The Journal of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators

JTABSE

COPYRIGHT

TO PURCHASE ADDITIONAL COPIES

JTABSE

The Journal of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators

Volume 2, Number 1   Spring 2015

Co-Editors

Edwin Paul Hood, Garland Independent School District,
ephood@garlandisd.net

Lucian Yates, III, Prarie View A&M University,
LYates@pvamu.edu

Guest Editors
Pamela Minigan-Finley, LeadershipHBCU
prfinley@leadershiphbcu.org

Terence L. Finley, LeadershipHBCU
tlfinley@leadershiphbcu.org

TEXAS ALLIANCE OF BLACK SCHOOL EDUCATORS
EXECUTIVE BOARD 2015

Officers

Dr. Michael D. McFarland	President
Dr. Kimberly McLeod	President-Elect
John Washington	Immediate Past President
Phyllis Williams	Executive Director
Dr. LaTonya Goffney	Recording Secretary
Dr. Gabrielle Lemonier	Treasurer
Mark Hyde	Financial Secretary
Dr. JoAnne Rucker	Correspondence Secretary
Dr. David Harris	Chaplain
Dr. Edwin Hood	Parliamentarian
Kristiana Hamilton	Historian

Board Members (Affiliate Presidents)

Mary Olison	Alamo Area ABSE
Dr. Mary L. Thomas	Austin Area ABSE
Dr. Sybil Comeaux	Beaumont Area ABSE
Dr. La Tricia Johnson	Corpus Christi Area ABSE
Shirley Davis	East Texas Area ABSE
Jimmy Nealey	Fort Worth Area ABSE
Spencer Hughes	Garland Area ABSE
Dr. Dawn Randle	Houston Area ABSE
Brockley Moore	Killeen Area ABSE
Colina C. Poullard	Lamar Unversity ABSE
Natalie Anderson	Lubbock Area ABSE
Dr. Ceretha Levingston	Northeast Texas ABSE
Dr. Angela Dickson	Prairie View Student ABSE
Dr. Duana Kindle	Richardson AABSE
Dr. Lamont Smith	Southwest DC
Teryana Lamb	Texas Southern Unversity ABSE
Dr. Kenneth Gay	Tyler Area ABSE

FROM THE EDITORS

When charged with the task to put together the research journal for the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators, we accepted the challenge and the opportunity. It brings us great pleasure to reintroduce *The Journal of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (JTABSE) with this* Spring 2015 edition. It has been 8 years since the last publication of the *JTABSE*. During that time, a wealth of knowledge has been added to the field of education that has had a tremendous impact on the lives and the successes of minority students in both Pk-12 and higher education. Thus, the purpose of this journal is to provide peer-reviewed research addressing topics that continue to impact minorities in public and higher education. Our goals are to:

- Provide current research relevant to the field of minority education in the Texas.
- Contribute to the current body of existing literature.
- Spark further interest to add to the research presented within the journal.

We hope that you enjoy the manuscripts provided in this edition. The next edition will be available in August 2015, the "Back to School Edition". We are currently accepting manuscripts for review. Please send an electronic copy of your manuscript to Dr. Edwin P. Hood. All manuscripts will be reviewed for proper formatting. Please see the manuscript formatting information provided.

As a peer-reviewed journal, we are looking for additional reviewers. If you are interested in being a reviewer, please contact Dr. Lucian Yates. We ask that reviewers currently hold a doctoral degree and have an in depth knowledge of current APA guidelines.

Thank you so much for your continued support in the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators and for taking the time to read the following pages of research. If you should have any questions, concerns, or want to offer any feedback, please do not hesitate to contact either Dr. Edwin P. Hood or Dr. Lucian Yates. We hope that you enjoy the information and look forward to the next release!

Repectfully

Dr. Edwin P. Hood, Co-editor

Dr. Lucian Yates, III, Co-editor

MEET THE GUEST EDITORS

Dr. Pamela Minigan-Finley, a native of Maryland, is a results-oriented professional with 16+ years of experience in Organizational Effectiveness and Instructional Design. The breadth of her experience covers a wide area of responsibilities and substantive contributions within both the educational and corporate sectors, inclusive of building solid learning organizations through leading and driving change; as well as linking and aligning organizational learning with strategy and business execution. Dr. Minigan-Finley holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Prairie View A&M University; a M.Ed. in Instructional Technology from the University of Houston; and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Phoenix. She is currently a Manager of HR Talent development in the oil and gas industry, where she delivers results-focused solutions that drive improved organization performance. Dr. Minigan-Finley is actively engaged in the educational community and serves as a dissertation coach and literary consultant. She firmly believes that, "Learning is the time-portal of change and those who embrace it arrive at new dimensions of opportunity with each experience."

Dr. Terence Finley, a native of New York, holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Prairie View A&M University, a M.B.A. in Marketing and Logistics from the Pennsylvania State University; and a Bachelor of Science from the State University of New York at Brockport. His research interests include the access, adequacy, and equity of educational resources for underrepresented populations. While in pursuit of his doctorate, leveraging 15+ years as a Finance, Sales, & Marketing Executive, Dr. Finley held the position of Graduate Assistant to the Chief Financial Officer of Prairie View A&M University. He is currently the Leadership Development and Organizational Officer, reporting to the Associate Vice President of Business Services. Dr. Finley leads with a commitment to a shared vision of excellence. He inspires the belief that all students can and will excel. He **C**ares more than others think is wise; **R**isks more than others think is safe, **E**ncourages more than others think is plausible; **E**xpects more than others think is possible; and **D**reams more than others think is practical. He leads through a **CREED** of *Excellence*.

The Drs. Finley are co-founders of LeadershipHBCU™, a nonprofit organization focused on promoting organizational advancement through building, supporting, and maintaining learning environments within HBCUs, whereby knowledge sharing, idea development, collaborative decision making, learning from experiences—as well as mistakes, and holistic thinking are fostered as vital facets of organizations, their cultures, and their values.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Examination of Teen Fathers: What Can School Educators Learn From the Data?

Joyce P. Finch[a]
Katherine M. Bacon[b]

[a]Texas Southern University
finchjg@tsu.edu

University of Houston
baconk@uhv.edu

Abstract. When a teen becomes a parent, researchers have historically focused on the teen mother with little research or discussion concerning the teen father. Because of this gender imbalance of literature, teen fathers are portrayed negatively with little consideration towards their needs, their stressors, and their involvement with their children, their children's mother, and the maternal family. Recent research has examined teen fathers and has challenged these negative views showing teen fathers are very involved and interested in the welfare of their children. This review of literature studies teen parenting from the teen father's perspective and discusses interventions for school educators so the teen father can increase parental involvement and can graduate from high school.

Keywords: Teen Dads, Teen Fathers, Adolescent Fathers, Adolescent Parenthood.

INTRODUCTION

Society's path to parenthood is to get married at the right age and then, to have children. However, the path to teenage parenthood does not follow society's norm. Society does not look upon teen pregnancy as favorable, but as aberrant. Following World War II, the 1950s, and the 1960s, teen pregnancy was common (Furstenberg, 2003). There is little literature concerning teen births during this period because it was concealed since the teen mother married the father of her child. The teen parents would drop out of school; he would get a job in a factory, buy a house, and put his children through school. In today's world, the teen father would not marry her, would drop out of school, and would not be hired in a factory because the jobs of today are more technical (Tuffin,

1

Rouch, & Frewin, 2010). Previously, nearly nine out of ten (87%) children under the age of 18 lived with their two married parents, but by 2008, the percentage of children born to unmarried women rose from 5% to 41% (La Guardia, Nelson, & Lertora, 2014).

From 1991-2005, birth rates to teen mothers declined, but teen births in the United States (U.S.) rose in 2006 (Ventura, 2007). African American teens reported the largest increase of 5%; Hispanic teens rose 2%; White teens rose 3%; and American Indian or Alaska Native teens rose 4% (Ventura, 2007). The U.S. continues to have one of the highest teen birth rates among industrialized countries, and one in three girls becomes pregnant at least once before the age of 20 (Kane, 2006).

Even though recent literature is focusing on the teen father, there is still a paucity of research concerning this vulnerable population. Most of the time data concerning teen fathers is mainly collected from the teen mother and have relied on her opinions regarding the father's role and involvement (Reeves, 2007; Robbers, 2009; Shade, Kools, Pinderhughes, & Weiss, 2012; Tuffin et al., 2010). Teen fathers' behaviors and attitudes are better understood within their internal and external environmental factors.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Risk Factors of Teen Fatherhood

Adolescence is a very challenging and confusing developmental period since the adolescent experiences profound social, physical, and psychological changes. It is a time of pubertal changes, increase in self-consciousness and self-concept, and the evolution of abstract thinking (Frewin, Tuffin, & Rouch, 2007). The adolescent is establishing his/her independence from family, is becoming romantically involved, and is developing close bonds with friends. When a teen is propelled into fatherhood, he must grow up quickly, and it becomes a turning point in his life.

The risk factors for teen fathers are very similar to the risk factors of teen mothers: dependence on public assistance, living in poverty, dropping out of high school, difficulty securing steady employment, continuing the intergenerational practices of young fatherhood, and delinquency (Bunting & McAuley, 2004; Futris, Olmstead, Pasley, & Nielsen, 2012; Gordon, Watkins, Walling, Wilhelm, & Rayford, 2011); Paschal, 2006; Shade et al., 2012; Wilkes, Minnix, & Jackson, 2012). It is estimated that teen births cost the taxpayers $9.1 billion annually because of their dependence on public assistance (Hoffman, 2006).

Living in poverty is a precursor to adolescent fatherhood as indicated in the results of the Oregon Youth Study (Bunting & McCauley, 2004). The study investigated 207 families whose sons were attending fourth grade in schools in the Pacific Northwest. Thirty-five became fathers before the age of 20, and the study also found that poor academic performance and low income were predictive of early fatherhood (Bunting & McCauley, 2004). African American adolescents who are living in poverty are at a higher risk of becoming a teen father than adolescent White and Hispanic males (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004; Dallas, 2004).

Sipsma, Biello, Cole-Lewis, and Kershaw (2010) felt the need to conduct a study to support strong evidence concerning the intergenerational cycle of adolescent fatherhood. Their data included 1,496 adolescent males 19 years old and younger who were interviewed annually from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997. One hundred and fifty-four (almost 10% of the participants were sons of teen fathers, 379 (25%) were sons of teen mothers, and 140 (9.4%) became a teen father before the age of 20 (Sipsma et al., 2010). African American and Hispanic adolescent males were almost twice as likely as White males to be at risk of fatherhood (Sipsma et al., 2010). Sipsma et al. (2010) also postulated in their study that delinquency also surfaced as an important risk factor for teen fathers. Sixty-two teen fathers participated in the Pittsburgh Youth Study, and the study found teen fathers were twice as likely to be classified as serious delinquents. They lived in areas with low academic achievement, high school dropout rates, and high incidence of crime which were all consistent with teenage fatherhood (Bunting & McAuley, 2004).

Nelson (2004) stated, "Teenage childbearing, relational volatility between parents, lack of economic support, and contact with non-resident children are directly and indirectly related to teen fathers' income levels" (p. 428). There is a decline in the labor force particularly for low-income and African American men (Nelson, 2004; Wilkes et al., 2012). Even during the economic boom of the 1990s, earnings in the labor force declined among young, unskilled men, especially African Americans (Nelson, 2004).

Paschal (2006) interviewed 30 African American teen fathers 14-19 years old who resided in Wichita, Kansas. Twenty-eight of the 30 (93.3%) were dependent socially and/or financially on their parents or some other adult (Paschal, 2006). Twenty-one (70%) were from low income families whose combined income was less than $25,000. At the time of the interview, most of the teen fathers lived with one parent or

another family member such as his grandmother (Paschal, 2006). Paschal (2006) stated the teen fathers were very aware of the circumstances of their lives:

> high crime rates; high incidence of incarceration of other young male African Americans; intense exposure to drugs; homicides that had taken their male friends' and family members' lives; the neglect, pain, and anger they and many others have felt from their fathers not being involved (or being minimally involved) in their lives; and the disproportionate rates of unemployment and underemployment of other African American men they knew (even among those who were college educated. (p. 182)

Stress of becoming a father is another risk factor, and it is directly related to the maturity and age of the teen father. The older the father, the more likely he is to be involved with his child (Fagan, Bernd, & Whiteman, 2007). It is particularly stressful for low-income teen fathers who have very few resources to help with the stresses of parenthood because they lack job skills and work experience (Fagan et al., 2007). Fagan et al. (2007) conducted a study of 57 teen fathers in the prenatal phase and when their babies were three months old. The majority of the fathers (56%) were African American, 36% were Hispanic, and 8% were other. Their study found an association between parenting stress and father involvement (Fagan et al., 2007).

Involvement with His Child

Literature has consistently shown that as children receive positive involvement from their fathers their cognitive, social, and emotional development is positively influenced (Fagan & Lee, 2013: Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2008). Howard, Burke, Borkowski, and Whitman (2006) conducted a longitudinal study examining the impact of fathers' influence to children born to adolescent mothers. They studied 134 mothers and their children from pre-birth to age 10, evaluated the father's contact with his child, and how it influenced his child's social and emotional adjustment and academic achievement (Howard et al., 2006). The majority of the fathers and mothers were African American, and the results of their study indicated a significant impact on reading achievement through the age of 10. It also attested to the fact that the majority of these African American teen mothers grew up with no father figure and tended to view fathers negatively (Howard et al., 2006).

Nelson (2004) postulated that another predictor of father involvement is accessibility to his child. Dallas (2004) referred to the maternal family as "gatekeepers who control the physical access to their grandchild" (p. 352). Many of the teen fathers are unable to see their children because they have an antagonistic relationship with the maternal family (Robbers, 2009). The maternal family may be hostile towards him, blame him for the pregnancy, and/or ignore him (Bunting & McAuley, 2004). This may lead the teen father to become less involved and discourages him from fatherhood when he was interested in having a relationship with his child and his child's mother (Robbers, 2009). When the teen father is not included in the decision making process of his child during pre-birth and after birth, he feels a sense of isolation and confusion (Fagan et al., 2007). This situation could contribute to his decrease in feeling responsible for his child and could contribute to problems between him and his child's mother. However, if the teen father is involved in the life of his child and the teen mother, the teen mother's sense of confidence in her nurturing skills is increased, and the teen father's self-esteem is raised (Amin & Ahmed, 2004).

Dallas (2004) interviewed 12 low income African American maternal and paternal grandmothers of adolescent mothers and fathers in order to study the influence of family support. One maternal grandmother stated that she would not let the teen father see his child because he and/or his family did not contribute anything to the financial support of his baby. Another maternal grandmother allowed the teen father to see his baby even though he and/or his family did not financially contribute because she felt he sincerely cared about his child (Dallas, 2004). Sixteen teen fathers were studied in the Denver metro area for four years to explore their perspective of fatherhood (Simpson, 2008). Thirteen of the 16 (81%) teen fathers were shunned by the maternal family, which proved to be the strongest deterrent to their parental involvement (Simpson, 2008).

Current Research

Current research is showing that teen fathers are becoming more engaged with their children and their children's mother. Tuffin et al. (2010) interviewed 12 teen fathers 18 years and younger who were attending a large co-educational high school. All 12 of the teen fathers were working, were actively participating in the raising of their children, and cared deeply about their children (Tuffin et al., 2010).

The Bank Street College of Education in New York City provided counseling and other services to 400 teen fathers in eight cities over a two

year period. Eighty percent of the participants stated they had daily contact with their children, almost three-fourths contributed financially to the support of their children, and 90% still had a relationship with the mother of their children (Simpson, 2008).

Robbers (2009) conducted a longitudinal examination of 310 Hispanic teen fathers who were in a parenting program in Virginia from 2003-2007. Since little had been written about this group, Robbers (2006) felt the need to evaluate teen father involvement with his child. All of the teen fathers were from families whose annual incomes were below $40,000; 80% were of Hispanic origin; 12% were African American; 7% were White; and 1% was other (Robbers, 2006). Teen fathers participated in small group activities facilitated by male caseworkers. They attended job training workshops, evening and week-end workshops, tutorial sessions, and attended family activities with the mother of their children and extended families. The results of the study indicated that the parenting attitudes and behaviors by ethnicity identified with few differences (Robbers, 2006). There was a considerable amount of father involvement, and the teen fathers increased their knowledge and improved their attitudes about fatherhood (Robbers, 2006).

Florsheim, Burrow-Sanchez, Minami, McArthur, Heavin, and Hudak (2012) studied 105 pregnant teens and their partner. Half (53) were randomly assigned to the Young Parenthood Program (YPP), and the other half (53) were assigned to the control group. Those who participated in the YPP received 10 weeks of co-parenting counseling services, and those in the control group receive standard prenatal and social services. All of the couples were interviewed before childbirth, 12 weeks after childbirth, and 18 months after childbirth. The results supported the research indicating that if a teen father received support before the birth of his baby, he would become more involved with his child, and it would also enhance the mother's interpersonal skill development (Florsheim et al., 2012).

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL EDUCATORS

After examining the related literature of teen fathers, it was noted that the involvement in their children's lives is crucial. Without their involvement, their children have lower achievement in life, delinquency, and truancy (Futris, Nielson, & Olmstead, 2010). More often than not, teen mothers and teen fathers engage in hostile behaviors which have an adverse effect on their health and their children's health (Florsheim et al., 2012). In many high schools, parenting classes are only available to teen mothers. However, parenting classes should also be provided for teen

fathers designed to increase parental involvement. Once the teen father becomes involved with his child, the social and emotional well-being of his child is strengthened creating a stable, nurturing environment (Florsheim et al., 2012).

School counselors could conduct an in-service for teachers and administrators about the needs and resources available to teen fathers such as Women, Infant, and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Child Care Management Services (CCMS), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). When educators speak with the teen father, it is important to begin the conversation in a non-judgmental way. If his child's mother and the maternal family are involving him in the decision making process, he is already facing many ethical and complicated choices such as keeping the baby, terminating, or going through the adoption process. Educators must engage in culturally sensitive interventions to help him remain involved with his child and his child's mother. A shift from their problems and deficits to discovering their strengths are more beneficial to the teen father. Since they are at at-risk group for high school drop-out and low wage earnings, the school counselor is able to apprise him of the many vocational options which will enable him to graduate with a job skill.

A support group consisting of teen fathers is another intervention because they are able to advocate for each other during this stressful time. Teachers, counselors, and administrators could become mentors in order to enhance his performance as a father. If the maternal family is keeping him away from his child and his child's mother, the school counselor may initiate assertiveness training when dealing with the maternal family.

There are several barriers that prevent teen fathers from assuming responsibility of fatherhood: the maternal family may deny them access to their children, financial dependence on their family, developmental immaturity, conflicting or lack of involvement with their own fathers, and lack of education (Dallas, 2004). When services are not provided to teen fathers, school educators, social workers, and society are not addressing all aspects of this social problem. The goal of providing these services is to empower teen fathers to have the capacity and the ability to provide adequate financial, social, and emotional support to their children and their children's mother. Teen parenting should not only be studied through the lenses of teen mothers but also through the lenses of teen fathers.

REFERENCES

Amin, R., & Ahmed, J. (2004). Unwed adolescent fathers: Their involvement in the lives of adolescent mothers and their children. *Negro Educational Review, 55*(4), 187-195.

Bunting, L., & McAuley, C. (2004). Research review: Teenage pregnancy and parenthood: The role of fathers. *Child and Family Social Work, 9*(3), 295-303. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2206.2204.00335

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2004). Youth risk behavior surveillance-United States, 2003. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 53*(SS-2), 1-96.

Dallas, C. (2004). Family matters: How mothers of adolescent parents experience adolescent pregnancy and parenting. *Public Health Nursing, 21*(4), 347-353. doi: 10.111/j.0737-1209.2004.201408x

Fagan, J., Bernd, E., & Whiteman, V. (2007). Adolescent fathers' parenting stress, social support, and involvement with infants. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 17*(1), 1-22. doi: 10.1111/j.1532-7795.2007.00510

Fagan, J., & Lee, Y. (2013). Explaining the association between adolescent parenting and preschoolers' school readiness: A risk perspective. (2013). *Journal of Community Psychology, 41*(6), 692-708. doi: 10.1002/jcop.21565

Florsheim, P., Burrow-Sanchez, J. J., Minami, T., McArthur, L., Heavin, S., & Hudak, C. (2012). Young parenthood program: Supporting positive paternal engagement through co-parenting counseling. *American Journal of Public Health, 102*(10), 1886-1892. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2012.300902

Frewin, K., Tuffin, K., & Rouch, G. (2007). Managing identity: Adolescent fathers talk about the transition to parenthood. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 36*(3), 161-168.

Furstenberg, F. F. (2003). Teenage childbearing as a public issue and private concern. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*(1). 23-39.

Futris, T. G., Nielsen, R. B., & Olmstead, S. B. (2010). No degree, no job: Adolescent mothers' perceptions of the impact that adolescent fathers' human capital has on paternal financial and social capital. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 27*(1), 1-20. doi: 10.1007/s10560-009-0187-8

Futris, T. G., Olmstead, S. B., Pasley, K., & Nielsen, R. B. (2012). A fork in the road to high school completion: Exploring adolescent fathers' educational paths. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory,*

Research, & Practice about Men as Fathers, 10(3), 291-313. doi: 10.3149/fth.1003.291

Gordon, D. M., Watkins, N. D., Walling, S. M., Wilhelm., & Rayford, B. S. (2011). Adolescent fathers involved with child protection: Social workers speak. *Child Welfare 90*(5), 94-114.

Hoffman, S. D. (October, 2006). *By the numbers: The public costs of teen child-bearing*. Washington, D.C.: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

Howard, K., Burke, J., Borkowski, J., & Whitman, T. (2006). Fathers' influence in the lives of children with adolescent mothers. *Journal of Family Psychology, 20*(3), 468-476. doi: 10.1037/0893-3200.20.3.468

Kane, A. (2006). Keep them married. *Policy & Practice of Public Human Services, 64*(3), 36.

La Guardia, A. C., Nelson, J. A., Lertora, I. M. (2014). The impact of father absence on daughter sexual development and behaviors: Implications for professional counselors. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families, 22*(3), 339-346. doi: 10.1177\1066480714529887

Lundahl, B. W., Tollefson, D., Risser, H., & Lovejoy, C. M. (2008). A meta-analysis of father involvement in parent training. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18*(2), 97-106. doi: 10.1177/1049731507309828

Nelson, T. J. (2004). Low-income fathers. *Annual Review of Sociology, 30*, 427-451.doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.29.010202.095947

Paschal, A. M. (2006). *Voices of African-American teen fathers: "I'm doing what I got to do."* New York: Haworth Press, Inc.

Raeburn, P. (2014). Where's DAD. *Scientific American Mind, 25*(3), 46-51.

Reeves, J. (2007). 'Tell me your story": Applied ethics in narrative research with young fathers. *Children's Geographics, 5*(3), 253-265. doi: 10.1080/14733280701445838

Robbers, M. L. P. (2009). Facilitating fatherhood: A longitudinal examination of father involvement among young minority fathers. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 26*(2), 121-134. doi: 10.1007/s10560-008-0157-6

Shade, K., Kools, S., Pinderhughes, H., & Weiss, S. J. (2012). Choosing fatherhood: How teens in the justice system embrace or reject a father identity. *Journal of Community Health Nursing, 29*, 91-105. doi: 10.1080/07370016.2012.670573

Simpson, K. (2008, September 21). Teen dads often cropped out of picture. *The Denver Post*, p. A1.

Sipsma, H., Biello, K. B., Cole-Lewis, H., & Kershaw, T. (2010). Like father like son: The intergenerational cycle of adolescent fatherhood. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(2), 517-524. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2009.177600

Tuffin, K., Rouch, & Frewin, K. (2010). Constructing adolescent fatherhood: Responsibilities and intergenerational repair. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 12*(5), 485-498. doi: 10.1080/13691051003629359

Ventura, S. (2007). Teen, unmarried births on the rise. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/07newsreleases/teenbirth.htm

Wilkes, L., Mannix, J., & Jackson, D. (2012)/ 'I am going to be a dad': Experiences and expectations of adolescent and young adult expectant fathers. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 21*(1/2), 180-188. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2702.2011.03715.x

The Grit of African American Male Pre-service Teachers

Lucian Yates, III[a]
Jerrel Moore[c]
Mathias R. Vairez Jr.[c]
Pamela T. Barber-Freeman[a]
William Ross[b]
William H. Parker[a]
Ramiro Bautista[c]

[a]Professor
[b]Associate Professor
[c]Doctoral Students
Prairie View A&M University,
lyates@pvamu.edu

Abstract. While the population of America's public schools is becoming more diverse, the percentage of minority teachers is steadily decreasing. While over 44% of all students in America are minority, only 12-14% of teachers are minorities and less that 2% are African American males. The challenge for colleges of education is to recruit more African American male teachers. Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore the concept of grit and its impact on African American males entering the teaching profession.

Keywords: Grit, African American Males, Teachers, Minority Teachers, Recruiting, Resilience.

INTRODUCTION

While the population of American public schools is becoming more diverse, the percentage of minority teachers is steadily decreasing (West, 1993; NCES, 2006; Igersoll & May, 2011). With over 44% of all students in America being minority, only 12-14% of teachers are minorities (Howard, 2001; NCES, 2006). While approximately 82% of the 3.8 million teachers in the United States are white, only 7% are African American and 8% Hispanic (Feisteitzer, 2011; Goldring, Gray,

11

and Bitterman, 2013). Of these teachers, less than 2% are African American males (Lewis, 2006). These figures must change if educators expect to reduce minority achievement gaps and dropout rates. David Saba, President of the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence in Washington, D.C. has called for the diversification of the profession (Saba, 2005). Greg Johnson, a policy analyst for the National Education Association (NEA), suggests increasing the number of diverse teachers is necessary because of the role model factor (Matheson, 2009). Specifically, African American male role models are important for African American students; but, essentially for African American male students mentoring process and in most cases to represent the father figure. A major challenge for colleges of education is to recruit and retain more African American males into the teaching profession. Among the reasons African American males either chose not to enter or leave the teaching profession is the inability to persevere when faced with adversity (Lewis, 2006). Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore the concept of grit and its impact on African American males entering the teaching profession and to ascertain if this concept can be taught.

THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This examination used, as its guiding framework, two theoretical principles: resilience and grit. A brief examination of these two constructs follow.

Resilience

Resilience is broadly defined as the ability to overcome adversity. According to Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000), resilience is the "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity. Thus, Luthar *et al.* (2000) claims that two conditions must exist when conceptualizing resilience: (a) exposure to threat or adversity and (b) achievement of a positive adaptation. The scientific study of resilience has occurred in three distinct stages, the first of which included a pioneering study by Michael Rutter and Associates on the resilience of children living on the Isle of Wight, a large island in England (Rutter, Tizard, Yule, Graham, & Whitmore, 1976). Over a ten-year period, Rutter studied children whose parents had been diagnosed with a mental illness. Other forms of adversity experienced by the children in the study included discord within the family, low socioeconomic status, and intervention in the lives of the children by a government agency. Rutter *et al*. (1976) found that despite the adverse circumstances many of the children did not display maladaptive

.

behaviors. Factors present in children labeled resilient included a positive personality, a supportive family, and support from a community entity, such as a school or church group. His study revealed that fostering a sense of achievement and motivation, enhancing personal growth, and increasing social contact with peers within the school environment promoted resilience in the children. Norman Garmezy, who also studied the resiliency of children with mentally ill parents, conducted a similar study that involved the resiliency of children living in urban ghettos. Garmezy (1991) found similar positive adaptations in the resilient participants of his study, including positive dispositional attributes of the child, family cohesion, and supportive members of the community. Also, during this period, Emmy Werner began a revolutionary resilience study on a group of individuals from birth to adulthood. Werner studied the lives of approximately 700 individuals living in Hawaii exposed to poverty as children. Werner (2004) found that about one-third of the individuals developed into productive members of society as adults. By age 40, this group of participants had stable marriages and families, obtained adequate education or vocational skills, and were active in church activities (Werner, 2004). According to the results of the study, their resilience was attributed to self-competence, self-regulation, determination, and effective problem-solving skills (Werner, 2004).

The second stage of resilience research is based on the ecological systems model theorized by Russian-American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. His research contends that development reflects the influence of several environmental systems. Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecological systems theory identifies five environmental systems:

Microsystem – refers to the groups that most directly affect the development of the   subject,

1) Mesosystem – refers to relations between microsystems,
2) Exosystem – refers to links between a social setting in which the subject does not have an active role
3) Macrosystem – refers to the culture in which the subject lives, and
4) Chronosystem – refers to environmental events and transitions over the course of life of the subject (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

Each system contains roles and norms that can affect the psychological development of the subject. Researchers of the resilience second stage research examined the interactions among individuals and groups that resulted in resilience development. Findings from these studies during the second stage revealed that resilience can be developed.

Therefore, the third stage of resilience research focused on policy implications regarding resilience (Luthar *et al*., 2000). These policy implications include recommendations for parents, teachers, and other members of the community and the ways they can develop resilience or perseverance in youth.

Grit

Grit is defined as the ability to develop resilience which is critical to the academic success of some individuals, such as many members of underserved and underrepresented groups. Previous research regarding achievement implicates that success is achieved only by those with innate ability (Gottfredson, 1997). According to Eisenberger (1992), perseverance is one's capability to persist in the face of difficulties, risks, and failure. This concept is similar to the aforementioned concept of resilience. Both concepts involve overcoming some type of adversity. Duckworth hypothesizes that when other qualities such as competitiveness, social status, and the need to make money are held constant, grit is a strong predictor of higher achievement (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Duckworth *et al*., (2007) challenged the notion that talent was the best predictor of high achievement. These researchers suggested that grit is a personal quality shared by most individuals in the upper echelon of their fields. They defined grit as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (Duckworth *et al*., 2007). To test this hypothesis, Duckworth *et al*., (2007) created the Grit Scale, a self-report questionnaire designed to measure quantitatively an individual's grit or ability to persist for long-term goal accomplishment. Duckworth *et al*., (2007) used the Grit Scale to conduct a study that explored if adults with more education possessed more grit than less educated adults. In this study, adults with more education scored higher on the grit scale than adults with less education (Duckworth *et al*., 2007). A later study was conducted to determine if the Grit Scale could predict performance among high achievers. In this study, Duckworth *et al*., (2007) surveyed 139 undergraduate students at the University of Pennsylvania whose average SAT score was 1,415, a score achieved by less than 4% of students who take the SAT. When SAT scores were held constant, higher grit scores were associated with higher grade point averages (Duckworth *et al*., 2007). Duckworth *et al*., (2007) also used the Grit Scale to conduct a study involving the freshman cadets of the United States Military Academy, West Point. Admission to the Academy is determined by the Whole Candidate Score, a weighted average of SAT scores, class rank, demonstrated leadership in extracurricular activities, and physical aptitude. Despite the careful

.

selection process, about one in twenty cadets leave the Academy during the first summer of training. A total of 1,218 freshman cadets completed the Grit Scale questionnaire during the first few days after their arrival to West Point. Duckworth *et al.*, (2007) found that Grit was a better predictor of summer retention than the Whole Candidate Score. Across these studies and others, grit accounted for significant variance in success outcomes.

MODES OF INQUIRY

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the role that grit played in the recruitment, retention, and certification of African American male pre-service teachers and to explore what were the triggers of grit for African American male pre-service teachers. During the quantitative phase of the research, each participant ($n = 15$) enrolled in the Thurgood Marshall College Fund's Teacher Quality Institute (summer, 2013) was given The Grit-S (Duckwork & Quinn, 2009) to ascertain "grittiness". The Grit-S has strong psychometric properties with the one year test-retest reliability of $r = 0.68$ (Duckwork & Quinn, 2009). During the qualitative phase of the investigation, follow up investigations were conducted with the students ($n = 5$), with the highest grit scores, to ascertain the answer to the following research question: How, when, and under what condition did you acquire your grittiness?

FINDINGS

The findings of this study will be presented in two steps. First, the results of the self-reported Grit Scale, using descriptive and inferential statistics will be presented. Secondly, the results of the follow-up interviews will be reported.

Quantitative Results

The sample was made up of fifteen African American male pre-service teachers ($n = 15$) enrolled in the Thurgood Marshall College Fund's Teacher Quality Institute during summer 2013. Demographical data collected included participants' academic classification, academic major, age, grade point average (GPA), whether or not they were a first generation college student, and who they lived with for the majority of their life.

Participants' academic classifications (see *Table 1*) ranged from one sophomore (6.7%), two juniors (13.3%), five seniors (33.3%), to seven graduates (46.7%).

Table 1

Classification Frequency

Classification	Frequency	Percent
Sophomore	1	6.7
Junior	2	13.3
Senior	5	33.3
Graduate	7	46.7
Total (*n = 15*)	15	100.0

Thus, the majority of participants had senior and graduate classifications, which represent 33.3% and 46.7% of the participants, respectively. In addition, participants' academic majors varied (see *Table 2*).

Table 2

Academic Major Frequency

Academic Major	Frequency	Percent
English	1	6.7
Elementary Ed.	2	13.3
MA: Elementary Ed.	1	6.7
Social Studies Ed.	1	6.7
Middle Grades Ed. Math & Science	1	6.7
Secondary Ed. Social Sciences	1	6.7
History	1	6.7
English Ed. Secondary	1	6.7
Middle Grades Ed.	1	6.7
Social Science Ed.	1	6.7
4-8 Generalist Interdisciplinary Studies Ed.	1	6.7
Special Ed.	1	6.7
M.Ed.: Instructional Technology	1	6.7
Biology	1	6.7
Total (*n = 15*)	15	100.0

.

The academic majors were: English (6.7%), Elementary Education (20%), Social Studies Education (6.7%), Middle Grades Education (13.3%), Secondary Education (13.3%), History (6.7%), Social Science Education (6.7%), 4-8 Generalist Interdisciplinary Studies Education (6.7%), Special Education (6.7%), Instructional Technology (6.7%), and Biology (6.7%). As seen in *Table 2*, the majority of participants were Elementary and Middle Grades Education, which account for 33.3% of the participants, cumulatively. The mean age of the participants was 25.13 years; the median age was 23.00 years, and the mode was 21 years (See *Table 3*).

Table 3

Age Descriptive Statistics

Age Descriptive Statistics	
Mean	25.13
Median	23.00
Mode	21[a]
Std. Deviation	6.243
Variance	38.981
Range	24
Minimum	20
Maximum	44

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The ages of the participants ranged from 20 years to 44 years; with a range of 24 years and a standard deviation of 6.24 years (See *Table 3*). In terms of frequency distribution of the ages of the participants, majority of the participants (66.7 %) had ages ranging from 20 years to 25 years. The remaining participants (33.3%) had ages ranging from 26 years to 44 years (See *Table 4*).

Table 4

Age Frequency

Class Interval	Frequency	Percent
20 - 22	6	40.0
23 - 25	4	26.7
26 - 28	2	13.3
29 - 31	2	13.3
44 - 46	1	6.7
Total (*n = 15*)	15	100.0

The mean GPA of the participants was 3.22; the median was 3.10, and the mode was 3.00 (See *Table 5*).

Table 5

GPA Descriptive Statistics

GPA Descriptive Statistics	
Mean	3.2227
Median	3.1000
Mode	3.00[a]
Std. Deviation	.45850
Variance	.210
Range	1.60
Minimum	2.40
Maximum	4.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The GPAs of the participants ranged from 2.40 to 4.00; with a range of 1.60 and a standard deviation of 0.46 (See *Table 5*). A frequency distribution of the GPAs of the participants revealed that majority of the participants (66.7 %) had GPAs ranging from 2.51 to 3.50. Only a minority of the participants (6.7%) had GPAs ranging from 2.00 to 2.50. The remaining participants (26.6%) had the highest GPAs, ranging from 3.50 to 4.00 (See *Table 6*).

18

.

Table 6

GPA Frequency

Class Interval	Frequency	Percent
2.01 - 2.50	1	6.7
2.51 - 3.00	4	26.7
3.01 - 3.50	6	40.0
3.51 - 4.00	4	26.7
Total (n = 15)	15	100.0

A majority of the participants (60%) were not first generation college students. However, 40% of the participants were first generation college students (see *Table 7*).

Table 7

First Generation College Student Frequency

1st Generation College Student	Frequency	Percent
Yes	6	40.0
No	9	60.0
Total (*n = 15*)	15	100.0

The results also showed that a majority of the participants (40%) lived most of their life with only their mother. Only 33.3% of the participants lived most of their life with both parents; 13.3 % with grandparents, 6.7% with fathers and 6.7% with others (see *Table 8*).

Table 8

Majority of Life Lived With

Majority of Life Lived With	Frequency	Percent
Both Parents	5	33.3
Mother Only	6	40.0
Father Only	1	6.7
Grandparents	2	13.3
Other	1	6.7

Yates et al.

Majority of Life Lived With	Frequency	Percent
Both Parents	5	33.3
Mother Only	6	40.0
Father Only	1	6.7
Grandparents	2	13.3
Other	1	6.7
Total (_n = 15_)	15	100.0

The data suggest that all participants in the Thurgood Marshall College Fund's Teacher Quality Institute (summer, 2013) possessed high grit scores (see _Table 9_ and _Table 10_).

Table 9

Grit Descriptive Statistics

Grit Descriptive Statistics	
Mean	3.9607
Median	3.8800
Mode	3.88
Std. Deviation	.43508
Variance	.189
Range	1.38
Minimum	3.25
Maximum	4.63

_n = 15_

Table 10

Grit Frequency

Class Interval	Frequency	Percent
<= 3.90	8	53.3
3.91 - 4.90	7	46.7
Total (_n = 15_)	15	100.0

.

Using a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5 (one being low (no grittiness) and five being high (quite gritty), the average grit score for the participants was 3.9607, the mode was 3.88, the range was 1.38, with a minimum of 3.25 and a maximum score of 4.63 (see *Table 9*). Of the 15 participants, 53.3 % had a grit score between 3.25 and 3.90 and 46.7 % had a grit score between 3.91 and 4.90 (see Table 10 and Chart 1).

Chart 1: Grit Frequency Pie Chart

Grit Score (Binned)

■ <= 3.90
■ 3.91 - 4.90

46.67%

53.33%
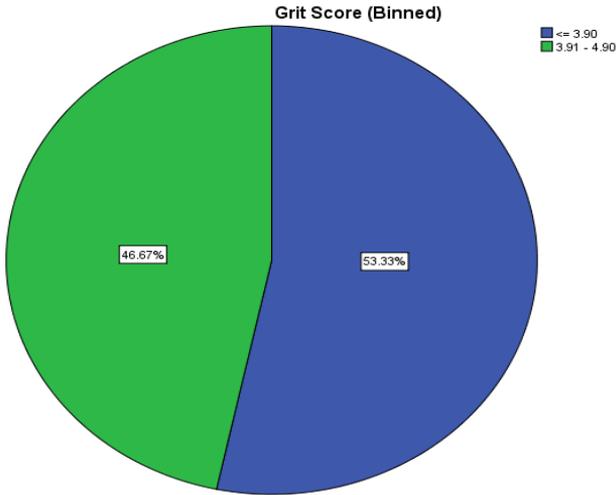
An exploration of the relationships between participants' grit scores and the collected demographic variables revealed the subsequent findings. There was a weak to moderate negative relationship ($r = -0.260$) between participants' grit scores and age. Accordingly, the younger participants had higher grit scores. This relationship was not statistically significant ($p = 0.349$) (See *Table 11*).

Table 11

Pearson Correlation Matrix

	Grit Score	Age	GPA
Grit Score		1	
Age		-.260	1
		(.349)	
GPA		-.251	.545[*]
		(.366)	(.035)

n = 15

Number in parenthesis denotes level of significance
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Also, there was a weak to moderate negative relationship (r = -0.252) between participants' grit scores and GPA. Thus, the participants with lower GPAs had a bit higher grit scores. This relationship was not statistically significant (p = 0.366) (see Table 11). To further illustrate these relationships, Cross tabulations and bar charts were produced (see Table 12 & 13 and Charts 2 & 3).

To facilitate further explorations with like variables, the grit variable was transformed into a categorical ordinal variable (see Table 10). This allowed for the exploration of the relationships between participants' grit and the subsequent demographical variables. The results were that there was a moderate positive relationship (*r* = 0.351) between participants' grit and classification. Thus, as the higher the classification the higher the grit score -- participants with higher classifications had higher grit scores. This relationship was not statistically significant (see Table 14 and Chart 4). Also, there was a very weak relationship (*r* = 0.054) between participants' grit and whether they were a First Generation College Student or not. Thus, whether participants were a First Generation College Student or not was not related to their grit score. This relationship was not statistically significant (see *Table 15* and Chart 5). Finally, there was a moderate relationship (*r* = 0.354) between participants' grit and who they lived with for the majority of their life. This relationship was not statistically significant (see Table 16 and Chart 6).

Table 12

*Grit Score (Binned) * GPA (Binned) Crosstabulation*

		GPA (Binned)				Total
		2.01 - 2.50	2.51 - 3.00	3.01 - 3.50	3.51 - 4.00	
Grit Score (Binned)	**<= 3.90**					
	Count	1	3	1	3	8
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	12.5%	37.5%	12.5%	37.5%	100.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	20.0%	6.7%	20.0%	53.3%
	3.91 - 4.90					
	Count	3	3	0	1	7
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	42.9%	42.9%	.0%	14.3%	100.0%
	% of Total	20.0%	20.0%	.0%	6.7%	46.7%
Total	Count	4	6	1	4	
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	26.7%	40.0%	6.7%	26.7%	
	% of Total	26.7%	40.0%	6.7%	26.7%	

Gamma Coefficient: *G* = -.317 -- Contingency Coefficient: *C* = .405
Both were not Statistically Significant.

Table 13

*Grit Score (Binned) * Age (Binned) Crosstabulation*

Grit Score (Binned)		Age (Binned)				Total
		<= 25	26 - 30	31 - 35	41 - 45	
<= 3.90	Count	1	1	5	1	8
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	12.5%	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	6.7%	33.3%	6.7%	53.3%
3.91 - 4.90	Count	0	0	5	2	7
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	.0%	.0%	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	33.3%	13.3%	46.7%
Total	Count	1	1	10	3	15
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	6.7%	6.7%	66.7%	20.0%	6.7%
	% of Total	6.7%	6.7%	66.7%	20.0%	6.7%

Gamma Coefficient: $G = -.310$ -- Contingency Coefficient: $C = .363$

Both were not Statistically Significant.

.

Chart 2: Grit Score (Binned) * GPA (Binned) Bar Chart
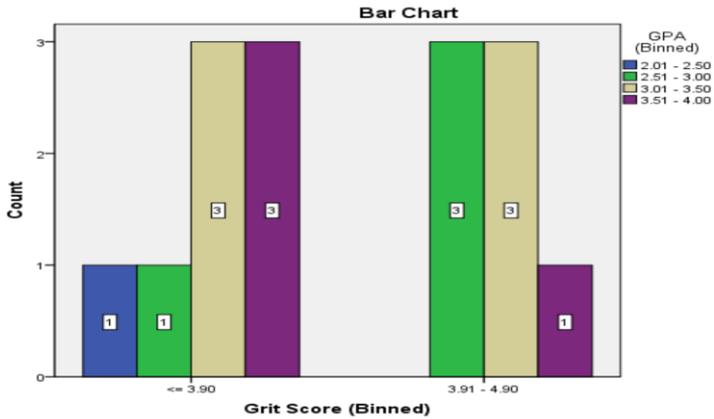
Chart 3: Grit Score (Binned) * Age (Binned) Bar Chart

Yates et al.
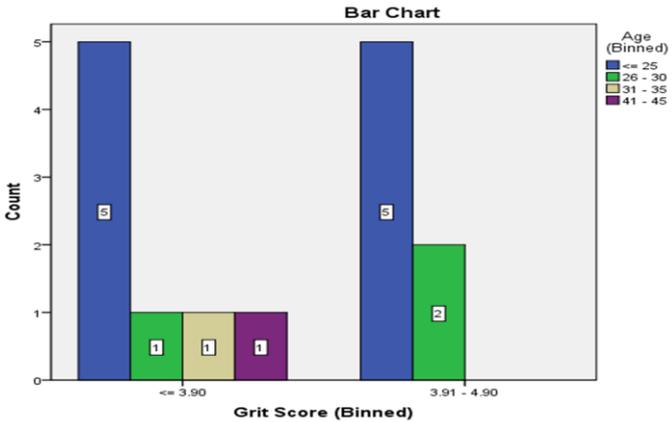
Table 14

*Grit Score (Binned) * Classification Crosstabulation*

		Classification				Total
		Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate	
Grit Score (Binned)	<= 3.90					
	Count	3	3	1	1	8
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	% of Total	20.0%	20.0%	6.7%	6.7%	53.3%
	3.91 - 4.90					
	Count	4	2	1	0	7
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	57.1%	28.6%	14.3%	.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	26.7%	13.3%	6.7%	.0%	46.7%
Total	Count	7	5	2	1	7
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	46.7%	33.3%	13.3%	6.7%	46.7%
	% of Total	46.7%	33.3%	13.3%	6.7%	46.7%

Gamma Coefficient: G = .351 -- Contingency Coefficient: C = .281

Both were not Statistically Significant.

**Chart 4: Grit Score (Binned) * Classification Bar Chart**
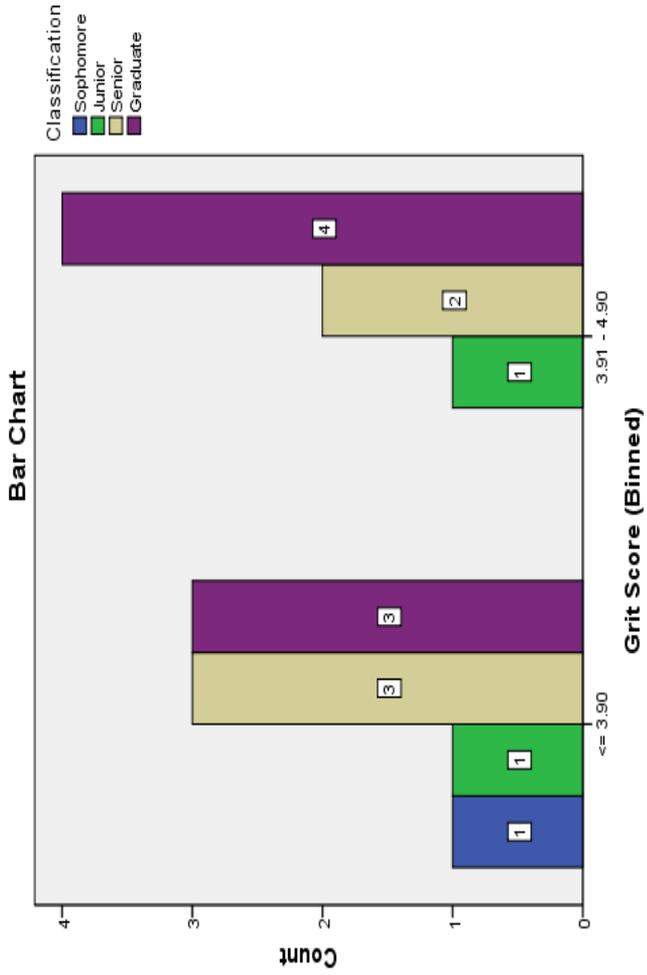
Table 15

*Grit Score (Binned) * 1st Generation College Student Cross tabulation*

			1st Generation College Student		Total
			Yes	No	
Grit Score (Binned)	<= 3.90	Count	5	3	8
		% within Grit Score (Binned)	62.5%	37.5%	100.0 %
		% of Total	33.3%	20.0%	53.3%
	3.91 - 4.90	Count	4	3	7
		% within Grit Score (Binned)	57.1%	42.9%	100.0 %
		% of Total	26.7%	20.0%	46.7%
Total		Count	9	6	
		% within Grit Score (Binned)	60.0%	40.0%	
		% of Total	60.0%	40.0%	

Contingency Coefficient: C = .054 -- was not statistically Significant.

.

Chart 5: Grit Score (Binned) * 1st Generation College Student Cross tabulation Bar Chart

Bar Chart

1st
Generation
College
Student
■ Yes
■ No

Count

5
4
3
2
1
0

3
5
3
4

<= 3.90   3.91 - 4.90
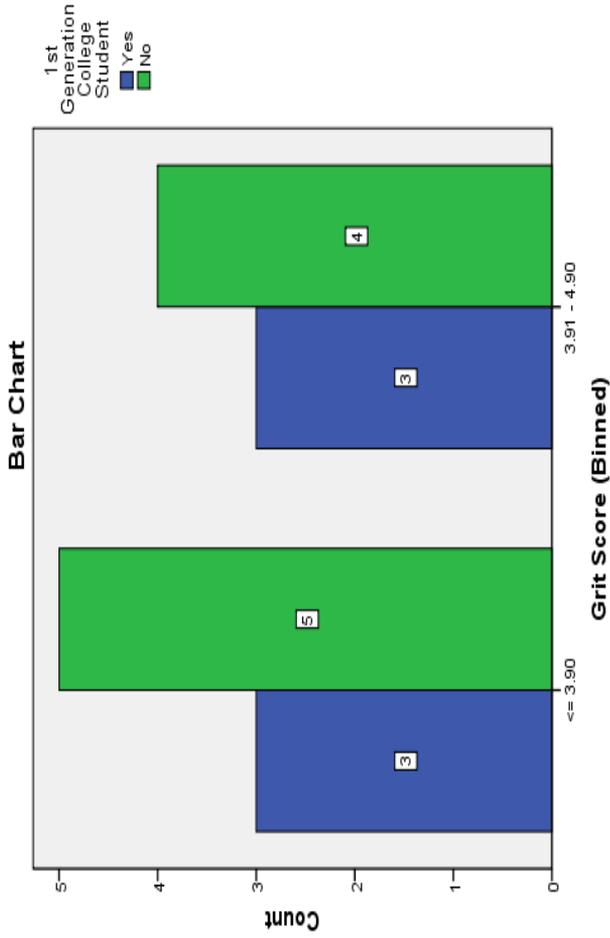
Grit Score (Binned)

Table 16

Grit Score (Binned)		Both Parents	Mother Only	Father Only	Grandparents	Other	Total
<= 3.90	Count	1	1	2	3	1	8
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	6.7%	13.3%	20.0%	6.7%	53.3%
3.91 - 4.90	Count	0	1	3	3	0	7
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	.0%	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%	.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	.0%	6.7%	20.0%	20.0%	.0%	46.7%
Total	Count	1	2	5	6	1	15
	% within Grit Score (Binned)	6.7%	13.3%	33.3%	40.0%	6.7%	100.0%
	% of Total	6.7%	13.3%	33.3%	40.0%	6.7%	100.0%

Majority of Life Lived With

Contingency Coefficient: C = .354 -- was not statistically Significant.

Chart 6: Grit Score (Binned) * Majority of Life Lived With Cross tabulation Bar Chart
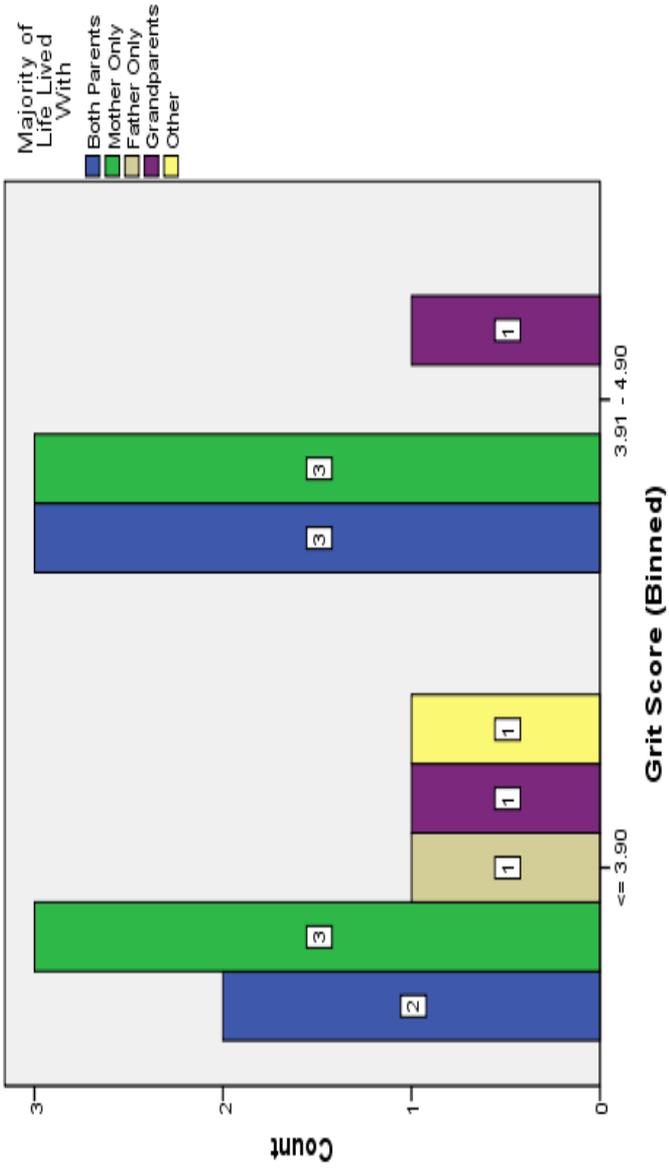
Qualitative Data

Phenomenological research is used to describe the meanings and themes that several individuals lived (Creswell, 2007). Categorically, it should tell a story of lived experiences. In this case study, how, when, and under what conditions did "gritty" African American pre-service teachers acquire grit. Researchers, figuratively and literally, place themselves in the real world of the participants. The researchers interviewed five (5) participants with the highest Grit scores.

Open coding (Creswell, 2007) was used to analyze the interviews. Written field notes were also used to help interpret the data. Themes were identified by each of the researchers and then a consensus discussion session was held to finalize themes and the participants' quotes to underscore the themes.

During this entire process, every ethical consideration was given to ensure that each participant was treated with respect and dignity. Additionally, trustworthiness of the data was achieved by following Guba's standards or constructs for qualitative research: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Guba, 1981). Through the qualitative portion of the study, three themes emerged that explained the participants' acquisition of grit. They were: The Role of Family, The Role of Life Circumstances, and The Role of Spirituality.

The Role of Family. Without fail, each participant said they learned grit from their family—usually parents, however, sometimes from other family members and sometimes from friends. Whether it was intentionally taught or by mere observation, each participant said they learned to be gritty from their family. Participant One said,

> *I learned to be gritty from my parents as they served as role models for me. Their attitudes and their hard work were very important towards completing the goals in their lives.*

He went further to quote his mother, who said,

> *You finish what you start. Good or bad, whether it will pay off or not, you will never see the end result of your work if you do not finish,. Trust me son, it will pay off in the long run.*

His father gave similar advice, when he said,

> *Put your head to the ground and go forward. Sometimes you have to do the things you don't want to do in order to do the things you want to do later.*

.

Participant Three went further to state that his father told him that he had to be resilient.

> *You have to be resilient. You must be better than the best. What is the alternative?*

Participant Three said that he also was encouraged to be resilient from his uncles and his cousins, who said

> *Because you're small, they told me, "I have to prove myself."*

> Participant Four continued the theme of resiliency. He learned this grittiness by "observing his mother and family members".

> *My family members were uneducated, but still they worked hard. I watched my family members hustle. It was not illegal things, just survival skills. So I learned to be resourceful. Use my resources to meet goals.*

Participant Five continued this theme of resiliency, when he said

> *After my father left my mother, we had to start from nothing. She had to go to college. She had to get a job and work to support three sons. To see her do that and succeed in St. Louis helped me to learn grit.*

Further, Participant Five related that he learned grit from other sources.

> *People modeled for me how to be gritty. Learning from others and being a mentor. I even learned from the faults of my classmates and friends. I also learned from their successes too. Learning street smart knowledge and support from people too helped me to become gritty.*

Participant Two was crystal clear in how he learned grit. His father told him

> *Never give up on things that are true and dear to you. Education is one of the most important things and will always pay off at the end.*

Before my freshman year in college, my mother told me,

> *You just gotta make it happen.*

> *The Role of Life Circumstances.* In the words of the modern adage, Life Happens. For these participants, it was no different. These five individuals faced all types of obstacles that they attribute to the acquisition of grit. Participant One stated that he learned grit from watching the life experiences of his father.

> *Dad went to the university as an athlete. He was given the opportunity to earn a degree but he did not finish. He wakes up daily at 3 am for work. He returns home at 9 pm only to get back up and do it all over again the next day. I've noticed that my father has done whatever he had to do to support this family*

> *and other around him. Therefore, I'm going to take the opportunity to earn my degree so that I won't repeat his mistakes.*

Participant Four's experience was similar to Participant One in that he learned his grit from watching others.

> *I had no father in my life. My mother had a boyfriend but I had no strong male role model. As a child, my family experienced financial difficulty, so I decided to try to acquire the things that I need so that I wouldn't repeat my current circumstances.*

The other participants' stories were much more heart-wrenching. Participant Two, for instance, learned his grit in ninth grade when his father died of lung cancer.

> *I was a freshman and everything was new to me. I needed guidance and knew I had to persevere. I learned from my mother, not what she said, but by her actions.*

Profoundly, Participant Two recounted a particular episode that was a defining moment for his acquiring grit.

> *On a family outing to the beach, all of our family was walking along the beach together, except my mother. She would walk along or many times she would want to be alone. I learned that at times you must be along to get your work done. That has translated to me today. Sometimes, I just have to be alone.*

Participant Three's life circumstance happened at age thirteen.

> *My father died when I was 13 years old. My mother had MS and I had to take care of my three siblings. I had to grow up really fast. I would remember the lessons learned from my father like, "you must be better than the best. What is the alternative?" So today, when things get rough, I persevere.*

Participant Five's story was similar to the others'.

> *My little brother committed suicide. That affected the entire family. I had to look at my life and decide if I wanted to live like that. I was not satisfied with my life, I was failing in school. I had a low GPA. I decided that I had to change. I understand that goals in life take lots of steps and building blocks. I had to work hard. And now I am pursuing a MA in curriculum and instruction.*

The five participants related that these life changing events contributed to their acquisition of grit. Where the events may have crippled or at least, stymied the growth and development of many, these

.

students dealt with these circumstances and actually thrived as a result of them.

   The Role of Spirituality. The final theme that emerged was the role that spirituality played in the acquisition of grit. Although all participants attributed their faith to their success, two participants were extremely explicit in how spirituality helped them acquire grit. Participant Three said,

   When my father died and my mother had MS, I was
   angry until I started to go to church more. It was then
   that this started to make sense.

He went further to quoted the Bible verses that helped him.

   I remember the verses that helped me the most. 'I press toward
   the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' and 'I can
   do all things through Christ who Strengthens me. ' Before then, I
   thought I had to prove myself. But when I studied the Word, it
   helped   me through these difficult situations.

He finally attributed his success to *"the Grace of God!"*

   Participant Five had a similar story when considering the role of spirituality in the acquisition of grit. He said

   My grandmother taught me. She always quoted the Bible. She
   said things like:
   God would not give us more than we could bear. Believe and
   strive to be better; and, if you want it, you can do it. The
   teachings of the Bible were important to me. It was through
   these teachings that I was able to make it through my little
   brother's suicide.

DISCUSSION OR SIGNIFICANCE

   The data identified by participants offer a step that contributes to much needed information on the grit of African American male pre-service teachers. The data found are unique because the grit of African American male teachers has rarely been examined.   Therefore, the purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the role that grit played in the recruitment, retention, and certification of African American male pre-service teachers. During the quantitative phase of the research, each participant (n =15) enrolled in the Thurgood Marshall College Fund's Teacher Quality Institute (summer, 2013) was given The Grit-S (Duckwork & Quinn, 2009) to ascertain "grittiness." The data from the surveys revealed that a relationship exist between grit and age, GPA, classification, and who they lived with for the majority of their life.

During the qualitative phase of the investigation, follow up interviews were conducted with five students (n = 5), with the highest grit score, to ascertain the answer to the following research question:

> *How, when, and under what condition did you acquire your grittiness?*

The qualitative portion of the examination was undertaken to ascertain if grit could be taught and if so under what conditions. Five participants, with the highest grit scores, were interviewed and three themes emerged: The role of the family, the role of life circumstances, and the role of spirituality. All students possessed high grit scores (see Table 1 and Table 2). Grit is defined as the ability to develop resilience, which is critical to the academic success of some individuals. Duckworth *et al*. (2007) define grit as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (p. 1087). According to Eisenberger (1992), perseverance is one's capability to persist in the face of difficulties, risks, and failure. As found by Duckworth *et al.* (2007), when other qualities such as competitiveness, social status, and the need to make money are held constant, grit is a strong predictor of higher achievement (Duckworth *et al.,* 2007). Therefore, one can surmise that this group of African American pre-service males will be successful.

The work is symmetric to the work of Masten, et al. (1990), Benard (1991), Garmezy (1991), Linquannti (1992), and Yates, Pelphrey, and Smith (2008) identified these factors (protective factors) that contribute to student success. They are the influence of family, influence of personal circumstances, and influence of spirituality.

Although this inquiry had a small sample, the results are extremely profound. This investigation uncovered that grit can be taught, and as asserted by Duckworth that grit is a better predictor than academic ability, then the way we "do business" in education must be "turned on its head". Rather than teaching academic skills, we should teach students how to be gritty.

.

REFERENCES

Bernard, B. (1991). *Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school and community.* Portland, OR: Western Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No., ED 335 781)

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1999). Environments in Developmental Perspective: Theoretical and Operational Models. In S.L. Friedman & T.D. Wachs (Ed.).*Measuring environment across the life span: Emerging methods and concepts*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Press, P. 3-28.

Creswell. J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Duckworth, A., Peterson, C., Matthews, M., & Kelly, D. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99* (6), 1087-1101.

Duckworth, A.L. & Quinn, P.D. (2009). Development and validation of the Short Grit Scale (Grit-S). *Journal of Personality Assessment, 91*:2,166-174.

Eisenberger, R. 1992. Learned industriousness. Psychological Review, 99 (2), 248-267.

Feistritzer, C.E. (2011). *Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Information.

Garmezy, N. (1991). Resiliency and vulnerability to adverse developmental outcomes associated with poverty. *North American Behavioral Scientist. 34* (4), p.416-425.

Goldring, R., Gray, L., & Bitterman, A. (2013). *Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2011–12 Schools and Staffing Survey* (NCES 2013-314). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

Gottfredson, L. S. (1997). Why grit matters: The complexity of everyday life. *Intelligence, 24*, 79–132.

Guba, E.G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal, 29*(2), 75-91.

Howard, T.C., (2001). Powerful pedagogy for African American students: Conception of culturally relevant pedagogy. *Urban Education, 36*(2), 179-202.

Ingersoll, R.M., and May, H. (2011). The Minority Teacher Stortage: Fact or Fable? *Phi Delta Kappa International*. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/09/01/kappan_ingersoll .html

Lewis, C. W. (2006). African American male teachers in public schools: An examination of three urban school districts. *Teachers College Record, 108*(2), p224-245.

Linquanti, R. (1992). Using community-wide collaboration to foster resiliency in kids: A conceptual framework. Portland, OR: Western Regional Center for Drug Free Schools and Communities (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 353 666)

Luthar, S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Society for Research in Child Development, 77* (3), 543-562.

Masten, A.S., Best, K.M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development and Psychopathology, 2,* 425-444.

Matheson, K. (October 9, 2009), Few teachers are black men, *USA Today.*

National Center for Education Statistics (2006). *The condition of education 2006.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Rutter, M., Tizard, J., Yule, W., Graham, P., & Whitmore, K. (1976). Isle of Wight Studies. *Psychological Medicine, 6* (2), 313-332.

Saba, D. (2005). *American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence.* Washington, D.C.

Werner, E. (2004). Journeys from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience, and recovery. *Pediatrics, 114* (2), 492.

West, C. (1993). *Race Matters*. New York: Vintage Books

Yates, L., Pelphrey, B., & Smith, P. (2008). "An exploratory phenomenological study of African American male pre-service teachers at a historical Black university in the mid-south. *National FORUM of Applied Educational Research Journal, 21*, (3), 1-16.

Transformational Leadership in Urban Schools

LaBotta Taylor

Garland Independent School District
lstaylor@garlandisd.net

Abstract. African American female administrators rely on culture to develop meaningful relationships with students, teachers, and parents; and to make up for any financial hardships, which may exist during the administration of urban elementary schools. However, there is limited research is available on how transformational leadership skills influence the academic success of urban schools. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine transformational leadership skills evident in African American female principals at high-achieving, urban elementary schools. Two African American female principals participated in this quantitative study. The results showed that the principals displayed all tenets of the transformational leadership theory, while leading high achieving campuses. However, an unexpected outcome of the study suggests that transformational leadership theory is missing a cultural component within its doctrine.

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of school reform, begun over 30 years ago, is more problematic among students, teachers, and leaders during the 21st century than in years past in urban schools (Horsford, 2011). Urban schools, which typically have larger enrollment than rural or suburban schools, primarily serve low-income students (Lomotey, 1987, 1993). Low-income students are generally defined as students at or below the national poverty level in an impoverished area (Ladson-Billings, 1995). A national survey on poverty found that poverty rates are higher for African Americans and Hispanics and well above the national average. According to the National Poverty Center (2013), "In 2010, 27.4 % of Blacks [African Americans] and 26.6 % of Hispanics were poor, compared to 9.9 % of non-Hispanic Whites and 12.1 % of Asians" (p. 1).

African American children who live in poverty are exposed to other external challenges within their own respective neighborhoods, such as malnutrition, family instability, high crime rates, prostitution, and drugs. Even with all of these challenges, research has shown that some African American students succeed academically. A pioneering study, entitled "Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High Poverty Urban Elementary Schools" (Johnson & Asera, 1999), found that improvement efforts from these urban elementary schools came from building the capacity of principals to provide instructional leadership by employing the following strategies: (a) providing opportunities for principals to visit other successful schools with similar demographics; (b) assisting principals in understanding and implementing data-driven, decision-making processes; (c) ensuring that principals have time to support instructional efforts on a daily basis; (d) giving principals easy access to district personnel when challenges arose; (e) giving principals time for individual professional development in best practices; and (f) mentoring principals on identification, support, and termination (if necessary) of inadequate staff. In addition to these strategies, the nine elementary schools interfaced with parents and communities in various ways that resulted in student academic success. According to this study, the key to success lies with strong educational leadership in the schools that uses strategies and processes for teaching, administration, professional development, and parent and community involvement.

African American female principals typically lead low socioeconomic elementary schools (Alston & McClellan, 2011). Administrators in predominately urban schools are familiar with the needs of minority students (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007). They are cognizant of the rigorous testing demands, as well as funding requirements for Title I schools. Title I schools are public schools with students from the highest percentage of low-income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Although Title I funds are provided from the federal government via local educational agencies (LEAs), these funds are normally not enough to keep pace with technology integration and programs of more affluent schools. Therefore, African American female administrators rely on culture to develop meaningful relationships with students, teachers, and parents and make up for any financial hardships that may exist during the transformation of urban elementary schools (Siddle Walker, 2009).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine transformational leadership skills evident in African American female principals at high-achieving, urban elementary schools.

Research Question

1. What are the transformational leadership skills evident in two African American?

2. Female principals who work in high-achieving urban elementary schools?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As a conceptual model, Transformational Leadership Theory centers on the notion that leaders set higher expectations for followers, which increases the scope for improving performance (Bass, 1998). Transformational leadership can be categorized under the following four tenets: (1) Charismatic Leadership (or Idealized Influence, CL or II), (2) Inspirational Motivation (IM), (3) Intellectual Stimulation (IS), and (4) Individualized Consideration (IC) (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Bass (1998) pointed out, transformational leaders lead successful schools by creating a vision, setting goals, and fostering strong parental and community support. Yu, Leithwood, and Jantzi (2002) observed how the principal sets the tone for the school, thereby, sustaining an innovative climate and organizational commitment for change. Others such as Fullan (2001), further endorsed the necessity of sophisticated leadership in a complex society, where transformational leaders emerge as team players, problem-solvers, and escalation analysts (known as CEOs in the corporate world)—all in one.

METHODS

This study was a multiple case study (qualitative) with an exploratory approach. Exploratory case studies are "aimed at defining the questions and hypotheses of a subsequent study or at determining the feasibility of the desired research procedures" (Yin, 2003, p. 5). Moreover, exploratory case studies allow the researcher an opportunity to observe the raw state of social phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher is given the opportunity to gather research from a hands-on perspective in the field.

Settings and Participants

The settings were two urban elementary schools in two small urban school districts. The sample for this case study consisted of two African American female principals.

Case 1

Setting. School district A had approximately 8,150 students. Its student demographics included 64% African American, 23% Hispanic, 8% White, 1% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 3% Other. The district served both a 64% economically disadvantaged and 44% at-risk population. School district A had approximately 600 students in grades Pre-K to 4th grade. Student demographics among the Pre-K to 4th grade population included 76% African Americans, 17% Hispanics, 4% White, and 3% Other.

Principal profile. Participant 1(P1) had 16 years of educational experience and 5 years of principal experience. Four years at her current campus and one year in another district. P1 earned a Bachelor of Science in Economics and a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership. She was in her late thirties with four children. P1 is currently employed as Principal of the aforementioned PK-4 elementary campus.

Case 2

Setting. School district B had approximately 8,900 students. Its student demographics were 78% African American, 16% Hispanic, 4% White, and 2% Other. The district served both a 69% economically disadvantaged and 37% at-risk population. School B had approximately 615 students in grades Pre-K to 5th grade. Demographics among students in these grade levels included 87% African Americans, 8% Hispanics, 4% White, and 1% Other.

Principal profile. Participant 2 (P2) had 15 years of experience working in education. She had been a principal for 3 years. All of these years had been at the same campus and in the same district. P2 earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry and a Master of Education in Teaching with Principal Certification. She was in her late thirties and married with two children. P2 is currently employed as Principal of the aforementioned PK-5 elementary campus.

DATA SOURCES

The data sources included observations, documents, and interviews. Each of the sources are explained in more detail below.

Observations

Observations included: noting the principal's interactions with district personnel, teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members on a daily basis. The researcher shadowed the Principal as she performed her job and made decisions for her elementary campus. These observations also included noting school activities and meetings both on campus and off campus and other spontaneous interactions. The observations were documented on the Principal Observation Protocol. This form assisted in recording transformational leadership practices of each principal. In addition, it helped to reflect on these practices and draw valid conclusions.

Documents

Documents included announcements, flyers, agendas, and minutes for school wide events, such as Family Math Night, Family Reading Night, Parent Breakfast, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. The documents also reflected minutes from district meetings, such as principal meetings, vertical team meetings, and professional development. The minutes were acceptable either from the planning meetings before the activity or follow up meeting after the event. Additionally, staff memos included policies and procedures written by the principal to teachers, staff, parents, or the community. These memos normally highlighted norms and expectations for upcoming school events.

Interviews

There were three interviews with each principal during which I employed the Seidman approach. This approach allowed for in-depth interviewing and interaction between the researcher and the participants. Seidman's (2006) three-interview series provided an authentic view of "the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). The three-interview series included three separate 90 minute interviews within a three-week time frame. Seidman recommends that each interview last for a minimum of 90 minutes. He stated that "the purpose of this approach is to have the participants reconstruct their experience, put it in the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning; anything shorter than 90 minutes for each interview seems too short" (p. 20). Interview 1 focused on the principal's life history, Interview 2

concentrated on the details of the experience, and Interview 3 reflected on the meaning of the administrative experience. This structure acknowledged the importance of reflection and storytelling, which made the experience one of validity for the participants.

RESULTS

Multiple themes emerged from the interviews, documents, and observations with the two African American female principals. Emergent themes were: motivators, visionaries, role models, spirituality, community engagers, and culture.

Motivator

Both principals were very influential on their campuses. They motivated their students and staff on a daily basis. Each leader showed consistent appreciation for their campus with incentives and rewards. Both principals gave thank you notes, birthday cards, and accolades on a consistent basis. They inspired students and staff members to be their very best and to reach their fullest potential.

Visionary

Each principal encouraged teachers to think outside the box. They wanted students to have fun learning. Sometimes this was with or without technology. However, it met high expectations and performance standards. Both principals encouraged higher order thinking skills, problem-solving techniques, and real world application.

Coach, mentor, and role model

Each administrator was an effective coach, mentor, and role model. They considered the feelings of others. Each principal led by example. They were well respected in the community and prided themselves on having the best campus in the world. When P1 and P2 coached staff members, they were committed listeners. They gave others their full attention and minimized interruptions.

Spirituality

Spirituality was used as a guiding force in the two African American principals. Both principals accredited all of their professional, as well as personal, success to God. They credited their achievements solely to a higher power. According to both, spirituality was a testament to their uniqueness as people and leaders. Both principals had humble spirits and depended on God to guide their footsteps and make wise choices daily.

Community Engagers

The two principals approached community involvement differently. Principal 1 was immersed in community events. In order to connect with the students, staff members, parents, and civil leaders; she lived, shopped, and attended church in the neighborhood. P1's campus had a high level of parental involvement. In contrast, principal 2 lived outside of the boundaries of the school district. She frequently connected with community members via board meetings, emails, and community outings. In addition, P2 welcomed parents and guardians to volunteer often.

Culture

Cultural understanding was an essential part of these two principals' leadership styles. There are nine universals of culture, which include various forms of behavior from different parts of the world (Cleveland, Craven, & Danfelser, 1993). These cultural universals include: material culture; arts, play, and recreation; social organization; language and non-verbal communication; social control; conflict and warfare; education; worldview; and economic organization. A cultural universal is "an element, pattern, trait, or institution that is common to all human cultures on the planet" (p. 1). The principals attended to the nine universals of culture in multiple ways.

Food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and personal possessions were the essential elements of material culture. Both principals ensured that each student had breakfast and lunch as part of the regular school day program (material). Students attended a weekly fine arts rotation to keep them physically fit, as well as enrich their study of the arts. Both participants exposed their students to the arts by sponsoring school programs and providing field trips (arts, play and recreation). Both principals built character in their students through social organizations. For example, students at Principal 2's campus were involved in after school enrichment programs, such as reading club, math club, chess club, and computer club (social organization).

Principal 1 had a special workshop during Black history month in February, in which the students could learn African dances and language from various African tribes. Principal 2 encouraged teachers to teach students sign language in Kindergarten classes to help with non-verbal communication (language and non-verbal communication). Both principals ensured students learned about systems and governments through social studies integration with other subjects, such as writing. Each principal implemented campus wide discipline management plans.

Both principals implemented the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (P.B.I.S.) as the primary system (social control). Both principals maintained an 'open door' policy to any resolve any conflicts, in the event someone needed to talk to them. They always remained neutral and acted as a mediator in disagreements between staff members. Both leaders created a 'family' culture; meaning yelling, name-calling, fighting, and cursing were unacceptable. Everyone had to remain professional and treat the school as if it were a second home (conflict and warfare). In this study, principals knew the significance of informal education. Informal education happens outside the classroom and typically at home. The principals were acquainted with linguistic phrases or slang (Ebonics), popular music, and family history to bridge the educational gap. They understood that relationships developed outside the standard school setting had a great influence on students.

Also, the leaders were cognizant of the importance of formal education. Both principals believed in a progressive approach (project-based learning, hands-on activities) to teaching and learning. They invested time and money to ensure teachers had the best instructional supplies and attended professional development. By doing so, teachers continued to grow and instruct students with a rigorous curriculum (informal and formal education). It is the overall perspective on how individuals view the world. In particular, worldview embraces the thoughts and ideas which people formulate based on belief systems, religion, and spirituality. Although the principals understood the separation of church and state in school districts, they also recognized the necessity to keep religion as part of the African American heritage. Morning announcements included the traditional pledges and a moment of silence. A moment of silence was for one minute in order to allow students to prepare mentally for the day through meditation, reflection, or prayer. Both pledges include the word God, so students viewed it as acceptable to use on a daily basis. Outside of these school rituals, both principals celebrated Christmas and Kwanzaa. Christmas is a religious holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of God. Kwanzaa is a celebration, which allows African Americans to celebrate themselves and their history. Each principal put up Christmas trees in the school, allowed teachers to decorate their classrooms, and gave Kwanzaa gifts which reflected Afrocentrism—cultural ideology and artifacts. For example, P2 gave the art teacher a statue of a Black Santa Claus and an African American tribal mask (worldview).

Finally, principals in this study tried to help students understand the cost of living and minimum wage. They encouraged students to attend college, so that they could have a good job and provide for their families. Principal 1 partnered with local banks and had representatives speak to the children about saving money. The banks offered the parents minor accounts for their children free of charge. Principal 2 raised money for the school through fundraisers. The fundraisers helped with student materials, field trip costs, and other campus needs (economic organization).

DISCUSSION

It is important to study and note the factors that bring about success in urban public schools, particularly at the hand of African American female principals, a rarely studied group. Transformational Leadership in African American female principals is not well researched because few transformational leadership studies include African American female participants. This study intends to add to the literature by providing new insight into the effectiveness of transformational leadership elements applied by African American women in academically successful urban settings.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Overall, Transformational Leadership served as a valid theoretical lens through which to understand how two African American female principals led high-achieving elementary schools. By listening, observing, and studying their leadership, there was much learned about effective approaches. This theory provides a basis to show how principals encourage and interact with their followers. The relationships built between the leader and followers are extremely valuable when educating students of color. Thus, transformational leadership theory demonstrates the use of common characteristics and traits in effective leaders.

Although the last three themes fell outside the realm of the transformational leadership theory, they were still important findings. They provided a link to cultural relevance. The African American female principals in this study affirmed an apparent connection to culture and leadership. However, Transformational Leadership Theory is missing a cultural component from its doctrine. Notably, the participants expressed church as a foundational place, where African Americans visited routinely to embrace spirituality. This was a traditional part of their cultural experience. In essence, God guided their footsteps in decision-making and setting a dependable plan for their lives. By respecting and

trusting the guidance of religious African American leaders, it appears that spirituality embodied ways of peace, love, survival, and healing. Given these points, transformational leadership should include a cultural competence for principals leading students of low socioeconomic backgrounds.

REFERENCES

Alston, J.A. & McClellan, P.A. (2011). Herstories: Leading with the lessons of lives of black women activists. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Bass, B. M. (1998). Transformational leadership: Industrial, military, and educational impact. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond. [Electronic version]. Journal of European Industrial Training, 14(5), 21-37.

Cleveland, Craven, & Danfelser (1993). Universals of culture. Retrieved from http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/devrob/Mi'kmaq%20Studies/nine_universals_of_culturework.htm

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leadership in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Horsford, S.D. (2011). *Learning in a burning house: Educational inequality, ideology, and (dis)integration*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Johnson, J. F. & Asera, R. (1999) *Hope for urban education: A study of nine high-performing, high poverty urban elementary schools*. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED438362

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Education Research Journal, 35*, 465-491.

Lomotey, K. (1987). Black principals for Black students: Some preliminary observations. *Urban Education, 22*, 173-181.

Lomotey, K. (1993). African-American principals: Bureaucrat/administrators and ethnohumanists. *Urban Education, 27*, 394-412.

McCray, C. R., Wright, J. V., & Beachum, F. D. (2007). Beyond Brown: Examining the perplexing plight of African American principals. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, *34*(4), 247-255.

National Poverty Center (2013). Retrieved from http://www.npc.umich.edu/poverty/

Seidman, I. (2006). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers Press.

Siddle Walker, V. (2009). Hello professor: A black principal and professional leadership in the segregated south. NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

U.S. Department of Education (2013). Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/low-income-prior.html

Yin, R.K. (2003). Applications of case study research (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage Publications.

Yu, H., Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2002). The effects of transformational leadership on teachers' commitment to change in Hong Kong. Journal of Educational Administration, 40(4), 368-389.

The GRIT Philosophy for Urban School Leaders

Kelly Brown[a]
Ruqqayya Maudoodi[b]

[a]Prairie View A&M University
kabrown@pvamu.edu

[b]University of Houston
rmaudoodi@uh.edu

Abstract. Since Angela Lee Duckworth introduced the concept of grit, educators have been trying to define its essence and how those skills can be fostered in students. In this article, the author explores the importance of urban school leaders developing their own grit as a model for students. Therefore, educational leaders should intentionally reflect on and address their capacity and level of grit as it relates to growth, resilience, intensity, and tenacity. The first tenet of growth is a process for leaders that allows for honest reflection and leads to success. Resilience is a quality that allows students and adults to persist beyond disappointment to realize a goal. Leading with intensity is a key component for leaders that allow them to stay focused and exert energy to meet the needs of diverse learners. The final component discussed, tenacity, is the determination and persistence to improve schools. In addition, educators should be keenly aware of creating a culture where grit is fostered in diverse populace of students. Understanding and fostering grit in ourselves and in our students' is a key component in ensuring the success of diverse learners academically and in life.

Keywords: Grit, Growth, Resilience, Intensity, Tenacity, Urban Schools

INTRODUCTION

Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really

51

hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it's a marathon, not a sprint. – Angela Lee Duckworth

Angela Lee Duckworth presented an informative TED (technology, Education, Design) Talk on the topic of Grit. Since then the term has been used to underscore the attitude we would like our students to adopt and internalize into their personal philosophy. However, the definition of grit and how we instill this quality in students has been somewhat illusive. When reflecting on the topic in regards to urban schools, I came to the realization that if teachers and administrators aren't modeling this quality for students, then the kids will not internalize what it means to be "gritty" (Duckworth, 2013).

Let's begin at the top, with campus and district leaders that need to exemplify grit. I used an acronym to define the essence of grit – **G**rowth, **R**esilience, **I**ntensity, and **T**enacity. It is important for urban school leaders to show growth, resiliency, intensity, and tenacity in order to see improvements in the students.

GRIT in Urban School Leaders

Growth is necessary for anyone who is trying to accomplish a goal. The process of realizing your vision is the accomplishment, whether you are successful or not. The process is what spurs your growth personally or professionally. Growth in a positive direction helps contribute to your overall success and of course your grit. As leaders gain experience, making mistakes is an essential part of the growth process. Urban leaders must feel comfortable taking risks and learning what does and does not work for the unique needs that urban students require. Conrad Hilton said "success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit" (Hilton, n.d., para. 1). By Hilton's definition, successful people exemplify grit, because mistakes become platforms to use in their next level of growth as opposed to a block that they sit and rest on.

John Maxwell spoke about the concept of changing the leader's beliefs from a goal orientation to a growth orientation (Maxwell, n.d.). For grit, this is an important concept to incorporate into your own personal philosophy. What is the difference between being growth oriented and goal oriented? First of all, once you achieve your goal, you are done. It may be on to the next one, but you are simply checking things off of a list. On the other hand, being growth oriented is a continuous quest. As humans, we are constantly growing, learning, changing, and developing. As a result, any goals we attain will help us get to the next level of our own personal, spiritual, emotional, or career

growth. The growth factor of grit is what helps the urban leader continue the pursuit of excellence; because part of the process includes the growth they will see personally, and within the staff, and students.

Take a look at an example of a gold medal winning Olympic athlete comparing the two models. Michael Phelps has the distinction of being the most decorated Olympian in history. During the Olympics he was able to say that he was the best in the world. Phelps had accomplished all of his goals winning eight gold medals in eight events during the Beijing Olympics. What happened after the Olympics was his learning opportunity. After he accomplished his goals, he lost his passion and motivation. He had done what he set out to do. He said in an interview with Bill Chappell,

> It's just, kind of finding the want, and the drive to do it
> again. There were some times when I was … not really
> too focused on anything, and didn't really have any
> goals. I wasn't really being too productive at that time.
> (Chappell, 2012 para. 9)

Phelps had set out to accomplish certain goals, but was not looking at his growth. As a result, the day after he achieved that great feat there was not much left to do so he became idle. In contrast, those with a growth mindset, look back at the things they accomplished, but appreciate the growth and journey to accomplish their goals. The benefit is that the next step in the journey will be just as impactful because the change in the person is the ultimate goal.

Growth is a process, meaning that it is continuous. It is also something we all engage in whether consciously or subconsciously, but there is no specific ending point. Instead, growth is just a moving bar that the urban leader is motivated to reach for. Within the growth we seek in our quest to be quality educational leaders, are goals that must be accomplished. But, the end result is not the goal itself, rather the process and motivation that occurred as a result of meeting, or trying to meet that goal. Most likely, growth will not stop, so grit is one of the tools used to motivate us to accomplish the next step in the journey.

Resilience is another important skill that must be fostered in children and adults. The risk and resilience framework emerged in the mid-1980s as an effective way to understand and prevent childhood youth problems such as school failure, delinquency, and substance abuse (Jenson, 2007). Since then this same framework has been researched and used effectively in many different respects to help children overcome adversity. Resilience is still an emerging construct, whereby research

examines the predictors of academic success rather than focusing on academic failure (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003).

For this reason, the term "at-risk" is a label that can be very dangerous for students in low income and urban schools. Some may say the term is simply semantics, but what is important is what happens as a result of knowing the risk factors. However, our argument is simply that when we begin looking at the deficits urban students enter school with; the solutions (if we have any) are so broad and all-encompassing that we immediately begin to look at quick fixes. The brain immediately begins to figure what is priority and what can be fixed quickly with a band-aid. This type of deficit thinking continues to promote the status quo. Instead, educators should be focusing on those protective factors that increase resilience of students. Look at their strengths and build on those, so students are able to confront whatever risk factor they are associated with now or in the future. "Resilience is a developmental, dynamic process; it is not a fixed attribute; varies from person to person and situation, and requires internal and external protective factors to mitigate risk" (Jacobsen, 2005, p.27).

Werner and Smith (1988) recognized the significant contributions of schools and their teachers in offering external protective factors. Bernard (1995) stated that teachers and schools should provide a caring educational setting, positive and high expectations for students, and learning environments that are relevant and practical. Such schools are characterized by caring, attentive and stable environments which are success-oriented in their predisposition and which acknowledge achievement in areas including sports, the arts, music, and academics. They should show genuine personal interest in students and have teachers who are positive role models and mentors (Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003). Henderson and Millstein (1992) proposed a model for promoting resiliency within the school environment which outlined six strategies:

(a) provide opportunities for meaningful student participation,
(b) set and communicate high expectations,
(c) provide care and support,
(d) increase pro-social bonding,
(e) set clear and consistent boundaries, and
(f) teach life skills.

It is important to note this model goes beyond simply addressing the academic needs for students, by addressing personal, social and emotional constructs. As stated before, the urban school setting is one where leaders have to simultaneously address the academic needs of students, but also the sources of academic failures which in many cases may have

nothing to do with the school environment, but rather the society, the community, and the home.

Resiliency defined is one's ability to thrive in the face of overwhelming adversity (Jenson, 2007) or the ability to adapt and thus bounce back when faced with conditions that create adversity (Bernshausens & Cunningham, 2001). Principals will have to become comfortable facing adversity quite frequently because they deal with students of varied backgrounds and experiences. This fact is especially true for leaders in lower income or urban school settings.

Intensity is exhibited when someone shows great energy, enthusiasm, or effort toward a goal. Grit cannot be developed, accomplished or realized without intensity on the part of the leader. Urban leaders need laser focus concentration to meet the needs of the very diverse learners in urban schools. Maintaining your commitment to a goal and doing everything to reach that goal with abandon is what will push the school to success.

If you were to study leaders who are at the top of their respective fields, one of the common characteristics most of them will have is an intense focus to achieve. This will encompass the work ethic, drive for success, and ability to engage in activities that will yield results. Interestingly, it may not be the amount of work as much as the intensity of the work you do that will make a difference in what you accomplish.

I was listening to a news story about a workout that will give you the same results as an hour of a general aerobics class, but in only four minutes. Of course, I think this sounds crazy, but as I did my research it is a type of high intensity interval training called tabata. The founder, Dr. Izumi Tabata and his team at the National Institute of Fitness and Sports in Tokyo, were researching ways in which athletes could increase their aerobic and anaerobic muscles. He studied two different groups: one group trained at a moderate intensity level while the other group trained at a high intensity level. The moderate intensity group worked out five days a week for a total of six weeks; each workout lasted one hour. The high intensity group worked out four days a week for six weeks; each workout lasted four minutes and 20 seconds (with 10 seconds of rest in between each set) (Rosenzweig, n.d).

The amazing part of the study was the end results. The high intensity group increased their aerobic (cardiovascular) system (similar to the moderate group) but, unlike the moderate group, they also increased the anaerobic (muscular) system. In other words, the group that

exercised with high intensity for a shorter period of time had better results than the group that worked out for longer with less intensity.

In exercise, as in education, the more intensity put forth for an activity yields better results. As a leader, you can work for hours pushing papers across your desk and not get the same results as leaders who spend time with the students, staff, parents, and community. Make sure that the work done will lead to success; then make sure you do it with intensity in order to get results faster. The tabata workout that we know today means, you work as hard as you can for 20 seconds and then rest for 10 seconds and repeat this for 8 rounds. For the urban leader, the lesson is intensity and balance. You must go full force, to achieve results, but do not forget to take the time to renew yourself so you are able to give your best each day.

Tenacity is the quality of being very determined, or of continuing to persist. It may be self-explanatory but as the principal of any school and especially, an urban school the ability to move towards your goal in a very resolute way and persevere through the many obstacles that will come is a quality that will yield results. That same determination is one of the most important elements of grit.

In "Academic Tenacity: Mindsets and Skills that Promote Long-Term Learning" (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014) the authors define 'academic tenacity' in reference to student learning and outcomes—specifically students in low-income areas. Dweck et al. (2014) stated,

> At its most basic level, academic tenacity is about
> working hard (and working smart) for a long time.
> More specifically, academic tenacity is about the
> mindsets and skills that allow students to look beyond
> short-term concerns to longer-term or higher-order
> goals and to withstand challenges and setbacks to
> persevere toward these goals. (p. 5)

The urban principal is and should be somewhat of a mirror of the students they are servicing.   If 'academic tenacity' is a skill that underserved students should acquire for long-term learning, the same should be said for the school leaders. Career or professional tenacity is a quality that should be fostered in higher education and professional development programs. Career tenacity is the ability to look beyond obstacles in order to find solutions that will benefit the staff and students that are being served. Urban principals should be able to confront challenges head on and then use them as a stepping stool to meet goals for the campus.

Another facet of tenacious principles is the ability to see the long-term goals. Resist the urge to do immediate fixes that will not lead to sustained success. Sometimes, even though that success is gratifying, ultimately it will be short lived. Successful administrators have a plan that in the long-term will yield lasting results academically, socially, and emotionally for students. Stanford psychologists did an experiment with young children called the marshmallow test. During the test, the students were put in a room by themselves for approximately fifteen minutes, with a choice. They left a marshmallow (sometimes a cookie or brownie) in the room with the child and let them know if they did not eat the marshmallow for fifteen minutes, upon return, they would give them two marshmallows. Most students could not wait; they wanted the sweet treat and acted upon their short term goal. However, those students that delayed their gratification were rewarded with double the sweet treat. Years later after following up with those students, the students that waited were more successful than the ones who did not have the discipline to do so.

Urban principals, who adopt the growth mindset as discussed above, will focus on objectives where the goal is to learn or master. Therefore, instead of creating a personal goal focused on performance, the tenacious principal will seek out goals where the end result is mastery of a new skill or other learning objectives. The benefit of this mindset is, principals will seek out challenging tasks as a means to learn and grow.

When Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth began her research one of the questions she was seeking to answer was, why do some people achieve and succeed more than others if they have equal intelligence? Her findings highlighted that success does not solely depend on intelligence and IQ, which is what we value in education. But rather, there are some non-cognitive factors that make the difference in achievement. She found that,

> People who accomplished great things, she noticed, often combined a passion for a single mission with an unswerving dedication to achieve that mission, whatever the obstacles and however long it might take. She decided she needed to name this quality, and she chose the word "grit." (Tough, 2011, para. 15)

Much of the research centered around grit is focused on student achievement. However, the same tenets of character can be extrapolated to anyone who is or wants to achieve at high levels. What urban administrators need to realize is that in order to foster success and achievement in students, they must also embody those characteristics as

well.

Fostering Grit in Students

Improving the quality of instruction and the school climate is only part of the equation when looking to set students up for success. Equally as important, if not more so, are fostering those characteristics encompassed in grit. This is the essence that will help a low-income student from a single parent household, who is exposed to gangs, drugs, and instability at the home on a daily basis, still graduate high school.

Goodwin and Miller (2013) in their article stated, "Twenty-five years of research has shown that giving students challenging goals encourages greater effort and persistence than providing moderate, 'do-your-best' goals or no goals at all. However, simply setting a high bar is inadequate. Students also need the will to achieve goals (Poropat, 2009); a growth mind-set, or the belief that they can become smarter and turn failure into success through their own efforts (Dweck, 2006; Goodwin & Miller, 2014).

As an administrator, who is looking to improve the academic achievement of their students, you must focus on cognitive strategies in addition to those psychological strategies that help students succeed. Other research also supports the notion that academic achievement is linked to mind-set; Snipes, Fancsali, and Stoker's (2012) review of the literature, for example, suggests that mind-sets directly "influence students' academic behaviors and strategies, which in turn facilitate academic success" (p. 8). The fastest way to impact students is to reach their teachers. Administrators should consider spending time training and teaching the differences between the deficit and growth model in education so teachers will be more aware of their mode of thinking. Placing labels on students will sometimes lead the teacher to make judgments about the child which will change their interaction.

Risky Labels

Every school I have worked for as a teacher and administrator were considered Title I campuses, which means that over fifty percent of the school was eligible for Title I funds. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC),

The original purpose of Title I was additional resources to states and localities for remedial education for children in poverty. The 1994 reauthorization of Title I shifted the program's emphasis from remedial education to helping all disadvantaged children reach rigorous state academic standards expected of all children. Title I funds can be used for instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and program improvement. In return, school districts and states must meet accountability requirements for raising student performance. (National Association for the Education of Young Children, para. 1)

In other words, a majority of my students were labeled at-risk. Principals can easily fall into the mind frame of depending on labels to plan instruction and programs for the school. If we consider what it means to be an at-risk student, the statistics say:

- Nearly a third of youth from low-income families (29 percent) fail to earn high school diplomas; approximately three times greater than the percentage of youth from middle-income families (10 percent) and roughly six times greater than the percentage of youth from high-income families (5 percent) (Macomber & Pergamit, 2009).

- In each year from 1990 to 2012, the status dropout rate was lower for Whites than for Blacks and Hispanics. (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.)

- About one in three (35 percent) youth from distressed neighborhoods are consistently-connected to work or school between the ages of 18 and 24, compared with nearly two in three (62 percent) youth from non-distressed neighborhoods (Macomber & Pergamit, 2009).

- Seventy-eight percent of youth in distressed neighborhoods are from low-income families. Even among youth from low-income families, those in distressed neighborhoods are less likely to be consistently-connected to school or work than those in non-distressed neighborhoods (Macomber & Pergamit, 2009).

However, the very label of "at-risk" seems to be problematic for children due to a couple of reasons. First of all, it does not take into account the individuality of each student's community and family situations. In addition, it does not address any protective factors (see Figure 1) that may contribute to the potential of the students. Urban school leaders have to critically look at what it means to be labeled at-risk and balance the risk with the protective factors that are also present in the student's life.

For instance, if we use the example of Joshua–Joshua is a fifth grade student from a single parent household whose father is in jail. Joshua's brother dropped out of school in order to help support the house once his father went to jail. Joshua makes average grades and has not been retained in the past. Joshua and his family live in a low-income neighborhood—walking distance from the school. His mother works a part-time job but works odd hours, which limits her from being home when he gets there. His mother works hard to pay all the bills, but does get financial assistance from social security for his grandmother who also lives with him and his mother. Joshua has big dreams to play professionally when he is older.

If leaders simply look at Joshua related to his at-risk factors, then the picture for his academic and social future seems bleak. However, if we look at the complete picture, there are many things that Joshua has going in his favor. However, the most important part of the equation is how the school can support and continue to build Joshua's resilience. This is what is going to help him as he leaves our fictional school and continues with his studies.

As an urban administrator, I always tried to frame conversations with teachers regarding students around solutions. When teachers and administrators shift the paradigm to creating solutions to difficult problems, instead of numerating all of the issues, then true and effective change can begin to occur. Staff was not allowed to be taken in by the many obstacles they face in trying to reach children emotionally and academically. They were instead, expected to find one way to reach one child and then expand on their success quickly and succinctly.

In addition, one of the greatest benefits of supporting a growth mindset is that it helps to foster the grit in students. One of the key components of long-term success is the ability to stay the course. The urban school needs to put measures in place, like authentic relationships, calculated successes, and acceptance of failure, so students can use what they gain from the school in other facets of their life. Urban administrators are in the business of helping children. The reality that is

not always shared in the urban schools is that helping children encompasses much more than simply scoring high on an achievement test. The real value of education is instilling lifelong learning skills that students will be able to use long after they are done with their formal education.

Risk Factors	Protective Factors	Increase Resilience Factor
• Single Parent Household • Father Incarcerated • Brother who did not graduate • Low SES Status	• Extended family in the household • Passing classes • Strong teacher • Positive relationship with staff and peers.	• Reach out to grandmother to volunteer at the school. • Support family with social services like Communities in Schools. • Reach out to older brother with information for completing his degree. • Partner with another school/organization to mentor • Offer an afterschool program or tutoring (supplemented by grants) and enrichment activities while mother is working.

FIGURE 1. *Risk, Protective, and Resilience Factors*

REFERENCES

Bernard, B. (1993). Fostering resiliency in kids. Educational Leadership, 51, 44-48.

Bernhausen, D., & Cunningham, C. (2001). The role of resiliency in teacher preparation and retention. Retrieved January, 27, 2007, from ERIC database.

Chappell, B. (2012, August 12). Michael Phelps Exits The Olympics, And Enters Retirement At 27. NPR. Retrieved August 6, 2014, from http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetorch/2012/08/08/158422864/michael-phelps-exits-the-olympics-and-enters-retirement-at-27

Duckworth, A. (2013). The key to success? Grit. Angela Lee Duckworth:. Retrieved August 6, 2014, from http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duck

Dweck, C. (2006). Mindset: The new psychology of success. New York: Ballantine.

Feldman, A. F., & Matjasko, J. L. (2005). The role of school-based extracurricular activities in adolescent development. Review of Educational Research, 75(2), 159-210.

Dweck, C., Walton, G. & Cohen, G. (2014). Academic Tenacity: Mindsets and Skills that Promote Long-Term Learning. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from http://web.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Welcome_files/Dweck WaltonCohen_2014.pdf

Goodwin, B., & Miller, K. (2013). Grit + Talent = Student Success. Educational Leadership, 71(1), 74-76.

Henderson, N., & Millstein, M. (1992) Resiliency in schools. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hilton, Conrad. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved February 6, 2015, from BrainyQuote.com Web site: http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/c/conradhilt130635.html

Jacobsen, J. B. (2005). Teacher perceptions relating to fostering resilience in high school students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation., Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Jenson, J. (2007). Research, advocacy, and social policy: Lessons from the Risk and Resilience Model. Social Work Research, 31, 3. Retrieved November 24, 2007, from ProQuest database.

Macomber, J.S. & Pergamit, M. (July, 2009). Vulnerable Youth and Transitions to Adulthood. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Services

Policy. Retrieved from
http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/09/vulnerableyouth/4/index.pdf.

Maxwell, J. (n.d.). The John Maxwell Team – "A Minute with Maxwell".
John Maxwell Team A Minute With Maxwell Free Video Opt
In. Retrieved August 6, 2014, from
http://johnmaxwellteam.com/growth/

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.). *Title I -
Helping Disadvantaged Children Meet High Standards*.
Retrieved from NAEYC.org:
http://www.naeyc.org/policy/federal/title1

National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). *Fast Facts*. Retrieved
2014 йил 30-July from NCES.ed.gov:
nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16

Oswald, M., Johnson, B., & Howard, S. (2003). Quantifying and
evaluating resilience-promoting factors: Teachers' beliefs and
perceived roles. Research in Education, 70, 50-64.

Poropat, A. E. (2009). A meta-analysis of the five-factor model of
personality and academic performance. Psychological Bulletin,
135(2), 322-338.

Rosenzweig, F. (n.d.). What is Tabata Training?. Active.com. Retrieved
August 6, 2014, from
http://www.active.com/fitness/articles/what-is-tabata-training

Wang, M.C., & Gordon, E.W. (1994). Educational resilience in inner-city
America: Challenges and prospects. New Jersey: Erlbaum
Associates, Inc.

Snipes, J., Fancsali, C., & Stoker, G. (2012). Student academic mindset
interventions: A review of the current landscape. San Francisco:
Stupski Foundation.

Tough, P. (2011, September 17). The Character Test. The New York
Times. Retrieved August 6, 2014, from
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/magazine/what-if-the-
secret-to-success-is-failure.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Waxman, H.C., Gray, J.P., & Padron, Y.N. (2003). *Review of research on
educational resilience (Research Report No. 11)*. Santa Cruz,
California: Center for Research on Education, Diversity, &
Excellence.

Werner, E., & Smith, R. (1988). Vulnerable but invincible: a longitudinal
study of resilient children and youth. New York: Adams
Bannister & Cox.

Improving Recruitment, Retention, and Graduation Rates of Black Students: An Institutional Introspection Approach

Pamela Finley
Terence L. Finley

Leadership HBCU

prfinley@leadershiphbcu.org

tlfinley@leadershiphbcu.org

Abstract. Today, improving recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Black students is the topic of many inquiries and a primary educational objective for this nation. In 2009, President Obama set a national goal to re-establish the U.S. as having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. To reach this goal, America must exceed its 2008 graduation rate for African American students by approximately two million degrees conferred. Respectively, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) must facilitate degree attainment for approximately 167 thousand of the two million African American citizens. As such, this work espouses an introspective approach, predicated on Learning Organization theory, as the lynchpin for improving the academic outcomes for African American students at HBCUs.

Keywords: Learning Organizations, Introspection, Degree Attainment, Graduation Rates, Recruitment, Retention.

INTRODUCTION

 "Please sit down," the world renowned therapist said, offering her client a seat on the expensive sofa in her plush sky-rise office. "Thank you," the woman replied. "It's my pleasure. Now tell me, what seems to be the problem?" After 30 minutes of carefully outlaying a litany of perplexing issues the troubled woman ended her soliloquy, at which time the therapist replied, "So why do you think these things are happening to you?"

 Ruminate, if you will, the process of examining the ills associated with the human body. Irrespective of the malaise or situation—mental or physical—the prognosis is most always preempted by an investigation of the internal issues—and rightfully so. Moreover, finding the root cause and subsequent treatment of ailments quite often requires an individualized approach. This conclusion is derived from the understanding that the physical, genetic make-up and consciousness of human beings are distinctive to and for each person. Therefore, it stands to reason that a diagnosis and treatment plan identified for one person may not be the appropriate analysis or resolve for another. Each person must be evaluated autonomously. This individualized approach allows the practitioner to examine the issues, situations, and circumstances apropos to the wellbeing of a sole being. Likewise, institutions of higher learning are comprised of similar autonomous principles. Each institution is in and of itself unique to another—non-monolithic.

 Juxtapose this perspective with how Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) can improve the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of African American students; the answer is clear, by looking within—institutional introspection. W.E.B. DuBois communes, "Unless we conquer our present vices, they will conquer us" (Wilson, 2011, para. 8). In accordance, Collins and Hansen (2011) align the value added proposition for good organizations to choose greatness by "confronting the brutal facts of their current reality" (p. 13). Conversely, Senge (2006) illuminates a similar platform by which organizations achieve success through the creation of

emotional and energetic tension—exposing and working to resolve gaps or natural tensions created by understanding and focusing on the differences between an organization's current and desired reality. Forthwith, institutional introspection offers an interesting, and virtually unexplored, dynamic on how HBCUs can improve the academic prowess as well as the successful collegiate advancement of African American students.

Well documented are many extrinsic approaches, explanations, and measures that have been explored with regard to improving the academic success model for Black students. Included in that exploration are the constructs of Critical Race Theory that unmasks the deleterious effects of negative on African American student achievement (Harper, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Likewise, Finley (2013) fashions a lens that exposes a Deficit Paradigm deeply rooted in the U.S. education system, which perennially associates low income, low socioeconomic status, and historically underrepresented students with diminished academic achievement. While there are many suppositions that add to the enigma of Black student achievement, the whole of these truths are no more germane to every institution than they are to every Black student (Ashley, Gasman, Mason, Sias, & Wright, 2009). As aforementioned, it is a fact that HBCUs are non-monolithic entities. Each one operates by and within its own set of unique parameters (Ashley et al., 2009; Gasman, 2011). Therefore, predicating solutions to the issues and situations faced by these institutions using a one-size-fits-all approach could result in a negative-sum effort, whereby the outcome is costly and detrimental to the well-being of institutions and the students they serve (Minigan-Finley, 2013).

The framework espoused within this narrative—Learning Organization Theory, focuses on an introspective approach to employing the transformational benefits of fostering shared knowledge, learning from mistakes, idea development, and holistic thinking (Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008) within HBCUs, thereby, transforming these institutions of higher learning into learning organizations. The effectiveness of this approach lies in the ability of HBCUs to generate "an accurate

picture of their current reality that will produce an equally accurate and compelling picture of their desired reality" (Senge, 2006, p. 770)—resulting in intrinsic institutional change, growth, and development. HBCUs must understand how their internal policies and procedures in relation to their academic, operational, and business practices affect, promote, or encumbers the process of recruiting and retaining African American students; as well as how these mechanisms impact graduation rates—their current reality, in order to make significant and lasting improvements—their desired reality. Senge (2006) advocates this paradigm within his seminal work on learning organizations that can be employed to establish the tone, practices, and the success demarcations for improving the internal operations of HBCUs—thus improving the contributions of these tertiary institutions on African American student achievement.

Societal Nuances

". . . by 2020, this nation will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to have that. We're going to have it again."

- President Barack Obama, July 14, 2010

If the current educational agenda, as set forth by President Obama in 2009 prevails (see FIGURE 1), America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. As a result, nearly eight million additional American citizens will have earned a postsecondary degree; approximately two million of those citizens will be African American; and roughly167 thousand of those African American college graduates will have reached degree attainment at a HBCU (see Figure 1) (Wilson, 2011).
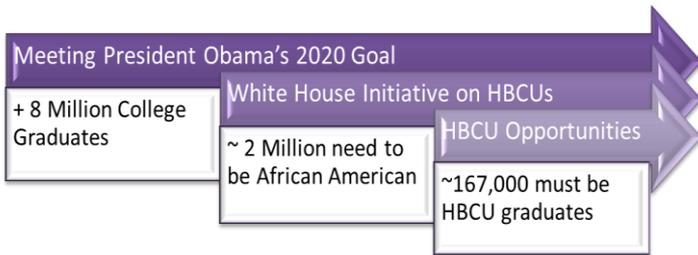
FIGURE 1. *President Obama's 2020 educational goal based on population trends and college enrollment factors adapted from Wilson (2011).*

Accordingly, the Lumina Foundation (2012) indicates that the path to reaching and exceeding the President's goal is predicated on increasing the current national two- and four-year rate of degree attainment from approximately 38 percent to 60 percent (see FIGURE 2). However, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) reports slow growth in degree attainment. American citizens, among the ages of 25 to 64, who obtained an associate's degree or higher between 2008 and 2011 increased only slightly across the four year period, from approximately 37.9 percent in 2008 to 38.7 percent in 2011 (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems [NCHEMS], 2013; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011). In an effort to counter this trend and accelerate the growth in this arena, President Obama, in his 2015 State of the Union Address proposed the America's College Promise which in essence would provide all Americans with an opportunity to receive a free community college education.
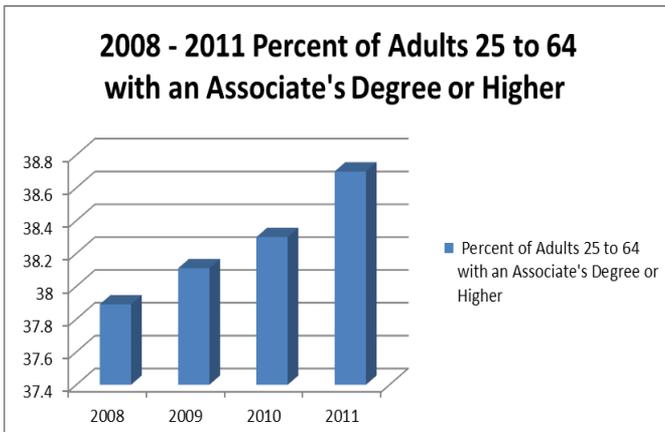
FIGURE 2. *Percentage of U.S. adults with at least an Associate's Degree, adapted from NCHEMS, 2013.*

Projections based on 2011 U.S. Census Bureau data, suggest that America will miss its targeted educational goal by approximately 13.6 percent or more (Nicholos, 2011). Meanwhile, the Center for American Progress (CAP) reports that China's ability to provide greater access to educational resources and to improve the quality of education and teacher efficacy, has resulted in their improved national ranking on the international aptitude test for primary and secondary school age children. As a result, Shanghai schools ranked first out of 65 countries on the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), wherein the U.S. ranked 17th. In addition, China is positioned as the largest provider of higher education, with an expectancy to confer degrees in excess of three to four times the U.S. 2009 annual rates over the next few years. "In 2007, China surpassed the U.S. in the number of science and engineering doctoral degrees awarded" (Cooper, Hersh, & O'Leary, 2012, p. 19). With a focus set on improving its universities by expanding services and attracting high quality faculty from across the globe, China is now poised to lead the world in awarding science, technology, engineering, and mathematic degrees (Cooper et al., 2012). Conversely, demographic projections and degree attainment rates based on college enrollment trends, forecast that China's international

contribution of college graduates will rise in excess of 13 percent, while the US graduate contribution is projected to fall below 18 percent by 2020 (Cooper et al., 2012).

In parallel, the rate of degree attainment for African Americans, at its stated pace, appears to be an even more disparaging prospect. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010) report shows that among this age group, only 26.84 percent of two- and four-year college degrees were earned by Blacks while their White counterparts realized 42.9 percent of the degrees conferred across the U.S. Meanwhile, an analysis of 456 public and private institutions (excluding HBCUs and for-profit institutions) conducted by Lynch and Engle (2010) revealed that 54.7 percent of Black students, in comparison to 73.4 percent of Whites, graduated with a bachelor's degree within six years from private institutions. Additionally, only 43.3 percent of Blacks compared with 59.5 percent of Whites achieved degree attainment at public institutions during this same period. More daunting are the stated six-year graduation rates at HBCUs. Although the nationwide college graduation rate for African Americans hovers around 41 percent, graduation rates at HBCUs shows a 4 percent deficit, standing at a meager 37 percent (Gasman, 2011). Armed with these statistics, as well as evidence of mediocre and low academic achievement—among some HBCUs—numerous educational pundits and those within mainstream America have illuminated critical issues that substantially challenge the credibility of HBCUs to make significant contributions to America's educational agenda (Gasman, 2011; Kwateng, 2006; Love, 2012). In fact, the relevance of these institutions has been the topic of many Socratic debates. While some question if HBCUs should abandon their historical mission—to serve underrepresented African American student populations—others question the overall need for the continued existence of HBCUs (Finley, 2013). Escalated within this Socratic dialogue is an inquiry into the ability of such postsecondary institutions to engage an educational leadership and workforce with the competence to positively impact student achievement (Cochran-Smith, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Lynch, 2007); and to educate the next-generation workforce that can sustain the advanced

learning requirements of the 21st century national and international knowledge economy (Lynch D. , 2007; Milken Institute, 2010; Pace, 1985) while being successful in the global marketplace.

Historical and Current Perspectives

Improving the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Black students has long surpassed the traditional constructs and practices of many HBCUs (Clay, 2011-2012; Duncan, 2010; Hoyt & Brown, 2003; Kelderman, 2010). Prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, these issues were virtually non-existent. HBCUs held the monopoly on educating and graduating African American students. More than 90 percent of Black college bound men and women, in pursuit of postsecondary degree attainment, filled the halls and classrooms of historically Black universities such as Cheyney, Bethune-Cookman, Lincoln, Prairie View A&M University, and Wilberforce, irrespective of their level of college readiness, income status, or educational background. High and low performing students as well as financially stable or financially challenged students enrolled at these HBCUs in pursuit of postsecondary educational advancement. Moreover, due to the lack of interest convergence—tolerance or encouragement of racial advances for Blacks only when they promote the self-interests of Whites (Harper, Paton, & Wooden, 2009)—mainstream America had not yet fashioned a requisite to expand the intellectual aptitude of African Americans. In other words, there was no recognized benefit to White America for educated African Americans; therefore, there was no need to compete with HBCUs for high performing African American students, faculty, and administrators. Respectively, the financially stimulating athletic abilities of Black student athletes were likewise unrenowned—unlike today. As such, promoting the academic and athletic achievement of African American students was of little importance, interest, or consequence to mainstream America.

Post *Brown v. Board of Education,* HBCUs have been thrust into the forefront of a new reality. Along with integration came selective admissions policies, funding linked

to enrollment statistics, and more recently the onset of performance based funding. In Texas, the highly touted proposal to transition tertiary institutions to a performance based funding model "links 10 percent of state funding for public colleges and universities to their graduation rates and other measures of student success" (Haurwitz, 2013, para. 1). Conversely, a majority of HBCUs are already underfunded; and the competition for high achieving and more financially stable, students has yielded limited results (Burnim, 2008). In fact, Gasman (2009) espoused the discordant plight of the missions of HBCUs and their financial realities in stating that "these institutions have suffered disproportionately . . . due in large part to Black college's [long standing] commitment to serving disadvantaged students—while they are themselves disadvantaged by a history of underfunding and discrimination" (p. 1). "Separate but equal", Jim Crow laws that were in actuality separate and unequal, have facilitated a long lasting negatively charged impact on these institutions. As Finley (2013) denotes, "*The very nature of inequality is to treat those that are unequal as equals* (2013, p. 92)*."*

Many HBCUs are struggling to raise enrollment levels, secure larger endowments and adequate funding, and achieve social justice. Few would argue that the recent U.S. economic crisis, historical inequalities, insufficient and inadequate resources, pressures for increasing degree attainment rates, and other 21st century challenges also serve to perennially threaten the stability as well as the very existence of these institutions. Meanwhile, students who have been deemed underprepared for college, facing financial challenges, or may have limited educational support, but are still in pursuit of degree attainment have little to no choice in the matter of college selection. Traditionally, HBCUs have been and, in many cases, remain their only option for degree pursuit and attainment.

The Task At Hand

Nelms (2010) contended that, "in order to advance America's agenda as well as advance their historical missions, HBCUs must respond to the dynamic changes taking place in our society and demonstrate their continued relevance. To

become a more competitive force, HBCUs must make critical changes. . . ." (p. 3). The kind of critical and dynamic changes needed, are linked to the capacity for HBCUs to become more nimble entities with the ability to change organizational direction and business practices with the necessary speed and flexibility in accordance with their respective environments (Daniels & Mathers, 1997). This requires an individualized approach as the impact of external forces creates a unique set of circumstances for an institution. Likewise, the internal processes and practices, though similar in nature, produce distinctive outcomes. Argyris (2006) suggests testing the realignment of organizational processes, practices, and strategies through challenging the notions, assumptions, and ideas that provide the foundation for them. These components can be vastly different, or profoundly similar, from one institution to the next. In context, to sustain HBCUs and to advance the academic wherewithal of the students that they have committed to serve, HBCUs must actualize a more inward-looking, focused, and deliberate approach. To that end, Learning Organization Methodology prescribes a reflective approach that aligns the comprehensive intellectual capacity of the whole institution in such a way that the institution gains the ability to learn, adapt, and alter its behavior in accordance with changes in its environment—to become a learning organization (Lombardi & Bourke, 2010; Pollack, Fireworker, Kleiner, & Friedman, 2009; Senge, 2006; White & Weathersby, 2005).

Learning Organizations

Within learning organizations, knowledge sharing, idea generation, learning from mistakes, and holistic thinking are vital competencies embedded within the institution. These competencies construct the kind of reflective analysis, thinking, and dialog necessary for (1) improving operational methodologies and practices; (2) improving student recruitment, retention, and graduation outcomes; and (3) implementing change enabling factors for effectively navigating the complexities of social injustice with greater speed and agility. It is important to recognize that one or a subset of these competencies are present and practiced within

every organization and institution—to some degree. However, in a learning organization, these competencies are embedded into the fabric of the institution. They are deliberate and strategic functions comprised within the organization's culture and consistently engaged by all. Learning organizations rely heavily on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors of human capital—their people. They are intelligent, thinking entities capable of information processing, organizational behavior changes, and system-level learning (Minigan-Finley, 2013).

Organizational learning versus learning organizations. Prior to immersing you into the inner-workings of a learning organization, it is important to highlight how learning organizations differ from the concept of organizational learning (see Figure 3). Organizational learning—the activity of creating, retaining, and in some cases transferring knowledge—takes place on multiple levels and at varying degrees within an organization. Disparately, a learning organization is an intact entity characterized by its ability to learn, adapt, and quickly alter its behavior to its environment.
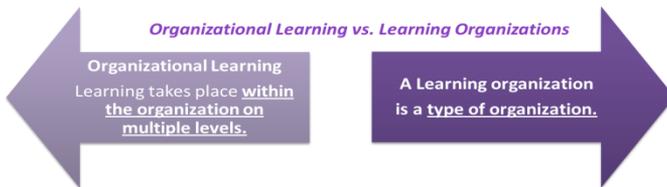

FIGURE 3. *The difference between organizational learning and learning organizations (Minigan-Finley, 2013).*

Practiced within the culture of a learning organization are leadership behaviors that,

> . . . help create and sustain supportive learning environments, such environments make it easier for managers and employees to execute concrete learning processes and practices smoothly and efficiently . . . concrete processes provide opportunities for leaders to behave in ways that foster learning and to cultivate that behavior in others. (Garvin et al., 2008, p. 5)

Senge (2006) dialogs a narrative that elicits the natural, self-motivating factors—creative tension—to produce the kinds of crucial institutional transformations quintessential to (a) increasing enrollment and retention, (b) improving persistence to graduation rates, (c) and narrowing the aforementioned gap in degree attainment for African American students. The change enabling properties generated from creative tension have been recognized by some of the world's foremost leaders such as Dr. King who stated,

> Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to
> create a tension in the mind, so that
> individuals could rise from the bondage of
> myths and truths . . . so must we . . . create
> the kind of tension in society that will help
> men rise from the dark depths of prejudice
> and racism. (as cited in Senge, 2006, p. 769)

The disciplines of a learning organization (see FIGURE 4) promote organizational cultures conducive for operating more effectively within the dynamic and changing educational arena of the 21st century (Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, & Kleiner, 1994).

Mental Models
assumptions that influence how we see ourselves, others, the world, and how we take action

Systems Thinking
a conceptual framework that fosters clear patterns, interrelationships, and enables change

Personal Mastery
achieving high levels of proficiency

Personal Mastery
achieving high levels of proficiency

Team learning
aligning and developing team capacity to create desired results

FIGURE 4. *Disciplines exercised within Learning Organizations, adapted from Senge, Ross, Smith, Roberts, & Kleiner, 1994.*

Disciplines of a learning organization. With respect to the task at hand, learning organization disciplines underpin the need for an introspective look at HBCUs by HBCUs and their respective leaders. For example, improving the recruitment of African American students will require organizational facets that include dispelling the negative stigmatisms associated with Black institutions. Those mental models—assumptions that influence how we see ourselves, others, the world, and how we take action; and likewise how others and the world view us and takes action, are ideals that prepend the mindset of institutional superiority or the prescribed inferiority of HBCUs (Minigan-Finley, 2013). For some HBCUs, these mental models facilitate such beliefs as achieving an "A" at a HBCU is the equivalent of receiving a "C" at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI); and connotations that only low income and low achieving students attend HBCUs.

Retaining African American students requisites systems thinking, which constitutes offering new and more challenging opportunities for students, capitalizing on advancements in technology, and developing more innovative course offerings, to name a few. Personal mastery and team learning link to the ability of HBCUs to improve the mindset, skillset, and toolset of administrators, faculty, and staff through professional development and structured learning programs. Equally important is the need for HBCUs to conceptualize the future in ways that foster authentic commitment by all—shared vision. Unlike the traditional approach to establishing a clear vision, shared vision is the product of engaging creative tension, wherein "the energy for change comes from the vision, from what we want to create, juxtaposed with current reality" (Senge, 2006, p. 770). As such, it is incumbent upon each institution to identify the gaps—tension, that exist between their current recruitment activities, retention practices, and graduation rates, contrasted with their desired reality. Additionally, this methodology elicits a stronger cultural dynamic that exceeds the traditional practice of change motivated through problem solving, which generally results in a temporary fix—when the problem lessens, likewise does the change effort. Whereas, institutionalizing a shared vision

within a learning organization, requisites intrinsic change motivated through creative tension, based on the institution's natural energy geared toward changing their reality—creating "an accurate picture of the current reality is just as important as a compelling picture of a desired reality" (Senge, 2006, p. 770).

Institutional Introspection Theory

Introspection is defined as a "reflective look inward: an examination of one's own thoughts and feelings" (introspection, 2013). Postulated within this narrative, introspection is the catalyst for HBCUs and other tertiary institutions to self-evaluate their internal methodologies, processes, practices, and culture in an effort to achieve greater organizational efficiencies. In other words, Institutional Inspection Theory (IIT) is the process, act, or lens used to look within an institution to access, diagnose, and understand the needs, strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats that impact the institution's ability to effectively execute its mission, business objectives, and operational strategies. With respect to improving the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Black students, IIT fashions a systems-level mindset, skillset, and toolset, wherein institutional leaders and practitioners improve and better manage organizational performance and strategy execution. That is, it enables HBCUs to formulate an academic performance scorecard (evaluation matrix or framework) that employs institutional commitment—the institution's responsibility to students via its policies, programs, and infrastructure aimed at gaining and keeping students engaged (Finley, 2013) as primary key performance and success indicators.

CONCLUSION

The disciplines of a Learning Organization coupled with Institutional Introspection Theory places into context, the many ills that have served to impede the progress of improving the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Black students. Notably, HBCUs must contend with the implications of a legacy burdened with inequality, while navigating social injustice, and other obstacles that

intentionally promote disparities between historically disadvantage groups and European Americans (Woodson, 1933), that still exist today. As aforesaid, these institutions have traditionally endeavored to advance educational objectives with far less access to, as well as adequacy and equity of resources than their Majority counterparts (Douglas-Hosford, 2009; Finley, 2013). A deeper look at the realities of negative mental models reveals deep-seated obstacles that plague Black institutions such as persistent underfunding, systemic racism, unfair graduation rate comparisons, and other negative characterizations (Douglas-Hosford, 2009; Gasman, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2004) to which HBCUs must acknowledge and overcome. Ever present is an argument that majority institutions face similar circumstances, however duly noted by the Congressional Research Service, these conditions appear to profess more acutely for HBCUs (Mathews, 2011). These issues have had long lasting impacts on advancing ideals of White superiority and dwarfing the academic contributions made by Black institutions (Douglas-Hosford, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Pendergast, 2002).

Given to reflective interpretation, depositions espoused in Brown v. Board of Education, expose a deeply rooted malaise within the framework of today's postsecondary topography—the prescribed inferiority of HBCUs, as ascribed by mainstream America, which serves to undermine the forward moving progress of Black colleges and universities. This reality, which is played out in the eyes of the public, is a perplexing scene that misconstrues the aesthetics of buildings and facilities, equipment shortages, and the lack of funding at HBCUs with their importance, and the quality level of the education received by students who attend the whole of these institutions (Burnim, 2008; Kwateng, 2006). In addition, the media and others erroneously project the misfortune and troubled operations of one or two HBCUs as the contour of all HBCUs (Gasman & Bowman, 2011). Thereby, calling into question the ability of HBCUs to meet the needs of the 21st century knowledge-economy (Rotherham & Wellington, 2009)—as a result placing the very existence of HBCUs under substantial debate (Clemet & Lidsky, 2011; Gasman, 2010). In context,

> HBCUs are depicted as the poor
> stepchildren of American higher education.
> As a group, they are portrayed as being
> unable to manage finances and having weak
> leadership, unresponsive alumni, and low
> graduation rates. Some HBCUs have one or
> more of these attributes, but the same is true
> of historically White institutions. The notion
> that HBCUs "never measure up" or are a
> "lost cause" permeates the media narrative,
> and as a result, the general public, the higher
> education community, and even some
> African Americans have negative
> perceptions of HBCUs. Reporting on
> institutions that are in trouble is, of course,
> news, but without stories about their
> successes, HBCUs tend to be dismissed by
> mainstream media despite their many
> accomplishments. (Gasman & Bowman,
> 2011, p. 2)

Institutional Introspection theory exposes a counter narrative—a self-examination respective to each institution that enables practitioners to understand the impact and affect that society, public opinion and policy, and other factors have on each entity in and of itself. Cast against these dynamics, HBCUs must create their own zero-sum outcomes, wherein the value proposition of these institutions substantially facilitates a mutual educational gain for both the institution and its students (Minigan-Finley, 2013). Therefore, a blanket approach to improving the educational outcomes at these institutions equates to futile efforts (Ashley et al., 2009). Through the lens of learning organization theory, the focus on improving the recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of Black students are framed within the context of each respective institution. Within this framework, the ambiguity of differences is replaced with the specific educational, operational, and business practices germane to improving each specific institution. HBCU leaders are then able to focus on the transformational properties of fostering shared knowledge, learning from mistakes, idea development, and holistic

thinking respective to their institutional needs in order to realize a more significant bearing on improving educational outcomes for African American students.

REFERENCES

Argyris, C. (2006). Teaching smart people how to learn. In J. V. Gallos, Organizational Development (pp. 267-285). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ashley, D., Gasman, M., Mason, R., Sias, M., & Wright, G. (2009). *Making the grade: Improving degree attainment at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).* New York, NY: Thrugood Marshall College Fund.

Burnim, M. (2008). *The challenge to HBCUs in the 21st century*. EndSights, 28. Retrieved 9 18, 2012, from http://www.aascu.org/uploadedFiles/AASCU/Content/Root/MediaAndPublications/PublicPurposeMagazines/Issue/08_07burnim.pdf

Clay, P. L. (2011-2012). *Historically Black colleges and universities facing the future: a fresh look at challenges and opportunities*. Retrieved August 15, 2012, from Ford Foundation: Advancing Higher Education Access and Success: http://www.fordfoundation.org/advancing-higher-education-access-and-success

Clemet, A., & Lidsky, A. J. (2011, April-June). The danger of history slipping away: The heritage campus and HBCUs. *Planning for Higher Education, 39*(3), 149-158.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2002). Reporting on teacher quality: The politics of politics. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(3), 187-189.

Coleman, D. C. (2011). *The History of Historically Black Colleges & Universites*. Retrieved 9 15, 2012, from HBCUConnect.com: http://hbcuconnect.com/history.shtml

Collins, J., & Hansen, M. (2011). *Great by choice*. New York, NY: Harper Audio.

Cooper, D., Hersh, A., & O'Leary, A. (2012). *The competition that really matters: Comparing U.S., Chinese, and Indian investments in the next-generation workforce*. Washing, D.C.: Center for American Progress.

Daniels, W. R., & Mathers, J. G. (1997). *Change-ABLE organization: Key management practices for speed and flexibility*. Mill Valley, CA: ACT Publishing.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Youngs, P. (2002). Defining "Highly Qualified Teachers": What Does "Scientifically-Based Research" Actually Tell Us? *The Research News and Comment*, 13-25.

Douglas-Hosford, S. (2009, 4 8). Black superintendents on educating Black students. *Urban Rev, 42*, 58-79. doi:DOI 10.1007/s11256-009-0119-0

Duncan, A. (2010, June 3). Changing the HBCU narrative: From corrective action to creative investment--remarks by Secretary Arne Duncan at the HBCU symposium at the North Carolina Centural university centennial. Retrieved November 5, 2012, from ED.gov: http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/changing-hbcu-narrative

Finley, T. L. (2013). *A historically Black university and a predominantly White institution: A causal-comparative study of the access, adequacy, and equity of African American student engagement measures and their affects on the overall quality of the college*. Prairie View A&M University, College

of Education. Prairie View, TX: Unpublished Dissertation.

Garvin, D. A., Edmondson, A. C., & Gino, F. (2008). Is yours a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review*, 1-10.

Gasman, M. (2009, August 25). Obama's Agenda for Black Colleges. Retrieved 9 18, 2012, from *Inside Higher Ed*: http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2009/08/25/gasman

Gasman, M. (2010). Comprehensive funding approaches for historically black colleges and universities. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.

Gasman, M. (2011, September 9). Being fair about graduation rates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Retrieved September 23, 2012, from Huff Post College: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marybeth-gasman/hbcus-graduation-rates_b_948678.html?view=print&comm_ref=false

Gasman, M., & Bowman, N. (2011). How to paint a better portrait of HBCUs. *Academe, 97*(3), 24-27. Retrieved September 30, 2012, from http://ezproxy.pvamu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/870399984?accountid=7062;

Harper, S. R. (2009, September 14). Niggers no more: A critical race counternarrative on Black male student achievement at predominately white colleges and universities. *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(6), 697-712. Retrieved February 22, 2013

Harper, S. R., Paton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and Equity for African American students in Higher

Education: A critical Race Historical Analysis of Policy Effrots. *Journal of Higher Education*, 389-414.

Haurwitz, R. K. (2013, February 27). Business leaders call for performance-based higher education funding. Retrieved April 14, 2013, from Statesman Capitol Watch: statesman.com/news/news/state-regional-govt-policies/Business leaders call for performance-based higher education funding

Hoyt, J., & Brown, A. B. (2003). Identifying college choice factors to successfuly market your institiutions. *C&U Journal*, 3-9.

introspection 2013. (n.d.). In Merriam-Webster's. Retrieved July 24, 2013, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/introspection

Kelderman, E. (2010, June 30). Improving the image of HBCUs (An urgent need). Retrieved October 15, 2012, from Chestnut library blog: http://chesnuttlibrary.blogspon.com/2010/07/improving-image-of-hbcus-urgent-need.html

Kwateng, D. (2006, October 16). HBCUs fight perception of inferiority. Retrieved from The Black Collegian Online: www.black-collegian.com/news/bcwire/archives/hbcu_future2_1006.htm

Ladson-Billings, G. (2004, October). Landing on the wrong note: the price we paid for "Brown.". *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 3-13.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68. Retrieved February 22, 2013, from https://www4.nau.edu/cee/orgs/serd/docs/ladson-billings-and-tate.pdf

Lombardi, M., & Bourke, J. (2010). Learning and development 2010: Bridging the gap between strategy and execution. *Learning & Development*, 1-31.

Love, D. (2012, September 20). Obama White House awards HBCUs, but how will the money be managed. Retrieved October 22, 2012, from NBC News: Education Nation: http://thegrio.com/2012/09/20/obama-white-house-awards-hbcus-but-how-will-the-money-be-managed/

Lumina Foundation. (2012). A stornger nation through higher education. Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation for Education, Inc. Retrieved April 13, 2013, from http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_Stronger_Nation-2012.pdf

Lynch, D. (2007, November 27). Can Higher Education Manage Talent. Retrieved February 20, 2012, from *Inside Higher Ed* : http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2007/11/27/lynch

Lynch, M., & Engle, J. (2010, August). Big gaps, small gaps: Some colleges and Universities do better than others in graduating African-American students. *The education Trust*, 1-8. Retrieved April 13, 2013, from http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/CRO%20Brief-AfricanAmerican.pdf

Mathews, C. M. (2011). Federal research and development funding at historically black colleges and universities. *Congressional Research Service*. Retrieved 9 18, 2012, from http://www.ieeeusa.org/policy/eyeonwashington/2011/documents/fedranddathistblack.pdf

Milken Institute. (2010). 2010 global conference, panel on Science, Technology, Engineering + Math(STEM) =

        formula for global competitiveness. 2010 Global Conference (pp. 1-21). Milken Institute.

Minigan-Finley, P. R. (2013). *Historically Black colleges and universities functioning as learning organizations: perceptions of academic administrators, faculty, and staff members*. Prairie View A&M University, College of Education. Prairie View, TX: Unpublished Dissertation.

NCHEMS. (2013). ACS educational attainment by degree-leve and age-group (American community survey):Percent of Adults 25-64 with a bachelors degree or higher. Retrieved 2013 13, April, from *NCHEMS Information Center for Higher Education Policymaking and Analysis:* http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?sub measure=232&year=2011&level=nation&mode=data &state=0

Nelms, C. (2010). Strengthening America's historically black colleges and universities: A call to action. NCCU Centenial Symposium: Setting the Agenda for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (pp. 1-12). Durham, NC: NCCU.

Nicholos, A. H. (2011). Developing 20/20 Vision on the 2020 degree attinment goal:The threat of income-based inequality in education. Washington, DC: The Pell Institute. Retrieved April 21, 2013, from http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Developing_2020_Vision_May_2011.pdf

OECD. (2011). *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD* Indicators. U.S.: OECD Publishing. Retrieved April 13, 2013, from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2011-en

Pace, C. (1985). *The credibility of student self-reports.* Los Angeles, CA: University of California at Los

Angeles: The Center for the Study of Evaluation, Graduate School of Education.

Pendergast, C. (2002). The economy of literacy: How the Supreme court stalled the ciril rights movement. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*(2), 206-229.

Pollack, S., Fireworker, R., Kleiner, D., & Friedman, H. (2009). Transforming a University from a teaching organization to a learning organization. Cauce 2009 (pp. 1-9). Vancouver: University of British Columbia. Retrieved from Cauce2009.

Rotherham, A. J., & Wellington, D. (2009, September). To work, the 21st century skills movement will require keen attention to curriculum, teacher quality and assessment. *Teaching for the 21st Century, 67*(1), 16-21.

Senge, P. (2006). The leader's new work: Building learning organizations. In J. V. Gallos, *Organizational Development: A Jossey-Bass reader* (pp. 765-792). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Boss.

Senge, P., Ross, R., Smith, B., Roberts, C., & Kleiner, A. (1994). *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building A Learning Organization*. New York, New York : Double Day.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *Back to College: BLS spotlight on statistics*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

White, J., & Weathersby, R. (2005). Can universities become true learning organizations. *The learning Organization, 12*(3), 292-298. doi:DOI 10.1108/09696470510592539

Wilson, J. S. (2011, September 18). A multidemensional challenge for Black colleges. Retrieved November 22, 2012, from *Chronicle.com*:

http://chronicle.com/article/A-Multidimensional-Challenge/129046/?sid=cr&utm_source=cr&utm_medium=en

Woodson, C. (1933). *The Miseducation of the Negro*. Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers.