

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES' DESCRIPTIONS OF STEREOTYPES IN
CLASSROOMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Donald L. Stewart, Jr.

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the stereotypes experienced by select African American males in a South Texas classroom. Descriptions based on the experiences of 11 African American males over the age of 18 regarding the stereotypes presented between themselves and their teachers assisted in understanding the phenomena. Three research questions guided this study: (RQ1) How do African American males describe their experiences with stereotypes in a South Texas K-12 classroom? (RQ2) How, if at all, did participants' experiences with stereotypes in the classroom contribute to their academic achievement? (RQ3) What, if any, emotions toward classroom stereotypes did participants describe experiencing? The research questions solicited reflective experiences by participants to help identify commonalities between data collected from the participants. Using critical race theory by Bell assisted in understanding the descriptions of experiences by select African American males in public education regarding stereotypes. Participants must have attended public school and have been able to articulate their experiences reflectively during an interview process. Data analysis comprised transcribing information obtained through a questionnaire, audio-recorded individual interviews, as well as a focus group. Interviews took place after receiving a screening survey that focused on a criterion sampling. Open-coding themes and identifying teacher and student behaviors based on questionnaire and interview data collected described the essence of the phenomenon. Researcher journaling throughout the process assisted with the trustworthiness of collection data.

Keywords: achievement gap, critical race theory, hegemony, linguistics, masculinity, stereotype, stereotype threat.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter explains the purpose of the study as well as the problem that the study seeks to address through providing background information. Research questions used to guide the study and the significance of the study are included as well. Definitions of terms are discussed in this chapter to provide greater clarity into the topic. The researcher's self-interest in the topic and research is also explained to provide the reader with the connection between the researcher and the study.

Background

Education in America, especially public education, has several topics of discussion including segregation, content importance, ideals embedded in the curriculum, and standardized testing (Patton, 2016). Through each era, a consistent topic of emphasis has been student achievement (Fultz & Brown, 2008). Desegregation changed the demographic make-up of each classroom. The change in the demographic make-up of classrooms began a new topic of discussion regarding education: equity in achievement levels between the varying demographics (Hartung, 2004). As the argument shifted from access to equity in the classroom, comparing student populations along racial lines became a normal practice in school for both national and state accountability (Fultz & Brown, 2008). Using the disaggregated data from national and state testing has shown a greater emphasis on areas where the data revealed deficiencies.

African American males reflect lower levels of academic achievement in national and state-testing data since the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* case in 1954 (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Understanding the contributors to the achievement gap provides African American males a greater opportunity to succeed in their education experiences. A

description of educational experiences from the teacher perspective is prevalent and accessible (Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

However, the missing information from the body of research is the description of the educational experiences of African American males as the information pertains to stereotypes in the classroom (Nellums & Milton, 2013; Sato & Israelson, 2013; Walker, 2012). The lived experiences have been reported through a Eurocentric lens that focuses on the voice and perspectives of teachers, lacking the African American male student perspective on the daily instructional, procedural, or cultural norms that are in place in K-12 classrooms.

Public education has changed over time, reflecting each decade on the changes and trends in society. The use of student data to understand societal implications regarding trends and changes in educational practices and student achievement outcomes is common among national and state level governing bodies (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). This practice has also highlighted disparities in student achievement based on ethnicity, race, and gender (Center for Education Statistics, 2014; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). These data also show that the gap in performance between African American males and their peers is based on stereotypes present in society as well as within schools that covertly or overtly cause a different educational experience for African American males (James, 2011).

The best explanations within the literature about stereotypes in the classroom are through historical forms of legal and illegal racist practices (Hartung, 2004). African American males became a topic of study after the desegregation of schools, especially when dealing with educational practices and policies (Fultz & Brown, 2008). The desire to understand what contributes to stereotypes experienced in education is only a portion of comprehending the underachievement by African American males in the classroom. Further research is needed to

get an understanding of the effects of stereotypes on African American males in educational settings (Hartney & Flavin, 2013).

Racial stereotypes and the perception of their presence in the classroom have been a topic of discussion; however, the literature regarding descriptions of these phenomena by African American males is absent (Hartung, 2004). Utilizing critical race theory will begin a focus on the differences in descriptions of African American males to highlight the uniqueness to their experiences with stereotypes in the classroom. Often, these racial stereotypes are in the form of institutional practice that inhibit cultural communal norms and apply norms of the greater culture to the classroom (Wallace & Brand, 2011), also known as hegemonic practices.

Hegemonic practices allude to the assimilation of cultural norms into the dominant culture essentially to reject the norms of diversity and acceptance of differing ideals, values, and behaviors within an ethnic or racial group (Wilson & Rodkin, 2011). In these instances, education upheld the status quo regarding racism (Fultz & Brown, 2008). Hegemonic practices in education are useful for subjugating individuals into the dominant society and giving a false sense of appropriate cultural norms (James, 2011). In turn, education became a method to withhold freedoms and institute inferiority in minority communities rather than support the cultural norms and heritage of the minority (Experian Information Solutions, 2015). The celebration of one culture in education may hinder the ability of another culture to identify the relevancy and importance of the formal educational process (Walker, 2013).

These actions by the educational system and educators simultaneously devalue cultural norms of the minority group and decrease the insight to stereotypes practiced in the classroom toward minority students (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). Past research revealed many areas in which teachers struggle reaching African American male students based on misconceptions of cultural

differences (Wallace & Brand, 2011). Cultural differences culminate through misunderstanding based on stereotypes and values inherited by both teachers and African American male students (Howard & Navarro, 2016). The disproportionate academic achievement rate revealed strong tendencies of disengagement for African American males in the educational system.

Upon understanding the inception of disengagement, it becomes important to also take into account curriculum that students value, and then teachers can adjust their classroom behaviors and procedures to maintain a high level of engagement for students (Stovall, 2013). Positive behaviors by students receive praise based on the values and behavioral norms of the teacher and the students working in unison. In contrast, many teachers do not work in the communities in which they grew up, creating a possible disconnect between themselves and their students culturally (Hayes & Juarez, 2012). Communities and neighborhoods have influence on those that reside within the boundaries as well as the cultural identity and habits of the citizens (Hayes & Juarez, 2012).

The cultural divide between teachers and African American males can be large, small, or non-existent depending on the student. However, the phenomenon of stereotypes in the classroom establishes a gap in the literature regarding the students (Morton, 2014), especially when addressing the levels of achievement for African American males. African American males experience higher levels of frustration and lower levels of academic expectations based on cultural and societal attitudes and perceptions (Ware, 2014). Negative attributes of African American males held by teachers are perceived as stereotypes and that educators act outwardly concerning the young men in the classroom (Appel & Kronberger, 2012) further highlight the missing voice of the African American male from the research (Hall Mark, 2013; Hartley, & Sutton, 2013).

Lower socioeconomic communities contain higher levels of racial minorities. Conversely, communities settled with higher economic status have higher concentrations of Caucasian students. Teachers who work in areas different from their upbringing are typically at a cultural disadvantage. Teachers must be intentional about their transition and understanding of their students' racial identity (Perryman-Clark, 2013). Intentional implies that the teacher makes plans to act and react based on the desire to understand and respect the cultural norms of the students. Once achieved, the students perform for the teacher because of the relationship. The sense of value gained personally from the teacher and toward the content by the student is the intended relationship (James, 2011). With purposeful actions, the teacher can reach a point of understanding, creating a bridge between the racial backgrounds of both parties. Bridging the cultural connections is key to making meaningful connections to students (Nellums & Milton, 2013). However, the lack of appreciation for the culture or misinformation based on stereotypes becomes evident for many students.

Parker (2015) explained that race is separate from ethnicity because race is an association, and the basis of ethnicity is on lineage. Critical race theory is a clarifying lens to use when seeking to understand the societal implications of racial stereotypes present in public institutions and increases the effectiveness of finding solutions for African American male students and those who educate them in public education. Critical race theory implies that there is an inability to remove racial bias in all social interactions based on historical injustices (Chang, 2013). Critical race theory removes ideas of religious and ethnic inequalities and focuses rather on racially motivated injustice (Bell, 1980). The need for social justice or in this case to understand social inequities also necessitates the use of critical race theory to explain the phenomenon of stereotypes experienced by African American males due to beliefs from teachers

in the classroom (Cook, 2015). Using critical race theory forms a strong theoretical framework to understand that the essence of low achievement for African American males relates closely to the stereotypes they face in American classrooms that perpetuate Eurocentric values and assimilation of behavioral norms.

The basis for this study was the nature of stereotypes presented in the classroom. Linguistic patterns, misinterpretation of African American displays of masculinity and relevancy to the students of formal educational systems and policies are common stereotype misconceptions presented through literature (Hartney & Flavin, 2013; Scott & Rodriguez, 2015; Sleeter, 2012). Teachers participating in diversity training have identified the above misunderstandings as barriers they are aware that take place between themselves and the students (Hayes & Juarez, 2012). Experiencing stereotypes are not limited to African American male students and not all students experience stereotypes when working with their teachers and other school personnel. However, the stereotypes present are affecting this population of students more than other demographics in education (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). Teachers know of these areas because of the practicality of identification. Linguistics and the displays of masculinity are patterns of exhibited behaviors affording teachers an observational experience. Relevancy of content is a difficult process to address because of state or national content standards (Hebblethwaite, 2010).

The attention brought to the topic of academic achievement in public education created some philosophical and practical questions regarding the process of publicly educating citizens. Previous research reports disparities in the academic achievement of African American males (Fultz & Brown, 2008; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Taylor & Walton, 2011). The educational experience of African American males is a unique phenomenon. African American males are

achieving academically at lower levels and in higher numbers than are their ethnic and racial peers (Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Situation to Self

I am a public school administrator who has been in public education for 11 years. I have experience through academic data disaggregation consistent with disparities in academic achievement between African American males and their peers, which is the initial reason for conducting this research (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Upon further investigation into the literature, the educational experiences of African American males differed from that of their peers (Larnell, Boston, & Bragelman, 2014). However, the literature findings could not provide the descriptions of the educational experience of African American males. The epistemological perspective for this study was post-modernism that sought to address a connection between the current state of societal norms with the reality of the lived experiences of the participants in the study (Bevan, 2014). Focusing on the descriptions of the participants' experiences in the manner they experienced the phenomenon assisted in comparing current definitions and effects of stereotypes that were effecting African American males. This epistemological perspective recognized that human experience was grounded in the world that has intersubjective meaning (Bevan, 2014).

As a public school administrator, the phenomena of stereotypes pertaining to African American males was a topic that was of great interest. Axiological assumptions for this study were based on the thought that many teachers were not purposefully trying to portray stereotypes. Teachers and students find great value in their interactions and work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, the stereotypes were present and their effects on African American males were profound. Frequently, data show that African American males perform academically

below their peers. The two philosophical assumptions made during this study were that teachers portray stereotypes knowingly and unknowingly toward African American males who are unique to the population. I made the ontological assumption that each of the participants describes the effects of stereotypes differently based on their personal understanding and interpretation of their experiences with stereotypes if any (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The findings from this study revealed possible societal issues that contributed to the poor academic performance of African American males affording public educators the ability to counteract current trends in performance. Findings from the literature suggested that African American males experienced stereotypes in higher levels and frequencies greater than differing ethnic peers (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). The intent of this study was to connect these two phenomena based on the gap in literature. African American males' descriptions of experiences with stereotypes in South Texas classrooms provided the opportunity to investigate, record, and report the lived experiences missing in the larger body of research.

Problem Statement

The specific problem related to this qualitative study was that African American males in South Texas experience factors related to stereotypes in public education classrooms (Condrón, Tope, Steidl, & Freeman, 2012; Fultz & Brown, 2008; Hall Mark, 2013). Desegregation of schools changed the need to explain educational disparities from access to achievement levels (Fairclough, 2002). African American males experience lower levels of academic achievement compared to other demographic populations (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). During the study performed by the Center of Education Statistics (2014), researchers addressed cultural misconceptions in the classroom with a focus on the teacher perspective (Haddix, 2008). The findings from other studies, such as Gay (2013) and Walker (2012), highlighted the teacher

perspective because teachers or former teachers created the diversity trainings used in prior research.

The teacher's perspective in addressing any stereotypes comes from the teachers' desired outcome, missing the students' descriptions of their experience with teachers and stereotypes. Prior researchers have paid attention to the need for increased diversity training. These specific diversity or cultural trainings assisted in giving skills and broadening the teachers understanding (Cook, 2015; Gay, 2013; Hayes & Juarez, 2012). Diversity workshops and cultural trainings for teachers typically comprise research-based methods. The methodology was not inclusive of descriptions of the experiences for those intended to benefit from the training, the African American males (Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

Quantitative studies have produced statistics that help identify the areas of deficiency regarding African American males in the classroom (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010). African American males achieve at lower percentage rates than any other demographic in education characterized by race and gender (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Qualitative research was used to examine the lived experiences of African American males through their descriptions of stereotypes experienced in K-12 classrooms. Based on the data presented by national studies, African American males are experiencing a phenomenon unlike their peers of different ethnicities based on academic achievement (Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Quantitative studies conducted gauging the effectiveness of teacher diversity trainings before and after are present in the review of the research literature. "Remaining unexplained ethnicity-based differences in academic achievement may be due to the teacher's academic expectations, which potentially bias their actions" (Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Osborne, & Sibley, 2016, p. 123). There is a misunderstanding between teachers and African American males

regarding stereotypes, such as language, behavior, and acceptance of educational practices (Miller & Bennett, 2011). The intent of this study was to describe select African American male students' experiences with stereotypes that may contribute to underachievement in the classroom to help reduce the achievement gap.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of select African American males who experienced stereotypes in their K-12 education. At this stage in the research, stereotypes are defined as beliefs unfairly held against a group of people sharing a common characteristic (James, 2011). The theory guiding this study was critical race theory as it explained that in American society, race cannot be separated from societal interactions (Bell, 1980). Critical race theory was central to the theme of this study and inquiry based on the participant's and the research questions. African American males have a unique educational experience understood with greater depth upon disaggregating their descriptions in a research study. James (2011) wrote,

African American youth are counted among the most "at-risk" students because of their continued disengagement from school, poor academic performance and high rates of absenteeism, suspension, expulsion, and drop out, due in part to the school's 'progressive discipline' policies and practices. (p. 466)

San Antonio, Texas, was the primary location for the collection of evidence. The data collected reflected personal experiences and, therefore, assisted in the identification of possible common shared experiences. The descriptions of the phenomena from those experiencing it increased the information that was currently known concerning the phenomena as well as those involved in public education as professionals.

Significance of Study

The findings from this research study could increase the academic success of some African American males by investigating their descriptions of stereotypes between themselves and the teachers who taught them. Public education works to assist all students. Professional educators could benefit from this study. Previous literature findings focused on the teacher perspectives, descriptions, and quantitative data to show a connection between the teacher behavior and the student success for African American males (Brown, 2009; Cook, 2015; Gay, 2013; Haddix, 2008). Educators across the country are dealing often with the low academic achievement of African American males based on the cultural factors that play a major role in racially diverse schools (Fultz & Brown, 2008). These actions further depict that through routine use of cultural and diversity training for campus and district personnel via workshop opportunities, there is a need to address the existing cultural gap between African American males and the educators from whom they receive educational services (Mills & Ballantyne, 2009).

The exposure of teachers to these trainings is by choice or in limited numbers as evidenced by the continued achievement gap experienced by African American males (Walker, 2012). This study offered the descriptions of experiences from the student point of view, giving the body of literature a research foundation to take further. By neglecting the voice of the African American male student, the methods to assist this population are not reaching full potential.

Empirically, this information may reduce negative experiences and increase the positive educational experiences for African American males (Smith & Hawkins, 2011). The descriptions of lived experiences of African American males in this study through data analysis

will hopefully reveal perceptions that create themes, providing evidence of occurrences and events common among the shared experience (Henriques, 2014). Using data from shared experiences afford educators and researchers the platform for future research on related topics. This study could provide a platform toward eliminating the achievement gap between African American males and their Caucasian counterparts in public K-12 settings.

Research Questions

The problem related to this qualitative research study is that African American males experience stereotypes in classrooms. To gain a greater understanding of the experiences of African American males in education, research must focus on decoding their descriptions of the shared experience. These research questions guided the development of the study.

RQ1: How do African American males describe their experiences with stereotypes in a South Texas K-12 classroom?

The purpose of this question was to address the overall problem within this research study and focused on how descriptions are shared during the research. African American males' descriptions of the stereotypes that fade during the formal K-12 educational process are missing from the literature. This overall question helped to align further questions to individual experiences that shape the overall experience of African American males (Ware, 2014).

RQ2: How, if at all, did participants' experiences with stereotypes in the classroom contribute to their academic achievement?

The individual participants can share the effects of stereotypes about their personal choices and interactions within the classroom that focus on the institutionalized commonalities of a shared experience. The manner in which stereotypes may have altered their lives or those they witnessed experiencing the stereotypes, aligned with the findings in the literature regarding

stereotype threat. The manner in which stereotype threat affects academic achievement can be drastic in African American male youth (Brown, 2009; James, 2011; Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013).

RQ3: What, if any, emotions toward classroom stereotypes did participants describe experiencing?

The shared experience or essence of a problem in qualitative research results in individuals sharing the details often lacking from research; this can contribute to connections within literature that assist in identification of the problem and the eventual solution (Chang, 2013). Participants must have experienced stereotypes while attending public K-12 education. The emotions tied to stereotypes present in the classroom highlight the motivators to understand a connection between motivation and a lack of personal initiative when one person or specific group feels left out of the relevancy of the process: in this case, public education (Mills & Ballantyne, 2009; Morton, 2014; Perryman-Clark, 2013; Ruffins, 2013).

Definitions

Understanding the definitions is critical when analyzing the descriptions of African American males in educational research. There are several variations and understandings of the term *achievement gap* and *stereotype threat*.

1. *Achievement gap* – Because of differing understandings of the concept of the achievement gap, it is necessary to a clarifying definition to guide research methods and data collection. The Center for Education Statistics (2014) wrote, “A difference in scores between African American and White students can only be considered an achievement gap if the difference is statistically significant, meaning larger than the margin of error” (p. 1). For this study, the achievement gap refers to the statistical differences in scores concerning national reading and math.

2. *Hegemonic practices* – Hegemonic practices refer to governmental or social systemic practices affording one group of individuals greater economic, political, and social opportunities than are provided for another group. The majority group does not always promote hegemonic practices. The demographical population processing political, economic, and social power at the time often employs hegemonic practices to ensure that the social order does not change (Fairclough, 2002).
3. *Inequalities* – According to Palmer and Maramba (2011), inequalities are barriers between the dominant race, class, or religious group, and people marginalized in both population size and geographical location. Inequalities in education concern either access to education or disparities in academic achievement. In terms of this study, the definition most associated with inequalities among African American males was the achievement gap in academic testing.
4. *Stereotypes* – The general understanding of stereotypes are beliefs unfairly held against a group of people sharing a common characteristic (James, 2011). Stereotypes are social practices and beliefs that can have positive and negative effects on the particular group associated with the stereotype (Ruffins, 2013).
5. *Stereotype threat* – Stereotypes affect cultures in various ways. The understanding of stereotypes and the threat they present to behavior were critical for understanding this study. Appel and Kronberger (2012) explained, “Stereotype threat is known as a situational predicament that prevents members of negatively stereotyped groups to perform up to their full ability” (p. 609). The intent of this study represented the pressure exerted on African American males in the classroom due to negative stereotypes.

Summary

Gathering descriptions of stereotypes experienced by select African American males gives a voice to those affected by the phenomena. Through a questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group, the research focused on understanding the essence of African American males experiencing stereotypes in education and their reflections on those interactions with professional educators. African American males who share life stories and interactions will present descriptions that assist readers professionally and personally. Utilizing a phenomenological research method, the desired data surfaced through the lived experiences shared during the questionnaire, interviews, and focus group process. The need to assist African American males in the classroom is necessary across the United States (Graham & Erwin, 2011). Teachers and administrators attempt to enhance learning environments and increase student achievement. However, data still reflect an achievement gap between African American males and their racial counterparts.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Although African American males learn the same curriculum, the same standards, and take the same state and federal testing as the students of other demographical groups, African American male achievement levels are lower (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). While all students experience similar instructional practices within American classrooms, African American males are underachieving as a group compared to their Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian peers (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The defining reference for the statistical divide between Caucasian students and African American students is the *achievement gap*. The achievement gap refers to the statistical difference between the highest scoring demographic group and the lowest scoring demographic group (Condron et al., 2012).

The theoretical foundation of this chapter is critical race theory, which has evolved from critical theory. The basis of societal evolution is on societal interactions between racial identification and the governing policies that dictate the norms expected of citizens in the society (Palmer et al., 2010). Critical theory is the foundational theory for understanding the stereotypes existing for African American males in modern education. Critical theory describes the societal inequalities for a group or demographic through a social conscious lens (Stovall, 2013). The basis for inequalities can be on race, gender, socioeconomics, and religion (Creswell, 2013). Palmer and Maramba (2011) explained the need to understand the role that inequalities play in societal constructs. Using critical race theory, Palmer and Maramba (2011) revealed an understanding of low academic performance by African American males. Palmer and Maramba (2011) described the necessity to look through the lens of social injustice. African American males are the lowest academic achieving group of students.

Teachers and students routinely engage in behaviors conducive to learning. Students enter the classroom with a level of trust and mutual respect toward the teachers who promote the learning process. Mutual respect from the students' manifests in the actions of students that lead to redirection or further progress through the learning cycle. The lack of mutual respect between the educator and the students often begins the formal classroom management of student behaviors. The particular steps used for classroom management procedures direct the level of mutual respect within the learning environment (Hargrove & Seay, 2011). Students interact with their teachers based on the desire to gain knowledge from the daily instruction. Students interested in learning exhibit traits that teachers can internalize as relevancy and interest.

Theoretical Framework

Early critical theorists, such as Dubois and Woodson, explained that society must place a greater emphasis on moving away from natural sciences to understand human interaction and behavior (Fay, 1987). Natural science explains how people interact in their environment but places no emphasis on improving the beliefs and values of a society. Focusing on the interaction of individuals toward one another may not be a way to overcome injustice, but could help rationalize an understanding. The interconnectedness of each person and the governing rules within the constructs that support the civilization are identifiable through the social sciences.

Early research comparing African American males with their counterparts begins with social sciences; therefore, using a similar lens to base research affects credibility toward the findings (Fultz & Brown, 2008). Legitimate results from research expand the scope of the solutions created by reading the literature. Critical theory highlights the social behavior of individuals and seeks to identify areas in which injustice has occurred (Bracey, 2015). By identifying the antecedent to the social injustice, critical theory can assist in discovering how to

take action upon revealing the findings. This is the major difference between researching through the natural sciences and critical theory, a social science methodology.

Utilizing critical theory, subjugated people expect to rise above their social constraints. Critical theory focuses on the nuances of social life and the frequent interactions between people, institutions, and policies that govern societal norms (Fay, 1987). Within the policies and procedures governing society, there must be opportunities for equitable competition and prosperity. In America, public education is a way to address the economic prosperity and sustainability through public initiatives (Howard & Navarro, 2016). To promote the success of the American way of life, public education includes all citizens.

The social sciences are at the heart of understanding stereotypes. The disparities in levels of achievement racially and ethnically become identifiable with empirical and nominal data. When looking at percentages by demographic breakdown, the achievement percentages of a test or benchmark give clear nominal figures that explain the levels of achievement (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). However, the data delivered nominally can expose strengths and weaknesses when disaggregating the data. Data based on demographics are presented since the early implementation of American public education (Palmer et al., 2010).

Using data to increase academic achievement took a stronger role in education since implementing the *No Child Left Behind* legislation (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Solutions for the disparities for an ethnic or racial group in education often lack the research regarding racial understandings. A continuum of empirical studies and longitudinal studies revealed the same information on the landmark case *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954. African American males are not performing at the same academic levels as their Caucasian counterparts. Ending legal segregation in school has not ushered in an era of equal achievement

data (Sleeter, 2012). Segregation based on the racial identification of students in K-12 settings established the platform for critical race theory research in education. A continued achievement gap between African American males and their peers establishes the platform for further investigation into stereotypes using critical race theory.

Critical Race Theory

African American males are a marginalized group in American education (Patton, 2016). To grasp the foundational levels in which stereotypes existed and are practiced by educators results in applying components of critical race theory to the study. Understanding the descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males requires the use of critical race theory as well (Bell, 1980). Bell began by first understanding the use of critical theory and the practical application toward solving the achievement gap. Concluding that race in America could not be separated and needed to be included in the body of work, Bell (1980) focused on finding understanding and explaining the need to highlight racial lines and the role racism and discrimination play in American education.

Through Bell's work, it becomes clearer that critical race theory is the means to understanding both the behavioral misconceptions by educators and the value of a quality education by way of relativity to the African American male student. Teacher misconceptions and relevancy of education previously contributed to stereotypes and continued to play a role in the progress of African American males in education (Cook, 2015). If this demographic cannot find relevancy in their school curriculum and assessments, they will work in opposition rather than in unison to acquire the skills (Bell, 1980). Bell elaborated on the need to feel a sense of relevancy in the classroom for each learner, which is a characteristic often absent for African

American males in classrooms. The lack of relevancy often stems from systemic curriculum decisions that limit the ability to be relevant culturally to racial minorities.

There is cultural relevance tied to curriculum and classroom instructional strategies (Walker, 2012). The foundational basis of cultural relevancy is also part of critical race theory, which highlights the societal constructs of culture based on race and ethnicity (Patton, 2016; Stovall, 2013). Race and ethnicity are not interchangeable concepts; however, they share many commonalities in American society rooted in racial identification.

Historical foundations for critical race theory. Early conflicts with stereotypes exposed African Americans to racial bias in education, initially identified through access to education. Many early writings spoke specifically about utilizing education to subjugate African Americans (Fairclough, 2002). The first American policy to subjugate African Americans was the famous Willie Lynch letter written in 1712 (Experian Information Solutions, 2015). Lynch described African American males and females in the term of *Negro* and explained the process to turning Africans into American slaves.

The entire process of subjugation was written in this letter as a form of education for both Caucasians and African Americans establishing systemic practices to change the roles of superiority of one race over the other. The letter establishes roles in society and a routine to practice by Caucasian slave owners to promote African American inferiority, an early hegemonic practice (Fairclough, 2002). Slave owners would subjugate African Americans through a formal educational process that stripped dignity and cut ties to relevant cultural ties (Experian Information Solutions, 2015). The Willie Lynch letter set the first chapter in descriptions of education for African Americans males in history and was based solely on racial perceptions and

dispositions. The letter lacks any scientific knowledge but faces a social science dilemma of lasting impressions left on the American conscious.

Considered as propaganda in the 21st century, for many, the Willie Lynch letter is nothing more than inappropriate rhetoric. However, at the time of the writing of the document, it became famous and was used in practice (Fairclough, 2002). The establishment of education as a process to hinder the advancement of African American males in the American societal conscious began with this letter. Generations since have used this method to subjugate African American males further both in policy and practical behaviors (Hartung, 2004).

The *Brown v. Board of Education* case helps to overcome social injustices, not merely to expose empirical data. Hartung (2004) explained, “*Brown vs. Board of Education* is a landmark in the history of U.S. society, and it is today widely considered to be a landmark in the history of U.S. judiciary; the ruling is among the first that acknowledged social science results” (p. 88). The Supreme Court used official court testimonial descriptions of segregated school conditions while using data from social research to identify the root of segregation as a determiner to society effectiveness and growth was critical in ruling separate as inherently unequal. Opponents of segregation used descriptions of the conditions alongside empirical data to strengthen the decision of ending segregation laws. The descriptions gave experiences and a lens that nominal data could not present.

Descriptions of lived experiences are the foundation of early application regarding critical race theory. Bracey (2015) wrote, “CRT has increased its reach and popularity, providing the intellectual and methodological foundations for work in the legal academy and various social sciences” (p. 553). The basis for the ruling was in social sciences and the need to maintain a competitive society that prospers with an educated populace of all races.

Public education is a mirror of the diverse American population. African American males perform lower academically, and critical theory can only identify issues by emphasizing systemic approaches to access (Bell, 1980). Conversely, critical race theory explains motivators of behaviors within systemic processes and individuals based on race. Bell (1995) wrote, “Critical race theory writing embraces an experientially grounded, oppositionally expressed, and transformatively aspirational concern with race and other socially constructed hierarchies” (p. 906). The motivators for critical race theory in education are to overcome legislation and policies that produce racial bias and prohibit opportunity based on race. Legislation secured African American males access to public education; however, the solution of changing the achievement gap is missing because the descriptions of lived experiences by African American males was largely absent from the research (Hartley & Sutton, 2013; Walker, 2013). The desire to understand the stereotypes experienced by African American males’ links to the use of critical race theory and the past studies within these realm-highlighted similarities between race and ethnicity in American public education (Ainsworth, 2013).

Critical race theory research on education. In American education, critical race theory is used to establish the determination of guided behavior by an individual or group through their identification with a particular race and a disassociation from another race (Smith & Hawkins, 2011). The body of literature links several factors to the disassociation from one race to another. The factors include language, identification with norms and values, and physical appearance (Miller & Bennett, 2011). Many educators do not connect the notion of safety in poverty-stricken neighborhoods having favor greater than the necessity to obey school rules (Perryman-Clark, 2012). Students who feel undervalued and cannot understand the relevancy on the topics of classroom activities usually behave in a manner that detracts from learning and leads to

removal from the classroom setting. Students who lack appreciation for the teaching style and instructional practices in the classroom will misbehave (Nellums & Miller, 2013). Misbehavior by African American males also relates to school policies and classroom teacher interactions that exclude cultural norms and interactions that value the racial identification and community expectations for behavior.

Critical race theory in education. Subjugation and separation of African American males from their peers continued in the literature until the writings of W.E.B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington surfaced (Fairclough, 2002). To negate the lack of access to educational opportunities, both men focused their attention on using education to gain both political and economic prowess by African American males. Washington worked to establish Tuskegee Institute and Dubois was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Fairclough, 2002).

Although Dubois and Washington did not always agree on the methods to which African American males should use education, both saw the need to have a quality education to overcome past historical injustices in the African American community. Leaders and theorists, such as Dubois and Washington, had opposing methodologies yet similar ideas concerning the role public education must play in the daily lives of African American males (Fairclough, 2002). The work of Dubois and Washington began a strong debate and pragmatic movements in educational practice for both African American and Caucasian students. Their ideals and other works have shown through time that public education must address the concerns of the African American male to ensure that he has equitable opportunities to succeed in American education (Peterson et al., 2016). The disparity in the education success experienced by the highest performing group of students and the lowest is the achievement gap.

Related Literature

Modern education has shifted from gaining access to public education toward understanding disparities in levels of achievement (Fultz & Brown, 2008). The increase in this focus stems from achievement gaps noticed in the 1980s, based on several years of student data, as compared to the full integration of the public education system (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Fultz and Brown (2008) focused their work on moving beyond critical theory and worked with the ideas in critical race theory. Because critical theory was rooted in Eurocentric ideals regarding injustice, they would fail to address the racial issues faced in the early and middle 19th century for racial minorities from non-Eurocentric backgrounds (Ainsworth, 2013).

Eurocentric ideals cannot describe and understand the full depths of American racism and the long-lasting effects that racism has played in American culture. Using critical theory only explained a portion of the issue that African American males faced in schools. Critical race theory focuses on the necessity to change inequities and practices racially motivated. Parker (2015) explained, “In education, racism and racial capitalism has been and continues to be imbedded within the structures, discourses, and policies that guide daily practice in schools” (p. 199). The motivation for students to perform well begins with an understanding of personal ability and acceptance by society. Personal abilities may include academic and athletic or artistic abilities. If personal abilities are rejected or seen as uncharacteristic for the individual’s race, the individual will lack the motivation to participate in the uncharacteristic activities. The practice is vice versa for teachers. If the educator does not see the students’ actions as characteristic of their ability based on racial bias, he/she will direct students to opportunities that are better suited for

their ability level. The decisions made by the student and teacher play a role in the outcome of the student.

Achievement Gap Statistics

Data produced by the Center of Education Statistics (2014) performed a longitudinal comparison between African American students and Caucasian students from 1990 until 2013. The National Center of Education utilizes a process where students are given exams from each state in large urban schools for comparison. Examination of students utilizes a system called the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Data collection comprises reading and math scores based on several breakdowns demographically. Using the National Assessment of Educational Progress process, comprehensive reports and longitudinal data assist identifying strengths and weaknesses based on nominal data (Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Disaggregated national and state standardized assessments in math and reading reported differences in achievement levels on reading and math exams for African American students when comparing them to Caucasian students (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). African American students performed lower over the reporting period than Caucasian students. The grade levels chosen comprised both 4th and 8th grades. Each test represents an achievement gap based on the student's average reading and math scores per demographic on a 500 scale. Scale scores best explain the comparison for test takers each time they test based on the difficulty of the test (American Production and Inventory Control Society, 2014). Raw score conversions focus on the exact number of test items correct. However, raw scores do not consider the difficulty level from the first test with the second test. Scale scores are more efficient for helping

to explain the changes in testing over time while considering the difficulty from the first test to the second test or further retesting (American Production and Inventory Control Society, 2014).

Scoring utilizing a scale method, achievement levels for Caucasian students in 4th grade math in 1990 were 220 points compared to African American students at 188, a 32-point difference. Achievement levels in 1992 for Caucasian students in 4th grade reading were 224 as compared to African American students at 192, a gap of 32 points. Each year there were gaps in both 4th grade reading and math. The last year of the data collection, students showed a growth in both African American and Caucasian students. The final reporting year, 2013, for 4th grade math delivered a score of 250 for Caucasian students, an increase of 30 for 1990 through 2013. African American students scored 224 points, an increase of 36 points from 1990 through 2013. Both demographics achieved at higher levels over time (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). However, a 26-point gap still exists for African American students compared to Caucasian students. The final reporting year of 4th grade reading, Caucasian students scored 232 points, while African American students scored 206 points with a gap of 26 points (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Table 1 illustrates 4th grade mathematics testing over time by the Center of Education Statistics. Table 2 illustrates 4th grade reading testing data collected over time by the Center for Education Statistics.

Table 1

Mathematics Testing Scores for 4th Grade

Reporting Years for 4 th Grade Math	Scores for Black Students 4 th Grade Math	Scores for White Students 4 th Grade Math	Gap Between Groups
1990	188	220	32
2013	224	250	26

Note. Adapted from “National Assessment of Educational Progress” by Center for Education Statistics, 2014.

Table 2

Reading Testing Scores for 4th Grade

Reporting Years for 4 th Grade Reading	Scores for Black Students 4 th Grade Reading	Scores for White Students 4 th Grade Reading	Gap Between Groups
1992	192	224	32
2013	206	232	26

Note. Adapted from “National Assessment of Educational Progress” by Center for Education Statistics, 2014.

National data regarding 8th grade math and reading from 1990 through 2013 provided growth as well for both Caucasian and African American students. In 1990, Caucasian students scored a 270 in math, while African American students scored a 237 (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The gap in 1990 between the two groups was 33 points. Caucasian students scored 267 points, while African American students scored 237 points for 8th grade reading in 1992. The gap in 1992 between both groups was 30 points. In 2013, Caucasian students achieved at 294, and African American students achieved a 263 in 8th grade mathematics. The gap in 2013 for mathematics was 31 points between the two groups. Caucasian students scored 267 points in 1992 while African American students scored 237 points. The gap in reading was 30 points. In 2013, Caucasian students’ scores increased to 276. African American students’ scores increased to 250. The gap that existed in 8th grade reading for 2013 was 26 points. Although both groups showed growth, the gap still existed in 8th grade reading nationally (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Table 3 illustrates 8th grade math scores collected by the Center for Education Statistics. Table 4 illustrates 8th grade reading scores collected by the Center for Education Statistics.

Table 3

Mathematics Testing Scores for 8th Grade

Reporting Years for 8 th Grade Math	Scores for Black Students 8 th Grade Math	Scores for White Students 8 th Grade Math	Gap Between Groups
1990	270	294	32
2013	237	263	31

Note. Adapted from “National Assessment of Educational Progress” by Center for Education Statistics, 2014.

Table 4

Reading Testing Scores for 8th Grade

Reporting Years for 8 th Grade Reading	Scores for Black Students 8 th Grade Reading	Scores for White Students 8 th Grade Reading	Gap Between Groups
1990	237	267	30
2013	250	276	26

Note. Adapted from “National Assessment of Educational Progress” by Center for Education Statistics, 2014.

The noticeable trend is that the achievement gap is narrowing among African American and Caucasian students. However, a gap still exists and the reasons behind the existence of the achievement gap require more information than the presentation of data findings. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) stated, “NAEP data can be used to identify gaps and report on trends over time but cannot explain why gaps exist or why they change” (Center for Education Statistics, 2014, p. 1). Representation of standardized test data will only help to identify differences in the levels of achievement. Each representation could be helpful for establishing that areas that have either progressed or regressed.

The data establish a means to locate areas of concern regarding the achievement gap. African American students are performing below Caucasian students, and research must conduct qualitative inquiry and utilize descriptions of barriers to success by African American students to remedy the achievement (Morton, 2014). Critical race theory plays a major role in understanding the inclusion of race as an American social construct, which is also a viable barrier to the academic success of African American males (Hall Mark, 2013). Critical race theory is also useful for identifying societal symptoms that led to the statistical divide between levels of achievement for African American and Caucasian students.

Hegemonic Practices

The subjugation of African American males to promote the superiority of Caucasian males through education is a representation of hegemonic practices (Bracey, 2015). Hegemonic practices to produce influence of one culture or group over another are a historical concept. Using education is often the means to either suffer from or overcome the ills of society for a minority group. In American education, the early studies highlighted the lack of access (Fultz & Brown, 2008). However, the overt practices often promoted through segregation and housing patterns are no longer legal. Early writers and researchers toward the inadequate access to quality education by African American males used the three major governmental branches to change legislation and laws concerning segregation (Hartung, 2004).

Brown vs. the Board of Education was a landmark case that established separate but equal was not a policy that was realistic in American society and ended the Jim Crow era for education (Fairclough, 2002). Changing the course of American public education, the Brown case began a new chapter in American education for African American males. A great shift

moved from access and equal educational opportunity *de jure*, to access to curriculum and teacher practices that showed links between cultural relevancy in both strategies and curriculum.

Because modern legislation guards and protects educators and students from discrimination to eliminate overt marginalization, covert marginalization still exists. Covert does not imply that educators are purposefully minimizing the access to achieving academically for African American males. Haddix (2008) explained, “The paradoxical nature of multi-cultural teacher education allows, White, monolingual pre-service teachers to claim an ethnic-less, race-less, culture-less and language-less identity while working” (Haddix, 2008, p. 258). Losing understanding or willing to identify and be sensitive to cultural nuances presented by African American males has led to isolation and underachievement for African American males. Teachers must recognize the cultural factors that students bring to the classroom to effectively teach. Typically, students recognize the personal culture of the teacher, promoting the ability to build faster relationships with students who match the teacher’s culture.

Classroom conflict becomes present in cases where the teacher cannot identify or unwilling to accept cultural norms of the students. Any conflict with students often causes teachers to retreat or take the path of least resistance. Often the teachers are in fear of being labeled; therefore, they practice a form of neutrality often termed *colorblind* (Peterson et al, 2016) Describing the emerging state of guilt and color blindness that persists in modern education, teachers fear being labeled as a bigot or racist if they mention race or ethnicity in their classroom (Hargrove & Seay, 2011). The process of all or nothing comes into play regarding diversity education for teachers. The fear of perception as a discriminatory teacher or administrator, educators often pretend not to notice race. Many teachers use the term *colorblind* as the means to prevent conflicts, especially with people who are racial minorities (Hayes &

Juarez, 2012, Peterson et al., 2016). In contrast, the use of this method created a generation of educators who value the idealism of culture acceptance, yet minimize race and ethnicity as a part of the cultural identity (Mills & Ballantyne, 2009). Discounting the background and shared experiences of students entrusted, teacher entrusted is counterproductive to increasing success for minority students, especially African American males.

Stereotypes

Johnson-Ahorlu (2013) explained that stereotypes are best described by, “Gross generalizations applied to a group of people with some level of shared characteristics” (p. 382). Stereotypes can be of a negative and a positive connotation. Positive stereotypes lead to an increase in pressure to perform to the expectations of the stereotype, no matter ability or desire to do so. Negative stereotypes exert pressure to identify with the negative stereotype by acceptance and adherence to the behaviors predicted by the stereotype. The other option is to reject the negative stereotype and to act in a manner in opposition to those predicted by the stereotype (Ruffins, 2013).

Research has taken a greater look at the influence of negative stereotypes in education and their effects on teachers and students. Ware (2014) stated, “The categorization process can also trigger stereotypes when an individual is seen as a member of a social group, perceptions about that group’s characteristics and behavior influence judgments made about them” (Ware, 2014, p. 23). Teacher actions and school policies are dictated by personal judgments formed by societal and cultural morals and values (Ruffins, 2013). When policies created by personal judgments are due to racial stereotypes, those decisions are not necessarily merit-based and lack the ability to foster positive interactions or outcomes. African American males experience

greater negative racial stereotypes in society and education. Past and present research shows the need to study further the racial barriers experienced by African American males in education.

Stereotype Threat

The self-identification with a stereotype or fear of subjugation to stereotypes has a direct effect on student learning (Appel & Kronberger, 2012). The perceived validity of the stereotype either by the teacher or by the students can lead to a stereotype threat. The students' perceptions of the stereotype threat gains reality through the pressure on the student, either to reinforce or to oppose the perceived stereotype, through a display of behaviors by the student. For students under the pressure of a negative stereotype, they have to make a conscious choice daily to pursue their cultural identity or their individual identity (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). An Asian student may pressure to perform well in school based on societal stereotypes that Asian students are all high achievers. African American males may spend more time and energy in athletic competition due to the esteem associated with African American males as professional athletes, alongside the stereotype that all African American males are athletic. Both scenarios highlight the stereotype threat presented to students. Both scenarios, based on research, can maneuver students away from their areas of talent based on the effects of stereotypes and their ability to exert pressure (Hartley & Sutton, 2013).

African American males are subjected to higher degrees of pressure from negative stereotypes in education. Appel and Kronberger (2012) wrote, "One of the factors that have been discussed as a cause of the achievement gap is stereotype threat, an extra pressure experienced by members of the negatively stereotyped group" (p. 609). The negative stereotypes associated with African American males are taught and identified at an early age (Wilson & Rodkin, 2011). Young children learn about negative stereotypes through social media,

television, and family influences. Each medium outlet is sending several messages daily about the ideals and characteristics deemed important in society. Other stereotypes are witnessed and practiced in public. Public perceptions and attitudes directly affect the practices in place in American classrooms. The classroom is an area that African American males identify as cross ethnic and stereotype threat.

Stereotype threat weakens students' ability to advocate internally against the stereotype associated with their race. The goal behind a stereotype is to give a categorical identity to individuals associated with the connotations. Once stereotypical connotations are accepted by the individuals, the desired negative or positive effect is often to change the attitudes and beliefs others portray toward the stereotyped group. African American males who are not athletic may feel shame and attempt to prove their identity by performing in a stereotypical manner. If the racially identified stereotype is negative in nature, the student will likely be unsuccessful academically, especially for African American males. Taylor and Walton (2011) stated, "Hundreds of experiments show that stereotype threat undermines intellectual performance directly by causing stereotyped students to perform below their capabilities" (p. 36). Negative pressures from racial stereotypes cause two actions by African American males. The first action, the student identifies and portrays being African American through reenacting the negative stereotypes in his behavior. The second action, identification with African American becomes synonymous with accepting negative stereotypes as true. Both actions lead to confusion of racial identification and behavior patterns for students, lowering their self-confidence and their ability to succeed.

Stereotype Threat Overt versus Covert

Implementation of stereotypes based on race can be overt and covert. The cultural implications presented by a lack of African American males in education points to a serious need to include their perceptions and descriptions of formal teacher education. Graham and Erwin (2011) further explained, “Caucasian teachers and students of color emerge in classroom and school where teacher’s pedagogical practices and classroom management may clash with student’s home lives, creating confusion and leading to perceived misbehavior” (p. 399). Cultural norms of the students and teachers are not entirely separate; however, there are misconceptions and differences misperceived on both sides.

For example, political implications of offensive, derogatory terms can endear in the subjugated community in which they are used. However, for the dominant culture that may not be a norm and deemed offensive. Only through building effective relationships can the teacher gain cooperation from students and stop using these forms of language in the classroom. When formal discipline is delivered due to the offense, the teacher and students build a gap in expectation of treatment and acceptance. Again, this example does not excuse the inappropriate language, but it helps to establish grounds for stereotypes commonly present in American schools.

The motivation to subjugate based on race need not be overt, but can also be covert (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Policies supporting overt subjugation are no longer legal. *De jure* discrimination is unconstitutional in both federal and state level education legislation (Fairclough, 2002). The ability to change these issues was debated in the courts, and comprehensive policies in many states and school district educational codes have increased both the penalties and awareness to overt racial discrimination. The covert methods are unintentional

and bound in cultural differences based on misunderstandings, rather than bigotry or discrimination involving identification with race. These methods are difficult to overcome and require in-depth investigation to help alleviate the issues. The investigative process must include the use of critical race theory to grasp the span of stereotypes presented in the classroom for African American males fully.

Racial Stereotypes and African American Males

The stereotypes often associated with African American males influence their own notions of success. “Stereotypes can be so deeply internalized that they persist in the face of facts that directly contradict the stereotype” (Ware, 2014, p. 1). African American males encounter negative stereotypes concerning educational abilities based on longstanding racist attitudes proven by scientific data as impractical and false. However, the ideas associated with the stereotypes persist as a deterrent to success. “Instead, I feel the key is to look at the 30 percent of African American male high school graduates who are qualified [for college] and just don’t apply or don’t finish” (Ruffins, 2013, p. 11). Ruffins described the necessity for personal, educational self-evaluation by African American males when deciding to further their education or to pursue another avenue for their careers. The self-evaluation for many African American males starts with their personal experience in school and the stereotypes they have faced. The pressure associated with overcoming negative stereotypes or subjected to discrimination based on those same stereotypes are critical in deciding to take further formal post-secondary schooling.

Association with a negative stereotype permits the students to fulfill the negative in anticipation that the stereotype is true; therefore, the African American male cannot succeed in an educational setting (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). The stereotype permits the African American

male to place limits on himself, preventing the motivation for competition in the educational arena. Attempts of disassociation with the stereotype may cause the African American males to identify with another racial identity to succeed. Ware (2014) wrote, “Harvard’s Implicit Association Test is an experiment that measures the speed at which two concepts are associated. The research shows that unconscious stereotyping and prejudice are widespread” (p. 24). The study findings expanded insight toward human associations between concepts, particularly character traits and race. Ware (2014) further reported, “Test takers consistently made more associations between the faces of African Americans and words having negative concepts. Positive concepts were associated with faces of Whites” (p. 24). Caucasians and African Americans made associations of negative and positive characteristics based on race during the study.

Stereotypes from Teachers

The teaching staff may not be properly prepared to address the demographic and cultural needs of the community due to shortsighted diversity programs during their formal pedagogical education process. Diversity programs rarely address the key issues of stereotypes experienced by African American males (Hayes & Juarez, 2012). Teacher education programs fail to address topics concerning *White privilege* or *Black rage*. Using European American historical accomplishments, values, interests in the curriculum are means to the disengagement of African American males from the classroom (Peterson et al., 2016). The pairing of accomplishments exclusively to European Americans reinforces negative stereotypes concerning African American males. An absence of African American males from the positive accomplishments is a covert reinforcement for associating positive traits with Caucasians, simultaneously associating the absence of success with African American males (Cook, 2015). These actions tie into the

hegemonic practices instilled in American systems due to racial constraints and beliefs. The diversity program cannot identify the needs because the focus is on assimilation of the students rather than holding the same expectation for teachers.

Teachers' Roles

The association with negative stereotypes toward African American males is an issue both for individuals subjected to and enacting stereotypical practices. "Specific to education, African Americans have consistently been stereotyped as unintelligent and lazy. This stereotype has served as the basis for the group to be denied equal access and opportunity within our education system" (Johnson-Aholru, 2013, p. 383). Educators cannot focus merely on the ability to be within the classroom as the equal opportunity. The idea should shift from equal toward equitable. Stereotypes prevent both teachers and students from bridging the racial and cultural differences and sharing a successful academic experience. Through reflection, teachers gain an awareness of the role stereotypes play in the choices of their African American male students. Teachers also understand that the manner of their behavior can act as a conduit toward reinforcing negative stereotypes and preventing success academically.

African American Male Teachers

The absence of African American male educators in classrooms contributes to hindering the maturation process for African American male students, perhaps contributing to their educational underachievement. African American males make up 2% of the entire teaching force in America (Graham & Erwin, 2011). A possible basis for the low number of African American male faculty is largely based on their individual educational experiences with stereotypes presented in the classroom (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011). The hegemonic practices experienced with curriculum, instruction, and paired with administrative policies and procedures to reduce students' negative behaviors, often leaves African American males with

low self-worth and a lack of appreciation of the public education system that the students perceive lacks appreciation for them.

Low socioeconomic communities, separated by racial lines, rarely are racially diverse. The stratification of these geographical and economical areas is grounded in racist and discriminatory practices in housing patterns and economic infrastructure (Hartung, 2004). These living patterns often are not conducive to building teachers from within these communities either, further creating a cycle of stifled academic competition for students. Many teachers who gain employment in low socioeconomic communities are unfamiliar with the customs of the community. “African American men teachers compose approximately 7.5 percent of all male teachers nationwide and make up approximately 2 percent of all teachers” (Graham & Erwin, 2011, p. 398). African American males represent low populations as educational professionals due largely to inexperienced teachers who created a negative experience and failed to build a relationship with the students (Brown, 2009).

Applying stereotypes may not be a purposeful action. Yet, the issue is present in the literature concerning the lack of teachers understanding the racial and cultural characteristics of African American males (Brown, 2009). A lack of understanding is founded on negative racial stereotypes associated with African American males. Stereotypes can adversely affect students’ attitudes and teachers’ actions.

African American male educators are often the first to identify with the racial stereotypical characteristics and can understand the time and effort it will take for the students to overcome their unwillingness to highlight the positives of the culture rather than the stereotypical negatives that often promote their isolation and distance from their other teachers. Brown (2009) stated, “However, examining these teachers [African American males] pedagogic performances

highlights the nuances of skill, thought and strategy these men employed to reach their students” (p. 433). Because of an understanding of the shared experience, many African American male teachers can detect the students’ behaviors early and help to foster a sense of collaboration. Collaboration and care begin a partnership with the school as an entity rather than merely focusing on one classroom at a time to reach each student.

African American male teachers are not the sole answer to increasing African American male student academic achievement nationally. To promote a new form of segregation is not conducive to assisting African American male students to achieve on par with other ethnicities and races. All students must learn to live and co-mingle with people from other cultures. Teachers employing culturally responsive processes can attain greater success with students despite cultural differences (Morton, 2014). However, the stereotypes often experienced by African American males are unique to this segment of the population, and the literature was missing descriptions of their experiences. The descriptions could help educators reverse or prevent many of the negative experiences for African American males.

The negative interaction with school authority figures shapes the understanding, engagement, and participation within the school regarding African American males. These young men experience higher rates of dissatisfaction with school and in turn teach those same lessons and experiences to fellow African American males (Graham & Erwin, 2011). The findings from the literature suggested that diversity training is not helping to alleviate the achievement gap but bring awareness to the situation (Gay, 2013). During the process, awareness must go beyond the rhetoric of longitudinal studies that only give further information to the already identified problem. There is a dire need for the descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males that contribute to low academic achievement.

Awareness of this particular situation was evident immediately after the desegregation of schools based on racial lines. The findings from several studies provided information in several formats revealing statistics to help determine factors that contributed to the academic underachievement of African Americans (Hartung, 2004). However, the missing piece in the literature is the descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males.

Research

Researchers and bodies of literature have focused on teacher education and improving teacher diversity training (Sato & Israelson, 2013). There is little information regarding the descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males in education. Programs that promote cultural diversity are to overcome the stereotypes present in the classroom. Teachers' reflections and expectations are present throughout many sources; however, the voices of the underprivileged groups are not present in instances of a group, but personal narratives.

Teacher perspective research. Because of the notion that the teacher can use identified steps to alter the behaviors of their students, many studies focus on the teacher's perspective (Stovall, 2013). Focusing on the teacher's perspective gives the research a teacher-centered focus for understanding diversity in the classroom. Research with students is a difficult task and the limitations of the students to verbalize their discontent or enjoyment is often lacking because of immaturity and limited vocabulary (Stovall, 2013). Teacher-centered studies dominated the American literature regarding low achievement among the African American male population. Quantitative studies explaining the long-term effect of the low academic achievement of African American males in American society are present as well. "Educational research has consistently demonstrated the underachievement of African American males starting at school entry" (Graves, 2010, p. 263). African American males struggle upon entering school based on the

attitudes of teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents. African American males are often misunderstood and mislabeled regarding behavior patterns.

The information presented in the large body of research focuses on the need to improve programs, teacher education, and parental involvement. However, the links between teachers struggling to identify with cultures outside of their own lineage indicates a tendency to lose some of their students not raised with the same morals and values, which the teacher might possess (Hebblethwaite, 2010). Misperceiving the actions of African American males could lead to the cultural gap between African American males and the professional educators who work with them. This key statement, misunderstanding the cultural norms of individuals whose ideologies differ from another individuals' self-identified culture, creates a system of practices that cannot lend themselves to progressive actions. The absence of progressive actions could lead to the reinforcement of stereotypical threats.

School officials often lack the understanding of the behavioral patterns of African American males in modern society. Teachers learn about the topics of diversity but rarely discuss topics that are both controversial and uncomfortable. The lack of understanding leads to mistreatment and lowered expectations based on perceived resistance to authority. African American males exhibit traits, especially in inner-city schools, that project their perceived masculinity. Sagging pants, baggy clothing, aggressive poses in pictures all project a misunderstood subculture by the dominant accepted culture and are deemed bad or inappropriate behavior. Many educators do not connect the notion of communal norms in poverty-stricken neighborhoods having favor greater than the necessity to obey school rules in the lives of the youth (Ruffins, 2013). Misperceptions by the larger community, especially schools, reject the cultural identity of urban students. "Certain school policies and practices set African American

males on a trajectory of early school leaving, or dropping out prior to attaining high school diplomas” (Walker, 2012, p. 321). The basis for dropping out from formal schooling is on the need to enforce community standards not conducive to the community in which the students reside. Staff members who may work with students in unfamiliar communities uphold school policies.

The behaviors presented by youth need direction toward a mature presentation that is acceptable and productive as an adult, also known as maturation. The process of maturation for African American males has the same goal as the process for Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian males. Differing only in cultural background, all demographics exhibit characteristics identified as distinctly *Black* when they wish to object to conformity (McClain, 2016). If the distinctly African American actions are in direct contrast to conformity or the societal norms, African American male culture is immediately identified as the opposing norm of behavior and rules are instantly set against the behaviors and traits. By imposing rules or sanctions on students, the perception of the identified cultural characteristics is false, unworthy, and unacceptable.

Recent literature did not suggest that sagging clothing (e.g., when a person wears their pants below their waist exposing their undergarments as a fashion statement) and premature aggressive behavior would ever be acceptable; in comparison, the literature indicated these notions of misunderstanding as stereotypes to success for African American students when dealing with their teachers (Howard & Navarro, 2016). The absence of understanding of real masculinity for many young African American males allows their misconceptions to turn into counter culture measures of dress and behavior reinforcing negative stereotypes. Furthermore, creating this process is the absence of positive African American males in educator roles.

Teachers' diversity education program research. Teachers implement classroom procedures for a harmonious program and ignore the topics critical to overcoming racial misperceptions from both teachers and students. Racially harmonious programs and teacher preparation classes are ways to instruct teachers about the identification of the problem, but rarely go deeper than the surface level concerns (Patton, 2016). Self-awareness and understanding of the role the teachers play in exerting stereotype threat based on race play a major role in the success of the students and the teacher. African American males are often stereotyped as less intelligent than their Caucasian peers (Larnell et al., 2014). The disassociation with academic success at school as an African American trait, leads to negative influences identified through stereotypes to grow more influential to African American males. When teachers promote the cultural identity that is not identifiable for the African American males as successful in education, poor academic achievement follows. The actions reinforce the systemic marginalization of African American males creating stereotypes in the curriculum from their teachers.

African American male student perspective research. Bell (1980) built upon works previously highlighted by early critical theorists. Bell proposed CRT in 1980 as a research methodology because race and behavior cannot be separated in American society. Therefore, the research process must include a review of stereotypes for African American males based on the racial identity of the subjects, rather than the majority, through Eurocentric race perception (Bell, 1980). The Eurocentric perspective has dominated the educational process in shaping policy and procedures.

African American males should have the opportunity to share lived experiences and through gathered information, expose barriers present in the educational process. Several other

studies analyzed African American males' culture adaptations and expressive styles, discussions that came to be characterized as soul literature. "These soul studies offered a more positive picture of African American male culture" (Fultz & Brown, 2008, p. 863). By using these studies as a basis for understanding African American males' behaviors in the classroom, teachers effectively can change their own perceptions and practice collaboration rather than the isolation of African American males in their classrooms.

During the 1980s, the literature regarding academic achievement for African American males followed the subscription to understanding the dilemma of underachievement in schools, needing a differing approach than the body of research was offering through critical theory (Patton, 2016). Through the findings revealed in literature, critical theorists could identify the foundations of the issue; however, the theories did not address the main issue of racial stereotypes. Racial stereotypes persisted between teachers and students built from the racial and cultural foundations present in American society. The racial stereotypes existing within American society were predicated in segregation, and eventually desegregation, in schools. The necessity to integrate has become a widely accepted practice. However, dealing with racial bias in the curriculum and procedures of the educational system has become a barrier identified in the literature for African American males.

Emerging Themes within the Literature

Cultural misconceptions based on stereotypes. Misunderstanding cultural differences and stereotypes are associated with language, religious beliefs, religious practices, behaviors associated with non-verbal communication (eye contact, proper handshake, greeting style), and traditions and customs (Gay, 2013) are common stereotypes within the literature. Stereotypes present link to studies identified by teachers. The absence of student identified data concerning

these interactions is a focal point of this study. Student perceptions and descriptions about stereotypes helped to understand the role educator behavior affects student performance (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). The roles of educators have changed the needs of African American males in the classroom. Educators in the classroom misunderstand the behavioral patterns of African American males.

Cultural sensitivity. Recognizing and accepting the diverse cultural background within the classroom has become an increasing theme presented in modern studies. Cultural sensitivity training is the typical process utilized by diverse schools that affect a change in student achievement (Hebblethwaite, 2010). Once the cultural norms are identified, educators must start honoring, respecting, and ensuring that though different, judgment is free of negativity (Patton, 2016). The foundations for cultural sensitivity result from students possessing differing cultural backgrounds from the educators hired to instruct and ensure learning is taking place. With the majority of teachers being Caucasian and female (Graham & Erwin, 2011), the goal of cultural sensitivity is to equip teachers and administrators with the skill set to maintain high levels of learning with the acceptance of cultural norms for the students.

Achievement gap. Academic achievement associated with learning is evaluated by standardized tests, both state and federal. The data are disaggregated by grade level, content, and year. Further dissection lists data by demographics such as race, special programs, and gender. Disaggregating the data, groups are based on achievement level. A major difference in academic scores or achievement from one demographic group to another is listed as an achievement gap. The achievement gap that exists in academic achievement occurs between ethnic groups in education (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). African American males have the highest achievement gap between their academic peers.

Summary

At the time of this research, the data and literature in other studies revealed a strong tendency for African American males to be identified as underachieving academically more than their peers. There is little evidence based on physiological reasons. The majority of scientific studies indicated no biological differences other than the outward color of one's skin. Therefore, to reach deeper into the achievement gap and understanding low academic success for African American males, the direction of research must include an in-depth study regarding the descriptions of the educational experience by African American males. The basis concerning low achievement for African American males is on societal inequities in the education and African American male interactions with educators. A lack of curriculum relevancy may be a reason for student disengagement from the lessons and discouraging identification with a curriculum that respects the student's identity.

Teacher attitudes and actions toward African American male students is continually a topic of discussion in literature and research (Gay, 2013). Teacher education programs should address the achievement gap through a Eurocentric lens. Eurocentric refers to the values and morals brought with early European settlers in the Americas. Through the Eurocentric lens, teachers and other educators could impose values and morals not always in accord with those of the African American males (Ainsworth, 2013). Imposing the Eurocentric cultural norms is in contrast to the inclusion of African American norms. Educators assert influence over students, perceived as positive by students who succeed academically and as negative by students who do not attain academic success.

African American males experience higher rates of incarceration and living below the poverty level, based largely on the lack of educational experience to overcome economic

dilemmas (Palmer et al., 2010). Stereotypes present in the classroom are a major reason African American male students struggle in American education compared to other populations (Taylor & Walton, 2011). Stereotypes contributed to the inability of some students to perform on par with their peers because of misconceptions presented by racial and ethnic norms and values that differ from teachers and students. Stereotypes are not exclusive to African American males, but this demographic is achieving at a lower rate than are other demographics. The communication skills, behavioral norms, and expectations by educators may also contribute to the interactions that increase the achievement gap.

The descriptions and experiences from African American male students who were unsuccessful based on stereotypes were missing from the literature and the lack of this information might lead to the continued inability for teachers to assist African American male students to succeed academically. African American male descriptions of the phenomenon are missing from the literature based largely on modern understanding of cultural diversity in education. The intent of this study was to fill the gap in the literature, understand the experiences of the African American male students, and obtain the essence of the stereotypes contributing to the underachievement of African American males in education.

Using a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was necessary to understand this phenomenon. African American males in education have been a topic of interest throughout American history. The attitudes, expectations, and overall achievement of the African American males demographic were measures used in the past to explain that American society, particularly the education system, has shown inequities toward African American males in education. All the above areas of interest were presented from the teacher's point of view. Conversely, the

stereotypes experienced by African American male students are missing from the body of literature.

Tenebaum and Ruck (2007) stated, “The findings of three of our four meta-analyses suggest that teachers favor European American students more than African American and Latino students” (p. 271), highlighting the necessity to look at the emerging phenomenon through the lens of critical race theory. Through critical race theory, it becomes clear that the issue facing African American males is the racial disconnect in the classroom based on cultural factors (Sleeter, 2012).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter is a presentation of procedures, research design, and analysis for this research study. This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study describes the stereotypes experienced by African American males in K-12 public classrooms. The data collection in this study was based on the lived experiences of the participants in the research, who all attended public schooling in San Antonio, Texas. The research methods and procedures are discussed as well as the guiding research questions in this chapter. Information pertaining to the participants, location, data collection, and analysis process is also provided. Lastly, the ethical decisions as well as the role of the researcher are included within this chapter.

Design

A qualitative method is appropriate for understanding the descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males. Phenomenology is a useful research design to acquire information from several individuals based on a shared experience (Creswell, 2013). A phenomenological study is useful to help understand shared experiences as a methodology for research. Moustakas (1994) wrote, “The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13). Moustakas (1994) explained that a phenomenological study works directly with social sciences when dealing with a shared experience from the phenomena. Through studying the shared experience, a researcher can find commonalities that would greatly benefit the practical field of education. A phenomenological design enables researchers to find an essence to the phenomena (Creswell, 2013), and through this design, the expectation is that the descriptions given by the participants should lend greater validity to critical race theory regarding cultural factors that play a role in educational practice and African American males’ student success.

Graves (2010) explained that African American males struggle in their school settings as early as second grade. The initial setbacks for African American males manifest through disruptive behavior and disengagement from the curriculum (Hayes & Juarez, 2012). African American males show higher rates of frustration and deviant behavior when confronted with conflicting ideals due to cultural clashing with the teacher. Cultural values practiced externally from school influence the student behaviors toward teachers and peers while attending school. To understand these cultural divides, the research findings must describe African American males' experiences with stereotypes.

Phenomenological studies are useful for finding the essence of a shared experience. The process for this study utilized a transcendental phenomenological design based on obtaining the descriptions of participants pertaining to their conscious reflections. Henriques (2014) wrote that [transcendental] "refers to what the collective experience and meaning of individuals is in a common context, the one in which their agency occurs" (p. 452). The collective experience of stereotypes by African American males in education necessitates that conscious reflections could explain the sociological paradigm. Transcendental experience gives insight into the credibility of the subjects' experience and their perspectives. Through the shared experience by individuals, meaning is unveiled transcendently to society.

A quantitative method is not appropriate for this study because the focus of the research was to understand stereotypes that were presented in society rather than merely focusing on the statistical likelihood of stereotypes. The findings from previous literature revealed strong evidence to support the achievement gap and the presence of stereotypes for African American males in the classroom (Cook, 2015; Graham & Erwin, 2011; Larnell et al., 2014). However, the perspectives of African American males who experienced stereotypes are a phenomena and a

problem that is difficult to identify through quantitative explanations. The study of descriptions requires a qualitative method. Coding and gathering data regarding a shared experience to understand the essence of an issue requires the use of a phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological studies include the use of interviews and descriptions as a means to collect evidence.

Research Questions

Participants conveyed descriptions of their experiences through a questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group session during the study. Asking the appropriate forms of questions was vital to gathering the data needed to understand the descriptions of the lived experiences with stereotypes. Open-ended questions regarding stereotypes afforded the participants the opportunity to elaborate and expound on their experience in public education as students. Moustakas (1994) explained that the interview session is the main method of collecting data in a phenomenological study. Conversations and interviews with the participants required that questions pertain to the information and address the essence of the phenomena experienced by African American males.

1. How do African American males describe their experiences with stereotypes in a South Texas K-12 classroom?
2. How, if at all, did participants' experiences with stereotypes in the classroom contribute to their academic achievement?
3. What, if any, emotions toward classroom stereotypes did participants describe experiencing?

Setting

The setting of the described experiences of the participants was paramount to understanding the role of environmental factors and stereotypes. San Antonio, Texas, was the site of data collection. San Antonio, Texas, is a large urban area with a total population over 1.1 million inhabitants. The largest ethnic demographic is Hispanic at 58.66%. The second largest ethnic demographic group is Caucasian at 29.5%. African Americans comprise 6.82% of the population (Area Connect, 2015). San Antonio is the largest city in Bexar County. In Bexar County, Texas, 82.6% of adults have a high school diploma, and 24.1% have a Bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The participants agreed to answer a questionnaire, attend an interview as well as a focus group section as part of the study. After receiving the Institutional Review Board's approval (Appendix A), the initial screening survey (Appendix B) established the basis for qualification for participation in the study.

Participant locations and schools attended were not limited to one school district as San Antonio, Texas, has several districts within the municipal governing area. Each school district follows an in-house curriculum guide and hiring practices for teachers. The school district will be a secondary factor and will not be included in the data analysis process. Each school district decides teacher professional development opportunities and decisions on terminating employment of teachers. Visions and missions vary within each school district, changing policies and procedure for addressing student behaviors. The ability to understand a greater range of experiences of African American males within San Antonio necessitates data collection of participants regardless of the attended school district. However, participants had to attend public schooling in San Antonio, Texas, to participate in the study.

Participants

Purposeful criterion sampling identified participants based on the need for each individual to meet two criteria. The first criteria for participants were based on the identified race of each individual. Participants were all African American males who attended primary and secondary schooling in the public school setting in South Texas. The second criteria required that participants self-report through the initial survey that they had experienced stereotypes. It also required that through reflection, participants articulated the lived experiences in writing on the questionnaire and verbally during the interview and focus group process (Creswell, 2013). Participants were identified using the initial screening survey (see Appendix B) that indicated the purpose of the study and a definition of stereotypes. Eleven participants were selected to analyze a quality sample size for obtaining information regarding African American males' experiences as well as seeking data saturation in a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994).

Solicitation for participation in the study took place at two local church organizations and one local historical African American fraternity. The two local church organizations and one local historical African American fraternity are listed in the study as local Church 1 or Church 2. The local fraternity was listed as a local historical African American fraternity. A continued sampling size was sought and effectively utilized to acquire the appropriate amount of participants for data collection to reach data saturation. Snowball sampling was also utilized based on accepted participants' willingness to recruit associates who may have been interested in participating in the study (Bevan, 2014). Possible participants received an initial screening survey (Appendix B) to assess their ability to meet the required criteria for the study.

All participants attended a K-12 school in a public setting. Students who received home schooling or online education were not candidates for this study. Participants spoke and

understood English and voluntarily contributed to the study by signing a participation consent form (Appendix C). Participants were listed with naming pseudonyms for each individual until the appropriate number of participants were identified. Pseudonym names were selected from the list of top 100 names of 2016 from the baby center website (Baby Center, 2016). The focus group participants maintained their participant name pseudonym from the individual interviews.

The participation consent form (Appendix C) included all important rights and procedures of the study, which afforded participants the clear understanding of the purpose of the study. The participation consent form (Appendix C) also provided an explanation of the research procedures from data collection through interviews. Effectively providing information upfront gave the participants the knowledge to voluntarily participate.

Procedures

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix A), the selection of participants occurred through criterion sampling using an initial screening survey (Appendix B). The IRB approval letter was shared with the local church organizations as well as the local African American historical fraternity. The participants were African American males who self-identified as experiencing stereotypes in the K-12 classroom. Once identified as qualified subjects by the initial screening survey, 11 participants answered the questionnaire (Appendix D), took part in an individual interview, and 4 participants took part in a focus group.

Participant invitations to participate in the study were given as a hard copy through two local churches and one local historical African American fraternity organizations. Each church and the local historical African American male fraternity had a naming pseudonym to identify the organization in the research and a naming pseudonym to identify participants. The historical African American fraternity utilized their social media sites to assist in finding possible

participants in the study based on sending out a digital form of the initial screening survey (Appendix B), research flyer (Appendix E), and contact information to express interest in participation. The possible participants were chosen through their responses to the initial survey questions. Snowball sampling was also used in the identification of additional participants (Creswell, 2013). Possible participants received the initial survey through hand-delivered copies or through email. The return of the initial survey to the researcher was through personal pick up, mail, fax, or email. Once the initial surveys were collected and analyzed, a selection of participants, meeting the criteria for inclusion in the research study, were contacted via phone or by email to schedule interviews. Not all initial screening survey participants were included in the interviews. Only a select group of 11 participants partook in the questionnaire, interviews, and focus group portions of data collection.

Interviews were held in agreed-upon locations for the participants and the researcher. Locations for the interview were conducive to privacy and allowed for an interview conversation. Interview periods were scheduled for 60 minutes and the interview script (Appendix F) was followed throughout the process. Participants received information about the allotted time and the questions as a first step in the interview process to allow individuals the opportunity to answer the questions fully as well as ensuring that all interview questions receive adequate attention for accurate data collection. Semi-structured interviews were held as a means to ask possible questions that seek to clarify or extend participants' answers.

Data analysis comprised of coding themes and categories revealed through the data collected from the questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus group session. The themes presented resulted from the data and were organized for analysis. Interviews were face-to-face or by phone conference. All interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy and to maintain a

record to later use in the member check process for trustworthiness of the information collected. The breakdown of the data connected the research questions to the information given by each participant (Creswell, 2013). Once themes were deciphered and coding was completed, the data were interpreted and lists of descriptions were created regarding the essence of the phenomena, to include the stereotypes experienced by African American males in South Texas classrooms. Using an Excel spreadsheet, each participant's data were then listed under the overall themes that emerged during data analysis.

Researcher's Role

African American male achievement levels are a topic of discussion in schools across America. As a public school administrator, I have worked alongside many public educators who are also trying to positively impact academic disparities between African American males and their racial counterparts. In this qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument to disaggregating the data collected from questionnaires, interviews, and the focus group (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Concern increases annually regarding the ability to raise the academic achievement of African American male students based on national and statewide data reports. Researching the phenomenon of stereotypes contributing to low academic achievement for African American males could be beneficial for helping to improve the achievement gap from an educator's perspective. However, the descriptions of stereotypes by African American males are a key component to understanding and creating solutions.

The focus of this study was the descriptions by African American males of stereotypes present in the classroom. Assuming that all participants were honest and gave accurate reflective descriptions of their experiences during primary and secondary schooling, questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group session were the chosen methods of data collection (Creswell,

2013). As interviews took place, the assumption that participants spoke freely and openly when addressing questions of the research study increased accuracy of data (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Finally, the three methods of data collection in the research, removed the need to schedule follow-up interviews with participants.

The researcher as the human instrument in this case, could assist with changing behavior and actions of professional educators. This study and the significance of the findings have an influence on the current position I hold as an administrator in public education. As a father of two African American males, this topic is also important to the relationships and interactions they will have with their teachers and administrators. Purposeful changes in educator actions increase the likelihood of fostering remedies to the negative relationships built with African American males that hinder successful educational progress. Participant pools will not be limited to individuals known to the researcher.

Data Collection

The data collection process in this transcendental phenomenological study was rooted in varying data collection techniques. When seeking triangulation, several methods of data collection were used (Bahn & Weatherill, 2012). These methods consisted of (a) a questionnaire, (b) individual interviews, and (c) a focus group of the participants. I chose these three methods as the means to gather quality data based on each of these methods is able to accurately describe the lived experiences of the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire collected data regarding participant reflections concerning the topic (Appendix D). It also gave insight into the ability of the participants to reflect upon those incidents and a willingness to share their personal descriptions. Participants accessed the

questionnaire through printed hand-delivered copies and electronic means via email. Three of the participants requested a formal meeting to gain a greater understanding of the study before deciding to participate in the research via a phone conference.

Analyzing the data gathered from the questionnaire allowed for categorizing of codes that later led to themes based on information given by each participant (Creswell, 2013). These data were the initial collection of information regarding the phenomena and give a span and societal presence of the phenomena of this research study. All participants selected by the researcher who met the criteria from the screening survey completed a copy of the questionnaire (Appendix D) before their first interview. Five participants chose to complete the questionnaire digitally through email. The other six participants filled out the questionnaire in person before taking part in the interview process.

The standardized questionnaire questions were:

1. Describe, if any, the role a student's racial identity had on their daily interactions with teachers or other educators during your K-12 schooling experience.
2. Explain your feelings, if any, regarding teacher interactions with students that were based on the student's pattern of speech?
3. Describe, if any, events or occurrences during your K-12 schooling experiences directed toward you or other students that would be considered racially motivated?
These actions can be displayed by educators, parents, or other students.
4. Depict, if any, events or occurrences directed toward you or other students during your K-12 schooling experience that were motivated by stereotypes?

5. Based on your experiences in a K-12 public setting, evaluate whether you or any other African American males experienced higher levels of conflict with their teachers that could be considered motivated by stereotypes?
6. Based on your experiences, what do you think are the most influential factors affecting the African American male population during the K-12 public education process in San Antonio, Texas?
7. Based on your experience, evaluate the role stereotypes in education play regarding the academic success of African American males in public education in San Antonio, Texas?

Question 1 asked the participants to reflectively address whether the participant experienced any interactions that were racially motivated, whether experienced or witnessed. Identification of incidents or lack of incidents was central to understanding the participants' descriptions of racially or stereotypically motivated actions. Question 2 asked the participants to evaluate whether their normal speech pattern was being clearly understood among the educators with whom they came into contact. Linguistic patterns or the inability to understand the cultural norms within speech patterns is often the first place where the breakdown of communication takes place between educators and students (Haddix, 2008).

Questions 3, 4, and 5 sought to understand whether the participants witnessed any events or occurrences during their K-12 experience that would be considered racially motivated. These questions addressed whether the participant experienced through observation or through personal interaction racially or stereotypical interactions. These actions did not have to merely be perpetrated by staff but could have also taken place based on other students or parents during the schooling experience. Lastly, questions 6 and 7 asked participants to elaborate and evaluate the

role that racially motivated stereotypes played in their experiences as well as the collective experiences of African American males. By doing so, these questions asked for the participants to address the degree to which race and stereotypes played a role in the educational experiences of African American males (Hartley & Sutton, 2013). This is also key to the phenomena as the questions in both the individual interviews asked participants about their personal experiences, while the focus group pointed to the overall shared experiences with a personal connection.

Interviews

The process of data collection took several weeks based on the need to schedule interviews and reach data saturation. Interviews are the foremost method of collecting data in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Interviews took place at agreed-upon locations and times between the participants and me. Each interview session was scheduled for 60 minutes. None of the interviews took an hour in length. The longest interview was 32 minutes long. The scheduling process was by phone or through email. These data collection processes comprised of conducting semi-structured interviews through face-to-face and phone conference. Interviews were recorded using a digital audio-recording device. The goal was to interview all participants in person; however, telephone interviews were held for three participants. Interviews focused on the descriptions of stereotypes. Questions were open-ended with the expectation of gaining a comprehensive account from the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Because the interview was also a time to build trust and rapport, it was paramount that the questions be direct and to the point without deviating from the purpose of the research process. To prevent straying from the intended purpose of the research, an interview script (Appendix F) was used during the process.

A semi-structured approach for interviews was utilized due to the need for flexibility to ask participants clarifying questions and additional questions based on participant answers, as well as possibly omitting certain questions based on the elaboration and details discussed in each participant's answers (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Semi-structured interviews gave participants the ability to include their voice in the data being collected as well as increasing the span of the individual experiences of each participant within the study's phenomenon (Henriques, 2014). This method allowed for increased levels of feedback within the dialogue of the scheduled interview sessions.

The purpose of interviewing participants regarding their primary and secondary experiences was based on the literature presenting evidence that as students progress through school, they are more aware of their actions of and the motivators to those actions (Bahn & Weatherill, 2012). Equally as important, students gain more insight into the actions of those around them during their later years in public education (Hartley & Sutton, 2013). Understanding external actions increases the students' ability to report reflectively and adjust their own actions during the schooling years. This was the reason for selecting participants who were above the age of 18 and who were more likely to be able to address the phenomena reflectively in dialogue with the researcher.

The standardized open-ended interview questions were:

1. Please provide your name and the correct spelling.
2. Please provide your age.
3. What is your self-identified race? Please explain how others may describe your race.
4. Please describe your K-5 public education experience.
5. Please describe your 6-12 public education experience.

6. As a student, describe, if any, a situation with teachers that made you feel uncomfortable in school based on your race or the race of others?
7. Reflect back to your K-12 school/s. Describe, if any, any differences in the courses taken by African American males?
8. Reflect back to your K-12 school/s. Describe, if any, differences in the extracurricular activities taken by African American males during your K-12 public education.
9. Describe an event or occurrence, if any, during your K-12 educational experience when you were/were not provided an opportunity based on race.
10. Describe your favorite teacher or educator. What characteristics did this person exhibit?
11. Describe a teacher or educator whom you rate as unfavorable. What characteristics did this person exhibit?
12. Evaluate the role your identified race played in your educational experience.

Questions 1 and 2 were designed to ensure that the participants' personal identification information matches initial survey documents as well as for the recording a collection of data accuracy. Questions 3, 4, and 5 sought to build rapport with the participants and allow them to give an overall picture of their public schooling experience (Doody & Noonan, 2013). By separating the schooling experience into one focused on K-5 and the other focused on 6-12, the identification of maturity and awareness in social constructs was presented in the literature (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). African American males experience lower expectations by themselves, their parents, and public educators as their school years' progress (Graves, 2010).

The participants are engaged in questions that promote an understanding of their perceptions and descriptions of their ability to succeed academically.

Racially biased practices have been presented in several articles and studies, especially those concerning critical race theory (Ainsworth, 2013). Question 6 focused on the experiences of the participants regarding events they described as racially motivated. Because of the nature of phenomenological studies, to take what is identified in the mind of participants and create a more concrete understanding of a shared phenomenon among the participants, there is a need to gain reflective descriptions regarding overt and covert racist practices experienced within a similar setting (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the setting and phenomena focus on human interaction and the interview process described these experienced interactions in-depth.

Bevan (2014) highlighted interview questions concerning academic access and opportunities. Questions 7, 8, and 9 focused on educational opportunities in academic and extracurricular programs in public education. African American males experience fewer academic opportunities that offer advanced content and preparation for success in higher educational settings. The lack of experiencing advanced coursework in educational settings leads to fewer African American males choosing education as a desirable field to work (Scott & Rodriguez, 2015). African American males are a small population of teachers in schools; therefore, the ability of teachers of differing races to teach and relate content to African American males is often only part of teacher diversity workshops and training from consultants (Hayes & Juarez, 2012).

Interview questions concerning stereotype threat and teacher diversity trainings bridge the gap between theory of suggested action (Hebblethwaite, 2010) and the identified research of what is experienced by African American males in classrooms (James, 2011). Teacher diversity

programs foster traits, characteristics, and actions in teachers to affect positive learning for students (Mills & Ballantyne, 2009). Questions 10 and 11 directly related to gathering data regarding teacher actions and qualities as those identified in teachers' education programs as successful when interacting with African American males. These trainings give educators the theory behind the need to practice content with other professionals and reflections of personal application of all learned content by teachers in the classroom. Miller and Bennett (2011) explained that these trainings neither hit their intended goals with the individual teachers nor did they change the experiences of African American males in education with high levels of success. Question 12 asked the participants to evaluate the role their race played in their public education experience. This afforded the participants a manner to finalize their emotional and educational experiences in public education (Ware, 2014). This gave the participants a way to voice the importance of race and the presence of race as a societal construct validating the research theory guiding this study, critical race theory (Bell, 1980). The data collected through the interview questions gave greater insight into the effect teacher actions have on the experiences of African American males in K-12 classrooms.

Focus Group

A description of stereotypes experienced by the African American male participants does not lend itself to being an observable setting based on the actions or on attitudes and perceptions. The basis of the desired data is on the ability of participants to describe, internalize, and report their experiences. A focus group afforded the ability to clarify the research findings of the reportable data through dialogue from several individuals (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Utilizing a focus group also allowed the participants to interact with one another, which gathered further data for the researcher to analyze (Creswell, 2013). Focus group membership included four

participants based on their interview data to share those descriptions of stereotypes experienced during a focus group interview. Participation in the focus group was limited to African American males who participated in the individual interview phase of data collection. Focus group member selection was through an invitation from the researcher via email, phone call, or text message and was voluntary.

Notes and audio recordings were taken during the focus group session to collect accurate data and reporting (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The purpose of the focus group was to check for commonalities within the described experiences of the participants and rationality of the research findings. The member check process also increased trustworthiness of the research process. The interview script for the focus group (Appendix G) was based on the questions of the participant interviews.

A focus group comprising four members was helpful for checking the validity of the research findings (Doody & Noonan, 2013). This process promoted greater rationality of the findings and trustworthiness of the research process, as well as increasing the likelihood of understanding the societal implications toward the essence of the phenomenon of this research study. The focus group data collected compared and contrasted information given by participants alongside their descriptions regarding stereotypes experienced by African American males in public education during their individual interviews and the questionnaire. I selected focus group participants based on their willingness to participate as well as the data collected during the individual interview session. Focus group participation was voluntary, and each participant was aware of this process when they signed their consent to participate form. The focus group members were presented different interview questions than the individual

interviews, to increase participants' data collection based on the differences in the individuals and their experiences.

The focus group meeting was held on an agreed upon date and time that was conducive to all members being available. Focus group members were invited through email, text message, and phone call, which gave them the location, time, and length. The focus group meeting was scheduled for 120 minutes and offered the members an opportunity to share a brief personal background before starting the formal process. Rules of expected behavior for the meeting were addressed initially as well (Appendix G).

Standardized focus group questions:

1. Please provide your name and the correct spelling, as well as any biographical information you wish the others to know about you before beginning the conversation.
2. Describe, if any, events or occurrences between students and educators during your K-12 experience that were motivated by racial stereotypes.
3. Reflect back to schools that you attended. Describe the academic programs in which there were high levels of participation by African American males.
4. Reflect back to schools that you attended. Describe the extracurricular activities in which there were high levels of participation by African American males.
5. If applicable, describe an event or occurrence during your K-12 experience when you felt students were not provided an academic opportunity based on race.
6. In your own words, please evaluate the role stereotypes play in the actions of professional educators.

7. In your own words, please evaluate the role stereotypes play in the actions of African American male students.

Question 1 served as a means to familiarize each participant with one another. Due to the information shared being personal in nature, it was imperative to provide introductions of all participants in the focus group. Question 2 transitioned the conversation to occurrences during the participants' public schooling process that they described as racially motivated. Graves (2010) highlighted the disparities in parental, educator, and student expectations regarding the interactions of African American male students. These expectations decreased over time due to institutionalized perceptions and actions toward and by African American males.

Questions 3, 4, and 5 pertained to areas in which access to educational opportunities were limited based on stereotypes regarding race. The characteristics and effects of stereotype threat played a role in the academic outcomes of African American males (Hall Mark, 2013; Hargrove & Seay, 2011; Hartney & Flavin, 2013). The suggestion that certain activities were stereotypically African American had an impact on the participation within the activity. Participants elaborated on their access and the access of others to educational programs.

Questions 6 and 7 gave focus group participants the opportunity to describe and evaluate the role stereotypes played in the African American male educational experience. This addressed the central theme surrounding the research study. They were open-ended questions that required participants to take a full reflection on their experiences, both lived and observed of others, and then shared their personal conclusions of the impact of stereotypes on African American males (Howard & Navarro, 2016).

A professional transcriptionist transcribed the recorded individual interviews and recorded focus group interviews. The professional transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement

(Appendix H) to ensure the protection of the identity of participants and their data collected during the interview process. All files were stored digitally on a hard drive, a removable pin drive, and google drive. The stored data were held at the researcher's home, in a safe, accessible only to the researcher. Each participant's information was stored in a safe to ensure the confidentiality of each participant was secure. Journaling assisted with monitoring progress and to study steps taken to ensure a quality and valid study was conducted. The researcher kept notes, data, and transcriptions in the proper order and categories.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study utilized three methods. The first method was the questionnaire (Appendix D) that explored information that identified the presence of the phenomena within the desired criterion-based participant pool. The information given in these data assisted in identifying and establishing the presence of the phenomena as well as the manner with which to this conduct research study. The second method of data analysis was the individual interviews of the participants. Interviews were semi-structured, and they allowed me to adjust the questioning to yield richer details into the phenomena being experienced (Doody & Noonan, 2013). A focus group session was the third method of data collection. The focus group was comprised of four participants that shared their experiences as a group.

Upon collecting data, all interviews and the focus group session were transcribed precisely as the audio recordings. Participant interviews contained the information needed for analysis. All transcriptions were contained in a digital file stored in a safe to ensure confidentiality of participants. The analysis method was based on Moustakas (1994) and included several key steps to successfully analyze the data: (a) bracketing both the researcher's experience as well as the topic of the study, (b) Horizontalization, (c) clustering the themes that

emerged, (d) textural descriptions of the lived experiences, (e) structural descriptions of the lived experiences, and (f) textural and structural descriptions of the lived experiences. To reach data saturation using these methods required 11 participants.

Bracketing

Conducting quality research requires the removal of bias to the analysis of the collected data. Bracketing in qualitative research requires that the researcher describe the possible personal bias to the study and the topic (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Bracketing (Appendix I) took place by describing my lived experiences as a professional educator and the manner with which previous experiences in this role shaped worldviews on the topic of African American males and stereotypes (Moustakas, 1994). By doing so, my ability to focus on the data helped to remove implications of personal preconceptions into the data being analyzed. The epoche process also assisted in removing the use of researcher experiences as a means of weakening the data being collected from participants and to appropriately interact with the data and participants during the interviews and the data analysis process (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Horizontalization

A professional transcription service was employed to accurately transcribe the recorded interviews as well as focus group session. Transcriptions were reviewed to ensure accuracy of the documents used to analyze the data. Each interview transcript was viewed in the same manner based on the statements given by participants. No one statement was given more value than another based on age or volume of information. Horizontalization required several readings and categorizing of the questionnaire responses, transcribed interviews, and focus group session to effectively start to code the statements (Moustakas, 1994). Once statements were coded using the open-coding process, it became easier to form themes from the noteworthy direct quotes.

These significant statements described the themes emerging for the study. The quantity and frequency of a topic afforded more reliability when coding and gave credibility to the significance of a theme (Ranney et al., 2015). The coding process utilized highlighting notable experiences on the digital documents and hard copies. All of these codes were listed in an Excel spreadsheet and then began to cluster participants' descriptions into categories that were closely related. Upon identification of the clusters of codes, the data analysis process began to clarify information and the emergence of themes became evident. The use of taking the coded category clusters and organizing them under themes allowed for the constant comparative methods of connecting the themes with the body of literature and research on the topic. Themes highlighted the data as well as the process to analyze the significance of the data toward the phenomena.

Clustering the Themes

Through the descriptive coding process, themes emerged based on the significance a word or phrase presented in the interview transcripts (Creswell, 2013). During this study, I utilized a constant-comparative method as a means to address validity. Comparing themes that emerged in the study that are also present in the body of literature took place during the data analysis phase. Additionally, using categories or themes already present in the bodies of literature made coding the data from interviews a less labor-intensive process (Bahn & Weatherill, 2012).

Themes in research. Using preconfigured categories emerging through analyzing the transcriptions lent better validity to the study. Themes present in the body of literature pointed to themes regarding language and linguistic differences (Haddix, 2008) and ideas of showing masculinity that were often misunderstood that resulted in disciplinary actions at school (Ranney et al., 2015). All of these topics were identified in the data collected; however, they were not all

identified in the same manner as current research shows. Finally, research findings have shown a lack of personal connection with the formal educational process leading to a decrease in personal relevancy for African American males based on content and values presented in the classroom (Bianco et al., 2011).

New emerging themes. The research exposed new themes that emerged from the data. Coding the descriptions collected in the participant questionnaires, interviews, and the focus group session exposed informational bridges to the body of literature. Descriptive coding methods identified the initial responses participants offered and provided a format to categorize and then place the codes in the context of a cluster needed for the study (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). In this process, the context in which the participants described the stereotypes experienced in the classroom was also an important theme to understand the practical methods of the phenomena in the study.

Textural Descriptions of the Lived Experiences

The individual accounts of each participant through the questionnaire, interview, and those involved in the focus group session provided rich descriptions of the phenomena. To provide the textural experiences of the participants, the data collected were summarized into similarities or differences that were shared with the researcher. This is a manner of addressing the exact information that is needed to address the research questions of the study. These summaries of data offered insight into a collection of experiences aiding to understand the phenomena in greater detail (Moustakas, 1994).

Structural Descriptions of the Lived Experiences

African American males' descriptions of stereotypes in education explained the textural descriptions of the lived experiences. To address the structural descriptions as explained by

Moustakas (1994), the researcher sought the details that coincided with the academic performance pieces within the research. Paying close attention to the barriers to academic opportunities and negative interactions within the transcriptions increased the ability to analyze data that incorporated the whole narrative delivered from participants in the questionnaires, interviews, and the focus group.

Textural and Structural Descriptions

The textual and structural portion overlapped during the data analysis process bringing together the final portions of the data analysis. Bridging the gap between information analyzed as the narrative of the experience that is reflectively intrinsic and the portion that is reflectively extrinsic based on data collected from each of the participants, addressed the whole experience of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Included through this analysis procedure was the inclusion of the researcher's reflection. By doing so, this brought final clarity to the total experience and broadened the totality of the phenomena.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research utilizes the researcher as the instrument (Creswell, 2013) and, therefore, requires that trustworthiness be taken into account. A quality research study must be founded on four areas to ensure trustworthiness: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability and (d) confirmability (Ranney et al., 2015). Solid research is able to address these areas and through them sustain integrity. For each area, Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained the importance and role each plays. Credibility seeks to address internal validity while transferability addresses external validity. Dependability speaks to reliability and duplication of the process, while confirmability ensures objectivity in the protocols used to conduct the study.

Credibility

Based on accurately describing the reality within the phenomenon, true value was reached. This is known as credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The credibility of this research study increased by using triangulation of data, constant comparative techniques, as well as member checks. These presented no changes in current proposals but merely expanded the depth and breadth of the information (Bahn & Weatherill, 2012). The essence of the phenomena regarding stereotypes was gained through descriptions of the experience by the participants and then checked against themes presented in the literature and body of research. Finally, presented information was checked by the participants for their involvement in the study.

A constant comparative method of the collected data and literature gave greater dependability to the analyzed data (Creswell, 2013). Comparing the information presented in questionnaires, interviews, and the focus group session to check for parallels in the existing body of literature exposed patterns and led to greater reliability of coding themes and validity of information presented. Disaggregating collected data highlighted consistencies with past and present points of view. Seeking to identify consistency with previously presented information in the field brought an increased credibility to the methods of data analysis (Bevan, 2014). Although new information arose during the data collection and data analysis process, coding still existed to show categories of the same nature.

Member checks offered participants a chance to read their questionnaire data, transcription from the individual interviews, as well as their portions within the participation of the focus group (Cope, 2014). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checks are instrumental to the establishment of credibility in a study. Lastly, any direct quotes or inclusion

of their information in the study was offered to review as well. At that point, the participants did not offer any feedback or questions.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is akin to reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It addresses consistency, stability, as well as credibility of the information presented by the researcher and focused on the relationships between data collection. In this study, the use of an questionnaire, individual interview as well as focus group interviews established a process to compare data gathered. Using recorded interviews and transcriptions to substantiate findings, aided in establishing dependability of the study.

Confirmability assisted in taking the collected data and applying a practical method to remove researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Bracketing (Appendix I) is a method to dispatch researcher bias (Creswell, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2010). By taking into account each of the research questions, questionnaire, individual interview questions, and focus group interview questions, I was able to monitor my own responses and ensure that they were not imposed on the findings. The confirmability process also used the constant comparative technique of finding links between participant responses and the body of literature. Finally, the member checks afforded feedback vital to checking the validity of participant responses in the findings and conclusion (Cope, 2014).

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained using sufficient details about a phenomenon increases the ability to reach transferability. Transferability refers to the use of the details within the study and the ability to apply them to other settings (Creswell, 2013). Providing meticulous accounts of the procedures throughout the study, including participant data collected through a

questionnaire, recorded individual interview, and focus group interview transcriptions, the context with which the data collection was intended, promoted transferability by readers.

Ethical Considerations

To perform a reproducible and valid research process, interview questions ensured that emotional responses were not given due to a familiarity to the topic by the researcher.

Resembling the participants through race and gender, my physical appearance may influence participant responses during interviews and the focus group. Participants may have been unwilling to label themselves as underachieving for the purposes of the study. Therefore, respect for the participants' situations and removal of rhetoric that would contribute to causing emotional distress were employed during this study (Bahn & Weatherill, 2012).

Participants received no compensation for data collection as a participant in this research study. All participants received information regarding the purpose of the study and the opportunity to drop out of the study at any given time they chose. Participants received confidentiality and all names reported in the study were aliases only known to the researcher. Participant information was kept in a safe lockbox in the researcher's residence to preserve privacy toward any identifying information such as names, data, or transcripts of interviews.

Interview recordings captured the participant responses using an audio-recording device. Using a professional transcriber to create usable transcriptions required a signed disclosure statement (Appendix H). The professional transcriber maintained the confidentiality of the participants' names and the information gathered during the interview process.

Summary

Understanding the shared experience with stereotypes by African American males requires the use of phenomenological methods of research. African American males experience

stereotypes unique to the demographic in the public school setting. Interviews with African American males over the age of 18 who experienced stereotypes highlighted themes that will further the field of research and offer useful insights for professional educators, students, and parents.

Coding the data into themes (Appendix J) presented by participants bridges the gap between previous research and delivers the descriptions of African American males into the field of study regarding the stereotypes experienced. Through the coding process, each participant's information was treated with confidentiality and the participants were asked only to share as much information as they chose with the interviewer. Strict protocols were followed in data collection and through the seven-step data analysis process (Moustakas, 1994) to ensure that the research reflects trustworthiness.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter describes the findings as well as the data analysis from participant questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group. Also included is the process for the collection and analysis of the data for this study. This study explored descriptions of the lived experiences of 11 African American males who attended public schools in San Antonio, Texas. The results and findings presented in this chapter are rooted in a synthesis of their descriptions of stereotypes experienced in K-12 public education. Each participant is summarized in this section to afford an enhanced understanding of each individual.

The collection of data during this phenomenological study was comprised of a questionnaire, individual interviews, as well as a focus group made up of participants seeking to understand the phenomena of stereotypes experienced, if any, by African American males during their K-12 public education experience. Phenomenological approaches were most appropriate for this study based on the collection of data of a shared experience (Moustakas, 1994). The criterion-based sampling of African American male participants was central to the goals of the study, therefore, ensuring that their lived experiences were described by those most familiar with the phenomena of the study.

Participants in this study consisted of 11 African American males who attended public school in San Antonio, Texas. All participants in the study were between the ages of 18 and 28 years old. Pseudonyms were given to each participant based on the top baby boy names of 2016 (Baby Center, 2016). The use of the pseudonyms increased the confidentiality of the participants. Seeking to increase transferability, brief descriptions of the participants are included.

Participants

To understand the descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males in K-12 public education, 11 participants took part in this qualitative research study. Using criterion sampling and snowball sampling, a participant pool was collected and select individuals were sent a participation letter (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation of data was achieved through three methods of data collection from each of the 11 participants. A questionnaire and an individual interview were collected from the 11 participants. A focus group was comprised of four participants. Data analysis consisted of themes and the final presentation of the findings was in a narrative format answering the overall research questions that guided the study.

The following paragraphs briefly describe each participant from which data were collected for this study.

Alexander

Alexander attended a school that serviced a high percentage of African American males. Due to the racial demographics of the school he attended, he often shared data that encompassed not only his perceptions, but also contained his observations of the experiences of his African American peers. He felt during his experience, that the educators in his life played a factor in his ability to find relevance and purpose in his education. He shared several personal stories as examples to his answers and gave his perspective in detail. He was worried during his interview that not only was his message being heard clearly, but that he backed it up with real world examples.

Alexander shared many of his experiences in a reflective manner during the interview. He paused before answering each question, taking time to reflect. After the brief pause, he gave

answers that made connections to his public education journey as well as those of his peers. Alexander shared a collective experience in public education regarding African American males.

Benjamin

Benjamin played sports in high school and admitted that he also enjoyed several of his content courses. He is a father and takes that role very seriously. He felt that many of his earliest experiences in education assisted him with being more successful in his career. He attributed the lessons of life to being as important as the lessons taught by his teachers.

Benjamin shared his belief in the structure of the family and the important role that faith has played in his life. He also made a point to mention that there are many misconceptions about African American males in educational settings. In addition, the misconceptions too often drive the actions of teachers and administrators to make mistakes when interacting with students, but especially African American males. Benjamin was also working with his son to ensure that he does not subscribe to the misconceptions and stereotypes that he saw as a hindrance to the academic success of African American males.

Bryson

Bryson is currently in the military and spoke about the impact of military life on his perspectives. He attended a large high school, and he spoke about the diversity on the campus. During his interview, each question was taken seriously. When asked to reflect, he took time to carefully craft his answers. He spoke about the internal self-determination that one must use to succeed, something he admits was proven time and time again in his military service.

The military has played a major role in his life and Bryson spoke at length about the life lessons that were absent during his public schooling experience and were introduced upon joining the military. Bryson explained that being a father while serving his country gave him a

new perspective on the role a parent plays in the life of his child. He also talked about the education his child will receive is more important than ever, as the world is changing and he wants his child to have the best opportunity to succeed.

Daniel

Daniel grew up in a military family. Both his parents at one point were in the military. He explained that in his educational experiences, there were varying aspects between his early years at a predominantly White school compared to the latter years that were more diverse in both race and culture. His ability to reflect on the positive and negative experiences made it clear that he was able to process the importance of not only being a good student, but also by representing himself well in school could offer him advantages. He also spoke of the important role his parents played in pushing him to go further in education, especially when his teachers did not expect a greater effort of him.

Daniel and I met at his church, and it was during this time that he spoke strongly about the role faith has played in his life. The church was a second home to him and through the church is where he assisted current students with reaching their desired academic outcomes in post-secondary education. Daniel spoke about being a part of his church family and the goodwill that he was a part of in his community because of his interaction as a member of the church. Daniel also shared during this initial meeting that his educational experience contributed to his desire to assist his church organization with their educational outreach programs.

Elijah

Elijah spoke in depth about the need to feel a part of a community of learners. He felt that his success was dependent on the people he surrounded himself with and that those individuals gave him the advice to be successful. He is currently in a career field that he really

enjoys and takes pride that he works in a field that is under-represented by African American males, and he hopes to help make that a change for other African American males and females.

Elijah gave answers in all three data collection methods that focused on his ability to defy stereotypes. Elijah consistently spoke about being the opposite of the traditional stereotypes presented toward African American males. He also shared that the stereotypes did not stop after high school. He felt the presence of racially motivated stereotypes throughout college and during his first year at his current place of employment. He attributed his ability to deal with stereotypes to his public education experience.

Grayson

In his individual interview, Grayson was very quiet and gave short answers. However, in his questionnaire, he gave more insight into the role that athletics played in his life as well as the lives of those with whom he went to school. He recently graduated high school and gave a lot of praise to his father for playing a major role in his life. His father and stepmother gave him the systems of support to be successful.

Grayson went to several schools in the San Antonio Area. Based on the differences in the racial makeup of each school, Grayson admitted to feeling at times like an outsider. He also shared that some of the schools he attended, he felt accepted and the campuses were more racially diverse. He enjoyed the campuses that were more racially diverse as it allowed him to have friends of different races and backgrounds.

Isaiah

Being intelligent, reflective, and perceptive are all characteristics displayed by Isaiah during the data collection process. In his questionnaire and his interview, he was keenly aware how others perceived him and he explained how he could also shape that perception at an early

age. He had a varied approach to working with teachers and other students that afforded him both educational experiences that had a positive effect on his life. He spoke positively of many of his teachers as well as his parents, all of which he afforded great admiration.

During his interview, he spoke about situations where he felt a little uncomfortable in school. As one of a few African American males in his advanced courses, he participated in racially motivated jokes. Some of the jokes were directed at him, as well as Isaiah directing racially motivated jokes back at his peers. During his interview, Isaiah viewed the jokes as harmless as a student, but a form of bullying as an adult. When asked why, Isaiah stated, “I guess it is because they [students] could not opt out of the jokes due to peer pressure.” He later explained that the jokes were meant to be fun and that he never felt anyone was intentionally trying to bully him or hurt his feelings based on racist comments during the joke telling sessions.

Jackson

Jackson is a college student who attended all of his public education in a school district that services a high amount of students who live in homes below the poverty line. He was very proud of his successes as a student as well his strong need to give back to the same community upon graduation. During his interviews, he admitted that he had a lot of influence by the positive choices of his older siblings as well as the negative choices being made.

Upon graduation from college, Jackson wants to become a public educator, with the hopes of giving back to his community. He is seeking to teach literature, a course he felt passionate about in high school based on being able to read books that were culturally relevant to his life experiences. Jackson spoke at length in his interview about shaping and changing perceptions of African American males in education.

During his interview, Jackson answered questions swiftly, as if he had answered these questions in his mind. He shared that the questionnaire gave him insight into further questions for the interview process. There was little-to-no lag time in-between asking him a question and his response.

Landon

A recent college graduate, Landon is working on becoming a public educator. During his interview, he shared the important role athletics played in his life and that he always felt comfortable in that environment. His demeanor throughout the process was one of reflection. He spoke about his schools and shared the role that mentors played in his life and the importance of having a good mentor.

It is based on having good mentors that Landon started working with a local after-school program in preparation to become a teacher. He had strong coaches who helped him develop as a player, and he hopes to be that level of a coach for his players. Sports and the notoriety of being an athlete gave Landon pride in high school. He spoke about the use of sports as a pathway to success and also a means of protection in his community. He stated, “You would get a pass if you played sports.” He grew up in a tough community during a shift in racial demographics and economic turmoil. These circumstances made it more difficult to be successful in school for African American males, who were tempted to join gangs or commit crimes.

Levi

Levi is a minister who is married with three sons. He commented that this study was important for him, hoping that it could assist in creating better learning environments for his sons. He enjoys the outdoors going hunting and fishing. Because of his outdoor activities, he did

not always identify with his peers in the urban school setting. He had a unique outlook on his experience in K-12 public education looking at the inward goals and the external influences that could have caused his life to go in a negative or in a positive pathway.

Levi spoke clearly about his perceptions and shared his lived experiences with a keen connection to the experience of African American males living in the southern portion of the United States. Levi also shared the role of growing up in San Antonio, a city that has a large Hispanic population. He explained in his interview and his questionnaire that African American males in San Antonio have a very different experience than those living in eastern Texas or other portions of the United States southern region based on the honoring of several Hispanic, Caucasian, and African American cultural holidays and traditions. He stated, “These traditions are good because it allows us to appreciate each other, but it adds another layer of racial stereotypes.”

Ryan

Ryan played collegiate sports and it shaped his life because it gave him lifelong connections to professors and teammates who promoted his growth and gave him a support system when he was apart from his family. From visiting many of his teammates, he has gained a greater appreciation for other cultures and traditions. Collegiate sports provided him with the opportunity to attend college and earn his degree. Ryan stated that this was the turning point in his life because he had to grow up and become a man. He lamented that many friends he left behind were not doing very well, and now he knows why. Some of his African American male friends lacked the educational experiences to be successful upon graduation.

During his interview, he shared personal stories as well as the experiences of others. Ryan spoke with a deep baritone voice that commands attention. During his teenage years, he

and a group of friends were at the window at a drive thru restaurant. As the young men ordered food, a squad car abruptly pulled up to his car, blocking him and the friends in the car. Two police officers got out of the vehicle and pointed their firearms at the four young men in the car. Ryan and his friends were not charged with a crime and were told that they were pulled over based on fitting the description of suspects from a robbery in the area. This situation shaped the way Ryan felt toward authority and hindered authoritative relationships throughout high school.

Results

Procedures for Data Collection

Upon receiving Liberty University IRB approval (Appendix A), the approval form was taken to the two local church pastors and one historical African American fraternity, to solicit possible participants. Approval was given to speak to the Men's Bible study courses held in the evenings. Local Church 1 services a large portion of the African American population in its regional area. The meeting had several attendees. However, many of the attendees were not in the criterion sampling age group. One participant was gathered from local Church 1.

Local Church 2 was located in a separate region of San Antonio, Texas. It, too, services a large portion of the regional African American population. During the Men's Bible study class, three possible participants were identified and two participants were selected from local Church 2. In similarity to local Church 1, local Church 2 had few possible participants who were in the age range of the criterion sampling size.

The historical African American fraternity posted the flyer (Appendix E) for soliciting participants on its online community board, and this process identified one participant. Through snowball sampling, the participant gained from the historical African American fraternity was able to solicit other participants who offered the rest of the participants selected in the study.

Each new participant was able to identify another likely participant who would follow the same process of filling out the initial screening survey. Based on a need to meet the criteria of the study, not all of the possible participants were selected.

The means to communicate with participants came from text messages, phone calls, and emails once the original presentations at the local churches as well as the historical African American fraternities concluded. Upon completion of the screening survey, the selected participants received their acceptance letter (Appendix K) via email or via text message as an attachment. At the same time as sending the acceptance letter, participants were offered a time to schedule an individual interview. I offered the participants an opportunity to receive the questionnaire via email or text message, and they could fill it out and sign before the individual interview session.

Participant signed their letters of consent (Appendix C) before any data collection could take place. I covered consent forms in depth, allowing participants to ask questions before starting the formal data collection process. Seven of the eleven participants asked to sign the consent to participate form through email by printing, signing the form, and scanning the document back through email prior to arriving for their interview. Four of the participants signed their consent to participate in person through a hand-delivered copy.

The collection of questionnaires to place prior to the individual interviews. Several participants stated that they were glad that they completed the questionnaire before the interview as it enabled them to reflect upon their public education experiences before the interview process. Interview sessions were scheduled in one-hour blocks and for those participants who had yet to complete the questionnaire, they finished it first, then took part in their individual interview. Interviews were recorded and then later transcribed. Participants could choose to

share any information they wished as it pertained to the questions being asked. Interviews varied in length by each participant. Upon completion of the individual interview, each participant was offered the opportunity to participate in the focus group session if they wished. All of the participants expressed interest in the focus group process; however, only four individuals were able to participate.

The focus group consisted of four individuals: Elijah, Benjamin, Alexander, and Ryan. The participants introduced themselves to each other and during the focus group session, all answered the questions within the script (Appendix F). The focus group session followed a script and participants could provide as much information as they wished or add to another participant's points. Each of the participants shared insights into the phenomena being studied and all gave several examples during their experiences to shed light on their descriptions during the session. During the focus group session, several of the topics discussed in the participants' questionnaires and individual interviews were spoken about in further detail.

Theme Development

During the data analysis process, themes began to develop based on the data being collected through individual questionnaires, interviews, and a focus group session. The coding of the themes was based on open coding, (Appendix L). During open coding (Table 5), a selection of data was categorized based on participants' responses to the questions. Assuming that participants were honest in their reflections and responses, I began to take the data collected and using sticky notes, placed them on charts to organize thoughts, responses, and participant quotes. Data collection and analysis consisted of taking all responses as given by participants. I bracketed my experiences to remove researcher bias during data analysis, allowing for the presentation of data as it was given by participants. Lastly, during the theme development, data

coding was placed into the identified themes of the research study based on frequency and connection to the identified themes in the constant comparative process. The constant comparative process highlighted lower academic expectations for African American males as a consistent theme in the literature (McClain, 2016).

Table 5

Open Coding

Open Codes	Enumeration of Open Codes Across All Data Sets	Themes
Limitations of Academic Performance		
Parents Academic Expectations	33	
Teacher expectations	31	
Participation in sports expected	30	
Participation in advanced courses	29	
School emphasis on academic expectations	24	
Students' academic expectations	26	
Student willingness to participate in advanced courses	25	
Negative Initial Interaction		
Stereotypes from beginning	22	
Trial period of meeting the stereotype	22	
First impression	20	
Overt feeling of teacher bias	11	
Overt feeling of administrator bias	9	
Policy preceded relationship	9	
First day of school, first interaction	9	
Teacher verbal expression of stereotype upon first interaction	8	
Teacher non-verbal expression of stereotype upon first interaction	8	
Presence of Race identification		
African American males absent from advanced courses	22	
High participation rates of African American males in sports	22	
Presence of stereotypes of African American males	15	
Race plays a role in education for African American males	11	
African American males must act a certain way to be considered African American in public school	5	

Themes

During the data analysis process, three themes emerged from the data collected from the questionnaire, individual interviews, and the focus group session (Appendix K). The themes were based on the descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males in San Antonio, Texas. The three themes that emerged were (a) limitations on academic expectations, (b) negative initial interactions, and (c) the presence of race identification. Each of the themes were constructed from the participants' descriptions of stereotypes on the questionnaire, in individual interviews, and the focus group session. Themes were developed using an open coding method of data analysis (Appendix L).

Limitations on Academic Expectations

During the interviews and the participant responses on the questionnaires, each participant explained either a situation or a strong internal sense that their teachers or administrators had lower academic expectations of them compared to their non-African American peers. This theme became ever present in the focus group as well; due to the nature of the conversation, each participant felt that he could have been pushed or motivated to achieve higher if that had been the expectations of the teachers. Graves (2010) explained that as each school year passes, African American students experience lowered academic expectations by their parents, their teachers, and also by themselves.

Jackson is a college student and he spoke openly about the absence of high expectations once he began middle school. He was also an athlete in middle school and high school. He experienced situations where he was encouraged as well as his teammates to take classes that were less challenging. Jackson has several family members who pushed him, especially his mother, so he knew early that he was going to go to college. In preparation for college, he

enrolled in honors courses; and he was met with resistance in those classes because the teachers assumed early that because he was an athlete, he was not serious about his work. Jackson wanted to prove to himself and the teachers that he was capable of performing in honors courses.

Jackson stated, “K-12 I feel like, the majority of African American males in K-12, for me, they took a lot of regular classes, some were in remedial classes.” Jackson went on to later explain, “There was more a focus on being an athlete rather than being a student.” The presence of athleticism being more expected as it pertains to African American male participation is mentioned in several of the responses from the participants in this study. Participation in athletics was an expectation explained by several participants directly and indirectly.

In his interview, Jackson was able to look back on his experience and though he felt that the teachers had lower expectations, stating “I felt in K-12 [teachers] already had this idea of what kind of limitations were already set on us. They never had high expectations; they just wanted us to get enough knowledge to pass the test.” He also felt that this was what compelled him to place higher expectations on himself. His intrinsic motivation to succeed was derived from the feeling that his teachers or administrators set the academic bar lower than his own personal expectations. Jackson made a conscious decision to create high intrinsic motivators to succeed academically. He sought to present an opposing view of the academic expectations of African American males. His explanations about changing attitudes toward African American males was very similar to Elijah who also focused on taking rigorous academic courses to establish internal academic expectations based on feeling that these expectations were absent in his teachers.

Elijah attended a magnet school program that focused on engineering. He was always interested in math and science and gravitated toward those classes quickly. He was aware that

these courses and the magnet program had a low representation by African American males. The low representation was also a motivator for Elijah to attend the program. He wanted to show that African American males could succeed in this program. As we spoke during the interview, he was very calm and relaxed about the questions concerning race and stereotypes because he always felt that he was breaking the negative stereotypes through his hard work in class.

However, his intelligence did not always overshadow the negative stereotypes about African American males, and there was an occasion when he switched schools where the administration refused to place him in honors courses. “Due to my look of a typical Black student (braids, baggy clothes, tennis shoes, etc.), when I changed schools/districts, the assistant principal refused to place me into Pre-AP/AP classes based on how I looked.” This was the first overt opposition Elijah faced, but he spoke about it happening again once he got into the honors courses with the instructors. The limiting of academic expectations for Elijah also created a competitive nature for his academic performance because he felt compelled to prove the school staff wrong time and time again, especially regarding negative stereotypes. Elijah shared that many of his peers chose not to take these courses because they were not expected to take the courses. The lack of participation in his eyes was based on the lack of expectation for African American males to participate. The lack of expectation to participate in advanced courses was shared by Grayson, who felt limited in academic opportunities based on his experiences.

Grayson stated in his experiences that teachers did not push him or any of his peers to participate in the academic courses. The lack of push from the teachers to strive for a better outcome and preparedness toward post-secondary success was lacking in his experience.

Grayson stated, “We just were not expected to take these courses.” Grayson recently graduated high school and he spoke about how he became serious about school when he moved in with his

father and stepmother. The two of them made him feel better about his education and his ability to succeed in school despite a lack of his teachers or administrators expecting him to experience rigorous courses. He explained, “I felt like I was not pushed hard enough by my teachers in high school.” In his description, the school played a role in accepting less effort from certain groups of students and expected more effort from others. Grayson also stated “I think my teachers thought I was dumb or just an average Black boy and they thought the work I did was enough to get by.” This feeling of getting by was one that made him feel that he could only achieve or strive to graduate high school, but not a lot beyond a diploma in terms of an education. Grayson became more aware as he got older that he could achieve more in terms of academics but felt that he was not prepared when he began to prepare himself for college and that his teachers played a role in that feeling stating, “But I could have done better if pushed to do so.”

Benjamin was concerned in the focus session that the lack of academic expectations and motivation from teachers and administrators played a major role in his public education experience. Benjamin is a successful businessman who showed a lot of interest in this study and the implications it would have, largely based on his experiences in schooling. He attended a school that was very diverse, but was also a large campus. Benjamin reported, “All the African American males, they were subject to playing football and playing basketball. That was kind of one of the things that was expected from the African American male was football or basketball.” Benjamin also explained the role and importance of athletic expectations, but an absence of any academic expectations beyond just staying eligible to play sports hindered his ability to take advanced courses. He was always interested in academic courses but enjoyed sports as well. He felt pulled to one side or the other during high school and chose to play one sport so that he could get into courses that were more rigorous. In those courses, he felt that the teachers expected less

of him and that he was more than just athletic, but that he had real interests in academic topics. It was the lack of academic expectations that pulled him away from advanced courses and the overt expectation to play basketball that made him invested in sports. The feelings of Benjamin were also felt by Alexander who was always shown and told through community and campus examples that to be successful as an African American male, sports must be in your future.

Alexander went to college on a football scholarship. Our interview session consisted of him giving his thoughts, perceptions, and descriptions through both a personal lens and then backing it up with an example in his lived experience. The first time he felt that a teacher did not have high expectations for him and set academic limits was in the fifth grade. Alexander stated, “She rarely assisted me when I needed help and would not explain concepts.” He went on to state that he felt she worked with all the African American students in this manner. His emotions toward this teacher was focused on the “why.” He still wonders why the teacher acted in that manner. As Alexander wondered why it became clear that this experience left Alexander with a negative perception of the teacher and made him less likely to participate in areas outside of his comfort zone or to try new academic opportunities. However, he chose to join band and during this period he again had a limitation placed by the instructor.

The second time Alexander described an instructor limiting his academic expectations was in beginners’ band in middle school. The director gave him two options of instruments based on his physical stature, not interest. He began playing one of those instruments and began to enjoy being a part of the band. The band director rarely assisted Alexander and he began struggling with pieces of music as the level of rigor increased. Ultimately, he was successful as he employed intrinsic motivation to succeed. Alexander said, “I made it a point to be first chair,

so I practiced a lot on my own and after school.” Alexander felt he could have done better musically if he would have been expected to by the band director.

Alexander felt very strongly about the teachers setting expectations and pushing students toward those goals. He explained “They [African American males] are not being taught that they have to work for success and that they can achieve anything if they put their minds to it.” He later explained, “These same students strive to escape by becoming an athlete or an entertainer. Few think of loftier goals of becoming an attorney, doctor, scientist, or professor.” Alexander and Benjamin shared comparative experiences to Landon and Ryan because, he too was expected to play sports and choose between being eligible for play or academically challenged.

Landon discussed his ability to work well with teachers once they were able to get his interest. However, he felt that because he was a strong athlete with a solid opportunity to play at the collegiate level that his teachers focused more on eligibility rather than on helping him to fully master concepts that would help him be successful in college. Landon noticed that his teachers were often cordial and worked with him during classes, but they did not push him to reach his academic goals, but rather focused on his ability to play sports. He described that his situation was not uncommon in his schooling as the values of both the school and the community focused on athletics not academics stating, “It would be like one or two [academic extracurricular activities] but in athletics or anything like that it was predominantly Black.” There was a systemic push to participate in athletics rather than to subscribe to high academic performance for African American males.

Ryan played college basketball and described in his interview a positive public education experience. Ryan attended a school that had a high population of African American males, though they still were a minority on campus. He spoke at length about the role athletics played

in his interactions with teachers, but that there were few expectations to take advantage of academic interests. This was not just his experience but also his teammates. Ryan explained that they were expected to play, because they could possibly get a scholarship to play basketball. Even with the educators' intention being a positive motivator of actions, the students did not receive the academic benefits in the same manner as their peers who did not participate in basketball. They were also a successful team, and there were many hopes that they could advance to the Texas State Championship. Therefore, academic interests were not valued as high as athletic talent. He explained, "The Black males that were more athletic or may have been the top players of the team were placed in courses versus being able to have options and choose what they wanted to take." This situation upon reflection during his college years made Ryan realize that systemically the school would lower the academic expectations of the African American male athletes, possibly thinking that in the end they were helping them to get into college.

Ryan also felt that this hurt many of his teammates, because their lack of being able to take more rigorous courses based on the lower academic expectations for them prevented many of them from being successful as they entered college. The lack of academic preparation made it much more difficult to remain eligible at the collegiate level and a few failed out of school and lost their scholarships. During his explanation of this situation, Ryan showed an emotional response to those that did not see academic success in college. Ryan paused before proceeding and shook his head. He continued to shake his head as he proceeded to finish his answers. His physical responses connected with his verbal answers highlighted that Ryan felt saddened by the lack of preparation and what implications this had on his teammates. He was able to overcome the academic struggles through assistance in college but admitted that the lowered academic

expectations for him and others like him in middle and high school propelled academic struggles down the line when attending post-secondary education. Ryan spoke about a consistent battle to decide between bringing pride to his school and community through athletic success or the reach his own personal goals and interests. This battle was determined each year in education. Daniel spoke of similar battles and chose to go the route of producing a brighter future for himself based on his self-interests outside of sports. Ryan and his teammates were compelled to compete and their interests outside of sports were neglected during their public education experience.

Daniel reported that he experienced low expectations from his teachers and that there was a period in which teachers and students must undergo that would offer them the chance to understand one another as well as learn the other individuals' ability level. Daniel made the conscious choice to no longer play basketball and participate in ROTC, hoping to possibly have a future in the armed services. He stated that this was a difficult choice because he had to give of basketball, something he was expected to participate in, but he was happier after. Daniel excelled in his school's ROTC program, and it helped to shape his career as a student. He enjoyed being a part of the ROTC program but felt that at times his academic teachers did not see the same level of ability as his ROTC instructors. In ROTC, he was pushed to perform at his best, but many of his classroom teachers did not expect the same level of effort. He shared that as school progressed, he took courses that were more advanced. As he started taking more of these courses, he found himself being the only or one of two African American males in these classes. The systemic placement of these courses and the staff members teaching them created a hindrance, but the lack of insisting that bright African American males take the courses rounded out the notion for Daniel that this was not necessarily the expectation for African American males in public education. Daniel stated that he felt isolated at times due to being the only

Black, but that it was also a positive in the way his teachers described him, largely because he did not exemplify the negative stereotypes associated with being an African American male. The isolation of being the only student in a course and feeling a lack of academic expectations and preparedness were concepts known to Daniel upon graduation from high school. He shared, “I knew my experience was not typical, but parts were, I was not expected to be academic.” The lack of systemic academic expectations was a consistent theme throughout the study in the participant’s responses during data collection.

Levi was spoke passionately during his interview about the lack of academic expectations for African American males. He offered two differing points of view regarding his experiences with a lack of expectation. His first experience was during elementary school. He was the only African American student in his grade level and stated, “I was a good kid, but I was often not spoken to with the expectation that I was a good student.” He stated that his teacher and an administrator initially tried to keep him from participating on the chess team for the school. He was met with resistance and only after he was able to show that he enjoyed chess and was also able to perform at a high level did they allow him to begin participating in competition. He admitted during the interview that he understood that he needed to prove himself like the other students who made the team, but it was the language used by the teacher and the administrator that made him aware that they did not expect much from him in the way of academics. Levi stated, “I was a good athlete, too, so they tried to make me more interested in sports than chess or any academic clubs.” This was alarming to Levi, as his interests were in both athletics and academics.

The second point of view that Levi shared concerning the lowering of academic expectations came in the form of a teacher who practiced what Levi termed as “charity

teaching.” There was a kindhearted teacher when he was in high school and all the students knew that she would help students out with extra credit or turning an assignment in late. Levi reported, “If you were Black, she believed that history was hard on the Black man, so she would allow us more chances than the White students because she wanted to give us charity.” The lack of the teacher making the expectations clearly known and clearly defined fostered a situation where African American male students took advantage of her kindness and naïve nature, thus lowering their ability to reach the academic expectations that were expected of their peers. Accepting less work or mastery of content prevents students from making natural connections between the content topics from one school year to the next. This creates gaps in the students’ knowledge. Levi was very concerned in his interview by this situation, as he described it, “This only contributes to students not learning and not being held to the same standards as their peers.” In his interview, Levi admitted he, too, took advantage of this occurrence and felt that it did not have an impact on his ability to learn, but rather the amount of content that was mastered in this class, was low due to the teacher’s lowered academic expectations for her students based on stereotypes of past social injustice.

Levi also spoke about the faculty of his high school and how they would try to place systemic barriers to advanced curriculum that seemed to be in place for the African American males, especially since there were very few in his school taking the courses. He reported, “They lied to us; they said we would have to take a test, get two recommendations from teachers, and that we could possibly be ineligible for sports if we could not keep in the course.” At this point in the interview, Levi began to speak about systemic oppression is not always about the words used against but rather the situations that African American males are left out of, like advanced courses. He then stated, “This was the worst part; I found out that all I needed was for my

mother to request that I be in advanced courses.” Levi was angered by this because though it did not keep him from taking the courses, it did prevent others who were African American.

Isaiah articulated his ideas during his interview with introspection that lead to descriptions of both his experiences and those he witnessed with others. He focused on the notion that his experience missed overtly negative experiences regarding stereotypes and lowered academic expectations. Subtle differences were the manner in which the effects of lowered academic expectations systemically were present. He noticed like several of the other participants that there were lower numbers of African American males in advanced courses. Isaiah stated, “In high school, there were two of us, me and another boy. I honestly do not remember having a lot of them [African American males] in my classes.” In these courses, students were able to experience greater levels of depth and complexity within the topics discussed; however, there was an absence of African American males in these courses and Isaiah felt that until his teachers got to know him, there was some hesitancy to interact with him on an intellectual level. Assuming he was an athlete often played a role in his teachers’ action of presuming his ability to participate in the advanced academic setting.

Negative Initial Interactions with School Staff

During the individual interviews, focus group, and the responses to the questionnaire, the initial interactions with staff members became the topic of conversation. The participants described interactions with school personnel that were often negative at the outset. Their perceptions of this interaction often left them feeling that they were being judged stereotypically by school personnel based on the negative stereotypes of African American males and that the teachers were preemptively trying to prevent any negative classroom or campus behaviors. The

participants shared that this first action lead to many negative interactions afterwards by both the teacher as well as themselves.

Several studies have highlighted this tendency of action by school personnel as a concern and barrier to the academic success of African American males (Bianco et al., 2011; Brown, 2009; Graham & Erwin, 2011). Negative initial interactions with school personnel had an impact on the educational experiences described by the participants. The initial negative experience with an educator determined how they saw themselves within the classroom as well as the manner in which they would be willing to work with and learn from the teacher. Even if the participant had high academic aspirations, the initial interactions had relevancy to their desire to participate and interact within the classroom.

Elijah experienced negative initial interactions several times during his school experience. He felt that every time he walked into the room, he would have to prove to the teacher that he was not a representation of the negative stereotype. Elijah stated, “Initially, the teachers and educators all associated me as a typical Black kid who did not take my education seriously. First impressions speak volumes on how many of them lumped all of us into the same category.” For him, this would lead to negative experiences and having to try and be comfortable in his own skin while simultaneously seeking to being accepted for himself by his teachers. He mentioned this pattern of behavior by his teachers early in his interview explaining, “I could tell that I and the other Black males initially experienced higher levels of conflict with teachers.” He then described that he grew tired of always having to prove himself to his teachers, but that he got used to it over time and even mastered the skill by the time he was heading off to college. Elijah went on to report, “Some students were not as perceptive as me and did not cope well with the initial grace period having to earn the trust of the teachers and principals.” The initial

interaction was explained as a process of acceptance based on the actions of the individual that assimilated to the others' expectations first, the African American male student or the teacher. He went on to explain, "They took the experience as, my teachers and principals hate me and I do not know why, and from there they shut down and stop trying." Shutting down and the act of abandoning a course due to the negative interactions was experienced by Alexander as well.

Alexander experienced the same initial negative interaction with a teacher. However, his demeanor about the implications of the negative initial interactions was different from Elijah's, who said the interaction was person-to-person, but not really systemic. Alexander stated that the negative interactions he had with teachers, especially those upon first meeting, came from two places. The first was that possibly the teachers did not wish to teach at the campus, one that served high levels of poverty. The second was that the teachers did not want to address possible negative behaviors. Alexander stated, "I remember my 5th grade math teacher." He paused after saying her name, going into deeper reflection in the interview and then stated, "Based on several negative interactions, my mother met with the principal who admitted that there were several issues with that teacher and several complaints by other African American parents." Alexander had a difficult school year and he attributed most of it to the teachers' initial negative interactions that continued to be negative throughout the year until his mother met with the Principal who provided some form of intervention, one he may not have known.

Landon described in his interview a presence of the similar initial negative interactions between himself and his teachers. He attributed the negative initial interactions toward the stereotypes of African American males, providing this explanation: "I guess because it could have been experienced from other kids, Black kids, that gave them [teachers] the most trouble." He experienced this situation more in high school and middle school. He pointed to the teachers

in elementary school where his experience was more nurturing; while in high school, there were more instances of teachers enforcing initial interactions that would be viewed as stern. Landon later explained that most of the interactions did have some merit in his view, stating, “A lot of the disagreements would be like, sagging pants. If anything, more of the Black students sagged their pants, more than the other ethnic groups.” This connects to the research on African American males and their initial disagreements with school personnel over rules that are often culturally connected based on ethnic and racial norms that do not match the dominant culture and views from Eurocentric cultures (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009).

In the interview with Ryan, he described interactions similar to those of Landon. The two shared very similar backgrounds and upon entry into secondary education, Ryan also noticed an increase of negative initial interactions between himself and his teachers. “In athletics, we were singled out for hairstyles. It seemed intentionally biased because the other races could wear cultural hair styles, but we could not.” The seclusion of cultural styles had an immediate feeling of not being accepted by the coaches. He mentioned that this was the case with several teachers as well, “But from day one, you could tell teachers, they may talk to a certain way. Some once they realized that you may be a good student then they treated you as so.” The initial interaction paired with the same grace period was mentioned several times by other participants. This term of a grace period arose in the interview with Jackson as well.

Jackson was academically motivated in middle and high school and he stated, “The grace period was to get to know you and determine if you would portray the negative stereotypes.” Jackson, a college student, had a reflective understanding of the initial negative interactions with teachers relating in his interview, “I felt I was targeted, you know preconceived notions about my characteristics. Being an athlete, being a Black male, there is a stereotype that comes with

that.” Jackson spoke about overcoming those initial negative interactions based on a desire to succeed, but he felt that his experience was not singular. He stated, “I was challenged a lot with my humanities teacher because I always felt that she was targeting me because of my race and my gender.” It was based on feeling that she was holding something against him that motivated him to work even harder to succeed. Jackson did lament the notion that this may have hindered some of his peers though who were not as strong willed. Due to his willingness to engage in the coursework, Jackson was able to commit to completing courses while maintaining high grades. Isaiah shared a similar need to score high in his advanced classes. He was met with similar negative interactions as Jackson based on being one of a few African American males who participated in honors courses in his middle and high school.

Isaiah was a very strong student and had several instances where he felt his teachers may have started off being very stern, but over time the negative interactions were eventually overturned into positive relationships. He did identify initial negative interactions with professionals in the school environment stating, “Young African American males enter into an educational environment wherein the educator expects them to behave in a stereotypical way, and so the teacher overcorrects.” This was attributed to preconceived expectations based on stereotypes that in his case, were unfounded and hurt the possibility of building a meaningful educational relationship with Isaiah. He later concluded, “They jump on every little infraction, resulting in a student that feels marginalized.” Isaiah throughout his interview presented a balanced approach to his description, something gained through his own desire to be a professional public educator. He finalized this statement with, “On the other hand, the job of an educator is immense and difficult.” Isaiah presented a broader picture during his interview that the negative interactions were an attempt to maintain control in an environment where the

teacher and the student could feel uncomfortable based on the presence of stereotypical beliefs that are unproven, but somehow gained credibility through interactions. Maintaining control of the class through the belief of a perceived stereotype about African American males prohibited the creation of a relationship between the student and the educator. Relationships between teachers and students is important to the overall academic success of a classroom. Without the relationship it is difficult for the students to find the motivation needed to progress through advanced courses or to try new courses unrelated to sports. Grayson shared in his responses that the use of policy to maintain control of the class was the beginning of many negative interactions with his teachers. Based on assumptions of his appearance, teachers would often interact with him in a stern manner to preemptively prevent classroom disruptions. Grayson spoke about the emotions of anger and sadness that went along with the initial negative interactions with educators because he was being judged by a stereotype rather than as an individual.

Education for Grayson was more mandatory than relevant when he was in middle school and his first year of high school. He shared in his interview this was based largely on the initial negative interactions he experienced with school staff members. "I had good teachers, but I experienced a lot of negative interactions with substitutes because they wanted to keep the class under control." He spoke of a consistent need for teachers to maintain control when dealing with African American males. He attributed it to the need to separate cultural norms of dress and hairstyles. "Students had a lot of issues with teachers and administrators based on how they dressed, they would not talk to you with respect or like a person." These interactions caused an effect of disassociation with the importance of school. It was when he began to live with his father and his stepmother that his education became important in terms of trying to excel rather than merely showing up and doing enough to pass, allowing him time to pursue his other

interests outside of the classroom. The need to control the classroom was spoken about in the delivery of Grayson, Jackson, Ryan, Alexander and Isaiah. Levi shared many occurrences in his interview and on the questionnaire where he was receiving lessons at home that reinforced a sense of cultural pride through history that was lacking in his schools. Levi spoke at length about the use of school discipline procedures and policies to control students. But he also added a new layer that was not spoken about by the other participants. His first and most impactful initial negative interactions were based on the content not just policies and procedures of the school.

Levi gave many strong quotes regarding negative initial interactions. Many were similar to those that the other participants reported; however, he shed light on academic initial interactions that were often unsettling and caused him to look unfavorably with his teachers. He stated, “It is hard to feel liberated when the first thing they tell you is that your people were slaves.” He went into detail concerning the use of hegemonic practices that have been identified in the body literature (Larnell et al., 2014; Sleeter, 2012). Levi described experiencing American history in a manner where European ideals and European descendants were painted as heroic and a part of the creation of something special, American Democracy. However, African Americans are first taught the history of slavery for their cultural entrance into democracy. Levi pointed at “The importance being seen as less than from the beginning” as the negative initial interaction with teachers, especially those who taught history. Levi experienced similar concerns alongside the other participants when speaking about the negative interactions; however, it was this notion of subjugation as the first teachings concerning African American history that was his main concern. He was less concerned with the practical interactions and more focused on the ability to use hegemonic practices to impress upon those who are oppressed further oppression through

a lack of strength and pride in cultural, ethnic, and racial identity. Levi felt strongly about his academic abilities; yet, he was rarely interested fully in school because he felt he was not valued and or was his culture. He always maintained high grades but rarely felt authentically engaged or connected to the content presented in his classes.

The Presence of Race Identification

During all three methods of data collection, participants spoke about the issue of race and their identification as African American males as playing a role in their educational experience. During the interviews and the focus group, participants described several experiences in detail that highlighted the presence of race as a factor, whether overtly or covertly. Scott and Rodriguez (2015) described the presence of race in educational institutions and how the presence of racial identity can have harmful effects on teachers' and students' interactions. Those interactions can be fostered by stereotype threats from both parties that signal in the individuals a sense of action or thought that is based on racial stereotypes.

While hosting the interview session with Isaiah, he described his experiences as lacking overt racist practices. Isaiah had friends of different races at school largely because he had several classes that were honors courses. In each of the schools he attended, he noticed that he would be one of two or maybe three African American males in the classroom. The absence of other African American males was noticed early, but overtime he grew use to the low representation. On his questionnaire he stated, "Actually, there were not that many African American males that I remember having in my classes." He noticed that there were few students who looked like him in many of his courses and wondered why. However, he did not try to identify any specific reason for the lack of participation in these courses by African American males, only that he did take notice that there were fewer in the honors courses. Isaiah attributed

the disproportionate participation rates as a self-choice for those who participated and those who chose not to. Isaiah remembered, “Most of them were similar to me in that they did not fit the mold of being stereotypically Black; so for the most part, they rarely had conflicts with teachers,” as was the reason why he and those African American males selected the rigorous content classes. Isaiah shared this idea with several other participants in this research study. Race was something that they noticed and that they did give attention to interactions and systemic practices that could be connected to racial stereotypes or racial bias. Isaiah concluded, “Stereotypes and racism have a huge impact on African American Males in public education.” Isaiah reported that he was aware of his race, the notions of racism and how it effects societal interactions, though he never experienced overt racism. He noticed that he was one of a few African American males in his classes. He also noticed that at times, he was one of a few in his school. This is a connection that Isaiah and Benjamin both shared. Benjamin was aware of his race, racism and societal implications in elementary school. This shaped his interactions with his peers because he, unlike Isaiah, experienced overt racism at a young age.

Benjamin and his older sister were the only African American students in their school when he was in first grade. He stated, “When I was in 1st grade, I was teased and made fun of because of my skin color by other students. I was one of two Black students.” Benjamin explained that this made him immediately aware of race and from that point forward, he was much more aware of the presence of race in his educational experience. Though the school took the appropriate steps, he noticed over time, that there were school rules and practices that were often aimed at curbing the African American males’ expression of culture through dress and language.

Benjamin spoke during the focus group at length about his mother and other parents had to complain to the district Superintendent about the campus policies at the high school regarding hairstyles. For him, race was the basis of the campus policy, or at least that was the result. The need to understand why others could wear their hairstyles, but African American hairstyles in particular were deemed inappropriate, was both frustrating and demoralizing. “I just needed to know why and we all wanted to know, why?” The administration ceased using this policy and the students felt that they were able to express themselves. Benjamin stated that it was an intentional process to have the policy reviewed, and the results helped to highlight how he could organize his peers and their parents to advocate for themselves when stereotypes and bias appeared in school. His experiences in elementary with overt racism gave him the motivation to speak out against rules and policies he felt were targeting African American males.

Jackson, Daniel, and Ryan all spoke about similar experiences regarding policies or occurrences that made them aware of their identified race in their interactions with school officials. Jackson noticed similar issues that Isaiah experienced regarding the inclusion of African American males in his classes, stating, “I noticed I was the only one.” This helped him to feel a sense of pride, but he was aware of the burden he carried because of being African American. Isaiah noticed at the time that he was in different courses; he did not feel the need to uphold the African American community. It was something he noticed as race has a presence in his mind; it was not a major focus. For Jackson, it was critical to his interactions. He felt that because he was African American, he had to set a good example to overturn the negative stereotypes. He said, “I take pride in my race because I was able to maybe reshape the way at least one person viewed African American males.” The presence of race in his life was rooted in

a desire to perform at high academic levels, possibly trying to change the minds of those educators who saw African American males as not being able to fulfill academic expectations.

Daniel spoke at length in his interview and on his questionnaire about being fully aware of his race and knowing that this may play a role in how others dealt with him. During a negative interaction with a campus officer, he became angry that the officer left no room for discussion during the incident, but that he chose to place him in handcuffs and chose to embarrass him in front of his peers. "I guess he just wanted to treat me like I was a bad Black kid, assuming I was a troublemaker," reported Daniel. He added a little later that he had discretion on the situation, "and even though I was in my ROTC uniform, he refused to listen to my questions." Daniel attributed the behavior to the officer holding a bias against him and it was most likely racially motivated. The experience was not the first time that Daniel felt that his role played a role in his interactions at school, but it did affirm his concerns that his race had a presence in his and those around him.

Ryan reported similarities as Benjamin and Daniel, because he experienced a situation as a primary student where he could identify where racial differences were present. Ryan experienced similar policies as Benjamin and had negative interactions with staff members based on racial stereotypes. At the time, he did not agree with the policies, which is not a requirement for school staff members. Ryan felt that the use of the policies was a way to regulate the behavior of the students to prevent having to really work with students at their level. As Ryan explained how the school system was assisting him to get to college on an athletic scholarship, he felt that he was not pushed academically largely because he was Black and was expected to only play basketball. Ryan reported, "I always just thought that was my way out." He paused for a second after this statement and then stated, "In reflection, I would have taken more classes,

but because I was Black, I just took the classes where I could pass.” He went on to say in the focus group session, “and it was not just me, we [African American males] did not want to seem soft so we took the stuff we were expected to, like football and basketball.” Ryan was aware at an early age that his racial identity was both a push and pull factor. His push factors were toward sports and his pull were away from academics outside of passing to play sports. As with the initial negative interaction, Levi had the strongest connection to being able to perform both athletically and academically. Levi was able to connect the two concepts into the overarching understanding of the societal stereotypes placed on African American males. Athletics is valued and Levi participated in sports each year of school. This brought him friends and a sense of connection to his school. However, he also wanted to show teachers that he was capable of taking advanced courses. These ideas and actions shown by Levi were rooted in his understanding of how teachers may have perceived him based on his race, something he consistently observed during his public education experience.

Levi perhaps had the strongest feeling that race and racial stereotypes were present in his public education experience. He shared examples of students being treated very differently in elementary, middle, and high school. Levi went to an elementary school that was less than 1% African American in population. Another student used a derogatory racial term toward him and he became aware at that moment that racial stereotypes were present. Levi said, “At that moment, I was never going to let that happen again.” Levi was not the only participant to report his personal experience with overt racial stereotypes. He stated his awareness became stronger as time went on and gave several examples. These examples were delivered in both his questionnaire and his individual interview. Levi was made aware of the presence of race through both negative and positive situations.

One example shared by Levi in both his questionnaire and his interview spoke about discipline consequences were often different for African American males in comparison to Caucasian students at his school. Levi explained, “When we got caught playing dice, we [African American males] got in trouble, and the White boys did not even get suspended; they said it was math.” Whether Levi saw the consequences given to the Caucasian students, it was a situation where Levi identified his race as a factor in the decisions being made by campus professionals.

Each of the three themes in this transcendental phenomenological study are a result of data collected from 11 participants through a questionnaire, individual interview, and a focus group session. African American males’ descriptions of stereotypes experienced in K-12 public education in San Antonio, Texas, was the phenomena in this study. The themes presented are a result of investigating this phenomenon utilizing a qualitative method and a phenomenological research design, to collect and analyze data of the shared lived experiences of a criterion-based sampling population of this study.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate descriptions of stereotypes experienced by African American males to understand the role that stereotypes based on race affected the population, if there was any effect at all. Eleven 18- to 28-year-old African American males who attended K-12 public education in San Antonio, Texas, participated in the research study. A questionnaire, individual interview, and a focus group were the means of data collection. Through analysis, the three themes that emerged were (a) limitations on academic expectations, (b) negative initial interactions, and (c) the presence of race identification.

Critical race theory (Bell, 1980) was the theoretical framework that was the foundation of the study, based on the work he performed in the field of education. Bell (1980) explained that educational institutions have institutional discriminatory practices that must be looked at through the lens of race. The departure of race within individual interactions was also a difficult task to accomplish. The information discussed below are summaries of the shared experiences of African American males and stereotypes present in public education based on the research questions of this study.

RQ1: How do African American males describe their experience with stereotypes in a South Texas K-12 classroom?

African American male descriptions of lived experiences was the method in which participants provided data in this study. The direct research question was not asked, but through the questionnaire, individual interviews, and the focus group, this question was met. Each of the participants used reflection as a method to deliver their data to the researcher. The participants were from varying backgrounds in terms of schools attended as well as the communities in which the schools served. However, each participant described experiencing stereotypes and that racial stereotypes played a role in the African American public education experience. Some reported overt interactions based on their racial identity and relayed how it made them feel. Others spoke about the covert methods they were subjugated to racial stereotypes, providing examples to justify their responses. All of the participants gave real world examples as the foundation to their perceptions and descriptions of their lived experience with stereotypes in public educational settings in San Antonio, Texas.

Participants reported that in San Antonio, they felt they were afforded opportunities without race being a factor, even when they felt racial stereotypes were present. However, the

stereotypes they and the educators with whom they interacted, were often associated with were the negative stereotypes of African American males. This made them feel uncomfortable in certain academic situations, leading to them not participating in activities that were stereotypically not associated with being an African American male. Elijah stated in the focus group session, “I would go into classes and try to show that I was smart and not a threat so the teachers would want to teach me.” He wanted to show his teachers that he was not the negative stereotypical African American male regarding academics. He then stated, “But once the bell rang and I went back in the halls, I would sag my pants and walk really tough.” I asked him to clarify why he would use the two methods for acceptance. The first method of acceptance was being for the teacher and the second method used was around his peers. Elijah said, “Because it was not cool to be smart, physical prowess is more important to my peers, but it scares teachers.”

At that moment, Ryan chimed in on the focus group and stated, “You cannot be soft.” Ryan then went on to explain that at his school, it was imperative to be tough or act *hard*. I asked Ryan to clarify what he meant by hard, and Ryan went on to share that he had to be tough around his peers so that he was not picked on or made fun of; but for teachers it had to be different because they would not want to work with students if they felt slightly threatened. The thought of a conflict with African American male students based on racial stereotypes, while the students also feel the pressure of stereotype threats to identify as being African American was present in the research (Ruffins, 2013; Scott & Rodriguez, 2015; Sleeter, 2012; Taylor & Walton, 2011, Tenebaum & Ruck, 2007).

The African American male student must wrestle with the ideas associated with whether to portray stereotypes through their actions as a means to appease and feel a part of their peer group, which is often in opposition to building meaningful relationships with teachers. This is a

portion of stereotype threat (McClain, 2016). Participants reported that teachers displayed stereotypes toward African American males through an internal fear of the students making possible poor choices and negative behaviors. Several participants presented this time of getting to know one another as a grace period, but it was really a period of gauging whether the other individual, teacher, or student, would portray the negative stereotypes of or toward African American males.

The descriptions of the experiences were often associated with real world examples that focused directly on the reason or justification of the participant's perspective on the issue. Benjamin shared his perspective on being the only African American student and gave an example of why that was significant in his experience. Levi shared a similar experience being the only African American student and he gave several real world examples of how this perspective was formed and used them to justify his perceptions. Isaiah had few negative experiences based on race, and he gave real world examples of his experiences and used them to show how his interactions with teachers and peers was different than the typical African American male experience. Each participant added to the data by giving rich details of the experiences and focused their descriptions on their perception of the phenomena as well as real world examples to validate their responses.

RQ2: How, if at all, did participants' experiences with stereotypes in the classroom contribute to their academic achievement?

Emerging from the data collected on the questionnaires, interviews, and the focus group session highlights that stereotypes had a negative effect on the academic achievement of African American males. The negative effect was rooted in two areas regarding the phenomena of this study: (a) willingness to participate in rigorous academic courses and (b) an overreliance on and

expectations to play sports. Participant responses on the questionnaire, in interviews, and during the focus group delivered information that showed stereotypes both externally and internally create barriers to academic success for African American males in public education.

Access to advanced curriculum was available in the participants' experiences. However, few of them took advantage to the degree in which they felt it set them up for future success academically. Jackson and Elijah reported that they had to prove they could do the work. Jackson spoke about taking a course in which the teacher was not sure if he could handle the work and asked if he wanted to leave the class before it even really got going. "She wanted me to drop out of the class because she assumed I was not going to make it in the class." He did well in the course and that is what made him to continue to take more honor courses. Elijah shared a situation with one of his teachers where she asked him directly whether he could handle the work, stating, "I was shocked, she asked if I could do the work. I even started to doubt myself." At first, he was discouraged, but she later told him, upon finishing the grace period spoken of earlier, she offered him an opportunity to ask for assistance at any time and reassured him that he could do the coursework.

The harm done in this case was slim, because the two participants were able to continue progressing academically forward. However, for others, this was not always the case, and it inhibited them from being able to take rigorous courses. Taking part in academic courses that offer increased depth and complexity in learning, fosters a greater connection to the material. Levi was visibly upset during his interview when he began to talk about his high school's policy for participation in advanced courses. They would put several layers in front of it, stating, "You got to get a signature from a teacher and a recommendation from a counselor." He admitted that it made him mad and not take the courses because of the barriers. He went on to say, "They put

a bunch of steps to discourage you from participating, but really your parents could make a request and you were in.” Levi was allowed into the classes after his mother intervened. Levi felt he would have been more prepared and so would have many of his peers if there were not systemic barriers to being able to select advanced courses.

In the interview and focus group, Ryan reported that he and other athletes were told not to take advanced courses or were placed into certain courses based on eligibility requirements. He was concerned during his interview that this practice hurt him from being academically successful in college, stating, “I never even knew about academic plans and requirements until I was in college and they gave me my degree plan.” Feeling that he was held back by a lack of academic expectations for him was a concept he repeated in all three methods of his data collection. Ryan felt that the stereotypes toward African American male athletes played a role in his academic achievement.

Alexander shared the same sentiment, as he was a star athlete all around. He had a message based on the systemic low expectations of the entire student body, one that was mostly African American, that the school chose to offer very few advanced courses. Alexander said during the focus group, “Unlike some schools, my school just did not have anything academically strong; they focused on athletics.” The school offered several athletic activities but few in the manner of advanced academic courses, hurting his chances and the chances of his peers to be academically involved in school at a level higher than the regular coursework. He went on to later explain, “They were more focused on us [African American males] getting a diploma and just getting out of school than believing we could actually go to college.” Alexander also talked about he was not the only person who experienced this; all of his African American male friends in school felt this same way. Athletics was valued more than academics.

Of the participants in this study, Jackson, Grayson, Benjamin, Alexander, Ryan, Daniel, Levi, Isaiah, Landon, and Bryson all played high school sports. Alexander, Ryan, and Landon played collegiate sports. The role that sports had on the African American population in San Antonio was major. Each of the participants spoke at length about the role of sports in their lives and those who look like them. While speaking, many also admitted that though they were athletic, they had many other interests in school; but this is where they were expected to participate. Because it takes a lot of practice and attention to improve athletic skills, they had to make a choice between doing one or the other.

Landon spoke at length in his interview about the role basketball played in his life. “It was a way to get my college paid, so I am grateful for that.” However, in high school he felt that sports were praised higher by the school and the community where he lived. He rarely saw African American males in educational programs, but participation in sports was very high. Landon stated, “Sports, we mostly played sports, it was expected, especially if you were pretty good.” Landon enjoyed playing sports but felt it had to have some form of a balance in the respect one gets from it. Landon shared, “I tried to focus on both, especially as I grew older, but it took up more of my time because it was about respect and it got me respect.”

The academic limitations that were in place once a student began to invest fully in his education was often a struggle for the participants. Daniel was a very good athlete but hoped to join the military after high school. He participated in sports and ROTC, but was soon faced with a dilemma in high school. Always a good student, he noticed that in ROTC he could sustain his grades better and, therefore, eventually quit playing sports. He did not regret the decision because he knew it was more important to have high grades, but he stated that because of sports,

“I struggled my junior year with grades and whether to play sports.” He feels that the choice made at the time was the better choice and he was happier when it was all said and done.

Ryan, Alexander, and Benjamin all spoke about giving up academic endeavors to participate in sports that ultimately had a negative effect on their academic success. Ryan and Alexander quit the band to play sports. Both participants shared stories of success in band and that had it not been for the expectation of them to play sports, they would have stayed in the band through high school.

Benjamin told the other participants in the focus group session that he was interested in theatre. But there was no way he would take the class because he felt compelled to play basketball because he was African American, stating, “I would walk past the theatre and see them practicing, but I knew no one expected that of me. I am supposed to play basketball, and I am good at it.” He would later take up theatre and acting in his adult life in college and in the local acting scene. Stereotypes and their academic connections to African American affect the academic success of this population.

RQ3: What, if any, emotions toward classroom stereotypes did participants experience?

Through reflection, participants were able to speak about their experiences with stereotypes. Participants shared descriptions about being directly involved with stereotypes as well as instances where they directly witnessed another African American male being affected by stereotypes. The direct interaction with stereotypes was explained in a different manner than those that were witnessed. In the situations where there was direct interaction, participants spoke about the emotional connection with the educator, while indirect was often left absent of any emotional connection regarding the type and form of the stereotype. When faced with

stereotypes, the participants gave descriptions that they were offended, angered, and lost trust with the individual educator with whom the interaction took place.

Levi in his interview was offended and angered by one of his teachers in school. He was a strong chess player and competed against other students around the city of San Antonio. He enjoyed playing chess and liked being a part of a team. During his time on the chess team, he felt constant conflict with the chess sponsor, stating, "I was once left behind on a tournament; they took another kid even though I had been a part of the team that won and advanced to the tournament." Levi was angry and disappointed in being left behind and though he enjoyed chess, he was very angry and disappointed at the belief that he was left behind based on his race. Whether that was the actual reason, because Levi internalized this as purposefully racially stereotyping him caused him to give up chess for good. Levi reported, "I quit after that, you know, I am done. I'm not about to deal with this, that's just how it was."

Alexander shared during his interview and during the focus group that he had serious conflicts with his band director in the 6th grade. Even after feeling immense pride in improving his skills, he had consistent conflicts and negative interactions with his band director. He noticed that the director had a very different relationship with several of his classmates and those students were not African American. In his mind, this was based on his race and he felt consistently stereotyped by the instructor, stating, "I think he did not like me because of my skin color, I mean, I was really good after practicing, and he still did not like me." He added, "It was my race, had to be."

Whether this was the actual reason, Alexander felt that this consistent interaction was rooted in him being African American and caused him to weigh his options between participation in sports, where he felt accepted and band, where he felt he was not. These feelings

were based on his perception from several negative interactions that no matter how hard he worked, his band director fundamentally did not like him based on his race and the negative stereotypes that were associated with African American males in education. Alexander stated, “I was hurt, because I worked hard and earned my spot in first chair.” Alexander was angry and frustrated and lost trust in his director and ultimately quit the band.

Jackson and Elijah both attended college after taking several honors courses in high school. As both spoke emotionally about how they were faced with initial barriers to the classes based on preconceived stereotypes concerning their intellectual abilities, neither individual struggled in advanced courses; but they were consistently asked to question their academic abilities, at times in front of their peers, making them angry, discouraged, and disappointed in their instructors.

Jackson shared a time when he had a teacher who admitted that she appreciated that he was not like the typical Black student, saying, “I could not believe she shared that with me.” Even though he was very successful in the class, he felt like she was displaying stereotypes on his peers and he was offended. He became aware of her behavior and wanted to prove to her that he was able to compete academically in the class and began working harder to reach his goals in the class. He reported, “I think the stereotypes of us [African American males] are used too often and they have an effect, unfortunate, it is sad and really disappointing.” Jackson did not let this deter him from being successful, but he felt that the teacher’s actions did hinder other African American males from taking the class.

Elijah, on the other hand, had several teachers ask him directly if he could compete in the course. He stated, “A few asked me directly if I could hang with the course, especially based on my physical appearance.” He stated that he dressed like the typical kid from the inner city:

braids, sagging pants, and a baggy shirt. He then reported, “I was like yes, then I said wait, can I do this class?” The immediate self-doubt made him feel angry and defeated, if only for that moment. Later, he went to speak with one of the teachers, and she offered to help him if he needed help. His anger, frustration, disappointment, and lost trust began to turn around. By him communicating with the teacher, he felt like it made the situation a lot better and she was able to see him as a good person who aspired to learn everything she had to teach. Elijah said, “After that, she and I met occasionally for tutoring, but I really did not need it. I was showing her that my grades mattered to me.” The relationship with the teacher got better and better and eventually he became her student aide the next year.

Elijah and Jackson were met with initial feelings of anger, offense, and a lack of trust with their teachers. Both felt it was largely based on the stereotypes toward African American males. They realized that they needed to take advanced courses to reach their career goals. They found a way to succeed through building a strong relationship with their teacher. Jackson chose to use the anger, lack of trust, and feeling of being offended to increase his intrinsic motivation and prove the teacher wrong, stating, “I made it a point to show her I could always do well in her class.” Elijah found that through building a relationship with the teacher that he could change her mind and show her through action that he was not the stereotype that she was perceiving about African American males. Elijah used his emotions of anger, offense, and lack of trust to seek a way to build a better relationship and prove to his teacher that he was a good student and cared about his grades, negating her possible belief of the negative stereotypes of African American males. By doing so, Elijah gave himself a better opportunity to be continually exposed to information that would be vital to his future career.

Summary

In this chapter, the findings of the phenomenological study are presented. The manner in which data were collected and analyzed are discussed. Themes that emerged due to the open-coding process are also presented. The three themes that emerged are (a) limitations on academic expectations, (b) negative initial interactions, and (c) the presence of race identification. Each of the research questions that guided this study was answered based on the data collected of the lived experiences of 11 African American males in San Antonio, Texas. The findings were connected to the theoretical framework of the study. Additionally, this chapter listed the method taken to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the research study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The specific problem related to this qualitative study was that African American males in South Texas experience factors related to stereotypes in public education classrooms (Condrón, Tope, Steidl, & Freeman, 2012; Hall Mark, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to investigate African American male descriptions of stereotypes experienced in K-12 public education in San Antonio, Texas. The information and data collected in this research as well as the findings were investigated through the lived experiences of 11 African American males. This chapter is comprised of a summary of the findings including the research questions that guided the study. During the data analysis process, a constant comparative method was used to make comparisons between the body of research surrounding the phenomena. The implementation of the constant comparison method also identified gaps in the literature, which are included in this chapter as well. Encompassing the implications and recommendations for school personnel and African American males, solutions are provided to resolve common misconceptions in public education. Lastly, recommendations for future research and acknowledgement of limitations are discussed.

Summary of Findings

Three research questions helped in guiding this qualitative phenomenological study. The overall problem in the research focused on the manner and types of stereotypes that were experienced by African American males during K-12 public education in San Antonio, Texas. This information was largely missing from the literature and all participants in the study provided data to explain that internal and external stereotypes were present in the educational experiences of African American males in the study setting. Stereotypes played a major role in

their experiences with teachers and upon reflection, lived experiences were shared during the data collection process.

The second research question for this study focused on the effects of stereotypes on the academic achievement of the participants. The achievement gap phenomena are a constant reminder of the possible differences in the experiences of racial minorities in public education, especially African American males (Bracey, 2015; Chang, 2013; Hartney & Flavin, 2013). The statistical differences in reading and math performance on national standardized testing highlighted an achievement gap between African American males and their Caucasian peers (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The participants shared that the presence of stereotypes contributed to their relationships with educators as well as the content being taught. There was a grace period where teachers often needed to identify whether the particular African American male student would portray the behaviors associated with negative stereotypes. African American males would choose to either work with the teacher through this grace period or eventually abandon the courses. When the latter happened in advanced courses, participants described that they felt that by not being comfortable taking the course, hurt them later down the line.

The third research question focused on the emotions that were tied to stereotypes. Each individual shared his lived experiences. Through reflection, detailed real world examples were provided that showed African American males were often offended, angered, and lost trust in the professional educators who portrayed stereotypical reactions to the participants. Participants reported that they needed teachers who were open to teaching them from the beginning. They needed teachers who challenged them to succeed because they often lacked any real academic push. Lastly, the participants shared occurrences or events where they felt that their teacher

displayed negative stereotypes on them, and it left them feeling that they were not welcome in the classroom, causing them to disengage all together.

Discussion

This section of the study reports the findings and their relationships with empirical and theoretical literature from Chapter Two. There are connections explained between previous researched that confirmed or corroborated data that emerged during this study. This section also discusses where data collected and analyzed during this study diverged from or extended previous research on the phenomena. Lastly, this section proposes contributions to the field of research regarding this phenomenon.

Empirical Literature

In Chapter Two of this study, research was outlined that highlighted the consistent discrepancies in academic achievement of African American males in the public education system (Appel & Kronberger, 2012; Condrón et al., 2012). The discrepancies are highlighted in the reading and math data collected by the Center for Education Statistics (2014). As schools began to segregate, the body of literature focused on access to education (Fairclough, 2002). The access to education suggested that African American students would be better off in schools that were not segregated and made strong implication that schools serving African American males did not contain the same quality education as the schools that served Caucasian students (Walker, 2013). As segregation ended with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the issues with access began to be addressed. However, total de-segregation of public schools would be fought in the courts federally and later in the states courts, it was evident that the era of *de jure* school segregation was over in American education.

The concerns of educating all American regardless of race began a new argument upon disaggregating student achievement data based on race. Hartney and Flavin (2013) highlighted the political foundations that helped foster the achievement gap of African American males and their Caucasian counterparts in public education settings. The gap was rooted in societal values and norms that accept one culture over another through systemic elevation of one culture over the other. This is often termed as hegemonic practices, as these everyday occurrences show a tendency to place higher value on one culture and then assert those same values into the policies and procedures within the institution. Public schools are institutions that service a community; however, at times those values are not in place at the schools where there are high concentrations of racial minorities.

Levi stated in his interview, “It is hard to feel liberated as a Black man in public education.” When asked further why, he stated, “When the first thing they teach you is that you were a slave.” He was referring to feeling very negatively about the first mention of African Americans in history as slaves in America. Everything else about African American history in the United States is either before or after slavery. This was profound in his mind, because Levi felt that the history of African Americans in America was founded on being second class; and though history must be taught with honesty, he wished that more of the story was being told in a clear, chronological, and concise manner. It was with this sentiment that Levi began to find little relevance in the educational process because he could not see a representation of himself in many of the courses he took. Relevance in topics discussed was also spoken about in the empirical literature (Hargrove & Seay, 2011).

The curriculum decided by teachers often plays a major role in the students finding relevance in the topics being discussed in school. As students take courses, they begin to find

the relevance in the content and feel a connection. Teachers are able to create lesson plans that entice students to investigate deeper into the curriculum and provide them an opportunity to discover the topics at a personal level (Sato & Israelson, 2013). This is the means to reaching African American males. A students' connection with the content is the means for course selection. During this study, the participants spoke about the courses they took and which ones they enjoyed the most. On the questionnaire, during their interview, and in the focus group session, participants shared which courses they enjoyed and which ones they did not enjoy.

Ryan and Alexander shared that they enjoyed band immensely because they enjoyed the music and were naturally curious about getting better at the creation of music. They found relevance in the process and made a natural connection between their efforts and the fondness with a class where they could find relevance in the outcomes. Daniel found great relevance in ROTC because it provided him the opportunity to be a leader, something he also really enjoyed. He planned on going into the military and saw this as a way to get some early training before he began his official career. Elijah and Isaiah both found a love for math and science. While in high school, they both enjoyed the difficulty of the math and the complexity of the sciences, especially chemistry. Isaiah reported that his chemistry class was one of the best courses he took while in school and that the class had an impact on his life. Elijah enjoyed sciences so much that he chose to use that passion as a vehicle through college as well as in his current career. Jackson stated, "I fell in love with literature when I read books that represented positives about my culture." He found relevance in the works of literature that gave him a sense of pride in himself. This led Jackson to read other books outside of his comfort zone and he began to enjoy the study of literature. He too, like Elijah, has used this as the means to gain his college degree as well as in his future career. In all of their statements about the relevance in a class or the lack of, the

participants continued to stress that the teachers in these classes were a major component.

Teachers could either make or break the class in terms of their internal interest in the course.

Teacher-to-student interactions are a large portion of the empirical literature regarding African Americans in public education (Taylor & Walton, 2011). Students and teachers work together to increase the retention of content knowledge through exposure, application of learning skills, and assessments to discover level of mastery. This process affords students a pathway to mastering concepts being presented in classes. The manner in which teachers complete these tasks are through daily interactions with students. Positive interactions between teachers and students increase academic success for African American males (Wilson & Rodkin, 2011). The concern regarding this research study was that there were fewer positive interactions with African American males and their teachers based on the presence of racial stereotypes.

All of the participants in this study reported that they had negative interactions with educators or had witnessed other African American males experiencing these same negative interactions with educators and that these negative interactions led to disengagement from the content or school. Levi quit the chess team because of consistent negative interactions with the sponsor. He had consistent interactions where he felt he was being singled out due to his race and felt that no matter what he accomplished as a chess player, it would never be enough to foster a relationship with his chess sponsor. Alexander quit the band program because of negative interactions with the band director. He reported, "I do not think he liked me because of my race." Alexander stated that no matter what he did, the situation was never resolved. Over time this negative interaction caused him to attract more to athletics where he felt welcome.

Elijah reported a situation where he was searched by the campus officer and an administrator because of his race. He concluded, "During the search, I asked them why me, and

they stated it was because I was with the kid who they found the illegal item in the morning at breakfast.” Elijah was hurt by this comment and knew he was not the only student eating breakfast with the young man who possessed the illegal item at school. Elijah went on to say, “I was the only Black student with him at breakfast.” Elijah felt embarrassed by the incident because though he was a good student, he was placed in handcuffs in the cafeteria in front of his peers. Elijah was not the only student to report being placed in handcuffs and searched by school staff members; Alexander reported a similar incident during his high school experience. Alexander had to fight his case in court. Each of the negative interactions led some of the participants to look inward at their own personal identification as an African American male and they were faced with a choice: to follow the stereotypes or to resist the stereotypes through their actions. This process of selection is mentioned in the literature as stereotype threat (Hartley & Sutton, 2013).

Stereotype threat is activated internally when participants worry as to whether they are portraying a certain stereotypical behavior. In Chapter Two, this is discussed at length as the means and manner of stereotype threat in the empirical literature. Taylor and Walton (2011) reported that stereotype threat can have a consistent and stressful effect on students in educational settings. As students employ intrinsic motivation to complete tasks, they often seek within themselves to identify why they are choosing to perform certain tasks. For example, a student may dress or act a certain way to identify with and among a certain culture. Even for those who are not normally of the race or ethnicity, if they wish to be associated with the stereotypes of that group, they may act in a manner that is stereotypical of the culture with which they wish to identify. Hip-hop culture is often associated with African American culture and cultural expressions (Kirkland & Jackson, 2009). If a Caucasian male wants to be associated

with African American hip-hop culture, he may dress a certain way to display outwardly his affection and wish to identify as a part of the culture

Stereotype threat can be of a positive connotation or a negative connotation, which is also explained in Chapter Two of this study. In the case of the participants, several spoke about the stereotypes that are negative playing a role in how they chose to interact with teachers as well as the courses they selected. Ryan spoke about having pride in being a part of the band and playing his instrument. However, when some of his friends who were also African American males saw that he was in the band, they began to give him a hard time about it. He was also a good athlete and chose to identify with this stereotype because it was dually accepted, by his culture and others. Ryan reported that he was not embarrassed about being a part of the band, but merely that he was not being *Black enough* in the eyes of his peers. In this situation, Ryan was directly faced with stereotype threat. He had to decide whether he was going to associate with the dominate stereotype of African American males being athletic or to continue on his path as a band participant. His peers and community valued his athleticism and eventually he quit the band for basketball.

This version of stereotype threat was reported by Benjamin as well. He chose not to participate in theatre because he felt a pressure to act *Black*. In an attempt to identify with his race, he chose to succumb to stereotype threats that valued athletics over academic or performing arts interests. Benjamin stated in the focus group session, “I did not join theatre because of the pressure to be in athletics; I was tall, Black, and athletic.” Though he would later begin to take performing arts classes, he always felt like he missed out on some great memories and opportunities in high school because he did not take any theatre courses due to stereotype threats.

The disproportionate rates of academic achievement cannot merely be explained through statistical data. The lived experiences give powerful data in understanding the phenomena of the achievement gap. The 11 participants in this study shed light on the types of stereotypes experienced as well as their emotions that resulted from the stereotypes. They also shared how the educators who portrayed those stereotypes contributed to their academic achievement. Participants shared information that was connected to the body of empirical literature and it often confirmed what was presented.

However, the empirical literature did not highlight the role of initial interactions and the importance of them to African American males. In Chapter Four, data were presented that indicated each of the participants having a negative interaction with at least one teacher. Participants reported that they encountered situation where they had to prove that they were not *stereotypically Black*. The participants shared real world examples of instances where they were pre-judged by teachers or other educators and it had a negative impact on the trust and relationship with that educator. First impressions were important to them.

Elijah spoke regarding the importance of an initial negative interaction with an assistant principal who refused to place him in advanced courses. Jackson shared that he had several teachers who took a while to warm up to him based on his being an athlete. Landon reported that several teachers waited to see if he was going to display any negative behaviors before building a positive relationship with him. Each reported that they noticed a difference in the way the teacher expected them to behave and had to make a conscious decision to either portray what they expected in terms of the negative stereotypes or to purposefully show a very different type of behavior to get the teachers cooperation. These feelings of the first impression being a key component to the academic achievement of African American males emerged in the study.

Theoretical Literature

The theoretical framework of this study was critical race theory. Bell (1980) wrote about the removal of race from American institutions and how it is difficult to accomplish. Race and racism is counterproductive to success but present nonetheless and must be addressed. To better understand the role in which race has played in the academic achievement of African American males, critical race theory seeks to examine the role of race, racism, and societal implications that arise from the level of implementation of race related practices (Bell, 1995). Contained in this theory is the focus on social interactions rather than the individual practices. Critical race theory seeks to investigate how societal structures that are founded and currently practice racial patterns of oppression interrelate and the effect on those being subjugated (Howard & Navarro, 2016). The motivators behind the uses of critical race theory are rooted in systemic identification of policies and procedures in place that permit and omit racial inclusion and full participation.

During the research, participants reported information that drew connections to critical race theory in theory and application. However, the information shared with the researcher regarding direct oppression due to race was shared as covertly rather than overtly. None of the participants shared an event of direct racism from one of their teachers. They did not report experiences where they were called names, removed from events, or received a consequence with an explanation of their race as the reason. On the contrary, all of the participants reported that they never felt as if they were denied an opportunity based on their race alone. Many felt that covertly, they were discriminated against or were not given all the information of an academic opportunity based on racial stereotypes. However, there was no mention throughout the process of overt and direct racism aimed at them from an administrator. It was reported as “I

felt” or “They gave me the feeling” that the negative interaction was rooted in their race. Often based on the lack of witnessing very few, if any, negative interactions with Caucasian students and teachers were similar to those they felt African American males experienced.

Alexander reported during his interview and the focus session that he felt the teacher did not like him because of his race. Levi reported a similar statement about his chess sponsor. Grayson reported a similar statement about his interactions with several substitute teachers during his K-12 public education. Stating, “I felt like they did not like the Black kids.” This feeling of being disliked on race was a part of the research on critical race theory as it spoke to the emotions tied to individuals who felt they were experiencing covert racism (James, 2011; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

Through the empirical and theoretical literature regarding this research study, themes emerged that compared and contrasted the information presented in the past that would assist in the practical field of public education. The descriptions of the shared experiences shed light on the phenomena of stereotypes and the manner in which they contribute to the academic achievement of African American males. Critical race theory was the theoretical framework that presented the research study with a base to investigate the lived experiences of a criterion-based sample of participants who could describe their interactions within the societal institution of public education. The empirical literature shared insight into the ability to understand how the phenomena has been viewed and investigated in the past as well as a pathway to conduct and understand topics associated with this research study.

Implications

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was significant based on providing descriptions by African American males regarding stereotypes present in public

education. By doing so, there was an increased understanding of the essence of the shared experience with the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). The goal of the research was to investigate the presence of stereotypes and to evaluate the role to which they contribute to the academic experiences and achievement of African American males in public education. Instrumental to not only understanding this phenomenon with greater depth, this study identified key implications practically, empirically, and theoretically that could increase the success of public educators toward increased academic success and building better relationships with African American male students in public education.

Theoretical

Themes emerging from this research study implied that it is very difficult for individuals in public education to disassociate with race during daily interactions. It is also difficult for individuals in public education to dissociate race with policies and procedures in public education. Three participants in this study, Elijah, Benjamin, and Ryan, gave examples of educational policies that were aimed at limiting the cultural expressions of African American males in public education. Whether the schools thought about the policies and procedures as racially stereotypical, the African American males experiencing this policy felt it was unfair and based on race. Critical race theory supports the notion that legislative doctrines may support without purpose, racial division due to the dominant culture being widely accepted and adopted as the norm or even the rule (Bell, 1995). Policy makers in public education need to analyze discipline data based on infraction types and further break down the infractions by racial demographics. By doing so they will highlight whether any of the policies are singling out any one racial population in schools.

The racially motivated stereotypes described by the participants in this study linked the ideas presented in critical race theory regarding racial stereotypes and institutional policies.

Alexander, Landon, Benjamin, Levi, Jackson, Elijah, and Ryan all reported a feeling of racial tension and racial bias by their teachers based on racially motivated stereotypes during their K-12 experience. Though the racist practices they encountered were not overtly practiced, the covert nature of the racially motivated behavior had a lasting effect on them and their African American peers throughout their educational experiences.

Empirical

Empirical data on the phenomena highlighted that fewer African American males are achieving academically in comparison to their Caucasian peers (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The data presented in this research study focused on increasing the academic expectations of African American males. The participants reported that they had academic interest but that there was a higher expectation of athletic performance than academic participation. In some cases, athletics was given direct presence over academic coursework. Public educators will increase the success of their African American students, by intentionally focusing on this demographic and seeking their interest in advanced courses. Teachers and administrators on a campus can create a stronger connection with African American males toward feeling included in advanced coursework by analyzing their course offerings. Once complete, campus leaders can analyze the racial makeup of their advanced courses and electives to monitor the selection and completion of rigorous academic courses by African American males.

Ryan reported being placed in courses because he was a star basketball player in high school. Empirical literature suggests that there is a tendency to lower the academic expectations for African American males over time as they progress through the K-12 public education

system (Graves, 2010; Hall Mark, 2013; McClain, 2016). The data that emerged in this research study supported these empirical studies. African American males represent a small portion of the students in advanced courses as well as the students identified as eligible to participate in honors courses.

Practical

Teacher education programs are a first opportunity to assist future educators in being able to discuss stereotypes present in the classroom and how to address the effects of these practices have on the students. McClain (2016) explained that by ignoring the presence of possible stereotypes, there are disastrous consequences on the learning environment, leading to an increased level of tension and decreased possibility of students finding relevance and acceptance in their classrooms, especially for African American males. These actions lead to teachers and students increasing the likelihood of a negative initial interaction that could result in further tensions and conflicts between the teacher and the students. Ryan stated, “My favorite educator, he accepted us from the start.” Daniel reported about his favorite teacher, “She was always about teaching the students, from day one you could tell, she cared.” Teacher education programs are able to instill in future educators the will to identify their own beliefs and to foster a practical means to focus on removing racial stereotypes from their beliefs.

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations of this study consisted of identifying the problem, purpose, and research questions of the study. The research purpose was selected to make a positive impact on the identified problem of the study. There are other research problems related to African American males that could have been identified for investigation. Exploring the lived experience with African American males and stereotypes in San Antonio, Texas is based on identifying gaps

in the literature (Fultz & Brand, 2008). Selection of the research questions in this study was based on the critical race theoretical framework and empirical data being collected nationally (Bell, 1980; Center for Education Statistics, 2014). The selection of San Antonio Texas, as the setting was also a deliberate decision. Each participant in the study also needed to use reflection as a means to identify and describe their experiences in detail regarding the phenomena of the research study during data collection.

The phenomenological method of investigation was used based on seeking the descriptions about the essence of a shared lived experience (Henriques, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Data collection consisted of a questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group to increase trustworthiness and the credibility of the study (Cope, 2014). Data collection in this research study was based on the ability through reflection for the participants to share their experiences. The limitations of this study included the use of 11 participants between the ages of 18 and 28 years old. By limiting the amount of participants in the study, the data are relevant to demographically similar regions. By limiting the age of the participants, the study may miss the historical accounts and experiences of the sampling group. Participants had to have attended public schooling in San Antonio, Texas. Each of the participants volunteered for the study. Due to the voluntary nature of the participants and limitation was present as they were willing to participate based on a personal connection to the problem and purpose of the study.

Through self-reflection, the data collected has limitations based on the influence of external factors unrelated to the study. Participants shared positive and negative experiences based on memories of interactions with educators. These memories for some of the participants may be influenced based on their desire to be an educator or a strong emotional reaction to the interaction during their experience.

Recommendations for Future Research

In consideration of the study findings, limitations, and the delimitations placed on the study, recommendations for future research are provided. The recommendations for future research provided in this research study are vital to the success of public educators toward eliminating the current academic achievement gap between African American males and their peers. The recommendations being provided stem from the data collected through the questionnaires, individual interviews, and the focus group session of this study. They were based on the descriptions from the lived experiences of 11 African American males in San Antonio, Texas.

The first recommendation resulting from the data collected is to conduct a phenomenological study with participants who are slightly older in age than those participants in this study. Utilizing similar research questions and a similar theoretical framework, future research studies could allow for a study of experiences of participants over time. The first reports concerning racial disparities in student achievement began in the early 1980s (Palmer, Davis, Moore & Hilton, 2010). These data have been collected and analyzed over the last three decades. The participants in this study experienced the rising tide of monitoring student data based on race and seeking educational solutions to remedy any deficiencies. They were all in K-12 public education at a time when there was a national initiative to increase both student achievement and to eliminate achievement gaps. Though the achievement gap has largely stayed the same between African American males and Caucasian males, there has been growth (Center for Education Statistics, 2014). However, that growth is at the same rate; therefore, the academic performance gaps have stayed relatively unchanged. Several of the participants in this study reported that they were neither denied opportunities based on race, nor did they experience direct

and overt racism with a professional educator. By performing the study with older participants, it allows research to reflect changes in practice and experiences over time that may give clues that public education is currently moving in a positive direction. The data could also show that there has been little progress in many of the initiatives in public education to eliminate the achievement gap.

The second recommendation for future research is investigate the role stereotypes play in the lives of African American female students. Graves (2010) conducted a study that focused on parental involvement in both African American males and females. The study discussed a decline in academic expectations of parents and educators for both African American males and females each year in public education. The males had the largest drop in statistical expectations, while the females had the third largest drop behind Hispanic males. One of the emerging themes in this study was the limitations of academic expectations placed on the African American male participants.

Insight into this segment of the school population may bring about data that connect this research study assisting in further elimination of the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students. Exploring the issue of limited academic expectations as a topic worth further investigation opens the body of research to a new foundational understanding of intuitional racially motivated stereotypes with a connection to practical applications and implications that can have a negative impact on the performance of students.

Summary

In Chapter One of this qualitative phenomenological research study, the problem statement, significance of study, and purpose of the study were presented. African American males and their academic achievement have been a consistent topic of discussion since school

desegregation (Fultz & Brown, 2008). The specific problem related to this qualitative study was that African American males in South Texas experienced factors related to stereotypes in public education classrooms (Condrón et al., 2012; Hall Mark, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of 11 African American males who experienced stereotypes in their K-12 education. The significance of this study was to understand the effects of stereotypes on African American males and in turn to identify ways to assist educators in helping them to succeed academically.

Chapter Two provided the theoretical framework of the study as well as supplying the literature that helped to identify the phenomena in its entirety within the field of research. Utilizing critical race theory, the study was conducted using the lens of race, racial stereotypes, and institutional policies and procedures that fostered racial division, either overtly or covertly (Bell, 1980, 1995; Howard & Navarro, 2016). The phenomena of stereotypes and their effects on the African American male student population was listed statically in Chapter Two as a means to support the body of literature (Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Chapter Three consisted of the method and design of the research study. Included was justification for the selected research design, including research to support the reasons for the selection of a qualitative phenomenological research design. The research questions guiding the study were discussed in detail and the setting described in full detail. Procedures for data collection, criteria for participant selection, and the researcher's role in the study were all included to clarify into the pathway followed during the study. Finally, this chapter contained the manner that trustworthiness, credibility, validity, and transferability were reached while conducting this study.

Chapter Four presented explained in detail the data collection and analysis process that led to coding the themes that emerged. As a result of data analysis, three themes emerged: (a) limitations on academic expectations, (b) negative initial interactions, and (c) the presence of race identification. Each of the themes was able to relate directly to the research questions of the study. Participants shared their lived experiences through a questionnaire, in an individual interview, and through a focus group session.

Chapter Five is a summation of the findings regarding the research questions. Empirical, theoretical, and practical implications are discussed as well as bringing further clarity to the importance of the study. Recommendations for further research seek to extend the data collected in this study to participants of older age ranges as a means of comparing the experiences of African American males over time. It is also recommended that this study be applied to African American females.

During the investigation into the phenomena of the achievement gap and how stereotypes have affected the educational experiences of African American males, this study provided details into how the participants felt and what decisions were made as a result of the presence of stereotypes in their educational experiences. As a public educator, I had negative interactions with African American males that at times seemed to be from a perception that I was just another administrator or teacher in the system. I was able to build positive relationships often, but I had a difficult time understanding how that happened. Bianco et al. (2011) proposed that most African American males who went into teaching did so as a means to give back to their community, especially for African American male students. I found myself wondering during the study how many African American teachers each of the participants had during their educational experiences. Levi, Ryan, Elijah, Landon, Bryson, and Alexander spoke about the

absence of African American male teachers in their schools. Conducting this study not only highlighted the absence of African American male teachers, but the importance as well. Ryan spoke about the role an African American administrator played in his life, making him believe that he could aspire to anything if he worked hard for it. Levi shared a similar story as well. He had an African American male teacher who inspired him to own up to his name and change the negative feelings he had because he was named after his father. He and his father did not have the best relationship, and he had a hard time with his own name until his teacher helped him see another perspective.

This study also identified a common voice throughout many of the questions. Although the participants were not all the same age and did not attend the same schools or school districts, their descriptions of the stereotypes present in their educational experiences were very similar. The participants shared their honest perceptions of their experiences. The bracketing process assisted in being able to look at the participant response free of my personal assumptions and it also gave me the chance to allow the data to speak for itself.

The goals behind conducting this study were both personal and professional. My hope was that this research would assist public educators who work with African American males. This is a unique demographic with an educational experience that cannot be described merely through the statistical academic data. The inclusion of their voices and their perceptions into the investigation of the effects of stereotypes gives clarity and connects the reader to those most affected in education by racially motivated stereotypes, African American males.

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[liberty&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=4a9f0e87ca7e83a5de6cf14493b1ad03](http://www.go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA368074232&v=2.1&u=vic_liberty&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=4a9f0e87ca7e83a5de6cf14493b1ad03)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education Department

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 11, 2017

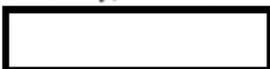
Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
IRB Approval 2749.011117: African American Males' Descriptions of Stereotypes in
Classrooms: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Donald L. Stewart, Jr.,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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APPENDIX B: INITIAL SCREENING SURVEY

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education Department

School Experience Survey

The information gathered from this survey will help to identify your description of school experiences. Information gathered from this questionnaire will determine further participation in the research.

Questions

Place an X in either (Y) for yes and (N) for no at the end of each question. Question three requires information regarding the state in which K-12 schooling was attended. Question four requires participants to list their ages if they are between 18 and 28.

1. Do you identify yourself as African American? (Y)___ or (N) ___
2. Did you attend K-12 schooling in a public setting? (Y)___ or (N) ___
3. Did you attend K-12 schooling in the San Antonio, Texas? (Y)___ or (N) ___
4. Are you between the ages of 18 and 28? If so, please list your age.
(Y)___ or (N) ___ Age: _____
5. Are you able to reflect upon your K-12 public school experience with detail? (Y)___ or
(N) ___
6. Do you feel that your experience can be shared with the researcher in a manner that
promotes dialogue? (Y)___ or (N) ___

Contact Information

Please list your contact information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: () - _____

Email Address: _____

Researchers Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research conducted by Donald L. Stewart, Jr., please contact me at dstewart9@liberty.edu

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
1/11/2017 to 1/10/2018
Protocol # 2749.011117

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM
Consent Form
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES' DESCRIPTIONS
OF STEREOTYPES IN
CLASSROOMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
Donald L. Stewart Jr.
Liberty University School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of African American male descriptions of stereotypes in classrooms. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an African American male between the ages of 18 and 28 who attended public school K-12 in San Antonio, Texas.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Donald L. Stewart Jr., a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the lived experiences of select African American males who experienced stereotyping in their K-12 education. The study seeks to answer three central questions:

1. How do African American males describe their experiences with stereotypes in a South Texas K-12 classroom?
2. How, if at all, did participants' experiences with stereotypes in the classroom contribute to their academic achievement?
3. What, if any, emotions toward classroom stereotypes did participants describe experiencing?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a questionnaire that should take you approximately 30 minutes.
2. A one on one interview that will be audio recorded. The interview should take approximately 1 hour. The individual interview can take place over the phone or other electronic method if the participant prefers.
3. If selected, participate in a focus group interview comprised of 4 to 6 participants that is audio recorded. Focus group interviews will last approximately one hour.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal as the research questions focus on participants describing their lived experiences in public education. During interviews participants may share information that is personal and upon reflection have an emotional connection to experiences of the past.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. The information being gathered will assist current practitioners in the field of education. Benefits to

society include a better understanding of the role stereotypes are perceived and described by African American males.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Questionnaire, Interview and Focus group responses will remain in a locked safe. The information will be kept for a minimum of three years. Once a three-year time frame has been met all participant responses will be destroyed.
- All audio recordings of interviews and the focus group will be stored digitally on a hard drive, a flash drive and the cloud in Microsoft format. Each digital form of data collected requires a password to retrieve the data.
- Audio recordings will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The transcriptionist is also required to sign a confidentiality agreement to secure the data provided by all participants. The transcriptions of the audio recordings will be destroyed after three years as well.
- During the focus group, participants will describe their experiences with other participants. During this process there are limits to assuring confidentiality of participant's responses as other participants in the focus group may share information discussed, though it will be discouraged. Participation in the focus group is not mandatory.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Donald L. Stewart Jr. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at 210-912-5699 or dstewart9@liberty.edu. You may also

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
1/11/2017 to 1/10/2018
Protocol # 2749.011117

contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Kimberly Lester, at klester@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE
Participant Questionnaire
Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education Department

The purpose of this questionnaire is to solicit information regarding your public schooling experiences. Please answer all questions. If you have any concerns during this process, please let the researcher know. You will have as long as you wish to finish this document before the formal interviewing process begins.

1. Describe, if any, the role a student's racial identity had on their daily interactions with teachers or other educators during your K-12 schooling experience.
2. Explain your feelings, if any, regarding teacher interactions with students that were based the student's pattern of speech?
3. Describe, if any, events or occurrences during your K-12 schooling experiences directed toward you or other students that would be considered racially motivated? These actions can be displayed by educators, parents, or other students.
4. Depict, if any, events or occurrences directed toward you or other students during your K-12 schooling experience that were motivated by stereotypes?
5. Based on your experiences in a K-12 public setting, evaluate whether you or any other African American males experienced higher levels of conflict with their teachers that could be considered motivated by stereotypes?
6. Based on your experiences, what do you think are the most influential factors affecting the African American male population during the K-12 public education process in San Antonio, Texas?

7. Based on your experience, evaluate the role stereotypes in education play regarding the academic success of African American males in public education in San Antonio, Texas?

Contact Information

Please list your contact information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: () - _____

Email Address: _____

Researchers Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research conducted by Donald L. Stewart, Jr., please contact me at dstewart9@liberty.edu

APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT FLYER**Recruitment Flyer**

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education

Research Participants Needed

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES' DESCRIPTIONS OF STEREOTYPES IN CLASSROOMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

- Are you an African American male between the ages of 18 and 28?
- Did you attend K-12 in a public school in San Antonio, Texas?

If you answered **yes** to both of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an educational research study.

The purpose of my research is to describe the lived experiences of select African American males who experienced stereotypes in their K-12 education. The findings from the proposed research study could increase the academic success of some African American males by investigating their descriptions of stereotypes between themselves and the teachers who taught them.

African American males between the ages of 18 and 28 who attended K- 12 in a public school in San Antonio, Texas are eligible to participate.

The study is being conducted in San Antonio, Texas at an agreed upon location and time either online, over the telephone or in person.

Please contact Donald L. Stewart Jr. at dstewart9@liberty.edu for more Department

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW SCRIPT**Interview Questions**

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education Department

1. Please provide your name and the correct spelling.
2. Please provide your age.
3. What is your self-identified race? Please explain how others may describe your race.
4. Please describe your K-5 public education experience.
5. Please describe your 6-12 public education experience.
6. As a student, describe, if any, a situation with teachers that made you feel uncomfortable in school based on your race or the race of others?
7. Reflect back to your K-12 school/s. Describe, if any, any differences in the courses taken by African American males?
8. Reflect back to your K-12 school/s. Describe, if any, differences in the extracurricular activities taken by African American males during your K-12 public education.
9. Describe an event or occurrence, if any, during your K-12 educational experience when you were/were not provided an opportunity based on race.
10. Describe your favorite teacher or educator. What characteristics did this person exhibit?
11. Describe a teacher or educator whom you rate as unfavorable. What characteristics did this person exhibit?
12. Evaluate the role your identified race played in your educational experience.

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINES AND INTERVIEW SCRIPT**Interview Questions**

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education Department

Before we begin our focus group conversation, please note that there are expectations of behavior that must be met. The meeting will last approximately 2 hours. Please be respectful to one another and allow each member who wishes to share to be clearly heard by the group. If at any moment you feel the need to ask for clarification, please ask the researcher if it is ok to ask another member a question. Lastly, this is voluntary, you do not need to share any information you are uncomfortable sharing. The meeting is audio recorded. Please say your name for the record before you speak.

1. Please provide your name and the correct spelling, as well as any biographical information you wish the others to know about you before beginning the conversation.
2. Describe, if any, events or occurrences between students and educators during your K-12 experience that were motivated by racial stereotypes.
3. Reflect back to schools which you attended. Describe the academic programs in which there were high levels of participation by African American males.
4. Reflect back to schools which you attended. Describe the extracurricular activities in which there were high levels of participation by African American males.
5. If applicable, describe an event or occurrence during your K-12 experience when you felt students were not provided an academic opportunity based on race.

6. In your own words, please evaluate the role stereotypes play in the actions of professional educators.
7. In your own words, please evaluate the role stereotypes play in the actions of African American male students.

APPENDIX H: TRANSCRIPTIONIST CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.

Liberty University

Education Department

Please read this Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement and address any questions or concerns before agreeing to transcriptionist services for this study.

This study is being conducted by Donald L. Stewart, Jr., an Ed.D. candidate in the School of Education of Liberty University. The purpose of the research is to gain descriptions of stereotypes affecting African American males in American classrooms.

As the transcriber of this study, I _____, understand that I will be hearing recordings of confidential interviews. The information collected by these recordings is based on participants who agreed to participate based on the condition their identity is kept confidential. I understand it is my duty and responsibility to honor their wishes through this confidentiality agreement.

I agree to keep all information from recorded interviews, including identities, confidential with the exception of Donald L. Stewart Jr, the researcher. I understand that failure to adhere to this agreement is a violation of ethical standards, and I will abide by this agreement with my full cooperation.

I, _____ agree to:

1. Maintain confidentiality concerning all research information by not discussing or sharing content of interviews in any format with anyone other than Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
2. Maintain confidentiality by securing all materials and data collected by the researcher while said objects are in my care.
3. Return all information and materials given to me by Donald L. Stewart, Jr. back upon completion of my transcription tasks.
4. Upon final consultation with Donald L. Stewart, Jr., I will erase or destroy all research information in any format regarding the research.

Transcriber:

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

Researcher:

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

You will be given a copy of this document for your records.

Researchers Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the research conducted by Donald L. Stewart Jr., please contact me at dstewart9@liberty.edu

APPENDIX I: BRACKETING**Researcher Bracketing**

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study

Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.

Liberty University

Education Department

I grew up in San Antonio, and attended five different public schools from K-12. The city is a diverse city rich in culture and has a strong military presence. Upon graduation of high school, I went to college to become a public educator largely based on the positive and negative experiences I had in public schools. I graduated from the University of Texas at San Antonio with a BA in History with a concentration on religious history and subjugated people. I became a teacher and a coach at a public high school in San Antonio and after one year of teaching began getting my Masters in School Administration from Lamar University. After three years teaching and coaching, I became an Assistant Principal and worked at a large high school that serviced the largest portion of African American students in San Antonio. During this time, I began to notice that there were several African American males who were being unsuccessful and as an Administrator I was consistently addressing discipline situation that often seemed like a breakdown in communication rather than out right defiance.

As I began the Doctoral program at Liberty University, I became exposed to several articles about the field of education and over time also began reading literature on stereotype threat. This concept is explained in depth during the literature review of chapter 2, but this topic was very interesting. I began to reflect on my own experience as an African American male who attended K-12 public education in San Antonio, and wondered whether my experience was unique or was it typical. The observable data at hand as an Administrator, led me to believe that

there were some similarities between my personal experiences as a student and the African American male students with whom I was interacting every day.

I had some positive and negative interactions with teachers and I often felt like I was not pushed very hard in my classes, because I was an athlete. It was not until I began taking advanced classes in the 8th grade, did I think that I would be going to college based on academics. In reflection, I often felt as if I were given preferential treatment once I did step outside of the negative academic stereotypes that are associated with African American males, but that those opportunities were fewer and far between for my peers who were also African American.

During this study, I recognized that my personal experiences with stereotype threat often under minded my ability to make good decisions based on a sort of cultural tug of war, being drawn to the positive stereotypes and being pushed from the negative, intrinsically. I analyzed the role of critical race theory as proposed by Bell, (1980) in education and thought about the ability of educators, who are human and have their own perceptions, to remove race and stereotypes from their behavior with students. I also took into account the role that educators play in shaping the futures of the students whom they teach. Lastly, in reflection I thought about how it was important that I suspend judgement during the entire data collection and data analysis process and allow for the data to speak for itself. The participant data was the means to identify and investigate the problem associated with this research study. If I followed the member checks, constant comparative method, open coding and made sure to bracket my own experience, I would be better able to meet the ethical considerations of this study. Ultimately, I was able to intently listen to all my participants, collect and analyze data and finish my study free of my own personal bias.

APPENDIX J: Themes
Themes
 Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
 Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
 Liberty University
 Education Department

Questionnaire Themes

Limiting academic expectations	Negative Initial Interactions	Presence of race identification
<i>They [African American Males] are not being taught that they have to work for success and that they can achieve anything if they put their minds to it. These same students strive to escape by becoming an athlete or an entertainer. Few think of more lofty goals of an attorney, doctor, scientist or professor. Alexander</i>	My Mother reminded me of my fifth grade math teacher. Based on several negative interactions, when his mother met with the principals he admitted that there were several issues with that teacher and several complaints by other African American Parents. Alexander	<i>"However in middle school I began to notice how students were treated differently based on them being white, black, hispanic or asian. In those later years I noticed that black children were treated slightly different sometimes, but it was not something I could pin point to one specific reason." Alexander</i>
<i>"Due to my look of a typical black student (braids, baggy clothes, tennis shoes, etc.). When I changed schools/districts, the assistant principal refused to place me into Pre-AP/AP classes based on how I looked." Elijah</i>	<i>"Initially, the teachers and educators all associated me as a typical black kid who did not take my education seriously. First impressions speak volumes on how many of them lumped all of us into the same category." Elijah</i>	<i>"Many people have persevered during hardships and dealing with stereotypes is just another obstacle that can be overcome with hard work. The stereotyping will never go away, so it should be acknowledged and dealt with appropriately." Elijah</i>
<i>vital role in African American males success. I think people assume AA males are just dumb athletes, and don't push them to their full potential." Benjamin</i>	<i>"I could tell that I and the other black males initially experienced higher levels of conflict with teachers." Elijah</i>	<i>"When I was in 1st grade I was teased and made fun of because of my skin color by other students. I was one of two black students." Benjamin</i>
<i>"I felt like I was not pushed hard enough by my teachers in high school. I think my teachers thought I was dumb or just average black boy and they thought the work I did was enough to get by. But I could have done better if pushed to do so." Grayson</i>	<i>"Some students were not as perceptive as me and did not cope well with the initial grace period having to earn the trust of the teachers and principals. They took the experience as "my teachers and principals hate me and I don't know why" and from there they shut down and stop trying". Elijah</i>	<i>"Actually, there weren't that many African American males that I remember having in my classes. Most of them were similar to me in that they didn't fit the mold of being stereotypically black so for the most part they rarely had conflicts with teachers." Isaiah.</i>
	<i>"Not so much with my main teachers but with substitutes. They treated me different because of how I looked." Grayson</i>	<i>"Stereotypes and racism have a huge impact on African American Males in public education." Isaiah</i>
	<i>"Stereotypes were the base for most bullying I experienced, as well as some of the best jokes." Isaiah</i>	
	<i>"Young African American males enter into an educational environment wherein the educator expects them to behave in a stereotypical way, and so the teacher overcorrects. They jump on every little infraction, resulting in a student that feels marginalized. On the other hand the job of an educator is immense and difficult". Isaiah</i>	

Interview Themes

Limiting Academic expectations	Negative Initial Interactions	Presence of race identification
<p>"I don't know. I just always noticed that there'd be a lot more Black people in athletics than in Spanish class or something like that." Grayson</p>	<p>I would have to say the initial reaction, or the nature of the initial interaction, between students and the professors, being Black, when you think of it as like a grace period there where it's like, "Okay well, they need to get to know you." And then, once they got to know you, they didn't really based their interactions on, "Oh, you're Black and this is how I'm going to treat you." Elijah</p>	<p>"Me being a black student made it a bit harder for me to get the recognition and I guess initial...i wouldn't want to say like response or...something like the initial reaction or I want to say...let's just say the initial interaction between, you know, first impressions mean anything so me being a young Black man, going to class, and you know, sitting there with a bunch of other white students I always get that look like well I try to go and introduce myself and let them know that I'm in the class and I'm not a troublemaker and things like that" Elijah</p>
<p>Yeah, the only difference I noticed was AP and pre-AP courses. So I guess the honors courses. In my school, I was one of a handful who had actually taken pre-AP and AP courses. Well, honors courses I would say. Elijah</p>	<p>"I guess because it could have been experienced from other kids, black kids, that gave them [teachers] the most trouble." Landon</p>	<p>So, I mean me being a young Black man it made me have to work harder and kind of get thicker skin to some of the impressions that we made or initial impressions that we made with the teacher and things like that. Elijah</p>
<p>"I was going to a new school, in a new (4:25) district, and the Assistant Principal who was a Black man himself kind of looked at me and placed me in courses that honestly I was...I will just say I was way too smart to be in. I wasn't able to take AP or pre-AP course because he didn't feel that I would be able to do well in those courses. I pretty much went to regular classes and sat there and was bored and all of my teachers were like "Yeah, you don't belong in here". Elijah</p>	<p>A lot of the disagreements would be like, sagging pants. If anything more of the black students sagged their pants. More than the other ethnic groups. Landon</p>	<p>I think that one was a little bit difficult for me for the simple fact that my sister and myself were the only two African American kids in this whole school. Benjamin</p>
<p>I mean pretty much all the, as I got older, but all the African American males they were subject to playing football and playing basketball. That was kind of one of the things that was expected from the African American male was football or basketball. Benjamin</p>	<p>In athletics we were singled out for hairstyles. It seemed intentionally biased because the other races could wear cultural hair styles, but we could not. Ryan.</p>	<p>I feel that, you know, being African American that I already had something against me and that's being black. I feel that people automatically assumed that I was dumb. They felt that I was probably going to end up in jail, selling drugs, kids all over the place. Benjamin</p>
<p>You know, one thing that I did notice as I got older is that the African Americans weren't subject of different extracurricular activities like the arts and theater and debate or, what else did they have, baseball. You know, for the African American male, I noticed that growing up, is either football or basketball and that's it. Benjamin</p>	<p>"But from day one, you could tell teachers, they may talk to a certain way. Some once they realized that you may be a good student then they treated you as so." Ryan.</p>	<p>"I very rarely think about race and when I do its kind of from the viewpoint of somebody elses reacting about how they feel about race". Isaiah</p>
<p>"Definitely, anything dealing with sports, there were more african ameircan students than anything. Any activities dealing with academics it was more caucasian kids and asian kids than Black". Landon</p>	<p>"I'm new but noticed the first day we metit was like, he didn't want me there, and I can't really say what was his reason but it was clear hate." Alexander</p>	<p>"I think it [race]played a pretty big role". Ryan</p>

<p>"It'd be like one or two [academic extracurricular activities] but in athletics or anything like that is't predominanalty black". Landon</p>	<p>"He[teacher]did not give me the attention he gave other people, and it was usually, almost always 99%, someone of a different race." Alexander</p>	<p>"he [teacher] treated me a little differently from other students and I think it was race driven." Alexander</p>
<p>"I know that I was enrolled in a lot GT classes. May parents kind of pushed, had me tested and stuff so there werent a lto of afircan american males in GT". Isaiah</p>	<p>"I felt I was targeted, you know preconceived notions about my characterisits. Being an athlete, being a black male, theres a stereotype that comes with that". Jackson</p>	<p>Stereotypes, prejudice, racisms are all that stuff can go kind of into the same category. And I think it's not it wasn't about like, consistent hate. It's just when it happened, I think it could hold anybody back. Alexander</p>
<p>"In high school there were two of us, me and another boy. I honelsy don't remember habing a lot of them [African American males] in my classes". Isaiah</p>	<p>"I was challenged a lot with my humanities teacher because I always fle that she was targeting me because of my race and my gender." Jackson</p>	<p>"I take pride in my race because I was able to maybe reshape the way at least one person viewed African American males". Jackson</p>
<p>"A lot f them wasnted to do basketball." Isaiah</p>	<p>I experienced what, in retrospect I think was a bit of maybe prejudice, profiling, by the school officer I think. Maybe just, maybe after a while in dealing with kids and their temperment you get jaded I don't know. But his response to me bringing my car into an area that was supposed to be reserved for faculty and him not knowing whatever preclearance I got based on the after-school curriculars that was going on- blah, blah, blah- there was no room for, you know, explanation, there was no room for anything. There was no room for observation. I'm, know it's not like I'm dressed, in a hoodie and basketball shorts, tatted up or whatever the stereotypical look of somebody about to do something wrong is. I had on ROTC uniform with decorations and badges and whatnot so if you're gonna profile somebody I would assume, the last thing you would think is you know someone dressed and decked out was up to something malicious. Daniel</p>	<p>Then I went to the southside, La Soya Elementary. It was pretty good, a lot of racism there. I was the only black, I think there was only two of us in the whole school, and a bunch of Hispanic kids. The first time I got called nigger was at that school. Levi</p>
<p>Primary Similarities, were were all expected and into playing sports. However the things that were outside of sports there were fewer African American males . Isaiah</p>	<p>you really deal with more teachers seeing your blackness before they see you as a student. Levi</p>	<p>1. Evaluate the role your identified race played in your educational experience.</p>
<p>I mean pretty much all the, as I got older, but all the African American males they were subject to playing football and playing basketball. That was kind of one of the things that was expected from the African American male was football or basketball. Be</p>		<p>Yeah, absolutely man I think it plays a role in not only our K through twelfth but our everyday experience it was certain things I had to consider that my white counterparts didn't have to experience or consider. Levi</p>

<p>"The Black males that were more athletic or may have been the top players of the team were placed in courses versus being able to have options and choose what they wanted to." Ryan.</p>		<p>So just those experiences man showed us that being black in public education is sometimes it's belittling when you look through history books and you see your people as slaves, that's it. And then they show you Martin and Frederick that's all brother. Levi</p>
<p>"My school didn't have a lot of stuff that was offered at other schools and I know if it was they just wanted to get us in and get us out." Alexander.</p>		<p>I only had one black teacher brother from K through twelfth. Nah I had two Ms.Alexander, that was my first grade teacher I think and then Dr.Guess that was the thing about that. I had tons of teachers, and only two were black man come on now that's it man so. Levi</p>
<p>"Some people are gifted to play football. But if all you offer is basketball, football and track it is like the talent that is somewhere else maybe. We had ROTC but it was not attractive." Alexander</p>		
<p>"K-12 I feel like, that a lot of the majority of African american males in k-12 for me, they took a lot of regular classes, some were in remedial classes. There was more a focus on being an athlete rather than being a student." Jackson</p>		
<p>"Athleticism was valued more than the academic standpoint." Jackson</p>		
<p>"So, it was not fond for African American males to take those higher classes those that were more rigorous and challenging because that was not something that was valued by the community". Jackson</p>		
<p>"I felt in K-12 it was, already had this idea of what kind of limitations were already set on us. They never had high expectations they just wanted us to get enough knowledge to pass the test." Jackson</p>		
<p>"again the focus was on athleticism where if you were playing sports that was the thing to do. So not many African American males did things such as theatre, drama, choir and dance. This was more frowned upon or wasn't valued as high as playing basketball, or playing football." Jackson</p>		

<p>ortable with her because she always treated us like we was second class citizens and with miss- I can't remember the English teacher's name but you could always tell she was trying to give out charity, that was always uncomfortable because we didn't need it. Levi</p>		
<p>what were they called, AP classes, might be, the equivalent to that you know AP and pre-AP classes and that's how they segregate the schools, man. You put all the black kids in here, put all the white kids in pre-AP class. Levi</p>		
<p>They can do that. You know you have to fill out paperwork and all kinds they would tell you you had to have grades not understanding that all your parents had to do was request it. They ain't tell you that. They didn't tell you that all your parents had to really do was request and you can get in these, nah, you need to, you gone have to take a test, and we gone have to whatever. But that's how they told it to you. Nah, you can't be in the pre-AP, you have to your grades have to show this. They didn't say man if your parents really want you in that</p>		

Themes Focus Group Session

Limiting Academic expectations	Negative Initial Interactions	Presence of race identification
<p>the role that athletics played for African Americans, I just think athletics as a whole is like the biggest motivation for African American males. If it wasn't for athletics, we wouldn't have as many you know African American males go to college. I'm not too sure on that one. Athletics is kind of like that, that get away you know what I mean not too many you know African American males like to be in the classroom. Alexander</p>	<p>And I think, long story short, I ended up getting out of that class because I started to notice how differently I was treated from the other students. I didn't know that it was racially motivated at the time but I just wasn't treated fairly and being that I loved it so much, I felt so uncomfortable that I left it anyway and it was because of racial motivation. Alexander</p>	<p>Racially motivation, this is Alexander and the band incident happened when I was in middle school. To touch on that, I could say I was at an age where I didn't know what racial, you know racial accusations or racial moti- I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know how to recognize it. So I could say that now, looking back at it that my band director didn't like me. He treated me pretty differently because of my race. And I could just recognize it now. Alexander</p>

I didn't know what a degree plan was until I got to college. Like, you know what I mean like I should've saw what a degree plan was as freshman in high school. Like, this is what you gonna look forward to way down the road or at least sophomore, junior year for sure my senior year I'm supposed to know what a degree plan looks like. Like I remember just coming into college like dang what is this? You know what I mean like I though yall just put me in some classes and lets play some ball you know what I mean?

about the Black athletes not being able to wear braids or dreads and not just being free to you know wear whatever hairstyle they wanted. As far as what the Caucasians kids I mean they could pretty much wear their hair as long as they wanted, pretty much any way they wanted to but I didn't notice that until after I got out of high school like man like you was basically telling like the Black kids like you can't wear that. Ryan

in high school, our criminal justice course, there tended to be a lot of African American males in that class, pretty much all the males in that class are African American. I don't necessarily want to say it was because it was an easy course but I think that understanding our criminal justice system was one of the things that a lot of African American males at that time were interested in in learning about because one of the things that I feel growing up in where we, growing up in the areas we were growing up in a lot of African American males were being sent to prison, going to jail so kind of understanding why we were being sent to prison and being sent to jail were something that made the class kind of interesting. Benjamin

I think it kind of, it kind of put you in a box you know what I mean that you're not, you know it's like nah we don't want you to get in those because you know we don't know you know what kind of grade you might get. So just stick around this area not knowing that that class might really be suited for you but you know just who you are you might seriously like genuinely have an interest in that but you know you want to just listen to your coach you know and just stay in that safe zone you know what I mean? **Ryan**

I remember one of our basketball coaches used to say that braids, or anyone wearing braids, they were thugs. So, back then I used to kind of laugh it off not really knowing like so you're judging me based off my hair thinking that I'm a thug and you know, your definition of us being thugs is you know the us rocking the hairstyle (6:42) so we must be out there doing drugs and stuff like that so I remember I think it was our, well my senior year. **Benjamin**

So, in my mind, I felt like oh well since I'm Black, I'm somewhat athletic, that's what I have to do is I have to play basketball. I have to play football. I have to run track. I have to do something of that nature. But in my heart, I wanted to act but again coming up and going to where I grew up, you did not act. Like that's just something that you weren't supposed to do. You were supposed to play the basketball you were supposed to play the football. So then at school, I wanted to be in theater arts because I loved acting and I would catch myself walking past the theater arts room looking at auditions thinking oh I would love to be in this production or I would love to try out for this but there was a conception like oh if you go do that you're not one of us. So, therefore I would just be walking past theater arts crafts room(26:27) and going there and going to basketball practice. So I feel like if you're African American, they don't see, young African American males, they don't see anything outside of sports. **Benjamin**

I would definitely change some of that stuff like nah I really want to try this because I'm really interested in this course. I don't want to just stick to you know this little box that you're keeping me in. So... **Ryan**

Yeah, so like I was saying since I was more of the academic type I was taking pre-AP and AP courses and me being pretty much the only Black male in the class I kind of got this stigma that you know when I first walked into class and when I talked to the teachers that they didn't really either respect me or expect much from me when I first walked in or you know just initially.

Elijah

. I had braids, baggy jeans, and like at that time jerseys were pretty cool so I was wearing jerseys alright? I had everybody's jersey and my shirts were baggy and yeah so this was just the style. This is my look you know? And so my behaviors were you know always the same I'm very studious. I'm outspoken at times I could be quiet when you know I don't want to be bothered and one thing that you have to do as being a Black male in high school you have to be tough. That's same, point blank and simple. So you have to look like if somebody messes with you you know, it's not gonna go well for them. You got to protect yourself. You got to be tough. **Elijah**

We didn't have that course at school, not when I was in high school. I'm sure we around the same age. We didn't have boxing. We didn't have much of nothing and I like how Ryan says he felt like he was in a box you know now he sees that he was so limited and I kind of agree with what in my position at high school, I mean I had track scholarships. I had a scholarship to do shot put. I had a scholarship to do the diskus. I had a scholarship to play football. But it's all sports. Academically, I don't think I got the push.

Alexander

seeing me, kind of giving me a glare or whatever and then you know if I have questions it's like oh why are you asking me questions, why are you, what do you want now, here we go again with this, how did you even petty much get to this class and so with that it was more, it was always like this grace period of the initial reaction that you get from a teacher who maybe had bad experiences with either lazy students or students that just you know aren't properly prepared for the courses and then there's me who comes in and yes I'm Black but that has nothing to with the fact that you know I'm very motivated towards what I do. **Elijah**

Oh yes stereotypes definitely play a role. Like, being a Black male you have to like, you have to somehow fit the stereotype. You have to somehow like you want to fit the stereotype. You want to be known as the kid that's tough or you want to be known as like, I mean not saying like a thug but you just, you have to like, be like stone cold and then when it comes to, when it comes to your education which is completely different than how you may act when you're at home it's just, the stereotypes play a huge role when you're sitting there, and you're trying to be cool and you're trying to be someone that you might not be necessarily because you want to fit the stereotypes you want to be in with your friends. You want to have friends. You want to be a cool guy. You want to be popular. I mean yeah that, that affects you in the long run because that's how you know your teachers and your educators that's how they see you. They see you as fitting the stereotype and so they treat you like the stereotype. So it's kind of like a revolving door. I want to fit in. I want to be you know part of this crowd because I am Black and like I want to be cool but then on the other hand I don't want to be treated like I'm that cool kid who doesn't really care too

much about my education and thing of that nature so it pretty much just a revolving door. You walk into the door as you know the persona who you really are not and the you get treated as that and then you kind of look back at it as oh whoa why are you treating me like that just because I look that way or just because you know these are the friends that I have and it's like well if you fit and you put yourself into the box, they're gonna assume that you are that person within the box without getting to know you.

Ryan

<p>It's like they didn't want to push us to do nothing else. I don't know I just think that, you think high school you think sports you know or Black you don't hear nothing else you don't see nothing else you don't see academics you don't see culinary wasn't no guys cutting hair in a barber class nothing like that we didn't have nothing pretty much. I mean, we had the basic courses and I'm sure if you look it up, it's probably gonna say that that's what was offered and if it, if something else was offered then we didn't know. Maybe ROTC but that was it. I think we were limited. Alexander</p>	<p>So, it was always these graces periods of them finding out who I am not just what I look like and what they expected me to be that had to be overcome before you know, I gained their trust or like I got pretty much same type of interaction between them that the other students were having. So once we got past that point it was okay well this is like a really good student he's very like focused on what he wants. Elijah</p>	
<p>Like alright how can we help them get to the stage so we can get the next ones in here? And instead of helping, it becomes a part of the problem. Just pushing people out there with no knowledge. Putting people out in life with no skills to better their self in the future Elijah.</p>	<p>So then when it came to the educators it was they see this kid coming. He's got braids, baggy clothes, a stone face and they automatically assume that he's a troublemaker. Elijah</p>	

I didn't know what a degree plan was until I got to college. Like, you know what I mean like I should've saw what a degree plan was as freshman in high school. Like, this is what you gonna look forward to way down the road or at least sophomore, junior year for sure my senior year I'm supposed to know what a degree plan looks like. Like I remember just coming into college like dang what is this? You know what I mean like I though ya'll just put me in some classes and let's play some ball you know what I mean? **Ryan**

in my extracurricular activities which were non-athletic, there weren't that many Black males who were doing the things that I was doing. There were not that many in the National Honor Society. There were not that many doing, like a bunch of community service programs based out of like our school or any other extracurricular activities that were geared towards academia. **Elijah**

APPENDIX K: PARTICIPANT ACCEPTANCE LETTER**Participant Acceptance Letter**

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education Department

Dear [Participant],

I am pleased to inform you, [Participant], that your initial survey answers have made you a qualified candidate to participate in this phenomenological study. As a participant, you have the right to give any information you feel comfortable delivering to the principal investigator, Donald L. Stewart, Jr., during the interview process. Interviews will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time for the participants and the principal investigator. As a reminder, participants receive no compensation for their information. Each participant will receive the opportunity to share his educational experiences with the interviewer through the interview process. Could I get your email address/physical address so I can send you the questionnaire? Please complete and return the attached questionnaire. Would it be possible to go ahead and schedule a time for an interview? Please respond to this email to schedule an interview.

Thank you for your participation,

Donald L. Stewart, Jr.

APPENDIX L: OPEN CODING

Open Coding

Stereotypes: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Donald L. Stewart, Jr.
Liberty University
Education Department

Open Codes	Enumeration of open codes across all data sets	Themes
		1. Limitations of Academic Performance
Parents Academic Expectations	33	
Teacher expectations	31	
Participation in sports expected	30	
participation in advanced courses	29	
school emphasis on academic expectations	24	
students academic expectations	26	
student willingness to participate in advanced courses	25	
		2. Negative initial interaction
Stereotypes from beginning	22	
trial period of meeting the stereotype	22	
first impression	20	
overt feeling of teacher bias	11	
overt feeling of administrator bias	9	
policy preceded relationship	9	
first day of school, first interaction	9	

teacher verbal expression of stereotype upon first interaction	8	
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		3. Presence of Race identification
African American males absent from advanced courses	22	
High participation rates of African American males in sports	22	
Presence of stereotypes of African American males	15	
Race plays a role in education for African American males	11	
African American males must act a certain way to be considered African American in public school	5	