THE LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AFTER

PARTICIPATION IN A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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December 2014

Major Subject: Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perceptions of African American undergraduate males who attend a predominately White institution in the southwest as they concern leadership after participation in a leadership development program and the influence of social constructed identities on development. Research concerning African American undergraduate males in education has been from a deficit- orientated narrative and focused primarily on academic achievement or lack of involvement, with little attention paid to African American males performing leadership. As society continues to focus on graduation and college attendance by African American males, it is important to explore African American undergraduate male leadership as a viable method to engage and influence graduation and attendance. Study I of this dissertation research examine the literature pertaining to socially constructed identities, leadership, and leadership development programs. Results indicated a gap in the literature addressing the intersectionality of multiple layers of identity and leadership. Study II examined the way in which African American undergraduate males make meaning and define leadership. Results indicated that African American undergraduate males defined leadership as either leader behaviors or specific characteristics that leaders possess. Study III examined the influence of participation in a leadership development program on the perception of leadership. Results indicated that these African American undergraduate males had a sense of increased self-concept and a sense of responsibility/selflessness to improve themselves and others. This dissertation suggests that universities develop and

implement campus leadership development programs focused on the interconnectedness

of socially constructed identities and leadership theory as a method to engage and

improve self-concept in African American undergraduate males.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is a testament to my belief that God has the power to move you in directions you believed were impossible. I dedicate this effort first to my darling daughter, Jianna Marie Cunningham, who has been my wind, my peace, and my strength. I wrote this dissertation to instill in her the belief that anything, with hard work, prayer, and perserverence, is achievable. Without the prayers and best wishes of my family, Lorenzo, Lula Mae, Loretta, Sharon, Angie, Angela, and Wanda, this dissertation could not have happened. I would be remiss in not acknowledging the people who first introduced me to the idea of obtaining a doctorate: Dr. Pam Hargis and Janet Greer. They may be gone but their memory lives on in my accomplishments. This dissertation is also dedicated to every African American young man who does not realize his greatness or has not been told that he can be the "hero" in his own story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the faculty and staff in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, especially in the Department of Agricultural Leadership Education and Communication, for their training and support. I am grateful to each of them for embracing me and encouraging my learning and self-discovery. I acknowledge my wonderful committee: Dr. Barry Boyd, Dr. Kim Dooley, Dr. Chanda Elbert, and Dr. Kelli Peck-Parrott. Dr. Boyd has been the encourager, challenger, and sage on the side. He allowed me time to "come into my own." He was patient when I needed an ear and firm when I needed a push in the right direction. Dr. Dooley taught me life lessons that will forever change my life, enriching my life beyond belief and bestowing the ability to be still and listen to my inner voice. Dr. Elbert encouraged, challenged, and supported me throughout this journey, giving me courage to go on when I wanted to quit. Dr. Kelli Peck-Parrott instilled in me confidence in my intellect and writing. Her comments were like onions with multiple layers, leading me in my work and my interactions with all people. These people have been my advocates, singing my accomplishments when I was afraid to sing my own praise. They epitomize what educators should be; they lifted me when I was unable to stand on my own.

I acknowledge my wonderful Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life staff, Justin, Melissa, Sade, Cameron, and Delicia, who were my cheerleaders and my secret elves. I could not have accomplished this task without your help. I hope I can one day be as much help to you all as you have been to me. You all make me love my job everyday because of your positive energy, creativity, and compassion. I acknowledge also my

wonderful fraternity and sorority students, members of AASLI, UDS, and DGC thank you for your years of laughs, learning, and happiness. You all are the reason I do what I do every day. I especially like to thank the TAMU National Pan-Hellenic Council for all of the years of teaching me about myself and allowing me insight into your lives. I am so proud of all of you and wish you success in all of your future endeavors.

The members of my board of trustees, Dr. Bonner, Dr. Cummins, and Dr. Tonya Driver, have been pivotal to my success. They have kept me on the right path, celebrated my success, calmed my nerves, and mourned with me during failures or setbacks. Dr. Bonner's ability to make me delve deeper into the research and become a visionary has given me courage and confidence in my abilities and prepared me to face intellectual challenges. The weekly meetings with Dr. were more beneficial than we realized at the time, helping me to stay grounded in theory and abreast of trends. Dr. Tonya Driver's help, support, prayers, tears, and friendship, pulled, pushed, and sometimes rolled me along the way through this journey. Her ability to "put some words" together is unparalleled. I am happy and proud to call her friend, colleague, and now DR. Tonya Driver.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Much of the research on African American college males and leadership has evaluated the impact of one or two variables but has seldom accounted for the intersectionality of race, masculinity, student involvement, and leadership (C. Brown, 2006). Past studies have been concerned with bringing attention to the deficits of enrollment, poor academic achievement, low matriculation, and tumultuous social integration faced by African American males in higher education, rather than conceptualizing methods to address the problems (Harper & Harris, 2010). These studies have added to the current climate of fear and anxiety in higher education surrounding work with this population. According to the 2010 U.S. census (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010), African Americans (approximately 39 million) made up 13.6% of the population. The state of Texas has more than three million African American residents. It is expected that California, Texas, and Florida will account for 45% of the nation's population growth from 1995 to 2025. Texas is expected to gain more than one million African Americans by 2025 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). Specifically in Texas, as numbers continue to increase, it will be important for institutions of higher education to be prepared to help in adjustment and retention of this population.

In 2009, African American males comprised only 5.65% of the students enrolled in institutions of higher education. Only 17.8% of African American males age 25 and over were awarded a bachelor's degree or higher in 2009, compared to 30.6% of White males. This number for African American males increased by almost two percentage

points from 2000 but has decreased by one percentage point since 2008 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). Meanwhile, enrollment and matriculation rates of African American male students in Texas has shown a slow increase of about 5% since 2003 (Texas Education Agency, 2014). These statistics report only one dimension of the student; they do not explore the intricacies of the college experience of African American males as they matriculate.

In order to comprehend the nuances of the African American collegiate experience, it is important to note the theoretical framework and factors that affect African American student matriculation. Several researchers have noted the influence of student involvement and integration in African American student matriculation and retention (Cuyjet, 2006; Guiffrida, 2003; Haber, 2011). Addressing the growing concern of African American males as they matriculate in higher education, specifically in Texas, requires an approach to the multiple layers of the students in this population (Harper, 2014).

Defining the problem in education with regard to African American college male students as solely an outcome of society does not recognize the roles that faculty and student affairs professionals play (Walker, 2009). Faculty and student affairs professionals are charged with creating safe spaces for learning and development on campus for all students; however, the creation of learning and developing spaces often relies on external factors such as other students and the surrounding community. Students often experience the most learning and developing in student organizations. Research has indicated that student organizations behave as avenues for social

integration for college students (Tinto, 1993). If the student organizations serve as the "train" in development and learning, the student affairs professionals who advise these groups perform as the "engineers" of the train.

The role of student affairs professional in engaging African American male students cannot be overlooked in developing solutions to address the concerns about matriculation of African American male college students (Frazier, 2009). Student affairs professionals, as well as faculty, play intricate roles in creating environments that aid in engagement by African American male college students. According to the study conducted by Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2010) of 34 African American students at a predominately White institution (PWI), the students recounted the negative impact of the microagressions that they experienced in and out of the classroom. The term *microagressions* was defined as subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color (Pierce, 1974). The microagressions ranged from behaviors such as peers not selecting them for study groups and organizations based on race to comments such as, "I don't want to work with you because you're Black." As noted by the researchers, the students stated that they felt hopeless, tired, discouraged, and prone to disengage from the university and that they performed poorly academically. As suggested by the study, student affairs professionals and faculty should attempt to create counter spaces for learning, as well as model appropriate methods to address these microagressions (Solórzano et al., 2010).

As other researchers have addressed the influence of involvement and leadership on African American male college students, the need has emerged to evaluate the impact

of multiple layers of identity and how students become prepared to lead (Griffin, Jayakumar, Jones, & Allen, 2010; Hammond & Mattis; 2005; Majors & Billson, 1992). In order to identify the tools needed to empower future African American male leaders, there is a need to evaluate the collegiate experience of African American males as it relates to the intertwined impact of race, gender, and leadership identity.

This dissertation is comprised of three interrelated qualitative articles relevant to leadership perceptions held by African American males at a PWI in the southwest and adheres to the format of the *Journal of Leadership Education*. Article 1 was the product of a critical review of the literature concerning African American undergraduate male students, leadership, and the college student. This detailed examination of the literature yielded information concerning research gaps pertaining to effects of the intersectionality of identity, leadership, and leadership development programs. The need to examine how African American males defined and understood leadership also emerged from the literature review. Therefore, this dissertation study evaluated how African American undergraduate males defined and made meaning of leadership, as well as the after effects of involvement in a leadership development program that intentionally intertwined the multiple layers of identity, leadership, and leadership skills/education training.

Article 2 reported the results of the qualitative study of how African American undergraduate males at a southwestern PWI defined and made meaning of leadership. Twelve African American undergraduate males were interviewed to identify their

personal definition of leadership. The results indicated that leadership was seen as either performed behaviors or leadership traits possessed by leaders or research participants.

Article 3 describes the findings of the study focused on the perceptions of leadership of African American undergraduate males at a southwestern PWI after participation in a leadership development program that involved social constructed identities and leadership. The leadership development program Black Men Lead (BML) focused on the intersectionality of multiple identities. Participants stated that, through involvement in the BML program, they had an improved self-concept and sense of selflessness/responsibility toward their community.

In summary, a Black male undergraduate self-concept model was developed that acknowledged the multiple layers that influence undergraduate African American males' self-concept. Participation in the leadership development program, which interwove the multiple layers of socially constructed identity and leadership skills and training helped the students with self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-concept.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP IDENTITY: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE UNMASKING PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE UNDERGRADUATES

The knowledge of student development theory allows the professional in higher education to play a pivotal role in the development of college students. This role is especially influential when dealing with racial minority students. Studies conducted by Tracey and Sedlacek (1985) and Nettles, Theony, and Gosman (1986) found that academic adjustment and achievement by African American and other minority students are influenced by different sociocultural and contextual factors than those that influence White students.

Literature Review

The review of literature is presented in four sections: (a) a review of literature about identity development, (b) a discussion of student organization involvement, (c) a discussion of student leadership in college student organizations, and (d) a discussion of leadership development programs.

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review was to conduct a critical analysis of literature relevant to African American male college students and identify empirical evidence pertaining to their perceptions of leadership. This review contributes to existing literature by critically analyzing research relevant to African American male college student leadership.

Review Method

In an attempt to gather relevant literature, I utilized an online library search tool yielding results from ProQuest, Eric, and Academic Search Complete. Key terms used for the search were *African American male*, *college student and development*, *college student and leadership*, *identity development*, *self-concept*, and *leadership development programs*. The results of the search yielded an abundance of articles. I refined the search by focusing on articles published within the past 10 years, with use of older articles when deemed as seminal, focused specifically on African Americans, males, or college students. This narrowed search resulted in a manageable review. These articles were reviewed for commonly referenced bodies of work to provide a foundation for the most relevant topic areas for this review. Harper and Harris (2010), Cuyjet (2006), and hooks (2004) were most commonly cited and provided a basis for identifying the overarching areas of focus for this review.

Results of the Review

It was important to identify areas for gathering research that was specifically relevant to African American male college students. Literature about identity development, student organization involvement, leadership in student organizations, and leadership development programs provided the focus for this review.

Identity development. Layers of identity fuse to construct the ways in which individuals interact with society (Erickson, 1968). Berzonsky (1994) discussed identity development through the lens of three social-cognitive styles of decision making about the self, which is applicable to college students. Self-explorers used an *information*

orientation, in which they actively sought and processed information before making identity-relevant decisions. One would expect such individuals to internalize new and interesting possibilities and enhance their creativity. The status group of foreclosure was reflected in a *normative orientation,* which consisted of a concern about standards and prescriptions held by family and friends. Finally, uncommitted or diffused individuals were said to operate with a *diffused orientation*, which involved avoidance and procrastination, in effect letting circumstances dictate life paths.

Based on this information, individuals in higher education should approach college student development as developing multiple aspects of a student. The development of identity is holistic and therefore influences individual leadership development. Multiple layers of student identity, such as college student, race, and gender, are often intertwined and cannot be separated, thus affecting roles within the group that the student chooses to lead. According to a study conducted by Hughes and Bonner (2007), gender and race are connected integral components of identity development. This finding assisted in establishing the significance of this review on the intersection of race, gender, and leadership. This review of identity development literature is relevant to African American males in college and was viewed through the lens of college student identity and African American identity.

College student identity. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), the transition to college is a time for students to explore themselves and to develop an identity. College students develop identity in multiple layers. In order to address the underlying issues of African American male involvement and influence of participation

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in a college leadership development program, the intricacies of how students develop while attending college were reviewed. The exploration into literature concerning student development encompassed psychosocial, cognitive-structural, and typology perspectives (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). The cited researchers contended that it was important for individuals in higher education to understand the formal and informal psychosocial, cognitive-structural, and typology student development theories in order to work effectively with college students.

As college leadership educators develop effective leadership development programs, integration of how students develop and an understanding of identity are imperative. Chickering and Reisser (1993) provided the most valuable framework because it was easy to utilize with most students and was treated by many as the foundational theory for college student development. Their student psychosocial development theory suggested that students develop through seven vectors while attending college: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. While programs, that are developed for strictly specialized subpopulations such as gay and lesbian, Latino, Asian, African American, and multicultural students were not always feasible, it is necessary for people working with students in higher education to understand and integrate at the minimum, specific components of the theories concerning these groups. It is important for those who work with leadership development and African American males in higher education to become familiar with all vectors of student development,

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specifically establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity. Being mindful of these vectors when developing a leadership program can help to solidify the effectiveness of the program and outcomes developed by a leadership educator.

The vector of establishing identity is important to address with students in leadership programs for several reasons. According to McEwen (2003), student development is an enhancement of identity toward complexity, integration, and change. Identity may also be applied to the process of leadership and how one comes to adopt a leadership identity, which was informed by two key families of developmental theory: psychosocial and cognitive. Chickering and Reisser (1993) underscored the importance of relationships as foundational to establishing a personal identity. The final vectors, "developing purpose" and "developing integrity," attest to the importance of developing commitments in a pluralistic world—the context in which leadership is practiced (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

African American identity. Racial identity development frameworks are complex and difficult to define and convey (Chavez, Guido-DiBrito, & Mallory, 2003). People develop their identities by constructing self in comparison to others on individual and group levels (Alessandria & Nelson, 2005). Such comparisons are connected to an individual's conscious or subconscious feelings about membership in a particular racial group (Tatum, 1997). In order to delve into the complexity of the college student, it is important to explore the multiple dimensions of identity and the impact on integration.

Researchers have argued that the initial Chickering and Reisser theory did not account for racial or gender differences in how students developed and experienced

college (Mather & Winston, 1998). For example, Straub (1987) contended that the vector of establishing autonomy was necessary to develop intimate relationships and self-sufficiency. However, Straub found that college women experience the establishing autonomy vector differently from their male counterparts. Males asserted autonomy through separation, individual rights, and playing by the rules, while women were found to assert autonomy through methods that preserved relationships and harmony (Straub, 1987). Results also indicated establishing identity vector to be experienced differently based on gender.

The established individual identity of students was multifaceted and consisted of several layers (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Two layers of identity relevant to this review are African American racial identity and gender identity. For the purpose of this review, *African American racial identity* is defined as "significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their membership within the African American racial group within their self-concepts" (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998, p. 19).

Several models have been developed to discuss the role of race in development of students. Most models of identity assume that African Americans have a number of hierarchically ordered identities, of which race was viewed as only one (Cross, 1971; Milliones, 1980; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997).

According to the Cross (1971) model of psychosocial Nigrescence, students travel through several stages as they develop an African American identity: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, and internalization. Cross revised the model

in 1991 (Cross, 1991) to encompass experiences that are more diverse. During the stage of *pre-encounter,* the person is oblivious to race as an important aspect of identity. The *encounter* stage entails the person experiencing a profound event directly correlated with race that causes the person to reflect on identity and delve into the concept of African American identity. During the *immersion/emersion* stage people may experience the desire to be pro-African American and anti-White, although internally they do not commit to endorse all things associated with "being African American." The individual develops a sense of security and satisfaction with being African American, represented in the final stage of internalization (Sellers et al., 1998).

Milliones's *African American consciousness model* explored these stages. According to the model, which appears to resemble the four stages in the Cross model of psychosocial Nigrescence, Milliones's model focused on the concept of African American consciousness (Milliones, 1980). The term *African American consciousness* refers to a person's beliefs or attitudes about himself or herself, own race, and the White majority in relation to the African American experience. This theory described four stages of African American consciousness: preconscious stage, confrontation stage, internalization stage, and integration stage. Significant positive relationships were found among African American consciousness, self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy (Okech & Harrington, 2002).

Similar to Cross's Nigrescence model, the multidimensional model of racial identity (MMRI) developed by Sellers and colleagues (Sellers et al., 1997; Sellers et al., 1998) emphasized the need to focus on the person's interpretation of African

Americanness. They explained racial identity to be the lens by which African Americans define themselves when compared to other racial groups. This observation made by African Americans may also influence how they see themselves and how they see their world. The MMRI was developed to explain the integrated framework between the diversity of racial identity profiles among African Americans, as well as the significance that African Americans place on race.

The four dimensions of MMRI describe the significance and meaning of race in the self-concepts of African Americans: identity salience, centrality of identity, ideology associated with the identity, and regard in which the person holds African American people. Through testing this theory, a significant relationship between race and the self-identity of African Americans was identified (Sellers et al., 1997). Persons for whom race played a significant role in identity and who emphasized the uniqueness of being African American were more likely to participate in African American-centered activities and interact more with other African Americans (Sellers et al., 1997).

The MMRI described *salience* as the belief in how much race plays a part in self-concept and is dependent on the context of the situation. The dimension of *centrality* is similar to salience in that it focuses on the individual's idea of the implication of race on self-concept; however, it is dependent on the individual's normal behavior versus situational behavior. The third dimension, *ideology,* was defined as how the individual feels that a member of the African American race should believe, behave, and offer opinions as related to interactions with other people in society. This dimension of ideology was described with four specific ideologies: (a) nationalist philosophy, focused

on the importance and uniqueness of being of African descent; (b) oppressed minority ideology, highlighting the similarities between African Americans and other oppressed groups; (c) assimilationist philosophy, targeting the similarities between African Americans and the rest of American society; and (d) humanist philosophy, emphasizing the commonalities of all humans. These ideologies are manifested across four areas of functioning: political-economic issues, cultural-social activities, intergroup relations, and interaction with the dominant group.

The final dimension, *regard,* may be defined as how a person feels about himself or herself. This dimension encompasses how a person positively feels toward other African Americans and being placed in that group. The *public* regard in this dimension consists of how the person believes others feel positively or negatively about African Americans, while the *private* regard relates to how the person feels, positively or negatively, about being placed in the African American group (Sellers et al., 1997).

In 1903, W. E. B. DuBois discussed the "double consciousness" that African American people must possess to survive. To be bicultural means to be able to successfully manage the beliefs, values, standards, and expectations of both the dominant culture and one's own culture, even though one's culture is devalued by that dominant culture (Gilligan et al., 1992). Boykin and Toms (1985) expanded the concept of biculturalism with "a triple quandary conceptual framework" (p. 47) within which socialization takes place: (a) in the mainstream of American society, (b) being a member of an oppressed minority group, and (c) the African American culture. They argued that a "triple consciousness" was necessary to manage these three distinct and competing

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domains. If gender is added to this model, African American men in college may have a "quadruple consciousness." Race, college student status, and gender add layers of complexity to how African American male students define self.

African American male identity. Relevant to this literature review, it was necessary to explore African American male identity. In order to discuss African American male identity requires a preliminary review of *masculinity*. Masculinity is constructed by society and focuses on how male gender identities are developed by socializing practices (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Kimmel (1996) argued that masculinity is directly influenced by interactions with peers. Further, Kimmel (2010) asserted masculinity to be a "homosocial enactment" because men are "under constant careful scrutiny of other men and other men grant us acceptance into manhood" (p. 23).

O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman (1986) identified a central developmental issue of males to involve pressure by society to embrace a narrowly constructed masculine behavior stereotype. According to O'Neil et al., six behavioral patterns are associated with male gender identity conflict: (a) restrictive emotionality; (b) homophobia; (c) socialized control, power, and competition; (d) restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior; (e) obsession with achievement and success; and (f) health care problems. The influence of these behaviors must be acknowledged and accounted for as they directly affect identity development in men.

In the case of African American men, media and popular culture have directly influenced their views of masculinity (Harris, Palmer, & Struve, 2011). The media often present a distorted portrait of African American males as criminals, sexually charged,

unintelligent, and often lacking basic leadership skills (Henefield, 2011). The seminal

work by Cazenave (1984) approached the multiple factors that one must consider when

discussing masculinity among Black males. Franklin (1986) described the difference

between African American and White male masculinity based on the desire of White

men to work toward modifying the current masculinity standards while Black males

work toward a definition of masculinity that utilizes their differential life circumstances.

In the United States, how African American males construct their masculine identity

must entail the contextual factor of racism (Majors & Billson, 1992).

Majors and Billson (1992) coined the phrase *cool pose* to define the presentation

of self that African American males use to establish their identity. The concept of cool

pose was defined by Majors and Billson "as a ritualized form of masculinity that

encompasses behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and

designed performances which deliver a message of pride, strength, and control" (p. 4).

As researchers continue to explore Black male masculinity, the term cool pose

may be inadequate due to its inability to describe the various societal factors and masked

performances designed to resist racism and mask emotions (Henefield, 2011). The

definition of masculinity specifically for African American males has transformed over

the years, ranging from the initial concept of masculinity being based on standards

related to completed stereotypical White male standards and tasks (Levant, 1996). The

literature then evolved to define Black male masculinity as based on context and

dependent on individual experience. Currently, research defines Black male masculinity

in the context of meaning-making experiences characterized by history of oppression

and stigmatization associated with race and gender (Harper & Harris, 2010). When working with African American males at PWIs, it is important to incorporate male identity and the connection between African American identity and the lens by which they became involved and later assumed leadership positions (Cuyjet, 2006).

Involvement in Student Organizations

According to Smedley, Myers, and Harrell (1993), four factors contribute to adjustment by African American students: (a) academic preparedness, (b) psychological stress, (c) sociocultural stresses students encounter, and (d) integration. There are specific issues of identity and community that arise when moving to college; however, these issues are felt by African American students to a greater extent than by White or Asian students (Fischer, 2004).

As the need for PWIs to recruit and retain African American male students has increased, the need to identify factors that may influence attainment of these goals has evolved. Some researchers have stated that the need for students of color, primarily African Americans, to gain satisfaction with the institution is closely correlated to the ability to integrate socially and academically (Fischer, 2004; Tinto, 1993). The major avenue for students to integrate socially is via student organization involvement. Tinto (1993) stated that some students who struggle to integrate into the academic realm may integrate smoothly into social realms. Presumably, students who integrate into both the social and academic realms of the university display greater institutional commitment than those who do not integrate into the university.

Many universities have utilized student organizations as methods of social integration and leadership development for students. Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) analysis of research during the past 30 years indicated a growing body of knowledge that consistently demonstrates that students increased leadership skills while in college. Astin (1993) asserted that student involvement has the potential to enhance most aspects of the undergraduate student's cognitive and affective development.

One popular aspect of cocurricular life on campus is student organizations, which incorporates two of the "three most potent forms of involvement" (Astin, 1996, p. 126): faculty and student groups. Goals and intentions related to attainment of a college degree are reaffirmed by successful integration. Tinto (1993) argued that most departures from a university were tied to the quality of the experience that the student had after entering the university, in other words, the extent to which experiences served to integrate the student into the academic and social realms of the institution.

As the topic of involvement by African American males is explored, it is important to note the argument that some researchers have stated concerning problematic trends of involvement by African American students at PWIs and historically African American (Black) colleges and universities (HBCU). Involvement by African American students at PWIs often consists of investment of spare time in activities that do not improve skills, enhance deep learning, or produce measurable development outcomes (W. R. Allen, 1999; C. Brown, 2006; Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Harper, 2009; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006). When African American male engagement in structured activities, student organizations, or campus leadership was compared to that by female

counterparts, males' involvement was considerably lower (Cuyjet, 1997; Harper, 2009; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006).

According to Guiffrida (2003), the most important reasons African American students valued their membership in primarily African American student organizations were that the group assisted them in establishing out-of-class connections with faculty, provided opportunities to give back to other African Americans, and allowed them to feel comfortable by being around others who were perceived to be like them. In addition, these groups exposed and connected African American students from predominantly White home communities to African American culture (Guiffrida, 2003).

Although connecting with faculty out of class may be important to any student, several studies have indicated that these relationships were especially important to African American students (Guiffrida, 2003; Harper, 2006b). This was due in part to the emphasis that they placed on African Americans helping one another (Strayhorn, 2008). Many students contend that the more African Americans they know in positions of power, the better their chances to be aligned with someone who is able and even obligated to help them in the future (Guiffrida, 2003). Participation in African American student organizations provided an important means by which to establish these important out-of-class relationships with African American faculty.

Research by Padilla, Trevino, Trevino, and Gonzalez (1997) and Murguia, Padilla, and Pavel (1991) indicated that involvement provided students of color with cultural connections at PWIs, but the researchers did not define how this connection occurred within the organizations or the characteristics of students for whom this

connection was important. Recently, college retention researchers have argued that quantitative measures of college student social integration have failed to identify the complexities involved in the social integration of minority students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000). Rendon, Jalomo, and Nora (2000) recommended that future research investigating the integration of minority students include qualitative methods to allow a definition of social integration to emerge from the students' perspectives.

African American student organizations also provide students with an outlet to discuss their experiences and frustrations of being a minority. Students explained in a study by Guiffrida (2003) that their White peers were hesitant to recognize or empathize with them regarding these experiences. However, within the African American organizations, students were able to share issues with others who could relate to them, understand their perceptions, and support them.

Opportunities found in African American student organizations to give back to the African American community are another important benefit of participating in these organizations. By allowing opportunities to give back collectively to the African American community, community service in African American student organizations appears to play an important role in facilitating cultural connections and social integration into PWIs. As students continue to be involved, the natural transition to leadership roles unfolds. Leadership development is considered to be an integral part of the educational program of college students, with courses and activities scattered throughout the cocurricular experience.

Leadership Within Organizations

The positive influence of involvement by African American men in student

organizations has been shown to be amplified when leadership positions are held

(Harper, 2006a). *Leadership* has been defined in many different ways by researchers;

however, for the purpose of this study, I utilized the definition proposed by Northhouse

(2007): "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a

common goal" (p. 3). The current research, which concerned leadership, concentrates on

the cognitive effects of leaders on their followers, as well as the impact on structural,

cultural, and performance measures (Bass, 1990). As leadership is discussed, there is a

need to explore the connection between self-knowledge and leadership. For African

American students, self-knowledge interplays with identity development, thus

influencing leadership effectiveness.

Researchers have defined leadership as a process whereby one person influences

a group to achieve a common goal. Taking into account the context of leadership within

an organization, Nahavandi (2006) described a leader as a person who influences

individuals and groups within an organization, helps them in establishment of goals, and

guides them toward achievement of those goals, thereby allowing them to be effective.

While identifying leadership based on traits, Nahavandi (2006) expressed that

behavioral theorists focus on behaviors and thus it is important that leaders' behaviors be

based on their traits and skills. In this regard, Lussier and Achua (2007) identified nine

traits of effective leaders: (a) dominance, (b) high energy, (c) self-confidence, (d) locus

of control, (e) stability, (f) integrity, (g) intelligence, (h) emotional intelligence, and (i)

flexibility and sensitivity to others. Similar research by Burns (1978) identified a set of behavioral traits based on a historical perspective: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. As practices of leadership are discussed, behavior is an essential intertwined feature. Komives and colleagues argued that leadership, like any other skill, must be learned and practiced (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998).

Leadership Development Programs

As students become involved, it is often a natural transition for them to take on leadership roles in an organization. As students pursue opportunities for leadership roles, they often face the dilemma of preparedness for these roles. In order to approach leadership preparedness, many institutions have constructed leadership development programs. For the purpose of this review, *leadership development programs* are defined as a collection of activities or experiences "intentionally designed with the purpose of developing or enhancing the leadership skills, knowledge, or abilities of college students" (Haber, 2006, p. 29). A *peer leadership program* includes involvement by other students to assist in the development of student peer leadership skills, knowledge, or abilities (Haber, 2011). The term *peer leaders* describes students who have a role in the program in which they serve as leaders or educators for other students (Haber, 2011).

According to researchers, college students' leadership skills develop through a range of activities and experiences, the most significant being those that involve peer interaction, such as interaction with peers in classroom or cocurricular settings (Astin, 1993; Dugan & Komives, 2007). The development of leadership programs to address

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these concerns has become a growing interest among student affairs and leadership educators. The combination of student development, leadership theory, and racial identity contribute to effective leadership development programs. The newly discussed emergent perspective of leadership, focused more on relationships and process orientated views and styles, may apply more to women and students of color who have historically been excluded from previous notions of leadership (Dugan, Komives, & Segar, 2008; Kezar & Moriarty, 2000).

Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, and Burkhardt (2001) concluded that leadership development programs influenced educational and personal development. Lamborghini and Dittemer's (2002) concluded, "Leadership potential exists in every student, and colleges and universities can develop both" (p. 11). Both Lamborghini and Dittemer's (2002) study at Northern Essex Community College and Polley's (2002) study at Columbus State University (Servant-Leadership Program) reported that the leadership development programs improved leadership skills.

Garza (2000) established that, 10 years after completing a student leadership program, the participants reported that the program had aided in acquisition of leadership skills and had improved job competencies. The participants also reported that these attributes aided in their advanced leadership positions and influenced their pursuit of graduate studies.

Although gender was not found to explain differences in the impact of participation in leadership development programs (Endress, 2000; Pugh, 2000) or to account for differences in leadership behaviors (Posner, 2004; Posner & Brodsky, 1994),

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others have reported that males and females responded to different leadership paradigms (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Romano, 1996).

Discussion

As demonstrated in this review of literature, there is a need to evaluate the intersection of identity, leadership, and leadership development programs. Researchers have identified connections between gender and race, gender and leadership, and race and leadership, but no research has discussed at length the relationships of the four variables: race, gender, college experience, and leadership development programs. As researchers continue to evaluate the multiple layers of identity such as gender, race, and college experience, it is important to understand the influence of identity and perceived leadership skills on how college students, specifically African American males, construct their self-concept. As institutions of higher education continue to be charged with the task of developing culturally competent leaders who reflect the growing work force, it is important to delve into the interconnectedness of the perceptions of African American males of race, gender, college, and leadership development.

Due to the limited research concerning African American men's experiences in college leadership development programs, it is important to explore their experiences and to evaluate the influence of their experiences on future leadership perceptions. As several studies have reported, participation in campuswide organizations has provided students with leadership skills that they said would enhance their experiences upon graduation. However, there is limited data to support the benefits of African American males participating in a college leadership development program (Jay & D'Augelli,

1991). Although there are numerous campuswide organizations that offer to assist students to develop their leadership skills, many African American men choose to have their leadership experiences within African American support organizations. The need to advance research on leadership by African American males in college is a charge posed by many researchers (Kimbrough & Harper, 2006; Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005; Strayhorn, 2008).

This review of research about identity, student development, and leadership development programs identified three principle problems. First, more research is needed to explore the connections among leadership, gender, and race. Second, there is a need to explore the influence of leadership development programs on African American college males' perceptions of leadership and social adjustment. Third, more research is needed to evaluate how involvement in leadership programs affects construction of self-concept by African American males.

Conclusion

Few studies have investigated the connections among race, gender, student development, and leadership development programs. Existing research tends to compartmentalize gender and race, race and leadership, or leadership and gender; very few studies discuss at length the intersection of all four variables within the African American male community.

African American college males exist simultaneously in several realms of identity. Future research should include more quantitative and qualitative methods grounded in theory exploring the connections and effects of these realms on self-concept

and leadership skills. Institutions should embrace the task of developing culturally competent leaders who represent the changing demographics of the United States. Attention must be paid to intertwine gender, cultural, and leadership components to create not only well-intentioned but also well-planned and well-implemented programs.

Research strongly implies that social integration plays a vital role for African American student success in college, almost as much as academic preparedness. Student organizations should develop recruitment plans to encourage African American male student participation.

"There is virtually no race- or gender-neutral school context for Back males in higher education" (Davis & Laker, 2004, p. 49). Thus, it is important that educators continue to engage in dialogue on methods to address the impact of the multiple layers of identity lived by African American college males. As student affairs professionals and academic affairs continue to work together to address the growing disparity between African American male and White attendance and graduation, it is important that further research be completed to lend voice to an often-silenced population. Student affairs professionals must encourage and participate in development of strong research agendas focused not only on African American undergraduate males' academics and involvement but also on their ability to be developed as strong campus leaders.

CHAPTER III

WHAT'S UP WITH THIS LEADERSHIP THING? VOICES OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

The development of future leaders has been the original purpose and cornerstone of higher education since its inception (Dewey, 1916). According to Dewey, the role of educators is not to view education "as something, like filling a vessel with water, but rather [as] assisting a flower to grow in its own way" (Dewey, 1916, p. 38). The creation of an educated society has been promoted as the method to ensure that the people prosper and evolve to their upmost potential (Sarason, 1971). As stated by Nohria and Khurana (2010), higher education is charged to develop the next generation of "leaders who possess the competency and character necessary to lead our modern society" (p. 3). Numerous studies have been published concerning the plight of African American males in the United States education system (Becker & Becker, 2003; Bonner & Bailey, 2006; Fashola, 2005; Fleming, 1984; Harper, 2003; Howard-Hamilton, 1997; J. Jackson & Moore, 2006; Weatherspoon, 2005). The need to explore plausible solutions surfaced as literature and the media continued to depict African American males as unconcerned, unintelligent, and lacking the ability to lead or excel (hooks, 2004; Majors & Billson, 1992).

Numerous studies informing the experiences of African American male college students have been conducted (Harper, 2014). The most influential factor that informed the experiences of African American males was Black racial identity. While Byars-Winston (2010) identified being Black as central to identity for Blacks, DeCarlo (2005)

argued that the impact of race was only recently "included and obliquely expounded upon in conceptual models of human development" (p. 36). Specifically for African American male college students, X. M. Allen (2000) and Gray (1995) noted continued low college matriculation and graduation rates of African American males as directly correlated to the decline of the African American family structure (X. M. Allen, 2000; Gray 1995). Several scholars have agreed that a relationship exists between environmental and cultural factors that influence human behavior, including academic performance and self-perception (Becker & Becker, 2003; Brookover & Erickson, 1969; Maxwell, 2004; Morrow & Torres, 1995).

According to C. Brown (2006), as some colleges and universities experience improvement in enrollment of African American males, the struggle to retain and graduate those students has continue. Solórzano et al. (2010) contended that out-of-classroom experiences often play a significant role in African American male students' early departure from the university. Harper and Harris (2010) and Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) identified possible methods to address the needs of African American male college students that called for action by faculty and student affairs professionals. Due to the nature of student affairs professionals' roles as gatekeepers to student organizations, they have been thrust into the front lines in addressing the growing disparities between African American males and other males in higher education (C. Brown, 2006).

As student affairs professionals continue to grapple with engaging African American males, there must be intentionality in the design of campus opportunities to meet the needs of these students. This study sought to identify student involvement

needs by identifying perceptions of leadership among African American male college students who participated in a gender- and race-specific college leadership development program. To examine and make meaning of African American male college students' perceptions of leadership, it was important to review relevant literature. In the following section, African American male identity, college student involvement for African American males, and leadership were reviewed to inform the study.

African American Male Identity

According to Erikson (1968), a sense of self develops as a person discovers self and a personal role as defined by society. Erikson suggested that an undergirding principle of identity is development of ego identity as the sense of self that develops through social interaction. The theory incorporated biological and racial perspectives to inform the development of identity. To explain African American male identity, literature relevant to African American racial identity, male gender identity, college male identity, and the intersection of each of these identities were reviewed.

African American Racial Identity

Racial identity is "one of the most heavily researched areas that focuses on the psychological experiences of African Americans" (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 19) and includes attitudes and beliefs about being African American and part of the African American race (Decuir-Gunby, 2009). Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) and Sellers et al. (1998) are frequently cited in reviews of recent literature describing African American identity. Both frameworks outline African American identity development to be socially constructed.

The Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) lifespan model of Black identity development suggests cyclical stages over the course of the African American's life. African Americans with positive self-perceptions have a better understanding of being African American and actively engage with society as an African American. The multidimensional model of racial identity posed by Sellers et al. (1998) provides a theoretical framework for the significance that African Americans assign to being African American and to being part of the African American race.

Male Gender Identity

Kimmel (2010) suggested that males experience masculinity as a "homosocial enactment" whereby men "are under constant careful scrutiny of other men; "Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men's approval" (p. 23). Majors and Billson (1992) also discussed masculinity as they introduced the concept of *masculine attainment*, a term that refers to the "persistent quest for gender identity" (p. 30). They contended that what constitutes a man is the ability to be responsible and provide for himself and his family. This challenge is heightened for Black males in America due to systematic racism.

College Male Gender Identity

Upon entering college, students begin with multiple identities that must be acknowledged (Orbe, 2004). Student affairs professionals must refrain from the attempt to develop students by compartmentalization as they enter college. Chickering and Reisser (1993) and Harper and Harris (2010) informed this study concerning college male identity.

According to Harper and Harris (2010), "Understanding the development of college men requires examining their socially constructed experiences [because] masculinities have noticeable influences on the ways men experience college" (p. 18). The "noticeable influences" include how they develop friendships and where they allocate their out-of-class time, among other influences.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) outlined concepts for college student development, including (a) developing competence, which is confidence in the ability to achieve a goal; (b) managing emotions, where students learn to identify and express emotions appropriately; (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, freeing students from needs for approval, as well as increasing decision-making abilities; (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, where tolerance and appreciation of differences increase; (e) establishing identity as students begin to develop comfort with appearance and racial, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as a sense of self in social and cultural contexts; (f) developing purpose, as students develop the ability to establish commitments to personal interests, beliefs, and values; and (g) developing integrity, where abilities grow to balance self-interest with social responsibility.

Intersection of Racial, Gender, and College Identity

Based on the review of literature, multiple bodies of work have informed the racial, gender, and college student identity layers of the participants in this study. Sellers et al. (1998) noted the significance that African Americans assign to being African American. Kimmel (2010) identified concepts of masculinity that are exercised as the need for approval by other men. Harper and Harris (2010) validated the need to capture

socially constructed experiences to make sense of college male identity. Majors and Billson (1992) contributed the notion of male identity as a demonstration of personal responsibility and being a good provider. These scholars noted that this demonstration is not "straightforward achievement" for Black men:

> Outlets for achieving masculine pride and identity, especially in political, economic, and educational systems, are more fully available to whites than to black males. This in turn restricts the Black man's ability to achieve in family systems, to take care of a wife and family, or to be a present and supportive father. (p. 31)

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) establishment of identity vector informed this study as African American males grow in their comfort levels with being African American, as well as male, on their college campuses.

College Student Involvement for African American Males

Astin (1996) suggested that student involvement is an important campus opportunity that correlates with student achievement and development. Tinto (1993) indicated that student organizations play an important role as agents of social integration for college students. Considering that social integration, specifically student involvement, has a direct impact on student retention and graduation, understanding the influence of student involvement on all students on college campuses should be a priority.

A study by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) indicated that the higher frequency and quality of student involvement in out-of-class campus opportunities, the greater the

students' educational aspirations, improved self-confidence, and increased interpersonal and leadership skills. Further, quality student involvement experiences have led to greater satisfaction with the university and decreased departures (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Although student involvement has been recognized as beneficial, the task to ensure that these experiences are constructive and to integrate learning often rests on the shoulders of student affairs professionals (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007).

For African American male college students, there are positive effects on identity development for those who are involved and engaged in out-of-classroom activities (Cokley, 2001; Harper, 2006a, 2006b; Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008). Although research into the impact of leadership on African American male college students has increased, research concerning *how* African American college males frame or define leadership is minimal (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Research has explored experiences of African American male who assumed leadership roles in predominately White organizations and/or race-based organizations (Guiffrida, 2003; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006; Sutton & Terrell, 1997). There is minimal literature that discusses how African American males perceive leadership after assuming these positions (Harper, 2009). If student affairs professionals are to aid in creation of safe learning spaces in and out of the classroom for African American males, they must address the variables that may negatively influence student involvement experiences.

Leadership Development

Societal needs for leaders equipped to work with a diverse workforce continue to grow, and higher education has been challenged with the task of developing these

leaders. Societal leaders should be equipped to cultivate partnerships, address issues critically, and develop collaborations with local communities and key stakeholders (Ewing, Bruce, & Ricketts, 2009). Higher education is charged to produce not only technically competent managers but also managers who possess the ability to motivate and lead others.

To meet this task, many colleges and universities have chosen to incorporate leadership development in their mission statements (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012; Astin & Astin, 2000; Boatman, 1999; Guthrie, Jones, Osteen, & Hu, 2013; Roberts, 2007) and have met this goal through encouragement of students to become involved in student organizations. The use of student organizations and leadership development has been well documented, as well as benefits of development of students as responsible citizens or leaders for the community and positive effects on social integration of students, regardless of race (Astin & Astin, 2000; Harper & Harris, 2010; Tinto, 1993).

Quality student involvement experiences, specifically taking on leadership roles in student organizations, require leadership skill development due to eventual transitions to leadership roles (Frazier, 2009). Leadership development concepts for college students, both in and out of the classroom, have been reflected in the literature for years (Keeling, 2004). In a study by Foreman and Retallick (2013), students who held a leadership position in a student organization scored significantly higher on the scales of consciousness of self, commitment, and individual values on the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale. Rubin, Bommer, and Baldwin (2002) reported that an extracurricular

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index score indicating the number of student organizations, leadership roles, and hours spent in those organizations significantly predicted development of skills such as communication, initiative, decision making, and teamwork. The concept of leadership has developed to be more relational, process oriented, service directed, and systems focused over the past 30 years.

As the concept of leadership has evolved, the face of higher education has also evolved. Universities and colleges have become more diverse and reflective of the changing demographics of the United States. It is expected that by 2042 the United States will become a minority majority country (U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2010); thus, the challenge to meet the initial charge of education—educating leaders for society—has become more daunting. Higher education has recognized the need to explore the intersection of leadership development and diversity (Guthrie et al., 2013). Student affairs professionals and leadership educators have a unique opportunity to address this challenge by developing opportunities to engage African American undergraduate males in student organizations and the activities of leadership.

Early attempts at development of leadership frameworks for African American college males were often generalized from studies that focused on students of colors in general (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). This practice did not account for the intersectionality of African American college males' multiple identities and removed the unique voice of this population (Guthrie et al., 2013). In order to develop leaders, student affairs practitioners and leadership educators must understand and legitimize the multiple identities of students (Chen & Van Velsor, 1996).

As cited by Sutton and Terrell (1997), research was conducted concerning African American leadership in student organizations (Bordas, 2007; DeSousa & King, 1992; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). However, very little research has focused on African American males. Early research conducted on African American males often focused on barriers to involvement or experience after holding a leadership position; very few focused on the perceptions of leadership before assuming leadership roles or how African American college males framed their concepts of leadership (Frazier, 2009; Harper & Quaye, 2009). The assumption by early researchers was that African American males did not assume leadership roles due to being unprepared, intimidated, or convinced that the leadership experience was irrelevant. The idea that African American males might construct their leadership framework differently from that of their White counterparts was not considered (Fleming, 1984; LaVant & Terrell, 1994).

A study by Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) indicated that African American undergraduate males did not view leadership as positionality but instead as the role played in the organization. The term *leader* and the concept of leadership were associated with "acting White" or "trying to shine," both of which were viewed negatively (Arminio et al., 2000). In review of the limited literature concerning the voice of African American undergraduate males who participated in gender- and race-based college leadership development programs, I was led to explore this silenced population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions and personal definitions of leadership held by African American male undergraduate participants in a

race- and gender-based leadership development program at a PWI in southwestern United States.

Study Methods

The two most common approaches to research are the quantitative and qualitative methods. The methods are dictated by different views of reality. A *qualitative* study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting. The *qualitative* method is based on the assumption of multiple realities (Guba, 1990).

In this study, the qualitative method was used to offer a voice to participants. The study employed the basic features of the phenomenological approach. According to Polkinghorne (1989), a phenomenological researcher should be able to say, "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (p. 46). Phenomenological projects focus on the experience that the subjects report rather than on the individual. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "It is not possible to understand any phenomenon without reference to the context in which it is embedded" (p. 302). According to Patton (1990), in phenomenological research there is a core to the meaning of common experience among participants. During the phenomenological research process, prior experiences and interest are shortly cast aside so as not to interfere with the research. This was important in the current study, which focused on second-semester freshmen African American males at a university in the south. The core framework of the research followed standards set forth by Moustakas (1994) that a

phenomenological account should get inside the common experience of a group of people and describe the what, how, and meaning of that shared experience.

Based on past experience with the phenomena and willingness to participate, a purposive sample approach was used. Twelve participants were interviewed concerning their experiences with a college leadership program created for African American males at Big South University (BSU; a pseudonym) called Black Men Lead (BML; a pseudonym). The common phenomenon was the BML, an 8-week program for second-semester and sophomore African American males and was sponsored by the BSU National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) fraternities, the governing council for historically African American fraternities and sororities. The BML program incorporated peer leaders, leadership skill training and leadership theory overview, life skills training, academic study groups, history of Blacks in the United States, Black identity development, small-group discussions, a leadership excursion, and a culmination project.

Setting and Context

I identified and invited study participants using a criterion and convenience sample (Appendix A). The study participants ranged in socioeconomic classification and academic major. All held a grade point average of 2.5 or higher and had participated in leadership positions in high school, had played a sport, or were members of a high school honor society. I collected data using 1-hour to 1.5-hour semistructured interviews and transcribed and organized data into statements for data analysis. The statements were clustered into themes and evaluated across participant interviews for commonality and similarities.

Interviews

Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study and signed a consent form (Appendix B) prior to participation. The demographic data for each participant were collected prior to the study via the BML program application and interview. Participants were encouraged to use pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and were offered opportunities to question the interviewer at the conclusion of the interview. The names of participants were withheld and distinguishable characteristics or comments were withheld from the final report. Each interviewee was assigned a numerical value to acknowledge identity.

The interviews were hosted on campus and lasted approximately an hour. Open-ended and guiding questions (Appendix C) were generated based on the literature review. The interviews were transcribed by hand. They varied in style, which allowed for free expression by the participant. I employed interview techniques such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and empathizing to develop rapport and insight into each student's experience. The questions focused on the BML experience, identity, perceptions, interactions with peers, and leadership. After coding the data from the first interview, each participant met with me in person or by telephone to discuss discrepancies between their statements and my interpretations.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the interview transcripts using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method involved simultaneously performing a systematic coding and analysis of the data to generate theory instead of beginning with a theory or

hypothesis in mind. The data were analyzed and assigned codes to categories that emerged from the data (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Techniques identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Moustakas (1994) were used to analyze data systematically. The analysis process began with a reading of the verbatim interview transcripts and was completed by a three-level coding method.

The first level of coding included "carefully examining the data and selecting phrases, words, and stories when observed individually contains a single unit of meaning" (Schreiber & Stern, 2001, p. 69). The first-level coding included a review of the interview transcript and making notations on the notecard to identify key words or phrases. The second level of coding was "examining and collapsing codes into categories or higher-level concepts" (Schreiber & Stern, 2001, p. 70). As the data were reviewed and analysis continued, it was important to note convergences and divergences among categories. In the third level of coding, relationships among categories were observed and final themes emerged (Schreiber & Stern, 2001, p. 71).

During the qualitative research process, it was important to address four areas suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to ensure trustworthiness: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. My experience in student affairs (more than 10 years), as well as her role as designer of the BML program, added to confidence and truth value in the interpretation of the data. Member checks were achieved (a) by sending the overarching themes to the participants with requests to add or delete any comments, and (b) by debriefing in conference with colleagues in the student affairs area who work exclusively with the study population.

To analyze the data, a master list of categories and themes was developed and compared to current conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Peer debriefing was conducted with members of the dissertation committee and fellow student development professionals to ensure neutrality. According to Lincoln and Guba, peer debriefing

is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind. (1985, p. 308)

The issue of applicability could not be addressed because the BML experience is a unique phenomenon; however, transferability may be inferred. The context of applicability relies on the perspective of the reader; however, the reader is urged not to generalize across racial identities or university settings. Phenomenological studies are designed to gain insight into the world of the participant who experience a particular phenomenon.

Results

The experiences of the 12 participants were examined and four broad themes emerged during analysis. The themes were divided into two categories: (a) perceived behaviors of leaders/participants, and (b) traits that leaders/participants possessed. The themes were (a) influence and motivation, (b) selflessness/responsibility, (c) awareness, and (d) performance of specific behaviors (integrity, honesty, initiative, and good communication). The presentation of results uses pseudonyms and participant direct quotes, with the cited participant identified by a code number.

Influence and Motivation

Participants strongly agreed that leaders should be able to influence and motivate others, especially other African American undergraduate males. They agreed that being a role model was intertwined with influence and motivation. Specifically, they stated that it was important to be a role model to other African American males on campus and at home (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

> I heard a saying once that said you can lead a horse to water but if you cannot make them drink, then you are really not a leader. A leader is going to make sure the horse drinks the water because of their ability to influence. (2)

> I look to a leader as someone I can look up to. You cannot choose your manager but you can choose your leader. (4)

> Leadership is a person or group of people that inspires people to do something that they wouldn't normally do. Leadership impacts others' lives in a positive way. (8)

Selflessness/Responsibility

Participants stated that they expected the leader to be selfless and engage followers in decision making. They said that the leader should be committed and feel a responsibility to followers. They identified the need to be the best and to take one for the team, noting that they had to represent all African American men to their White counterparts in and out of the classroom. It was even more important to serve the organization well to ensure that it would be easier for future members of the [Black] organization (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10).

I am not selfish but selfless. I'm going to get people engaged in decision making.

(4)

You have to be able to take on all the pressures and challenges [of the

organization] and not complain. (7)

A leader will want to do it for the good of the cause and not for fame. I am more

of a servant leader. (9)

You have a commitment to make sure the organization is successful and there is

no benefit to you other than the good of what you are working for.(10)

Awareness

Study participants identified the need for leaders to be aware of themselves and

their followers in order to be effective and lead. The leader should be selected by

members and not self-appointed, to ensure that the leader is not doing it for the wrong

reason, or in order to be seen. One participant discussed at length the importance of

leaders possessing emotional intelligence and making positive impacts on followers (1,

2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12).

Got to know who you are. If you got to tell me who you are, that's not who you

are, that's just somebody you want to be. (1)

Have to be understanding of your followers and know where they are coming

from and their challenges. You need to understand who you are leading. You

have to be a spokesperson and so you have to understand and know your people.

(7)

You have to be aware of what is going around you, making sure you know what

is going on in your culture. (10)

I believe emotional intelligence is important, because it helps knowing your

people and their strengths and weaknesses. Because if you put them in a position

where you know they are going to fail, they will fail. (12)

Leadership Behaviors

Participants identified specific desirable leadership behaviors that a leader should

perform or that they viewed themselves performing, such as communicating effectively,

being an active listener, and being open-minded, decisive, a self-starter, and

knowledgeable. Several participants stated that it was important to be unique in order to

stand out and lead extraordinary people (1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11).

Not judging everybody because people come from a different lenses and cultural

barrier. Not trying to put your own experiences onto everybody. (1)

A leader should be able to make changes quickly and be knowledgeable. For

example, you don't want to ask a teacher a question and they don't have an

answer. They should be knowledgeable in what they are doing. (4)

Communication is key; you have to communicate effectively if you want to be

efficient as an organization. You have to have the ability to trickle down

information. (5)

Effective leadership requires willingness to listen to the opinions and thoughts of

others and actually consider them. (11)

Discussion

The study examined the perceptions of leadership reported by 12 African American undergraduate males at a PWI in the southwestern United States who had participated in a race- and gender-specific leadership development program. As stated by Astin and Astin (2000), student organizations play an important role in social integration for college students and are invaluable in offering opportunities for leadership development. Four major themes emerged from the study: leaders influence and motivate followers, leaders are aware of self and others, leaders exhibit selflessness and responsibility, and leaders perform specific leadership behaviors. Dimensions of leadership that emerged from the data included leader traits, leader behaviors, and the concept of servant leadership.

Leader Traits

Northouse (2013) identified a set of leadership traits based on a retrospective examination of research (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986; Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). The major leadership traits that were identified were intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. The participants in the current study frequently described themselves and leader desirable traits to be hones, effective communicator, confident, knowledgeable, relatable, possessing integrity, applying ethics in decision making, self-starters, determined, and trustworthy. The traits identified by the participants were more aligned with the earlier traits noted by Stogdill (1974) in research in which African American males were not the focus population. Stogdill's research identified the leadership traits of

self-confidence, drive for responsibility, vigor and persistence, risk-taking, initiative, self-confidence and personal identity, acceptance of consequences, readiness to absorb stress, ability to tolerate frustration and delay, influence others behavior, and design social interaction with purpose.

Leader Behaviors

As described by Fairholm (2002), leadership is not merely mechanics, styles, behaviors, or characteristics of leaders; instead, leadership is a holistically and philosophical enactment that entails values, motives, power, and the aspirations and needs of the followers and leader. Nahavandi (2006) focused on the behaviors of leaders. In this regard, Lussier and Achua (2007) identified nine behaviors of effective leaders: (a) dominance, (b) high energy, (c) self-confidence, (d) locus of control, (e) stability, (f) integrity, (g) intelligence, (h) emotional intelligence, and (i) flexibility and sensitivity to others.

The themes that emerged in this study aligned with the behaviorist concept of leadership. Participants stated that influencing and motivating others was significant for their community (African American males) due to the low level of African American male student organization involvement on campus. They indicated that, in order to be a role model and encourage other African American males to become involved, the leader must be able to influence and motivate hesitant peers.

As noted in studies completed by Kimbrough and Harper (2006) and Strayhorn (2008), African American undergraduate males often assumed responsibility to portray the entire race in interactions with other races. Participants in the current study stressed

the importance of role modeling for other African American males on campus to dispel African American male negative behavior stereotypes. They also recognized that being able to influence others was not always connected to holding a formal leadership position in a student organization. One student discussed at length his experience with a specific student organization and their election of a less influential and competent president due to the climate and politics of the organization.

The participants reflected that it was important that leaders understand and be aware of followers' and their own personal strengths and weakness in order to advance and serve the organization, which position aligns with the ideology of collectivism. The foundation of collectivism was the premise that leadership is a collective endeavor (Guthrie et al., 2013). The ideology of collectivism emerged as a method to develop diverse students' leader identity (Bordas, 2007). According to Bordas (2007), diverse college students reported that uplift of the community relied on empowerment of the individual. As the leader develops and empowers the follower, the community is advanced and improved. This viewpoint aligns with the servant leadership style approach.

Servant Leadership

Researchers have debated the servant leadership approach as both trait and behavior based (Laub, 2003). Laub reported that servant leadership was viewed as a behavior process and that students focused on the behaviors that encapsulate servanthood. The study indicated that African American males' definition of leadership aligned with many of the tenets of servant leadership. The foundation of servant

leadership is the idea of a leader being a servant to the people being led (Spears, 1998). The highest duty of a leader is to address the highest-priority needs of others (Greenleaf, 2002).

According to Russell (2001) and Russell and Stone (2002), an essential component of servant leadership is the value of integrity and competence to establish interpersonal trust with followers. Rost (1993) indicated that anyone in the hierarchical setting can be identified as a leader and anyone can be a follower (Rost, 1993). The use of the servant leadership style when working with college-age African American men allows for incorporation of multiple layers of identity due to incorporation of self-awareness and support by followers who are growing not only as members of the organization but also as individuals (Riverstone, 2004).

The servant leadership style may provide African American men the voice to encourage their followers but still exude self-confidence. The leadership style of African American men to show strength but remain nurturing is encouraged in the servant leadership model due to its focus on making followers better than they were before. One of the key components of servant leadership is the leader offering followers opportunities to be successful and provide ideas to the organization; this component is in alignment with the consideration characteristics that are a mark of the African American leadership style. Self-awareness and a servant mindset may assist African American men as they navigate their student organization's complexities.

Implications

This study reflects specifically on the role that student affairs practitioners and leadership educators may play on university campuses. This study concluded that African American undergraduate males defined and perceived leadership in ways similar to those reported in previous research; however, there remains confusion regarding the terms *leader* and *leadership*. Participants used descriptors to define leader and leadership, even after participating in a leadership development program. The interchangeable use of the terms *leader* and *leadership* for college students is a conundrum. Student affairs professionals and leadership educators must embrace and share with student leaders a common language pertaining to the terms leadership and leader.

As Arminio and colleagues (Arminio et al. 2000) found, students of color did not value the label of *leader* in the same way as their White counterparts. As indicated in this study, African American males were unconcerned with the formal *title* of leader but thought it more important to perform the *behavior* of a leader and be identified by peers as a leader rather than hold a formal position. Past studies have focused exclusively on students who held formal positions, which does not account for African American males who were perceived by peers and who perceived themselves to be leaders and engaged in leadership. To give a truthful and robust voice to this population, future researchers must consider this paradigm when designing studies.

Student affairs administrators must be cognizant of the convergence of multiple identities that African American undergraduate males encounter on college campuses,

coupled with the servant leadership approach. The servant leadership approach may be overplayed to ensure follower and organization success. As cautioned by Block (1993) concerning students and servant leadership, student leaders may be tempted to assume too much responsibility, to their personal detriment. Student affairs professionals and leadership educators must take this into consideration when engaging these students and be intentional in conversations concerning life balance and obligations.

Recommendations

The development of student leadership paradigms and increasing satisfaction with the university cannot be attributed solely to campuswide involvement by African American men; however, students realize and appreciate when opportunities are offered. African American men have different experiences and conceptual ideas of leadership, leading to the need for dynamic and distinct leadership opportunities. Participation in campus-wide organizations provides students with leadership skills, but many students require safe spaces to enhance and develop personal leadership skills.

Safe spaces for students of color rely not only on physical locations but also on emotionally and intellectually safe spaces. Students must have a sense of safe space to express not only their emotions but also their intellectual capacity. As one interviewee stated, it was important to be able to express his emotions with other men without fear of ridicule or reprisal. The beliefs of many African American undergraduate males that there exists no place in the classroom or in the extracurricular realm to express emotions or intelligence freely is detrimental to their development as students and as men. Student affairs practitioners should create and offer safe places to train and educate African

American undergraduate males. The leadership development program should ensure that multiple identities are addressed.

Attention must be paid to inextricably intertwined technical, cultural, and political components to create not only well-intentioned but also well-planned and well-implemented programs. Research strongly implies that social integration plays a vital role in African American student success in college. African American students should be encouraged to become involved in campus-sponsored activities during their first year. Freshmen orientation programs that exemplify a friendly and inclusive community should be implemented. Student organizations should be instructed on successful recruitment plans to encourage African American student participation.

CHAPTER IV

"SO A MAN THINKETH AND BELIEVETH IN HIS HEART, SO HE IS":

INFLUENCE OF INVOLVEMENT IN AN AFRICAN AMERICAN

COLLEGE MALE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

During the past 20 years, the experiences of African American undergraduate males attending PWIs have been explored as they pertain to persistence, involvement, academic success, and leadership roles (Harper, 2006a, 2006b, 2009; Harper, Davis, McGowan, Ingram, & Plant, , 2011; Harper & Nichols, 2008; Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Smith, 2003; W. A. Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007; W. A. Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007; Strayhorn, 2008). However, much of the published research adds to deficit-orientated reports about African American undergraduate men (Harper, 2014). The concept of deficit orientation focuses on the inability, inferiority, or inadequate performance of a population. The deficit-orientated narratives of researchers often focus on negative persistence, enrollment, graduation, and involvement of undergraduate African American men, with limited mention of successful strategies (A. L. Brown, 2011; Griffin et al., 2010; Majors & Billson, 1992). As institutions of higher education continue to face challenges concerning retention and involvement by African American undergraduate males with limited proposed solutions, there is a need to develop and implement strategies to address these concerns.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (2014), 58.7% of White students attending a public 4-year institution graduated with a

bachelor's degree within 5 years, compared to 37.2% of African American students. In 2012, African Americans made up 12% of the full-time enrolled students at public institutions in the United States, compared to 63% of White students. This growing disparity has intensified the need to develop and implement effective strategies to meet the needs of this population.

Research during the past 20 years has focused on perceived or actual deficits of African American undergraduate males; however, little information exists concerning successful programs or strategies to address these deficits. Based on results of the reviewed studies, student affairs professionals began to focus on their roles in addressing alarming statistics. In this section, African American male identity, college student involvement by African American males, diverse student leader identity, and leadership development programs for African American males are explored and used to inform the research study.

African American Male Identity

Stryker (1980) suggested that the "core self" is comprised of multiple hierarchal identities arranged by importance and behavior, directly tied to the arrangement of identities. According to Cheek and Briggs (1982), the aspects that comprise one's identity are considered personal and social. Personal aspects of one's identity consist of self-definition and include beliefs in one's abilities, values, and attributes relevant to the person. The social element of identity consists of societal constructs, role in society, and relationships with others. Although all identities include both personal and social

elements, the importance placed on either component varies by individual (Cheek &

Briggs, 1982; Sampson, 1978).

Research performed by Jones and McEwen (2000) contributed to understanding

the intricate development of a student's core identity or sense of self. These researchers

found that student descriptors fit into two categories: (a) an inner or core identity that

included their own personally assigned attributes and characteristics, including

intelligence, compassion, and independence; and (b) intersecting identities that can be

experienced in multiple dimensions, including race, gender, culture, class, and religion.

Most models of identity assume that African Americans have a number of hierarchically

ordered identities, of which race is viewed as only one (Sellers et al., 1997). Many

researchers have examined the development of racial and other dimensions of students'

identities, yet few have focused specifically on African American men (Harper &

Quaye, 2009).

African American Racial Identity

Individuals develop their identities by constructing a self in comparison to others

on an individual or group level (Alessandria & Nelson, 2005). Such comparisons are

connected to one's conscious or subconscious feelings about membership in a particular

racial group (Tatum, 1997). In order to delve into the complexity of the college student,

it is important to explore the multiple dimensions of identity. Racial identity is one of the

layers of the socially constructed identities that focus on the psychological experiences

of African Americans (Sellers et al., 1998) and include "attitudes and beliefs" about

being African American and part of the African American race (Decuir-Gunby, 2009).

Male Gender Identity

When exploring the experiences of African American undergraduate males and leadership, it is important to evaluate gender role performance or masculinity. *Masculinity* is herein defined as a collection of rules and norms that govern gendered behavior by men in a particular context (Kimmel & Messner, 2007). In the review of the literature, the terms *male gender identity* and *masculinity* were often used interchangeably.

The social constructivist model for masculinity acknowledges that masculinity is performed differently and influenced by myriad factors such as gender, class culture, race, ethnicity, and age (Brod & Kaufman, 1994; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994; Di Stefano & Kimmel, 1992; Gilmore, 1990). Kimmel (1996) argued that male gender identity is directly influenced by interactions with peers and that college men must negotiate their gender identities. As in the case of African American men, media and popular culture directly influence how they viewed masculinity.

The central point to men concerning identity development is the pressure by society for men to face a narrowly constructed masculine behavior stereotype. Society defines masculine behavior as restrictive emotionality; homophobia; socialized control, power, and competition; restrictive sexual and affectionate behavior; obsession with achievement and success; and health care problems. The social constructivist model of masculinity enriches understanding of undergraduate males' gendered behavior on the part of student affairs professionals; however, it sheds little light on undergraduate African American males who often perform masculinity differently from their White

counterparts (Harris & Lester, 2009). The current study explored manhood in the construct of African American college males.

African American Undergraduate Male Gender Identity

Researchers have indicated that the concept of manhood is important to explore because masculinity does not address the conflicts, societal stressors, and strains of male role fulfillment. Males construct their idea of manhood through a combination of distinct cultural codes and universally acknowledged masculine ideals. Males frame their identification of being a "man" through reinforcement of masculine enactments and manhood, with special attention to accepted cultural definitions (Gilmore, 1990).

Early researchers conceptualized the African American male's manhood as a "problem," focusing on the deficit orientation of African American males. Researchers focused on the problems of low family commitment, sexual promiscuity, and docility (Broderick, 1965; Elkins, 1959; Moynihan, 1965; Reiss, 1964). Early research on African American males did not include undergraduate African American males and presumed low socioeconomic status. Bowman (1989) suggested that research on African American male manhood be evaluated utilizing the life span model to incorporate manhood in a developmentally framework.

Majors and Billson (1992) proposed that young African American men participate in "cool pose" as a method of a symbolic manhood practice. They defined cool pose as a ritualized form of masculine cultural codes and behaviors that incorporate unique behaviors, physical posturing, language, and performance to convey pride, strength, and control. Some researchers have argued that cool pose does not allow for

authentic behavior or manhood as a developmental process (Hunter & Davis, 1992). Hunter and Davis postulated that manhood for African American males includes four domains: self-determination and accountability, family, pride, and spirituality. According to these researchers, the construction of manhood by African American males was relational and interconnected to how they were treated by others.

Early research indicated that manhood was constructed by interconnections among self, family, and others; responsibility and accountability; developed over time; proactive; and required self-improvement (Asante, 1987; Bowman, 1989; Hunter & Davis, 1992, 1994; Jagers & Mock, 1995). This was further indicated in the study by Hammond and Mattis (2005) of 171 African American men that explored how manhood was defined. The common themes from the study were willingness to assume responsibility/accountability, independence and control in decision making, ability to make way for others, spiritual and moral rectitude, and possession of focus.

The intersectionality of race, college attendance, and manhood directly influences one's core sense of self. The intersection between race and gender among African American college men remains seriously understudied, which affects the ability of student affairs professionals and leadership educators to assess and strategize methods for intervention (Harper, 2004; Howard-Hamilton, 1997; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995). As student affairs, practitioners and leadership educators continue to encourage African American undergraduate males to assume student leader roles, special attention must be paid to the relevance of relationships and perceptions of peers. To further make

meaning of the experiences of undergraduate African American males in higher education, student involvement must evaluated.

College Student Involvement by African American Males

Four factors have been identified as contributing to African American adjustment in college: (a) academic preparedness, (b) psychological stress, (c) sociocultural stress, and (d) integration (Smedley et al., 1993). Tinto (1993) indicated that departures by African American undergraduate students were tied to social and academic experiences that integrate the student into the institution. Higher education views student organizations as methods of social integration based on the opportunity for students to construct social networks and practice leadership skills. Research conducted by Padilla et al. (1997) and Murguia et al. (1991) indicated that involvement in student organizations provided students of color with cultural connections at PWIs. This was relevant to the present study, as it offered context for the experiences of participants.

As stated at the meeting of Association of College Personnel Administrators (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Administrators in 2007, the need to address the growing diversity of college and university campuses requires expansion of roles and responsibilities of student affairs professionals (Hoover & Wasley, 2007). Attention must be paid to the additional role of student organizations in establishing out-of-class connections with faculty. As indicated by Guiffrida (2003), these relationships were important to all students but were especially highly valued by African American students.

As students continue to be involved in student organizations, the natural progression to leader often occurs. This is an important opportunity for African American college males to hone valuable leadership skills for the future workplace. Recently, college retention researchers have argued that quantitative measures of college student social integration have failed to identify the complexities involved in the social integration of minority students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh & Love, 2000). As indicated by Logue et al. (2005), there is a need to study specific involvement areas because students experience leadership differently based on the organization and its context (Gellin, 2003).

Diverse Student Leader Identity

As institutions utilized student organizations and student leadership roles as methods of integration, this approach brought challenges and opportunities to student affairs practitioners and leadership educators. There are several definitions of leadership and expected competencies. For example, the expected competencies associated with the emergent perspective of leadership are managing oneself and self-development while obtaining self-awareness, knowledge leadership concerned with process rather than position, and thriving relationships and collaborations (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

Along with multiple definitions of leadership, there is a variety of opinions on what competencies are essential to student leader capacity. Leader capacity was described as "how leaders access and use information as well as the content of their underlying knowledge of the tasks and social issues related to leadership" (Lord & Hall, 2005, p. 593). Frequently mentioned was the focus on "self" as a key competency of

college student leadership. Parks (2000) reported that persons between the ages of 17 and 30 attempted to develop self-awareness, sought truth through intentional dialogue, and developed behavior congruent to justice and right. Using the lens of leader capacity allowed incorporation of how students of color make meaning of leadership due to the value placed on the use of cultural and life experiences and the implications for leadership.

Leader Identity

As the approach to student development and leadership evolved to become more holistic, student affairs professionals recognized that, as college students experienced leadership, they begun to form a leader identity. The college student leader identity model was adopted by student affairs professionals as an approach to student leader development based on the model's recognition of the influence that identity plays in leader development (Guthrie, Jones, Osteen, & Hu, 2013).

The college student leader identity model stemmed from research by Komives, Casper, Longerbeam, Mainella, and Ostee (2005) with undergraduate student leaders. The model lent voice to the concept that leadership identity was a combination of personal and social identities and that one can make a difference and create change by working with others (Renn & Ozaki, 2010). Student leader identity is a foundational component of leader capacity and connected to the student's ability to participate in the activity of leadership (Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). The college student leader identity model encouraged leaders to focus on self by managing oneself, aligning behavior and decisions to one's values, developing a sense of purpose, having character,

and demonstrating commitment (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Higher Education Research Institute, 1996; Komives, Lucas, et al., 2006; Shankman & Allen, 2008). Leader identity includes many facets of a student's social identities, as well as attributes of leader capacity.

Student Leader Identity

Early leadership research studies on college and university students were dualistic in practice and considered only two lens: White students and students of color (Ospina & Foldy, 2009). As discussed by Tillman (2004), previous leadership development theory devalued and marginalized the experiences of students of color. Bordas (2007) asserted that diverse college students' leader identities were influence by culturally relevant influences, unlike their White counterparts. Diverse students developed their leader identity with strong influence from their racial culture (Bordas, 2007). There exists a need to reframe the college student leader identity model to incorporate the unique and previously overlooked experiences of diverse students.

Utilization of the student leader identity development model for diverse college students provides a framework for leadership educators and student affairs practitioners to implement strategies to develop diverse student leaders (Bordas, 2007). Leadership identity for diverse students entails three distinct frameworks: collectivism, servanthood, and activism.

The concept of collectivism stems from the expectation that leaders unite communities and inspire followers to act collectively. Collectivism embraces the leader's ability to show empathy and to share in the pain of the community while

propelling the community forward for the common good (Bordas, 2007; Hofstede, 1980, 1991). When placed in the context of African Americans, leaders have been expected to reflect the African American community's needs and aspirations (Walters & Smith, 1999).

The servant paradigm of diverse student leader identity development focuses on the belief that power is shared by the community, with everyone being involved to benefit the community as a whole (Bordas, 2007). Through the lens of African Americans, leaders are not self-selected or influenced by power or position but are appointed and encouraged by the community to lead (Bordas, 2007). The effective leader was seen to possess the ability to motivate and bring to the fore inner abilities of the collective and to instill a desire for self-sacrifice and community-first behavior by the group (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; Shamir, Zakay, Breine, & Popper, 1998).

The activism approach for developing diverse students' leader identity is based on the premise leaders that emerged from the need to convene the community during conflict (Bordas, 2007). The African American lens saw community leaders possessing the ability to be an advocate and motivate the community to act collectively in conflict while strategically planning to address the issue or injustice (Walters & Smith, 1999). Literature concerning students of color leadership has not often included leader identity and capacity, which is critical in understanding and developing leadership development frameworks for students of color (Bordas, 2007; Guthrie et al., 2013; Ospina & Foldy,

2009). Institutions of higher education have the ability and obligation to influence the development of all students' leadership skills and efficacy (Guthrie et al., 2013).

Leadership Development of Diverse Students

As the focus from student development researchers progressed from discussion of involvement of African American males to one of incorporation of African American males into leadership roles, limited information was available pertaining to these experiences. There were limited research findings for this population due to previous leadership development research underappreciating or dismissing experiences of diverse students from collegiate programming (Cheatham, 1996). Studies that targeted diverse students focused primarily on awareness of differences rather than developing diverse leaders' skills.

Previous studies were aligned with the concept of diverse students being targets of influence rather than agents of influence, with few studies delineating race (DiTomaso & Hooijberg, 1996). Researchers have argued for continuation of treatment of African American students as a monolithic group in higher education research and practice (C. Brown, 2006; Cuyjet, 2006; Fries-Britt, 2000; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Harper, 2004, 2006b; Torres et al., 2003). They have noted several important within-group variations in the experiences of African American undergraduate students and called for a more intensive and disaggregated study of subpopulations within the race.

Leadership Development for African American Males

When African American male leadership was the focus of studies, concentration was on the leadership role experience, with no mention of leadership development

(Harper & Wolley, 2002; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Harper and Wolley (2002) evaluated leadership experiences of African American male leaders at PWIs but made no mention of leadership development or training that had occurred prior to assuming the leadership roles. A case study by Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) focused on two variables of Greek participation and African American students but presented no evaluation based on gender or leadership role (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). When leadership was evaluated, results pertained to either intersection of their leadership development and gender or race and leadership role (Harper, 2014).

The few studies that have examined leadership in identity-based settings indicated that being involved in leadership activities where race was a facet promoted positive development of leadership or activism and personal identity (Renn & Ozaki, 2010). Sutton and Terrell (1997) indicated that African American males were willing to perceive themselves as leaders among African American students on campus, but the majority did not consider themselves to be leaders in campuswide groups. However, Harper and Quaye (2009) reported that African American men were inclined to lead for advancement of the African American community, respond to community needs, and promote cross-cultural engagement. When student leaders of color were asked to describe their leadership accomplishments, the responses often focused on accomplishments of the organization (Arminio et al., 2000).

Although research into the impact of leadership on African American male college students has increased, the influence of leadership development programs is understudied. As student affairs professionals and leadership educators aid African

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American undergraduate males in establishing leader identity, they must understand the connectedness between socially constructed identities and leadership (Cuyjet, 2006).

Leadership Development and Training Programs

As universities focused on leadership development and creation of leadership development programs across the country increased in the early 2000s, there were an estimated 800 or more student leadership programs (Cress et al., 2001; DiPaolo, 2002). As defined by Haber (2006) leadership development programs are programs or activities intentionally designed with the primary intent of developing and enhancing leadership skills, knowledge, or abilities of college students. Leadership development programs may contain components of training, education, and development via various methods, such as seminars, formal courses, outdoor education, workshops, mentoring, speakers, service, and volunteerism (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999).

Researchers have indicated that experiences in formal leadership courses are the most significant predictors of leadership ability (Cress et al., 2001; DiPaolo, 2002; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). In the study by Haber and Komives (2009), the influence of leadership development programs on college students' outcomes in socially responsible leadership were measured. The study indicated that participation in leadership development programs influenced men and women differently as it pertained to consciousness of self. Haber and Komives also reported that males who participated in the study indicated that participation in student organizations improved consciousness of self; however, the study did not account for racial differences. Similarly, another study found that holding a formal leadership role was not significantly valued by African

American college males, in contrast to White men and women and Black women (Kezar & Moriarty, 2000).

African American Racial, Male Gender, College Male, and Leader Identity

College intervention programs are often used by universities to address low involvement and matriculation by African American college males (Harper & Harris, 2010). Harper and Quaye (2009) suggested that the programs should provide reflection opportunities, peer student support groups, incorporation of identity development (racial and gender), and attention to social and academic integration.

Traditional university-sponsored undergraduate African American male intervention programs have focused exclusively on personal development or academics and have incorporated faculty and peer mentoring, summits, workshop series, or structured courses for success (Harper, 2014). Little is known about African American males leadership development programs due to the tendency of research to focus on academic achievement, persistence, or barriers to involvement by African American male students, with little or no attention to leadership skills training or development (Bonner, 2006; Harper et al., 2011; Martin & Harris, 2006). The study of leadership development for African American males has placed little attention on how or why leadership development/training programs were successful or influenced the activity of leadership. This information led to exploration of the benefits of participation in a gender- and race-specific leadership development program for African American undergraduate males at a PWI in the Southwest.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to address gaps in the current literature and to add to research on leadership development by examining experiences of African American undergraduate males who had participated in a gender- and race-specific leadership development program at a large PWI in the Southwest. I sought to determine the significance of a leadership development program that used myriad approaches to incorporate multiple identities such as race, gender, student, and leader in developing student leaders.

Methods

The two most common approaches to research are quantitative and qualitative methods. The qualitative method adheres to a constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm is influenced by the viewpoint that there are multiple realities and is focused on process, meaning, and understanding. The decision to utilize a qualitative methodology was influenced by the exploratory nature of this inquiry and my commitment to deconstruct the deficit-oriented practices that have described undergraduate African American males. Based on Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) overview of qualitative research, the methodology provided a framework to describe and interpret the BML program, understand it through the lenses and experiences of the participants, provide voice to the varied experiences of the BML members, and provide a more complex and multifaceted exploration of the topic (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

A naturalistic study allowed me to find answers to research questions through connections, relationships, and information sharing with others (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). As stated by Patton (2002), qualitative methodology aids in making meaning of the real world without limitations of rigid research design. Due to the selected small size and characteristics of the research sample, the phenomenological qualitative method was most effective. According to Duncan (2002) and Lynn (2002), the use of traditional qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation enables the researcher to understand the unique experiences of a marginalized population while offsetting the deficit-oriented narratives used in previous research studies.

There are five major approaches to qualitative inquiry: narrative research, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). The current study utilized the phenomenological approach. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of the experience and allow the researcher to understand the experience of the research participant. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), during the phenomenological research process, prior experiences and interests are shortly cast aside so as not to interfere with the research. This was important to this study, which focused on second-semester freshmen African American males at a university in the Southwest. The core framework of the research followed standards set forth by Moustakas (1994) for a phenomenological account that would get inside the common experience of a group of people and describe what, how, and the

meaning of that shared experience. This approach gives credence to the ability for people to share an experience but deduce radically different meanings (Crotty, 1996).

The empirical phenomenology method incorporated description of the experienced phenomena. According to Moustakas (1994), the empirical phenomenology method involves return to the experience to develop detailed descriptions that provide a basis for the experiences of the participants. This type of qualitative study usually provides rich and insightful self-reports of the phenomenon under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which in the case of the present study was the phenomenon of participating in a leadership development program targeting Black college male identity and leadership development.

I interviewed 12 participants of the BML program at BSU, using the empirical phenomenology method. BSU is a PWI research university located in a small rural town in the southwest region of the United States. BSU offers a unique background for examining the experiences African American males who had participated in an identity-based leadership development program. The institution reported low involvement in non-race-based student organizations (e.g., Student Government Association, student activity programming board) and low enrollment of African American males (less than 3% of the 50,000+ student population). BSU was chosen as the research site due to its. The BML program was selected as the phenomenon based on my intimate knowledge of the program and keen interest in exploration of the impact of the program on African American males at BSU.

Study participants were selected based on past participation in the BML program and willingness to participate in the study. Study participants ranged in socioeconomic, classification, and academic majors. They held at least a 2.5 grade point average and had been active in a range of high school activities. I collected data via long interviews and transcribed them into statements for data analysis. From the data, themes emerged and evaluated across participant interviews for similarities. In order to frame the research study, it was important that significant emphasis be placed on description of the BML program.

According to Sutton and Kimbrough (2001), African American undergraduate males were sometimes hesitant to assume leadership roles at PWIs due to lack of confidence in leadership skills. The BML program was developed in 2006 to address this and to ensure social and academic integration of African American undergraduate males. The BML club operated as a program-based organization to serve freshmen and sophomore African American males at the university.

The BML program design was unlike other university undergraduate African American male intervention programs. BML's program focused exclusively on development of leader identity and skills through the lens of masculinity and race for African American males. The program addressed students' multiple layers of identity, incorporated practical application of leadership through a campus-wide culmination project, required completion of a research project and participation in an out-of-state field trip, and offered course credit through participation.

The fraternities in the NPHC and the Department of Student Activities at BSU sponsored BML. The NPHC is the governing council for historically African American fraternities and sororities. The program was structured through a student club paradigm, with junior and senior undergraduate African American males reviewing applications and conducting interviews. There were two tiers of membership in the program: executive board and general membership. Program administration was the responsibility of nine executive board members who were past members classified as juniors and seniors and a staff advisor. The criteria for selection were students' interview and application scores, a desire to embrace club rules and policies, and a genuine interest in self-improvement and advancement of African American men. Each group of men was selected in the spring and considered a cohort, with full membership into BML awarded at the completion of the 8-week program. The program incorporated identity development, leadership theory, experiential learning, junior and senior peer mentors, academic intervention, and practical application of leadership. Guest faculty and peer lectures, small group discussions and projects, study groups, outside readings, assignments, program development, and a research culmination project met the program objectives.

Interviews

According to Patton (2002), the most common source of data collection for phenomenology studies is interviews. This method was chosen due to my established relationship with BML members. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study and signed a consent form approved by the university's institutional research

board prior to participation (Appendix B). Study participants did not offer demographic information due to prior completion of the BML application and interview results. Students were encouraged to use pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and offered opportunities to question the interviewer at the conclusion of the interview. Each interviewee was assigned a numerical value to acknowledge identity. Semistructured open-ended questions were used for the interview to ensure flexibility and to lend a true voice to study participants. Identities of research participants, as well as were distinguishable characteristics or comments, were withheld from the final report.

The interviews were hosted on campus and lasted approximately an hour. The interviews were transcribed by hand; they varied in style, which allowed free expression by the participants. Interview techniques such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and empathizing were employed to develop rapport and insight into the student's experience. The questions focused on the BML experience, identity, perceptions, and interaction with peers and leadership.

After the coding of data from the first interview, each participant met with me in person or by telephone to discuss any discrepancies between their statements and my interpretations to ensure member check.

Reflective comments and emerging judgments about the data were recorded after reading the transcripts, providing preliminary textural summaries of what and how each participant reported experiences and summaries experienced during the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the memoing component is vital to validation of research. "Memoing aids the researcher to analyze the data at a

conceptual level, helps to refine, and expand codes further, which develops the key

categories and shows their relationship which builds a more integrated understanding

(p. 74).

Data Analysis

Student interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for common categories,

themes, and patterns across interviews. The constant comparative method was described

by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Use of the comparative method involves simultaneously

performing a systematic coding and analysis of the data to generate theory versus

beginning with a theory or a hypothesis in mind. Initially, a line-by-line coding of the

same subset of three transcripts was compared and analyzed to establish preliminary

codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The techniques identified by Miles and Huberman

(1994) and Moustakas (1994) were used to systematically analyze collected data. The

analysis process began with a reading of the verbatim interview transcripts and was

completed by a three-level coding method.

Open coding was completed as the first level of coding. Open coding is a broad

sweep of the data and specific text or words that have meaning, as singular units are

identified (Schreiber & Stern, 2001). I made notations of identified key words or

phrases. The second level of coding involved close examination and collapsing codes

into categories based on emergent themes across interviews (Schreiber & Stern, 2001).

A master list to take note of all codes and convergences and divergences among

categories was created. The third level of coding was the point when relationships

between the categories were observed and finalized as results (Schreiber & Stern, 2001).

In the qualitative process, it is important to address trustworthiness through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks were used to ensure trustworthiness by sending the overarching themes to the students with directions to add or delete comments, employing use of a reflexive journal, and reviewing BML program interviews and applications. Peer debriefing with student affairs professionals responsible to work with African American undergraduate males at BSU and dissertation committee members was used to establish creditability and neutrality of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The prolonged engagement of the researcher as the advisor of BML added to credibility of the data (Erlandson et al., 1993). Use of an audit trail and journaling established dependability and confirmability. Transferability could not be addressed due to the uniqueness of the BML experience; however, applicability to other areas may be inferred by the reader. The phenomenology study was useful to gain insight into the world of the student experiencing the phenomena.

Results

This section summarizes the responses by 12 interviewees according to the themes that emerged from analysis of their responses: (a) self-concept with subthemes of increased confidence in leadership skills and self-awareness, (b) responsibility to improve self and others, and (c) peer support systems. These categories were emergent rather than prefigured and based on my interpretation. The presentation of results uses pseudonyms and participant direct quotes. The code in parenthesis corresponds to the interviewee who made the statement.

Self-Concept

A person's perception is a multidimensional construct that refers to perception of self in relation to numerous characteristics, such as academic and social ability, gender roles, racial identity, and abilities

Increased confidence in leadership skills. Participants stated that the unique BML experience had increased their leadership skills and their ability to influence others. The BML program offered training to enhance skills and understanding of leading others. Study participants rated their skills as superior to those of African American undergraduate males who had not participated in the program (1–12).

> You can't approach all leadership roles the same. I will definitely be involved more. BML taught me to broaden the type of leadership approaches to use in different situations. (3)

> I can see myself being a positive influence and making a difference to other Black males. (4)

> Not to sound arrogant, but I know I am miles ahead of other Black males and of course you have your outliers that can keep up, but even with those I have the advantage. Being able to plan, implement ideas, and agendas while dealing with faculty, staff, and students is something that has to be taught, learned, and developed. Those who did not take part of BML tend not to get this exposure to this training. (12)

Self-awareness. The participants reported identified development of self-awareness and increased self-efficacy. They stated that they felt more confident and

prepared to lead others because they understood themselves. They reported that participation in the BML program had improved their worldview and their ability to understand themselves, and had made them aware of the influence of their multiple identities on decisions and interactions with others (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Two participants expressed that they were better men due to the BML experience.

BML made me feel like I can do anything as long as I put my mind to it. (1)

The BML experience taught me to be self-aware and encouraged me to be a part regardless if I get accepted or get the responsibility I want. (2)

It was a great experience. I learned about myself . . . it helped me mature into the man I am now and opened my eyes besides culture. (5)

BML helped me with self-confidence. When I had to do the presentation, that was the first time I had to do something like that. I felt like I could do it because of the training I got in BML. (9)

BML helped me find my identity. (11)

My identities are what help me solve problems. (12)

Responsibility to Improve Self and Others

The theme of responsibility emerged as participants discussed their need to improve themselves and the community. They stated that it was important to meet expectations of others and to dispel stereotypes (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

You are supposed to meet expectations so you can help others better themselves. (2)

I feel like we [African American males at BSU] have responsibility to improve.
When we were at the leadership excursion in Alabama, a White woman asked if
we were athletes because we were in [Black] college. That is why we have to
make sure we do better as a group. (4)

Being a Black male at [BSU] makes you stand out. You have a lot of positive and
negative pressure. People think you may not deserve to be here. . . . You want to
prove them wrong. (5)

You always want to find different ways to better yourself because we [African
American males] are the minority here and you want to find ways to stand out.
(7)

Peer Support Systems

Students appreciated the opportunity to be around other positive African
American males and desired other opportunities to develop camaraderie with other
African American males on campus. They stated that discussions during BML had
allowed them to voice opinions without fear of being judged (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12).

For me to improve my leadership skills, I have to associate myself with other
leaders. (1)

BML was a great experience to meet other African American males who were
trying to become better leaders and get a sense of brotherhood. It was amazing to
be with a group of guys because we had the same goal of becoming a better
leader on a PWI. (7)

It gave me a change to interact with peers, as well as learn about my culture a little more deeply without having to worry about regulating as effectively, which a class would require. . . . It gave me a chance to speak freely and express my emotions to individuals who were having the same or common issues. (12)

Discussion

The development of leadership identity in African American male college students is a complex process. Limited theories are provided to educators for use in construction of frameworks for leadership development programs and learning environments. This study was an attempt to offer insight into a possible framework for future use. The study examined the influence of identity-based leadership program experiences reported by 12 African American undergraduate males who attended a large PWI in the Southwest. Analysis indicated alignment of interviewees' comments to existing literature.

Self-Concept

The theme of self-concept emerged. Theoretical models of leadership have emphasized the importance of self-concept and identity as keys to the process of development (Goleman et al., 2002; Greenleaf, 2002; Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Rost, 1993). The term *self-concept* is multifaceted and constructed by multiple identities. Researchers have used the terms *self-concept* and *self-perception* interchangeably; however, in this study the preferred term was *self-concept*. To understand self-concept, the "socially constructed" self must be explored (Harper & Harris, 2010).

The term *self* implies multiple layers of identities, attitudes, beliefs, values, motives, and experience, along with evaluative and affective components (Gecas & Burke, 1995). Self-concept has been described as having three components: the ideal self, the public self, and the real self.

The perception of race plays a significant role in shaping African American undergraduate student self-concept and cannot be discounted (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). As indicated in the revised Cross's (1991) Black identity model, personal identity and reference group identity comprise the African American self-concept. Personal identity was defined by Allport (1961) to be one's general personality traits and reference group orientation related to a person's selected social group membership, which varies by socially constructed identities. Self-concept encompasses self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-worth.

Self-concept emerged as one theme in this study. According to Murphy (2002), the term *student leader self-concept* was defined as a student's internal perception of the ability to engage in leadership processes. The idea of self-concept was described by Rosenberg (1979) as socially constructed by the person's relationship to the environment and influenced by subcultural racial and socioeconomic factors. The interviewees reported that, through participation with BML, their self-concept had been positively influence through developed identity, leadership efficacy, and self-awareness.

These views aligned with previous research. In studies by Chavous (2000) and Chavous et al. (2003), participants' self-concept was positively influenced by participation in leadership development programs. To fully capture the implication of the

BML experience on self-concept, comments related to self-awareness were explored. Self-awareness plays an important role in the creation of self-concept in African American undergraduate male leaders.

> BML taught things from a different perspective in regards to cultural identity that I could relate to and use throughout my whole life and college career. . . . I am now more prepared when I face a situation. (8)

Self-Awareness

The BML program focuses on leader identity development, with attention paid to the intersectionality of multiple identities. To understand the influence of improved self-awareness as mentioned by students, I self-awareness is approached in the vein of leader identity development.

The model of leader identity development incorporates psychosocial and cognitive influences on leader identity development (Komives et al., 2005). The *awareness* stage represents a period of leadership external and independent of the participant; however, this stage is different when seen through the lens of diverse student leader identity. Following the diverse student leader identity model, the stage of awareness not only embraces the student's multiple identities but also places importance on the student's desire to seek opportunities to serve the community.

Komives et al. (2005) cited the development of self-concept (including awareness) and self-confidence as integral to identity development. Interviewees not only mentioned the importance of understanding oneself, as seen by their recognition of their multiple identities and the role played in decision making, but also identified a

sense of maturity. These comments mirror findings in a study by Harper (2006a) and lend credence to the belief that leadership development programs positively influence participants' self-efficacy confidence and personal growth (Dugan et al., 2008). Personal growth of a leader is achieved by broadened perspective, increased self-confidence, and extended clear sense of self-purpose and self-efficacy (Komives et al., 2006).

Leadership Self-Efficacy and Confidence

Bandura (1977) coined the term *self-efficacy* and defined it as a person's self-evaluation of the ability to perform a given behavior, not to be confused with skills. To perform a specific behavior competently, both skill and self-efficacy are necessary (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy has evolved to incorporate myriad constructs, such as social, academic, and leadership. This current study focused on *leadership efficacy*, defined as confidence in the ability to engage in tasks and behaviors related to leading and motivating others and establishing interpersonal relationships (H. Smith & Betz, 2000). As stated by BML interviewees, after participating in the program, they had a heightened sense of belief in their leadership abilities, as well as increased confidence.

Since I completed BML, I don't think it is anything someone can throw at me about leadership I couldn't handle. I was given knowledge about leading that my peers did not receive. (12)

The belief by BML leaders in superior leadership skills was enhanced in a culmination project to which friends were invited. As one interviewee stated,

I loved that my friends who didn't do BML got a chance to come to the Black

Man Think Tank we put on and see how together we were. I know they were

like, "Dang, I wish I had did it!" (4)

These sentiments were not unusual after review of the existing literature. African

American undergraduate males agreed that it was important for their peer group to verify

their capabilities (Flowers, 2004; Frazier, 2009; Haber, 2011).

Responsibility to Improve Self and Others

The interviewees discussed the responsibility to improve themselves and others

to combat negative stereotypes.

I know sometimes they [White] peers look at me in class when I talk, like, "I

didn't know he could talk like that!" (10)

Interviewees agreed that they were obligated to the African American

community at BSU, family members, and other African American males to do well in all

endeavors because they were viewed as representative of all African American males.

I know if I do well in the class and participate with the White organizations, they

will be like, "John was great," but as soon as I mess up one time, it will be like,

"I knew Black men at [Big South] were like that." They will project me onto all

Black men on campus. . . . So I know I can't mess up, got to be on it all the time.

(6)

McClure (2006) noted that Afrocentric masculinity emphasizes community over

individualism and cooperation over competition. The African American men in the

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current study often mentioned the need to separate themselves from negative stereotypes.

These BML students portrayed a collective mindset as outlined by Bordas (2007) in the diverse student leader identity model. Interviewees agreed that the African American female community at BSU expected African American males to advance the African American community by assuming leadership roles. McClure (2006) expounded on this mindset at length in her study of African American males.

The belief of interviewees regarding responsibility for the community demonstrated hegemonic Afrocentric masculinity, which places emphasis on community and collectively acknowledges a common destiny with other African Americans. Hegemonic Afrocentric masculinity embraces the importance of unity among family and community while emphasizing collective work and responsibility (Akbar, 1990; Nobles, 1980).

Another example of hegemonic Afrocentric masculinity was the men's self-ascribed responsibility to hold campus leadership positions in student organizations and affinity groups beyond their fraternity. They stressed the importance of having a connection with other Black students on campus and exemplifying positive Black male attributes and characteristics.

Chavous (2000) postulated that self-worth is an important tool for African American men in their efforts to develop social support networks at PWIs. Social support was noted by student development researchers as an integral component of African American male college student development, which may lead these students to

use high levels of self-worth to develop positive social relationships at PWIs (Cokley & Moore, 2007).

Friendship Groups

The interviewees reported that participation in the BML program had allowed them to create friendship groups. Although not indicated by as many interviewees as other identified themes, this theme should be considered at length because it was used to view others. Student affairs educators have recognized the importance of peer groups in college student development for years; however, the influence of race and gender as structural characteristics on formations of friendship groups has not been explored.

Student change in college based on four major influences: student background characteristics, academic and social context of the institution, and family and non-college reference group. The social norming that students experience in college significantly influences personal orientation during college (Weidman, 1989). According to Weidman, the interpersonal environment and the interpersonal process play a significant role in the socialization process.

Socialization is dependent on interpersonal interaction and the emotional intensity and frequency of the relationship affiliated with the interaction; long-term impact of college is based on informal social interactions with peers and faculty (Homans, 1950, 1961).

In light of the long-term interaction among BML members, friendship groups were established. One interviewee stated, "I am so glad I did BML as a freshmen; these guys are now not only my friends but my family." Given the sentiments of the

interviewees concerning peer groups, it was important to delve into the roles of peer groups on college campuses.

As Feldman and Newcomb (1969) noted, peer groups can also be thought of as membership groups that operate in social groups with shared and accepted sets of developed norms through interpersonal interaction. Individuals change under the pressure of direct approval (or disapproval) of valued and trusted peers.

This process of peer influence is different from that seen in reference groups. Reference groups are defined as peer groups that influence peers through macro-social processes of institutions (Alexander & Eckland, 1975). Student involvement researchers have asserted that interpersonal interactions are primary contributors to overall development in college (Astin, 1993, 1996; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

It was important for this study to explore friendship groups. The interviewees reported that the men in BML were not only peers but also members of a friendship group, sometimes described as a '"brotherhood." The term *friendship group* was used to describe the interpersonal environment that consisted of best friends and close acquaintances who form a singular, cohesive group.

The findings in this study were consistent with previous research by Bonner and Evans (2004), who found that African American males attending a PWI seek opportunities to develop and engage in peer groups.

African American students often find themselves in a hostile environment on campus and seek retreat into a group of like-minded and like-complexioned peers. Among students of color, the group level of intellectual self-confidence has a positive

effect consistent with the notion that people benefit psychologically from interaction with a highly confident set of best friends. These interviewees reported appreciation not only of the development program but also the ability to speak freely on issues of race and manhood with men who were similar. As one student stated, "I know I can be myself and voice my opinion without someone making fun of me or questioning my manhood." As indicated by B. A. Jackson (2012), concerning brotherhood and masculinity, brotherhood allowed African American males to retain perception of manhood and community without violating traditional views of manhood.

Interviewees described increased confidence and a desire to improve academically as a group. This aligned with results from a study by Antonio (2004) concerning the effects of peer groups on intellectual self-confidence and educational aspirations in college. That study indicated that friendship groups high in self-confidence had influenced members' self-confidence over a period of 2 years (Antonio, 2004).

The more homogenous a student's friendship groups, the higher the degree of aspiration by the members. This applied directly to BML's cultural homogenousity. For students of color, friendship groups positively affect self-confidence and educational aspirations (Antonio, 2001). BML students acknowledged a feeling of trust and openness when dealing with men in the group, which aligned with findings reported by Antonio (1998). In review of the statements by interviewees concerning peer group, the impact on self-confidence is clear. This study linked complex realities of the intersectionality of multiple identities and performance of leadership; however, further research is needed.

Recommendations

Carter and Rudd (2000) suggested that the two primary goals of early leadership development programs are to develop leadership skills in the participants and to enhance participants' knowledge of topics. The current study built on existing research on experiences of African American undergraduate males after participation in an identity-based leadership development program (e.g., Arminio et al., 2000; Renn & Ozaki, 2010).

According to Guiffrida (2003), the most important reasons African American students valued their membership in primarily African American student organizations were that the group assisted them in establishing out-of-class connections with faculty, provided opportunities to offer service and support to other Blacks, and allowed members to feel comfortable by being around others perceived as like them. Given the complexity of student involvement, leadership, and identity development, it is important that further research be completed. As universities continue to become more diverse, the charge of developing societal leaders will increase. Student affairs professionals and leadership educators must become intentional in creation of leadership development programs for the new diverse student. It will be important to address the multiple identities of African American males in future leadership development programs.

Student development and leadership researchers must establish research designs that evaluate effective strategies for this population while incorporating variables other than persistence and matriculation. Studies of African American males continue to focus on either high- or low-academic achieving males; the average male is often overlooked. To ameliorate the disparity for African American males in the United States, the middle

cannot be discounted and overlooked. The focus of researchers on only academic high-achieving African American undergraduate males or African American undergraduate males who lead predominately White mainstream organizations continues to marginalize the experiences of African American males who are in different places in their Black identity.

As higher education professionals continue to acknowledge and investigate the growing disparity for African American males, proactive strategies that include peer interaction and exposure to multiple leadership approaches and models must be designed. Universities should incorporate a holistic, student-centered approach in connecting with African Americans to ensure that multiple administrators participate in creation of solutions. Cuyjet (1997) noted that encouraging African American male community leaders and campus faculty members to serve as mentors for these students can provide a positive sense of gender identity development.

Based on the current study, the BML program addresses these recommendations and should be established at other campuses in the southwest. The BML program involves not only leadership but also the interplay of the multiple layers of the student. Universities that seek to establish the BML program should utilize past BML members as consultants to lend voice to the silenced population on campuses. The major complexity of the BML program is the combined experiences of the classroom. Student affairs professionals and academic affairs officers at other institutions must develop strategies that effectively and efficiently address the needs of program participants to have a combined classroom and extracurricular experience.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The concept of leadership development for college and university students both in and out of the classroom has been stressed for years (Keeling, 2004). In many institutions' mission statement, leadership is emphasized as a tool to develop students as responsible citizens or leaders for the community (Astin & Astin, 2000). The concept of leadership has developed and progressed over the past 30 years to be relational, process oriented, service directed, and systems focused. According to this emergent perspective knowledge leadership is concerned with process and not position, relies on relationships and collaborations, utilizes people working toward a common and shared goal, and encourages self-management, development, and achieving self-awareness based on relationships and collaborations (Komives & Wagner, 2009).

The goal of this research study was to provide a voice to the experiences of African American undergraduate male students at a PWI in the Southwest as it pertained to defining leadership. The study examined the influence of participation in an identity-specific leadership development program. The study adds to the limited literature concerning leadership training and development for African American undergraduate males.

Study 1

The research into African American undergraduate male leader identity indicated four components: race, gender, college, and the individual's definition of leadership. The leader identity of African American undergraduate males plays a significant role in

establishment of "core self," as discussed by Lord and Hall (2005). Researchers have shown that intersectionality is linked to leadership styles, behaviors, and practices and offers a different lens by which to view the context of leader identity and how leadership unfolds over time (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

The influence of socially constructed identities on leadership training and development was examined because the majority of previous research targeted only barriers that African American undergraduate males face in college or when engaged in the activity of leadership. In order to offer voice to the experiences of African American undergraduate males who had participated in a leadership development program, it was important to review the existing literature concerning how African American undergraduate males make meaning of leadership. Equally important was the need to evaluate the influence of involvement in a leadership development program designed specifically for African American males as a plausible strategy to address the growing scarcity of African American male participation in student organization leadership roles.

Results of a systematic literature review emphasized the critical role of identity, involvement, and leadership in retention and engagement of African American males in higher education. Findings indicated that identity development was multifaceted and intricately intertwined in the development and engagement of students. Identity was social constructed and generated by experiences that incorporated, race, gender, and college attendance. Student affairs professionals found that involvement in student organizations was an important method of social integration for African American

college students (Tinto, 1993). Student organization involvement often progressed to assuming leadership roles on campus.

Based on these findings from the literature, a need to evaluate the intersection of identity, leadership, and leadership development programs emerged. Previous research (Flowers, 2004; Kimbrough & Harper, 2006; Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001) established connections between gender and race, gender and leadership, and race and leadership, but minimal research has been conducted on the interplay between leadership development programs and gender, race, and college attendance. Previous research studies, as summarized by Harper (2014), pertained to academics, persistence, retention, and involvement. From the critical analysis of the literature, it appeared that there was limited literature concerning leadership development and training of African American undergraduate males, especially at PWIs.

Two problems were identified from the review of the literature. First, leadership was defined in various ways and was framed differently by socially constructed experiences. Second, there is a need to explore possible influences of participation in a leadership development program by African American college males. To aid student affairs professionals and leadership educators in addressing the increasingly diverse student population, the influences of the multifaceted layers of identity and how African American males made meaning of leadership were examined.

Study 2

In previous studies of undergraduate African American leaders, it appeared that males were hesitant to assume the label of leader due to negative connotations about

their masculinity (Oldham, 2008; Sutton & Terrell, 1997). This study examined how students who participated in of BML personally defined leadership. As indicated by Harper (2006a, 2009), there may exist a different paradigm of what leadership means to African American males, thus negatively influencing studies concerning leadership for African American males. There is incongruence between African American males' definition of leadership and how leadership has been defined in the literature (McClure, 2006). Bordas (2007) discussed the need to extend to students an opportunity to define leadership from individual contexts in order to measure leadership and leader capacity. Before exploring the influence of participation in a leadership development program, it was necessary to examine students' beliefs about leadership and leaders.

Findings in Study 1, "Undergraduate African American Males Making Meaning of Leadership," indicated that BML members defined leadership as a set of specific traits or behaviors. The behaviors mentioned aligned with the existing study of diverse student leader identity development (Bordas, 2007). The students agreed that it was important for leaders to be responsible, to be aware of self and others, to be able to influence and motivate others, and to display integrity, honesty, and effective communication. This was important for the next study to establish the framework of how African American undergraduate males evaluated their personal skills and abilities.

Students used personal definitions of leadership to gauge their peers and their own deficits or superior skills and abilities. As indicated in the review of literature and findings in this study, students stated that leadership development was focused on the leader developing self-awareness to be more effective (Rost, 1993). Most leader and

leadership development programs ultimately focus of establishment of "core self." It was important to examine the impact of the development program on establishment of core self, which aligned with students' belief that leadership relies heavily on the leader's ability to be self- aware and confident.

Study 3

The third study evaluated the influence of participation in an African American male college leadership development program in order to discern what benefits, if any, stemmed from a program that incorporated four layers of African American undergraduate males' identity. Given that each previous study assessed a component of "self," it appeared that the influence of one particular identity could not be determined to be more influential than another; instead, all acted in concert to aid in self-concept.

In the study of the influence of participation in an identity-specific leadership development program, it was found that the program influenced development of self-concept, feelings of responsibility to improve self and others; it also aided in creation and appreciation of a peer support system. The findings led to construction of a model of how African American undergraduate males make meaning of their self-concept. Self-concept for undergraduate African American males can be described as seen through a telescope, with self-concept at the center being visualized through various layers, as shown in Figure 1.

As the undergraduate male first constructs meaning of his race, it affects the other lens of his identity as he progresses to self-concept. The multiple layers of race, manhood, college, peer group, leadership behaviors and traits, and leader identity
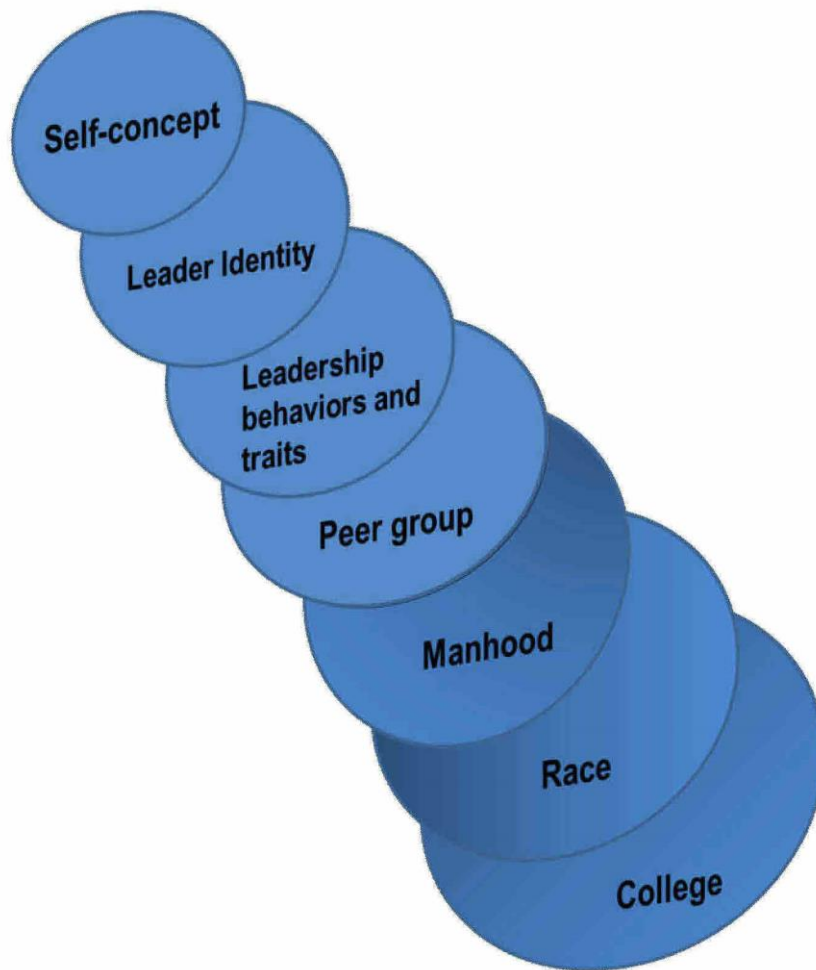
Figure 1. Model: Self-concept of African American college male after participation with race- and gender-based leadership development program.

progress to a positive self-concept. The initial lens of race may be interchanged with

manhood or college, based on the individual's affiliation; regardless of the initial layer,

peer group affects the remaining layers.

In order to capitalize on the identified importance of incorporation of all

identities when designing a leadership development program, it is important to examine

the BML program. Harper (2014) recommended several intervention programs for

African American college males students; however, most have focused on persistence, mentors, integration, or academic success with leadership being ancillary. This dissertation study indicated the need for development and implementation of programs for African American college males that include leadership development and training as the focus; from this focus, academic success, persistence, and effective mentoring would occur organically. Numerous studies (Becker & Becker, 2003; Brookover & Erickson, 1969; Maxwell, 2004; Morrow & Torres, 1995) have identified the influence of positive self-concept on long-term persistence in college.

In summary, the findings of this dissertation study suggest that African American males defined leadership as specific behaviors performed by leaders and specific traits that leaders possess but they seldom mentioned leadership as a process. Participation in a gender- and race-specific leadership development program for undergraduate students was shown to develop self-concept, aid in establishment of peer support systems, and encourage responsibility to improve self and others.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

It has been consistently suggested that the lack of retention of African American males in higher education should be addressed by socially and academically integrating this population into the higher education machine. Many have approached social integration through student organization involvement. The benefit of involvement has been seen to be enhanced by holding a leadership position. As expressed in many universities mission statements, it is imperative that higher education institutions assume the task of developing future leaders for society. Although the appropriateness of this

method has been supported by research studies (Astin & Astin, 2000; Nettles et al., 1986; Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985), there are challenges to student affairs professionals and leadership educators regarding the limited research on successful strategies to address this unique population. The African American undergraduate male population is unique due to the intersectionality of multiple identities.

The current study has demonstrated the need to evaluate how African American undergraduate males define leadership before and after participation in a leadership development program, compared by institution. As Sutton and Kimbrough (2001) indicated in their study of HBCUs and student leaders, African American males were hesitant to assume formal leader positions but viewed themselves as leaders on campus. That study focused exclusively on African American males in student leader roles.

I predicted that African American males who had not assumed leadership roles on PWIs and HBCUs but had participated in an identity-specific leadership development program would frame the concept of leadership and leader differently from their counterparts at HBCUs and PWIs who had not participated in such a program but had held a leadership position. Based on the literature (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2013), the students organization's leadership ideology was adopted by the leader once a position was assumed. The ability of leadership develop programs to entail race and gender identity to aid the student's development of a leader identity to frame and make meaning of leadership as a process through a cultural lens, paying special attention to intersectionality of identities, would be invaluable in developing the student's self-concept. Students who have a positive self-concept perform better than their counterparts

in classrooms, in academic aspirations, and in degree attainment (Haber & Komives, 2009). Based on the findings from the current study, development and incorporation of identity-specific leadership development programs on college campuses are critical to development of African American undergraduate males' leader identity. The ability of BML to close this gap is the foundation of the need to develop programs like BML on other campuses.

Further quantitative research with a larger sample is needed to develop effective strategies to address the education gap for African American males in higher education. Qualitative studies are important to lend voice and offer context; however, evaluation of other leader competencies must be measured and coupled to offer a well-painted portrait. Harper (2014) asserted a need for further research on strategies to address the disparity between the advancement of African American males and that of Whites and members of other racial groups. There have been many qualitative studies on African American males in college; however, only a few studies have used a quantitative approach with large samples. Institutions seek effective approaches before investing human and financial capital into a proposed solution. Quantitative studies are useful but face myriad challenges in establishing credibility, validity, and transferability due to the various environmental factors that influence African American undergraduate males in higher education.

This study has implications for student affairs professionals due to the need to encourage focus and attention on development of programs for this silenced population: African American undergraduate males. Currently, numerous programs engage students

of color in student organizations but place very little focus on the need to develop African American males into leaders of these organizations. The focus on only making these student members, with no attention to their advancement in the organization, is akin to marginalization and minimizing their ability in the organization. Student affairs professionals play a pivotal role in developing spaces for engagement and involvement but have given only limited attention to the emotional safety of these places and their influence on student self-concept. Results of this study indicated that students who participated in the BML program focused on the multiple layers of their identities and skills training that improved self-concept were the result, which is important for student affairs professionals as they develop and implement programs for undergraduates.

"Sometimes it is not who you believe you are but what people believe you to be—hero, savior, or God, doesn't matter. You must believe it as well till you truly know you are." In the recent movie *Hercules* (Flynn & Ratner, 2014), Amphiaraus consulted Hercules concerning his feelings of inadequacy in leading the fledgling troops. The farmers who were becoming soldiers saw Hercules as invincible and a son of God, so they agreed to follow him. As Hercules encouraged his followers to have confidence in their abilities and skills, he began to question his own abilities and strengths. As his wise sage suggested, sometimes there is a need to allow someone else to believe in you until you can believe in yourself.

This scene is a compelling summary of this research study. The BML program was designed to be a safe space for African American undergraduate males to make meaning of leadership, develop confidence in their skills and abilities, become more

global in their perspective, establish their own unique leader identity, and believe in themselves. As the participants in BML began to believe that they were heroes or saviors, they began to perform in that manner, relying on their peer group not only to verify their leader identity but also to challenge them to be successful in all endeavors.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Hello,

My name is Tammie Preston-Cunningham and I am doctoral student at Texas A&M University. I am contacting you because you have been identified as a past participant of the Black Male Lead (BML). I am currently researching the influence of this experience on African American men at a Predominately White institution. As the numbers of African American college students at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) begin to rise, it is important to be able to provide this population with adequate leadership development that will help them persist and succeed at their institutions of higher education. The only way to do so is to conduct research on how African American students perceive and assess the influence of participation in a leadership development program likeBML.

I would appreciate an opportunity to interview you on your past experience at Texas A&M and your involvement with BML. Due to time constraints, I would appreciate it if you could return your consent form within two weeks of receiving this email.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. Your participation is voluntary; you can elect to withdraw at any time; there are no positive or negative benefits from responding to this survey ;the survey will be used for student research; and the researcher may publish materials obtained from the research If you have any questions, please email Tammie Preston-Cunningham at tpreston@neo.tamu.edu or Dr. Barry Boyd at b-boyd@tamu.edu. If you are interested in participating please respond to this email or you may sign below. You may indicate your desire to participate by email or in person at 224 Koldus. Participation in the study will be two 1.5 hour interviews with the researcher in Koldus 224.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Tammie Preston-Cunningham
Graduate Student
Agricultural Leadership Education and Communication
Texas A&M University

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Influence of participation with leadership development programs on perceptions of Black Males

IntroductionThe purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the influence of participation in a leadership development program, which focuses on Black identity and leadership. The purpose of this study is to identify the influences of participation in a leadership development program on African American males at a predominately-White Institution in Texas. You were selected to be a possible participant because of your past participation in the Distinguished Gentlemen's Club

What will I be asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in interviews and be available to review your statement after completion of the interview. This study will take approximately three hours, which will encompass two 1.5 hour interviews.
Your participation will may not be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?
The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, your input will benefit the Distinguished Gentlemen's Club as well as other African American males on campus.

Do I have to participate?
No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?
This study is confidential. 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 Tammie Preston-Cunningham and Dr. Barry Boyd will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Tammie Preston-Cunningham at tpreston@tamu.edu or 979-4026-6379 or Dr. Barry Boyd, the researcher's committee chair for doctoral research at b-boyd@tamu.edu or 979-862-3693.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?
This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or 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.

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant:_____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:_____

**Printed
Name:**_____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview questions were developed based on initial research question and current literature concerning leadership development programs and student development.

Please tell me a little about yourself and major?

What led you to become interested in participating in a leadership development

program?

What organizations are you involved with?

How did you choose these specific organizations?

What types of activities do these organizations do? Is this something you place high

value?

How do you or your friends deal with the pressure to sometimes to become over

involved? Is this pressure related to the need to represent all African American

males?

Explain any challenges you faced to become involved with student organizations on

campus?

How did you approach those challenges?

How does race or gender play a challenge to you becoming involved?

How do you define leadership?

What do you believe are some key components of effective leadership?

Define cultural competency?

Explain why cultural competency may be important to leaders?

Give an example when you believed you displayed effective leadership within a group.

Does gender play role in how you lead within your coed organization? Single gender
organizations?

Give an example of some comments you were told about becoming involved?

Describe briefly, when you have attempted to encourage a peer to become involved.

Describe your experience with BML?

Have you participated with any other leadership development program before BML?

Describe your high school leadership experience and its influence on you now to become
a leader.

How has BML affected your opinion concerning becoming involved? What about
assuming a leadership role?

Discuss your leadership skills as compared to your peers who did not participate with
BML.

What are some negative or positive comments people have said about your leadership
capabilities?

Do you believe your gender plays a role in your leadership style? If so, how much?

Do you feel the need to address only one aspect of your multiple identities of being
Black, male, a student leader, and college student to address problems within your
student organization?