

**FOUR AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE PRINCIPALS AND THEIR  
LEADERSHIP IN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

A Dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research study was conducted as a qualitative study on four African American male elementary principals. The qualitative research framework was selected to examine and give voice to the life experiences and leadership practices of four African American male administrators of urban elementary schools. The purpose of the study was to expand the limited research base regarding the lived experiences of the principalship from the participants' point of view as they are able to apprise other administrators on the issues of leadership in diverse school settings. The guiding questions were, (1) what personal characteristics attributed to these African American male principals success in elementary urban education; (2) how did the selected African American male principals exercise and interpret their acts of leadership; and (3) what were these African American male principals' perceptions about leadership as related to student outcomes in an urban elementary school.

The results of this study yielded the following as it related to the voices of four African American male principals and their leadership in urban elementary schools:(1) many forms or ways of leading were practiced by the principals; (2) their upbringing or journeys to the principalship were different, however they wanted to make a difference in the lives of students; (3) the guidance from people around them played an instrumental part in the principal leadership practices; (4) they believed that hiring quality teachers was important to the success of the schools they led; and (5) they viewed acts of caring as essential to building relationships.

## DEDICATION

“For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). This has truly been a humbling experience.

This dissertation is dedicated in the memory of my mother, the late Doretha Roberts Moultry; my step-father, the late Edward George Moultry; my biological father, the late Lester C. Matthews; my grandmother, the late Lessie Matthews.

To my late mother: The completion of this doctoral degree is bitter sweet because you are not present to witness it. There is no way I am at this point if you had not instilled in me the importance of family, drive, perseverance and love. I miss hearing your voice telling me, “You can do it, Edrick. You are going to graduate”. But because those words ring in my ear to this day, I am able to say, “I’m finished, Mama!” I know you are smiling down on me beaming with pride and filled with joy. You are not forgotten. I love you, always. Your son, Edrick.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During the past three decades, there has been a clear focus on improving student achievement through school reform in the United States. Although a substantial amount of effort has been invested in national and state initiatives to improve K-12 schools, it has been to no avail. The increase in student achievement had been stagnant. One reason cited for the shortcomings in progress is the need for strong and effective leadership centered on establishing policies and practices that support the learning of teachers, thereby influencing student outcomes and school improvement (Darling-Hammond 1995, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin 1998). Fullan (2007), Hargreaves and Goodson (2006), Leithwood *et al.* (2004), Leithwood (2007), Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), Mulford (2008), and Sergiovanni (1992) all articulate the complexities of school leadership and the multidimensional nature of the principal's role. Due to extensive research, the principalship has been recognized as the critical element in school improvement and reform (Fullan, 1991; Sashin, 1998). Effective principals are those who are able to build positive school cultures, and ensure schools focus on high standards of teaching and learning, and that the educational goals set forth are achieved (Leithwood 2007, Leithwood and Jantzi 2008, Mulford 2008). Additionally, effective principals establish a sound vision for the school, facilitate shared goal-setting, and manage resources to promote the attainment of these goals (Fullan 2007). According to Heck and Marcoulides (1993), the principal has a positive relationship on student

outcomes. Findings from their research concluded that the ability of the principal as an instructional leader to collectively govern the school, organize and monitor the school programming, and facilitate a positive climate are significant predictors of positive student outcomes. Therefore, principalship that focuses on leadership for learning and academic success is of the greatest importance.

The problem of urban education and ineffective attempts toward school improvement has caused many to refer to urban school problems as education's most serious concern (Lomotey, 1989; Carlin, 1992; Fredericks, 1992). However, research studies demonstrate that it is possible to nurture successful urban schools despite ongoing social ills in communities (Carter, 2003; Irvine & Armento, 2001). Research supports the need for administrators and teachers to be actively involved in communicating high expectations for student learning to create a positive impact on student outcomes.

There is a need for principals in urban school districts and schools to approach leadership in a way that focuses on the learners they serve, hence multicultural leadership. Gardiner, Canfield-Davis & Anderson (2009) defined multicultural leadership as the work principals do to ensure multicultural aims, objectives, curricular content, assessment content, and pedagogy are implemented effectively. Researchers have discovered that cultivating a climate that is multicultural is significant because of its affective impact on student learning (Carter & Larke, 1995).

For instance, the educational value of culturally responsive teaching for students of color becomes apparent in view of the vital role that culture plays in how children

interpret and respond to the world around them (Purnell et al., 2007) which contributes to their academic success. Gay (2000) confirms a close interaction between culture and cognition in students of color and calls for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as teaching grounded in multicultural contributions, experiences, and orientations of students. Culturally responsive teaching involves the following characteristics: 1) acknowledging the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, with the intention to influence the students' dispositions, attitudes about learning and validate the instructional content taught in the established curriculum; 2) building bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences, along with connecting academic abstractions and sociocultural realities; 3) the utilization of various instructional strategies that are associated with different learning styles; 4) teaching students to be knowledgeable of and celebrate their own as well as others' cultural heritages, and 5) including multicultural information and materials in all content areas and skills taught in schools. Moreover, in order for teachers to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching practices, they must have a strong foundation in multicultural education and understand how all students of color learn. (Carter & Larke, 1995; Nieto, 2000).

According to Maeroff (1983), it is up to the school system to make a difference in students' lives. The success of urban schools is determined by its ability to give an alternative to unsupportive home lives and peer interactions. Therefore, the effectiveness of urban schools is determined by children's ability to develop skill sets and knowledge essential for preparation for adulthood and the workplace (Irvine & Armento, 2001).

Researchers propose that principals play a major role in leading the instructional program in schools as well as being held responsible for school performance (Cooley, et al, 2003; Lashway, 2000). Both rural and urban districts in the United States are constantly confronted with the responsibility of satisfying state mandated requirements and ensuring students achieve within the schools. In most cases, the alignment of state systems of accountability to the state regulations are not the determinant of district or school ratings. Actually, these ratings are based on student outcomes and the principal's leadership makes the difference (Johnson, 1998).

### **Personal Story**

My story begins with an all too common scenario for our inner city youth in this country today. I was raised by my mother. At that time, I did not know my father. She was a single parent with two sons. I am six years older than my brother. My mother worked a minimum wage job to make ends meet. At times, my mother found it difficult to provide for us, so sometimes she would go to the local churches and food banks to get us food, or we would receive welfare benefits. We stayed in a little two bedroom apartment in an urban neighborhood filled with poverty and drugs. I attended some of the rougher urban public schools from elementary to high school. Although my circumstances early on were not the most favorable, I still was able to thrive as an individual. When I reflect on my upbringing, I can say the most important thing I learned was how to survive.

I went to several elementary schools because I moved around a little until my mother found a stable place to live. Once we settled, I attended a middle school that was

located in my neighborhood. I also attended a high school which was located in an urban neighborhood. I would say my experience there was decent. I established some friendships and did my classwork. Most of my teachers seemed to care for me and did their best to help me and my classmates learn. For that reason, I was able to graduate fourteenth in my class of three hundred students and attend a local Historically Black University.

I initially wanted to study accounting when I started my higher education, but changed my mind. In retrospect, I was not disciplined enough to be successful in the classes. To be honest, I hated the classes. I changed my major from accounting to interdisciplinary studies focusing on early childhood education.

My experience as an undergraduate student studying interdisciplinary studies allowed me to gain insight into the needs of students of color and the impact that I may have being an African American male educator. I was allowed to interact with students and observe classrooms early on which gave me a new defined purpose. From my observations and interactions, I knew I wanted to educate students at the elementary level. I realized the hard work it required to teach children and was inspired to contact one of my teachers. Her name was Ms. Gray, and she taught me in first grade. I reflected on the job she had done with me, and thought about how she was able to reach me even with twenty something students in the classroom. Needless to say, I graduated from college with my undergraduate degree; I began my career in education. In 1999, following in the footsteps of Ms. Gray, I accepted my first assignment in an inner city elementary school as a first grade teacher. It was the toughest year of my teaching career

and I like many young teachers, I questioned whether I was in the correct field. I was not sure if I was making a difference in the lives of my students. This went on for the next two to three years. When reflecting, I can say my first years of teaching were extremely challenging, but I persevered.

After teaching a few years with some success, I felt it was time to further my education. I began my graduate studies with the purpose of becoming an administrator in the public school system. I believe that making an impact on a classroom of students is rewarding, but I had the desire to broaden my scope of influence. Due to this new found passion, I followed the hierarchy of the school system. First, I became an assistant principal of a diverse elementary school allowing me to assist in establishing policies, procedures and a culture of learning for an entire school. Then, I was named principal of an elementary school in an urban district. My experience as a principal has presented me with many challenges in leading a school.

During my three year tenure, I have experienced both trials and triumphs. I have had district officials question my capacity for instructional leadership. I have had teachers that I had to dismiss after many attempts to provide support. I have been called a racist by some of the parents I have served. Conversely, I have had district officials express how well my school is managed. I have hired teachers that have become shining stars. And I have had parents give me praise for creating an environment for learning in which their child thrives.

The changing academic accountability standards have created a work environment, state and district-wide, that is volatile. As a principal, your currency is

assessment scores. Is your school meeting the standard in tested subjects? By my faith and efforts to keep the students first in my decision making, I have been able to maintain a good, successful urban elementary school. My challenge is to take the school from good to great. I am up to that challenge.

From my experiences, I have realized the importance of establishing systems, hiring and supporting teachers, and being an example and role model for the students, parents, and community I serve. I truly understand the impact I can have on an entire learning community. I have realized that my responsibility is not only to ensure students get the quality education they deserve, but to serve as a liaison between the parents and community members.

It is my hope that the interviews from the principals in this study in conjunction with my experiences will serve as a guide, or road map to the success for all that aspire to become effective principals in urban schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In educational leadership, the leadership experience of European American males has been the focal point (Glazer, 1991; Duke, 1998). In recent research, focusing on the definition of leadership and the study of character traits and qualities involved in effective leadership has been expounded. Conversely, conventional literature encompassing school leadership in truth has informed the principalship in technical theories of motivation and management (Hertzberg, 1968; Sergiovanni, 1967). In recognizing the diversity that is engrained in schools today, the importance of viewing persons' fulfilling the principalship as possessing a vast skill set is warranted,



particularly from the perspectives and voices of African American male elementary principals. Elementary principals are responsible for making sure students receive a strong academic foundation in school which prepares them for the academic rigor of middle school, high school and college. So, it is important for African American male elementary principals to offer their personal perspectives regarding their character, which will guide and inform their inner values, beliefs and leadership styles (Wesson, 1998). There is a need for research to provide insight on African American male personal and professional characteristics and attributes as male leaders particularly in urban education at the elementary level. Therefore, the aim of this study was to add to this arena the perspectives and lived stories of four African American male principals who through their experiences and accomplishments can bring important issues of leadership to the forefront for others in successful elementary urban schools.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine and give voice to the life experiences and leadership practices of four African American male principals in elementary urban schools. Discourse was utilized to determine the constructed meanings of their personal and professional acts of leadership as it related to positive student outcomes for elementary urban students.

### **Significance of the Study**

A considerable amount of literature defining leadership and examining character traits and qualities associated with effective leadership has been written. Research has also included a significant amount of literature on characteristics of effective schooling

with a great deal of attention on theoretical and practical approaches in educating all students.

However, the ever present voices of African American male elementary principals and their stories have been void in the research. Their voices can enlighten others about the issues of leadership in education from their perspective. Their expression of leadership can provide a unique model and clearer understanding of the construction of leader persona and the manner in which one leads elementary students toward achieving academic success.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine and (re) interpret (Dillard, 1995) the life experiences and leadership practices of four African American male administrators in elementary urban schools. The following questions served as guides for the study:

1. What personal characteristics attributed to these African American male principals success in elementary urban education?
2. How did the selected African American male principals exercise and interpret their acts of leadership?
3. What were these African American male principals' perceptions about leadership as related to student outcomes in an urban elementary school?

### **Definition of Terms**

**African American** – United States citizens who are non-Hispanic and classified as “Black” by the Bureau of the Census. African Americans include individuals descending from any of the Black racial groups of Africa. (Nettles & Perna, 1997).

**Culture** – A particular way of life that includes knowledge, values, artifacts, beliefs and other aspects of human endeavor peculiar to any group or groups of people (William, 1976)

**Ethnic Group** – A microcultural group or collectivity that shares a common history, culture, common values, behaviors, and other characteristics that cause members of the group to have a shared identity. A sense of “peoplehood” is one of the most important characteristics of an ethnic group. An ethnic group also shares economic and political interests. Cultural characteristics, rather than biological traits, are the essential attributes of an ethnic group (Banks & Banks, 2001).

**High Poverty Schools** – Schools in which 50% or more of students meet federal free or reduced price lunch criteria (Johnson, 1998).

**Leadership Styles** – A leadership style is an approach to leadership that includes influence and subtle, identity relevant practice, infused with organizational visions and values (Drew & Sorjonen, 1997; Potter, 2005),

**Elementary Schools** – A school with one or more of grades K-6 that does not have any grade higher than grade 8 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

**Urban School District** – A school district that has more than 50,000 students. (Johnson, 1998).

**Voices** – Framework of detailed expressions of one’s way of knowing. Voices highlights the uniqueness in expressing one’s story in emotional detail within their experiences which may include one’s beliefs, value system and concerns (Ellis, 2004)

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

In order to understand the relationship between the leadership of African American principals and student achievement, one must have knowledge of Critical Race Theory (CRT), male identity and male leadership and ethic of care. CRT emphasizes the socially constructed nature of race and asserts judicial conclusions. CRT is the counter story to the majority themed story. To understand the way one leads, it is important to understand their identity. A leader's persona is an attribute of identity, in which the main concern focuses on object relations through which the leader attempts to balance independence and belonging (Curry, 2000). Therefore, leadership persona is distinctive and becomes evident through a person's individual psychology, which is part of one's developmental experiences. An ethic of care focuses on the human connection through responsibility for the cared for.

For that reason, effective leadership is not rigid and customary, but is an aspect that creates the individual as it evolves within the processes of development. Since people are socialized and influenced by their families and the people they encounter in life, their values, beliefs, goals, and commitments will also continue to evolve throughout their life.

#### **Leader Persona and Individual Identity**

The manner in which one conducts themselves has an influence on leadership and leader persona. Additionally, leadership and leader persona imparts an individual's

values, goals, and beliefs. Essentially, the study of leadership through identity development can create a medium for life stories that realizes an awareness of one's own development. Marcia (1993) asserts that identity development has four stages: 1) identity foreclosure; 2) identity achievement; 3) identity diffusion; and 4) moratorium. Identity foreclosure is explained as being significantly influenced by one's childhood expectations placed by the parents. The identity formation of a person has not completely developed because the person's primary source of knowledge has been his/her parents.

In the identity achievement stage, one has sought alternative ways of knowing and initiated his/her own paths to take in life. The third stage, identity diffusion, is defined as a person's behavior changing from day to day. The behavior in this stage is considered to be dysfunctional and regressive as an act of avoidance by the person desiring to form an identity.

The last stage, moratorium, consists of examining new ways of doing things. Also described as a period of indecisiveness, it is common place for one to move between the moratorium and identity achievement stages while making progress toward his/her identity development.

Kegan (1982) connected identity theory with intervention, suggesting a method by which one could mesh the two together. According to Kegan, stages were described as phases where one struggled between being a part of and being separate from (object-relatedness). Thus, the identity of a person developed during the transition between the

past and present, and a force was felt as one moved forward in his/her route of becoming.

Moreover, Marcia (1993) distinguished identity formation from the construction of identity. He stated that identity is constructed when one has the ability to make critical life decisions concerning his/her values, goals, beliefs, relationships, and occupations.

Although, there is research on leader persona and personal identity, the success of an individual or organization has been credited with the type of leadership abilities one possesses. In regards to improving effective leadership, several formulas, strategies and approaches have been implemented in businesses and educational institutions.

However, Curry (2000) suggests that leaders are connected within an individual's development of becoming and not a result of a formula. Furthermore, when determining the manner in which one leads, the leader persona involving an individual's personal histories and varied experiences should be considered. Therefore, rather than leading by using prescribed leadership models and instructions, a more accurate explanation for effective leadership may be attributed to the compatibility of meanings and meaning systems between an organization and a leader. Despite this assessment, institutions are likely to persist to applying both theoretical and practical strategies toward leadership development in the educational settings in virtue of attaining high levels of professional and academic successes, while discounting personal histories of the leaders.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework was developed from the legal field in the 1980s. Scholars such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado and Alan

Freeman researched ways to specifically address race and racism in the United States. They sought to do this by questioning the ways in which race and racial power were constructed, represented and employed through the law (Roberts, 2010). Although, CRT derived from legal theory; it has had an influence on the field of educational research in recent years.

Tate (1997) identifies five principles outlined in CRT to address matters of race, class and gender. According to Tate:

“CRT recognizes that racism is endemic in U.S. society and deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and even psychologically; CRT crosses epistemological boundaries by utilizing philosophies and principles from various disciplines; CRT reinterprets civil rights law in light of its limitations, illustrating that laws to remedy racial inequality are often undermined before they can be fully implemented; CRT portrays dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest of powerful entities of society; and CRT challenges a historicism and insists on a contextual/historical examination of the law and society. [Tate 1997:234-235]” (Roberts, 2010)

CRT contributes perspectives to other areas such as history, disability studies, critical race feminism, whiteness studies, and sport and leisure studies, but emerged out of radical developments in critical legal studies and education in North America (Solórzano and Yosso, 2001, 2002)

Howard (2008) wrote, “CRT examines racial inequalities in educational achievement in a more probing manner than multicultural education, critical theory, or achievement gap theories by centering the discussion of inequality within the context of racism. . . . CRT within education also serves as a framework to challenge and dismantle prevailing notions of fairness, meritocracy, colorblindness, and neutrality in the education of racial minorities. (p. 963)” (James, 2012)

DeCuir and Dixson (2004) outlined five tenets representing CRT, which are: (1) permanence of racism, (2) Whiteness as property, (3) critique of liberalism, (4) interest convergence, and (5) counterstorytelling. In permanence of racism, conscious and unconscious racism is a permanent component of American life (Bell, 1992). Hence, it is systematically tied to the allocation of social, political and economic resources (Crenshaw, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The Whiteness as property demonstrates how Whiteness, or the right to be White according to law encompasses legal property rights and interests that people of color will never be able to enjoy (Harris, 1995). Whites’ identity was associated with tangible and economically valuable benefits that come with White privilege. The tenet defined as critique of liberalism, examines basic notions embraced by liberal legal ideology to colorblindness, meritocracy and neutrality of the law (Crenshaw, 1988). The tenet of interest convergent focuses on the idea that the significance of African Americans is achieved only when consistently aligned with the needs of Whites (Bell, 1980, 2004). The final tenet, counterstorytelling, is a method of storytelling used to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises held by the majority (Matsuda, 1995). It captures, constructs, and



reveals experiences of people of color while challenging the narratives of mainstream stories accepted as objective truths.

According to Ladson-Billings (1998), much of the scholarship of CRT focuses on the role of ‘voice’ in bringing added power to discourses of racial justice. In this study, CRT emerged through the examination of African American male elementary principals’ voices sharing experiences and perceptions of their leadership styles, as well as their approaches to creating an environment in which students of color can achieve academically.

### **Leadership Efficacy**

Bandura (1977) discusses the concept of organizational agency referring to the “intentional pursuit of a course of action”, which is the perception that all stakeholders on a campus are capable of setting goals and achieving them. In other terms, teachers accept responsibility for student achievement and do not let temporary setbacks unduly frustrate them. Moreover, principals must convey their self-efficacy in order to create the vision, establish systems and set the tone of the school in order for teachers to achieve a collective efficacy.

McCormick (2001) asserts that leadership self-efficacy or confidence is likely the key cognitive variable regulating leader functioning in a dynamic environment (p. 497). Edmonds (1979) and Stedman (1987) suggested a five-factor effective schools formula, which included exceptional principal leadership, high teacher expectations for student achievement, an emphasis on basic skills, an orderly environment, and frequent, systematic evaluations of students.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) assert school leaders' efficacy beliefs are of two types—beliefs about one's self-efficacy for improving instruction and student learning (LSE) and beliefs about the collective capacity of colleagues across schools in the district to improve student learning (LCE). Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs have directive effects on one's choice of activities and settings and can affect coping efforts once those activities have begun (p.501).

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach's (1999) categories of leadership practices related to efficacy are setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. Setting directions is a chief aspect of leadership as it helps a group develop a shared understanding about the organization and the vision established (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Developing people is effective and applicable for professional development goals set forth by leaders. Redesigning the organization focuses on fortifying district and school cultures, modifying organizational structures, and establishing collaborative processes. In conclusion, leaders must realize managing the instructional program centers on planning and providing supervision over instruction. They are also responsible for providing instructional support to staff; monitoring student and school progress and shielding the school staff from external factors that can impede progress.

### **Ethic of Care**

Caring is considered a process rather than a product; it is relational, contextual, and concrete (Gilligan, 1982; Mayeroff, 1965, 1971; Noddings, 1984, 2002; Tronto, 1993). It is a part of a belief system that motivates and acts as a compass that guides our

way (Pang, 2005). A caring centered approach to multicultural education is built on the significance of establishing trusting relationships and understanding the sociocultural context of learning. Essentially, it is a relationship-centered and culture-centered framework in education (Pang, 2005). The connection between the student and the teacher is a powerful part of student achievement for students of color in classrooms today (Siddle Walker, 1993; Strahan & Layell, 2006). Discourse regarding teacher care affirms that students yield positive school outcomes in the areas of attendance, attitude, self-esteem, effort and school pride, if they feel the teachers care for them (Steele, 1992; Noblit *et al.*, 1995; Noddings, 1995).

The ethic of care is the essential foundation for multicultural education and a central element of the commitment to students; this commitment motivates people to liberate schools from prejudice and discrimination. Caring also motivates educators at a personal level to include in their daily actions culturally relevant practices that make schools more meaningful, effective, and equitable (Pang, 2005). The point of culturally responsive teaching is to respond to students in ways that build and sustain meaningful, positive relationships, that is, to “care for” them rather than “care about” them. In respect to learning, it is a two-way responsibility. The teacher must care enough to provide relevant and well developed learning experiences and equally, students must study and work hard in order to become successful in their learning. Caring centered teachers encounter difficult challenges. As individuals, they are guided by their own sense of justice to examine their personal racial, social class, disability, and gender biases in social institutions, such as schools (Pang, 2005).

While teachers face challenges in the classroom, school leaders play a critical role in developing a culture in the school which respects diversity. The increasing diversity in schools calls for new approaches to educational leadership in which leaders exhibit culturally responsive organizational practices, behaviors, and competencies. Bass (2009) examined the leadership of five female educational leaders and teachers serving students on various levels and found that ethic of care was central to the way they led. They were passionate about helping others and selfless in their response to the injustices students of color faced in the educational system. As a show of care, they placed themselves at risk and were willing to accept the consequences.

Noddings (1992) challenged school leaders to embrace the ethic of caring to empower schools to become caring communities that nurture all children, regardless of their race, class, or gender. In a qualitative study describing how a culturally responsive school leader promoted equity in a racially and linguistically diverse school, Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012) asserted that culturally responsive school leadership was exercised on a personal level, environmental level, and curricular level. Culturally responsive leadership encompassed the following six traits: 1) caring; 2) building relationships; 3) being persistent and persuasive; 4) being present and communicating; 5) modeling cultural responsiveness; and 6) fostering cultural responsiveness. Caring is described as showing care for students, parents, and teachers and demonstrating a strong commitment to working with students of color. Culturally responsive leaders that care want students of color to be successful, which is demonstrated through nurturing behaviors, sharing of information, a passion for educating students, and a value for the

parents' perspective. Culturally responsive leaders believe that the success of the students is contingent upon building relationships. They are persistent and persuasive as they inspire others to adopt an inclusiveness regarding the realization of the school vision. Culturally responsive leaders are highly visible in the school and promote the use of culturally responsive curriculum material to teach students. Finally, they foster a community that respects and is responsive to one another. In conclusion, an ethic of care does not establish a list of guiding principles to follow, but rather moral standard for decision making that effect an entire campus. Culturally responsive, caring leaders create an atmosphere that uses caring as the context for interacting with students, parents, and teachers.

### **Effective Educational Leadership**

School leadership is a phenomenon that has been researched for several years. Also, research has made an effort to determine and describe characteristics that constitute effective leadership. Yet, issues relevant to effective leadership and its effect on student outcomes have surfaced. In order for leaders in education to be considered effective, they must positively impact the educational outcomes of students through their actions. In truth, a significant amount of research in educational leadership is focused on explicit descriptions of leadership behaviors and actions (Hallinger & McCary, 1990; Hallinger, Leithwood & Murphy, 1993). This leads to two questions:

- 1) What actions by the principals create change in the classrooms and students' performance?
- 2) What are the other factors that produce student improvement?

Hoachlander, et al (2001) suggests that an effective educational leader can skillfully define, manage, and augment curriculum and instruction. Furthermore, an effective educational leader increases student achievement through leadership that refines the instructional practices of the school. Anderson, et al (1987) asserts effective leaders must have a vision that can be transformed into action. Also, they must create an environment that is supportive, exhibiting awareness about situations on the campus and have the capacity to address the situations effectively. According to Bottoms & O'Neill (2001), effective leaders in education have to be instructional leaders that have a knowledge and understanding of effective classroom best practices that will yield positive student outcomes.

Leaders must know how to build capacity with teachers to create and sustain student improvement. Additionally, they must have an understanding of the level of support needed for the improvement of instruction on the campus. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty's research identified a relationship between principal leadership and student achievement (Robert Marzano, 2005). The researchers found 21 specific leadership responsibilities that are directly related to changes in student achievement.

Bottoms & O'Neill (2001) highlighted strategies that are necessary for leaders to be successful when improving student achievement. These fundamental strategies are: 1) establish the mission and vision of a curriculum and best practices that increase student performance; 2) establish high expectations for students to learn higher level content; 3) identify and foster the implementation of best instructional practices that increase

student performance; and 4) use data to monitor the instructional program, best practices in the classroom, and student outcomes.

Davis (1998) stated that, effective leaders exhibit an internal locus of control, meaning they are reflective of their successes and failures. In addition, they actively seek assistance when difficult problems present themselves. Lopez (1990) proposed that leadership, wisdom from prior experiences that includes a blending of intellect, knowing one's heart, and realizing the spirit and assessing themselves to gage their level of wisdom are characteristics of effective leaders.

According to Irvine and Armento (2001), effective leaders must acknowledge the challenges present in diverse classrooms. Having awareness of and respecting others' cultural differences helps leaders become more conscious of individual points of view so the cultural needs of that individual can be addressed effectively. The prevalence of diversity among students requires leaders to find ways to communicate with students so they understand what is expected of them. For students of color, in-school learning must connect with out-of-school living; encourage equity and excellence educationally; create a sense of community among different cultures; and develop students' agency, efficacy, and empowerment. Hence, the need for culturally responsive teaching is imperative (Gay, 2000; 2013).

Lastly, research on effective schools examined in contrast high-performing urban schools with schools with similar demographics, but lesser student outcomes. From the research, several characteristics that distinguished effective schools from ineffective schools surfaced. Effective schools were described as having: 1) strong administrative

leadership; 2) a clear focus on basic skills acquisition for every student; 3) high expectations for every student; 4) teachers that adjust their instruction to fit the needs of the students; 5) safe and orderly environments; 6) the use of incentives for student performance; and 7) consistent monitoring of student progress (Edmonds, 1979).

Additionally, effective schools have been described as having a focus on staff development, parental involvement, and the utilization of school resources to support established goals (Comer, 1980).

### **Male Leaders in Education**

The number of males in principalship in the nation has marginally declined (NCES, 2012). The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) reported during 1999-2000 and 2007-2008 that the percentage of male principals in public schools decreased from 56.2% to 49.7%, so by 2007-2008 men were no longer the majority. Furthermore, in 2007-2008, a total of 90,500 principals worked in public schools across the United States (NCES, 2012). Of that total, 44,978 were men and 45,521 were women. Almost 81% were European American, about 11% were African American, and only 6% were Latino. Moreover, results from the survey specified the percentage of male principals at the elementary level reported during 1999-2000 and 2007-2008 decreased from 48.2% to 41.1% sinking further below the majority threshold.

### **African American Male Leaders in Education**

Today, the amount of African American principals in urban schools is disproportionate to the number of European American and Latino principals. About 81%



of public school principals nationwide are European American and 11% are African American, 7% were Latino, 2% Native American or Alaskan, and less than 1% was identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NCES, 2008). As of 2008, in the state of Texas 65% of public school principals were led by European American principals, 11% were African American, 21% were Latino, 1% Native American or Alaskan, and less than 1% were identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (TEA Peims Data, 2011).

### **Historical Context**

For years, African American leaders were viewed as followers under the guidance of European American principals, and their ability as leaders was determined to be menial (Foster, 1995). Additionally, African Americans were regarded by their counterparts as “lesser leaders” in the field of educational leadership (Delpit, 1995; Sizemore 1986). There are noteworthy contrasts between the leadership of African Americans and European American. African American principals were found to value community involvement more than their European American peers. Lomotey (1989) conducted a qualitative study in which he examined the leadership styles of African American principals. As a result, three attributes of African American principals came to light: 1) commitment to the education of every student; 2) confidence in the ability of every student to learn, and 3) compassion for and understanding of every student and the communities in which they live. He also established that principals in his study displayed four distinct characteristics that were aligned with the traditional ideas of leadership and common expectations of the principal, such as: goal development, energy

harnessing, communication facilitation, and instructional management which are associated with positive student outcomes.

African American principals have had a sound commitment to the education of African American students and a rooted belief in their ability to learn. Additionally, historically, African American school leaders have exhibited compassion and an innate responsibility to collaborate with other African American leaders to establish schools for African American students. African American leaders also directly impacted the lives of African American students, serving as role models to motivate them to achieve (James, 1970).

The implementation of school desegregation was a significant cause for the decrease in the number of African American principals. According to Fultz (2004), African American principals were losing their positions at alarming rates. They were facing demotions and terminations primarily by means of: (a) demotion to teaching or nonteaching positions, (b) abasing their schools to lower grade levels, (c) allowing them to keep their title, but deeming them powerless, and (d) giving them central office positions with no influence. At the height of desegregation in the 1970's, Yeakey et al. (1986) reported that African Americans continued to be underrepresented in the principalship nationally. Presently, the country continues to feel the remnants of *Brown vs the Board of Education* and desegregation with the percentage of African Americans represented in the principalship being only 10.6% (NCES, 2008).

Lastly, African Americans are confronted with a variety of demands and expectations, which the European American male does not experience (Valverde &

Brown, 1988; Marshall, 1991). Consequently, Miklos (1988) asserted that school and district practices have established the expectation that African American principals and other principals of color are more apt to being placed in schools with the majority of the students being of similar ethnic or cultural background. Unfortunately, within these schools African American principals experience crises as evidenced by low measures of student achievement, high dropout rates, and high teaching staff turnover (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003).

According to Irvine & Armento (2001), African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans are representative of 70% of the student population in the nations' largest urban public school districts. Considering today's principals of color and the aforementioned challenges of leading an urban school, they must use new approaches to educational leadership that demonstrate culturally responsive administrative practices, behaviors and capabilities (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012)

### **Role of the Principal**

Studies have shown that the role of the principal is important to the implementation of initiatives for school reform and are recognized as influential in the complex process of effective school improvement and organizational change (Hallinger, et al, 1985). Specifically, research on the role of the principal and school effectiveness determined that the presence of strong administrative leadership in schools makes a difference in student learning and facilitating school success (Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Peters, 2012). DuFour, et al, (1995) purported that the most effective means for principals to execute their role of creating change in a school is by establishing a culture

which encourages the development of professionalism within their schools. They must engage teachers in continuous discourse and school based decision making, acknowledging them as professionals and utilizing their knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Rowan, 1990). Therefore, the primary role of the principal is to create an environment that empowers the faculty and staff for the purpose of effectively achieving campus goals. It is necessary for the principal to guide the school toward a focus on quality instruction, student achievement, and realize the vision for the school (Richardson, et al, 1989).

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty's (2005) research identified a relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. The researchers found 21 specific leadership responsibilities that directly related to changes in student achievement. Among those responsibilities is establishing strong lines of communication with teachers and among students; fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation; and involving teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies. Hopkins (2000) surveyed 43 principals to find out their feelings on important traits that should be present in successful school leaders. The results of the survey were ordered by importance. A leadership trait included, having a stated vision for the school and a plan to achieve that vision; clearly stating goals and expectations for students, staff, and parents; being visible; being trustworthy; and developing leadership skills in others. More leadership traits discovered were the ability to develop strong teachers and cultivate good teaching practices; collaborative leadership; possessing a sense of humor;

serving as a role model for students and staff; offering meaningful kindnesses and kudos to staff and students.

As the expectations for increased student performance from the school community and other stakeholders increase and become more complex, the role of the principal becomes more challenging. The issues they encounter become more complicated and involve extraneous factors (Calabrese, et al 1996). These issues require a different way of thinking and arriving at solutions to problems. Furthermore, Holtkamp (2002) stated changing demographics of students and parents will heighten the need for flexibility. The pressure and demands for higher academic performance will require an increased need for action, and principals will need to examine the way they make decisions. Principals will be acknowledged as the leader if they can fulfill the expectations set forth by the community in which they serve (Calabrese, et al 1996). However, principals must understand the role they play in the organization, their leadership attributes, and their opportunities for growth. Hence, the principal must prepare to have the content students are learning and the means by which they receive instruction as a focal point (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). More importantly, in order to increase the rigor in the classroom, the principal has to have knowledge of the content and employed pedagogy (D'Amico, 2000).

Since the principal determines the course of the school, the ability of the principal to communicate with people is critical to the success of the position. In regards to fostering positive relationships, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA) Research Centre Report listed four areas of interpersonal skills: trust, motivating

others, empowerment, and collegiality. Among the four listed, trust was considered the most important since relationships cannot be built without it. Secondly, motivating others is crucial to a leadership position. It was suggested that this could be accomplished through a process of sharing the decision making. Then, there is empowerment, because it allows teachers to pinpoint the impediments to change and outline strategies to deal with change. Lastly, there was collegiality. It is a process of sharing ideas, project cooperation, and support in professional growth, all of which benefits the students.

### **Challenges to the Principalship**

There are a host of challenges highlighted in research that principals face in their job as they strive to do what is best for students. I have chosen to discuss two challenges that have been identified in research as reasons for the inequities that exist in public education and possible solutions to fill them in. First, the hiring and developing of teachers is a challenge. This is a concern because there is an increasing amount of teachers entering and leaving the teaching profession before they realize their potential. Secondly, there is the issue of students of color not achieving on the same level as their European American counterparts. In urban districts and schools, these challenges are correlative or interrelated to each other on different levels.

### **Quality Teachers**

In the context of the classroom, teachers are the most important factor that influences student performance. Teachers leave lifelong impressions on students and are invaluable assets to their schools, so hiring and retaining quality, effective teachers is a

priority and a challenge for administrators. Additionally, school administrators play a vital role in creating and maintaining the supportive environment that must exist for the development of new employees joining the organization (Bandura, 1977; Boyd et al., 2011; Kram, 1985), thus improving the chances of keeping these individuals and improving its sustainability as an organization. Furthermore, administrators must find ways to retain effective veteran teachers. The challenge for school administrators is that they must decide which mentoring model will best support their beginning teachers and what factors are important to veteran teachers in their decision to leave or stay with a campus.

Over one third of beginning teachers leave the profession within their first 3 years (Amos, 2005; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Ingersoll, 2007). Therefore, approximately, 157,000 U.S. teachers leave the teaching profession every year, with an estimated 232,000 teachers who transition to schools with more desirable working conditions or for affluent, higher performing schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008). In a qualitative study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), it was concluded that the teaching profession was difficult for novice teachers, and that effective teachers were difficult to find and retain. The NCES study ascertained from interviews with 105 secondary school teachers in their first three years of teaching that lower pay in comparison to other professions, working long hours while shouldering heavy workloads, poor working conditions, and handling difficult relationships with students and parents contributed to teacher beliefs that from a societal standpoint, there was no respect for teaching as a profession (McCoy, 2003).

Though teacher turnover and attrition may not be unique to urban districts, the numbers tend to be more severe. The high turnover of teachers compounds the volatility in urban schools where large numbers of teachers are experiencing “burn-out” (Noguera, 2003). Thus, creating a sense of urgency in curtailing the problem is important for the success of students of color.

According to a report by The New Teacher Project (TNTP), the primary retention strategy in most schools is not having a strategy at all. In truth, novice teachers are ignored and left to “sink-or-swim” on their own, preserving a culture of isolation and short-term employment (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Studies suggests that implementation of mentoring programs and other forms of support, such as professional development and communication increase the chances of retaining beginning teachers. Hallam, et, al (2012), conducted a study on teacher retention was using two distinct mentoring models for beginning teachers within their first three years of teaching. Both quantitative survey data and the follow-up qualitative interview data were analyzed to describe the differences and similarities between two mentoring models and their effect on teacher retention. One of the mentoring models utilized in-school mentors and collaborative teams to support the teachers. The other mentoring model used district coaches, described as employees hired by the district to work specifically with the new teachers. This study showed that in-school mentors were more effective at inducting beginning teachers into the school and providing them with a collaborative mentoring network team than were district coaches. Additionally, the study supported the importance of administrators having the ability to develop and cultivate a



school wide mentoring culture, provide direct support, and select effective mentors to develop and retain new teachers.

While school administrators focus on creating the conditions to retain the best and the brightest new teachers to the teaching profession, it is important to note the importance of keeping the effective veteran teachers. Veteran teachers provide the tangibles, such as direct support and intangibles, such as experience that works to the benefit of the campuses' ability to retain teachers. Alvy (2005) asserted that campuses keeping effective veteran teachers in the profession should be a focal point. Veteran teachers can offer new teachers their wisdom, insight, and maturity as a form of support. Three instructional support strategies for retaining veteran teachers were highlighted in the study, which includes shaping the culture of the school to recognize their experiences by using veteran teachers as mentors. Secondly, it provided stimulation through collaboration with their other colleagues. This strategy was used for encouraging veteran teachers to remain within the school by allowing two of them to work together to teach one class. Finally, there must be provision made for teachers to utilize their expertise for professional growth.

### **Student Achievement**

Addressing the issue of student achievement using accountability standards has been on the forefront of educational reformers agendas for the past three decades. Accountability as defined by the principal's oversight of budget and other resources has been compounded with a strong focus on student outcomes (Elmore, et al, 1996). Currently, policymakers use student outcome goals, curriculum standards and test results

as the methods to define accountability (Popham, 2001). The outcome for failing to meet achievement goals effect student graduation rates, teacher incentives, district funding, retention of principals, and make districts and schools subject to takeover or reconstitution (Bonsting, 2001; Nance, 2007). The possibility of the consequences is an added pressure on principals to collaborate with the teachers they lead to align student goals with instructional practices and assessment. The complexity of the principal's role in combination with the perception that schools continue to fail have increased the demand for effective principal leadership to address the additional accountability school districts encounter (Christie, 2000).

The focus on testing has caused schools to be perceived as testing centers (Kohn, 2001). Also, principals have modified existing programs to improve student outcomes. In an effort to diversify the systems for appraising accountability, Sergiovanni (2000) suggested the utilization of multiple measures of performance that include state and local standards. Others have suggested student learning be assessed using student products and portfolios (Madaus, et al, 1999).

Principals are accountable for democratizing students, educating them on the basic democratic ideals which encompass the goals for citizens of the United States. Additionally, school leaders should implement educational programs that respect the multiple cultures of all students. Principals should be committed to the acknowledgement and appreciation for cultural diversity; advocating for societal interconnectedness of all people; improving the opportunities for all individual groups;

and facilitating productive and positive societal change that increases human dignity and democratic ideals (Banks, 2003; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

The state, district, and school systems hold educational leaders accountable for students becoming proficient in reading and mathematics, and the multiple contexts of accountability and the principal's involvement in the educational process make them central to school reform (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; Tucker & Coddling, 2002; Eslinger, 2012).

### **Leadership in Urban Settings**

Schools in urban settings are normally part of a large, central bureaucracy that can be slow to respond to the needs of the schools (Peterson, 1994; Weiner, 1999). Urban schools are governed by bureaucracies that are dysfunctional and are detached from the communities they are expected to serve (Weiner, 1999). Presently, urban school systems are urged to address the political and religious tensions that are part of the nation's social fabric. A main concern with bureaucracy is that it does not consider the students' individual needs. Although the bureaucracy functions to assure fairness toward all students, issues of inadequate funding and resources for schools and oversized classrooms still exist.

Another concern in urban schools is the bureaucratic restraints. Besides the federal and state requirements placed on urban schools, the decisions of these schools are controlled by an extensive number of regulations. These bureaucratic regulations impact every aspect of school life, and according to Weiner (1999), "the larger the

school system, the larger and, in most cases, more dysfunctional or sick the bureaucracy is” (p. 15).

Students of color make up 77% of the nations’ largest school districts and the number continues to increase (Banks & Banks, 2003). Therefore, urban school systems are obligated to provide a quality education to an exceedingly diverse population of students. According to Hussar & Baily (2013) the enrollment of students of color will be higher than European American students by the 2021. These students may be reluctant to conform to the ways of the majority culture in fear of being detached from their own culture and community.

In urban districts, many of the teachers live outside of the community that they serve. For that reason, teachers must rely on other resources in order to become more knowledgeable of the parents of their students and the community in which they reside. Regardless, urban schools in our nation are successful and the impact of strong administrative leadership makes a difference (Cotton, 1991).

Valverde (1988) stated that administrators in effective schools valued the attainment of basic skills, and were heavily involved in the design of the instructional program. They encouraged teachers to trust in their ability to teach all students. Also, teachers were encouraged to set high expectations for their students by supporting, and fostering cooperative learning, completing assignments, etc. Moreover, administrators were able to offer teachers recommendations on their teaching practices in order to address the different ways students learn and make them culturally sensitive.

Many students still know too little about the history, heritage, culture, and contributions of groups of color in the United States (Banks & Banks, 2003). Thus, educators are faced with the responsibility of providing students with information about the history and contributions of ethnic groups who traditionally have been excluded from instructional materials and curricula, as well as replacing the misrepresentation and biased images of groups that were included in the curricula with more accurate and significant information (Gay, 2000). Educators must also understand that multicultural education offers opportunities for enhancing the quality of education while capitalizing on the resources of all individuals (Penny, et al, 1997). In addition, Penny affirmed that educators who receive in-depth training in multicultural education will establish that children of color learn as well as other young Americans in the public school system.

Ladson-Billings (1994) purported that school administrators must be aware that the key factor in developing an environment that is multicultural is teacher attitudes. She believed the level of commitment a teacher has toward providing students a multicultural education effected student outcomes. Furthermore, establishing high expectations for students and providing them with relevant experiences are characteristics of multicultural teachers. Instructional design for students of diversity should consider their environment regardless of the economic conditions (Larke, 1992). So teachers are successful, administrators must provide the teachers with needed resources, such as district professional development, campus based professional development research articles, and parental and community involvement.

Then teachers will be prepared to implement effective instructional practices that are culturally sensitive and create an environment in which diverse students can grow and be successful. Administrators that effectively lead schools with students of color can offer them the opportunities to acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to become successful in school and adulthood (Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

In this research study, four African American male administrators in an urban district were chosen from various elementary schools in the district. By selecting administrators from various schools, I aimed to increase the comprehensiveness of the study. Every participant was assigned a pseudonym in place of his actual name. The participants were asked designated questions according to the instrument (see Appendix A). The focal point of this study was found within the compiled data. This qualitative study took the participants' experiences expressed through spoken language in order to offer insight regarding a phenomenon. As the researcher, my partiality and personal experiences as an administrator effected what I studied and the design and the interpretation of my findings. Therefore, I regarded interpretive qualitative design most appropriate. According to Bogdan & Biklen (2007), Creswell (2005), Gall et al. (1996), and Patton (2002), profundity and meaningful detail are essential for conducting an interpretive research study and achieving the intended outcomes.

#### **Background**

For decades, African Americans have been underrepresented in school administration. Before the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954, segregated schools were led by African American administrators. The repercussions of the historical decision was the decrease in the number of African American administrators,

mainly in the Southern states. Immediately following the Brown decision, the number of African American administrators in Southern states decreased anywhere from 16 percent to 70 percent (Valverde & Brown, 1988). Currently, the numbers are still low nationwide with African American administrators making up only 10 percent compared to over 80 percent by their European American counterparts (NCES, 2010)

The cultural diversity of schools and classrooms calls for diverse leadership. Although African American educators are interested in school leadership, they face many challenges in obtaining leadership positions, such as lack of mentoring for leadership positions, recruitment and retention into leadership programs, and proper preparation and appointment for leadership positions (Foster, 2004). Moreover, African Americans that are chosen for leadership positions typically find themselves employed in large urban districts that lacks funding, resources, and faces high numbers of uncertified teachers and low student achievement. The underrepresentation of African American principals is apparent. Therefore, to construct meaning from the data collected, the data was organized as listed below.

### **The District**

The district selected is located in Southeast Texas. In 2011-2012, the district had a reported enrollment consisting of 203,066 students with a demographic breakdown of 25.5% African American, 3.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 62.4% Latino, 0.2% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 8.1% European American. It was comprised of six early childhood centers, one hundred sixty elementary schools, forty-one middle schools, forty-four high schools and twenty-eight combined or schools identified as other. Based



on the most recent accountability ratings in 2013, 60% of its campuses ranked in the upper tiers of academic performance. As of the year 2012-2013, it had 59 schools ranked Exemplary and 106 earning Recognized status. Among elementary schools, 74 percent ranked either exemplary or recognized. Lastly, the district had three, U. S. Department of Education, National Blue Ribbon Schools.

### **The Schools**

School # 1 had an enrollment of 570 students with a demographic breakdown of 26% African American, < 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 72% Latino, 1% Native American, and 1% European American.

School # 2 had an enrollment of 990 students with a demographic breakdown of 70% African American, < 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 26% Latino, 2% Native American, and 1% European American.

School # 3 had an enrollment of 382 students with a demographic breakdown of 80% African American, < 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 20% Latino, 0% Native American, and 0% European American.

School # 4 had an enrollment of 520 students with a demographic breakdown of 78% African American, 0% Asian/Pacific Islander, 21% Latino, 0% Native American, and 1% European American.

### **Purposeful Sample**

The sample selection of participants in this study represented a purposeful sample versus random sample. The basis for purposeful sampling was to select participants that had firsthand knowledge of the phenomena being studied and whom the

researcher deemed most informative (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988). Patton (1990) stated purposeful sampling involved studying information-rich cases in depth and detail. The focus was on understanding and illuminating important cases rather than on generalizing from a sample to a population.

In addition, purposive sampling and emergent design were unlikely to be accomplished with the absence of interaction (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (1990) stated the sampling strategy must be selected to fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, questions being asked, and constraints being faced.

For this study, I interviewed four African American male administrators in successful urban elementary schools in a large urban district. The participants were assigned pseudonyms. Concerning this study, the term successful school was defined as demonstrating continuous progress in students achieving mastery on state-wide standardized tests.

The purpose of selecting the participants from the same level and from the same district was to determine if any trends would be realized from the data collected. The criteria for selecting each participant was as follows:

- 1) African American male elementary principal;
  - 2) Served in an educational leadership role for at least three or more years;
  - 3) Had been or was serving in the capacity of principalship at the time of the study;
  - 4) Had met Average Yearly Progress (AYP) in 3 consecutive years (2008-2011);
- and,

5) Had discovered an evidenced based impact on their student outcomes as a result of his leadership role.

### **Instrumentation**

Patton (2002) argued that the role of the researcher is to act as a human instrument in obtaining information. The advantage of having a human instrument is the ability to examine nonverbal and verbal communication, process, clarify, and summarize the data immediately, and probe for further information (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

I was the primary instrument in this study. Conversely, the interviews served as the primary source of data received from the participants' perceptions on the development of the leader persona and the leadership they provided to ensure the elementary students they served were achieving success academically. The interview protocol was created following a review of literature, while other questions derived from my own experience and inquiry that would inform the study and determine its purpose.

I employed an interview guide approach to naturalistic interviews. First, I created a list of challenges that each participant would address, while allowing other subjects to come to light. In order to reduce the chances of predetermined responses when collecting data, I crafted open-ended interview questions. The interview guide in this study was comprised of three primary concerns: 1) personal; 2) leadership quality/effectiveness and, 3) impact on student outcomes. Although the protocol of questions was created before the interviews were conducted, I maintained the freedom to formulate questions in a way that facilitated the interview in a conversational style. For example, a conversational style interview will maintain the flow of the interview while allowing me

the autonomy to devise a new question as needed. I requested subsequent interviews after reviewing the interview transcripts to solicit further explanation, elaboration, or verify certain information. For that reason, I used semi-structured interviews which gave me the flexibility to explicate important information that was gathered as a result of previous interviews or specific information that provided comparable data across subjects.

In each case study, an initial interview was conducted with the participants to gain insight into their self-perceptions in terms of their leadership effectiveness. The interviews were conducted in the office of each participant, which provided a quiet location for conversation. I interviewed each participant at least twice with most of the interviews ranging from one and a half to two hours in length. In order to prevent the possibility of postponements, cancellations or schedule conflicts, I scheduled the interviews ahead of time. Immediately following each interview, notes that were accumulated during the interview were organized. Organizing and reviewing of the notes was done immediately following the interviews which allowed me to capture and record other notables when they occurred. Audio taped interviews involved rough-draft transcripts that I edited and typed in final form.

Each interview conducted was handwritten and recorded on audiotape with consent from the participants. During the interviews, I discovered there were several benefits of handwritten notes. The handwritten notes helped me capture details of the conversation, and afforded me the chance to make certain notations unbeknownst to the interviewee. Additionally, note taking gave me the flexibility to highlight important

information without memorization for review at a later time. Conversely, utilizing a tape recorder had many advantages, such as assuring thoroughness, and affording the opportunity to review as frequently as needed, so I could gain a better understanding. Tape recording my interviews provided me an opportunity to later review nonverbal cues such as voice pitches and pauses, as well material for reliability checks. Furthermore, transcriptions were transcribed by myself and verified through comparison with the audio taped version. My participants received a copy of all transcriptions for further verification and revision.

The data collected for this study embodied four narrative sets of individual lived experiences. As a result of the questions being open ended, the individual participants were able to be completely focused on the details about their experiences they deemed pertinent to their leadership effectiveness. This resonated in the narrative sets of the participants.

### **Data Collection**

In respect to the different techniques of data collection, interviews can be viewed as the most effective means of getting the necessary information (Merriam, 1998). In this study, I conducted open-ended interviews along with semi structured face-to-face interviews to allow the participants to construct their ideas about their beliefs, perceptions and relevant events which informed the study. However, for the purpose of establishing validity, I employed ways of triangulation with the use of additional sources to attain data. I utilized audio-taped interviews, recorded field notes, non-verbal cues, and descriptions of the phenomenon from the participant.

My field notes entailed written descriptions of conversations, experiences, and observations from the participants and the situations that would have influenced their way of leading in either a favorable or adverse way. Observations as defined by Schwandt (2007), is a method of generating data about human experience that is characterized by the following traits: 1) events, actions, meanings, norms are perceived from the perspective of the individuals being studied; 2) a premium is placed on attention to detail; 3) events and actions are understood when set within a particular social and historical context; 4) social action is viewed as a process and dynamic instead of separate events; and 5) efforts are made by the observer to avoid premature imposition of theoretical notions on participants' viewpoints.

Observations were pre-scheduled with each participant. Upon completion of each interview, the data was analyzed. Prior to the interviews, participants were reassured that confidentiality of personal information (name, etc.) obtained from the interview would be upheld and a human subject form would be submitted.

### **Research Design**

This research study was conducted using a case study method on African American male educational administrators. I implemented the qualitative research framework to gain clarity on how these administrators in elementary educational leadership positions applied and perceived their leadership. The purpose of my case study was to broaden the limited research base regarding the lived experiences of the principalship from the participants' point of view, as they would be able to apprise other administrators on the issues of leadership in diverse school settings. In furtherance of

establishing more clarity regarding the perceptions of the administrators' diverse leadership in relationship to student performance, this study explored the complexity of the relationship between their lived experiences and the leadership they exemplified, by applying critical and interpretive lenses.

Therefore, for this study, I used qualitative research methods to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' applied leadership style, personal and professional characteristics, and means of assuring an increase in student performance for four African American male leaders in a successful urban school within a large urban district.

Research affirms that qualitative methods are stressed within the naturalistic paradigm because qualitative methods come more easily to the human-as-instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By this, it is meant that the humans gather information best, and most easily, through the direct employment of their senses by conversing with people, observing their actions, reading their documents, assessing the unobtrusive signs they leave behind, responding to non-verbal cues, and the like (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). From my perspective, listening to the stories and perspectives of the men and the successes they experienced as administrators of urban elementary schools was beneficial. Their lived experiences and stories were encouraging and supported my belief that African American males can do the work it takes to lead a successful school and impact the lives of all children.

Qualitative inquiry is based on an interpretivist epistemology in which social actions are constructed for meaning, and the evidence gathered is focused on the purposes and subjective meanings contained in the social actions (Gerring, 2007). For

this reason, the primary objective of my study was to analyze the meanings and actions. I included various forms of inquiry that assisted in uncovering the meaning of the social phenomena with minimal distractions to the natural setting.

The focal point of my study was on the interpretation of the data and gaining a deeper meaning.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described five essential characteristics of qualitative research. The researchers emphasized the importance of the extent to which qualitative research illustrated the following five characteristics:

1. Qualitative research is naturalistic, which denotes the role of the researcher as having a specific setting as a source of data to collect about the phenomena being studied.
2. Qualitative research is descriptive, being data collected is not just numbers and graphics, but words, videotapes, personal documents and other records.
3. Qualitative researchers are more concerned with the process than with outcomes.
4. Qualitative researchers analyze data inductively. They build upon abstractions they have collected and combined instead of gathering data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses.
5. Qualitative research primarily focuses on meaning to make sense of peoples' lives and their view of or perspectives on reality.

In my research, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.

My research entailed open-ended questioning of my participants with the intentions of attaining a vivid description of their role in the success of their assigned campus. I used



interviewing as a qualitative method of gaining an understanding of how these principals were making a positive impact on the performance and outcomes of their students.

Interviewing allowed the interviewees to tell their own stories. Rubin and Rubin (2005) asserted qualitative interviewing tries to communicate to the reader the complexity of the participants' perceptions and experiences. Moreover, the individual interviews increased the participants' comfort level and provided a higher level of confidentiality. As a result, the responses were more explicit in nature.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), understanding the behaviors of humans is dependent on grasping the framework within which participants construct and perceive their thoughts, behaviors and emotions. My research was grounded in the assumptions that individuals search for understanding of the world in which they live and work, and develop subjective meanings of their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated that qualitative research is multi-purpose in its focus, and requires taking an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Furthermore, qualitative methods enabled me to understand participants' subjective experiences, and to what degree they experience daily life and what they consider relevant or meaningful in reference to the phenomenon of interest (Donalek & Soldwisch, 2004). The importance of setting, context, and the participants' own frame of reference were emphasized as they allowed the emergence of constructs, which contributed to theory generation (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Lastly, my research attempted to highlight the significance of

subjective, personal meaning and definition, commonalities, and perspectives to the marginalized.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that data analysis in a naturalistic inquiry is open-ended and inductive. For this reason, data analysis starts during the data collection process and persists after the completion of the data collection. The data collected in my study was acquired mainly from the interviews, observations, and field notes. My interviews were audio taped and written. Later, I transcribed the interview notes verbatim, and reexamined them for accuracy. The data was analyzed immediately following each interview and observation. Conclusions were contrived by the use of coding, and then ideas or statements of experiences from the data were categorized to ensure that the essential constructs, themes, and patterns emerged.

As the researcher, the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis, and using the interpretive theory as a qualitative method of analysis, I was able to infuse my perspectives, experiences and biases with that of the participants. Additionally, as the researcher, it was necessary for me to make sense of and gain an understanding of the phenomenon being researched. Therefore, I analyzed the data using elements of categorizing and constant comparison looking for countersystematics that are contradictory to the emerging patterns of similarities and differences often referred to as analytical induction or the constant comparative method (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001, pp. 66-70; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, pp. 232-236; Silverman, 2006, pp. 295-297).

Many researchers using qualitative methods suggest that the original data be organized or divided into units of analysis (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, arranging the data into units became the basis of clearly defining the participants' respective categories which allowed me to outline the categories as they related to similar content. Lincoln and Guba, (1985), asserted that categorization is effective when categories are identified in such a way that "they are internally as homogeneous as possible and externally as heterogeneous as possible". So, as the researcher, I reviewed, looked closely, "zoomed in" (Halkier, 2011) compared, envisioned and categorized the data. The process for examining and categorizing the data began with identifying broad topics within each narrative set and searching for "systematic relationships between categories" or overlapping. The first categorical topics were the participants' personal, educational, and employment background. The second categorical topics were the participants' leadership qualities and effectiveness. Finally, I examined the impact the participants' had on student outcomes.

### **Complementary Data Gathering Techniques**

In order to gather additional data, several other strategies and techniques were employed. The purpose of these techniques was to enhance the collection and interpretation of the data. The use of tape recording, field notes, and non-verbal cues are discussed in the next section.

#### *Tape Recordings*

A cassette tape recorder was used to tape interviews with the participants. The transcriptions were reviewed and revised by the researcher.

### *Field Notes*

The main reason I recorded my field notes was to compose a written document of the observations, dialogue, experiences, and descriptions of the participants and the events that directly or indirectly affected them. Moreover, my field notes were used to keep an account of certain feelings, reflections about the investigation, and to make note of any follow up interviews that needed to be scheduled with the participants.

I transcribed the field notes after each observation or interview.

### *Non-verbal Cues*

The non-verbal communication techniques that I used in my study included: body movements, spatial relationships, use of time as in pacing, probing, and pausing volume, voice quality, accent and inflectional patterns and touching (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I made use of these non-verbal communication techniques to obtain information through non-verbal signs. I asked additional questions during the interviews so that I could gain a greater degree of understanding of certain nonverbal cues.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

The process of building trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is critical (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rossman and Rallis (2003), defines trustworthiness as qualitative methods comprised of both *competent practice* and *ethical considerations for the participants* with an underlying requirement that the relational matters involved in any research be prominent and privileged. Namely, trustworthiness is the ability of the researchers to get the technical matters and the relational matters right. The criteria for establishing trustworthiness in a study are reliability, validity, objectivity, and

generalizability. As a means of ensuring trustworthiness in this study, I employed multiple data sources such as, interviews, observations, recorded field notes, and follow-up individual interviews for triangulation. This procedure helped me gain meaning of the data with the purpose of ensuring that it was coherent and accessible. Additionally, in an effort to engage in and maintain relational and procedural ethical standards, I assured the privacy of the participants and confidentiality. Within the context of this study, member checks and a peer-review process were utilized to ensure credibility. Member checks were conducted once the data had been analyzed for revisions and clarification of my viewpoints and constructs.

### **Member Checking**

Lincoln and Guba consider member checking a necessary technique for establishing credibility. Member checking, according to Schwandt (2007), is a sociological term for soliciting feedback from participants on the researcher's findings. Member checks were beneficial in the data analysis process as this research study served as a platform for providing voice to the participants. Furthermore, performing member checks decreased the possibility of misrepresenting the information provided by participants and offered them the opportunity to have their voice properly represented. The participants in this study received a copy of the interview transcripts for review, clarification, and suggestions.

### **Transferability**

Transferability has been recommended as the qualitative counterpart for external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and is closely related to generalizability. Schwandt

(2007) stated, transferability is the ability of the researcher to present a “thick description” or sufficient amount of information, so some degree of similarity can be established and the research findings can be interpreted and generalized to a larger population. My aim is for the readers of my study to be able to apply elements of my study to their particular circumstances and situations.

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability, the naturalist’s substitute for reliability, can be demonstrated by “taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change”. To establish dependability, it was necessary that I reviewed the records for accuracy and to approve documents.

Confirmability, or objectivity, was utilized during the data collection and analysis phases to confirm and construct findings that may be paramount to add to prior knowledge about African American male elementary principals. I maintained a record of the inquiry process, copies of each taped interviews and discussions, notes from interviews and discussions, and hard copies of all transcriptions as a means of demonstrating confirmability. All records are available upon request.

### **Summary**

Qualitative research methods were chosen and utilized for my study due to the nature of the study, the setting, and my personal interest. I followed procedures so as to provide an in depth examination of the African American male elementary principals’ perceptions on leadership as it relates to student outcomes. Furthermore, I investigated constructed meanings of the relationship between their lived experiences and their style

of leading by using interpretive lenses. Essentially, I asserted the naturalist inquiry which was an approach that investigated the lived stories and experiences of the principalship. The voices of these male principals can be used as a vehicle to inform others about the pressing issues of leadership.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

In this data analysis, I will present the voices of four African American male elementary principals and their leadership styles in urban elementary schools. In my role as researcher, I utilized the actual expressed words of the participants to tell their stories with the intentions of offering a thick description of the thoughts and ideas presented by each principal. I aimed to tell each principal's story using data collected from interviews, observations and audio taping. In order to extract meaning from the data, I decided to organize the data in the following order: (a) participant profiles, (b) a description of school demographics, and (c) a review of interview responses by each principal. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to each.

#### **The Doctor's Profile**

The Doctor was originally born in Dayton, Ohio. The product of a teenage mother and father, he and his parents "grew up together". He lived all over the Midwest region of the United States in places like Michigan, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. He also lived in California for a short time before moving to Texas as a teenager. After graduating from high school in Texas, he attended Morehouse College where he had a double major in science and Spanish, therefore he is bilingual. He also did post graduate work at Meharry Medical College. He is published in the area of molecular physiology and biophysics with Baylor College of Medicine. He received his Master's degree in Educational Administration from the University of Houston, and is currently seeking to



complete his doctoral degree in Educational Administration from the University of Texas Austin.

This principal's initial intention was to become a medical doctor, but he was unable to make a high enough score to get admitted into medical school. He came to the conclusion that he needed to do something that was going to help him and his young family survive, so he decided to start "moonlighting as an instructor" at the university level. He taught at the university until he got his first opportunity to teach science at the middle school level. He taught science for one year then someone discovered he was bilingual and offered him a job as a fourth and fifth grade bilingual teacher at a charter school. While at the charter school, he saw that the expectations for his students were low and there were not many resources to support learning for his students. Therefore, he created partnerships with businesses to as a form of support. The students began to excel academically, and by the second year the learning in his classroom improved even more. The Doctor began entering his students in district science fairs and math competitions, and they were taking top honors. As he proudly stated, "I saw a lot of inequities across the board and yet our children really, really grew and prospered, and did well".

During his third year teaching, The Doctor was accepted into a university cohort to attain his Master's degree in education while he completed his certification requirements as a teacher. He was "trying to kill two birds with one stone". As a requirement to complete his Master's program, he became a principal intern at the middle school where he taught students. At the conclusion of his internship, the principal

of the middle school offered him an assistant principal position. He served as an assistant principal at the middle school level, and then became an assistant principal at an affluent high school. Two years later he was appointed to the position of principal of an urban elementary school. He has remained the leader at the same school. He is presently in his seventh year as principal.

Currently, the school he leads has an enrollment of 570 students with a demographic breakdown of 26% African American, < 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 72% Latino, 1% Native American, and 1% European American.

### **The Doctor's Interview**

The Doctor is accommodating regarding the time and place of the interview and wants the process to be as painless to me as possible. When we discussed the time and place for our interview, we agree to him coming to my campus after school hours. I gather he was very interested in contributing to the research I was doing from his willingness to make sure I was comfortable. I let him know that when he arrived at my campus, we would enjoy a bite to eat at my expense.

Upon The Doctor's arrival to my campus he greets me at the door with a smile and a firm handshake. He appears to be very confident in himself. He has on a khaki Boys Scout shirt with all the regalia, and shorts. I was thinking, this guy must be real involved with the Boys Scouts. In addition, I wondered how this would tie in to the interview we were about to partake in. We entered in to the hallway of my administrative suite on our way to my office. We went in to my office, and as promised, I had something for us to eat. I had my secretary purchase some sandwiches, potato

chips and sodas for us to enjoy. He was very gracious, and we began to eat and talk about our work day. In our discussion, we talked about the significance of my research. I tell him that we would be discussing his life story and journey to the principalship. He appears excited and tells me he was glad I was conducting this study because, “I lot of people need to know our stories”. At this time, I know he is invested in my research. I am anxious to get the interview started and confident he is going to share his story with me without reservation.

After eating, he is eager to start. I drew this conclusion based on his posture before I asked the first question. He leans in slightly and makes eye contact with me. I do a microphone check to make sure that once we start the interviewing process, I would not miss one word. I initiate the interview by asking him to tell me about himself. He begins by sharing what I call his humble beginnings growing up in the Midwest part of the United States. Then we press on with the questions focusing on leadership abilities.

When asked about personal qualities necessary for leadership, he named several, such as being data savvy. He elaborated on the meaning of being data savvy, stating, “You’ve got to understand where you are, where the kids are, and you need to understand what your kids need”. Additionally, he believed that principals should include character education in the students’ instructional day. The Doctor believed principals must have a clear understanding of curriculum and instruction to ensure that students receive rigorous instruction focused on the standards that are assessed. Though he identified being data savvy, advocating for character education and having a definite

knowledge of curriculum, he felt the strongly about his faith, his ability to build relationships and his ethics and integrity as personal qualities necessary for leadership.

His faith and desire to be a faithful servant permeated throughout the interview. He spoke firmly about having people on his staff that are committed to children. He described his expectations for staff members while alluding to lyrics from the Christian song entitled, “Jesus Loves the Little Children”, stating:

I tell people you got a love my babies. If you can't love the babies were going to have a problem. You got a love those babies in all that you do red, yellow, black and white, they're all precious in our site, and if they don't follow that mantra then it's a red flag for me.

In all that he does, especially in leadership, The Doctor relies on his faith. It is revealed as he proclaims:

And just being the faithful servant that I'm trying to be, has grown me stronger in terms of the word. It has really been a strong force in my life that helps guide me through the process of being an educational leader. You got a have something to fall back on, because it's a tough job. You have to have thick skin. You have to go out and leave your doorstep every day, and with the thought that you're going to give your best and serve and serve your heavenly father well. If you don't go out prayed up with your spiritual armor on, then you come back, defeated.

In terms of being relational or building relationships, he felt principals should be on a personal level with everyone associated with the campus. He said, ” It's about having a good relationship with the staff, the community members, and definitely the

students”. The Doctor used the word resourcefulness as he talked about relationships. He said, “You have to be resourceful, bringing in people whom you can trust to help move, and you need them to help get you where you’re trying to go”. Another aspect of relationship building he talked about was that of having a balanced relationship with his own family. He articulated:

I think it is also important that to be an effective leader you have to be in balance with your personal relationships at home, because if your home is not right, it is going to be hard for you to be right in all that you do.

Later in the interview regarding his relationship with his family, he added:

You got to leave your administrative hat at work, come home, and resume your role of being father, husband and faithful servant, and you have to work at it.

The Doctor maintained having ethics is important for leadership and instructional improvement in a school. He explained:

I think it's about being resourceful and resilient and doing everything ethically necessary to meet those needs of the community and to stay focus.

He expounded on the notion of being ethical with his experience being appointed as principal of his school.

As explained by The Doctor, when he took over his school, “it was a borderline Stage 1 school with a lot of personal issues.” Stage 1 means that the school had fallen below average for state expectations. He referred to the situation at the school as, “borderline unacceptable”. He attributed the school’s failures to poor leadership and high turnover of leadership. When he assumed the role of principal of the school, it was

in turmoil. He was the fourth principal in three years. Also, he shared that there was no accountability at the school and morale was low. The school had been cited for alleged misconduct during testing, however no one was found guilty. It was his charge as the new leader to bring the school up to par.

The Doctor feels that showing “managerial courage” is necessary for bringing about instructional progress in his position. Managerial courage means “saying what must be said at the proper time, to the right person, in the right manner.” To The Doctor, managerial courage must be exercised when addressing ineffective teachers or as he calls them “bad teachers”. He believed having managerial courage is needed by leaders to exit ineffective teachers off the campus. He explained:

There are a lot of people that are not good for kids, and I think that it is important to document them out. I think that it is true that for every bad teacher, it takes about 3 to 5 years to turn that kids -that student’s educational life around, and get them on the right track. It has been one of the most important objectives for me, it is to get the right persons on the bus.

Finally, he believed having a positive attitude and creating a positive culture helps him assure that his school is successful. He stated:

I always come to work with a smile. I think promoting a positive culture is key to good academic performance. I've been at places that were considered to be cesspools. I've been to some places, not very productive and some highly productive and even the ones - the places that where productive people weren't happy. And what I found is that that unhappiness trickles down to the kids.

The Doctor shared some of his life experiences that lead him to becoming an educator and eventually principal. First, he mentioned his experience at the Historically Black College he attended, Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He is appreciative of the male role models that he encountered in college. He asserted:

I thank God for the male leadership role models that I had that I didn't have growing up. I got to Morehouse, I learned about some things regarding education that helped affirm who I am today. I had some professors who were great role models and mentors that have been very instrumental in terms of who I am today, in terms of cultivating leadership, in terms of cultivating strong work ethic, in terms of becoming a lifelong learner on all levels.

Secondly, The Doctor visited schools from different parts of the world. He visited schools in Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Taiwan which helped shape his worldview regarding the need for students to be academically successful. In those countries, he witnessed conditions that were parallel or worse than the condition of urban schools in the United States.

The Doctor believed his upbringing had a considerable impact on the way he leads. He was born to a fifteen years old teenage mother and a nineteen year old alcoholic father. Growing up with an alcoholic father and a teenage mother of two young children, and his ability to persevere despite the circumstances gives him a platform for his students with similar experiences. He explained:

I had a father that was an alcoholic, a teenage mother that had two kids before she was 19 years old, and was on welfare the majority of our lives, and so what

I'm here to tell you is, no matter what is happening in their family and that yeah, you can beat all odds. We didn't have much growing up, but my mother always exposed us to the best and she always emphasized education.

The Doctor is very proud of his mother and how she exemplified persistence in her pursuit of her own educational goals. He gave an example of her impact on him and his outlook on the importance of attaining education using his mother's experience:

Yet, she did it not only by what she said but by what she did. My mother went back (to college) after 10 years of a miserable marriage and got her associate's degree, got her bachelor's degree in three years with two kids on welfare. Later on in life, in her 50s, went back and got her Master's in divinity, and so I'm really proud of her. She has been a role model for me.

When asked about his interests, values and beliefs that influences the way he conducts himself personally and professionally, he reiterated the role spirituality plays in his life. He viewed himself as a principal, but that of a good shepherd, overseer of the flock, which is further illustrated as he declared:

I look at my role as not as principal, it's that of a gate keeper, a faithful Shepherd whose job is to see that I am able to move the entire flock and not lose one. And that is probably the most underlying, the most important mindset that I can probably convey to you that helps get me through.

He believes in the core values of respect for all and engaging in acts of kindness even when people are not kind to him. He leads by example and takes the high road in times of confusion. The Doctor believes leaders should be perpetual problems solvers



for the school. Additionally, he viewed the ability to communicate or having interpersonal skills as an attribute that he expects the people that work for him to demonstrate, because it allows them to be solvers of their own problems.

In addition to his belief in respect and kindness toward others, The Doctor asserts that the absence of the church in schools has its contribution to what he calls “the erosion of today’s school system”. Specifically, in reference to the problems urban educators face with student discipline. He compares the use of the Holy Bible with the use of the Student Code of Conduct again alluding to his faith. He used the following comparison:

I am a firm believer that one of the problems that we have in school systems today is, I got a put my Bible in my desk and put my code of conduct on top. I believe if I could put my Bible on top of my desk, I can throw the student code of conduct away because it’s all covered. So what I try to do, the Bible covers it all. If I can put that (The Bible) on my desk I could throw it (student code of conduct) away-there will be no need for the student code of conduct.

The Doctor is an advocate for students of color. He passionately elaborated on the subject, referencing the statistic of African American males. He referred to himself as one of the “twenty-four”, meaning one out of twenty-four African American males has been or is presently in jail. On occasion, to illustrate the need for his students to follow the rules, he shares his own personal story of disobedience and the injustice he faced as a result. With a laugh he referred to the story as a sermon. His sermon is entitled “Too Cool to Get on the Bus”. The sermon is a recount of an experience he had

with law enforcement as a teenager. However, before he started telling me his story, he said, “I am going to show you how God works”.

The Doctor began by describing himself as a teenager, having a big Afro, self-righteous, and a poster child for the post-civil rights movement. He participated in the marches for the preservation of affirmative action that culminated from the Bakke cases. He had served as president of his black student union in California. He said he read all the books of *The Stolen Legacy* by author George Granville Monah James. He was into Huey Newton, Angela Davis, and H. Rap Brown. Furthermore, he witnessed firsthand, discrimination and injustices perpetrated against his parents in relation to employment and housing. The Doctor expressed he saw a lot of unjust as a teenager which helped characterize his experiences and “colored his walk” in terms of how he interacts with people.

As it goes, in 1978, The Doctor moved from San Francisco to Houston as a junior in high school. While in Houston he joined the high school baseball team becoming the first African American to letter in baseball. After one of his varsity baseball games which was played at an affluent high school in a predominantly Caucasian part of town, he chose to ride home with some of his teammates. This fact is important because earlier that day his mother instructed him to ride the bus home. On their way home, they were pulled over by the local police. It was alleged that they fit the description of a group of men that committed a robbery. As a result, he and his teammates were handcuffed and taken to the police station. He and his teammates were eventually released with a warning from the police to never return to that part of town.

Ironically, thirteen years later, The Doctor became an assistant principal at the school he played against the night of his arrest. That's how God works.

Additionally, as an act of kindness, The Doctor has supported students by picking them up and transporting them to school on Saturdays for tutorials. He has shopped at Goodwill to buy alarm clocks for students to promote self-dependence. The Doctor believes having good character is important. Therefore as a dedicated, long time member of the Boy Scouts of America, he recruits his African American and Latino male students with the severest behaviors to be members of the organization. He instills in them the values of the scouts such as, trustworthiness, self-reliance and good citizenship. In addition to character education, being in the scouts offers unique experiences they would typically not experience. Some of the highlights involving the Boy Scouts he mentioned is camping, presentation of colors at high school games and events, and for Governor Rick Perry. Furthermore, his guiding belief in having good character helped him choose teachers and staff with good character:

To say, hey, look, I think this is a person of good character who is going to make a difference in the lives of our children. I've met a lot of people with some great credentials and they weren't good for kids. They weren't loving. They weren't nurturing. They weren't positive.

The Doctor identified the bureaucracy that exists on the district, state and federal as an obstacle to effectively performing his duty as a principal. On the district level, he highlighted the district initiatives as a problem. He has to determine what initiatives will

meet the needs of his campus despite the wishes of the district. He elaborated on the issue:

One (obstacle), is compliance dealing with the district to be honest with you. As far as being compliant and following district initiatives. Two, is trying to find balance with what our superiors thinks ought to happen based off what my teachers and I want to happen. I often times see this conflict there.

On the state level, The Doctor expressed how changes are made regarding academic expectations without consideration for all students;

I think too, the forever changing and the raising of the bar. This whole concept of raising the bar. And I'm concerned about how legislatures make decisions and some of their kids aren't even in public school. You have people who are in position of power who are introducing bills, where they have no personal connection to the effect and impact of these bills.

Secondly, he viewed the amount of funding allocated for urban schools and the manner in which funding for urban schools is determined as unfair and an obstruction to providing a quality education to students of urban schools.

The Doctor establishes a successful learning environment beginning with his hiring practices. He focuses on hiring teachers that have a passion and love children. Also, he looks to hire other staff that has strengths he does not possess. He called it, completing the circle. The Doctor believes in hiring teachers that are knowledgeable of pedagogy and have positive attitudes. Conversely, he understands the importance of

dismissing negative people to preserve good morale on the campus. Once again stressing the importance of managerial courage, The Doctor said:

I think the other piece that has really been real helpful in terms of success has been to show that managerial courage and weed out the toxins. It's been a struggle to weed out the ones that I believe are really toxic. And that can really damage and poison morale.

Additionally, The Doctor expects his teachers to use data to make decisions for the students. He believes using data is essential for the success of a school. He explained to me by using a car gauges as a metaphor:

You got certain gauges that tells you where you are and indicates which you need to do regarding a plan of action. And so, we know that two of the most important gauges in our car is the gas in the oil. Without you being knowledgeable about where you are in terms of whether you've got gas in your car or not, or whether you have oil in your car, is going to determine if you go anywhere. These are just some of the things that we really focus on is helping alleviate fears dealing with data. Also, helping teachers understand that data guides everything. In all that we do we always have to know what your kids are in terms of their strengths and their weaknesses.

The Doctor is not afraid to share the leadership duties among the people on his campus. He has not had an assistant principal on his campus on paper, but has competent and dedicated members of his staff that share the responsibilities on campus. He expressed that success is a team effort and he does not need the glory. He believes that

cultivating relationships with students has an impact on their academic success. For example, he does home visits to sick students or calls them in the hospital to show that he cares. He sees the students as the future of the country, so investing in their success is priority.

According to The Doctor, two things come to mind when creating systems that produce change long-term. He highlighted support from strong collegial relationships and the need for balance between home and the work place. The Doctor believes leaders are better when they share ideas and strategies that have been effective on their respective campuses. In regard to balance, he feels too often administrators experience burn out and should do things that are relaxing outside of work. He stated:

You usually get burned out in terms of the job that we do. I am very much involved with my church. That helps me sustain my thoughts it keeps me together. It also helps me in terms of my spiritual armor. I think it's important for you to find a vent. My vent at times is to go play a little golf or fish. When I play a little golf or fish, I come back renewed and I'm able to focus a little more. Sometimes I have to get away. And I think that plays a very big role.

The Doctor believes in the idea of being held accountable for student standardized test scores, but he feels other factors should be taken in to account. To elaborate on the subject, he said:

I think that principals should be held accountable, but I think they should be held accountable in a way that is different from the way we are being held accountable today. The way we are being held accountable today is a very

narrow window. It's just on standardized testing. I think that what we do goes way beyond that, and that's the problem that I have. I don't have a problem with you holding me to STAAR, I don't have a problem with you, holding me accountable for Stanford, Aprenda, Telpas, and Tejas Lee. What I do have a problem with you don't see that I may have brought and \$75,000 to help with the character education program, or we put in an afterschool program to get these kids off the street.

Furthermore, he gave more examples of alternative criterion for measuring the effectiveness of principals. For example, he works long hours during the week and works on weekends, which takes time away from his family. The Doctor felt strongly about tracking the educational progress of students as a means of determining success. Finally, he proudly boasted about four former students that graduated from high school as valedictorians. He has had several former students to graduate from high school, which some enrolled in various colleges and universities such as Harvard University, California-Berkeley and University of Texas in Galveston. These are things he says, people do not notice.

When The Doctor was posed the question about his secrets to improving achievement and limits to power, he focused on the principal as an advocate for the school, stating:

I think to keep moving the needle you have to constantly be on the go and constantly be fighting for your campus. You've got to be your campus biggest advocate in all that they do. You got to espouse all the good things and you have

to be really your own PR person. Because if you don't blow your horn, then who else will.

As before, he reiterated the need to build strong relationships with the parents and students. He values their relationships and their role communicating the vision of the school to others. He believes their voices determine the global perception of the school. Visibility is another contributor to the success of his school. The Doctor is the first person everyone sees in the mornings as he greets his parents and students. He walks his campus during the school hours and is outside after schools making sure his students get home. He also visits the churches in the community.

The Doctor viewed funding as a limit to improving student achievement for schools. He discussed the inequity of funding for his school in comparison to other schools. He made his point with this description, when asked what hinders you, he made this statement:

Limited finances and limited resources. I'm held accountable to the same standards as some schools that have four to five times my budget. But I don't use it as an excuse.

The Doctor believes with adequate funding, he would be able to provide his students with comparable resources that affluent schools use to produce positive academic outcomes. Furthermore, he believes in utilizing funding as a way to expose his students to new experiences, such as field trips and traveling.



## **The Lawyer's Profile**

This principal is the product of a two parent home and both of his parents were teachers. He attended Florida A&M University for his undergraduate studies and later attended Texas Southern University School of Law. He received his Master's in Educational Leadership from Texas A&M University. Currently, he is in a doctoral program. His original plan was to become a lawyer, but soon found the law was not his calling. He decided to pursue a career in education because his parents told him; education is always something you can fall back on.

During his student teaching experience is when made the choice to become an educator. He did student teaching in a high school government and economics class. At some point during his student teaching, he says he was placed in a "sink or swim" situation. Meaning, he was expected to teach without any assistance from an experienced teacher. He recalls doing a lesson on first amendment rights and fourth amendment rights. According to The Lawyer, students were sharing their personal stories about the problems they faced when encountering law enforcement. As he stated, "they were talking about the streets and I was talking about what should have happened". He realized that not only were the students learning from him, but he was learning from them. The Lawyer recalled a time during his student teaching while teaching economics that made it clear to him that education would be his career. After teaching a lesson on cost of living in an economics class, The Lawyer recounted a comment made by a student and how he felt after the exchange:

(The student says) I understood it, and I never understood that. He said you have a way of breaking it down...(with some emotion) it kind of messed me up because it didn't have anything to do about coursework this kid came and said he learned from me. Then I was like, maybe I can do this work. And from there I started teaching and loved it.

From that encounter spurred a five year teaching career. The Lawyer was in a teacher coaching position for two years. During that time, he worked with a principal that he described as "awesome". She inspired him to become an administrator. Therefore, The Lawyer worked as an assistant principal for four years until appointed as principal of an elementary school. Before he took on the role of principal, he asked his mentor which was a principal, "How do you know when you are ready to become a principal?" Drawing words from her mentor, her reply was, "you are ready to be a principal when you are ready to accept responsibility for everything that happens at your school whether you are there or not". He has been a principal for eight years.

Presently, the school he is principal of has an enrollment of 990 students with a demographic breakdown of 70% African American, < 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 26% Latino, 2% Native American, and 1% European American.

### **The Lawyer's Interview**

The Lawyer and I agreed to conduct the interview at his campus. He had recently been moved from the campus he served as a principal for some years to another campus. His current campus was in need of a leader that was proven and he was chosen. When I drove up the school was in the process of being cleaned and manicured. There

were several workers planting new flowers and applying mulch on the perimeter of the campus. I got out of my car and walked up the sidewalk to the front doors. As I entered the building, I was impressed with the cleanliness of the hallways. I entered into the main office. At the time, there were several parents waiting in chairs with their children to be helped by the office staff. The office staff was very pleasant as they greeted me with a “good afternoon, how may I help you?” I told them that I was there to visit with The Lawyer. One of the ladies went to notify him that I had arrived for our interview. The same lady came back to the front of the office, and asked me to follow her as she led me to his office. The Lawyer’s office was very spacious and clean. His desk had very few papers and everything seemed to be in order. I noticed the walls were bare and just assumed it was because he had not been at the campus long enough to have pictures. He greeted me with a smile and a handshake and asked me to sit down at a conference table adjacent to his desk. From the moment I walked in the main office, I knew it was a busy time for him, so I immediately set up the recorder for the interview when I sat. We sat across from each other. I asked him how things were going with his new assignment. He enthusiastically explained to me that a lot of work had been done prior to me coming and more work was needed. He just immediately started talking when I turned on the recorder.

He was talking to me about the challenges his new assignment presented. His conversation let me know that he was concerned but optimistic about his ability to lead his new campus. He explained that the school was in need of huge turn around, and “healing needed to take place” in order for the school to experience the overdo

transformation. It was clear to me that he was up to the challenge. I felt I needed to focus the conversation, so I immediately went into the question about how to establish a successful learning environment.

The Lawyer believes in being fair and treating people the right way. Furthermore, he believes leaders should have the ability to see the bigger picture when working with employees. He says a good leader is one that can create an environment for staff that focuses on teamwork. He believes the way leaders communicate creates the perception for the people and their perception of the leader determines whether they will be willing and effective in their roles on the campus. He categorizes these employees in four levels of readiness.

He describes the first level as; people who are willing and able. According to The Lawyer, these are the people you want to “hold close” because they know what to do and they want to do. Next are the people who are willing but not able. He says they want to help, but they require guidance to get the job done. Then there are the people who are able but unwilling. They really do not want you to know they know because their loyalty lies with the former administration. For these people, he provided an example:

Those folks if you can intrigue them and get out of them what is in them. It may take you a little longer and stroking you have to find out what motivates them. If you can get them there then you’ve got something. If you get the able, which is also the unwilling to do something then you’ve got something.

Finally, there are the people who are unwilling and unable. He continued:

Those people got to go because they don't mean you no good. In most cases, then never going to step up to either one. Even if they act like they're willing to go to find a way to sabotage everything.

The four type of people described shows that The Lawyer is impartial in his evaluation of staff on the campus. He believes that for principals to get the most production from the staff, they should meet people where they are. Being reflective is a behavior that The Lawyer mentioned as the most critical for leadership as it can get the entire staff moving in the same direction.

The Lawyer's parents played a significant role in shaping him as person. He has a father that "drove him hard" and never let him be satisfied with just being good. His dad always expected him to do his best. He described his mother as unconditional. She wanted him to do what made him happy. She impressed upon him taking his time and doing things right the first time. In combination, they instilled in him the importance of having pride in his work and doing the best job he can do. He takes the lessons learned from his parents and incorporates them in to his style of leadership. He feels that the students deserve the best from the adults that are serving them and encourages his staff to push toward their level best.

The Lawyer's approach to establishing a successful learning environment encompasses involving the teachers, students and parents in discussions focused on student achievement. As he puts it, the accountability has to flow. Teachers, students and parents must feel responsible for the success of the school. He feels that the conversation should go beyond pass or fail, and must consist of actual numbers or

scores. This way the focus changes from “passing to growth” of the student. The Lawyer explained it this way:

My whole philosophy about a successful learning environment is everybody in the community being able to talk about achievement from a simplistic standpoint, but more sophisticated than pass or fail. That’s not enough, because folks so used to failing. You haven’t said anything. What I failed, okay well I failed last year. But Walker said. I went from a 50 to 60 from a 62 of 70 and a parent can even understand that. Having a conversation around, this is where he was. He grew 30 points. He needs 20 more, can he get five more questions? Some simple math that puts it where they can see it in opening up the conversation. So the parent feels empowered, as well as the child.

To facilitate the conversations of student growth with the learning community, The Lawyer made tracking growth visual by the use of a “move board”. After the administration of a benchmark test to students, the results were placed on the move board. Each classroom had the tracking system and teachers were able to determine which students they needed to focus on. The utilization of the move board was followed by celebrations for the students called a move party. This process empowered students as they were able to find themselves on the board and feel a sense of accountability for their own learning.

Another means of creating a successful learning environment for The Lawyer is establishing relationships with his parents. He puts his energy in making the school a place parents have a chance to contribute and become more involved no matter how

small the gesture. He acknowledges parents' effort to get involved with the school and uses it as an opportunity for the school to engage the parents at a "deeper level in the future". He told the story of one of his students' father and how he as a principal attempted to cultivate a relationship with a parent by recognizing his efforts as an involved parent.

The father came to The Lawyer the day after awards day, a time when students and parents are presented with certificates celebrating their achievements for the year. The father said to him, he was confused to why he did not receive an award as a parent because he brought his daughter to school every day. Based on the history of the parent, he getting his daughter to school every day was a major accomplishment. After all, he had recently been released from prison. The Lawyer detailed what happened immediately after their encounter:

So what did I do, classic The Lawyer? I ran in the office and said, "What happened?" and he was standing behind me and I told my staff to work with me. He did not get his award, what happened. I said, "I don't know, I will find out who messed up. But let's get that award". I wasn't really worried about it. Nobody really messed up, but I signed it in front of him and I said, "Man I appreciate the value that you have added to my school".

The Lawyer labored the point of celebrations as a strategy for motivating people and moving the school forward and gaining success for the students. He referenced the book entitled, "The One Minute Manager" by authors Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson as to how he hails the contributions of staff members.

The thing that caught my attention was it said the one minute manager, one minute praise one minute reprimand. In other words, if you are going to praise, praise and be done with it. Not saying that you don't want to make people feel good, but sometimes you can overdo it too. But the other thing is, once you reprimand be done with it.

The Lawyer considers himself a harmonious leader and stresses the power of authenticity associated with the actions of people. He describes his methods to get his people to have a sense of urgency for student achievement, and understand that caring for students and ensuring their success is a moral obligation.

Not that I'm Gandhi or Mandela. But when you talking to your staff, sometimes you have to paint a picture beyond the data. But help them understand there are lives behind the data. Helping them to see that they are part of a social movement, which is easier said than done. I show the clips from movies, but I think I do it in a way that comes across as authentic because that's who I am.

In regards to authenticity of action, he showed some emotion as he told a story of a teacher that exemplified the synergy that can be created from a sense of urgency and the genuineness of a person.

The school had missed the rating of Recognized by one student in the subject of science. He explained his science teacher's feelings about the situation as taking it "in a personal way". The next year she closely monitored her students. When he went in to her classroom during instruction, he described her teaching using phrases like "saw smoke", "she was teaching like her hair was on fire". In other words, the effectiveness



of the instruction this one teacher was providing to the students and the commitment to the students she demonstrated was a perfect example of what he expects from all his teachers. He described her seriousness to the task as “evangelical” for him as a principal. He added, “it’s about the work and coming from within here”, pointing to his heart. “If you get that serious about it, I’m just here to guide you”.

When asked about what is needed for sustaining the success of the school, he emphasized the need for quality intervention for students that were not successful. Interventions for students must start early and be consistent. In addition to intervention for students, he believes ongoing staff development for teachers keeps a school successful. Again, the need to celebrate students came up. So, to The Lawyer celebrating others is something that should be established and remain a part of the culture of the school.

The Lawyer does not like to spend his time on enforcing rules for teachers. To him, it is “minutia”. Therefore, he views hiring teachers that possess integrity as an obstacle to carrying out his duties as a principal. He explained it this way:

I’ll learn as much as possible try to hire people with integrity you hire people with integrity because you can’t manage integrity. Then you can’t necessarily staff development it. You can’t really document anybody to have integrity. You can document them to do what you said do. But if it’s not in you- You still try to find a way to get as close to it as you can or get around it. So I think that one of my biggest constraints is rules and is hard for me because I would prefer to be inspirational than spending time with the rules.

I asked him whether holding principals accountable using test scores was a good idea or a bad idea. His reply was, “yes, I think it’s good, but I am going to say it because the alternative is horrible”. He believes he should be held accountable, and that the principal should permeate the accountability to the staff and the community. As a result, everyone is aligned with working toward success for all students. He fears the alternative, which is having no accountability. He illustrated his sentiments this way:

To me the opposite of that (accountability) is to not have accountability. And what I mean is, if we go back to not being accountable, who’s going to care about the students. That means if the students are struggling, there is not a powerful conversation around how we can make it better. I think that conversation doesn’t happen if the school is not held accountable.

Though he thinks accountability for principals is important, he feels there are too many assessments and we should come together as a country and agree on one. In addition to high stakes testing, he concludes that principals’ ability to hire and develop effective teachers, and retain effective teachers should be considered in determining the effectiveness of a principal.

His thoughts on increasing rigor in the classroom were that teachers have to get away from lecturing students and allow students to ask the questions. He feels it is important for students to be creative and connect their learning to their experiences.

### **The Dancer’s Profile**

This principal was born in San Francisco, California in the early 1940’s, but raised in Texas. His mother was a housewife and his father was in the armed forces. He

had two older sisters. At six years old his mother allowed him to move in with his aunt and she brought him up until he was seventeen. With her, he grew up in an African American neighborhood and attended urban schools in elementary, middle and high school. After graduating from high school, he attended Texas Southern University majoring in education with a minor in music.

The Dancer had his heart and sights on becoming a dancer after graduating from high school. He loved to dance. He said, "I wanted to be the first black Fred Astaire on television". Nevertheless, he honored the wishes of the aunt he loved and respected and attended college. His story is sad and at times he became emotional as he talked about his past. His father was an alcoholic. At a young age his biological mother passed and before graduating from high school, the aunt that raised him from six years old passed. He graduated in June 1963 and his aunt passed March 1963. He became emotional as he recounted the events leading to her passing away because she played a huge role in raising him. The story was very detailed as he told it. To him it was "like a flashback". One day his aunt along with her friend was on the way to pick him up from church. While driving, his aunt had a "stroke of the brain". The friend that was riding with her told him that it happened suddenly. His aunt dropped her hand from the steering wheel and was unable to speak, as her friend asked her what was wrong. The car veered to the side of the freeway. According to his aunt's friend, a little man stopped and got out of his car to help. When he opened the door, she fell out of the car. A car ran over the tip of her hair barely missing her head. An ambulance was called to take her to the

emergency room. At this point, The Dancer begins to get emotional and removed himself from the room. He returned in ten minute and finished the story:

We didn't have cell phones. So somebody got off the freeway and called. The police came and carried her to the old Jeff Davis Hospital. And she lingered (got emotional). She lingered until I got there, the doctor said she was waiting on someone, but when I got there and walked out, she passed. So I had to struggle in school.

Though he struggled in school, The Dancer graduated from Texas Southern University and immediately went into teaching at an elementary school in a prekindergarten classroom. The next year he was assigned to another school and he taught fifth grade for fifteen years. After his experience in elementary, he went on to teach at the middle school level where he served as a reading specialist and later became a coordinator of a program for wayward children.

Some years later, The Dancer accepted a job at an urban high school and oversaw a Macintosh computer lab. He also was charged with assisting in the improvement of the relations between African American students and Latino students. At the high school gangs were present and through his efforts they became friends. Just as he was in his fame and glory as he put it, he was named the principal of an elementary school. He has been the principal of the same school for over twenty years. On his road to the principalship, he knew he wanted to lead an urban school. As a matter of fact, he says he prayed for a school that he could make a difference in the lives of students of color, particularly African American students:

I did not do student teaching in the black school. I did it in the Hispanic white school over there named Elliott. But I prayed, I ain't gone lie that I wanted to become a principal and I wanted to be put at a black school to help our folks.

Presently, the school he is principal of has an enrollment of 382 students with a demographic breakdown of 80% African American, < 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 20% Latino, 0% Native American, and 0% European American.

### **The Dancer's Interview**

I called The Dancer to discuss where in when we could conduct the interview. He expressed to me that he was in the process of moving from one campus to a newly built campus. So, agreed to meet at his the newly constructed campus. When I drove up, I was very impressed the outer appearance of the new building. He was pulling into the parking lot also. We exchanged greetings in the parking lot and proceeded to walk me to the entrance of building. The Dancer was very proud of the campus and all the work that had been put in to it. He told me that he was heavily involved in the design and details of the school. Before I was able to walk in the doors entering the building the tour of the school began. First thing I noticed was the building had two stories. We entered in to the main hallway of the building. The library was to the left and he proceeds to walk me into this colorful book filled library. It had several brand new computers, a nook and books from wall to wall. The windows looking out were circular. There were three of them. He told me the windows were designed to resemble his favorite Disney character, Mickey Mouse. We exited the library and continued down the main hallway to an area that had pictures posted on the wall. The black and white

portraits were of the past four principals before he was chosen to lead the school. The Dancer continued the tour walking down each hallway and into each restroom on the first floor. He pointed out the design of the classrooms. He explained that each classroom had a window in the door and on one section of the wall so he could observe without interrupting instruction. Each classroom had a new smart board and a number of computers. He showed me all the lounges and classroom for students with special needs. The special needs classrooms were right outside his second office door for easy access. He had a band room with sound boards and instruments.

Upon starting the tour of the second floor, I saw that the stairwell steps were colorful, and numbered in ascending order walking up and numbered in descending order walking down. On the second floor, there were several areas with comfortable looking couches and a table. These areas were for students to lounge and read books. I was blown away with the layout of the school and could detect his sense of pride as we continued the tour.

We made it to his office, and it was evident that his earlier statement about Mickey Mouse being his favorite character was true. His office was filled with Mickey artifacts and most of all a large mural of Mickey on the wall. The office was a little disheveled because of the transition from the old campus to the new campus. His office was connected to a conference room where he planned for us to conduct the interview. The conference room had a table and chairs with the plastic still on them. We sat down in the conference room and I set up my equipment to capture the interview. The Dancer summoned his secretary to get us a bottle of water and we began the interview.

One quality The Dancer believes leaders should possess to improve instruction at a school is ability to build relationships with teachers, students and businesses. As a principal, he is in constant contact with the teachers and students. He believes it is important for the student to know who their principal is. He boasts knowing nearly every child in his school either by name or by family. The relationship he builds with his students and parents makes it easier to get his parents to participate in the lives of the students. In addition to building relationships with parents and students, he develops alliances with businesses that are willing to contribute money to the school. As an example, he receives over two thousand dollars a year from a country club to buy uniforms and supplies for the children that he serves.

The Dancer feels he gets positive results because he is authentic in his words and actions. He expects the same from his teachers. Furthermore, he understands that teachers are going to experience challenges in the classroom, but wants them to stay focused on the students and give them “one hundred percent plus”.

He wants all the students in his school to learn, despite their circumstances they can achieve. He passionately stated:

I instill in the kids that all things are possible and you can overcome any barriers that are in your way. Because if there's a will there is a way.

The Dancer was raised as a child during segregation, he witnessed the time when African American students and European American students attended separate schools. During those times African American students had access to used books while European

Americans had new books. He recounts experiences as a young person in a Jim Crow society and his resistance to the treatment he was subjected to:

I've gone through sitting at the back of the bus, I've gone through being out of order and going to the front of the bus on purpose. I've been put off the bus. I've been slapped in my face in Woolworth. I slapped the white woman back and I ran and got caught by a white man at the top of the escalator and my mama had to come down there and whip me in the security room. That's the only way they let me go. They've been there where they lynched black folks for touching white women. I've been put out of the white man's toilet because I was supposed to be in the colored men's restroom. I was arrogant as a young person.

As The Dancer grew older he matured and was less resistant. He credits his aunt's rearing and teachers' low tolerance for "foolishness" as part of that transformation from audacious to respectful and disciplined. In his tenure as a principal, he acknowledges the discipline and well-mannered behavior learned from his aunt and his teachers as characteristics that guides him as a leader. He feels it is important he be respected and that he respects his superiors and follows their directives as long as they are in the best interest of his teachers and students.

The Dancer views rules, policies and regulations as a barrier to executing his duties as a principal. He briefly explained:

Rules, policies and regulations, where you would want to do something that's against board policy, but you just can't do it. When they came up with the new laws for education, that hinders us from getting funds and we lose grants.



“I can’t do everything around the school myself” was his response to the question regarding the delegation of responsibilities in school leadership. He has people in different positions that assist with the school improvement plan, budgeting and other duties on the campus. Through his use of delegation, The Dancer has been able to identify and develop leaders on the campus. Some have become principals.

The Dancer believes sustaining success means consistently assessing the standards taught to students. He also feels principals should be held accountable for standardized test scores. To effectively monitor the instructional programming he thinks leaders need to seek professional development to understand the curriculum the teachers are teaching. The Dancer is a believer in the school operating as a family which comes from his grandmother’s teaching. Whatever went on in her house stayed in her house, and he expects the same at his school. In all that is expected of The Dancer as the principal leading a successful campus, teamwork is important. He explained to me this way:

We are a team. The team goes up everybody gets credit, the team goes down everybody fails.

### **The Singer’s Profile**

The Singer was raised in what he considered a “tough” area in Houston, Texas. He described his mother and father as hardworking people. On his father’s side of the family, there were many educators, but his mother’s side of the family was more industrial. Even though he had both of his parents, his life was filled with many surrogates that provided him with love and guidance. He attended Texas Southern

University majoring in education with a minor in music. Additionally, The Singer studied voice with Julliard educated professors and performed while in college.

After graduating from the university, he began teaching and eventually went back to school to obtain his Master's degree. The Singer taught at four elementary schools. One of the elementary schools where he did his teaching was predominantly European American and located in an affluent neighborhood. With a smile he said, "I was the first African American male teacher in the history of that school". He laughed as he shared one of his experiences at the school that posed a problem for him. He explained:

I gave the first set of F's and D's to some of the wealthiest Anglo children in the United States of America, because they were a little spoiled and didn't do their work.

The Singer admitted that year was challenging as he received a lot of backlash for the grades he issued the students. He credited one of his mentors, a European American assistant superintendent for helping him get through that situation:

I will not say I had a good year, but Dr. Robin Simon the assistant superintendent. She's just like my godmother as well, she's Anglo. She worked with me with those folks over there, so we reached a normalcy level. And the most beautiful thing is, at the end of the year they scored the highest in the city of Houston.

However, in three of the school he was able to use his talent as a singer and started boy's choirs. The Singer taught middle school for a few years, and then became

an assistant principal at the middle school level. Eventually, he became an assistant principal of an inner city high school, where he served for five years. He was brought in to that particular high school which was predominately Hispanic to work with the African American students. At the time the African American students were wanting to “just get by”, and through his efforts many of the students graduated and attended four year universities. His work caught the attention of one of the area superintendents and he was offered a principalship at an elementary school that needed turning around. He is now in his fourteenth year.

Presently, the school he is principal of has an enrollment of 520 students with a demographic breakdown of 78% African American, 0% Asian/Pacific Islander, 21% Latino, 0% Native American, and 1% European American.

### **The Singer’s Interview**

The Singer and I agreed the interview would be conducted at his campus. I drove up to the campus and the first thing I noticed was a huge playground adjacent to the campus building. Also, I noted the outer appearance of the campus building. It was definitely an older building. I entered the doors of the building and went directly to the main office. There I informed the office worker that I was scheduled for an interview with The Singer. He informed me that The Singer was running a little late and asked me to sit outside the office and wait. As I waited, I looked around at the walls and noticed several plaques. I stood up and began to examine them. The plaques gave me insight in to the school accomplishments during the tenure of this principal. One of the plaques revealed that the school was a National Blue Ribbon School. Another showed the

school's boy's choir which was partnered with a local university. Additionally, there were plaques that boasted there Recognized and Exemplary ratings from previous years. After reading the plaques, I continued to wait for The Singer's arrival. A few minutes had passed and the same office worker let me know that The Singer was leaving a previous engagement and was on his way back to the campus. After twenty more minutes of waiting, The Singer arrived. He apologized for being late, shook my hand and invited me in to his office. His office seemed a little cluttered to me. There were papers and books all on his desk and binders on the floor. We sat down at a little table against the wall that had two chairs and began to talk as I set up my recorder. He was talking to me about the meeting he had just left. It was some type of community council meeting that had several important people in attendance. Then asked me to explain the steps to the research I was conducting. He seemed excited and eager to share his experiences with me. We began the interview with him providing me a little background information about him. Then we moved into his feelings on the personal qualities necessary for leadership and instructional improvement.

The Singer feels passion is necessary to lead a successful campus. Additionally, he believes it is important for principals to use their position to help children realize their potential and not use their positions for a show of prestige. The Singer feels the willingness to go above and beyond is necessary to get positive results for students. Since he does not have a wife or children, he goes above and beyond by working seven days a week at times. He acknowledges the challenges the school faces to provide a

quality education to urban students and highlighted the efforts of some of his staff members that shares his level of commitment to the school. He elaborated:

I have staff members, teachers who will come out here and they'll be out here on Saturdays. So willing to pay the price and the price is high.

All the same, The Singer feels it is important for the principal to recognize teachers and staff that are not dedicated to the students and exit them off the campus. For example, when he initially took over leadership of the campus, the level of instruction was extremely low. He had teachers that called the students "crack heads". Teachers were taking two hour breaks, leaving campus to run errands when they were supposed to be teaching students. According to him, he had to "restructure everything". The restructuring included; creating schedules for teachers and students, securing grants to update technology, replacing furniture and redoing floors, exterminating because roaches were crawling on the tables the children at from and firing teachers.

He talked about the year he had ten teachers leave. One of the teachers was an African American male he personally mentored and hired. The Singer was not pleased with the way he referred to the students. He explained:

I had a gentleman say to me, he was so angry, when I get in my car and I drive over here every day to work with these inner-city children. And I went back and pulled the email from 2005 where when he finally got certified he asked me for job, and I showed him that email. I said, listen, you were literally begging me to hire you because he was finally able to pass the test after fifteen tries. And I said, just like you took this test fifteen times you have to go over and over instruction

with your children. And for him to make that kind of statement, he's an African American male, and to say these inner-city children. It's just-that type of person you just don't need in an instructional environment.

The Singer builds relationships with students, parents and community. Since the standards have been raised for students, he has been engaging parents at the school to stress the importance of their participation in the learning process. He visits the churches in the area sometime forfeiting attendance of his own church to "carry the message" of high standards and the importance of parental involvement.

Early in his life, the Singer was inspired to educate children. He had a teacher/counselor Ms. Clamps, which mentored him from a young age. She introduced him to many influential people, some that were educators. That prompted the Singer to research his family. He discovered that many of his relatives were educators on all levels. His mentor encouraged him to share his "gift" as a singer with others, which translated in to the boys choirs he started at different schools including the school he leads.

The Singer strives to be a role model for young people and teachers alike. He believes in treating everybody right. Something he learned from his parents. He expressed it this way:

So if you're going to survive if you're going to make it, you want people to respect you, you have to respect people.

He views student discipline as an obstacle to fulfilling his responsibility to creating an environment conducive to learning. To him students with discipline

problems require counseling. Moreover, he believes the person providing that service must be interested in the children to be effective. He was reminded of a counselor that worked at his school that passed away three years earlier. In a sorrowful tone, he spoke highly of her commitment to the students:

She knew every kid. She knew about every child. When I got ready to suspend somebody she was like a mercenary, she would say let me talk to the parent. She was really a savior for the children.

He chronicled the days leading to her passing:

One day she tells me, “Singer I don’t feel good. I want to know if I can take Monday off to see a doctor”. She went to go see the doctor on that Monday, but by Wednesday she had had an aneurysm. And by Friday her mother pulled the machine and she was gone (within a week).

Her contributions went beyond counseling students. He says she did everything. Just as his former counselor had performed several duties, he expects the same from his other staff. The Singer depends on the site-based decision making committee, and assistant principal to share the various responsibilities on campus.

When The Singer became the principal of his current school, he inherited a school that was considered unacceptable. Within five years, the school was high achieving. He established a successful learning environment beginning with an effective administrative team. The decisions that were made for the campus were data driven. The Singer maintains that continuously reviewing data, establishing personal

relationships with students and parents promotes sustained success for a school. He stated it this way:

I believe that if you can effectively look at your data sit down with the child and the parent, then you have it made.

The Singer believes the principal should be held accountable for standardized tests scores but thinks the accountability should be shared among teachers.

### **Analysis of Findings**

The principals faced adversity and continued to work toward their goals. Several themes materialized as the principals shared their life experiences and their pathway to the principalship. The major themes identified were; (1) personal characteristics; (2) multiple ways of leading; and (3) accountability. The principals attributed experiences during their upbringing to the way they lead their campuses. They believed that fostering positive relationships with the students and parents was essential to leading a successful campus. The principals believed that treating people with respect, being committed to the assuring students get the best education possible, hiring people with a strong commitment to students and using data to guide their decision making helped them effectively lead their campuses to success.

### **Personal Characteristics**

Each of the principals in my study told a story of people that had a strong influence on them personally that resonates in their approach to leadership. The Doctor and the Dancer came from households that were less than perfect. Both had fathers that were alcoholics and the support of a strong female in their lives for guidance. The



Lawyer had a strong support system with his father and mother. The Singer came from a two parent home with parents that were supportive of him. However, he had a mentor that took an interest in him early in his life that was instrumental in guiding him to a career in education. As a result of their distinct backgrounds they were able to persevere through life and become unique leaders of campuses where they make a difference in the lives of students.

### *Upbringing*

Each participant initially began their higher education pursuing a career path other than education. Nonetheless, all the participants reached a turning point in their lives that made them choose to become educators and eventually leaders in education.

Each participant incorporated the lessons of perseverance, respect, and acts of dedication they learned from the adults in their lives in to their approach to leadership. The Doctor learned from the actions of his mother perseverance, “that no matter your circumstances you can do it”. He was able to succeed, but more importantly his mother was able to overcome her situation. She was a teenager with two children, alcoholic teenage husband and on welfare for years. Although her situation was unfavorable, she accomplished her goal of getting degreed. The Doctor proudly stated:

My mother went back to after 10 years of a miserable marriage and got her associate's degree, got her bachelor's degree in three years with two kids on welfare. Later on in life in her 50s, went back and got her Masters in divinity, and so I'm really, really proud of her. She has been a role model for me.

The Doctor uses his story and the story of his mother as an example and inspiration for his students that are experiencing difficult situations. His message is “you can beat all odds”.

The Lawyer had parents that were educators. The lesson he learned was to “take pride in what you do and do the best job you can do”. He described his father as one that drove him hard and always encouraged him to do his very best. He communicates this principle to his staff individually and as a group because he feels the students deserve their very best. The Dancer was taught to respect other by the aunt that raised him. He explains:

I was reared to yes ma’am and no ma’am. I could not disrespect adults. Anybody in the neighborhood can beat your butt.

The Singer was raised by his mother and father, but had a mentor that was dedicated to him from as early as fourth grade. He describes his parents as his wisdom and common sense. His mentor was described as “his life”. At an early age she noticed his talents as a singer and encouraged him to excel. She took him places and introduced him to influential people which allowed him to share his “gift” of singing. The Singer’s mentor gave to him therefore he gives back to his students. As an example of the dedication he has for the students, The Singer shares his experiences and his love for fine arts with them. The campus he leads partners with a local university and organization’s fine arts program to increase the students’ awareness and love of the arts.

### *Respect for Others*

The African American male principals were taught during different times of their lives to respect others which is evidenced in the way they interact with parents, teachers, students and community members. The personal value of respect for all stems from The Doctor's strong faith in God. A devout Christian and faithful servant, the Doctor says he respects others at all times even if respect is not being reciprocated. He asserted:

I'm a firm believer in the core values. One is the respect for all, and acts of kindness is all biblically based- to engage in acts of kindness. Even when folks are not being kind to me, I have to always maintain.

The Lawyer discusses respect as he describes the relationships he develops with his staff members. He recalls as a new principal the difficulty he had in the beginning balancing his leadership approach. Eventually, he got to a point where he felt that he could inspire teachers to become great teachers balancing fear and respect. He explained it this way:

I don't want my people to fear me and I don't necessarily want them to love me because that's fleeting too. If you just fear me as soon as I'm out of the picture you go back to what you were doing. I don't want their love either because that could be fleeting, because as soon as I don't do what you like, you say I'm not feeling him anymore. So what I'm saying is the respect comes somewhere in the middle. Just respect me and do your job. This is a business.

For The Dancer, respecting others was not an option. More importantly, through his aunt's strong stance on respecting others, he learned to respect himself and he holds

other accountable for being respectful. The Dancer instills respect as a characteristic in his teachers. He requires them to dress professionally. Female teachers must wear “decent outfits” with flat shoes, no jeans, t-shirts or flip-flops. The male teachers must wear a shirt and tie each day to work. He believes that students should have a better attitude toward teachers and it begins with the way teachers dress. He establishes expectation for the way teachers dress before any person is hired. As he states, “you get more respect and students get a better view point of you as a teacher when you look like one”. Additionally, he addresses his parents when he feels they are not being respectful in how they treat their children or how they dress when visiting the school. The Dancer explained that he respects his superiors but may not always agree with what his superiors direct him to do. But out of respect he is going to follow directives. The only exception is if the directives go against his principles or are not in the best interest of the teachers and students. In that case, he listens and determines if he is going to except the consequences. The Singer believes successful principals are respected by their staff. He learned from his parents to treat everybody the way you want to be treated which he applies to the way he leads. He concluded:

So if you’re going to survive, if you’re going to make it, you want people to respect you, you have to respect people.

### **Multiple Ways of Leading**

The principals in this study practiced many forms of leadership that were consistent with recent trends in leadership research. All the principals believed that leadership that was based on relationship building: shared decision making and

empowerment: communication and care attributed to the success of their respective schools.

The Doctor led with his spirituality and belief in God as the guiding force. The Lawyer led with the belief that accountability for student learning should “flow”. The Dancer led by being an advocate for students, always putting the students first. Finally, the Singer led by serving as a role model for the school. Collectively, the four principals lead with a love and care for the students they were responsible for. They felt that the students’ well-being and education came first and their expectation was that their teachers do the same. Their methods of leading also included building positive school culture, being ethical in their decision making, having interpersonal skills, and showing managerial courage.

The Doctor method of leading is steeped in his strong spiritual beliefs. In all aspects of the school and school culture he asserted his spirituality, including his interactions with the students. He described himself as the “faithful shepherd” whose job it is to see that the entire flock (school) moves together without losing one. The Doctor also referred to his role in leading the campus as the gatekeeper charged with cultivating strong relationships with teacher, parents and students. His spirituality entailed the value of respect for all through acts of kindness. When interacting with students, especially one’s with discipline problems, he discussed his beliefs:

I’m a faithful Christian, not a perfect Christian, but a faithful Christian. I am a firm believer that one of the problems that we have in school systems today is, I got a put my Bible in my desk and put my code of conduct on top. I believe if I

could put my Bible on top of my desk, I can throw the student code of conduct away because it's all covered. So what I try to do, the Bible covers it all. If I can put that on my desk I could throw away-there will be no need for the student code of conduct.

For the Lawyer, everyone is accountable for the success of the students. It was his belief that the leader has to see the bigger picture when moving and maintaining a successful campus. This included creating a positive culture and involving the parents and students in the campus processes that focus on meeting state standards of accountability. He leads with an inclusiveness that involved the parents and students in the conversations about the school's data. He also used the power of praise and celebrations to motivate his staff and students to achieve. The Lawyer regards himself as a harmonious leader as he works to bring his staff together for one common cause, student success.

The Dancer shows leadership by protecting the learning environment and being knowledgeable of the curriculum standard students are expected to master. He does not allow any visitors in the building during reading instruction in the mornings. The Dancer asserted he does not have to tell everyone he is the boss, because they already know. His leadership style is also inclusive. He shares the decision making with the staff members he considers the leaders. He stated:

And I learned also through leadership courses, and just by rearing it's always good to always have somebody to catch your back. So in this school, I do a lot of delegation.

Specifically, the staff members must adopt a culture of collaboration and work toward the common goal of successful student achievement. He would suggest staff members that did not agree with his philosophy find another school.

The Singer displayed his acts of leadership by serving as a role model. He models the behavior he expects from his teachers and staff members. He spends countless hours at the school planning and preparing for each day.

### *Ethic of Care*

The Doctor shared examples of his caring toward the students he served as an assistant principal. The high school where he was an assistant principal had several affluent students, but had a population of students that were not. He showed his commitment to the students and their education by implementing what he called “round up”. He was aware that the students did not have the level of support from the parents they needed in order to manage the rigor of school. So for Saturday tutorials he would go to the apartment complexes of these students and get them to come to school. The Doctor also demonstrated his commitment by teaching students responsibility. He explained how he went to Goodwill to buy alarm clocks and disseminated them to students so they could get to school on time each day.

As the principal of his current school, he has shown his commitment to care for the students he serves by instilling in them character. The Doctor is an advocate of the Boy Scouts of America He has instituted a troop on his campus where he is the scout leader. He shared some of the history of the Boy Scout and the significance as it pertains to character education for children. He specifically recruits the African

American and Latino young males on his campus that have behavior concerns. As a scout leader to the scouts he recruits, he provides them with exposure and unique experiences they would otherwise not have. His scouts have performed flag ceremonies for the governor and major sports teams. He has them participate in summer camps. He elaborates as he mentions a recent trip the scout went on:

They just got back from spending a week out in the (El Rancho Cinco) riding horses, fishing; some of these boys have never used a fishing pole in their life. They'll never know what it's like to even touch a horse. They don't know what it's like to sleep in a tent.

Specifically, his commitment and care for the African American and Latino males and all other students on his campus has contributed to creating a successful leaning environment.

The Lawyer demonstrated his ethic of care for the students and community he serves by conducting home visits when necessary. As he explained, it was a family that was having difficult times and their child was not doing well in school. He went to the apartment complexes they lived in to check on them. Another one of his students saw he was visiting the family and started knocking on doors screaming, "The Lawyer is here, The Lawyer is here!" The caring he showed through his actions is something that he practices and takes pride in. He described his perception of how the little boy felt when he saw him.



I guess I am that important to him and I say obviously I built that over the years because I work with my kids. I try to respect them. I try to care about them and I tried to do whatever I needed to do with them and their families.

As a show of caring toward his students, The Dancer has established an open door policy for them that differ from the policy established for his teachers. He stated:

The children could come in. I don't care how I am. That's their world. And I allow that door to be open for them because they may have something they may want to tell me or a problem they want me to solve. Adults make an appointment. Children can open the door and come in, I will have nothing to say. That's their world and I'm an advocate for children. I fight for the kids.

The Singer believes it is important to establish a personal relationship with students. That is a characteristic he possesses and expect from all the adults he employs at the school. He expects his teachers and staff members to make an effort to understand the parents and the students of the school. The Singer is definitely committed to providing his students with an quality education as he works seven days a week planning and preparing for each instructional week.

The commitment to the schooling and education of the students through acts of care these African American male elementary principals, helped guide their decision making for the campuses. Therefore, they were able to create a learning environment for students that produce successful student achievement.

### *Communication*

Effective principals have the ability to facilitate two way communications with teachers, parents and students which facilitate good relationships. The principals all felt communication was paramount in leading a successful campus. The Doctor believed that communication was his strength, and was necessary when establishing a successful learning environment. He expressed it this way:

My strength is in interpersonal skills. It is about how to keep folks moving, how to help them sometimes come up with solutions themselves because there's a lot of power in people coming up with solutions for themselves. All you're doing is facilitating that process. That's what I do, we're perpetual problem solvers. The goal is not always to solve problems for others it's to help them solve problems with themselves that they've created themselves.

The Lawyer considered himself direct and genuine. The Lawyer believed in the authenticity of communication when addressing his faculty. He adopted from his father, leaders should not always show emotion was something that should not always be done, but if so they have to be authentic. The Dancer prides himself on not being a "put on", or someone that tries to be what others want him to be. He demonstrates authenticity as a communicator as he is straight forward in his messaging to his students, parents, teachers and community partners. As the leader of the campus, the Singer goes to the local churches and creates alliances and recruits parents too in order to increase the enrollment at his school. For each one of the principals, communication is a quality of leadership that plays a key role in the creation and sustaining of a successful campus.

### *Quality Teachers*

Collectively, the African American male principals believed that the hiring of quality teachers was a practice employed that helped them maintain a successful campus. They hired teachers that came to school and interacted with the students with care, compassion and a willingness to do whatever it takes to provide them with a quality education. The Doctor's campus this past year met the state standards with distinctions and he attributes the success to his ability to hire the right people especially teachers. He stated:

This year we have been blessed to have not one or two, but three distinctions.

Our campus, I'm real blessed, and I can tell you that it has been about hiring good people that are passionate about kids, and who love kids.

The Lawyer believed there was no full proof way to hire the right teachers for the campus, but agreed that a quality hire is a teacher that has ethics, passion and cares for students. He valued teachers that had a "sense of urgency" about educating students. His teachers must possess the ability to not only teach the standards, but use data to drive their instruction. The Dancer feels leaders should be measured by the quality of teachers they hire. Moreover, to develop his teachers he provided them with professional development that is relevant in the classroom. As the leader, he also attends many of the professional development sessions as well. The Singer makes sure the teachers he hires has the passion for teaching.

The principals definitely viewed hiring teachers with the love for teaching children as a reason for the success of their campuses. So, in respect to teachers that did

not possess that love and passion for students, the leaders would not hesitate to exit them of the campus.

### *Accountability*

Accountability in the public school system entails establishing a system of holding educators on all levels accountable so that students learn and achieve. The NCLB Act was a standards-based educational reform from the Bush administration and its goal was for all students to become proficient in reading and mathematics by the year 2014. NCLB sought to improve students' academic performance through standardized testing, and the accountability of K-12 educators by disseminating the results of these assessments to the public. The system of accountability must include other factors that contribute to the success of a campus. Effective principals have the ability to establish and maintain a positive school climate and culture to counter the demands that accompanies the accountability of high stakes testing. As a result, each of the African American principals agreed that as principals, and the instructional leader they should be held accountable for the success or failure of the campus.

### *Data Driven Decision Making*

During the interviews, all of the principals considered the collection, disaggregation and use of data to make instructional decisions is key to the success of the campus. The participants discussed a variety of ways to display and share data, such as data binder, data walls and data meetings with teachers, parents and students. The Doctor felt an effective leader had to be data savvy to lead a successful campus, stating, "You've got to understand where you are, where the kids are. You need to understand

what your kids needs are”. He stresses the need for his teachers to not fear data and utilizing it to guide their instruction. In sustaining success, the Lawyer believed that data was important as it created a focus for instructional interventions for the students. He also implemented what he called the “move board”. He described it as a board that is used to track formative assessment data of the students on his campus. From it, teachers, students and parents are able to track the growth or regression of assessment scores and students are celebrated or remediated.

### **Summary**

All of the principals in the studied expressed the impact their parents had on their character, which had a direct effect on their style of leadership. They all learned life lessons that has allowed them to be successful educators and educational leaders. They all embodied characteristics instilled in them, such as courage, caring and passion.

Each principal believed that the reason for their success as leaders came from a caring attitude, treating people with respect, involving others in the decision making for the school, and making sure their teachers were providing their students with a quality education.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

I would like to review where I started with my study and describe how it evolved. I set out on this journey to conduct a qualitative research study, examining and (re) interpreting (Dillard, 1995) the voices of four African American male principals of urban elementary schools. More specifically, through discourse, the purpose of the study was to determine the constructed meanings of their personal and professional acts of leading, as related to experiencing success in urban elementary schools. Recognizing that the participants in this study had various realities, I chose qualitative methodology in an effort to understand the meaning they assigned to their experiences. I understood that the knower and the known were undividable and the researcher and participants would influence each other.

In an attempt to understand the life experiences and leadership practices of those four African American male principals, I began with these research questions as a foundational guide:

- 1) What personal characteristics attributed to these African American male principals' success in elementary urban education?
- 2) How did the selected African American male principals exercise and interpret their acts of leadership?
- 3) What were these African American male principals' perceptions about leadership as related to student outcomes in an urban district?

I investigated these questions through in-depth, open-ended interviews and semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the four principals. I also investigated the questions through the collection of data received from observations of the principals, recordings, non-verbal cues, and recorded field notes. As I collected data and had the data transcribed, I compared them with each other's data and put them into categories, using number coding.

I examined the literature I felt would be relevant to the study of African American male principal's leadership. I investigated Ethic of Care, Critical Race Theory, African American male leaders in education, historical perspectives on African American principals, and personal characteristics of successful male principals (Pang, 2005, Roberts, 2010, James, 1970). My study revealed that obtaining a position in administration was more challenging for African American men than their European American counterparts.

I also examined effective educational leadership. Many researchers expressed that effective principals exemplified the qualities of clear vision, strong leadership, relentless focus, political acuity, and personal accountability (Bottoms & Neil, 2001; Hallinger, Leithwood & Murphy, 1993; Marzano, 2005). In addition, I considered the role of the principal. One of the greatest challenges for principals is to create a sustainable environment that focuses on the academic achievement of our nation's urban students (Peters, 2012). His role may also require him to build relationships with parents, educators, and community leaders in order to support a clear and coherent vision of instructional purpose.

## **Summary**

As the results of the study are presented, the guiding questions serve as a focal point of the research. The personal characteristics, which attributed to the African American male principals' success in urban elementary schools are discussed in the next section (see chapter 4 for greater detail). The African American males exercised many forms of leading, but shared a commonality of utilizing a model of inclusiveness where the principal and the teachers participated in the decision-making process. Understanding and appreciating diversity among teachers and students was essential. Similarly, to enhance the academic performance of each campus, the principals utilized data and focused on their hiring practices to employ teachers that were caring and addressed the individual needs of students. Thus, culturally responsive leadership was characteristic of leaders in my study in their attempts to lead successful urban elementary schools toward academic success.

## **Personal Characteristics and Emerging Themes**

The first research question asked, "What personal characteristics attributed to these African American male administrators' success in elementary urban education?"

Each principal in this study had his own journey to the principalship. The Doctor, The Dancer and The Singer came from humble beginnings. The Doctor's parents were teenagers and his father dealt with alcohol abuse. The Dancer's father was also an alcoholic. The Singer had both of his parents in his life but found significant guidance from a mentor at age 10. The Lawyer also had both of his parents, but their parenting and guidance gave him direction. The Doctor and The Dancer had motivation



in their lives from adults who influenced what they did not want in life, but were blessed with adults who helped them form another vision. The Singer and The Lawyer had strong adult influences in their lives and they too allowed those influences to impact their choices and commitment to pursue educational leadership.

Each of the African American male principals attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to attain their higher education. A nurturing education found in the HBCU's helped them develop into the leaders they are today. The distinct mission of a HBCU to position, prepare, and empower African American students to succeed in a European American society served them well (Brown, et al, 2001)). Each of the principals were able to develop a black consciousness and identity and pride. The Doctor expressed the significance of attending an HBCU, stating:

I thank God for the male leadership role models that I had that I didn't have growing up. I got to Morehouse, I learned about some things regarding education that helped affirm who I am today. I had some professors who were great role models and mentors that have been very instrumental in terms of who I am today, in terms of cultivating leadership in terms of cultivating strong work ethic in terms of becoming a lifelong learner on all levels.

Upon entering their respective HBCU, each of the participants had a goal or dream to pursue a career in medicine, law or the arts. Though these principals did not see those initial goals through, they were able to find fulfillment in the role that they play as leaders of elementary schools. That is not to say that they chose education because they were unable or ill equipped to achieve their initial goals.

The field of education actually “chose them” as they navigated their way through higher education and their careers. The Doctor, credits God for leading him to education, stating, “medicine is not what the Lord wanted for me.” The Lawyer began pursuing his law degree and realized he did not like it. He stated:

To be honest, originally I was going to be a lawyer, so I thought. I went to Florida A&M University undergrad, and then I went to the Texas Southern University for law school for a minute, but I hated it.

The Dancer’s aunt who raised him steered him toward education as it was her last request that he attend college for education and minor in dance before she passed away. He felt it was important to honor that request and he does not regret the decision. The Singer aspired to sing and did so, but education became his main focus. As I see it, these successful African American male principals have journeyed to the profession that allows them to use their talents and create experiences and opportunities for the students of color they currently serve. The Doctor uses his love for the sciences and mathematics to expose students to a myriad of opportunities available in STEM subjects. This is evidenced by having them participate in science fairs and math competitions. He explained:

My second year teaching, we took first, second and third-place in the district science fair. We had what was called the math rainbow challenge which we took first place in the district and I was voting teacher of the year.

From his efforts, he has brought healing to the students of color on his campus.

Prior to The Doctor accepting the position as principal at his campus, there was a high turnover for principals and moral was low among the staff and students. The students were unsuccessful as their test scores were mediocre. As a result of his leadership, the academic status of the school and moral improved. He shared his experience:

Basically, we were borderline unacceptable. A lot of kids were scoring below the 50th percentile across the block in everything. And so we were right there for two big reasons; one, poor leadership. I was probably the fourth principal in three years. The school was in a lot of turmoil. Two, there wasn't a lot of accountability, morale was low. The school had been cited for misconduct during testing. Although no one was found guilty of cheating. The fact was they were cited for that.

The Lawyer brings the tenet of social justice to his campus, as he creates a learning environment that advocates for fairness and equity for all of his students. He engages all of his teachers, students and parents in the conversation concerning student academic growth as a show of equity. Particularly, each of his students and their parents must be informed of the students' academic progress, or as he stated, "the accountability had to flow throughout the community", for the campus to be successful. The Dancer introduces his students to acting, band and dance as a he imparts a piece of himself in his students. He uses choreography to help his school operate effectively, efficiently, and with grace. He recognizes the strengths of key members of his staff to work in unity for a common purpose because he says, "I can't do everything around the school by

myself". As a result of his love for singing, The Singer assembles boys' choirs and shares his craft and love for singing to help them reach higher heights. He uses his voice as an instrument to align the teachers, parents and students for success, and it resonates each and every day. He discussed the role that he plays with using his voice to share the vision of the school with the community:

So being leader doesn't mean just being here on this campus, I visit all of the community churches on Sundays. I skip my own church. But, there is not a church in this community that I have not visited. I go to their revivals, so what am I doing? I am carrying the message, because in each of those churches I have a parents and not only do I have parents, I am also recruiting parents as well.

#### *Principal Efficacy*

Principal efficacy emerged as a theme that was continuously related to student achievement. Principal self-efficacy may be defined as a kind of leadership self-efficacy which is associated with a certain level of confidence in one's own knowledge, skills and abilities in association with leading others (Hannah et al. 2008). Principals that do not believe that all students can learn will not lead successful schools and be diligent and steadfast in realizing the school's vision. I am describing this phenomenon as *leadership stamina*. Jointly, each principal recognized effective teachers as the reason for their students' success academically. The Doctor believed in teaching the whole child. He believed all students could be successful if provided with quality instruction and character education. The Lawyer tracked student formative assessment data to implement clear-cut focused instructional interventions to ensure his student educational

needs were being addressed effectively. The Dancer consistently collaborated with his teachers and provided them with the appropriate professional development needed to effectively teach students. The Singer acted as a role model for his staff by developing caring relationships with students and using data to determine the instructional programming for the campus. He led his school to become a National Blue Ribbon school.

### **Multiple Ways of Leading**

The second research question asked, “How do selected African American male administrators exercise and interpret their acts of leadership?” The men in this study practiced many forms of leading that was aligned with the research. According to the literature, principals’ lead with an ethic of care, empowering their employees and creates an environment that nurtures and supports all children of color on their campus (Nodding, 1992).

Each of the African American male elementary principals demonstrated an ethic of care in their approach to leadership. They possessed the ability to communicate with others on a personal level, displayed a passion for children and committed themselves to ensuring that their students learned at high levels (Madhlangobe & Gordon 2012). The Doctor implemented and became the leader of a program that promoted character education for his most vulnerable African American and Latino students. He used the program as a way to provide unique experiences to his students that would leave a lasting impression on their lives. The Lawyer made home visits to families with students experiencing difficult times. The Dancer was a strong advocate for the children he

served and employed an open door policy for them to come to him when they were in need. The Singer established relationships with the parents and students and expected the same from his teachers to make sure students felt cared for.

### **Perceptions of Leading Toward Academic Achievement**

The third research question was, “What are these African American male principals’ perceptions about leadership as related to student outcomes in an urban elementary school?” As we progress as a nation and global community, principals must recognize and apply their ethical and moral responsibilities in leading successful urban elementary schools. These African American male principals perceived their leadership to be focused on the betterment of children through education. Also, they empowered others to realize their abilities and gifts. Research conducted by Ladson-Billings (1994) highlights the importance of teacher attitudes in a school setting, which is in agreement with the findings. Each principal asserted that student achievement was the product of data driven decision making, student centered instructional practices, and quality teachers in the classroom. Specifically, The Doctor was strong in his belief that students achieve when teachers are committed to their learning. Furthermore, the data showed a relationship between the discipline and students achievement.

### **What Their Journeys Taught Me**

The participants in this study addressed the inequities of the discipline and expulsion of boys of color in their schools by taking personal interest in the lives of their students. The Doctor teaches self-reliance and self-awareness through his actions. He targets African American and Latino boys with behavior problems for the Boy Scouts.

Using the scouts as a medium, he teaches them good character and provides them opportunities to experience. The Dancer identifies one student each year to support and mentor. He literally pours his heart and resources into a life of a child. He eats with the student, talks with the student, and checks in with him to make sure they are performing in the classroom. Personally, I have implemented programs for men to come in to the school to read to students and mentor them as needed. As students are sent to the office for misbehavior, I make sure I talk to them. I affirm them first, and inform them of the consequences of their actions. Together, we then discuss, plan and implement an alternative action for the future. Further, I call their parents, place them on behavior contracts and offer in school detention. For me, suspension or expulsion is a last resort. The teachers on my campus use positive reinforcement in the classroom and campus wide. As a result of the interviews from these successful principals, I will identify one student to take an interest in, and I have plans to implement a mentoring program for students who frequent the office for misbehavior.

Each of these African American men believe in open lines of communication with their staff, parent and students. The Doctor prides himself on his use of interpersonal skills when speaking to stakeholders. The Lawyer and The Dancer display authenticity when talking to staff members, parents and student. The Dancer emphasizes, he does not “put on” when speaking, and he is always “real.” I too am very genuine with stakeholders, especially in the area of open and purposeful communication. My staff, parents and students can expect and receive the truth from me, no matter the outcome. Especially, when talking to parents, I am very honest about how I feel about

their concerns and address them in a way that I would expect my own children's school would address any concern I might have with their program. Typically, parents come to me very upset about a concern they may have. At times, the conversations are difficult, so listening for their concern and communicating and connecting is paramount. I call that dynamic, "listening through the noise" to pinpoint their issue, so it can be resolved appropriately.

For instance, I conferenced with one of my parents because she was upset that her daughter was failing reading. She talked to me about the teacher not returning her phone calls or emails, and not being responsive to her concern for her daughter. She discussed her inability to support her daughter with reading at home because she was not sure of the teacher's expectations for successfully completing daily homework. I determined that the parent needed the teacher to specifically demonstrate to her how the homework should be completed. Therefore, I immediately called the teacher in to my office to join the meeting. When the teacher entered my office, she did not have anything with her. I directed the teacher to go back to her classroom immediately and return with teacher's editions, homework samples and a willingness to help the parent. After the meeting, parent felt helped and was satisfied.

Two of the African American male principals have faced challenges while leading their schools because of their gender and race. The Doctor was arrested when he was 16 years old. This information surfaced when he was summoned to court to testify against one of his teachers. The teacher had a close relative who was a lawyer and notified the school district about The Doctor's arrest as a teenager. Though nothing



came of the disclosure of his arrest, his ability to lead was questioned. The Dancer spoke about the lack of respect he may receive from his parents because he is African American and a male. He has been cursed at and called names. He says as an African American man, and as a male in education, he has been prejudged and called gay. Earlier in his career, he recalls a time when a European American colleague, eating in the teacher's lounge, said that she had never eaten with a "N" (a derogatory term used to refer to African Americans, she used the term openly and freely) and did not intend to start.

In my experience, I have a high population of Latino students. I decided to establish rules regarding safety at the campus. I specifically implemented rules that effected the morning drop off, lunch time and dismissal process. Consequently, I have been called a racist to my face during a parent meeting and continue to battle that perception on a daily basis. Presently, many parents have had private meetings, called the central office and television stations to communicate their discontent regarding the way I lead the school. In the future, when I am faced with parents that perceive me as racist or inept to lead the school, I will make it a point to identify the "leader" of the parents. I will meet with that parent so they can get to know me, hear my philosophy on education and understand my commitment to educating all students.

### **Recommendations**

The following are recommendations based on the findings of this study:

1. Principals should engage in professional development that focuses on the caring perspectives. Each of the principals in this study was committed to the caring for

and nurturing of students as part of their acts of leadership as they led their students toward academic success. The principals in this study created a culture of care and a sense of community which is beneficial. Accordingly, future administrators may achieve academic success and a sense of community through a culture of care.

2. Principals need effective interpersonal skills. Therefore, professional development with concentration on collaboration and building learning communities would be beneficial. The participants placed a major focus on building relationships and inclusiveness through participatory styles of leadership. The principals involved students, teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, custodial and food service staff, bus drivers, the community, and stakeholders in the learning process. This style of leadership was found to be key in leading successfully.
3. Principal preparation programs must continue to be implemented. Programs for administrators should involve interacting directly with experienced principals, which provides valuable insight into the principal's role. Programs should demonstrate effective ways to make culturally responsiveness a priority in leadership practices.
4. Diversity among students is increasing in the public school systems across the country; therefore, diversity in leadership should also be a focal point. Principals of color may bring unique insights and talents by incorporating rich and

supporting climates for learning. African American male principals of color may also serve as role models for aspiring principals.

5. Principals must be educated on methods to empower teachers. Principals that practice methods of empowerment create an environment for shared decision making and capacity building among their staff.

### **Implications for Future Research**

Based on the findings of this study the following are suggestions for further research:

1. This study was conducted with four African American male elementary principals. Since the Latino population is the largest group of color in the nation, it would be beneficial to replicate this study by listening to the voices of Latino male elementary principals in a comparison study.
2. There is a vast amount of literature on women in the principalship. However, it would be interesting to hear from the voices of more African American male principals. This dialogue could lead to gaining a more helpful insight on men's perception of educational leaders' styles of leading.
3. It would be interesting to discover the similarities and differences between African American male and African American female principals. It is recommended to compare and contrast their views on accountability and leadership styles.
4. This study examined the leadership styles of current African American male principals in urban elementary schools. It is recommended that this study be

replicated using the voices of retired African American male principals to get an idea of their leadership styles and how they may have changed throughout the years.

As a leader who believes in equity and a quality education for students, it is my belief that each of the African American male elementary principals in my study will be an example to all. As the state of Texas becomes more focused on providing more rigorous instruction to its children, it seems as if these leaders in education have high academic success for all children as a common interest. This study showed that principals make a significant difference in facilitating teaching and learning as they attempt to demonstrate their personal and professional acts of leading.

Lastly, although there is valuable knowledge embedded in the stories shared by these African American male elementary principals, it is my desire that other principals realize the stories they have created on their own. Therefore, this research will add to the conversations concerning African American principals who have been a part of leadership in urban elementary schools.

## **Conclusion**

Principal efficacy, the ability to development and retain quality teachers, caring, and a common goal focused on academic success for all students were the characteristics demonstrated by these principals. Though it is not a generalized formula, it proved to be an effective and successful combination for these African American male elementary principals. These principals had to be focused, committed, and self-confident to reach their level of success in meeting the needs of their students.

The African American men in this study were remarkable men who successfully led in positions generally occupied by their European American male counterparts. One reason for conducting this research was to describe the leadership behaviors of African American male principals in urban elementary schools. It was revealed that these four men practiced several forms of leadership. They defined themselves by their positions as educational leaders who had dedicated their lives to ensuring that students received a quality education. They were able to effectively create a learning environment where both teachers and students could flourish. They were also able to convey to their staff the vision of the school, which included respect for everyone and empowerment. The African American male principals considered their style of leadership as caring and inclusive.

At times I would reflect on the interview process as I transcribed their responses. During that process, I pictured the principals sitting in front of me engaged in the interview telling their stories with such emotion, conviction, and authenticity. The actual words of these African American male principals were impactful, so the story of their lives and rise to leadership in the form of print is invaluable.

The reason for their stories was to explain how their lives and career paths led to ensuring that students received a quality education. To meet this charge, they surrounded themselves with staff and teachers that were committed to and cared for all students, and created an environment that fostered collaboration and respect. Their stories showed they truly cared about the welfare and future of the students they served. Their stories revealed their self-confidence and dedication which allowed them to

weather the difficult times during their tenure of leadership. These African American male principals told stories that illustrated their leadership characteristics, which included being courageous, possessing interpersonal skills, principal efficacy, and commitment. Equal treatment and fairness with teachers, parent, and students were values the resonated among each principal. They believed that respect and humanity toward everyone created a healthy perception of how they led their campuses.

The similarities and differences between the principals' experiences produced many pages of written and verbal contexts. Collectively, these principals were an inspiration to me because they were committed, caring, and passionate about their roles as leaders. Their voices conveyed wisdom, pride, humility, and conviction. During the interviews, I realized that I had endured similar trials and enjoyed similar triumphs. I realized that I shared some of the same characteristics of leadership such as self-efficacy, perseverance, and caring. Moreover, I discovered that like me, the field of education was not their first career choice. However, I have an unwavering belief that education chose me and that I am doing the work that I was purposed for by God. As stated by The Doctor:

*I am the gatekeeper, I am the good shepherd making sure all of my sheep reach their destination.*

Each of these four men shared their journey to the principalship with me and it led to a dynamic way of confirming for me, my own reason for pursuing a career in education. I began as an accountant major and realized that I was not interested in crunching numbers. I was led to education because I had reached the university because

of the love and nurturing of my teachers. I had the opportunity to observe and interact with students in several early childhood classrooms while at the university. Those experiences helped me realize that in order for me to reach my goals, I had to be taught to read and think critically. It was during those experiences that I came to the conclusion that I was obligated by my success to give back to the community by teaching and eventually leading schools in urban neighborhoods

These African American men who serve as principals have taught me that making sure students receive an equitable education was not for a show of prestige. Their efforts are to ensure that students' futures purposely remain bright and hopeful. I learned that in order to create a school environment for students to thrive, I have to demand the best from my teachers and myself, making sure our actions are aligned with the vision for the school.

Finally, I am inspired by President Barak Obama's, My Brother's Keeper Initiative for African American males and boys of color in the United States (Léger, February 2014). This transformative and purposeful effort is designed to create pathways to success for African American men and boys of color. The initiative will pull ideas and commitments from the government, private sector and foundations to achieve its goal of successful futures for young people who are presently not achieving at rates that support their potential. I, like my informants, am my little brother's and sister's keeper. I am a keeper for all of my young learners (African American, Asian American, European American, Latino American, Native American). However, on this doctoral journey, I chose to focus on African American principals in urban

environments. As an African American man, my role as an African American principal has been enriched by their wisdom and their leadership.

In my role as the good Shepherd, overseer of my flock, I intend to lead my sheep. I plan to stay steadfast in my pursuit to make a difference in the lives of all students I encounter. With my belief in God, and always making decisions with the welfare and successes of the students in mind, I believe I will continue to develop teachers, cultivate leaders and make an impact on the field of education.



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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### **The Voices of Four African American Male Elementary Principals in Urban Schools**

##### **Personal Information**

1. Tell me something about yourself.
2. How many years of elementary/secondary teaching experience did you have prior to becoming a principal?
3. How many years have you been employed as a principal in this district (in others)?

##### **Qualities/Effectiveness**

1. What do you feel are some of the important personal qualities, values, and behaviors necessary for leadership and instructional improvement?
2. What do you think are some of your strong qualities as a leader (principal) that has helped you in your leadership position?
3. Please share some of the important life experiences that you have had which facilitated your decision to become an educator (principal)?
4. What interpersonal dynamics do you feel impacted your effectiveness as a school leader (principal)? (How were you motivated toward becoming a leader in education?)
5. What role, if any, did your upbringing play on the way you lead?
6. What values, interests, goals, and beliefs influence the way you conduct yourself, personally and professionally?

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

7. Please describe some of the obstacles or constraints that cause you the most concern as you try to carry out your duties as principal.
8. How has your personal life been impacted by your decision to pursue a position in leadership?
9. Should school leadership be redefined and its multiple responsibilities distributed among other administrators and teachers?

### **Impact of Effective Leadership on Student Performance**

1. As principal, how did you go about establishing a successful learning environment for your students?
2. Please describe some of the approaches/techniques you used in gaining success for your students.
3. From your experiences as a school leader, name 2-3 key dimensions of leadership for sustained reform – the habits of mind and heart – that enable leaders to guide successful school change over the long term. Describe these in the context of your concrete experiences as a school leader.
4. Generally speaking, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea to hold principals accountable for student standardized test scores at the building level? Why or why not?
5. How should principals measure the success of their school? Is high-stakes testing a viable answer?
6. If principals play an important part in school improvement and student achievement, what are their secrets and what are the limits to their powers?



7. How has the need for an increase in rigor in the classroom guided you decision making as a leader?

**APPENDIX B**  
**PHONE SCRIPT**

Hello, my name is Edrick Moultry. I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University and I am conducting a study on African American male elementary principals in urban school districts. In order to get more information about this topic, I would like to conduct interviews with four African American elementary principals. The interviews will be held in 2 sessions and each will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. It will take place in your office. The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

All information gathered during the study will be confidential. I will be the only person with access to your consent form, which links your name with the subject number. Your identity will be disguised through this specific coding. In order to get exact information from you, and increase the strength of the study, you will be audio taped in the 60 to 90 minute interview sessions.

Your name will be pre-coded to the recording tape that will be used to record the interview session. The transcriptions (writing down from the tape what you said) will also be coded in order to further protect your confidentiality. Written reports may entail the use of quoted material. At the conclusion of this study, the information gathered and audiotapes, identifiable only by subject number, will be stored in a locked file that only I will be able to access. The information obtained from this research will be used for the

publication or educational purposes of this researcher only and not for any other purpose.

If you agree to talk with me, all information will be kept confidential and you can ask questions or stop at any time during the interview. Understand that if there are any problems or questions in connection with your participation of this study, you may contact Dr. Norvella Carter, the faculty advisor for this project, at Texas A&M University at (281) 788-4388 or [ncarter@tamu.edu](mailto:ncarter@tamu.edu). This research has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979) 458-4067 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participation in this study.

Do you have any further questions?

## APPENDIX C

### TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION PROGRAM

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#### CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The Voices of Four African American Male Principals and Their Leadership Styles in Urban Elementary Schools

**You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Edrick Moultry, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.**

#### **Why Is This Study Being Done?**

The purpose of this study is to examine and give voice to the life experiences and leadership practices of four African American male principals in elementary urban schools. Furthermore, study is to add to the limited research base regarding the lived experiences of the principalship from the participants' point of view as they will be able to apprise other administrators on the issues of leadership in diverse school settings.

#### **Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?**

You are being asked to be in this study because you are an African American male elementary principals, you have served in the principal role for at least three or more years, you are presently serving in the capacity of principal, you have met Average Yearly Progress in 3 consecutive years (2008-2011) and you have impacted your campus performance as a result of your leadership role..

#### **How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?**

4 people (participants) will be invited to participate in this study locally.

#### **What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?**

No, the alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

#### **What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?**

Your participation in this study will last up to 90 minutes and includes two to three visits. The procedures you will be asked to perform are described below.

This visit will last about 60 to 90 minutes. During this visit I will ask questions from an interview protocol/questionnaire. In order to get exact information from you, and increase the reliability of the study, you will be audio taped in the 60 to 90 minute interview session.

Your name will be pre-coded to the recording tape that will be used to record the interview session. The transcriptions (writing down from the tape what you said) will also be coded in order to further protect your confidentiality. Written reports may entail the use of quoted material. At the conclusion of this study, the information gathered and audiotapes, identifiable only by subject number will be stored in locked file cabinet that only I will be able to access.

**Will Photos, Video or Audio Recordings Be Made Of Me during the Study?**

The researchers will make an audio recording during the study so that I will be able to get exact information from you and to increase the strength of the study. If you do not give permission for the audio recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

**Are There Any Risks To Me?**

The things that you will have no more risks than you would come across in everyday life.

**Are There Any Benefits To Me?**

There is no direct benefit to you by being in this study. What the researchers find out from this study may help to inform educators about the circumstances involved in being an African American male elementary principal in diverse settings. African American male educators who aspire to become principals can apply this research to gain insight from existing African American male principals, as well as, aspiring and incumbent African American male principals can also learn from this study by reflecting upon their own experiences.

**Will There Be Any Costs To Me?**

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

**Will I Be Paid To Be In This Study?**

You will not be paid for being in this study.

**Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?**

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Edrick Moultry will have access to the records.

Information about you will be stored in locked file cabinet. This consent form will be filed securely in an official area.

People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

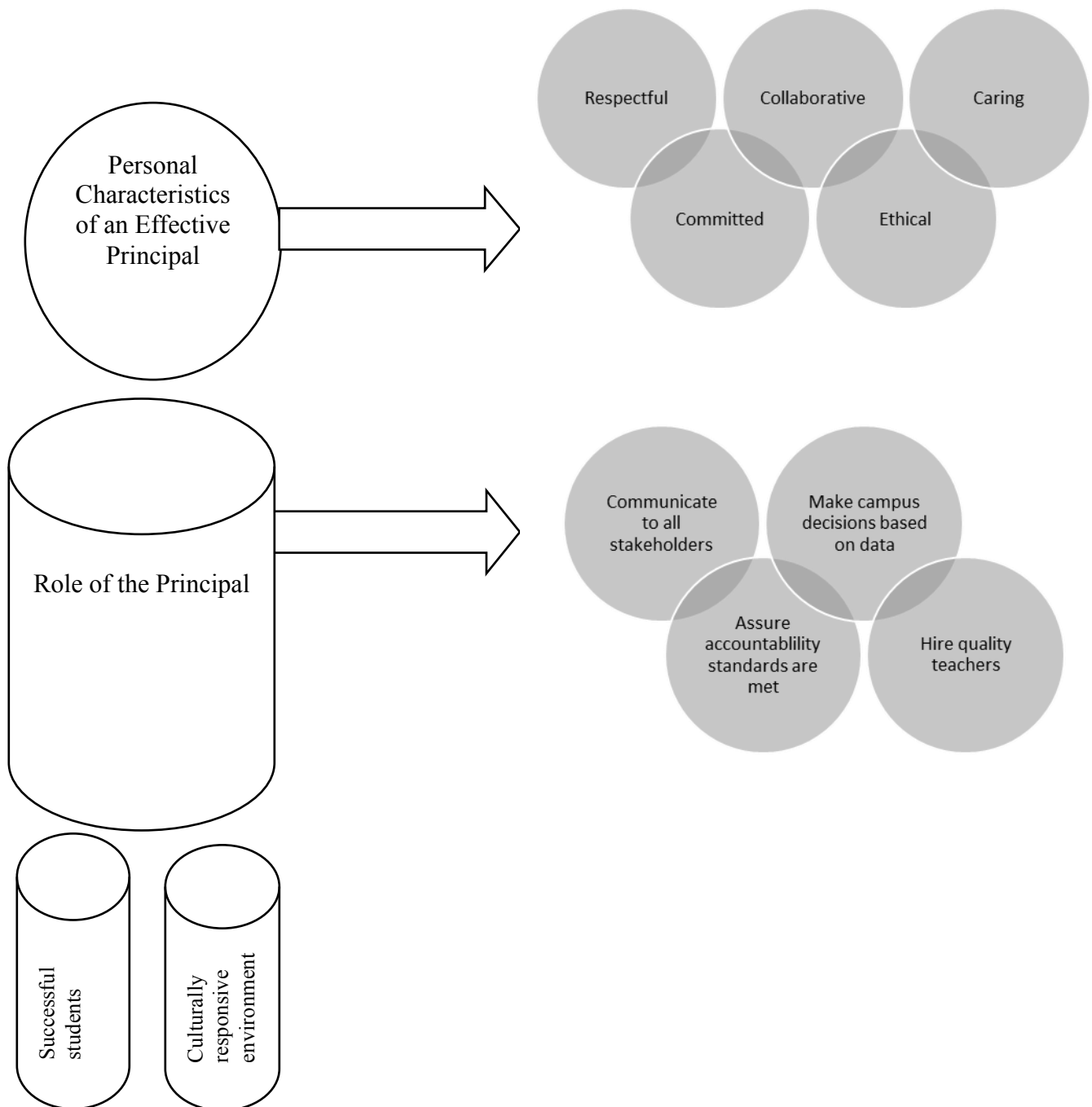
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## APPENDIX D

### Personal Characteristics of an Effective Principal and Role of the Principal



## APPENDIX E

Employed Principal Demographics 2006-2010																			
Black/African																			
Female				Male				American		White		Hispanic/Latino		Asian		Alaska		Indian/ Native	
Year	Total	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
2010	7846	4721	60.2	3125	39.8	864	11.01	5098	64.98	1661	21.17	42	0.54	93	1.19				
2009	7691	4559	59.3	3132	40.7	857	11.14	5187	67.44	1582	20.57	36	0.47	29	0.38				
2008	7507	4374	58.3	3133	41.7	837	11.15	5100	67.94	1514	20.17	31	0.41	25	0.33				
2007	7394	4245	57.4	3149	42.6	822	11.12	5066	68.52	1462	19.77	21	0.28	23	0.31				
2006	7286	4140	56.8	3146	43.2	809	11.10	5047	69.27	1392	19.11	17	0.23	21	0.29				

Source: TEA PEIMS data Michael C. Ramsay