, depends on what

was previously invested by the family (Byfield, 2008). The Bourdieu (1973, 1977)

cultural capital and cultural capital reproduction theory denotes activities that are

facilitated through disbursement of socially coveted symbolic wealth or high-status. This

cultural capital transfers over generations and is an important resource that contributes to

individuals' educational success (Byfield, 2008; Grayson, 2011; Jaeger, 2011; Oates,

2009; Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). According to Grayson (2011), cultural capital

is a central component of Bourdieu cultural reproduction theory. Students who are

exposed to various aspects of culture are more likely to have come from privileged

classes than others due to their familiarity with highbrow culture, an understanding of the

educational system, and the ability to communicate more effectively with their teachers

who are responsible for their educational success. Schools, then, transform social

distinction into educational distinction to reproduce and legitimize class structure

(Grayson, 2011; Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012).

Children from various backgrounds enter into school with varying amounts of

cultural capital. This includes dispositions toward schooling, linguistic aptitudes, and interpersonal skills, which children learn during primary socialization at home and related social settings. It is one of the most influential factors for determining both educational outcome and other measures of social stratification. Cultural capital can increase science, reading, and mathematics scores (Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012).

Cultural capital is a strong indicator of student achievement. Disadvantage students benefit most from the acclimation of culture; therefore, teachers have challenges setting high expectations for disadvantaged students, regardless of the students' race. More specifically, African American students begin to view themselves as part of a high-achieving student body, one where achievement is expected, and failure is not an option because the teacher (Templeton, 2011).

Embedded within cultural capital is racial identity. One of the primary developmental tasks during adolescent years is the development of personal identity. The development of racial identity is imperative to adapt and adjust to several ethnic minority adolescents (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). For African American boys, feeling of racial pride may be relevant within the context of education. Racial pride has provided implication for African American achievement as well as motivation both directly and indirectly (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). More specifically, African American students are more likely to develop a personal identity that does not include focusing on education due to their racial group resulting in barriers to success and cultural discontinuity (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). These personal identities develop because of insecurities, inconsistency, and socioeconomic status.

Low socioeconomic status tends to result in financial insecurities; therefore, some African American students have entered the work force early, placing their education on hold. Some students do not have parents who have enforced and reinforced the importance of education. Such inconsistency within the home has a negative influence on students' personal identity. This in turn produces apathy, academic disengagement, and school discontent (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). However, recent research has suggested that racial pride and awareness for African Americans has appositive relationship with academic achievement outcome. One research study found that African American middle school students who connected their academic achievement to their racial group membership had a higher level of academic self-efficacy beliefs than those students who did not view achievement as an aspect of their racial group identity (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012).

The structural and societal demands and norms for African American males are different; therefore, they receive differential treatment, which can have a significant impact on their development. Such differences have resulted in the labeling of African American males as troublemakers, prison bound, and/or labeled as at-risk (Harris & Graves, 2010). The research study of Harris and Graves (2010) focused on the transmission of cultural capital transmission from African American parents to their children. The study found that the more time parents spent with their sons partaking in cultural and educational activities, the more cultural capital the children absorbed. The consistent exchange of explanatory talk and narrative talk results in sons developing literacy skills that goes beyond the contributions made during home, school-based, and

non-parent supervised activities (Harris & Graves, 2010).

The study indicated that positive partnerships between school personnel and families would assist in the development of a greater understanding of obstacles that impede the obtainment and transfer of cultural capital among African American families. As a result, parents may become more likely to appreciate suggestions from the school and are more inclined to become partners in their children's education. It is of great importance that African American males receive consistent positive messages from the community, school, and home as it pertains to the necessity of learning in various settings (Harris & Graves, 2010).

A significant aspect of cultural capital is parental involvement. A consistent number of research studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between parental involvement and academic success. Parental involvement boosts a child's perceived level of competence and autonomy as well as offers a sense of security and connectedness, which assist children in internalizing educational values (Chang, Park, Singh, & Sung, 2009).

Continued parental involvement throughout high school remains in the best interest of the student (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010). Teens' attitudes and habits are formed during the adolescent years, thus making it imperative for parents to continue to play a significant role in the life, both in and out of school, of the adolescent (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010). According to Xu and Hampden-Thompson (2012), possessing a high level of basic home educational resources, being active in cultural activities, working with the arts and books at home, as well as experiencing cultural communication

with parents, has a positive effect on reading-assessment scores.

More specifically, Xu and Hampden-Thompson's (2012) study found that interactions between measures of cultural capital and parental SES were positive. Cultural capital was positively associated with educational outcomes. The research also found three interaction terms were positive, including status and cultural activity for reading-assessment and science-assessment scores as well as status and cultural possessions in mathematics. The return of most cultural capital measures increases with parental occupational status.

The type and quality of a student's educational experience is shaped by the teacher (Palmer et al., 2010). The qualitative research study of Li and Hasan (2011) found that, to promote the academic success of minority students, a positive learning environment is essential to nurturing successful personal factors, which is as important as cognitive factors. Positive learning environments within school supported physical learning and aided students' confidence and perseverance for achieving academic success. The establishment of a positive learning environment, along with quality interpersonal relationship between teachers and students, is one of the first steps toward student academic success. Good teachers are patient with their students, set and maintain high expectations, and know that it takes hard work and dedication to improve academic achievement (Li & Hasan, 2011).

The Li & Hasan (2011) study also found that both cognitive and non-cognitive factors are essential to improve minority students' academic learning. Teachers must establish a supportive climate that enhances confidence, self-esteem, and persistence in

students to nurture successful personal traits. Personal factors assist in the academic

success of minority students because they motivate such students to pursue learning

despite facing many difficulties. Many noncognitive factors support student success

although cognitive factors appear to be more directly linked to student academic success.

Students who are academically successful maintain a sense of balance between their

social and academic aspects of school, expect success, and are intrinsically motivated,

goal-oriented, and socially proficient. It is imperative that teachers recognize the

importance of nurturing such successful personal factors in a positive learning

environment to support student academic success.

Religion

When studying the culture of an individual, it is imperative to have an

understanding of the religion of the individual. Religion plays a significant role in culture

and has a major influence on peoples' morals and values. Such morals include their

attitudes and behaviors whereas such values include their view of educational attainment

and success. Churches and religious organizations have been of a unique importance

within the American society, as the United States has been one of the most religiously

observant countries within the world (Putnam, 2000). The church is a community center

par excellence that is positive influence on children's future educational goals (Al-Fadhli

& Kersen, 2010). Approximately 35% to 40% of the population has probably participated

in congregations regularly (Putnam, 2000). All forms of capital are being fundamentally

rooted in economic capital (Byfield, 2008; Madyun & Lee, 2010). However, Byfield

(2008) argued against this notion by stating that religious capital was different because

much of its acquisitions derived from a spiritual connection between the individual and God, therefore it is not connected to economic capital.

Religion is by far one of the largest generators of social capital within the United States and contributes to more than half of the country's social capital (Byfield, 2008). Evidence has shown that nearly half of all associational memberships within the United States are church related, half of all volunteering occurs within a religious institution, and half of all personal generosity is religious in nature (Putnam, 2000). Milot and Ludden (2009) reported that religion has the ability to provide mentorship, support, and social as well as cultural capital to adolescents undergoing uncertain and confusing experiences along with transitions. Religious attendance affected pro-social behaviors by increasing social capital, which included increasing social interactions and trusting relationships with friends, parents, and other adults (Milot & Ludden, 2009).

Many religious institutions directly support a wide variety of social activities well beyond conventional worship. Churches provide a vital incubator for civic norms, civic recruitment, and civic skills, which allows men and women to learn how to give speeches, run meetings, and manage disagreements (Putnam, 2000). Religion is a context that has the ability to support the needs and promote a sense of identity among adolescents as well as assist in the improvement of social competence along with general well-being (Milot & Ludden, 2009). Adolescents with a high religious identity had a higher sense of personal meaning and prosocial concerns that those without religious identities (Milot & Ludden, 2009). Religious ideals have the potential of being a powerful source of commitment and motivation (Putnam, 2000).

The church, more specifically the Black church, has proved to be an exceptional organization for gaining and trading social capital. Blacks are given access to positive present and historical Black role models, a sense of belonging, reassurance, as well as self-validation, and provided a strong personal, social, and community identity (Byfield, 2008). The church, dawning back to their first establishments in the late 1700s, is the oldest and most resilient social institution within the Black community and was traditionally the only black-controlled institution of a historically oppressed people (Putnam, 2000).

Faith-based organizations are particularly central to social capital as well as to civic engagement within the African American community (Putnam, 2000). According to Al-Fadhli and Kersen (2010), the church is an important societal institution of social capital, especially for African Americans. The church, for African Americans, is a 'one-stop' shop for learning how to navigate through life issues and gain civic and educational skills (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010). While the church has been a continuous institutional provider of social services, the Black church has been especially prominent within recent efforts to rebuild inner-city communities (Putnam, 2000).

Research pertaining to the effect of religiosity and/or spiritually on the academic achievement of high school African American male students is very limited. Spirituality is a deepened set of principles that goes beyond religion but transcends to being in right relationship with something greater, others, and ourselves. Religion focuses more on practices such as worship, creeds, and theology that engage members of the particular social organization to gather a better understanding of God and the world (Ivtzan, Chan,

Gardner, & Prashar, 2011; Kaiser, 2000). This may be due to the complexity of this form

of research. Much of the literature I found focused on students at the collegiate level

while others focused on the role of the Black church. Students' belief in God, specifically

their belief in the power of prayer, provided the students with another form of capital:

religious capital.

Historically, the Black church has been an institutional stronghold for the African

American community. African Americans have been able to combat racial prejudice and

hostility for generation as a result of the Black church sustaining a cultural ethos

(McCray et al., 2010). Black men are often expected to take on a leadership role within

the church that ties into their civic skills (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010). The Black church

functions as the institutional center of the modern civil rights movement (Putnam, 2000).

For African Americans, the Black church has been a contributing social outlet that

performed several functions including being a community center where an individual

may find restoration and relaxation (McCray et al., 2010). The Black church allows for

an adult network that creates avenues of information exchange that can lead to academic

achievement outcomes for their children (Madyun & Lee, 2010).

Psychological research has suggested that religion plays a significant role in the

lives of African Americans (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). Churches and other community

groups can motivate students by providing them with the physical space to relax, retreat,

and communicate with other teens (Ehrenreich, Reeves, Corley, & Orpinas, 2012).

Studies have shown that parents who were active members of their religious community

were more motivated to give attention to their children and had a positive parent–child

relationship, resulting in network closure (Madyun & Lee, 2010). Network closure is an interconnected system of social ties that can strengthen an individual's access to resources through the enhancement of communication between network members (Madyun & Lee, 2010). Byfield (2008) noted that religious capital does have the capacity to enhance cultural and social capital since the study found that social, cultural, and religious capital provided a psychological and social framework. For Black male students, this allows the students to make more sense of their purpose in life and providing emotional and social support to maximize these students' potential.

Some recent studies have shown that religion provides a sense of purpose within the lives of African American males. One study found that spirituality was a support mechanism that brought about a sense of purpose for African American males. Similarly, another study found that the research participants had capitalized on their academic support through the encouraging word they received from the members of their respected congregations during their academic quest (Jett, 2010). Butler-Barnes et al. (2012) found that within the African American community, the church has been actively involved in the efforts to attain social mobility as well as equality for the group. This includes an emphasis on education, leading to the conclusion that religiosity may have a particular impact on the academic achievement of an African American adolescent.

Religion positively correlates with adolescents' academic achievement and protection against school dropout. Madyun and Lee (2010) conducted a recent research study that focused on the relationship between religious involvement and parent–child communication regarding schooling. The quantitative research study, which consisted of

944 Black students as participants, showed that the higher the socioeconomic status, the more likely Black youths will attend church with their parents. The study found that Black youths in two-parent families, who attended religious services, tended to have more school-related communication than Black youths single-parent families, who attended religious services. Parents, who were involved in their child's schooling as well as were involved in religious service with their child, appeared to partake in more school-related conversations with their child.

The religious involvement of adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds had a significant influence on their academic achievement. These adolescents' religious involvement linked to greater parental expectations and discussions related to school as well as spent more time conducting academic activities such as homework (Milot & Ludden, 2009). The research suggests that adolescents' who lived within a two-parent home, and whose parents are more highly educated, are more likely to attend religious services than other adolescents. There were, however, few effects of the parent's influences on adolescents' views about religious importance.

The Milot and Ludden (2009) study found that religion likely serves as an influential social context for development and academic engagement. In essence, this suggests that religion serves as a micro system setting that is separate from parents, which plays a significant role in adolescents' socialization and the development of healthy attitudes along with behaviors. Adolescents who were more religiously devoted reported the lowest levels of substance use, truancy, and suspensions than those who were less religiously devoted. The study concluded that adolescent boys within urban

areas who reported religion was important within their lives reported higher levels of academic self-efficacy and school bonding than those who did not think that religion was important. Religious experiences have the ability to provide adolescents with experiences in different contexts outside of their homes and school to gain exposure to various role-taking opportunities.

African Americans who attended church during their adolescent years had an increase in their total years of schooling (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). Similarly, urban youth who attended church had a higher rate of school attendance and labor force attachment. Byfield (2008) found that both religious beliefs and religious communities had a significant influence on the academic success of the students he studied. The participants of the study cited religion as having an influence on their academic achievement. The church provided the students with a wealth of capital that they utilized to their academic advantage.

One research study found that spirituality was a valuable asset to the identity of African American males (Jett, 2010). Students' connectedness to God can enhance their self-confidence, provide them with a sense of direction, and enable them to remain focused when faced with peer pressure and adversities (Byfield, 2008). Spirituality can be an apparatus to positively assisting some African American male students during their collegiate experience as well as facilitate the development of their identity (Jett, 2010). Such connectedness for students also can assist with character development, shield the student from adverse situations and association, and endow the student with morals and values (Byfield, 2008).

Black adolescents may benefit from attending church. In doing so, community support gained from such an experience (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). Attending church, along with other behaviors such as volunteering, playing sports, or being a member of an afterschool club, may signal a student's involvement in prosocial activities, including academic achievement. Having a strong connection to a specific religious faith can provide a sense of purpose beyond those offered by an individual's proximal contexts (Butler-Barnes et al., 2012). Religion can serve as a source of personal affirmation and encouragement that promotes educational achievement and persistence. A recent research study noted that African American males utilized prayer as a coping mechanism to ease academic pressures as well as a means of direction along their academic journey (Jett, 2010).

Factors that Affect the Academic Achievement of African American Males

Socioeconomic Status

Several contributing factors have affected the academic achievement of African American males. Family background, including socioeconomic status, family structure, family size, parental drug use/abuse, and other factors may influence students' academic achievement and behavior (Hickman & Wright, 2011). According to the Alliance of Education (2011), high school students from low-income families drop out of high school at six times the rate of students from high-income families. If the male graduation rate increases by just 5%, the nation would see an annual savings of $4.9 billion in crime-related costs (Alliance of Education, 2011). If the drop-out rate of a single high school class is cut in half, 54,000 new jobs would be supported which will likely increase the

gross domestic product by as much as $9.6 billion.

Millions of public (K-12) students throughout the United States come from low-income rural, suburban, and urban communities that overcome poverty, food instability, financial insecurity, and inadequate housing (Williams & Bryan, 2013). Many students that come from low-income, urban areas do go on to become successful academically (Williams& Bryan, 2013). Li and Hasan (2010) noted school districts that serve high-minority and high-poverty populations tend to lack resources that promote academic success. This tends to result in lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates. Lowering the academic achievement gap increases the earning gap and literacy skill of an individual, thus resulting in a one percent increase in high school graduation rates and saving the nation as much as $1.4 billion each year in crime-related cost (Li & Hasan, 2010).

Several adverse life factors (poverty, a loss of a parent, or medical conditions) during adolescent years can either build a solid foundation or create limitations in adulthood. Another factor is socioeconomic status. African American students tend to come from lower socioeconomic status and home literacy environments (Matthews, et al., 2010). Diermer et al. (2010) noted that low socioeconomic status African American youth encounter racial, socioeconomic barriers, and structural inequalities that may limit their occupational self-concept development. The Coleman Report noted that the socioeconomic composition of the student population of a school has a stronger influence on achievement, independent of students' own social background, than any other factor (Coleman et al., 1966). Both African Americans and Whites were found to benefit

equally from attending a middle-class school that was predominantly African American verses poor African Americans who did not advance their academic achievement by attending schools that were predominately poor White students (Coleman et al., 1966). A follow-up research study to the Coleman Report concurred that a student's social class matters more than their race (Goza & Ryabov, 2009).

The racial composition and the rate of single-parent families have an effect on a child's well-being. Inner-city African American youths living in neighborhoods with relatively high levels of social capital were less depressed than those living in less close-knit communities were. Such a positive effect of neighborhood support was especially marked for children who lacked strong family bonds (Putnam, 2000). One study found a significant association between socioeconomic status and academic motivation at the high school level. Students in high socioeconomic status categories felt a greater sense of internal control over success, intellectual ability, and memory in comparison to students in low socioeconomic status groups (Young et al., 2011).

Oyserman, Johnson, and James (2011) study found that family socioeconomic status and neighborhood economic disadvantage affect youth academic outcomes. Greater wealth has been associated with higher mathematics achievement scores for children ages 5 through 14, even when traditional measures of socioeconomic status were controlled and partially mediated through cultural capital. Several studies have linked family wealth to college enrollment, college completion, and years of completed schooling. African Americans tend to have less money saved and fewer educational individual retirement accounts to pay for their children's postsecondary education than

their White counterparts (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009).

Family socioeconomic status is specifically important when considering strategies to attaining school-focused possible identities (Oyserman et al., 2011). Adolescents from families with a lower socioeconomic status tend to lack supervision, family activities, and may have poor parent–adolescent communication, which in turn increases the risk for later aggression and repeated violence (Ehrenreich et al., 2012). Low socioeconomic status does not necessarily cause decreased academic motivation, but the factors tied with socioeconomic status negatively affect academic motivation. socioeconomic status also be a better predictor of academic motivation (Young, et al., 2011). Approximately 59% of the African American student population lived below the poverty level (Kenricks, Nedunuri, & Arment, 2013). Ethnic as well as class-related disparities as it pertains to academic achievement has shown that children from families with a lower socioeconomic status STATUS academic performance tend to be lower in reading, science, and mathematics than children from families with higher socioeconomic status (Gut, Reimann, & Grob, 2013).

Educational odds are stacked against children and parents from low-income families. Graduation rates are significantly lower in districts with a higher percentage of students, who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). Children who are poor are less likely to have a parent with post-secondary education, which implies that education is not a priority within the household (Wickrama, Simons, & Baltimore, 2012). Adolescents from ethnic minorities are especially likely to experience difficult life experiences, especially African Americans,

because of low socioeconomic status (Gut, Reimann, & Grob, 2013).

African Americans appear to have an especially difficult time overcoming childhood poverty (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). Low socioeconomic status interferes with African American students' cultural capital. Black arts-participation was similar to Whites when socioeconomic difference was adjusted. A similar research study found that racial disparities with accessing high-brow culture and educational resources was because of race on socioeconomic privilege (Oates, 2009).

Poverty continues to be a consistent risk factor. Several studies have supported the fact that students from a low socioeconomic status background receive greater returns from participation in cultural activities than their counterparts of high- socioeconomic status background (Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Limited financial resources in a family correlated to students' poor academic performance. Such students sought after-school employment, which presented additional stressors and often undermined academic performance, resulting in such students having a limited time to study or do homework due to being tired during the school day (Ehrenreich et al., 2012). States that displayed disproportionately large numbers of poorly educated adults as well as low-income single-parent families tend not to have as many vibrant civic communities as those states with high-income two-parent families (Putnam, 2000).

Expectations for low-income children are to do well in school regardless of their socioeconomic status. The Oyserman, Johnson, and James (2011) study noted that almost half of low-income and minority students do not graduate from high school and the risk of failure within low-income neighborhoods is higher. Most low-income and minority

eighth graders within the United States who are expected to attend college even if the

students are currently at grade-level in their schoolwork or planning to take a college

preparation track in high school (Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2011). Low-income and

minority students do see school success as an important aspect of life. However, for these

students, the journey to academic success may not be clear. The Oyserman, Johnson, and

James (2011) study found that children from more disadvantaged neighborhoods were

more likely to have school-focused possible identities than children from less

disadvantaged neighborhoods. This implies that educational attainment was not as

prominent as the destination for these students.

The Oyserman, Johnson, and James (2011) study also found that both family and

neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage was an indicator of having fewer strategies to

attain school-focused possible identities. The study implied that socioeconomic

disadvantage undermines children's ability to determine the path toward their academic

success aspirations. Children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds do care about school

but are less likely than children from high socioeconomic background to have significant

behavioral strategies to make their school-focused possible identities.

A connection exists between socioeconomic status and social capital. Individuals

and communities that are socially and economically disadvantaged, leverage bonding

social capital within strong relational bonds to accomplish a task they could not

accomplish as an individual. For example, having a cosigner for a car loan or utilizing

several individuals as collateral on a business loan. Going a step further, individuals can

choose to disconnect from their immediate networks and seek to connect with promising

networks, which is an example of bridging social capital (Majee & Hoyt, 2011).

The model illustrates how individuals may combine as well as share their resources and assets collectively to improve their well-being. However, sharing resources as a group hinders individuals desiring to get ahead. This is why the model sought to demonstrate the role of cooperatives as a means of moving groups instead of individuals from getting by to getting ahead. Cooperative groups simultaneously strengthen the bonds of a group (bonding social capital) while connecting the members of the group with external resources to use for their advancement (bridging social capital). Both bonding and bridging social capital are essential to socioeconomic status (Majee & Hoyt, 2011).

Noncognitive factors, such as motivation, self-concept, and interests, are driving forces in children's transaction within their environments. Decoupling of children's intellectual interest may attribute to the decrease in genetic variance in academic achievement for children living in lower socioeconomic status (Ovwigho & Cole, 2010). Ovwigho and Cole (2010) found that, at a very low socioeconomic status, the genetic component of intellectual interest was 0% of the variation in academic achievement. At high levels of socioeconomic status, the proportion was 30%. These researchers contended that adolescents raised within a lower socioeconomic status environment have fewer opportunities to seek out intellectually stimulating interpersonal interactions that correlate with their levels of intellectual interest, scholastic experiences, and peer groups.

Adolescents raised in lower socioeconomic status received fewer benefits to their intellectual growth and learning from work and effort put into intellectual as well as

academic aspirations. Statistically, the Ovwigho and Cole (2010) research found

significant evidence that the variance in academic achievement explained by genes varied

positively with socioeconomic status. This could be accounted for through a stronger

influence of genes for intellectual interest on academic achievement in higher

socioeconomic status homes; therefore, the higher the socioeconomic status, the more

children are able to better convert their intellectual interest into academic achievement

through a process of gene and environment correlation.

Adult Guidance and Nurturing

Parental involvement creates a positive contribution to children's educational

achievement (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007). Parent–child communication positively affects

educational outcomes. Along with having positive communication with their parents, it is

also essential for children to communicate with a nonparent adult. Having the ability to

communicate with a nonparent adult is imperative to the academic achievement of

students. Students tend to be more successful when they are in supportive environments.

Parental Involvement. The importance of parental involvement seems to be a

universal agreement. Parental involvement is defined as parents who participate in the

education processes and experience of their child or children (Chang et al., 2009). Parents

indirectly motivate their child or children to achieve academically. There communication

centered on schooling was a better predicator of academic achievement than any other

similar parental involvement predicators (Madyun & Lee, 2010). More specifically,

research has found that a father's role is important in explaining cognitive development

and youth social initiative of a child (Lee, Kushner, & Cho, 2007). Parental interactions

influence adolescent motivation via an added sense of competence and autonomy

pertaining to school (Ehrenreich et al., 2012).

Educational psychologists and teachers deem parental involvement as important,

especially for students who are at a disadvantage, such as African American males

(Jeynes, 2007). Coleman (1988) noted that it was the responsibility of the family to

transfer cultural capital, norms, and values to their children. The level of parental

involvement varies according to gender, ethnicity, geographical location, and several

other factors. Within urban areas, parental involvement may be especially prominent

because of high family problem rates and unique sociological pressures on children

(Jeynes, 2007). Positive parental involvement is especially important for children from

low-income, ethnic-minority, and language-minority backgrounds (Chang et al., 2009).

A research study conducted by Harris and Goodall (2008), noted that parental

engagement makes a significant difference in the educational achievement and learning

of a child. During the middle and secondary school levels, parental involvement is vital if

teenagers are to become stable and productive adults (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010).

Similarly, Chen and Gregory (2010) noted a direct correlation between parental

involvement and students' educational outcomes. In Ehrenreich, et al, 2012 study,

adolescents linked their personal drive to succeed to motivators such as clear parental

expectations. Students of parents who are more involved in their schooling tend to earn

higher grades, have fewer disciplinary problems, and an increase in attendance (Chen &

Gregory, 2010; Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010).

Parents, especially urban parents, need to be motivated to be involved in their

children's education. A qualitative research study conducted by Huang and Mason (2008) found that parents' motivation to be involved in their children's learning stemmed from three themes: (a) the need for relationships; (b) the need to influence their children's education; and (c) education is the key to their children's success. Parental influence and family involvement continues to be the topic of recent research studies pertaining to cultural capital.

Fan, Williams, and Wolters (2012) conducted a quantitative research study focusing on whether there were ethnic group differences between parental involvement and student school motivation while controlling for gender and students' socioeconomic status Utilizing the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 survey, a nationally representative sample of 12,721 10th grade students from four ethnic groups, including Asian Americans, Hispanics, White, and African Americans, found that there was solid empirical evidence supporting that some aspect of parental involvement in school are related to student's motivation. Parents with higher goals for their children's postsecondary education tended to have highly motivated children. The results of the research noted that parental aspiration, which was positively associated with high academic self-efficacy among students, was high among all groups with the exception of African American students.

The ways in which parents communicate their expectations for success and interact with their children had the strongest influence on academic outcome (Ehrenreich et al., 2012). When students' parents are involved in their education, the student tends to demonstrate superior achievement in mathematics and reading (Fan, Williams, &

Wolters, 2012). African American boys received explicit messages pertaining to racism and messages of expectations concerning high level of mathematics along with academic achievement from their parents (Berry, Thunder, & McClain, 2011). This study noted that parents of Black boys engaged in racial socialization practices that were designed to train their sons on how to manage in a world where racial prejudice and discrimination are more likely to be intended for them. Research focusing on perceived parent support, the role of interpersonal relationships, relatedness of students along with parents, and family cohesion has found that all of these factors have a major impact on student school motivation (Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012).

Huang and Mason (2008) noted that parents' attitudes, behaviors, and activities are related to their children's education influence, learning, and success. The researchers also stated that several studies have indicated a strong positive correlation between parental involvement and academic achievement. Children whose parents are involved in their academic matriculation repeat grades less frequently and tend to demonstrate a greater reading level (Huang, & Mason, 2008).

Empirical evidence has shown that parents retain substantial influence over adolescents' school performance (Lloyd-Smith & Baron, 2010). A recent study conducted by Harris and Graves (2010) found that parental transmission of cultural capital had a positive impact on the reading achievement of African American male students. Students value parental engagement and see such engagement as being a form of valuing education, which is a direct benefit on the student's behavior. Parental engagement is one of the key factors in securing higher student achievement and school

improvement (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Taliaferro, Gunby, and Eckard (2010) found that parents are imperative to the school environment. A multiple system of support of parents and teachers is needed when looking at academic success for children.

Parental involvement is a means of which to improve student behavior and support for the school. Educators have identified parental involvement as one of the primary methods by which to raise academic achievement from current levels (Jeynes, 2007). Many educators are fostering and encouraging parental involvement via parenting workshops, volunteer opportunities, and other initiatives (Change et al., 2009). School personnel have blamed underachievement and achievement on parents (Taliaferro Taliaferro, Gunby, & Eckard 2010). Parents and school personnel hold different assumptions about school interactions, which may result in parental frustration and distrust, thus a lack of parental involvement. The culture of a school promotes a family-centered approach but may result in either a positive or negative effect on parental engagement (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Taliaferro, Gunby, & Eckard, 2010).

Parent–teacher relationships have the ability to foster success for a student. Building meaningful parent–teacher relationships provide a nurturing and cohesive support system for students, especially low achieving students. In the same manner, the research study conducted by Taliaferro, Gunby, and Eckard (2010) stressed the importance of student – parent relationships. When parents build healthy and nurturing relationships with their child, the child will desire to please their parents more. If academics are important to the parent, then it becomes important to the child. Likewise, Harris and Goodall (2008) gave way to the importance of parents becoming engage and

not just involved in their child's academics. More importantly, becoming engaged in the academic learning process at home has a greater influence on a child's learning. As parents reinforce what is learned at school in the home, learning becomes more evident, and the information learned leaves a lasting impact on the child's life.

Several research studies have pinpointed several barriers that affect parental involvement at the secondary level. Such barriers include prior engagements and responsibilities, caring for younger children, socioeconomic status, and jobs (Taliaferro, Gunby, & Eckard, 2010). The most cited reasons for the lack of parental involvement are work commitments, time demand, single parent restrictions, and less responsiveness to invitations (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Teachers have reported that getting parents to become involved in their child's academic was a challenge (Carolan, 2012). However, some parents reported that the schools were hard to reach while others reported that they did not feel welcome at their child's school (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Turney & Kao, 2009). A number of parents have stated that the sizes of secondary schools are intimidating and complex, thus reducing their engagement at their child's school (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Some parents' memories of school are negative (Taliaferro, et al., 2010).

Madyun and Lee (2010) noted that from 1960 to 2000, the proportion of Black children who were living within a single parent home jumped from 22% to 53.3%. Broken family structures place Black students at a higher risk for lower educational outcomes. Perhaps Black mothers have often been the focus of research on the linkage between family support and academic achievement among Black youths. This may be

due to the negative stereotypes, educational challenges, and residential circumstances that hamper Black fathers' involvement in the lives of their children (Jones, 2013). One third of all Black children will not see their fathers due to various circumstances, including the high incarceration rate among African American men (Jones, 2013). Black women now have the responsibilities of rearing their children and providing for the household (Jones, 2013).

Mentorship. Mentors, such as coaches and teachers, hold an enormous influence over students. Previous research has shown that mentoring increases minority student academic achievement along with enrollment and retention (Kenricks, Nedunuri, & Arment, 2013). Nonparent adults, who have taken on the role of a mentor, have assisted in significantly improving the educational attainment for youth that are transitioning from high school (Ehrenreich et al., 2012). Teachers must motivate students within non-cognitively positive academic environments by assisting in the development of the right attitude for learning, the establishment of a conceptual idea of learning imperative within the classroom, and challenging students to reach their highest potentials while always respecting students (Li & Hasan, 2010).

Mentoring provides at-risk adolescents a mature adult role model who offers support, nurturance, and guidance outside the immediate and extended family. In doing so, it lowers the probability of these adolescents engaging in, as well as experiencing, problematic behaviors (Hickman & Wright, 2011). Closing the academic achievement gap and promoting academic success of minority students, such as African American students, should be the responsibility of concerned educators. To promote student

academic success, it is crucial for teachers to develop positive personal factors through supportive learning environments.

Over 90% of schools annually ranked mentoring as having the greatest impact on academic performance according to the Benjamin Banneker Scholars Program (BBSP) Post-Satisfaction Survey. The Black Caucus of the Society for Research in Child Development stated that mentoring for African American students required: (a) culturally appropriate with diverse instruction; (b) mentors from similar cultural backgrounds who were knowledgeable in academic areas; (c) provide forms of support including financial assistance and infrastructures that are supportive for student life styles, participation, and goals; and (d) continuous development of institutional norms for selections along with retention that is relative to academic performance (Kenricks et al, 2013).

Mentoring programs help at-risk adolescents acquire germane academic skills that are necessary to enhance academic performance and is utilized among intervention, diversion, and prevention specialist. Previous research studies have found that when adolescents partake in a mentoring program, their parents reported that their children exhibited a reduction in disruptive behavior and an increase in their self-efficacy as well as problem-solving skills. A similar study found that at-risk students who participated in mentoring programs, resulting in academic achievement and grade retention improvement (Hickman & Wright, 2011).

The Ehrenreich et al. (2012) study noted that even though parents were of the greatest influence on completing high school, within the school, coaches were particularly influential to students' academic success. Males within the study noted that

coaches were the cool teachers and that they would hold their players at a high-performance standard academically. Having the presence of caring adults, including teachers, coaches, and parents, within the lives of adolescents was critical to students' academic success. Youths that are more engaged and connected at school are as a result of having caring adults within the school environment.

More recently, Kenricks et al., (2013) conducted a quantitative research study on college students who were enrolled in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program at a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Data were collected utilizing student surveys and students' interim as well as overall academic performance to determine the effectiveness of mentoring in the BBSP. The researchers tracked students' performance from spring 2009 to spring 2010 according to the students' average grade point average (GPA) within the STEM areas along with their co enrolled general education courses. The results of the study found an increase in the participants' GPA, which suggested that the students gradually improved their performance in STEM. This increase was because of faculty mentors advising students to increase remediation of course documentations and to participate in study groups along with utilizing other supplemental instruction and support tools. A strong correlation between academic success and degree acceptance was due to students' mentoring experience during their academic matriculation.

The Zell (2011) study focused on African American males between the ages of 18-23 and sophomores in college. The study found that beyond its cognitive and academic benefits, B2B provided its participants with the essential skills necessary to

succeed, including the acquisition of social and intellectual capital necessary to achieve their college goals. BEB strengthened the participants' competence when overcoming stereotypes, isolation, and other hurdles associated with underachievement. The participants reported they had improved their grades, increased their class participation, and raised their GPA as a result of being a member of B2B. There are several studies on adult to child mentorship and peer mentoring at the collegiate level. However, there is little research on the effectiveness of culturally informed mentoring strategies on the academic achievement of African American male high school students.

Factors Affecting the Academic Success of African American Males

Several research studies suggest social capital elevates academic achievement (Oates, 2009). However, internal and external factors embedded in social capital, when coupled, may have a positive effect on academic achievement among African American males. Internal factors are personal attributes over which an individual has some control including strength of character (i.e., personal morals, values, internal/self-motivation), spirituality, and goals/dreams/talents and tend to vary among students. Such attributes place one student at a higher academic advantage than another student since not every individual enters into the education market with the same amount of capital as some individuals who already possess the quantities relevant to capital acquired during their upbringing (Byfield, 2008). James (2010) noted that internal motivation seemed to be one of the best predictors of resiliency and academic success among urban students.

For the purpose of my research study, religion will be one aspect of culture researched. Byfield (2008) theorized religious capital as a linguistic union of social

capital, which makes religious capital a subset of social capital. Individuals often rely on their religious faith to cope with hardship since religion promotes beliefs and practices that assist youth in understanding and reconciling losses (Milot & Ludden, 2009). A higher level of religiosity and/or spirituality among adolescents correlated to lower health risk behaviors and lower levels of depression along with higher levels of happiness. Being involved in religious communities provides social capital and social support, which in turn affects an individual's well-being (Ovwigho & Cole, 2010).

Social capital embodies several forms of capital such as cultural capital and religious capital. Social capital has assisted in shaping the development of children (Putnam, 2000). A review of the literal has resulted in this model. Social capital coupled with internal and external facotrs may assist with cultivating academic success for African American males. Social capital is not a guarntee but an opportunity. The determining factor is how the individual responds to the opportunity created by social capital in his life.

Summary

The academic success of minority students is a national priority. The academic success of African American students is of importance since the makeup of the school populations is rapidly changing. Minority students have significantly lagged behind their White peers as it pertains to completing high school, resulting in the 2003 graduation rate of 59% for racial minorities and 82% for White students (Li & Hasan, 2010).

Numerous works have discussed the role of social capital, cultural capital, religious capital, and mentorship on student academic achievement. Studies have also

researched how race and gender influence academic achievement. However, there were several gaps within the literature. One such gap included the lack of research pertaining to the combined role of parents, teacher, mentor, peer, and pastor or community leader on academic achievement. Another gap within the literature is the lack of research conducted on the role of social capital on academic achievement of African American male students within an urban area.

Specifically, the literature lacks an in-depth understanding of a combined role on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. A qualitative approach is the ideal model to address research questions. This approach seeks to understand the context of the participants by gathering information via interviews (Creswell, 2009).

Chapter 3 provides a more in-depth understanding of why qualitative, more specifically a study, design will be utilized for this research study. I have provided a review of the strengths and limitations of qualitative case study. I will discuss my values, bias, and interest as it pertains to closing the academic achievement gap for male African American high school students. I will provide a thorough description of the participant selection process and the data collection instrument along with the instrument and the procedures. I will provide an in-depth explanation of the data analysis and interpretation procedures, along with the strategies that will be used to check for accuracy. I also will discuss issues pertaining to informed consent and ethical considerations in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to explore the academic achievement of African American male high school students. The results of this study will assist in closing the gap in the literature through indicating the combined effects of social capital on the academic achievement African American male high school students. In Chapter 3, I will provide a more in-depth description of the methodology used in this study, including sampling procedures, data gathering techniques, data analysis, instrument, analytical protocols, ethical concerns, and research validity. A qualitative method with a case study design was employed to gather an in-depth understanding of the combined role of social capital on academic achievement. I conducted a total of 18 interviews with a sample size of 16 participants.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Questions

The overarching research question that drove this research study was:

What is the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students?

I also developed the following additional research questions to further address the topic:

1. How do African American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence their academic achievement, such as community; culture; religion; and the involvement of parents, mentors, and

peers?

2. What other influences do African American male high school students identify as important for their academic achievement?

3. How do other stakeholders in the education of African-American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students' academic achievement, such as community; culture; religion; and the involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?

The academic achievement level of African Americans continues to lag behind that of other ethnic groups, especially in the areas of mathematics and science (Templeton, 2011). On average, African American males have performed below basic in every grade level and in every subject within the last 20 years on the National Assessment of Education Progress (James, 2010). The achievement gap has led to high dropout rates and low graduation rates among African American male students (James, 2010).

Approximately 43% of African American students verses 22% White students will not graduate with a regular diploma from high school (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). More specifically, the number of male graduates is lower than the number of female graduates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). Black boys often face adverse factors surrounding their school experience (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011). Many researchers have studied the academic achievement of African American males from the deficit model; however, not many studies have focused on high achieving African American males. More specifically, few researchers have studied the

role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students.

Research Design and Approach

Qualitative research is inductive in nature, flexible in design, and focuses on rendering the complexity of a situation for an individual purpose (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). The nature of this research study called for an inductive approach because I explored the complexity of social capital and its role on the academic achievement of African American high school males. Qualitative research is a situated activity that establishes the observer within the world and involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world (Creswell, 2007). Within this study, I took a closer look at the interpretive nature of social capital and situating the study within the social and cultural environment of the participants (see Creswell, 2007).

I selected a case study approach because it facilitated the exploration of the role of social capital on academic achievement within the context of African American high school males. This approach uses a variety of data sources to ensure that I did not explore the issue through a single lens, which would have limited the full understanding of the situation (see Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). Other qualitative methods, including a phenomenological approach, grounded theory approach, narrative approach, and ethnographic approach, were considered but rejected.

I rejected a phenomenological approach because it focuses on the nature of a phenomenon that describes the meaning of several individuals lived experiences (see Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). I rejected grounded theory because this method does not

begin with a theory or conceptual framework but instead generates a theory. My goal with this study was not to generate a new theory. A narrative approach honors an individual's stories as the data which offer a translucent window into cultural and social meanings; hence, this approach was unable to address the research questions of this study and was therefore rejected (see Patton, 2002). I rejected an ethnographic research approach because it would require prolonged observations of a specific group over an extended period of time (see Creswell, 2007). In ethnographic studies, there is also the possibility that the researcher "goes native" and will be unable to complete the research study (Creswell, 2007). Such an approach would best serve a longitudinal study, which was not the time frame of this particular study.

Aside from the various forms of qualitative designs, there were two other research approaches that I also rejected because they did not fulfill the purpose of this research study. A quantitative research method was not appropriate for this research study because it attempts to clarify a phenomenon through carefully designed and controlled data collection and analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In a quantitative study, a particular variable is influenced and then compared to another variable (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Such an approach would have been inappropriate for this study because researchers who use this research method often test theories as an explanation for their proposed research problem (see Creswell, 2009). A mixed method approach combines both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). This approach would have also been inappropriate due to the small sample size of this research study.

Qualitative research allowed me to collect the data in a personal, face-to-face,

natural setting, such as the site where the participants' experienced the issue or problem that is being studied (see Creswell, 2007; Janesick, 2011). The key instruments I used for data collection were interviews, examinations of documents, and observations. To address each of the research questions, a face-to-face interview within the natural setting of the participants was conducted. I spent time in the field (face-to-face interviews, observations, etc.) gathering the data necessary to address each research question.

Qualitative research demands time in the field. The design of this research study focused on the details and on understanding the social setting rather than on controlling or predicting the setting (Janesick, 2011). Multiple forms of data were gathered and organized into categories and themes. These categories and themes were built from the bottom-up and were continuously worked on to create increasingly more abstract units of information (Creswell, 2007, 2009).

The focal point of this qualitative research remained on learning the meaning that the participants held about the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students and not on the meaning that I as the researcher brought to the research from the literature (see Creswell, 2007). The participants directly collaborated with me during the data analysis and interpretation phase. As a result, they are then seen as coresearchers due to their direct participation in the research study (see Creswell, 2007; Janesick, 2011).

When conducting a qualitative study, the participants are considered empowered to share their stories, allowing the researcher, to hear their voices and minimizing the power relationships that often exist between the researcher and the participants (Creswell,

2007). Qualitative research design is a "do-it-yourself" rather than an "off-the-shelf"

process as with quantitative research design (Maxwell, 2013); therefore, it was the ideal

research design for this study. Such a research design is emergent since the initial plan for

the research cannot be stipulated (Maxwell, 2013). My interpretations of what I saw and

heard as well as what I understood developed a holistic account of the overall research

problem.

The research questions drove the research process of this study and served as the

foundation of the selected research methodology. The goal of this case study was to

expand the social capital theory and not to enumerate frequencies. Since case studies do

not depend solely on ethnographic data, the results have the potential to offer important

evidence to complement experiments, and therefore, can be valued as adjuncts to

experiments (see Yin, 2009). As the researcher, I developed the research questions to

address the role of social on the academic achievement of African American high school

male students. This was accomplished through detailed, in-depth data collection

involving multiple sources of information (i.e., audiovisual material, interviews,

observations, reports) to report case descriptions and case-based themes as guided by

Creswell (2007). The research questions addressed the research problem and assisted in

closing the gap in the literature as it pertained to the link between social capital and high

academic achievement for African American high school male students. The case study

strategy I employed in this study began with the theory of social capital and investigated

a contemporary phenomenon, African American male high school students' academic

achievement, in depth. The use of the research questions in their real-life context came

because of the boundaries between the phenomenon and contexts not being clearly

evident (see Yin, 2009).

Designing a case study requires multiple forms of evidence, with the data yielding

emerging themes (Yin, 2009). Triangulating the data allows the researcher to make better

sense of the data (Yin, 2009). A case study may not always include direct and detailed

observational data as in other forms of qualitative research approaches (Yin, 2009). The

benefits from previous development of theoretical proportions guided the data collection

and analysis of this research study.

Role of the Researcher

When using a case study design, the researcher is able to explore individuals,

interventions, relationships, organizations, programs, or communities (Yin, 2003). As the

principal researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument in this case study

research. In-depth interviews with three participants who were experiencing or

contributing to the case being studied (social capital) allowed me to focus on themes and

meaning from the perspective of the participants. As the researcher, I constructed the

interview protocol, conducted the interviews, and collected and analyzed all the resulting

data. I gathered interpretations, narratives, and descriptions from the participants to

recreate a set of events in a manner that the interviewees would recognize as a reality (see

Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

During the research, I was not a resident or employee of the study site school

district. There was no direct professional affiliation between myself and the district or the

school. Prior to data collection, I followed the methodological advice of Moustakas

(1994) to construct a detailed, reflexive journal that would allow me to reflect upon and fully disclose my experiences with high achieving African American high school males. In doing this, I was able to set aside my previous experiences to avoid bias when collecting data, interpreting the data, and reporting my findings. I reported my preliminary findings to my dissertation committee members during the data collection process so that they could offer alternative explanations and suggestions for data collection.

I worked on my listening skills prior to collecting data to learn how to assimilate large amounts of new information without bias. Hearing the exact words utilized by the interviewee allowed me to capture the mood and affective components of their response to understand the context from which the interviewee perceived the world. I maintained an unbiased perspective and acknowledged any unforeseen situations that arose, fully knowing that as a result of the unforeseen situation, any steps that I completed had to be repeated and redocumented, as suggested by Yin (2009). Fortunately, no unforeseen situations occurred during the study.

Methodology

Research Setting

The selected school district was Rockworth City Schools (*pseudonym used*). The district is located within a small rural town and consists of only four schools. Majority of the students have attended school together since kindergarten. The district is a Title I district and serves approximately, 2,446 students consisting of 38% African Americans, 30% Latinos, 25% Whites, 6% Multiracial and 1% Asians. Many of the families within

the community were born and raised within the city, have attended school within the city, and have chosen to raise their children within the city.

First, I obtained permission from the school district that included the school that was the focus of the study. I contacted the district's superintendent via telephone and e-mail to obtain the necessary documentations and directions for conducting research within the district. Once all forms, including the district application to conduct research, were completed, they were submitted to the Superintendent for approval. The superintendent signed the District Letter of Cooperation giving permission for the conduction of the study. Access to the high school that was the basis of the case was granted as a result of the approval.

The demographics of the school district as a whole do not mirror the demographics of the selected high school. The selected high school was the only high school within the district and serves over 600 students. The student population demographic is as follows: 48% African American, 25% White, 20% Latino, and 7% other. The female to male ratio is 2:1, with the student to teacher ratio being 16:1. Because many of the students at the high school live within the same neighborhood, a family like culture has been created at the high school. Within the last 5 years, the graduation rate has steadily increased. This high school was the most promising location for this research study because of the demographics of the school and the increase in the graduation rate. I contacted the principal of the selected high school immediately via telephone and e-mail to submit a copy of the research proposal for review and approval. I provided the principal with a School Letter of Cooperation. He signed the letter;

therefore, I was given permission to conduct the study at the high school.

Participant Selection Logic

The purpose of this research study was to explore the academic achievement of African American male high school students; therefore, the research population was high achieving African American male high school students. The state of North Carolina defines high academic achievement as students scoring proficient or higher on the English II, Common Core Math I, and Biology EOC examinations. The sampling strategy was intensity sampling for the purpose of this research study. As suggested by Patton (2002) intensity sampling could provide information-rich cases that had the ability to make the phenomenon being studied more obvious. The bounded cases (i.e., parents, teacher, mentor, peer, and pastor) provided information-rich cases which made the phenomenon being studied, social capital and its role on the academic achievement of an African American male high school student, more apparent.

The North Carolina Common Core Math I, English II, and Biology EOC examination determine the academic achievement level of the students who were identified as potential participants. Students who scored a 3 or above is proficient as determined by the state of North Carolina. These three examinations are state assessments that all students enrolled in each of these courses are required to take at the end of the semester (i.e., block schedule) or at the end of the school year (i.e., traditional schedule). They are used to "sample a student's knowledge of subject-related concepts as specified in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and to provide a global estimate of the student's mastery of the material in a particular content area" (NCDPI, n.d., para.

1). These three courses are part of North Carolina's high school graduation requirements. For the purpose of this research study, I used the scores from the 2014 – 2017 EOC.

To participate in the research study, the students must be 18 or older, African American, male, and enrolled at the selected high school. Student participants had to have also scored a 3 or higher on the EOC examination in Math I, Biology, and English II in 2017 or prior. To qualify for the study, each student had to live with his parents, have an adult mentor, and be a member of a local church or be employed locally.

Research Participants

Students who volunteered to participate in the study scored a 3 or above on their Math I, Biology, and English II standardized assessments between the 2014 – 2017 school years. The sample size of a research study is predicated on what is valuable, what is at stake, what can be done in a rational time and with the accessible resources, as well as what will be reliable (Patton, 2002). The sample size was predicted to be 18, but due to some overlap, the final number was 16 participants. The sample size included the three male African American high school students who were 18 or older, their parents, a peer or sibling who were also 18 or older, a former or a current teacher, a mentor, and the pastor of their local church or another community leader.

The sample size in qualitative studies are generally small, and frequencies are less important in qualitative research because qualitative research focuses on meaning instead of making generalized hypothesis, such as in the case of quantitative and mixed method research. The relationship between saturation and the sample size of this study is that the sample size needs to be large enough to assure that all perceptions potentially discovered.

However, the sample still needs to be small enough for the data not to become repetitive and superfluous (Mason, 2010). Sixteen participants were ideal because it was enough participants to ensure that all insights were uncovered but small enough that the data did not become redundant. Since qualitative research explores a context more in depth than quantitative research, saturation occurs quicker.

Research Procedure

An invitation flier, which included all of the necessary criteria to participate in the study, informed the staff of Rockworth High School about the research inclusion criteria. The teachers gave the invitation fliers to all African American male students in each of their classes. The flyer provided directions to the students to e-mail me, the researcher, directly to express interest in the study. Students had 5 days after the fliers were distributed to respond to the call to participate in the research. During that time, students had the opportunity to take home the information pertaining to the research study and reflect upon the study as well as discuss it with their family. Within those 5 days, 13 students sent an e-mail expressing their interest in participating in the study. A brief survey was sent to the 13 students to determine eligibility to participate in the study, and they had 48 hours to respond. The results were that some of the students were not of legal age, some did not have a mentor, and others were not proficient on at least one of the EOC assessments. These were automatically excluded from the study.

Out of the 13 students who initially responded, four students were truly eligible. I randomly selected three students out of the potential four, per my initial proposal. I sent the three selected students an introductory e-mail that included a consent form to be

completed, signed, and scanned to be e-mailed back to me. With the e-mail, I made

students aware that all information provided was confidential and that they could

withdraw at any time during the study. I asked the students to identify and invite the

following individuals: teacher; mentor; friend/sibling who is 18 or older; and pastor or

community leader. I requested the contact information for the students' parent from the

student. If at any time in the selection process, any student declined, hesitated, were not

suitable, or were not available, I contacted additional students by repeating the selection

process and beyond as needed.

Parents were contacted via telephone. During the telephone conversation, parents

were provided an overview of the research study. When parents verbally agreed and

expressed interest in participating in the study, an in-person meeting was scheduled. The

location of the meeting was Rockworth High School Media Center conference room

because it was a central location for all participants. The meeting lasted approximately 15

minutes. Parents who agreed to participate received a Consent Form during the meeting.

All three parents completed and submitted their forms prior to the conclusion of the

meeting. Upon completion of the consent forms, parents and students, identified and gave

the identified individuals an invitation flier to participate in the research. The flier

included all of the necessary criteria to participate in the study. The individuals and

research criteria were as follows:

1. One of student's current or previous teachers

2. His mentor

   - Must have known the students for at least 6 months

3. His pastor, community leader, or employer

- Must have known the student for at least 6 months

- Pastor – student must be a member of their congregation

- Community leader – student must have participated in a community activity within the last 6 months

- Employer – student must have been employed for at least 6 months

4. Peer or sibling

- Must be 18 or older

- May be a sibling

- Must have known the student for at least 6 months.

The students' preferences were obtained and respected according to who they invited by providing these individuals with an invitation flier. The flyer provided an overview of the research study and directions to e-mail me, the researcher, directly to express interest in the study. If interested in participating in the research, the participant completed the contact information form included in the e-mail and e-mailed it back to me. At that point, I contacted the individual via telephone. During the telephone conversation, the individual verbally agreed to meet in person to speak more in-depth about the study; therefore, I scheduled an in-person meeting with each individual. The location of the meeting was Rockworth High School Media Center because it is a neutral environment. Each meeting lasted approximately 15 minutes. At the time of their scheduled meeting, I provided a Consent form to be completed by the teacher, mentor, peer/friend/sibling, and pastor or community leader. In total, I met with 16 individuals

over the course of 3 weeks.

Instrumentation

The data collection instruments used for this research study were interviews and academic artifacts. Interviews allowed for the exchange of information between the researcher and the participants to reconstruct specific situations that, as the researcher, I have not experienced. Interviews can allow for the gathering of in-depth information that was unobservable by asking questions to receive a particular response (Janesick, 2007; Patton, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Interviews resulted in an information-rich conversation that allowed for the gathering of more efficient data and the development of themes that answers the research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Standardized open-ended, exploratory questions created for the interview because of a review of the literature and the review conducted by the panel of experts. Since social capital is a complex theory, this study attempted to find general themes that are associated with academic achievement. One limitation of the standardized approach is that it did not permit the discovery of new topics that arose as a result of the interview, causing individual variations reduction. However, that is not the purpose of this study.

Gathering in-depth answers from the 16 participants established sufficiency of data to address the proposed research questions. All interviews were conducted face-to-face on individual bases. I conducted a confirmability audit, which according to Given (2013) is the quality of the findings produced because of the information provided by the participants during the interview, by reviewing the data and the interpretation of the data

and to ensure support for the data by reviewing the literature. In-depth interviews of each participant coupled with the student's EOC scores will maximize validity and reliability.

The development of the data collection instrument by the researcher was based on the research questions, the purpose of the study, and a review of the literature review model developed in Chapter 2. The foundation for the development of the interview questions and the order of the conduction of the interviews relied upon the purpose of the study, and a review of the literature review model developed in Chapter 2. An expert panel reviewed the interview questions before the conduction of all interviews. The expert panel consisted of an African American male high school student, his parent who is also a Walden University faculty member, and a Walden University faculty.

Table 1 outlines the research questions, the data collection tool, which interview questions addresses each research question, and the data source. Questions were structured in a specific order to ensure each participant were asked the same questions, in the same order, while using the same approach (see Appendix A). Though the interview questions were similar in format, the interview questions differ in content according to the interviewee. For example, some of the questions I asked the students differed from what I asked the parent. Also, the questions I asked the parent differed from the questions I asked the mentor. In doing so, I was able to obtain consistent themes during data analysis.

Table 1

Instrumentation per the Research Questions

Research Question	Data Collection Tool	Data Source and Interview Questions

RQ1:
How do African American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence their academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?
	Researcher constructed interview questions.	**STUDENTS:**
		1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
		2. What extracurricular activities do you participate in during the week? Outside of school?
		3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
		    a. What does this mean to you?
		    b. How does this relate to your life?
		4. Tell me about an individual in your life who has had an impact on your education?
		    a. What were some of the things that that individual did or said that impacted your education?
		5. What things do you enjoy doing with your parents?
		    a. What things do you enjoy doing with your Pastor?
		    b. What things do you enjoy doing with your mentor?
		    c. What things do you enjoy doing with your teacher?
		    d. What things do you enjoy doing with your peer?
		6. How does having a nonparent individual impact your academic achievement?
		7. Tell me about the skills, morals, and/ or values you have been taught by your parents?
		    a. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your Pastor?
		    b. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your mentor?
		    c. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your teacher?
		    d. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your peer?
		8. Why is education important to you?

RQ 2:
What other influences do African American male high school students identify as important for their academic achievement?
	Researcher constructed interview questions.	**STUDENTS:**
		1. Tell me about some other key individuals, who were necessary in preparing you for success.
		2. Tell me about your relationship with Pastor?
		    a. How about your relationship with your mentor?
		    b. How about your relationship with your teachers?
		    c. How about your relationship with your peers?
		3. Is there anything special about being a male as it relates to doing well in school?

(table continues)

Research Question	Data Collection Tool	Data Source and Interview Questions

RQ 3:
 	
How do other stakeholders in the education of African-American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students' academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?
	Researcher constructed interview questions.	<u>**STUDENTS:**</u>
		1. Tell me about some other key individuals, who were necessary in preparing you for success.
		
		<u>**PARENTS:**</u>
		2. Please tell me a little about yourself.
		3. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
		4. Is there anything in the education system that made it difficult/easy for your child to succeed?
		5. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
		    a. What does this mean to you?
		    b. How does this relate to your life?
		6. Why has your child done well?
		7. What important values come to mind when you think about your son's education?
		    a. Parent- Tell me about skills, morals, and values that you have taught or are teaching your child? Tell me about conversations you have had with your child regarding education.
		8. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to the academic performance for people like your son?
		9. Looking at the structure of this community, there are many children who grow up in single parent homes.
		10. What sort of impact do you believe this has had on students?
		11. What other adults are involved in assisting your child in succeeding in school?
		12. Tell me about some other key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success.
		    a. Nonparent adults- are they essential and why?
		13. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?
		
		<u>**TEACHERS:**</u>
		1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
		2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
		3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
		    a. What does this mean to you?
		    b. How does this relate to your life?
		4. Outside of the classroom, can you provide me with some examples of conversations you have had with the student as it regards to education?
		5. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to African American males' academic performance?

(table continues)

Research Question	Data Collection Tool	Data Source and Interview Questions

RQ 3:
 	
How do other stakeholders in the education of African-American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students' academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?
	Researcher constructed interview questions.	1. Tell me how you believe your relationship with this student has affected his life.
		    a. What role do you believe relationships play in academic success (student name)?
		2. Tell me about some key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success.
		    a. Why do you believe these key individuals are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success?
		3. Looking at the structure of this community, there are many children who grow up in single parent homes.
		    a. What sort of impact do you believe this had on students?
		4. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?
		
		MENTORS:
		1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
		2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
		3. What are some of the things you and _____ (student's name) do together?
		4. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
		    a. What does this mean to you?
		    b. How does this relate to your life?
		5. Tell me about conversations you have had with the student as it regards to education.
		6. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to African American males' academic performance?
		7. Tell me how you believe your relationship with this student has affected his life.
		    a. What role do you believe relationships play in the school success of _____ (student name)?
		8. What is the role of social networks in academic success?
		9. Tell me about some key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success.
		10. How does having a nonparent individual, like you, impact academic achievement?
		11. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?

<div align="right">(table continues)</div>

Research Question	Data Collection Tool	Data Source and Interview Questions

RQ 3:
 	
How do other stakeholders in the education of African-American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students' academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?
	Researcher constructed interview questions.	**PASTOR/ COMMUNITY LEADER:**
		1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
		2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
		3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
		    a. What does this mean to you?
		    b. How does this relate to your life?
		4. Tell me about any conversations you have had with this student as it regards to education.
		5. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to African American males' academic performance?
		6. Tell me how you believe your relationship with this student has affected his life.
		    a. What role do you believe relationships play in the school success of _____ (student name)?
		7. Tell me about how you impact the lives of your congregation or community.
		8. How do you promote education in your congregation or community?
		9. Tell me about some key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success.
		10. How does having a nonparent individual, like you, impact academic achievement?
		11. How do social networks impact the academic success?
		12. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?
		
		PEER:
		1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
		2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
		3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
		    a. What does this mean to you?
		    b. How does this relate to your life?
		4. Tell me about your relationship with _____ (the student)?
		    a. What things do you enjoy doing with _____?
		    b. How do you and _____ help each another with school assignments?
		    c. Tell me about some of the things that you and _____ share in common? About education?
		5. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to the academic performance of your friends or students such as yourself?
		6. Is there anything special about being a male as it relates to doing well in school?
		7. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?

Patton (2002) suggested guarding against any variations amongst the researcher and allowing the researcher to use the participant's time more efficiently. I formulated each question to gather in-depth information-rich answers. The expert panel qualifications were determined by their previous and/or current experience conducting various qualitative research studies, their current teaching positions as qualitative research course instructors, and their role as committee members of various dissertation committees. Because of the expert panel, I reconstructed several of the interview questions.

After reviewing the literature, I developed the interview protocol. I developed an interview protocol as suggested by Janesick (2007) along with Rubin and Rubin (2012), and included the main questions used to guide the conversation. However, I revised the protocol upon completion of the review by the panel of experts. I used the interview protocol as an initial probe. Participants were further questioned based upon their initial responses in order to gather a greater insight into the research question. Individual interview protocols and questions were developed for each participant (see Appendix A). Potential follow-up questions were developed and clarifying questions were asked during the interview process. The participants were asked to provide examples and/or artifacts during the interview process. Artifacts included students' reports card, school attendance data, employment records, church issued participation records or awards, and school based awards. As suggested by Creswell (2007), Janesick (2007), Patton (2002), and Rubin and Rubin (2012), each participant was contacted prior to the interview and interview times were scheduled a week in advance as a common courtesy and to ensure

the availability of the research participants.

Data Collection

Collection of the data was done through one-on-one, face-to-face interviews. An audio recorder allowed for the audio recording of each interview. The data was then transcribed and stored the data on my personal laptop, printed, and stored in a combination lockbox. Securing the data came by storing the database and filing into a single file. The data were also stored on my hard drive as a password encoded document and on a flash drive, which was then stored in a secured lockbox. The laptop on which I stored the data drive was password protected. I was the only one with access to the laptop. I stored all electronic devices at my home. In case of technological glitches, I printed and kept a copy of the documents and placed them into a secured lock box. I secured the lockbox with a numeric combination lock and stored it at the home. I was the only one with access to the box. I coded the data manually while also utilizing Dedoose, a web-based software.

I utilized the epoche process to suspend any preconceived experiences or notions by recording them into my reflective journal. I kept a journal of bracketed descriptions of my thoughts. After each interview, I reflected upon the interview by recording my thoughts, comments, questions, and concerns into my journal. A self-reflection process occurred before each interview in order to clear my mind of any preconceived notions or data analysis. I also kept an independent field journal with printed and written interview responses and notes.

Data collection for a case study was not merely a matter of recording data in a

perfunctory manner. I also had to know how to interpret the data collected to know if the various sources of data contradicted one another. This can lead to the need for additional information (Yin, 2009). Triangulation of the data within a qualitative research study is highly recommended since several sources of data increases the reliability of the study and, therefore, this would be the method that will be utilized (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Triangulation occurred through structured-question interview during the initial formal interviews of all participants and conversational – question interview during the follow-up interviews with the three African American male high school students. A panel of experts reviewed the interview questions to ensure that the structured-questions address the research questions and to increase the reliability of the study.

Initial Interview
- **Week 1-** Interviews will last no longer than one hour.
- Student (3)
- Parents (3-6)
- Peers (3)

Initial Interview
- **Week 2-** Interviews will last no longer than one hour.
- Pastor (3)
- Teacher (3)
- Mentor (3)

Member Checking
- **Week 3-** Transcript of individual participant's initial interview sent to participant.
- Participants review their transcript
- Participants return transcript to research ONLY if changes need to be made to the data.

Follow-Up Interview
- **Week 4-** New interview questions will be developed according to the data.
- Students (3)
- The follow questions will be used to interview the three African American male high school students only.

Data Analysis
- **Week 5-** Member checking and data analysis
- Once the follow-up interviews have been conducted, the data will be transcribed, and the participants will receive a copy of the transcript via email.
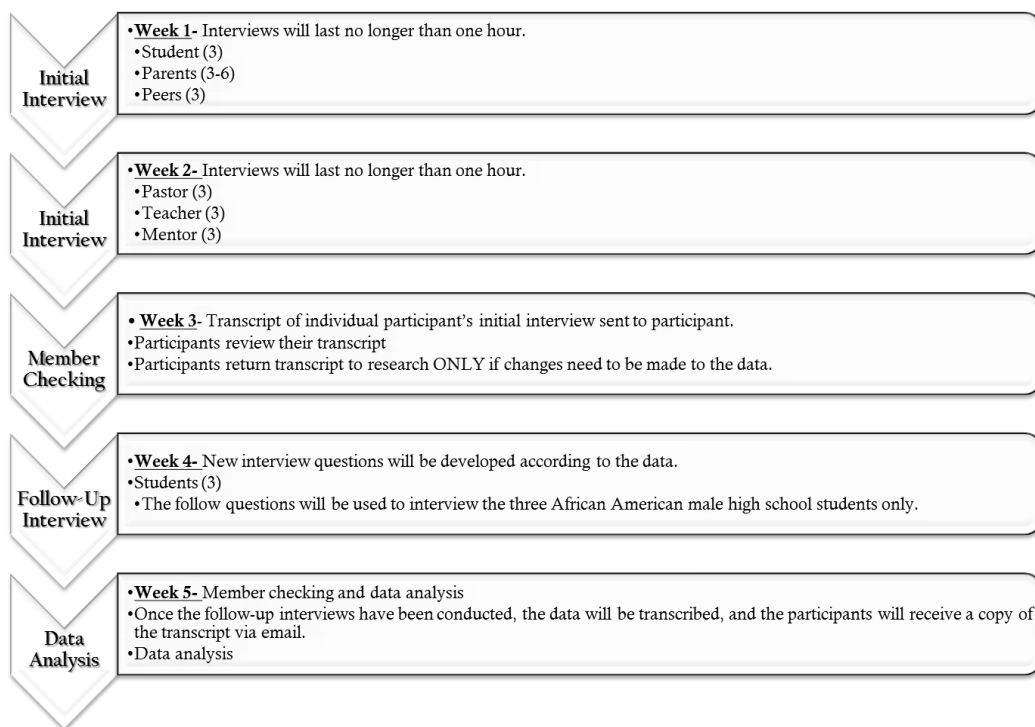- Data analysis

Figure 2. Data collection model.

Individual interviews, including date, time, and location, were scheduled upon

completion of each participants' individual meeting. I conducted the interviews in the conference room inside of the media center of Rockworth High School. I selected this location because it was accessible to all participants and provided privacy to protect the confidentially of the individual participants and of the students who were the focus of the study. Interview times were scheduled a week in advance as a common courtesy and to ensure the availability of the research participants. Interviews took place after 3:30 p.m. to allow dismissal of the school day at 3:00 p.m., grant participants enough time to arrive at the school, and to ensure privacy and the confidentiality of the participants' identities. As the researcher, I worked around the participants' availability and was flexible with my time. I contacted each of the participants via e-mail three days prior to their scheduled interview time as a reminder. They then received a phone call the day before their scheduled interview time.

Each in-depth interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. Although I made an effort to complete all of the interviews within 1 month, it actually took 2 ½ months to complete all interviews. I reviewed the transcripts utilizing the audio recording and written notes to ensure the information within the transcript was accurate. I saved all interviews onto on a secure network but separated them alphabetically according to the participants' last name. Upon completion of the initial interview, the data was transcribed. Participants were contacted individually to schedule an individual follow up meeting for member checking, including date, time, and location, upon completion of data transcription. Member checking is defined "as a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of

what has been recorded during a research interview" (Harper & Cole, 2012, p. 510). In

order words, member checking allows the researcher to check the recorded data for

accuracy. Thus, at the time of the meeting, the participants received a copy of their

interview transcript for member checking. If changes were necessary, they were made at

that time. However, no changes were made to the transcripts. Once I completed the

member checking, the data of the 16 participants, including the three African American

male high school students and each of the supporting participants (i.e., parents, teacher,

mentor, peer or friend or sibling, and pastor or community leader) were collected.

Data Analysis Plan

Based on intuitively derived categories, I coded the data. Codes provide meaning

to a concept, which strengthens a category (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005). Codes can indicate

specific ideas, keywords, topics, themes, phrases, concepts, and other information found

within the data, allowing a more thorough search of the data and identification of patterns

within the data. I coded the data manually while also utilizing Dedoose, a web-based

software. Dedoose has none of the complications associated with traditional software

programs. Since the program is Internet based, I had the ability to utilize the program

anywhere. The use of Dedoose was because the information and the data were protected

by a multifaceted security system, encryption, password protection, and information

backup.

<div align="center">

Issues of Trustworthiness

</div>

Creswell (2009) defined validation within qualitative research as trustworthiness

and authenticity of a research study while attempting to assess the accuracy of the

findings. When considering validity within qualitative research, validity is dependent

upon the correlation between the conclusion of the study and the reality; therefore, there

is no one set method to ensure the validity of a research study.

Research Validity

There were two main threats to research validity: researcher bias and reactivity.

Researcher bias deals with understanding how the beliefs, perceptual lens, and theories of

the researcher have influenced research study. To avoid my own personal biases, I kept a

reflective journal during the data collection instrument construction, data collection, and

data analysis processes. The dependability of the research, according to Given (2008),

rested on my ability to reduce bias, document observations, develop a reflective journal,

and remain as consistent as possible throughout the entire study.

Reactivity deals with the influence the researcher has on the setting or the

research participants (Maxwell, 2013). The goal of qualitative research is not to eliminate

reactivity but to understand how it can be used for productivity. In order to reduce

reactivity (Maxwell, 2013), I avoided asking leading questions and avoided adding my

own personal feelings, opinions, and comments to the participant's response. Along with

ethical protection of all participants, the validity and reliability are also ethical

considerations. Since the participants were the only ones who can legitimately judge the

credibility of the results, participants received a copy of their transcript of their interview.

Conducting a thorough description of the research context and the assumptions that were

essential to the research in order for the results to be generalized or be transferred to other

contexts can ensure transferability (Given, 2008), and appeared to do so in this study.

While the information for this research may be generalized, generalization is not the intended purpose of this study. Triangulation of the data could assist in maximizing the reliability and validity of the research. I conducted triangulation through interviews, examination of student transcripts, and member checking.

Ethical Procedures

I followed the requirements set forth by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and procedures. I did not collect any data until IRB approval was received. The IRB approval number for this research study, 12-19-16-0248478, expired on December 18, 2017. All data was collected, and the data analysis process had begun prior to the IRB expiration date. Upon IRB approval, I utilized the Consent Form to document the research participants understanding and willingness to participate in the research study. The only documents the committee and I signed prior to IRB approval were the Letters of Cooperation from community partners and the Confidentiality Agreements. The research participants were those individuals who provided the necessary data that was analyzed. These individuals included the students, their parents, their mentor, a former or current teacher, a peer, and their pastor or community leader. To document the community partner's (i.e., Rockworth High School) understanding and willingness to participate in the research study, I used the Letter of Consent. I kept the identities of all participants confidential. Pseudonyms kept the participants identity confidential. The pseudonyms were as follow: (a) students (S1, S2, S3); (b) parents (P1, P2, P3); (c) mentor (M1, M2, M3); (d) Pastor or community leader (L1, L2, L3); (e) friend/sibling (F1, F2, F3); and (f) teacher (T1, T2, T3).   There was no risk to the

participants as it pertained to unintended disclosure of confidential information,

psychological stress greater than what one would experience in daily life, attention to

personal information that was irrelevant to the study, and unwanted intrusion of privacy

of others. Participants had the liberty to cease their participation in the research at any

time during the study. I followed the recommended guidelines provided by Rubin and

Rubin (2012) as it pertained to the interview and interview procedure.

Summary

Chapter 3 describes this qualitative case study methodology, including the setting

and the participant selection process. I discussed the ethical responsibilities, including

informed consent and my bias. An in-depth description of the data collection process

including how I developed the interview questions was provided. I also discussed the data

analysis process. Chapter 4 includes the findings of the research study along with a

detailed and in-depth description of the experience of an African American male high

school student's academic success.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

I chose a qualitative case study design to explore how the parent(s), teacher, mentor, peer (either a friend or relative), and community leader or pastor influenced the creation of social capital for three African American male high school students and its effect on their academic achievement. The conceptual framework for this study was social capital theory. Social capital comprises of relationships that develop because of shared identities and obligations that provide possible as well as actual support and access to valued resources (Coleman, 1988). The overarching research question for this qualitative case study was: What is the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American high school male students?

This study used a case study approach as the research methodology. A case study was most appropriate for this research study because it facilitated the exploration of the phenomenon (i.e., the role of social capital on academic achievement) within its context (i.e. African American high school males) using various data sources (i.e., interviews, observations, academic transcripts, etc.) to ensure the issue was not explored through a single lens, but rather through a variety of lenses (i.e., student, mentor, teacher, peer, pastor), allowing for multiple facets of phenomenon to be revealed and understood (see Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). I conducted 18 interviews, but the final sample size was 16 participants.

Setting

Rockworth School District, the study site, is located in a small rural town and

consists of only four schools. The majority of the students have attended school together since kindergarten. Rockworth High School is the only high school in the district. At the time of the study, it served over 600 students and the student population demographic was: 48% Black, 25% White, 20% Hispanic, and 7% other. The female-to-male ratio was 2:1 and the student-to-teacher ratio was 18:1. Due to the student demographics of the school and the increase in the graduation rate, this high school was the most promising location for this research study. I informed the staff of Rockworth High School of the research inclusion criteria before beginning my recruitment.

Demographics

The participants for this research study were three high achieving African American male high school students. These students scored a Level 3 or higher, with the maximum score being a Level 5, on the EOC examination in Math I, Biology, and English II from between 2014 -2017. Students that score a Level 3 are proficient according to the NCDPI (n.d.). Those who score a Level 4 or 5 are considered not only proficient, but college and career ready as well (NCDPI, n.d.). Participants must have lived with their parent(s) or guardian(s), have an adult mentor, and be a member of a local church or be employed locally during the data collection period.

Participant Recruitment

I began participant recruitment by giving an invitation flier that included all the necessary criteria to participate in the study to the school staff at the high school. The staff then provided the invitation flier to all African American male students in each of their classes. The flyer provided directions to the students to e-mail me directly to express

their interest in the study. Students had 5 days after the distribution of the fliers to respond to the call to participate in the research study. Out of the approximately 100 fliers distributed, 13 students sent me an e-mail expressing their interest in participating in the study. Students received a brief survey in order to determine their eligibility and had 48 hours to respond. However, some of the students were not of legal age, some did not have a mentor, and others were not proficient on at least one of the EOC assessments leading me to exclude them from the study.

Out of the 13 students who initially responded, four students were truly eligible. I randomly selected three students out of the potential four, per my initial proposal. I sent the three selected students an introductory e-mail that included a consent form to be completed, signed, scanned and sent back to me via e-mail. I also requested the contact information of the students' parent or guardians and contacted them via telephone. Ultimately, these were all parents in the study, and no other adult guardians. During the telephone conversation, I provided the parents with an overview of the research study. Each parent verbally agreed and expressed interest in participating in the study. At that point, a face-to-face meeting was scheduled.

The location of the meeting was the media center conference room at Rockworth High School because it was a neutral location. Upon arrival, I greeted participants and introduced myself. I confirmed their identity and thanked them for their participation. The meetings lasted approximately 15 minutes. During the meetings, I gave the parents a consent form, which they completed and submitted after the meeting. I asked each parent and student to identify and provide the contact for each of the following individuals: (a) a

teacher, (b) a pastor or community leader, (c) mentor, and (d) peer or sibling. I obtained

and respected the students' and parents' preferences according to who they invited by

providing each identified individual with an invitation flier, which included the necessary

criteria to participate in the study. The flyer provided an overview of the study and

included directions for the individual to e-mail me directly to express interest in the

study. Participants had 5 days to contact each of the individuals they identified. After the

5 days, I contacted the participants to ensure flyer distribution. It took 15 days to gather

all of the information from the individuals identified. Those who were interested in

participating in the research completed the contact information form and e-mailed it back

to me.

I contacted each individual via telephone to receive a verbal agreement and to set

up a face-to-face meeting at the media center conference room of Rockworth High

School, in the same manner as the parent meeting. Each meeting lasted no longer than 15

minutes. At the time of their scheduled meetings, I gave a consent form to each teacher,

mentor, peer (either a friend or relative), and pastor or community leader. They

completed the form and I collected it for my records. The final sample size was 16

participants.

Participant Demographics

A total of 16 individuals participated in the research, but I conducted 18

interviews. Two of the young men selected two of the same secondary participants. The

first participant, a 45-year old male math teacher and coach was Phillip's teacher,

whereas for Michael, the same individual was his mentor. The second participant, a 49-

year old male history teacher and coach, was Michael's teacher, whereas for Phillip, the same individual was his mentor. Interviews occurred separately using a series of questions constructed for the specific role (i.e., teacher or mentor). The third student, Charles, chose different secondary participants.

To ensure confidentiality, I referred to all participants in the study by pseudonyms. Table 2 displays the demographics of the students and the individuals who they identified as their mentor, pastor or community leaders, teacher, and peer. The table also demonstrates the interrelationships among the participants.

Student Number 1, Phillip, was an 18-year old biracial senior with a 4.2 cumulative GPA. His father, a 53-year old, African American male, was the custodian at one of the local schools and was selected for this research study. Phillip's mentor was a 43-year old White male, who also served as his football coach and former teacher. The community leader who he identified was a 59-year old African American English teacher at the school and his National Honor Society advisor. Phillip also selected his 45-year old White male history teacher to be a part of the study. Finally, he identified his 18-year old twin sister as his peer representative for the study.

Student Number 2, Charles, was an 18-year old African American senior with a 3.5 cumulative GPA. His 35-year old African American mother had been in school studying to become a nurse. She was a single parent to Charles and his younger brother and was the selected parent for this research study. Charles's mentor was a 45-year old White male who was a retired Lieutenant Colonel with the U.S. Army and now serves as the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) instructor. Charles's pastor, a 52-year

old White male, had been his pastor for almost 10 years. Charles selected his 49-year old White Teen Pep teacher to be a part of the study. Finally, he chose his 18-year old African American male friend to be his peer representative for the study.

Student Number 3, Michael, was an 18-year old African American senior with a 3.2 cumulative GPA. He was the younger of two children. He lived with both of his parents. Michael's 89-year old African American father was a retired veteran of the U.S. Air Force and was the parent selected for this research study. Michael's mentor was a 49-year old White male, who was a coach and teacher at the high school. His community leader was a 56-year old African American male who was a retired principal. His 43-year old White math teacher was also selected to be a part of the study. Finally, he chose his 18-year old African American male friend, whom he had been friends with since primary school, to be his peer representative for the study.

Data Collection

I collected data through one-on-on, face-to-face interviews, which were audio recorded using a digital recorder. These interviews were scheduled after completion of the individual preliminary meetings with each participant, where the dates, times, and locations for the interviews were set. The location of all interviews was the conference room inside of the media center at Rockworth High School. This location was easily accessible to all participants and provided the necessary privacy to protect the confidentially of the individual participants who were the focus of the study. I scheduled interview times a week in advance as a courtesy and to ensure the availability of the research participants. All interviews took place after 3:30 p.m. to allow dismissal of the

school day at 3:00 p.m., granting participants enough time to arrive at the school and to

ensure the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants' identities. I worked around

the participants' availability and was flexible with my time. Participants received an e-

mail 3 days prior to their scheduled interview time as a reminder. Each participant also

received a phone call reminder the day before the scheduled interview time.

One-on-One Interviews

Prior to beginning the interview process, I carefully reviewed all research

questions and the interview protocol to bracket my ideas during the interview and data

analysis processes. As discussed in Chapter 3, I used the epoché process to suspend any

preconceived experiences or notions by recording them into my reflective journal. I

placed a bracketed description of my thoughts into my journal. In order to clear my mind

of any preconceived notions or data analysis, I conducted a self-reflection process before

each interview. After each interview, I reflected upon the interview by recording my

thoughts, comments, questions, and concerns into my journal. My independent field

journal, along with all printed and written interview responses and notes, was and will

continue to be kept in a secured lock box.

Following the interview protocols, I conducted an in-depth interview with each of

the participants. At the beginning of each of the interviews, I stated and explained the

purpose and protocol of the research study to keep it in the forefront of the entire

interview process. I informed participants that they would be audio recorded during the

initial meeting. Each participant granted verbal and written agreement. Each interview

lasted approximately 30-minutes to 1 hour. Despite efforts made to complete all of the

interviews within 1 month, it was not possible due to scheduling conflicts. Instead, I conducted interviews over the course of 2 ½ months.

Data Transcription

The transcription of all audio recordings was conducted once all interviews were complete. Due to the length of the interviews, a professional transcriber was hired, and it took approximately six weeks to transcribe all of the data. I reviewed the transcripts utilizing the audio recording and written notes to ensure that the information within the transcript was accurate. I saved the interviews into one file but separated alphabetically according to the participant's last name on a secure, password-protected network.

Follow-Up and Member Checking

Once the transcripts were completed, I contacted the participants to schedule an individual meeting for member checking, including date, time, and location. The location of the member checking meeting was the Media Center conference room in Rockworth High School. Meetings took place between the hours of 3:30 and 7:00 p.m. to ensure the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants' identities. Each participant met with me individually for no more than 30-minutes. During the meeting, each participant received a copy of his or her interview transcript for member checking, and had an opportunity to review it. I made no corrections; however, some participants added more details to their transcript. Additional data were included in the analysis. After member checking was complete, I analyzed the data of the 16 participants and each of the supporting participants via Dedoose, a web-based software.

Data Analysis

The data used to draw conclusions about the influence of social capital on the academic achievement of African American high school male students. I used induction to analyze the data. I collected and coded the data based on intuitively derived categories. Codes provide meaning to a concept, which strengthens a category. Codes have the ability to indicate specific ideas, keywords, topics, themes, phrases, concepts, and other information found within the data (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005).

Using Dedoose, I coded the data. I entered the participants' descriptions into the program. Descriptors included participants' occupation, gender, race, age, and the role they play in the students' life. Once I uploaded descriptors, I was able to develop and define codes based on the reoccurring text. Codes included education, grades, culture, morals or values, community, media, and others. Codes emerged even with preexistent codes. I uploaded the transcribed data to the software to Dedoose and then assigned transcriptions to each interviewee. I did this because the information and the data are protected by a multifaceted security system, encryption, password protection, and information backup.

Since Dedoose is a web-based program, I was able to access and utilize the program anywhere at any time. Although there were only 16 participants (i.e. three students and 13 additional participants), I uploaded 18 transcripts to Dedoose and grouped the data according to the three primary subjects of the research study. This occurred because two of the young men selected the same two secondary participants.

I manually coded all of the data in Dedoose and created broad categories that

related to the research questions, which allowed me a structure to identify subcategories on my second review. I organized the open codes that were connected to participants' responses. In Dedoose, I made memos and notes on my second review of the data and highlighted several key phrases and quotes that captured the essence of the experiences of the participants. The captured phrases were comments and were used to enhance my interpretations of the themes uncovered within the study. Several themes emerged because of the second review of the comments from the margins within Dedoose and from my interview notes. With the emerging themes, I reviewed my initial and subsequent notes while bracketing any thoughts and feelings that may have been associated with a specific participant or statement. Dedoose produced a data analysis matrix, which included various themes, for each research question. I organized the emergent themes by research questions.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness was evident in four areas: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. There are two main threats to research validity: researcher bias and researcher reactivity. Researcher bias deals with understanding how the beliefs, perceptual lens, and theories of the researcher might influence a research study in any way. Even though qualitative research is subjective in nature, Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers keep track of their beliefs and thoughts in a way that allow them to ensure these personal biases do not get in the way of accurate interpretation and presentation of the data. I remained unbiased as possible when collecting the data and remained aware of my assumptions that were rooted in my training as a high school

educator and what has been reinforced by the scholarly community in which I worked as an adjunct professor (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Researcher reactivity deals with the influence the researcher has on the setting or the research participants (Maxwell, 2013). In order to reduce reactivity, I avoided leading questions and mention of any personal feelings, opinions, and comments to the participant's response. Since participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Given, 2008), participants were given a copy of their transcript to review. Participants reviewed their transcripts to ensure accuracy.

To ensure the credibility of the research study, I remained consciously aware of any assumptions I made about how participants may respond to specific interview questions and left those assumptions completely out of my research findings. I attempted this by keeping a reflective journal during instrument construction, data collection, and data analysis processes. I recorded interviews and rereviewed all transcripts of the interviews. In addition, I conducted member checking, which allowed me to check the recorded data for accuracy. Participants reviewed their transcript and no corrections were necessary.

For prediction of dependability of the research, I utilized triangulation of the data. Triangulation of the data assisted in maximizing the reliability and validity of the research. I conducted triangulation through interviews, examination of student transcripts, notes taken during the interviews, and member checking. I based it on my ability to reduce my own bias, document observations, develop a reflective journal, and remain as consistent as possible throughout the entire study. I kept a secured audit trail, which

according to Malterud (2001) is a transparent description of the various steps taken during a research study from start to finish developing and reporting findings of raw data, written field notes, measurements, forms, and all corresponding documents.

As a means to further to improve the dependability of the data, I compared each recording and to their corresponding transcripts. I labeled each file with the date of the actual interview and other identifying information. I reviewed each transcript and loaded them into Dedoose to store, code, and manage multiple files. Within Dedoose, I created and managed all the codes per the participants to improve the transparency of my analysis. To ensure the security of the data, a password was assigned to the data to protect the data throughout the entire process.

To ensure transferability of data, I conducted a thorough description of the research context, limitations, and the assumptions essential to the research in order for the results to be generalized or be transferred to other contexts (Given, 2008). This study included three African American male high school students and specific representatives of their social networks. The study had strict requirements for qualified participants. I had a concern of creating conflict among students in the case that I had to turn them away from the study because they did not meet the research criteria or because I met my participant limitation. However, I did not have to address this concern because I only responded to the students who met all of the criteria and who contacted me about their willingness to participate in the study.

Results

I grouped the summary of the findings as presented according to the research

questions that guided this study. Identified and selected quotes were kept to the original transcript to retain the flavor of the conversational style of each of the participants. The selected quotes kept the focus on the composite meaning of the participants' description of their experiences. Coding was the primary procedure for capturing the themes within the data. The initial codes that were developed around the social capital theory that guided this research study were: (a) culture, (b) education, (c) relationships, (d) extracurricular activities, (e) morals or values, and (f) character. The review of the literature conducted for this research study guided my focus and construction of the research questions that addressed the role of social capital on academic achievement for African American male high school students.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that drove this research study was:

What is the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students?

The following additional research questions were included:

1. How do African American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence their academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers?

2. What other influences do African American male high school students identify as important for their academic achievement?

3. How do other stakeholders in the education of African-American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students'

academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement

of parents, mentors, and peers?

The data revealed that social capital plays a significant role in the academic achievement

of African American male high school students.

Three High School Students

I interviewed Phillip, Michael, and Charles. The three young men were all

graduating high school seniors. Phillip was an 18-year old bi-racial senior with a 4.2

cumulative GPA. He planned to attend college in the fall to study chemistry in hopes of

becoming a doctor. Michael was an 18-year old African American senior with a 3.2

cumulative GPA. He planned to attend college in the fall and major in engineering.

Charles was an 18-year old African American senior with a 3.5 cumulative GPA. He

planned to attend college in the fall and major in music production. the three students had

been friends since elementary school. Though their personalities differed, they all

appeared to display two things in common: (a) the drive to do and be better and (b) the

will to succeed. Specific representatives of each of their social networks were identified

by each of the students. These individuals were selected according to the criteria for

participant selection.

Overview of Parents

I interviewed three parents: Phillip's father, Charles' mother, and Michael's

father. All three parents indicated academics were priority in their home and their

children understood their expectations when it came to their education and grades. All

three parents indicated they expected their sons to attend college. They spoke of this as a

strong expectation that was not up for negotiation. Parents expressed their expectations as early as elementary school. Parents also noted parental engagement in their child's education was essential to their child's success.

Overview of Mentors

Of the three students interviewed, two of the students' mentors, Phillip and Michael, were their coaches as well as their previous or current teacher. Charles' identified his ROTC teacher as his mentor. When asked what role they believe relationships play in the school success of African American males, answers were similar. Mentors noted that genuine and authentic relationships were one of the keys to the academic success of all students, but especially of African American male students.

Overview of Teachers

I interviewed three teachers: Phillip's history teacher, Charles' Teen Pep teacher, and Michael's math teacher. Though each of the teachers spoke about each individual student based on their relationship with the student, one thing was consistent among all three teachers: Teachers should strive to have an authentic relationship with each of their students. Each teacher noted that having a genuine relationship with their students has alleviated behavioral issues within their classroom, increase their students' academic achievement, and has created a safe learning environment.

Overview of Community Leaders or Pastor

Phillip and Michael identified either a current or former school personnel as their community leader. Charles, on the other hand, identified his pastor as his community leader. When I asked the community leaders about some of the key individuals they

believed were necessary to prepare African American high school males for success,

many of the responses were similar. These individuals noted that it was essential for

African American male students to be active in their community, local churches, or in

other extracurricular activities such as sports. They expressed that the more occupied the

students were, the less likely they were to get in trouble in school, at home, or with the

law.

Overview of Peers

Charles and Michael named friends as their peers whereas Phillip's peer was his

twin sister. When asked what some of the things they shared in common as far as

education, educational goals, and grades, responses from the participants varied. Many of

the peers and the selected students noted that they competed with one another. They

competed academically or athletically. Their competition was of a positive nature, as it

was a form of external and internal motivation for the students to set achieve more.

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Summary of the Results

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In summary, through the analysis of the data collection, all three African

American male high school student participants expressed their relationships with their

parent(s), teacher, mentor, pastor or community leader, and peer or sibling have had a

profound influence on their academic achievement. The three students shared stories and

experiences that explained how their relationship with each of the secondary participants

affected their academic success. Through conversations, daily interaction, and personal

time spent with each of the secondary participants, the students noted they had learned

and grown morally, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically

because of these relationships. As a result, these forms of social capital have indicated that they influenced the students' academic success.

   The conjunction of the responses during the interviews led to the discovery of three main themes. Each theme addresses the research questions, with some themes overlapping. The three main themes were: relationship, culture, and student attributes. The exploration of these themes and several subthemes within them, formed the basis of this case study, and is detailed below.

Emergent Themes and Subthemes

   The examination of codes, categories, and subcategories allows a closer understanding of the emergent themes and subthemes that arose related to the overarching RQ and the three corresponding RQs. The themes, acknowledged within the data were: (a) relationships, including family and community; (b) culture, including core norms and future goals; and (c) student attributes, which related to students' interests and characteristics as described by themselves and which had a bearing on their social relationships. The results are organized and presented according the RQs previously mentioned. Table 3 provides an explanation of the three themes and six subthemes as well as which theme addresses the research questions.

Table 3

Emergent Themes and Sub Themes

Theme	Explanation	RQ
Relationship	The means and ways in which the students and their selected representatives are connected.	Overarching RQ
Family	Students' connections to their parent(s) or their sibling.	RQ 1; RQ 2; RQ 3
Community	Students' connections with their selected teacher, peer, mentor, and community leader or pastor.	RQ 1; RQ 2; RQ 3
Culture	The ideas, customs, norms, and social behavior of the students and their selected representatives.	Overarching RQ
Core Norms	The values and standards of social behavior identified by the students and their selected representatives.	RQ 1; RQ 2; RQ 3
Future Goals	Students post high school plans.	RQ 1; RQ 2
Student Attributes	The characteristics, personalities, and interests of the three students especially as related to their relationships and culture.	Overarching RQ
Interests	Activities and interests that the students took part in, particularly with those in their social capital networks.	RQ 1; RQ 2; RQ 3
Characteristics	Qualities or traits of the students	RQ 1; RQ 2; RQ 3

Results According to the Research Questions

Overarching Research Question. The overarching research question that drove

this research study was: What is the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students? Throughout various life experiences detailed in the interview discussions, some personal, family, and external experiences collectively resonated as a general theme of this research study that related to their high school academic experiences. The three students' experiences detailed in the interviews highlighted conversations, life situations, morals or values, and extracurricular activities that yielded positive outcomes to their academic achievement. Students shared stories that outlined their relationships with their parents, mentors, teachers, pastor or community leaders, and peers or siblings and how such relationships propelled them to academic achievement. Likewise, each of the secondary participants shared detailed stories of their relationship with students, and how they assist in motivating the students to achieve academically.

Subquestion 1. The first subquestion was: How do African American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence their academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers? The major findings of this study are that the students shared various life experiences that highlighted social capital constructs that had influence on their academics. Students described how their teachers, mentors, parents, peers or siblings, and pastors or community leaders each played major roles in their academic success. Not only did these relationships influence their academics but they also influenced their beliefs as well as assisted within the development of their core values. For instance, one of the young men recalled a time when, during one his football games, he became angry, and

his mentor, who was his coach, pulled him out of the game. The next day, his coach had a long conversation with him about his attitude and the need to remain humble. He stated that:

> Coach and I talked for a while about my attitude and how I acted on the field the night before …I honestly did not want to talk about it but I glad we did… as a captain, my attitude can dictate the attitude of the entire team…yah coach is a good guy.

As a result, humility was one of the core values this student expressed that he was steadily developing.

All three of the students' mentors worked at the high school. Having their mentor present daily helped keep them focused and on task, which has resulted in them achieving academic success. There are many data exemplars that illuminate the findings for this research question, as noted by Charles. He stated that he and his mentor spoke mostly about how he was doing in school, college, how to pay for college, and his future career goals and the best path to take to ensure success.

Likewise, Phillip and Michael, who both played football throughout high school, mentors were their coaches and at one point, their teacher. Michael noted that he and his coach went out to eat, attended collegiate football games together, and had conversations about his future and his desire to play football on the collegiate level. Phillip stated that his mentor was "like a father figure to him" and that his mentor held him accountable daily at school. "If I am late, he asks why I am late, and sometimes he knows my grades before I know them." Having these types of conversations with a positive male role

model, in Charles' opinion, has had a great influence on his actions.

When asking the students about how their parents helped to prepare them for academic success, each of the young men expressed that either their mother or father was a primary family influence that supported their schooling. Charles mentioned that his mother prepared him to be academically successful by being an example, as she is a single mom of two boys and is currently in college full-time. He stated that "she consistently speaks to me about my future and about being a positive example to my younger brother." Both Michael's mother and father have prepared him for academic success. Michael stated his mother always told him to "finish school so that I can one day make something of myself." He stated that both of his parents have consistently supported his athletic dreams as well but keeping in mind his education, which should always be his top priority.

When students were asked about how their peers helped to prepare them for academic success, each of the young men expressed that either their sibling or best friend had a great deal of influence on their academics. For example, during the interview, Phillip stated that his "friends and family basically [are] a support system for me… they help me get through everyday things the things that I have problems with." Like Phillip, Charles friends were part of his support system, especially his best friend. He stated that "he and I have been friends since eighth grade... we're pretty close, honestly, like we have the same mindset and we try to go for our goals." Michael noted that aside from his best friend, his sister was another peer who was essential to his academic success. During the interview, he stated that "I can honestly say, I don't think that I'd be the person I am

today without my sister... my sister was like my [second] mother."

      Subquestion 2. This research question was: What other influences do African American male high school students identify as important for their academic achievement? The major findings of this study as they relate to Research Question 2 discussed other influences African American male high school students identify as important for their academic achievement. Participants had both similar and varying responses to the interview questions that addressed this question. During the interviews, I asked students about conversations they have had and activities they have done with their mentor. Students shared stories of how their participation in sports and other extracurricular activities, such as JROTC and volunteering, contributed to their academic success. Other influences included afterschool employment, participation in religious activities, volunteering in the community, and several others.

      Michael noted that he and his mentor spent time together not only during football season, as his mentor was also his coach, but also during family dinners and outings such as football games. He stated that:

> Me and my mentor have become close this year. Like, I can honestly say my freshman, sophomore, and junior year, me and my mentor…did not talk as much. But when he became head coach, me and him like started talking.... he was trying to like put me in places where the colleges wanted me to see…he has taken me out to eat several times. Me and him have watched the, I wanna say, 'National Game.' You know- the football game with Clemson and Alabama.

Phillip, like Michael, and his mentor enjoyed time together through sports activities,

dinners and family activities outside of the school. During his interview, Phillip stated that he enjoyed "spending time with his mentor and his family… his wife cooks for us [he and his twin sister] and allows us spend the night if necessary." His mentor is also his football coach, so they spend time also on the football field. Charles had similar experiences with his mentor. He stated that "aside from class, we talk after school, and I participate in color guard, so we spend time with each other like that."

As it pertains to the students' description of their interaction with their teammates, co-workers, peers, and others that kept them grounded in their academics, students' experiences and stories varied. Charles made mention that his peer "honestly helped me a lot also... he's been a big encouragement for me like, in school, out of school- he's a good role model." He and his peer also enjoy spending time creating movies and music together. Likewise, Michael also talked about how he and his best friend spent time "chillin', watching sports, and going out to eat." He stated that his peer had showed him what a "true friend really is supposed to be." On the other hand, Phillip who selected his twin sister to be his peer participant, had different experiences than that of Michael and Charles. Phillip noted that he and his sister hung out together a lot, as they share the same friend. He also stated that "I like to talk with her... usually when I have a problem, I go to her first… when she has a problem, she comes to me, and then we just go from there."

Many of the participants conveyed how experiences of intrinsic motivation and internal control assisted in their academic success. Similarly, they conveyed feelings of respect and responsibility. For example, Phillip stated that his parents:

 … taught me, most importantly, to be respectful to adults and your peers and

people-- even people younger than you. Because to get respect, you gotta give

respect-- someone's always gonna be watching you, so you gotta make sure even

when people aren't looking, you gotta do the right thing…and you gotta be

responsible too… if you aren't responsible then, you're gonna be all over the

place.

For the students, their intrinsic motivation and resilience in pursuing academic success

was because of various themes. One such theme was extrinsic rewards. Such rewards

include money, awards, bragging rights, and more.

The students described how their relationships with their peers or siblings held

them accountable and how the bond they shared with their teacher went beyond the

classroom. Each of these individuals provided the students with extrinsic motivation.

Charles stated that his friend "honestly helped me a lot…he's been a big encouragement

for me like, in school, out of school- he's a good role model." His friend's

encouragement and friendship was a valuable source of motivation. Similarly, Phillip

stated that his sister "taught [me] that I gotta have respect [for] women most of all if you

not gonna respect nobody else." This respect was reflected in his relationship not only

with his sister but also with all female adults. Michael, during his interview, also stated

that his best friend gave him good advice when it came to "girls… and stayed on me

about my progress on my senior project."

All of the other influences that students described were related to their social

capital, but they also were related to students' own interests and attributes as well.

Students described all of the activities that they undertook with those in their social

capital networks. For example, Phillip's selected teacher and mentor were both his football coaches. He not only encountered them during the regular school day, but he also spent time with them afterschool during football practice. At one point, during this sophomore year, Phillip's teacher was both his football coach and his basketball coach, as he was coaching both sports simultaneously. Phillip noted that he and his mentor "gelled" sophomore year because his mentor was "straight-forward, funny, but yet caring." He stated that his mentor "really cared about me as a person and not just as a student."

Likewise, Charles's mentor was once his ROTC teacher. He spent time with his mentor during the school and afterschool, as he was a member of the drill team and color guard. Charles stated that he "thoroughly enjoyed ROTC but the military is not for me…at least not right now." One of the things that attracted Charles to his mentor was his mentor's 'never give up' attitude. Charles admired his mentor's military career and how his mentor managed to balance his personal and professional life. Like his mentor, Charles too wants to one day have a thriving career and a wife along with at least two children and a dog.

Michael too shared several stories of activities he participated in with his social network. For example, Michael and his best friend were both members of the varsity football team. He and his best friend also exercised together, did homework together, and hung out on the weekends. Michael stated that he and his best friend remained friends for over a decade because they knew what "triggered each other" and they had a "mutual respect for each other and each other's families."

Subquestion 3. This question was: How do other stakeholders in the education

of African-American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students' academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers? The major findings of this study as they relate to Research Question 3 dealt with how other stakeholders in the education of African American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influence students' academic achievement, such as community, culture, religion, and involvement of parents, mentors, and peers. Each of these participants provided stories of conversations and experiences that they have had with the students. These experiences, both positive and negative, directly influenced the student decision-making process, academics, character development, and self-esteem.

The parents of the three students, who were the focus of this research study, described their relationship with their child during their interview. Each shared stories of their child's childhood and how the morals and values that they had instilled in their child contributed to their child's high academic achievement. For example, Phillip's father stated, "I do not tolerate any of my children being mediocre because doing the bare minimum will not get you to where you want to go in life." He noted that they had to work for and earn everything they would receive in life.

Likewise, Charles' mother stated he was at home with her when he was young because she had him at the age of 18. She noted she tried to teach him, not realizing it was not enough. When Charles got to kindergarten, his mother stated he "did not even know how to hold a pencil properly because, in my mind, I'm thinking, "well, he's holding it [pencil] and he's writing." However, she decided to work with him daily,

challenged him academically, and did not give up on her son, which resulted in him

leaving kindergarten being able to read at a second-grade level. Charles' mother

mentioned her participation in the Parent Teacher Association and how she attends all

Open Houses and Student-Teacher conference. Though Michael's father is older, he

noted that he and Michael's mother are very active in all aspects of his life, especially his

academics. They remain in constant contact with his teachers and coaches to remain

abreast on his academic progress.

During the interviews, the mentors of the three students, who were the focus of

this research study, described their relationship with their mentee and shared stories of

how they met their mentee. The mentors also spoke about the importance of students

having a mentor, how they developed their relationship with their mentee, and how they

are reinforcing the morals and values taught to their mentee by their parents. For instance,

Michael's mentor, who was his football coach stated, "I think everything has to start with

building – having a relationship with the child ... letting the child not only see, but feel,

that they are a person, that they are not an object." He also said:

> I think it's important for them, specifically Michael, to see how you maintain and
>
> … how you handle things when things go well, when things don't go well … and
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> those little things they see would mold and develop their personalities."

Similarly, Charles' mentor mentioned that he believes the village was essential to

the development of students. He noted students need a "strong village that supports them

... where the kid is number one and critical ... and it doesn't have to be parents or quote-

unquote the 'nuclear' family." With this mindset, he believes his relationship with

Charles fostered a bond of trust that allowed him to give Charles advice when necessary for making difficult decisions. Phillip's mentor, on the other hand, noted that he was not sure how his role as Phillip's mentor has impacted him academically. He stated that their relationship has affected Phillip "socially and it's gotten him to be more … respectful, and to be more accepting of older adults."

The peers of the three students who were the focus of this research study described their relationship with their peers during their interview and shared stories of their relationship. During her interview, Phillip's sister spoke about their relationship. She stated that:

> I feel like our relationship is very close. We tell each other everything. When he's feeling down, I can tell, like… I just get a vibe from him. And we understand each other perfectly. I wish he was a girl, but then again, I don't. I like having a brother…we have a very strong relationship, a strong bond. We don't really argue like that anymore. I guess that's because we're getting older and we're starting to cherish the moments more. Although we are going to the same college, it-- before he knew that he was going to the same college as me, he would cry to my mom and be like, "Oh, I don't wanna leave her", and stuff like that… 'cause he feels like he has to watch out for me; which I don't know why, but I guess it's just a brother thing.

When asked about how they assist each other with school assignments, Phillip's sister noted that she is not strong in math but he is, so "I ask him for help here and there [with math]." However, Phillip is not strong in Science. She stated, "I'm really good with

science…I enjoy science so when he needs help with science, I'm there."

Charles's friend noted that he and Charles's relationship began three years prior.
His friend stated that:

Actually, he has actually [been] trying to start his thing with music and
everything. And so, it just happened that-- it was crazy how it happened because,
you know, like I said, I'm a filmmaker and everything. We like to do things like
making music videos and all that other stuff. He *does* music…we became friends
through ROTC and just kinda joking around and just kinda being cool with each
other… and it's kinda beneficial on both of our sides - being friends - 'cause we
didn't know what-- we didn't know we was gonna cross this path that we have
right now… He's actually pretty smart. So… and we both have imaginations.

As it pertains to how they assist one another, Charles's friend noted that they
continuously asked each other:

What's your grades looking like man? Like, how you are doing in that class?'… I
try to do that, encourage him, and stuff like that. I mean, that's (laughs) that's
something natural that comes outta me.

Like the other students, Michael is extremely close to his peer. His friend stated
that he has known Michael since:

…I was four. He's just always been that little brother to me. And if it's anybody -
like if I needed to talk to, or like, just to get something off my chest… I knew he
was one of those people that I could just say, 'Ay, I need to talk to you.' Or if I
needed something he was there. And he always been-- he's always been a brother

figure to me.

When it came to education, he stated that motivation was essential to increase academic

performance. During his interview, he noted that:

> With academic performance, I feel like, as long as we have like that motivation to
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> just …wake up and just want it. Like you just can't just come to school and just
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> sit here and just think everything's gonna be given to you. You gotta want it and
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> strive for it; 'cause if you not gon' strive for it, you just wasting your time getting
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> out of bed just to come here and sit… so yeah, we motivate one another.

Explicit Findings

All research questions focused on the role of social capital on the academic

achievement of African American male high school students. It is useful at this point to

discuss the themes in more detail, as they overlapped significantly in the discussion of

how the findings related to each research question. The themes, acknowledged within the

data were: (a) relationships, including family and community; (b) culture, including core

norms and future goals; and (c) student attributes, which related to students' interests and

characteristics as described by themselves and which had a bearing on their social

relationships. These themes and corresponding subthemes illustrated in Figure 3.
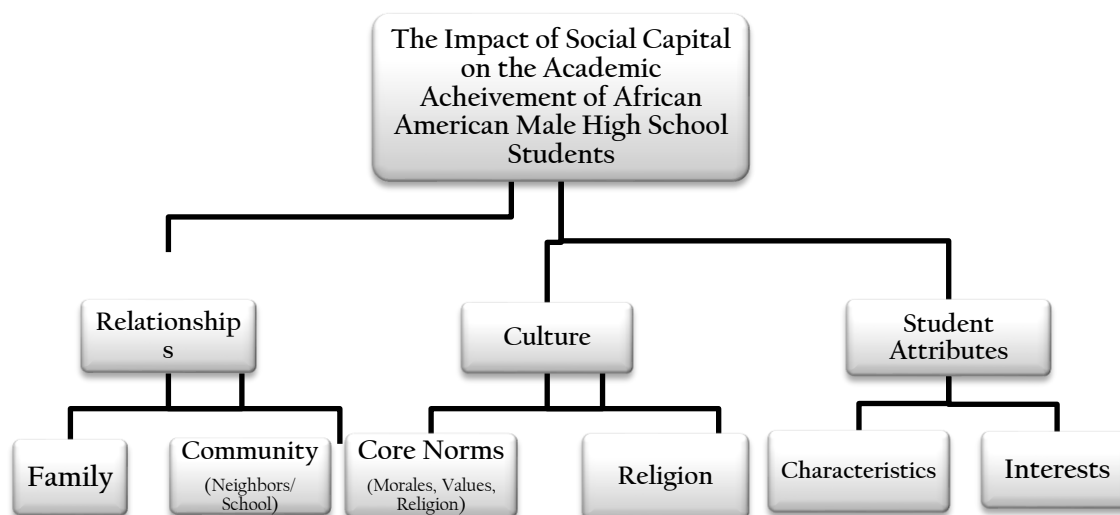
Figure 3. Emergent themes and subthemes.

Relationships

The first theme that emerged, *relationships*, was related to multiple research

questions. It was key for describing the overarching research question because the nature

of social capital is all about human relationships, and thus was related to all sub questions

as well. All three students noted that their parent, mentor, teacher, pastor or community

leader, and friend or sibling have all contributed to their academic success. The three

students conveyed experiences of receiving positive and supportive affirmations because

of their relationships with their parents, mentors, teachers, pastor or community leaders,

and peers or siblings. Participants expressed how their experiences have positively

influenced their academics and their pursuit of attending college. Participants shared

many experiences of how receiving support from individuals such as the secondary

participants via various forms of tangible as well as verbal encouragement contributed to

their academic success. Such encouragement included a variety of extrinsic motivators

including one-on-one conversations, continuous follow-up on their grades, peer or sibling academic competitions, high parental expectations, and outings such as dinner or the movies. The students noted they received such experiences daily at home, at school, at church or work, or sports activities. The participants internalized these forms of encouragement. Encouragement produced motivation to do better and to be better academically, and in some cases, athletically. Students, who received high levels of support from their family, community, and school personnel, expressed a significant amount of confidence in their academics, which resulted in them being accepted to at least three colleges or universities.

Family Influence. Various family members have influenced students to achieve academically. Aside from verbal encouragement and extrinsic experiences, students expressed a sense of responsibility not to fail or disappoint the individuals who provided them with social capital. During his interview, Phillip stated that his father told him and his siblings that "education is kind of what overrules everything…nowadays you need an education to go…further in life to prosper." For the three students, family means the world to them and they value the opinion of the members of their family. Michael stated that his dad "spoils me a lot... like he'd probably give me the world if I asked him to…so yeah, I love my dad…my dad does anything that I want."

Verbal affirmations and extrinsic experiences that stemmed from personal relationships may have had a positive influence on the academic achievement of these three high school students. For example, Charles noted that his mother's actions (i.e., working, attending college, and parenting full-time) had a tremendous influence on him

academically. He stated that "what my mother is doing now really does push me more than before…she always talks about how she wanted to become an RN which always just made me think about my own education." Watching his mother balance home, work, and school has motivated Charles to achieve academically in hopes of one day completing college and beginning a lucrative career in order to support his family financially.

The competitive nature of Phillip and his sister's relationship is key example of how extrinsic experiences and motivation influence academic achievement for African American male high school students. Phillip's sister stated that:

…it's competitive especially in Math…he'll already take a class and made a good grade and then I'll make a little bit lower grade and he would say 'I guess I made a higher grade than you'… but my GPA is higher than his now, so that's all that counts.

Because of the competitive nature of their relationship, Phillip and his sister are junior marshals and are ranked sixth (Phillips sister) and seventh (Phillip) in the senior class, which consist of 134 students.

Michael also credits his sister for having a significant impact on his academic accomplishments. He stated during his interview that:

I don't think that I'd be the person I am today without my sister…earlier in our childhood…my sister was my second mother. My sister taught me how to braid hair…she actually was the one that helped me with my reading and writing when I was in kindergarten, so I guess you could say she taught me how to write too.

His sister was a senior when he entered high school as a freshman. She assisted him with

becoming acclimated with his new environment, introduced him to the football coach who would later become his mentor, and assisted him with class assignments. Because of his sister, his popularity amongst the students and the staff grew.

Each of the three students articulated that they maintained a high-grade point average and plan to attend college in the fall, because they wanted to improve their and their families' quality of life. A sense of responsibility for bettering the future for them and their families conveyed throughout the many life experiences the participants shared. Participants' shared their desire to better their lives and their families were not limited to academic success but also to financial and 'status' success. The students shared their desire to be financially wealthy and famous. Many of the life experiences they shared revolved around their participation in sports or clubs/honor society, the time they spent with their families, their interactions with their friends, and their level of engagement within the classroom or with their teachers.

Community. The community of Rockworth was close knit and intimate. With only four schools within the district, students, faculty as well as staff, and parents are familiar with one another, may be related, or have worked with or encounter each other within the community. Community members, such as teachers, coaches, mentors, community leaders, and others, expressed their views on education. More specifically, these community members mentioned of conversations they have had with the students pertaining to their education and academic success.

The three students noted how their relationship with their mentor was crucial to their success. Two out of the three mentors were either the students' football or wrestling

coaches, whereas the other young man's mentor was his JROTC teacher. Each of the young men interacted with their mentors daily. They discussed how their mentors constantly checked on their grades or progress in class, talked to them about life after high school, and keeping in constant contact with their parents. For example, Phillip stated that his mentor:

> …is like another father figure to me. He helps me out. He makes sure I have everything that a father is supposes to make sure you have. I mean, he makes sure I have clothes – like good clothes that fit me- stable shoes, well good shoes that are in good condition…and most important, he makes sure I'm here on time to school. He always knows what time I come to school. If I'm late or not, he (mentor) always says something to me. If I'm on time, he says 'Way to get here on time!'…and yeah, he just encourages me…

Though his father was in his life and he lived with his father, his mentor was another significant male role model in his life. His father was not as knowledgeable as his mentor when it came to navigate through high school, applying for college, and applying for financial aid, therefore his mentor was essential during these pivotal moments.

While interviewing Michael's mentor, he spoke about his relationship with Michael, the time they spent together outside of school, and frequent conversations they have had pertaining to school and life in general. He stated that:

> Michael and I have talked [about] life after Rockworth. Michael is a smart individual. I personally think Michael is still trying to decide what type of individual he wants to be, whether he wants to be-- exercise his ambition and self-

drive to reach his potential to…Not only going off to school, but obtaining a

degree, getting a job, a high-paying job-- position that he wants to be able to

provide for himself and loved ones. Michael is trying to decide if he wants to do

the 'college thing,' for no better choice of words, or does he just want to always

remain in Thomasville. We have spoken about colleges. He has considered

several colleges. Again, we have talked about if there's a college that you think

you want to go to, to have the major that you want to study, go visit, go see the

college. See if you're comfortable with the atmosphere. If it is, full throttle ahead

and go after it. Michael has spoken about trying to be a student-athlete in college.

Michael mentioned that his mentor has assisted him on school assignments including

home-work and projects, as his mentor is also a teacher at the high school. Without his

mentor's help, he stated, he did not think he would have excelled academically.

The students articulated the importance of having a strong relationship with adults

and peers. All three young men expressed how important it was for their teachers to

cultivate genuine and authentic relationships with them inside and outside the classroom.

During his interview, Phillip spoke about his National Honor Society (NHS) advisor and

the things he enjoyed doing with advisors and his fellow NHS members. He stated that

"…during the holidays, we go ring [the] bells at Wal-Mart or something like that, that's

always fun…being with the people that are also in National Honor Society." Phillip noted

that though he enjoyed spending time with his NHS advisor outside of the classroom, he

some days dreaded going to her class. She was his senior English teacher and she was

extremely tough on his class. However, he later mentioned that he was grateful for her

tough love because it kept him "grounded and focus."

The students shared stories of how their neighbors too have cared for them when their parents were not around. The students' parents also grew up in the Rockworth community; therefore, many of the members of the community were related to one another, went to school with one another, or have been neighbors for many years. Having grown up in such a tight-knit community, the students were able to share life experiences of the community also being like their family. These students' 'village' worked closely together in order to ensure the success of the students.

Culture

The second theme that emerged, culture, provided a link between culture and academic achievement. All three students noted their community, family, and religion have all contributed to their academic success. Participants articulated that the people within their community were all responsible in their rearing because many of those individuals grew up with their parents. The students' family background also influenced their behavior and academic success. Students discussed how their family transferred values, norms, and beliefs to them. The students noted that family consisted of friends, neighbors, church family, and others. Their family influenced their academic success.

Within culture, religion influenced their values and morals. Although I only interviewed one of the students' pastors, all three young men shared stories of attending church during their childhood and how their faith contributed to their academic achievement. The students noted how the church has encouraged them to excel through various community outreach activities and church outings. For example, Charles' pastor

had a positive influence on Charles' the academic achievement. Because of this relationship with his pastor, Charles expressed how he believed that he had grown spiritually because of his pastor's teaching and his participation in youth group, thus increasing his belief that he can succeed in life. Charles' Pastor stated that:

> I think he's got a mother that loves the Lord and you know, wants to see him do the best he can do in life and… from everything I know about that family, they've got a good supporting cast behind him with his grandmother and mom. They support him so that even though they may not be a man in the house. He's got a strong spiritual leader in his mother that has been real – is a big contributing factor. You know, I think he's smart enough to see the efforts that his mother is putting in to do the best she can under the circumstances… it can never be easy with a woman raising children by herself.

Currently, two of the students do not attend church regularly. However, they all noted their belief in God and the need to have faith in order to succeed.

Various cultural experiences might have influenced the academic achievement of the three African American male high school students. An individual's environment may significantly influence their behavior. For example, Phillip stated that "I grew up in the city of Rockworth, and I think the city itself kind of like molded me, along with my father, molded me into the young man I am today." He attributed some of his norms and values to the community he was raised in and did believe that his environment played a significant role in his educational values. Likewise, Michael mention that "…education is important to me because, ever since [I was] a young kid, I always thought [it was a] way

out of Rockworth." Michael saw education as a key that would unlock his potential and grant him the tools to achieve success.

Core Norms. A culmination of family norms or values, social behavioral norms, religion, and other environmental factors contributed to the academic achievement of African American male high school students. The social network representatives, which each student selected, mentioned various values, norms, and social behavior that they impressed upon the student. For example, Charles' teacher stated that:

> There's a lot of- a lot of negative social and peer pressure, I think…I've got a
> student in my class this semester who by all accounts should be valedictorian of
> the class. I mean, he's brilliant. If you're black female, maybe it's a little
> different. I don't know. But it feels like if you're a black male, being the smartest
> kid in the class is like not allowed. It's like not socially acceptable or something.
> And so, I'm always after him... like, 'Don't conform. Don't give in to the pressure
> to not be who you really are.

For him, it was important for Charles to know who he is and for him not to conform to what society or his peers deems as the 'typical black male teen.' He wanted Charles to take a stand and be himself.

Like Charles' teacher, Phillip's mentor had a similar reasoning. For him, teachers need to see their students as more than a number or a grade. They should take the time to get to know the student and they should take personal interest in the needs of the student.

> I just think for African-American males especially, having that great teacher who
> has confidence in you and believes in you… You know, I think nine times out of

ten it's the teacher. I thoroughly believe if you can let a student know that you care more than just what their grade is on a sheet of paper, they may not perform any better, let's say, on the test… But saying that, if they know that you care for 'em as a person, ok, they're going to take the teaching that you have a whole lot more to heart and more serious.

As they were growing up, the students mentioned various individuals held them accountable for going to school daily as well as remaining on the right track to achieve academic success. These individuals included their pastor or community leader, peer, neighbor, teacher, and others. Michael's teacher stated that "they (social networks) build and strengthen the village." For Michael, his village was significant because they taught him "right from wrong" and how to "be a man."

Similarly, Charles' pastor talked about being an example for Charles and for his entire congregation. During his interview, he noted that he has always lived a transparent life and wanted others to see just how grace covers us all. He stated that:

> First, I try to live in a way that presents Christ. Try to feed them information that helps them in their life, through troubles, gives them directions according to the Word of God…that's what we have to do is encourage others to take lessons you've been taught…and pray fully that it rolls over into your family and your immediate love ones. And if it goes like that, then we're all helping one another along in life.

Interview data suggested much of the students' core beliefs, values, and norms may have stemmed from their family.

Future Goals. The students shared various stories regarding their experiences with their parents, mentors, teachers, peers or siblings, and pastors or community leaders. Having high expectations and setting goals that may have influenced the students' academic achievement. For example, Michael stated that:

My mama finished high school, but she never got to go to college 'cause she had my sister. She always told me that she wanted me to be better than her and she wanted me to go to college. She always pushed me and my sister to like compete with each other like when we were kids. When I was a kid, I used to tell Rosie (*pseudonym used*) [that] I was going to graduate before her and that just pushed [us]; we pushed each other.

The high expectations Michael's mother set for both of her children directly influenced his academic decisions. Similarly, Charles stated that "…well, I'm not going to say it's nothing else I could do; but for me, I think that's my best option (education)." For him, education was the best option for him to attain the success that he dreamed of one day achieving.

Having high expectations set before them and setting along with meeting goals may have influenced African American high school male students to achieve academic success. Collectively, the students' stories suggested a strong family and community presence, accountability at school, and consistent involvement in the community. Through accountability and healthy competition, participants expressed how their peers and/or siblings were influential in and contributed to their academic success. Students expressed their desire to attend graduate school or medical school after they complete

college. Their desire to better themselves and their family, along with their understanding

of the need for an adequate education, was evident during their interviews.

Student Attributes

The final theme that emerged, student attributes, was related to multiple research

questions and is thus also described length in sections above, but also requires some

separate attention as it helped answer the overarching research question as well as sub

question 2. One of the key aspects of social capital is the impact of core values, norms,

and principles that have been taught on the development of an individual's character.

These values were related to the activities and interests of the students, especially those

that they experienced with individuals from their social networks. Those experiences

provided a backdrop for expressing students' characteristics and social influences.

The activities students reported enjoying with their peers and mentors included

sports, going to the movies, eating out, and more. Michael, for example, stated that he

and his mentor spent time outside of school. He noted that:

> While my mom was unemployed, his wife used to make us lasagna 'cause it was
>
> like my favorite food and he used to bring it over there to me… so he just taught
>
> me like, help others just because it's the good thing to do.

Likewise, Phillip noted that he enjoyed attending "football games with his mentor… and

dinner with his family". Like the other two students, Charles stated that he and his mentor

had "long conversations about college… and we also hangout after school."

All three students noted that the core values, norms, beliefs, and principles that

were taught to them by their parent, mentor, teacher, pastor or community leader, and

friend or sibling have all contributed to who they are as a person. The three students conveyed experiences of being rebuked, corrected, or disciplined by their parents, mentors, teachers, pastor or community leaders, and peers or siblings. Participants expressed how those experiences have built character, shaped their behavior, and contributed to their current as well as future aspirations. Participants shared conversations they have had with the secondary participants about 'becoming a man' as well as becoming a contributing member of society. All three young men noted that life was one of their greatest teachers. Many of their response within the classroom came as a result of what they had be taught by the secondary participants.

Characteristics. The students shared stories about being disciplined if they were disrespectful to an adult, especially a teacher; if they received a grade lower than a 'B', if they failed to keep their word, and others. Phillip, for example, noted that:

> …Every time I go home and tell him [his father] about my grades, he always criticizes me if I made anything lower than a 'B', he'll be mad…but usually that's why I don't bring home anything lower than a B.

Likewise, Michael's mentor also played a significant role in the development of his character. During the interview, Michael stated that his teacher taught him to put "family first one… [and] do to others what you would want to be done." Charles noted that both his pastor "taught me speaking skills… and being able to build others." As a result, the students noted they developed responsibility, leadership, ownership, thinking critically, trust, problem-solving, and other character traits.

Interests. The three students shared stories about sharing common interests with

each of the secondary participants. Such interests included attending football games,

going to the movies, and volunteering within the community. For example, during his

interview, Michael stated that his mentor:

> … Has taken me out to eat several times. Me and him have watched the, I want to
>
> say 'National Game' game, the football game with Clemson and Alabama. We
>
> watched that together. I was at his house for New Year's Eve and …Yeah, he just
>
> takes me places with him, show me like different things-well, he basically showed
>
> me that, there's more than just the city of Rockworth.

Charles had a similar experience with his mother. He stated:

> Sometimes when my mom gets the time, we go out and just talk about my college
>
> stuff. Pretty much just talk about life. We actually like movie time. Like, every
>
> Friday we have movie time. We just sit around, eat popcorn, talk like always.

Phillip noted that he enjoyed spending time with his community leader, who was the

National Honor Society advisor, and the fellow members. He stated that:

> We go out like during the holidays and we go ring bells at Wal-Mart or something
>
> like that. That's always fun. Being with the people that's also in National Honor
>
> Society, just being around them and how intelligent each one of them are. And
>
> just yeah, they have good personalities and all that.

Summary of the Findings

The research questions focused on the role of social capital on the academic

achievement of African American male high school students, and data indicated that the

emergent themes were apparent across the overarching research question and all three

sub-questions. The themes, acknowledged within the data included: (a) relationships, including family and community; (b) culture, including core norms and future goals; and (c) student attributes, which related to students' interests and characteristics as described by themselves and which had a bearing on their social relationships.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure the validity of this research study, I used the following methods: member checking and peer review. Harper and Cole (2012) defines member checking as a quality control process by which the researcher looks for ways to improve the validity, accuracy, and credibility of the recordings obtained during the research interview process. Member checking allowed me to check the recorded data for accuracy. Participants reviewed their transcript during the meeting. There were no corrections. However, I took this opportunity to share the preliminary interpretations with each participant as well as to ask some follow-up questions. Follow-up questions clarified some unintelligible segments within the transcription and validating preliminary interpretations.

The second method utilized to validate the transcriptions was the use of a peer reviewer. I granted the peer reviewer a copy of the transcriptions along with a copy of the findings and my preliminary statement about the influence of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. An in-person meeting took place to discuss any questions generated because of the review. There were no fundamental changes made. As a result of discussing the data with the peer reviewer, I was able clarify my preliminary interpretations. The peer reviewer posed several

questions that I originally did not think about during the data analysis process.

Summary

The purpose of this research study was to explore the academic achievement of African American male high school students. The research examined how the parent(s), teacher, mentor, peer, and pastor influence on creating social capital leading to the academic achievement of three African American male high school students. Phillip, Charles, and Michael each attributed their academic success to the support they received from various individuals in their lives including their parent(s), mentor, teacher, peer or sibling, and pastor or community leader. Each of these individuals created some form of social capital within the lives of the students, leading to their academic success. Other stakeholders describe several contributing factors including home environment, accountability, relationships with non-parent adults, and religious affiliation.

Within Chapter 5 the purpose of this research study along with the implications of the findings within the conceptual framework. Recommendations for further research and the implications for social change were reviewed. The review included a review of the current research related to the impact of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how the parents, teachers, mentors, peers, and pastor or community leaders of three African American male high school students influenced their creation of social capital and effect this had on the students' academic achievement. The conceptual framework for this study was social capital theory. Social capital comprises of relationships developed because of shared identities and obligations that provide possible as well as actual support and access to valued resources (Coleman, 1988). The review of the literature I conducted guided the focus of this study and the construction of the research questions to address the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. Prior research and theory on social capital and African American male students provided a foundation for this research study. This study also provided a platform for participants to share their voices on how relationships directly influenced their academic achievement.

This study design was a framework for understanding how various individuals in a student's life can assist in the development of social capital and how, in turn, social capital influences the student's academic achievement. Interviews provided a first-hand account and interpretation of how social capital influences their academic achievement throughout high school. I interviewed the three African American male students, who were seniors at Rockworth High School. I also interviewed a parent, a mentor, a teacher, a community leader or pastor, and a sibling or friend of each of the three students for this

study. Interviewing the three students along with the corresponding individuals allowed me to work intimately with the participants, learning more about their lives, their relationship with the student, and their views on education.

African American students often are not encouraged to achieve academically during their primary and secondary education, resulting in a lower high school GPA (Zell, 2011). As a result, they tend to fail to finish high school, are disproportionally placed in behavior disorder and special education classrooms, and are disproportionally targeted for disciplinary actions including expulsion (Zell, 2011). Rockworth High School is in the small rural town of Rockworth, NC, and it is the only high school in the town. The district is a Title I school district and serves approximately 2,446 students consisting of 925 African Americans, 724 Hispanic Americans, 598 Whites, 154 Multiracial, and 30 Asian Americans.

At the time of the study, the high school served over 600 students with the student population demographic consisted of almost 50% African Americans with a 2:1 female-to-male ratio and a student-to-teacher ratio of 16:1. Due to the student demographics of the school and the increase in the graduation rate, this high school was the most promising location for the research study. Despite the steady increase in the graduation rate, the student dropout rate remains consistent. In this study, I examined how social capital influenced the three selected African American male students' academic achievement by examining their relationships with a parent, a mentor, a teacher, a sibling or peer, and a community leader or pastor.

The structure of the research questions captured participants' narratives pertaining

to participating students' academic achievement and how their relationships with secondary participants influenced their academic achievement. Through random sampling, I chose three students to participate in the study. The sample population consisted of three high school seniors who were proficient on the Math I, English II, and Biology EOC standardized assessments. Those three students then identified secondary participants (a parent, a mentor, a community leader or pastor, a teacher, and a sibling or peer) for the study. I asked participants specifically about their education, their core beliefs about education, and how each of the secondary participants influenced their academic achievement.

Summary of the Results

In this study, I focused qualitatively on the impact of social capital on the academic achievement of three African American male high school students at Rockworth High School. The major finding of this research study was that social capital positively influenced the academic achievement of African American male high school students. Students shared detailed experiences about conversations, life situations, morals or values, and extracurricular activities that yielded positive outcomes to their academic achievement. The students also shared stories about their relationships with their parents, mentors, teachers, pastor or community leaders, and peers or siblings and how these relationships propelled them in their academic achievement.

Students mentioned several experiences of how receiving support from individuals, such as the secondary participants, via various forms of encouragement, contributed to their academic success. Encouragement such as extrinsic motivators,

including one-on-one conversations; consistent follow-up on their grades; peer or sibling academic competitions; high parental expectations; and outings, such as dinner or the movies, were essential to their drive for academic success. They were motivated to do better and to be better academically, and in some cases, athletically because of daily experiences at home; at school; or from church, work, or sports activities. The participants internalized these forms of encouragement. Students, who received high levels of support from their family, community, and school personnel, expressed a significant amount of confidence in their academics, resulting in acceptance into at least three colleges or universities.

The second major finding of this research study was that social capital constructs had a positive influence on the academic achievement of the African American male high school students who were the focus of this study. The many life experiences the students shared highlighted social capital constructs that influenced their academics. This finding addressed Research Question 1 in which I asked how African American male high school students describe the social capital constructs that influenced their academic achievement, such as community; culture; religion; and the involvement of parents, mentors, and peers. Students noted how the secondary participants each played a significant role in their academic success. The relationships not only influenced their academics, but they also influenced their beliefs as well as assisted them with the development of their core values.

Some of the experiences conveyed by the participants noted intrinsic motivation along with internal control assisted in their academic success. Students' intrinsic

motivation and resilience in pursuing academic success followed various themes such as extrinsic rewards, including money, awards, bragging rights, and several others. Students' relationships with their peers or siblings held them accountable, and their relationships with their teacher went beyond the classroom. Each secondary participant played a role when it came to provide extrinsic motivation for the students.

The third major finding of this research study addressed Research Question 2. The other influences that the African American male high school students identified as important for their academic achievement included sports, afterschool employment, participation in religious activities, volunteering in the community, and several others. The students shared past and present experiences of how their participation in sports and other extracurricular activities, such as JROTC and volunteering, contributed to their academic success. Students also discussed how their interaction with their teammates, coworkers, peers, and others kept them grounded in their academics.

The last major finding of this research study was that social capital constructs, as described by the other stakeholders, influenced the students' academic achievement. The social capital constructs such as community; culture; religion; and the involvement of parents, mentors, and peers led to participants sharing stories of conversations and experiences that they have had with the students. These experiences, both positive and negative, directly influenced the students' decision-making process, academics, character development, and self-esteem.

Discussion of Results

Social capital theory served as the framework for the main themes that emerged

from the data analysis process: (a) relationships, b) culture, and (c) student attributes.

Included in this discussion will be the themes related to (a) relationships, including

family and community; (b) culture, including core norms and future goals; and (c) student

attributes, which related to students' interests and characteristics as described by

themselves and which had a bearing on their social relationships. The analysis of these

themes appeared integral to the relationships and culture themes.

Relationships

The *Oxford Dictionaries* (2018) define relationships as the way in which two or

more individuals or things are connected. One of the most prevalent themes that emerged

during my analysis of the data was relationships, such as the relationships between the

students and their parent, teachers, peers, pastor or community leaders, and mentors.

Lins, Servaes, and Tamayo (2017) noted social capital as an enabler of collective action

and cooperation that led to positive outcomes. Social capital, according to Putnam

(2000), fosters cooperation within a society and as result, the production of socially

efficient outcomes occurs. Social capital is a collective set of norms, values, and/or

beliefs that mutually benefits all members within a society (Putnam, 2000). The data in

this study revealed that because of receiving high levels of support from their family,

community, and school personnel, the students' relationships facilitated confidence in

their academics.

Family Influence and Planning for the Future. One of the major subthemes

that arose from the data from the interviews was family influence and planning for the

future. The students' family background influenced their behavior and academic success.

When asked how their parents helped to prepare them for academic success, each of the young men expressed that either their mother or their father was a crucial influence on their schooling. The students shared experiences of how their parent(s) built a solid foundation and constantly expressed their expectations of their son finishing high school and attending college. These findings were similar to the research findings of Hickaman and Wright (2011), who found that family background, including socioeconomic status SES, family structure, family size, parental drug use/abuse, and other factors may influence students' academic achievement and behavior.

According to Kincade, Oloo, Fox, and Hopkins (2016), African American men who received any form of community and/or family support were more likely to view education as important resulting in these students to adjusting better to life and having a more successful academic along with professional career. Likewise, the data from this research study indicated that because parents enforced and reinforced their expectations and the importance of education to their child, the students were more serious about their education and were more likely to be focused in school. For example, Phillip's father did not accept any grades lower that a B from his children, while Michael's mother expected that both of her children to attend and graduate from college. Similarly, Charles' mother expected her son to attend and graduate from college. The students' parents not only constantly reminded them of their expectations, but they also supported the students throughout the 4 years of high school by attending school functions such as honor roll assemblies, scheduling and attending parent-teacher conferences, attending games if the student played sports, and enrolling the student in various service learning projects.

Parents who expressed high expectations for their children assisted in instilling the value of education, which leads to successful outcomes later in life (Kincade et al., 2016). However, parents were not the only family members who had a positive influence on the academic success of the participants. External family members, including aunts, uncles, cousins, and others, also positively contributed to the academic success of the students. Charles, for example, noted that his grandmother continuously encouraged him to excel in school so that he would "make something of himself someday." Likewise, Michael spoke about his best friend, who was like the brother "he never had."

The students in this research study also expressed their desire to improve the quality of life for themselves and for their families. Each student felt a sense of duty for the betterment of their and their families' future. The students noted that they believed that academic success would lead to financial success, which in turn would lead to status, a different measure of success. Students shared their desires to be financially wealthy and famous.

Unlike the current study, however, previous research failed to study African American male high school students in the context of their social networks and their need for support in order to achieve academically. The sample for this research study did not just focus on the student, but it also focused on the social network of representatives that were connected to each of the students, including their parents, teachers, peers, mentors, and community leaders/pastors. Previous researchers have also failed to study African American male high school students in rural areas; many of the extant studies on the topic were set in urban or suburban areas.

Social capital can be localized within certain families and certain networks as families move forward together. Having a more in-depth understanding of how to access and use social capital may be a significant key to improving academic achievement for African American students. In previous studies, social capital often is discussed in unclear terms. For example, the mechanisms through which relationships, such as student to parents or student to peer, affect academic achievement have not been clearly studied.

Many researchers have researched social capital from the deficit perspective instead of a high achievement perspective. In doing so, these studies may represent a one-sided view of what are actually complex processes involving the achievement of African American students, especially those with a low-socioeconomic status. Within this research study, the students who were the center of the study were studied from a positive perspective, which has not been sufficiently studied, particularly for the role that social capital may play in their academic success. The findings from this research study can assist school districts and their personnel with developing strategies that address the academic achievement gap between male African American high school students and their counterparts from other demographic groups.

During the interview, the parents of the students emphasized that they did not want their sons to work or to have to worry about money because they wanted their son to focus on his education. Two of the three parents worked full-time, while the third was a retiree. One was also a full-time student. She mentioned that she did not want her son having to choose between his education and working. She also noted, that like her, she did not want her son to have to struggle with rearing children, working full time, and

going to school full time simultaneously in his future.

Community Members' Contribution. The town of Rockworth was an intimate community. Since there were only four schools within the district, students, faculty, staff, and parents have known one another, have some form of family relation, or have worked with or have encountered each other within the community. Many members of the community attended the local high school that was the focus of this research study.

Prior research has found African American males need to develop a rapport with their teacher, which allows them to be active participants within the classroom, ask high-level questions, and receive positive support along with interaction among students (Berry et al., 2011). The three students who were the focus of this research expressed how important it was for their teachers to cultivate genuine and authentic relationships with them inside and outside of the classroom. Community members, such as teachers, provide encouragement for students and have a positive influence on their trajectories (Kincade et al., 2016).

The relationships the three students built with the specific teacher they selected for this study allowed them to be open, honest, and transparent with that individual. As a result, students were able to have open conversations with their teacher about any issues occurring at school or at home, their post high school plans, and their dreams. In turn, their teacher assisted them with resolving personal issues, applying for college, and planning for the future. Such positive experiences were one of the contributing factors to the students' academic success. Similarly, Hargrave, Tyler, Thompson, and Danner, (2016) found that an increase in accessibility of teachers was associated with an increase

in academic self-concept, thus African American male high school students need teachers who are willing to help them when they need assistance. For African American male high school students, it is imperative that their teachers be accessible. Having and engaging in positive interactions with such student has the potential to produce academic success.

One study noted that African American boys tend to be subjected to racial discrimination within the classroom and are the target of lower teacher expectations (Institution of Education Sciences, 2012; Matthews, et al., 2010). However, this study found that teachers, who set high expectations for students and held the students accountable while providing them with the support they needed, students, specifically African American males, will succeed academically. Charles, for example, attributes his academic success to the teachers he had during his high school matriculation. More specifically, his English teacher, culinary arts teacher, JROTC teacher, who was his mentor, and his Teen Pep teacher have had a major impact on him not only academically but also socially. Each of these teachers found time to sit and talk with him about his grades, his social life, home life, future goals, and a host of other topics. He mentioned his Teen Pep teacher helped him get over his fear of speaking. He stated, "talking to younger kids and stuff … and being public about myself ... that was big for me." He also noted during his freshman year, his then English teacher "always kept me up and asked about my grades" and his Culinary Arts teacher had assisted him since his "sophomore year."

For African American males to be successful within the classroom, they need to develop a rapport with their teacher, as found in this study. This allows them to be active

participants within the classroom, ask high-level questions, and receive positive support

along with interaction among students (Berry et al., 2011). The Kenricks et al. (2013)

study indicated that students tend to be more successful in school when they are placed

into supportive environments. Likewise, the current study found that students succeed

academically when placed in a supportive setting. For example, Phillip was a member of

the NHS. During the interview, the student spoke openly about his NHS advisor, who

was his English teacher. He mentioned she always told him to "strive for greatness and

it's all about choices … you have to make good choices." He deems her as one of his

biggest supporters, corrector, and motivator.

Along with their teachers, the three students noted how their relationship with

their mentor was also crucial to their academic success. They shared experiences of how

their mentors were consistently checking on their grades or progress in class, talking to

them about life after high school, and were in consistent contact with their parents.

Having a nonparent adult, who has taken on the role of a mentor, has assisted with

significantly improving the educational accomplishment of youth that are transitioning

from high school (Ehrenreich, et al., 2012).

Prior research has noted that mentoring increases minority student academic

achievement along with enrollment and retention (Kenricks et al., 2013). This study

found that mentors, especially a male mentor, positively influenced the African American

male high school students' academic trajectories. Mentors included, but were not limited

to current or past teachers, coaches, and community leaders.

Having grown up in such a tight-knit community, the students were able to talk

about life experiences of the community also being like their family. The parents of the three students also grew up in Rockworth; therefore, many of the members of the community are related to one another, went to school with one another, or have been neighbors for many years. Students also shared stories of how their neighbors too have cared for them when their parents were not around. Community support is important to African American male prosocial development and achievement and it positively influences their trajectories and overall adjustment (Kincade et al., 2016).

Culture

The findings from this study revealed a link between culture and academic achievement. Community, family, and religion have all contributed to the academic success of the three students as found in the data. According to Byfield (2008), cultural capital, formulated through nurture rather than nature, depends on what was previously invested by the family. Family has been the core of much of the study. Participants expressed the people in their community were all a part of their rearing because many of those individuals grew up with their parents. This study found that culture affected students' educational outlook and their academic achievement. For instance, Phillip's NHS advisor described how culture and a lack of support can influence African American male high school students' academic achievement. She stated, "I want what is best for them as I do for my son and my granddaughter … so when I fuss at them … it is love from my heart and wanting them to just be the best that they can be in life." She also noted that:

Too often, our African American males focus on sports and not on their GPA or

academics. I think it is a cultural thing that led them to believe, because they are

talented maybe in a specific sport, that they are going to go to the big league,

which is not always true. I think the lack of support – maybe from the family

and/or the community, has caused this attitude to prevail.

Phillip views her as a role model, as they share a bond that goes beyond the classroom.

Religion. One aspect cultural influence for each of the three students was religion.

By far, religion is one of the largest generators of social capital in the United States and

has contributed to over half of the nation's social capital (Byfield, 2008). Religious

organizations have been imperative in the United States (Putnam, 2000). More

specifically, the church is a community center that has a positive influence on children's

educational goals (Al-Fadhli & Kersen, 2010). A culmination of family norms or values,

social behavioral norms, religion, and other environmental factors contributed to the

academic achievement of the three African American male high school students.

Two out of three of the students do not attend church regularly. However, the

students noted during their interviews their belief in God and the need to have faith in

order to succeed. Religion can provide mentorship, support, and social as well as cultural

capital to adolescents. It has influenced prosocial behaviors by increasing social capital,

including increasing social interactions and trusting relationships with friends, parents,

and other adults (Milot & Ludden, 2009). For example, Michael and his family were

members of their local church. Michael noted that when he was younger, he was a

member of his church's Sunday school program. During that time, he attended multiple

field trips with his youth group from his church.

Religion influenced the morals and the values of the three students according to the data. According to Putnam (2000), nearly half of all volunteering occurs within a religious institution and half of all personal generosity is religious in nature. All three young men shared stories of attending church and how their faith contributed to their academic achievement. The students noted how the church encouraged them to excel through various community outreach activities and church outings. Religious capital does have the capacity to enhance cultural and social capital since one study found that social, cultural, and religious capital provided a psychological and social framework (Byfield, 2008). Because their religion influenced their cultural capital, the students had a better sense of their purpose in life. The church provided them with emotional and social support, which in turn, assisted in maximizing the students' potential.

This study found that religion has the capability of providing African American male high schools students with experiences with various social networks outside of their homes and school. This allows such individuals to gain exposure to various individuals and cultures. Likewise, Milot and Ludden (2009) found that adolescent boys within urban areas who reported religion was important within their lives reported higher levels of academic self-efficacy and school bonding than those who did not think that religion was important.

Core Norms. The three students discussed how their family transferred values, norms, and beliefs to them. Chang et al. (2009) noted that parental involvement boosts children's perceived level of competence, autonomy, and sense of security as well as connectedness, which can assist children in internalizing educational values. Students

stated that for them, family consisted of friends, neighbors, and others. Students spoke about growing up and the various individuals who held them accountable for attending school daily and remaining on the right track to achieve academic success. In discussions and interaction with their children, parents communicate their values and expectations about education and academics (Harris & Graves, 2010).

The data suggested that many of the core norms, beliefs, and values that the three students spoke about during their interviews may have stemmed from their family and has influenced their academic success. The students who were the primary focus of this study expressed how they developed responsibility, ownership, thinking critically, trust, and problem-solving, and other character traits as a result of these connections. This current study found that social capital stems from their connections to various social networks. Previous research only studies these environments individually, but this study researched these environments collectively. In the case of African American male high school students, this study concluded that having supportive environments at home, at school, within the community, and at church combined positively influences such students' academics. More specifically, students' social networks that include teachers, mentors, parents, pastors/community leaders, and peers were previously studied separately. The current research studied these individuals collectively. Though they have interacted with the students throughout various stages of their lives, they have each positively contributed to the students' academic success.

Having a strong child and parent relationship produces more social capital for a child. Such a relationship prepares a child to move from the bonding into bridging, and

eventually into the linking of social capital networks (Alfred, 2009; Coleman, 1988). The experiences shared through the participants' stories buttressed many of the theories, research, and literature used to support the underlying philosophies of this research study. Family social capital is the physical presence of adults within the family (Madyun & Lee, 2010). For example, Charles identified several social capital constructs that influenced his academic achievement. These included his family, especially his mother who is one of his primary sources of encouragement and motivation. He stated his mother used to tell him and his brother stories about her time in high school. Aside from his mother, Charles' aunt and grandmother also provided him with a support system. Both women consistently supported Charles emotionally and socially.

Future Goals. According to Templeton (2011), high expectations set forth for African American students allows them to begin to view themselves as part of a high-achieving student body where achievement is expected, and failure is not an option. The findings revealed that the students desire to succeed academically stemmed from their desire to be successful in the future. For them, success equated to financial stability and the opportunity to provide for their family. Each of the young men mentioned that they one day desired to take care of their parents because their parents had scarified so much in order to ensure that they had what they not only needed but also had what they wanted. Participants shared various stories regarding their experiences with their support group. For example, Charles's mentor checked on his grades and had several conversations with him concerning his education and his goals. He also noted that social networks have a tremendous impact on academic achievement. High expectations, strong

family and community presence, accountability at school, and continuous involvement in

the community may have had an influence on the three African American high school

male students' academic success.

Student Attributes

The findings from this study revealed that the core values, norms, and principles

that have been taught assisted in the development of an individual's character. This study

found that the three students who were the focus of this study stated during their

interviews that they did not want to disappoint the members of their social network (i.e.,

parent, mentor, peer, teacher, and pastor or community leader). For instance, Phillip

stated that he "did not want to disappoint his family, especially his twin sister." Similarly,

Charles noted that his desire to "make my mom proud" and all that he strives to do is to

ensure that this comes to pass. The research study of Ehrenreich et al. (2012) had similar

findings as this study. Ehrenreich et al. found that both low- and high-aggressive youths

within the study were quick in acknowledging adults for their involvement in school,

stating that they did not want to disappoint the adult's expectations, therefore the students

worked harder. The study found that students maintained a more personal contact with

their coaches than with other adults within the school environment (Ehrenreich et al.,

2012).

Characteristics. Students must feel a sense of belonging within the learning

community (Li & Hasan, 2010). Teachers have the ability to build confidence in students

with small-step taken to help students experience success. For example, Phillip's teacher

stated that:

I think some people [teachers] get caught up in the belief of 'Me teacher, you student. Me chief, you Indian,' so to speak… And I think it's important - specifically for our young, black males here in this school - to be able to say, 'Yep. Tried my best, I messed up.' And take the responsibility myself instead of-- in today's society they get poor examples of if someone messes up. 'That's ok. What did you learn from this? What would you do different next time?' And in doing that, you are planting the seed on teaching them how to grow as an individual, which is the ultimate goal.

It is the responsibility of a good teacher to teach responsibility, confidence, and resiliency in addition to academic knowledge so that students can be successful academically, socially, and personally (Li & Hasan, 2010).

Interests. Williams and Bryan's (2013) study noted there are several contributing factors, such as religious capital, family social capital, and cultural capital that are essential to the cognitive and social development of youth from low-income families within urban areas. Their study found that home, community, and school played a vital role in fostering the resilience and academic success of urban African American students who were from single-parent, low-income families. Like the research study of Williams and Bryan, this study found that home, community, and school were essential to the academic success the African American students. During their interview, the three students shared how their common interests with members of their social network influenced their academic success. For instance, Charles's friend shared how they shared a common goal of making it 'big in the entertainment industry', he as a filmmaker and

Charles as a music producer.

The study by Williams and Bryan (2013) yielded 10 themes as a result of the interviews they conducted: (a) out-of-school time activities, (b) extended family networks, (c) positive mother-child relationships, (d) social support networks, (e) personal stories of hardship, (f) school-related parenting practices, (g) school-oriented peer culture, (h) extracurricular school activities, (i) good teaching, and (j) future plans. This current study yielded similar themes: relationships, culture, and student attributes. More specifically, student interests such as extracurricular school activities and future plans were found to influence the academic success of the three African American students. For instance, Michael noted how he and his mentor, who was also his football coach, bonded over football games. His mentor set up several meetings with college football recruits, which would enable him to obtain a scholarship for college. As a result, he was able to secure a partial scholarship with one of the local universities.

Limitations

This research study detailed the perspectives of three African American male high school students along with their parents, teachers, mentors, peers, and pastor or community leaders. There were several limitations to this research study. The first was studying only three African American male high school students in one school district. The small sample size was not indicative representation of the larger student body. Although this is true, I was able to dig into the sources of cultural capital for these students more than I would have been possible with a large number of subjects. The second was a methodology limitation. I had difficulty with obtaining a sufficient number

of participants who met the stringent criteria for the study. Unfortunately, many of the students who did show interest in the study did not meet the academic requirements to be a part of the study. Finally, this study did not study research long-term social capital beginning from primary school and ending upon the completion of high school. Conducting future research on the impact of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male students in primary through secondary education is suggested. This information also has the potential to provide a base for a similar study in the field of higher education.

The results of the interviews were specific to each of the participants' experiences. Subthemes articulated by the individuals were general in nature and the conclusions were the result of the interviews. The themes and conclusions drawn from this study provided a general understanding of how social capital, more specifically relationships, influence African American male high school students' academic achievement. Though the information given is specific to this study, it provides a foundation along with a platform for further discussion.

Implications of the Results for Practice

This research study examined the impact of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students from their experiences along with the experiences of their parents, teachers, mentors, peers, and pastor or community leaders. Historically, African American students, especially African American males, have been at the bottom of the achievement gap and have often experienced cultural discontinuity. Research within the area of social capital has found that the family

background of students and their social class influenced the academic achievement of students within a school and was a contributing factor to students' success (Rojas-LeBouef & Slate, 2011; Templeton, 2011). However, understanding how to access and use social capital would prove to be helpful in improving the academic achievement of African American students.

This research study took an in-depth look at the mechanisms through which relationships, such as student to parents or student to teacher, affected the academic achievement of three African American male high school students. Similar research involving African American students and academic achievement were conducted from the deficit perspective. The deficit perspective asserts that racial minority students, such as African American males, would underachieve academically because his family's culture lacks important characteristics compared to the culture of their White peers (Piazza & Duncan, 2012). However, not all students experience academic failure and those who do succeed experiences have not been sufficiently studied, particularly the role that social capital may play in their academic success. This is why this study focuses on African American male high school students, who have achieved academic proficiency. The results of this study points to the fact that social capital influences the academic achievement of African American male high schools students. School systems should allow research on various ways in which to capitalize on creating social networks not only within the schools but also within their surrounding community.

An examination of how positive social networks influenced African American male high school students' academic achievement was the focus of the study Social

capital theory was the framework for examining how these social networks impacted

African American male high school students' academic success. The relationship

between the students along with their parent, mentors, teachers, peers, and pastor or

community leaders and vice versa as well as articulating their understanding of how such

relationships impacted the students' academic achievement was also examined.

The findings from this study were that African American male students,

especially those in high school, need a strong support system that sets high expectations

for the students, holds the students accountable, and constantly supports the students in

all of their endeavors. For many of the students, such expectations were set forth for them

when they were young and reinforced daily by their teacher, peer, mentor, and/or pastor

or community leaders. Students had an understanding of what the adults expected of them

and what the consequences were if they failed those expectations. Because each student

had a desire to strive for greatness to better their lives and the lives of the members of

their family, they excelled throughout elementary, middle, and high school. As a result,

they each earned numerous of scholarships to attend the college of their choice.

Each of the secondary participants (i.e., parent, mentors, teachers, peers, and

pastor or community leaders) discussed their views of the importance of education and

explained how they instilled those same views into the students. The secondary

participants explained how and why the village was essential to the educational needs of

African American males. These explanations included: (a) the need for daily

accountability between the student and an adult, (b) the development and cultivation of

morale along with values that will guide the student throughout life, and (c) ensuring that

the child succeeds academically so that they may succeed in life.

Educational systems may use the findings of this study as an additional resource in developing innovative methods for increasing academic achievement among African American, especially male, students. Researchers and policy makers within the educational system (i.e., K-12) and the chosen district can extend upon the findings of this study in their efforts to cultivate social capital. By implementing early strategies and interventions into the school and the community that it serves would assist in promoting education and social networks, thus producing social capital. Such strategies may include, but are not limited to, mentoring programs, monthly community or family nights, and making school more accessible to parents who are unfamiliar with the system.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is evident that African American male high school students who participated in this study were subjected to relationships and life experiences that positively influenced their academic achievement. Additionally, the findings of this study introduced the need for mentors and pastor or community leaders and how such individuals impact the social, emotional, mental, and at times, physical development of a student. In light of this information, it is recommended that a longitudinal research study be conducted on the impact of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male students. The study should begin in kindergarten and end in high school. Depending on the post high school path the student decides to take, the study may extend into college, military experience, or the work force. Lastly, research on implementing various strategies that place lifelong emphasis, from infancy to old age, on social capital for African American

males would be equally relevant and beneficial.

Future research could look more specifically at how developing and cultivating strong relationships with various individuals, including teachers and mentors, beginning in kindergarten could assist in increasing academic achievement amongst African American males. A mixed-method research study could also be used to not only investigate how social capital influence academic achievement, but also the individual issues related to generational poverty, college attendance and completion, teen pregnancy, and the achievement gap of African American males.

Social Change Implications

The findings from this research study have the potential to produce positive social change by informing future research studies and influencing education policies and practices whose main objective is to improve academic performance and outcome for underachieving African American male high school students. By exploring the role relationships (i.e., parents, teacher, pastor or community leader, peer, and mentor) have on the academic achievement of African American male high school students provides an increased understanding of the influence social capital has on the development of other forms of capitals, such as cultural and religious capital, within this subgroup. School systems can learn from this study about the importance of providing a supportive environment for all students, but especially for African American male students. By providing teachers with training on the importance of building meaningful relationships with their students and their parents; being culturally sensitive and relevant; and how to create a safe as well as a supportive classroom environment, schools can begin seeing an

increase in academic achievement among their African American male students. The results of this research study may potentially create more opportunities and means of support necessary for all children to succeed.

Conclusion

The impact of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students was examined. Interviews revealed that having a strong support network of individuals such as mentors, teachers, parents, peers, and pastor or community leaders impact the academic achievement of African American male high school students. Social capital theory, which is relationships that were established of shared obligations and identities, framework I used to examine how social networks influenced the academic achievement of African American male high school students. The main themes that arose from the data were relationship and culture. Additionally, I framed subthemes from the themes. The corresponding subthemes were (a) family, (b) community, (c) core norms, and (d) future goals. These themes and subthemes revealed relationships created a support system and an accountability network for the three students, as shown in the interview data. These relationships, a form of social capital, appeared to strongly influence their academic achievement throughout high school leading to the students' successful completion of high school.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions and Statements

<u>Time of Interview</u>:
<u>Date</u>:
<u>Location</u>:
<u>Interviewer</u>: Sabreen Mutawally
<u>Interviewee</u>:
<u>Position of the Interviewee</u>:

<u>Interview Protocol</u>:
This interview is being conducted as part of a qualitative research study entitled *The Role of Social Capital (Social Network) on the Academic Achievement of a Male African American High School Student*. The purpose of this research study is to explore the role of social capital on the academic achievement of African American male high school students. This study will aim to close the academic achievement gap through researching the combined effects of social networks on the academic achievement of a male African American high school student. This research study is in partial fulfillment of the dissertation requirements for Walden University. Data will be collected over the course of eight to ten weeks. The data that will be collected will be used strictly for educational purposes. All participants identities will be kept confidential and the information that will be collected will become part of a research paper that will be viewed only by the instructor of the course. The names of the participant will be kept confidential in the research paper. Participation is on a voluntary base and data that is collected from each individual will only be shared with that individual. The interview itself will last ***no longer than 45 minutes***, however, the ***entire interview process will last no longer than one hour***. This is as a result of the necessary forms that need to be completed. If the participant has to stop for any reason before the hour has concluded, they will let me know and the interview will conclude at that time. The interview will be audio recorded only with written permission from the participant.

1. Participants of the research study will be contacted to set up a date and time for their interview.
2. All interviews will take place at Rockworth High School's Media Center Conference Room, as it is a central location for all participants and the interviewer.
3. Interviews will be conducted between 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm.
4. Participants will be contacted via e-mail as a reminder of their interview date and time two days prior the interview.
5. Interviews will last for 45 minutes to one hour.
6. There will be a 15-minute window allotted at the beginning of the interview to explain the purpose, procedures, and logistics of the research study.
7. Interviews will be audio recorded by the interviewer.

*The Role of Social Capital (Social Network) on the Academic Achievement of a Male
African American High School Student*

<u>Interview Questions for Students:</u>
1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What extracurricular activities do you participate in during the week? Outside of school?
3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
   a. What does this mean to you?
   b. How does this relate to your life?
4. Tell me about an individual in your life who has had an impact on your education?
   a. What were some of the things that that individual did or said that impacted your education?
5. What things do you enjoy doing with your parents?
   a. What things do you enjoy doing with your Pastor?
   b. What things do you enjoy doing with your mentor?
   c. What things do you enjoy doing with your teacher?
   d. What things do you enjoy doing with your peer?
6. Tell me about some other key individuals, who were necessary in preparing you for success.
7. Tell me about your relationship with Pastor?
   a. How about your relationship with your mentor?
   b. How about your relationship with your teachers?
   c. How about your relationship with your peers?
8. How does having a nonparent individual impact your academic achievement?
9. Tell me about the skills, morals, and/ or values you have been taught by your parents?
   a. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your Pastor?
   b. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your mentor?
   c. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your teacher?
   d. How about skills, morals and/or values you have been taught by your peer?
10. Why is education important to you?
11. Is there anything special about being a male as it relates to doing well in school?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add at this point?

*The Role of Social Capital (Social Network) on the Academic Achievement of a Male
African American High School Student*

Interview Questions for Parents:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
3. Is there anything in the education system that made it difficult/easy for your child to succeed?
4. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
   a. What does this mean to you?
   b. How does this relate to your life?
5. Why has your child done well?
6. What important values come to mind when you think about your son's education?
   a. Tell me about skills, morals, and values that you have taught or are teaching your child?
7. Tell me about conversations you have had with your child regarding education.
8. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to the academic performance for people like your son?
9. Looking at the structure of this community, there are many children who grow up in single parent homes.
   a. What sort of impact do you believe this had on students?
10. What other adults are involved in assisting your child in succeeding in school?
11. Tell me about some other key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success
    a. Nonparent adults- are they essential and why?
12. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?

*The Role of Social Capital (Social Network) on the Academic Achievement of a Male
African American High School Student*

<u>Interview Questions for Teachers:</u>

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
   a. What does this mean to you?
   b. How does this relate to your life?
4. Outside of the classroom, can you provide me with some examples of conversations you have had with the student as it regards to education?
5. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to African American males' academic performance?
6. Tell me how you believe your relationship with this student has affected his life.
   a. What role do you believe relationships play in academic success (student name)?
7. Tell me about some key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success.
   a. Why do you believe these key individuals are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success?
8. Looking at the structure of this community, there are many children who grow up in single parent homes.
   a. What sort of impact do you believe this had on students?
9. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?

The Role of Social Capital (Social Network) on the Academic Achievement of a Male African American High School Student

Interview Questions for Mentor:
1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
3. What are some of the things you and _____ (student's name) do together?
4. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
   a. What does this mean to you?
   b. How does this relate to your life?
5. Tell me about conversations you have had with the student as it regards to education.
6. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to African American males' academic performance?
7. Tell me how you believe your relationship with this student has affected his life.
   a. What role do you believe relationships play in the school success of _____ (student name)?
8. What is the role of social networks in academic success?
9. Tell me about some key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success.
10. How does having a nonparent individual, like you, impact academic achievement?
11. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?

The Role of Social Capital (Social Network) on the Academic Achievement of a Male
African American High School Student

Interview Questions for Pastor or Community Leader:
1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
   a. What does this mean to you?
   b. How does this relate to your life?
4. Tell me about any conversations you have had with this student as it regards to education.
5. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to African American males' academic performance?
6. Tell me how you believe your relationship with this student has affected his life.
   a. What role do you believe relationships play in the school success of _____ (student name)?
7. Tell me about how you impact the lives of your congregation or community.
8. How do you promote education in your congregation or community?
9. Tell me about some key individuals you believe are necessary to prepare African American high school males for success.
10. How does having a nonparent individual, like you, impact academic achievement?
11. How do social networks impact the academic success?
12. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?

The Role of Social Capital (Social Network) on the Academic Achievement of a Male
African American High School Student

Interview Questions for Peer:
1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. What is your relationship with the student and how long have you known the student?
3. There is an African proverb that states that "it takes a village to raise a child."
    a. What does this mean to you?
    b. How does this relate to your life?
4. Tell me about your relationship with _____ (the student)?
    a. What things do you enjoy doing with _____?
    b. How do you and _____ help each another with school assignments?
    c. Tell me about some of the things that you and _____ share in common?
        i. About education?
5. What do you believe are some of the contributing factors to African American males' academic performance?
6. Is there anything special about being a male as it relates to doing well in school?
7. Is there anything else you would like to say or add at this point?