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SELF-DETERMINATION IN CONTEXT: AN EXAMINATION OF FACTORS

THAT INFLUENCE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AMONG

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN HIGH SCHOOL

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SELF-DETERMINATION IN CONTEXT: AN EXAMINATION OF FACTORS

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AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN HIGH SCHOOL

by

Leroy Davis, B.S.; M.Ed.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation, which is the culmination of many hours of study, hard work, and personal commitment, is dedicated to my loving and supportive wife Gloria, and to our wonderful daughters, Allison Nicole and Jennifer Erin. I love all of you very much. I also dedicate this study in memory of my parents, Arthur and Mary L. Davis, to whom I am forever grateful for giving me life. Finally, I dedicate this study in memory of my father-in-law, Mr. Roy W. Burrell and my brother-in-law, Dr. Jake M. Burrell, both were self-determined African American men.

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educational settings. All of you have caused me to examine my beliefs and practices as an educator.

Much appreciation and gratitude is owed to Dr. Marc Johnson, who completed his doctoral studies at The University of Texas at Austin, in December 2006; and to Ann Reed for her professional editing service during the dissertation writing process.

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Finally, I want to thank my family for the many hours of reading and editing papers, accompanying me to The University of Texas Libraries, assuming a lot of family duties and responsibilities while I completed my doctoral studies, and for continuing to show love, support, and encouragement during those difficult times when I felt like giving up. I hope that I have inspired my daughters, my many nieces, nephews, and cousins to internalize that it is never too late to continue to pursue hopes, dreams, and goals.

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The purpose of this study was to examine self-determination and achievement motivation as predictors of successful school performance for high school African American males enrolled in an urban Texas school district. The students (N = 108) were placed into two distinct groups: higher-performing and lower-performing African American males based upon the following: (a) Numerical average in core classes taken, (b) performance on the Texas state achievement test, (c) placement in academic classes and programs, and (d) attendance and discipline records.

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in which African American males responded to The Needs Satisfaction Scale (Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003) and The Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993). Tests of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used in this study to measure the mean differences between the two groups in terms of self-determination (autonomy, relatedness, and competence); and achievement motivation (personal motivation,

parent encouragement, teacher support, and peer support). The study found statistically significant differences in levels of self-determination and achievement motivation between the two groups.

The qualitative segment was used to explore factors that lead to successful school performance for the African American males included in this study. Four themes emerged: (a) parental encouragement and expectations, (b) involvement in extracurricular activities, (c) personal motivation to achieve, and (d) relationships with significant adults.

Recommendations are made to replicate this study in school with larger African American student enrollment and in schools with high achievement and high economic levels. Also, the study may be replicated with other ethnic groups who historically have experienced poor school performance.

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Introduction of the Study

Self-Determination in Context

Self-determination has emerged over the years to suggest a myriad of meanings. Wehmeyer (1992) defined self-determination as "the attitudes and abilities required to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to make choices regarding one's actions free from undue external influence or interference" (p. 3). Ward (1988) defined self-determination as "the attitudes and abilities that lead individuals to define goals for themselves and to take the initiative in achieving those goals" (p. 16). These basic definitions of self-determination have been further explicated when applied to several contexts to include politics, psychology, and education.

Politically, the concept of self-determination has been used to denote the ability of a nation to govern itself. The Greeks applied this definition, along with autonomy, to mean self-rule, being able to exercise all of the necessary functions of power without interventions from any authority, which they cannot control or alter. Within the political structure of this country, self-determination has been defined as the opportunity for invoking the rights of minority groups to seek relief from repression and denial of rights to become first-class citizens within this country. Parker (2000) defined self-determination as "an individual and collective right to have the freedom to determine political status and the freedom to pursue economic, social, and cultural development" (p. 23).

In the context of psychology, self-determination has been considered synonymous with causality, the ability to make or cause things to happen in one's life. In their study of the construct of motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985), defined self-determination as "the capacity to choose and have those choices be the determinants of one's actions" (p. 38). Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, and Deci (1996) defined self-determination as "one's ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself" (p. 14).

Self-determination, in the context of education, has been defined in several situations. Deci and Ryan (1985) defined self-determination as promoting in students an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and confidence in their own capacities and attributes. Weymeyer (2002), on the other hand, defined self-determination from the prospective of students with disabilities when he posited, "for purposes of education and rehabilitation, self-determination is:

1. best defined in relationship to characteristics of a person's behavior,

2. viewed as an educational outcome, and

3. achieved through lifelong learning, opportunities, and experiences" (p. 22).

Simply stated, self-determination has come to mean the freedom and choice to set personal goals and accept the responsibility resulting from self-initiated actions. Each definition has a slight degree of variation from another; however, they have commonalities. Self-determination has come to mean having the freedom and choice to make decisions without compulsion or consequences. Self-determination has been associated with having personal and collective rights provided to all individuals. Self-determination has provided opportunities for valuing oneself as a capable and productive individual. As shown in Table 1, self-determination can be defined in a variety of contexts.

Table 1
Self-Determination Definitions

Authors	Year	Definition
Deci and Ryan	1988	The capacity to choose and have those choices to be the determinants of one's actions
Ward	1988	The abilities and attitudes that lead individuals to define goals for themselves and to take the initiative in achieving those goals
Deci and Ryan	1991	Promoting in students an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and a confidence in their own capacities and abilities
Wehmeyer	1992	The abilities and attitudes required for one to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to make choices regarding one's actions free from undue external influence or interference
Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Ryan	1996	A person's ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself
Wehmeyer	2002	For purposes of education and rehabilitation, self-determination is best defined in relationship to characteristics of a person's behavior, viewed as an educational outcome, and achieved through lifelong learning, opportunities, and experiences

The right to self-determination has been used in recent decades by people, in many cases ethnic or religious minorities, who sought independence to escape prejudice or persecution. Franklin (1984) wrote,

Historians, anthropologists, and political scientists have found that …groups of people who have experienced outside domination, which was generally considered illegitimate

by the dominated, have also come to value freedom, resistance, education, and self-

determination and passed on these values to their children. (p. 5)

African Americans, unlike many other Americans, have acquired intimate

knowledge about domination and oppression. For more than 200 years, people of African

descent were legally enslaved to perform domestic, agricultural, and other services for little or no

compensation (Genovese, 1981). The few slaves who did not comply with the laws of slavery

experienced harsh consequences that often resulted in being sold, beaten, and in many instances,

killed (Genovese, 1981). A few slaves made efforts to free themselves from the abysmal laws of

slavery by whatever means possible. They had a self-determined spirit that caused them to rise

and take total control of their lives. Self-determination was that inner spirit that helped them

survive slavery, Jim Crow[1], lynching, persecution, and other devastations. Possessing a self-

determined spirit was the value that African Americans embraced as a vehicle for gaining

economic, social, political, and educational equality (Franklin, 1984).

Self-Determined Values at the Core of Freedom for African Americans

One of the most pervasive questions asked by many is, How did African Americans

survive the devastation of being held captive as slaves in this country? One possible answer

would be their self-determined ability to survive. For many African Americans self-determined

values symbolized having control of their lives (Franklin, 1984). Being self-determined meant

having the freedom to be autonomous and having the ability to make decisions about their future

and that of their families. Self-determination meant self-improvement through acquiring

---

[1] The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site Interpretive Staff found, "from the 1800s into the 1960s, a majority of American states enforced segregation through 'Jim Crow' laws (so called after a black character in minstrel shows)".

knowledge, valuing hard work, and embracing spirituality as the center of their existence (Franklin, 1984). But, the value of education was perhaps the most defined self-determined value for many African Americans Franklin, 1984).

Historically, African Americans were forbidden by law to have political, social, economic opportunities, including the opportunity for free public schooling (Genovese, 1981). Most slave owners operated from the paradigm that if slaves learned to read and write they would no longer remain slaves; as a result many of these slave owners opposed any opportunities for slaves to acquire any type of schooling or learning. Miller (1988), in his biography on Frederick Douglass, recaptured the practice of teaching slaves to read when he wrote,

Learning will spoil the best nigger in the world. If he learns to read the Bible it will forever unfit him to be a slave. He should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey…If you teach him how to read, he'll want to know how to write, and this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself. (p. 12)

Many African Americans secretly learned the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic by whatever means possible (Genovese, 1981) because of their self-determined values for self-development (Franklin, 1984). There were serious consequences for slaves who disclosed that they knew how to read or write. Franklin (1984) documented, "mutilation (or death) sometimes resulted when enslaved Afro-Americans tried to become literate men and women" (p. 163). However, many of the slaves were still determined to learn to read and to write regardless of the consequence.

As slaves learned to read and write, many of them began resisting the institution of slavery. Slave revolts trace back to the early 1600s. Hendrick and Hendrick (2004) documented,

5

"within a short time after slaves were brought to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, and then to other settlements, they began to escape, and slave owners began to call for official action to solve that problem" (p. 5). However, many self-determined slaves continued to escape in hopes of living with the Native Americans or finding other colonies that participated in the anti-slavery movement.

Some of the revolts were violent in nature. Some slaves actually attacked and killed their White owners. Cowan and Newman (1994), documented, "in Virginia in August 1831, Nat Turner confirmed those anxieties by leading a rebellion that left fifty-seven white people dead" (p. 72).

Resistance was a self-determined value that many Black Americans had to embrace to survive. Franklin (1984) wrote,

> Within the slave community, freedom and self-determination were not tied to some abstract, bourgeois notion of "individualism," but were defined in terms of the amount of personal control that an individual had over his or her destiny and that of the immediate family. (p.74)

Frederick Douglas, an escaped slave who later became a famous lecturer and writer during the abolition movement, wanted to have control over his destiny and his life. He and other Black leaders such as Harriett Tubman assisted slaves in escaping and seeking freedom in the free states in the North. These self-determined individuals created what Franklin (1984) termed as "the network of resistance," a group of determined individuals who refused to be enslaved.

These important leaders were quite passionate in their beliefs about having control over their lives and their own destiny. Some leaders, such as Marcus Garvey, created a movement for

Black Americans to return to their homeland, Africa. Resistance was a cry for choice, freedom, autonomy, and equality (Genovese, 1981). It was these valiant men and women who introduced self-determination as a significant value system among African Americans. Franklin (1984) wrote,

> Under slavery, Afro-Americans valued survival with dignity, resistance against oppression, religious self-determination, and freedom. After emancipation, they continued to hold these ideals, and freedom, rather than being an end itself, became a means for achieving other cultural goals that developed within the slave and free black community. (p. 146)

Many slaves escaped from slavery by moving to the northern states and even as far as Canada where Blacks had more opportunities for social, educational, and political advancements. With the assistance of abolitionists, the oppressed slaves who resisted the woes of slavery used whatever means possible to pursue freedom. One such abolitionist was Reverend John Rankin, a Presbyterian minister from Ripley, Ohio. He and other abolitionists helped slaves find freedom in the North and in Canada through the Underground Railroad[2]. Hendrick and Hendrick (2004) defined the Underground Railroad as,

> The Underground Railroad, which operated in the United States from late in the eighteen century until the early years of the Civil War in the 1860s, was an informal, constantly

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[2] George and Willene Hendrick (2004) suggested that the term "Underground Railroad" may have developed from a myth involving a slave named Tice Davids who in 1831 ran away from being a slave in Kentucky to seek freedom in Ohio. During his escape, Tice was closely followed by his master, and when Davids reached the River, he jumped in and swam into Ripley, Ohio, where there were several abolitionists there waiting for him. It took the master some time to locate a rowboat, and by the time he found one, Davids had disappeared. "The Kentucky slave owner then thought 'The nigger must have gone off on an underground road'" (p.3).

changing network of routes over which fugitive slaves were passed along, often at night,

from Border and Southern states to Canada or to a safe city in the North. (p. 3)

Religion became an important self-determined value of the African American culture

during slavery. Upon arriving in this country, the slaves had to abandon their native religious

practices because they were viewed as barbarous in nature by White Americans. Therefore, the

slaves were introduced to Christianity. The slaves embedded many of their African cultures into

their practice of Christianity through the music, the emotions, the teachings, and most

importantly, the quest for freedom. Some slaves learned to read the Bible. During the abolition

movement, slaves cunningly used Negro spirituals to embed codes for communicating messages

of hope, escapes to freedom, and resistance of slavery. Many slave owners were oblivious to the

deeper meaning of the spirituals or the emotion associated with the worship service of the slaves

and often viewed religious practices among African Americans as a form of entertainment.

Franklin (1984) wrote,

> In teaching the enslaved Afro-Americans to ignore or disobey the rules of the slave
>
> holders and praise God among themselves, slave religion fostered self-determinist values
>
> among Afro-Americans. Some slaveholders aided the development of these self-
>
> determinist values by letting the slaves hold their own religious services. But on those
>
> farms and plantations where religious meetings were restricted or forbidden, Afro-
>
> American slaves often risked brutal persecution for spreading the Word of God or
>
> sneaking off in the woods to pray. (p. 62)

Religion served two purposes for enslaved African Americans. First, it provided hope for slaves to be delivered from oppression. Second, slaves were able to plan and execute escapes to the North by embedding secret codes in sermons and in spirituals.

In sum, African-Americans have first-hand experience of being oppressed and dominated. African Americans have also employed self-determined values of resistance, religion, revolt, and education as modes for liberation. Many movements surfaced empowering African-Americans to gain social, economic, and political freedom. Many Black leaders, including Marcus Garvey, challenged the laws of segregation and injustice and led revolts within the United States (Genovese, 1981). These leaders possessed values of being self-determined, resisting the constraints of slavery, and having a strong religious faith. They became leaders and spokespersons for the African American people.

History has proven that African Americans valued and wanted access to quality education. White Americans understood the power of being education and often were opposed to making education readily accessible to African Americans. Many Whites felt that they could control African Americans by denying them the opportunity for learning to read and write. Denying African Americans access to quality education has to be recognized as having a long-term negative impact on learning opportunity today for African American children.

African American Males as Endangered Species

African American males continue to face a plethora of issues that have been the concern of researchers. An examination of current quality of life statistics has indicated that African American males are in deep trouble to the point where some researchers have referred to African

American males as being an endangered species (Gibbs, 1988), hopeless and impossible to salvage (Garibaldi, 1992), and in deep trouble (Noguera, 2003).

The ages between 15 and 29, a transition period from adolescent to adulthood, is a difficult time in the lives of adolescents in general, but is a particularly difficult for African American males (Butler, 1999; Midgley, 1993). In 2004, African American males represented 14% of the total 31.1 million men between the ages of 15 and 29 in the United States (Figure 1). They currently represent the second largest minority male population.
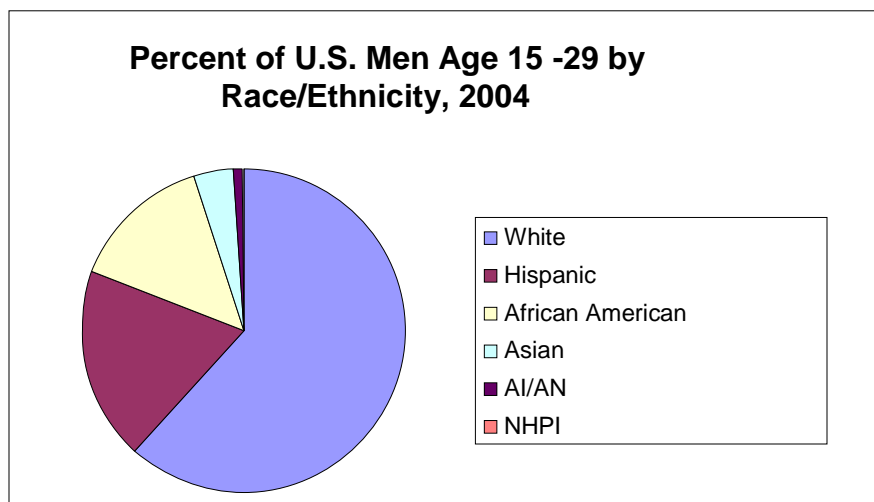
Figure 1. The percentage of U.S. men ages 15-29 by race/ethnicity in 2004.

Source: Annual Estimates of the Population by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005 (NC-EST2005-04). Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau. Release Date: May 10, 2006.

One factor that has impacted the quality of life for African American males has been related to their health and well-being. As babies, African American males have the highest probability of dying in their first year of life from improper nutrition or medical care (Auerbach, Krimgold, & Lefkowitz, 2000). The infant mortality rate for African American children is 18 deaths per 1,000 live births in comparison to 9 live births of White children. Black boys survive

less than Black girls (Kunjufu, 1990). Black boys born in major metropolitan areas face 2.1 to

3.5 times the risk of dying in infancy than White baby boys (Geronimus, Bound, Waidmann,

Hellemeiker, & Burns, 1996).

As they grow older, African American males are the only ethnic group to experience a

decline in life expectancy (Spivak, Prothrow-Stith, & Hausman, 1988). In many poor urban

communities, two-thirds of 15-year-old males cannot expect to survive to age 65 (Geronimous,

et. al). Young adult and middle-aged African American men living in impoverished urban areas

experience higher death rates than the White national death rate, or as many as 1,296 more

deaths per 100,000 population each year than white men nationwide (Geronimus, et. al.).

Between the ages of 15 and 29 African American males die at a rate that is 1.5 times that of

Whites and Hispanic men of that same age. While the death rate drops for others between the

ages 25 and 29, it continues to escalate for African American males during that same age span.

Between the ages of 15 and 29, the leading causes of death for young men, regardless of race or

ethnicity, are unintentional injury (e.g. car accident, firearm, or drowning), suicide, and

homicide, as depicted in Figure 2.
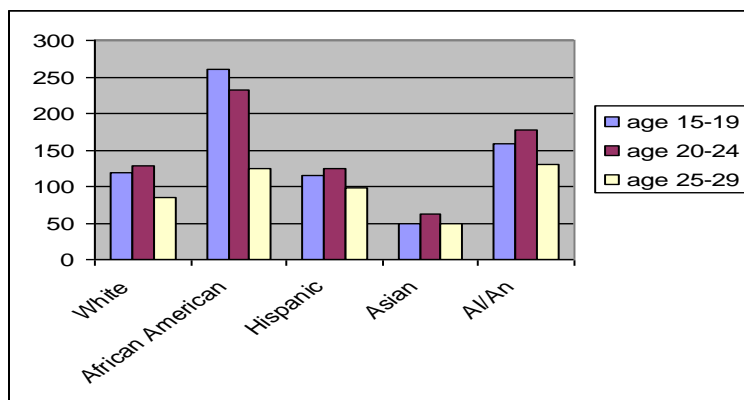
Figure 2. The death rates of men ages 15-29 by race/ethnicity in 2003.

Note: Rates per 100,000 population in specified group. Source: National Vital Statistics Report, 2006

For African American males, the leading causes of deaths within the age span of 15 to 29 are related to homicides. African American males lead the nation in homicides as victims and perpetrators (Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard, 1994), and they now have the fastest growing rate of suicide, which has increased by 146% with firearms used in 72% of the suicides (Johnson, Nazzaro, & Gilbert, 1991; Black Mental Health Alliance for Education and Consultation, 2003). In addition, African American males represent the greatest increase in the population between the ages of 15 and 29 contracting HIV (Brunswick, 1985; Centers for Disease Control, 1988; 2005; Kaplan, Johnson, Bailey, & Simon, 1987). African American males between the ages of 25 and 44 represent the highest number of males dying from HIV related diseases (Centers for Disease Control, 2005) as depicted in Figure 3.
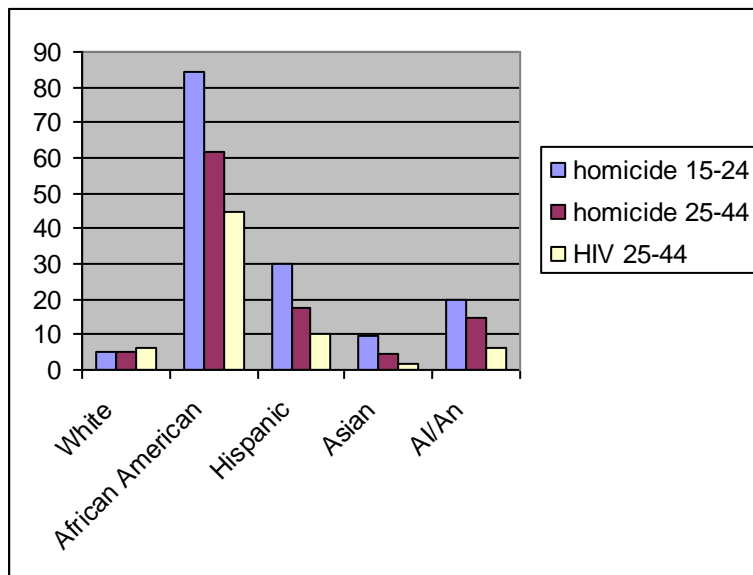
Figure 3. The death rates by homicide and HIV by race and ethnicity in 2003.

Note: Deaths per 100,000 resident population. Source: Table 42. Death rates for human immunodeficiency virus HIV) disease, according to sex, race, Hispanic origin, and age: United States, selected years 1987 -2002. Centers for Disease Control, 2005.

Even if HIV-related deaths were removed as factors leading to higher death rates for African American males, there are other health categories that also contribute to high death rates among African American males (Kochanska, 1995). African American males lead the nation in the number of men dying from prostrate cancer. The Center for Disease Control (2005) estimated that 251 per 100,000 African American males suffered from prostrate cancer as compared to 167 per 100,000 White men; and that 108 per 100,000 African American males suffered from lung/bronchus cancer as compared to 72 per 100,000 per White men.

Nearly 4 out of 10 young African American males lack health insurance (Race, Ethnicity Health Care Fact Sheet, 2006). The number of uninsured White men is significantly lower than the number of uninsured African American males, but the number of uninsured African American males is lower than other minority groups, as depicted in Figure 4.
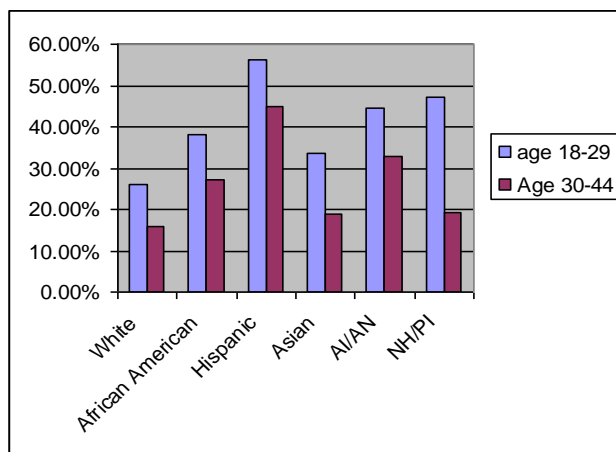
Figure 4. The percent of young men lacking health insurance by race/ethnicity in 2004.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey Table Creator [online]. 2005.

African American males have higher unemployment rate than that of all ethnic groups represented in Figure 5. The U.S. Census Bureau (Johnson, 1989) estimated that nearly 20% of African Americans between the ages of 16 and 29 live in poverty as compared to 18% for Hispanic, 12% for Asian, and 10% for White men.
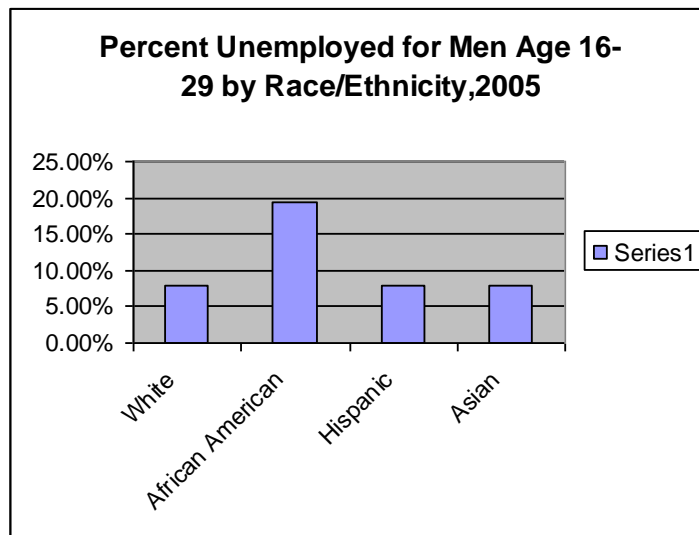
Figure 5. Percent unemployed for men ages 16-29 by race/ethnicity in 2005.

Source: Table 3. Employment Status of the Civilian Noninstitutional Population by the U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000.

More than 10% of African American males are represented in the nation's criminal justice system. In fact, there are a disproportionate number of African American males represented in the criminal justice system (Johnson, 1989; Mauer, 1994; Race, Ethnicity, Health Care Fact Sheet, 2006). While this group of the population in this country represents 14% of the population, they represent over 40% of the prison population, not including the number of young African American males on parole. The percentage of other racial and ethnic groups represented in the criminal justice system is significantly lower for White (1.5%) and Hispanic (3.6%). Figure 6 shows the comparison of the three ethnic groups, ages 18-29.

Percent of Men Age 18-29 in Prison, by Race/Ethnicity
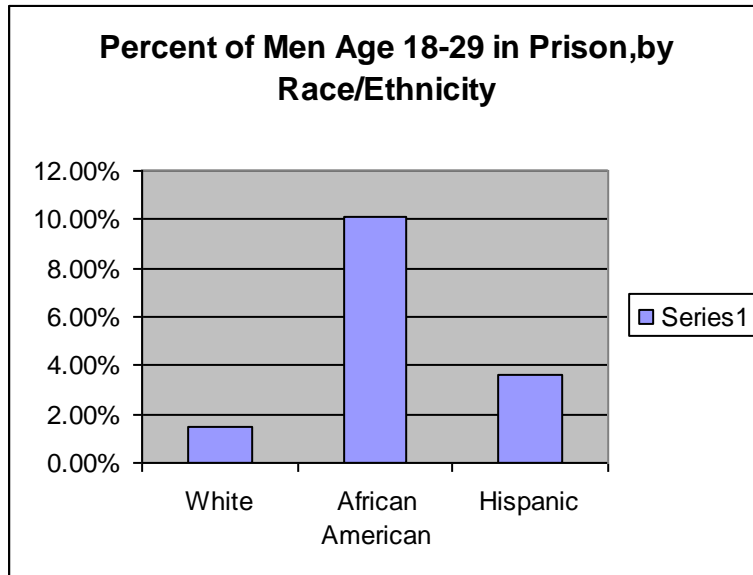
Figure 6. The percent of men ages 18-29 in prison by race/ethnicity in 2005.

Source: Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005, Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2006.

For these reasons, African American males are viewed by many researchers as endangered species (Gibbs, 1988) within social, economic, and political systems of this country. Historically, African Americans have sought educational opportunities as a way to enhance their quality of life. But, many African American males have experienced problems that have negatively influenced their education and negatively impacted their quality of life.

Rationale for the Study

Education has been often viewed as the great equalizer in American society because it unlocks doors to the future (Mickelson, 1990; Orfield & Yum 1990; Price, 2003). Some have viewed education as a venue for upward mobility (Gordon, Gordon, and Nembhard, 1994; Armstrong-Walker, 1998). However, for African Americans, education has become what Ladsen-Billings (1994) referred to as "elusive." The dream of access to a quality education for

African American males has become more elusive as they continue to struggle in public schools throughout this country.

African American males have one of the highest percentages of students dropping out of school. In 2003, the average drop out for rate for all students was 12.3 %, but for African American males, the average drop out rate was 16.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Although African American males have experienced an increase in the overall rate graduating from high school, they still have critically lower completion rates when compared to other groups. In 2003, nearly 80% of all Black males obtained at least a high school diploma; however, they lagged behind other racial ethnic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The high school completion rate for Asian American males was 90%; White males had a completion rate of 85%; while Hispanics males had the lowest high school completion rate of 70% (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

African American males are more likely to be absent from honor courses and programs for gifted students (Ford, 1993; Oakes, 1985; Pollard, 1993; Ford, 1995; Anderson, 2005), resulting in under-representation in these program. In 2002, African American males were underrepresented of the general population enrolled in classes for gifted and talented children (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). During that same period, African American males were also underrepresented in Advanced Placement (AP) math and science classes. In contrast, White males were overrepresented in AP math and science classes (DeJohns, 1997; Armstrong-Walker, 1998; Gordon, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

In contrast, African American males are overrepresented in classes for students with learning disabilities (Milofsky, 1974; Hosp & Reschly, 2004). In 2002, African American males

comprised 31.2 % of all male students enrolled in classes for mental retardation; 24.9% of students enrolled in classes for emotional disturbance, and 21.3 % of students enrolled in programs for students with learning disabilities, while comprising a significantly different general representation in the overall student population (U.S. Department of Education 2004).

African American males are disciplined at a higher rate than comparative groups. In 2002, they represented 23.8% of students suspended from school and 22.9% of students expelled from school (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). African American males' achievement scores are significantly lower than their male counterparts from other ethnic and racial backgrounds. The 2005 NAEP[3] scores showed a sizeable achievement gap for Black males at the 4th as 21% and at 33% at 8th Grade. African American males experienced similar results in the 2005 NAEP reading scores. In 2004, only 38% of African American males 4th graders and 43% of 8th graders had reading scores at or above grade level, and their White counterparts had reading scores of 72% and 76% respectively. African American males have a lower percentage graduating from college when compared to other groups; the percentage of African American males graduating from college was 15% percentage.

In sum, in each area of measurement of academic and school achievement, African American males have not performed at the same levels as their counterparts from other racial and ethnic groups Daily, 2001).There have many theories as to why African Americans continue to struggle in schools, but no single reason has been identified. During the past thirty years, researchers have studied the principles of self-determination theory and applied these principles to the academic performance of students. A careful review of self-determination theory literature

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[3] National Assessment of Educational Progress sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (2005).

identified no studies involving African American males as subjects. This study applied self-determination theory in the context of public urban high schools to a population of African American males.

<center>Statement of the Problem</center>

Research related to the school performance of African American males has been very limited in its scope. It has been primarily a research associated with failures and dysfunctional behavior (Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard, 1994) of African American males. Polite and Davis (1994) argued,

> The exclusive study of African American males' experiences in school and their related achievement and social outcomes has received a very limited place in the academic literature. Given the disproportionate rates of school failures, special education assignment, suspensions and expulsions for African American males, this stands as a critical omission. (p. 505)

These failures and dysfunctional behaviors in school are deeply rooted in the social and economic challenges related to being an African American male in the U.S. Noguera (2003) summed up the trials and tribulations of Black men when he wrote,

> It is not surprising that there is a connection between the educational performance of African American males and the hardships they endure within the larger society. In fact, it would be more surprising if Black males were doing well academically in spite of the broad array of difficulties that confronts them. (p. 432)

For more than thirty years, public schools have failed to find the answer to the myriad of questions related to poor school performance of African Americans, particularly males. The

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problem is multi-dimensional and has led to many debates by educators and legislators alike.

Both educators and legislators realize the nature of the problem, but they have been unable to

develop workable solutions to resolve the many problems related to improving the school

performance of African American males in our public schools.

One such problem is that literature related to successful African American males is

minuscule, and this problem is heightened by a plethora of literature on failure (Fordham &

Ogbu, 1986). Despite the many challenges facing African American males, many from this

group continue to find ways to navigate around negative influences. These students have been

able to use their successful school experiences to reach higher levels of social and economic

attainments (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostolny & Pardo, 1992; Mason, 1997; Noguera, 2003).

Therefore, the question asked of this study was, Why do some African American males

succeed in school while so many do not? Do some of the components of self-determination

theory explain this paradox? This study investigated self-determination and its three components,

autonomy, competence, and relatedness and if, or how, these may contribute to the success of

African American males in urban high school settings.   It also examined achievement

motivation and its components, school engagement, personal motivation, peer support, parent

encouragement, and teacher support.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this study stems from Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination

theory (SDT). SDT is built on the assumption that all individuals have a natural, innate, and

constructive propensity for developing an elaborated and unified sense of self (Deci & Ryan,

2002). In addition, SDT embraces both an organismic and dialectical framework for the study of

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human growth and development. The organismic view focuses upon how humans grow and develop; whereas, the dialectic focuses upon how the individual copes with the various forces he or she encounters in the process of development. Therefore, as an organismic and dialectic process, SDT embraces the assumptions that humans tend toward positive psychological growth and a unified self, but it also recognizes that social-contextual factors may either support or hinder these tendencies (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

SDT posits that humans are naturally motivated to participate in activities and social groups, and to develop a unified self, but basic needs must be met for optimal development and performance to occur (Deci & Ryan, 2002). SDT focuses upon the construct of three fundamental psychological needs, competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Competence refers to feeling effective in one's ongoing interaction with the social environment and experiencing opportunities to exercise and express one's capacities (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Simply stated, competence is the feeling of confidence and effectiveness in completing an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Relatedness refers to feeling connected to others, to caring for and being cared for by those others, to having a sense of belongingness both with other individuals and with one's community (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Autonomy refers to being the perceived origin or source of one's own behavior (deCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

SDT also posits that social environments that allow the satisfaction of the three basic needs are predicted to support these needs, whereas factors associated with need thwarting or conflict are predicted to be antagonistic of these needs. Figure 7 proposes a pictorial model of how the psychological needs attribute to self-determined motivation that lead to various desired outcomes.
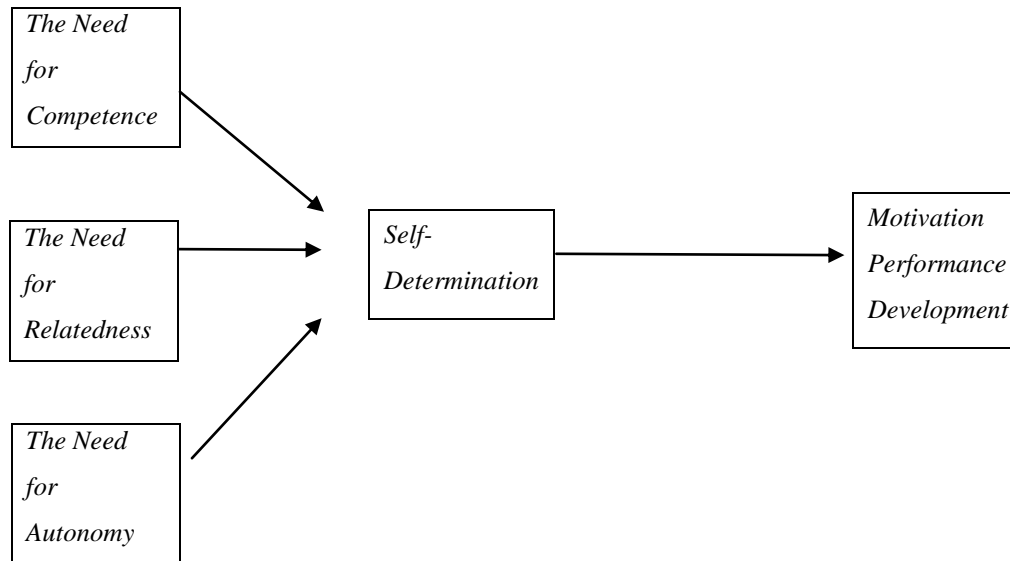
Figure 7. The model of basic psychological needs leading to desired outcomes.

The concepts of coping and development are viewed as essential in the process of being able to adjust and thrive in adverse situations. Two factors that influence how people cope are a sense of control and social support. When people feel that they have a sense of control, they view adverse situations as being a challenge and remain optimistic in the face of obstacles. People who believe that they do not have a sense of control tend to panic, become pessimistic and doubtful, and expect the worst about future stressful encounters (Bandura, 1977). The second predictor of coping is social support. People who have close, loving relationships fare better during stressful or adverse situation than individuals who are more socially isolated (Skinner & Edge, 2002).

The motivational model (Deci & Ryan, 2002) may be used to explain the phenomena of self-determination, coping, and development as presented in Figure 8.

CONTEXT ⟶ SELF ⟶ ACTION ⟶ OUTCOME


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┌──────────┐      ╭───────────╮
│ Warmth   │      │           │
│ vs.      │ ───▶ │ Relatedness│
│ Hostility│      │           │
└──────────┘      ╰───────────╯

┌──────────┐      ╭───────────╮        ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
│ Structure│      │           │        │ Engagement   │   │ Social       │
│ vs.      │ ───▶ │ Competence│ ────▶  │ and          │   │ Development  │
│ Chaos    │      │           │        │ Coping       │   └──────────────┘
└──────────┘      ╰───────────╯        └──────────────┘   
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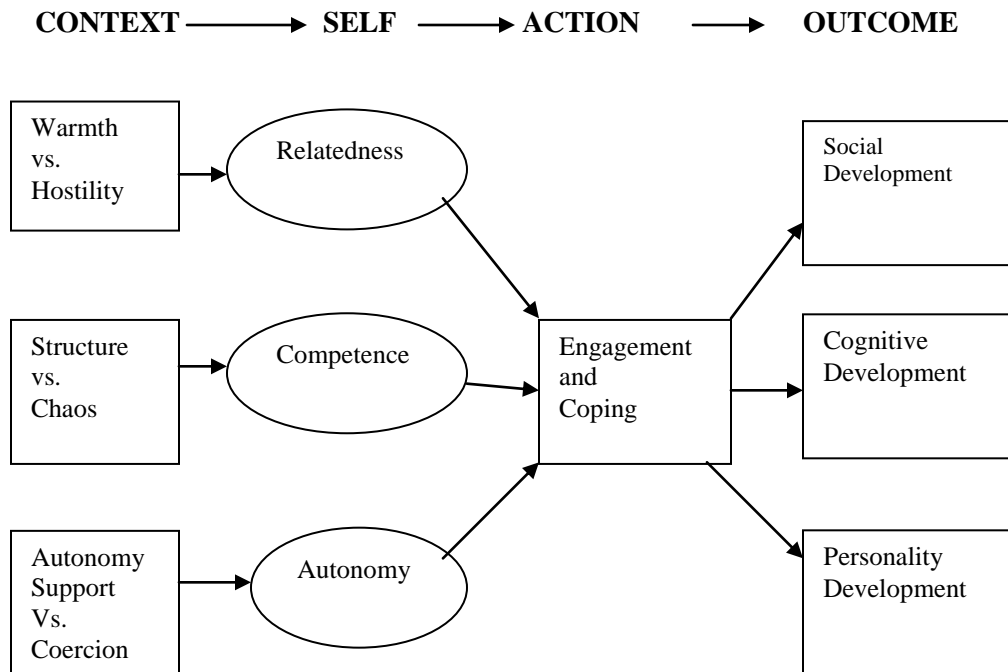
Figure 8. The motivational model of context, self, action, and outcome.

Source: From Deci and Ryan's Handbook of Self-Determination Research (2002)

This model integrated the work on attachment[4], perceived control, and self-determination by assuming that each is impacted by the three psychological needs. According to the model, social contexts within different settings (e.g. family, work, school, etc) provide people with the opportunities and experiences to fulfill their fundamental psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Thus, individuals create self-systems[5] around the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The "pattern of action" includes engagement (e.g., active, goal-directed, flexible, constructive, persistent) with the social and physical environment, versus coping (e.g., emotionally alienated or behaviorally disengaged) when engagement encounters resistance or is

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[4] Attachment Theory (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlsby, 1969, 1973; Papousek & Papousek, 1980) posit that when infants are born, they have the innate capacity to detect, seek out, initiate, and take pleasure from interacting with social partners and to protest and defend against separation.
[5] Connell & Wellborn (1991) used the expression self-system as the self-perceptions that individuals construct of their social/physical worlds

disrupted. All of these factors influence social, cognitive, and personality developments (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

The framework for understanding the school failures related to African American males stems from the work of Kunjufu (1985, 1986, 1990). Kunjufu (1985) argued that schools are deliberately designed to foster failure among African American males. In his theory, "Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome," Kunjufu (1985, 1990) also argued that Black children, including African American males, are enthusiastic and eager to learn in their early primary years, and this enthusiasm and eagerness last through the third grade. By fourth grade, African American males begin to experience academic, social, and discipline related problems leading to a series of failures in school. In his work, Kunjufu (1990) identified "a decline in parental involvement, an increase in peer pressure, a decline in nurturance and an increase in discipline problems, a decline in teacher expectation, a lack of understanding of learning style, and a lack of male teachers" (p. 29) as factors contributing to the school failure of African American males.

The conceptual framework for successful school experiences for African American males stems from the work of Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, (1998). In their study of successful African American males, they identified several factors contributing to the successful school experiences. First, parents of successful African American males are involved with their sons' academic experiences. As a result, these students have close relationships with one or both parents, or significant adult whom they are comfortable in discussing their feelings, victories, and concerns. Secondly, the parents of successful African American males have effective parenting skills and are able to set clear limits and expectations for their sons. Next, successful African American males are aware of their racial identity and can cope with the perceptions that society has of

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them. Also, successful African American males utilize community resources to help them grow and develop. They devote quality time with their parents or mentors to talk openly and freely about "what it means to be a young Black male in American society and how society tends to view them" (Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998, p. xi). They also have the opportunity to observe successful African American adults "who exhibit those values and behaviors we consider important to success: hard work, determination, interest in helping others, punctuality, accountability for one's actions, and responsibility for one's family" (Harbowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998, p. xi). Finally, successful African males are involved in extra-curricular activities, particularly athletics.

Hypotheses

The following two hypotheses were investigated in this study:

1. There are significant differences in the perceived levels of self-determination between the higher and lower-performing African American males.

2. There are significant differences in the perceived levels of achievement motivation between higher and lower-performing African American males.

Significance of the Study

Educators understand the factors that have caused failure among African American males as reflected in the countless study of these failures. However, there is an absent of substantial data to identify the factors that have caused some African Americans to do well in school. Self-Determination has been examined in many educational venues that use students from varied economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds; but as noted earlier, none of these examinations used African American males as sole study subjects. This study shines more light on the importance

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of meeting psychological needs helps of African American males as a means of fostering successful school experiences.

This study is also significant because it included certain unique designs that recaptured the problems faced by many African Americans in our public schools. First, the race-homogenous design provided more flexibility in understanding the cognitive and psychological functioning of African American males without having to address implication of racial differences and their relevance in understanding the complexities of school performance. Likewise, many studies often compare African Americans to other groups, namely White males. This study compares African Americans males to other African American males. Secondly, this study included an examination of personal and contextual factors related to motivation and school performance that focused upon successful experiences rather than failures of African American males. Third, by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, explanations for differences in academic achievement were explored in the strength of both methods of inquiry. The primary data collection was through established instruments related to motivation, and the secondary source was individual case studies from exploratory interviews with successful African American males. These multiple data sources shed more light on the complexities of African American males by giving voice and expression in explaining what coping mechanism African American males embrace to become successful students.

Researchers and educators often examine African American males as a group and not as individuals who possess qualities of being ambitious, studious, and conscientious. This study is also significant because it gives voice to African American males who are experiencing success in school by sharing their thoughts, beliefs, fears, and desires that are captured in individual case

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studies. These factors make this study an important contribution to the scarcity of literature on successful African American males.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation study was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 serves as the introductory chapter to the study and included the following sections: (a) an overview of self-determination, (b) statement of the problem, (c) significance of study, (d) theoretical framework, (d) hypotheses, and (e) organization of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the related literature. The chapter begins with an introduction followed by a presentation of the components of Self-determination theory. Next, the chapter presents literature on educating African American males in this country, followed by literature on indicators of coping with adversities and successful school performance for African American males.

Chapter 3 provides the methodology and procedures used in the study to test the hypotheses and research questions. The chapter begins with an introduction, followed by the organization of the literature review. A description of the study population, instruments used to examine levels of autonomy, relatedness, competence and academic motivation as variables in this study. Quantitative and qualitative procedures are outlined with an explanation of the process for analyzing the data for both methodologies.

Chapter 4 presents the findings and Chapter 5 presents a summary of the research findings with discussions and recommendations

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Diminished school performance of African American males remains an unremitting national problem. Empirical studies documenting the difficulties that African Americans face in school have perplexed educators and researchers (Banks, McQuater, & Hubbard, 1978; Kunjufu, 1985; Boykin & Bailey, 2001; Price, 2003; Salley, 2005). Attempting to identify factors that cause consistent poor school performance has prompted spirited debates among researchers. Salley (2005) has taken the position that "despite the attention, opinions remained divided about how to account for academic difficulties among African Americans" (p. 15).

Most literature on the school performance of African American males has focused on deficit views of African American males by depicting them as "dumb, deprived, dangerous, deviant, and disturbed" (Gibbs, 1988). Similar views are held by Polite and Davis (1990) who contend that the literature tends to stereotype African American males as "uneducated, unemployed, antisocial, oversexed, drugged, and incarcerated population of misfits" (p. ix).

Education is considered essential to economic, social, and political prosperity. However, the continuing problems and difficulties experienced by African American males in school have drawn much attention from those interested in the advancement of this country's Black population (Gill, 1992; Gordon, Gordon & Nembhard, 1994).

Ogbu (1978) posited that much of the failure of African Americans males can be attributed to a pervasive failure within our school systems to understand cultural and motivational differences in educating African American students, particularly males. Graham (1994) found, "Many Black students are thought to perform poorly in school…not because they

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lack basic intellectual competencies or specific learning skills, but because they have low expectations, feel hopeless, deny the importance of individual effort, or give up in the face of failure" (p. 55).

Although there is a historical documentation of the multitude of adversities encountered by African American males for access to a quality education, many from this group have managed to defy the odds of poor school performance and have experienced success in school (Hrabowski, Maton & Greif 1998). There is a plethora of examples cited in the literature about the failures of African American males in school, but there is a void of studies that that focus upon factors that motivate African American males to experience success in school.

Organization of Literature Review

This literature review begins with an introduction that recaptures some of the problems that African Americans face in school. The literature review also includes an overview of Self-determination theory as a frame for understanding the phenomena of achievement motivation and performance in school settings. The focus then shifts to research on historical perspective of the education of African American males in the United States, including studies written in *The Journal of Negro Education*, beginning as far back as 1930. Then, this chapter presents the literature on successful school performance and coping with adversities of African American males. School engagement, personal motivation, and relationships with peer support, teacher support, and parental encouragements are recurrent themes impacting the school performance of African American males.

Self-Determination: An Organimsic and Dialetic Process

Self-determination theory is an organismic dialectical theory that examines the continual process of how humans develop and grow, and how they act within various social contexts from a sense of "self" (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The process of integrating the humanistic development and the ability to act in social contexts can be found in early studies by psychodynamic theorists who postulate a sense of self and synthetic function of the ego (Freud, 1927; Nunberg, 1931, Skinner, 1953; Meissner, 1981; White, 1963) and humanistic theorists who postulate an actualizing tendency (Angyal, 1963, Maslow, 1955; Rogers, 1963). Therefore, Self-determination theory is founded on the principle that "people have a primary propensity to forge interconnections among aspects of their psyches as well as the other individuals and groups in their social worlds" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 5). It is through an integration of autonomy and homonony[6] that promote healthy human development (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Self-Determination focuses on the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991, 2002). The need for competence is being effective in one's interactions with the environment. The need for autonomy is to be self-determined and to have a choice in the initiation, maintenance, and regulation of an activity. The need for relatedness is to feel securely connected to others and the need to experience oneself as capable and worthy of love and respect (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). These basic psychological needs constitute the organismic perspective (Deci & Ryan 1985; 1991; Misrandino, 1996).

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[6] Deci and Ryan (2002) defined autonomy as "tending toward inner organization and holistic self-regulation and homonony as tending toward integration of oneself with others" (p. 5).

Self-determination theory examines the social context in which the satisfaction of these basic psychological needs (Connell, 1991) may be facilitated. Competence is facilitated by the provisions of structure, the communication of realistic expectations, consistent consequences, and competence related feedback (Connell, 1991; Skinner, 1991). Autonomy is facilitated by a context that provides autonomy support in the form of providing an opportunity to take initiative and allow for the provision of choice (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Relatedness develops from the involvement of others in the context through their communication of interest in and the enjoyment of the individual (Connell, 1991).

The social context can either obstruct or support the satisfaction of these basic needs. The extent to which the social context obstructs the satisfaction of the basic psychological need by providing inconsistency or chaos, coercion, or neglect (Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990) will decrease active engagement. On the other hand, the extent to which the social context supports these needs in an individual will keep that individual engaged within a particular context such as family, school, or work. Engagement will manifest in energized behavior (e.g. initiation, effort, concentrated attention, persistence, and continued attempts of adversities), positive emotion (enthusiasm, happiness, curiosity, interest), and orientation (Miserandino, 1996).

Deci and Ryan (2002) argued that Self-determination theory focuses on the dialectic between the active, growth-oriented human organism and social contexts that either support or undermine people's attempts to master and integrate their experiences in a coherent sense of self. Simply put, people are organisms who have the natural inclination to explore, develop, and take on challenges; not necessarily because they are programmed to, not because they are forced to, but because it a part of their nature to do so (Deci, 1976).

Mini-Theories of Self-Determination Theory

Over the past decades, Self-determination theory has evolved to form mini-theories, each relating to specific phenomena. Each of these mini-theories integrates the concepts of autonomy, competence, and relatedness; and each is linked in that they share both organismic and dialectical assumptions (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Basic Needs Theory

The concept of basic psychological needs is an intricate base for Self-determination theory and all of its mini-theories and is directly related to well being. Deci and Ryan (2002) found,

> Needs that are satisfied promote well-being, and when needs are thwarted lead to negative consequences….Because needs are hypothesized to be universal, this relation between satisfaction and well-being[7] must apply across ages, genders, and cultures." (p. 22)

Studies on basic need theory fall into three categories. The first category focuses upon need satisfaction as a predictor of fluctuation in well-beings. Two studies (Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000) posited that the satisfaction of each basic need contributes to an individual's well-being and that daily satisfaction of each basic need explained daily fluctuations in well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The second category focuses upon the relationship between the aspiration of goals and well-being. Kasser and Ryan (1993)

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[7] "The concept of "well-being" is a dichotomy of two school of thoughts: (a) hedonic or subjective well-being (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwartz, 1999) which equates with happiness, and (b) eudaimonic well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1998) which equates with being fully functioning" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 22).

have identified two types of aspiration, intrinsic aspirations[8], which provide direct need satisfaction of basic needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002) and extrinsic aspirations[9], which are related to obtaining external signs of worth (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci (1996) linked needs satisfaction with intrinsic aspirations and argued that intrinsic aspirations contribute to an individual's well-being. They also argued that extrinsic aspirations do not contribute to eudaimonic well-being[10]. The third category focuses upon need satisfaction and well-being as a universal construct. Deci and Ryan (2002) found "need is by definition universal and thus the relation between need satisfaction and well-being must apply in all cultures" (p. 26). This perspective does allow for variability in the values and mores for satisfying the basic needs of different people from different cultures. Therefore, Basic Need Theory examines the relationship between these basic psychological needs and their relationship to goal aspirations and a sense of personal well-being.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory

This mini-theory describes how different social contexts affect intrinsic motivation within people. Intrinsic motivation occurs when people engage in an activity for pleasure, interest, or enjoyment (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Self-determination theory has suggested that social-contextual events (e.g., feedback, communication, rewards) that induce feelings of competence during action can enhance intrinsic motivation for action. Likewise, optimal challenges, effectance-

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[8] Deci and Ryan (2002) cite the following as examples of intrinsic aspirations: "affiliation, personal growth, and community contributions" (p. 24).
[9] Deci and Ryan (2002) cite the following as examples of extrinsic aspiration: "wealth, fame, and image" (p. 24).
[10] Ryff, Keyes, Hughes (2003) described eudaimonic well-being as the extent one engages in life challenges and operationalized with assessment of purpose in life, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, and positive relations with others.

promoting feedback[11], and freedom from demeaning evaluations were all found to facilitate intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Cognitive Evaluation Theory extends the concept of locus of causality found in the work of deCharms (1968). deCharms examined intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and concluded that with intrinsic motivation, people perceive the locus of initiation and regulation to be within themselves and that with extrinsic motivation, people perceive the locus to be external to themselves, usually dictated by others (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Cognitive Evaluative Theory suggests that contextual events, such as the offering of reward, the provision of positive feedback, or the imposition of a deadline are likely to affect intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2002) in a negative way. As a result, intrinsic motivation is enhanced when people are provided positive feedback diminished when the feedback does not appear supportive (Deci & Ryan).

Organismic Integration Theory

This mini-theory is built on the assumption that "people are naturally inclined to integrate their ongoing experiences, assuming they have the necessary nutrients to do so" (Deci & Ryan, 2002, p. 15). Organismic Integration Theory is also built on the assumption that the more individuals tend to internalize an activity or value the more that this behavior becomes a self-determined regulation.

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[11] Effectance –promoting feedback stems for the work of White (1963) and used to describe "a feeling of efficacy".

Causality Orientations Theory

Causality orientations, as a mini-theory, explore the inner causes of a person's behavioral regulation by postulating three types of orientations that regulate human behavior: (a) autonomy orientation, (b) controlled orientation, and (3) impersonal orientation (Deci and Ryan, 2002)

The autonomy orientation involves regulating behavior on the basis of interests and self-endorsed values (e.g., intrinsically motivated or well-integrated extrinsic motivation). The controlled orientation involves orienting towards controls and directives concerning how one should behave; it relates to external and introjected regulations. The impersonal orientation involves focusing on indicators of ineffectance and not behaving intentionally; it relates to amotivation and lack of intentional action (Ryan & Deci, 2002). People are assumed to have each of these orientations in different degrees and each differs in the degree to which it represents self-determined behavior.

In summary, Self-determination theory is concerned with promoting in students an interest in learning and performing at optimal levels. The theory brings together the organismic and dialectic views to understand the humanistic and social development of individuals. A central concept that is a basis for self-determination is internalization, also referred to as the development of self-regulation and autonomy (Deci, et. al, 1991). The theory embraces 4 mini-theories (Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Organismic Integration Theory, Causality Orientations Theory, and Basic Needs Theory) to explain the various phenomena of human motivation and psychological needs. Each theory addresses these psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

Self-Determination Theory and Educational Outcomes

Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) has been linked to educational outcomes such as self-regulated learning (Deci, Vallerand, et al., 1991; Connell, 1991), school engagement (Connell &Wellborn, 1990), quality of learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Grolnick & Golan, 1991; and Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990), achievement motivation (Fortier, Vallerand, & Guay, 1995), student motivation, and relationships with parents, teachers, and significant others (Anderson, Manoogian, & Reznick, 1976), dropout behavior (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992; Vallerand, Fortier, Daoust, & Blais, 1995; Vallerand & Senecal, 1992). These outcomes are the direct result of being intrinsically motivated and internalizing regulatory processes, which research has suggested results in optimal learning and conceptual understanding, as well as enhanced personal growth and adjustment (Deci, Vallerand, et al., 1991).

Intrinsic, Extrinsic Motivation, Self-Regulated Learning, and Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation is defined as an intention to engage students in various types of academic activities based on their interests, perceptions of education, and their goals for the future (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Research studies have shown that students with higher levels of achievement motivation tend toward higher grades and higher rates of school completion than students with lower levels of achievement motivation (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay 1997). Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) has proposed a multidimensional model of achievement motivation by presenting three constructs: (a) intrinsic motivation, (b) extrinsic motivation, and (c) amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Vallerand, et al., 1991; and Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Intrinsically motivated behaviors are engaged in for their own sake –for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from their performance. Deci & Ryan (1985) have found "when intrinsically motivated, people engage in activities that interest them, and they do so freely, with a full sense of volition and without the necessity of material rewards or constraints" (p. 328). Researchers have found that extrinsically motivated behaviors are performed not out of interest but because they are believed to be instrumental to some other consequence. Unlike intrinsic motivated behaviors, extrinsically motivated behaviors are not performed because of an intense interest to engage in a particular activity. Some researchers have contended that extrinsically motivated behaviors are considered a means to an end (Deci & Ryan, 1991).

Type of Motivation	Amotivation	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
Type of Regulation	Non-Regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	identified Regulation	integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation
Quality of Behavior	Nonself-Determined					Self-determined

Figure 9. The Self-Determination Continuum, with Types of Motivation of Regulation
Source: Deci & Ryan (2002), Handbook of Self Determination Research

Although academic behaviors are viewed as intrinsically motivated (Fortier, et al., 1995), some researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Vallerand, et al., 1991; Deci & Ryan, 2002) have studied extrinsic motivation and identified 4 types of extrinsic motivation that may impact academic behavior: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation, shown in Figure 9. According to their research, external regulation refers to behaviors that one engages in because of an external consequence. It is behavior that is regulated through rewards and punishments (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Introjected regulation occurs

when individuals internalize the contingencies that guide their behavior. Because this behavior is regulated by rules or demands, it is not considered self-determined behavior. Introjected regulations usually involve coercion or pressure to perform in a particular manner, which does not allow students to make genuine decisions regarding their behavior. Identified regulation occurs when individuals value their behavior and believe it is important. When a student can identify with threat regulatory process, she or he becomes more willing to engage in a particular behavior. Deci, Vallerand, et al. (1991) have defined integrated regulation as "the most developmentally advance form of extrinsic motivation" (p. 330). They also contended that "integrated regulation bears some relation to intrinsic motivation because both are forms of autonomous self-regulation" (p. 330). In academic domains, Fortier, Vallerand, and Guay (1995) have found,

> Students who go to school out of choice (i.e., identified regulation) or for the pleasure and satisfaction experienced while doing academic activities (i.e., intrinsic motivation) have been defined as people with an autonomous motivational style toward education. Whereas students who do their school activities because of external pressure (i.e., external regulation) and internal controls (i.e., introjections) or even feel that they are not motivated (i.e., a motivational) have been defined as people who exhibit a nonautonomous motivational style in the academic domain. (p. 260)

Similarly, researchers have found that in the classroom context, self-regulation of cognition and behavior is an important dimension of student learning and academic performance (Corno & Mandianch, 1983; Corno & Rohrkemper, 1985, Pintrich and DeGroot, 1990). Deci, Ryan, and Williams (1996) posit "for an action to be considered fully self-regulated, people must

experience a sense of volition-a sense of unpressured willingness to engage in the action" (p. 165). Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) identified three aspects of self-regulated learning in the context of student learning and academic performance. First, students must develop metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and modifying their cognition (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1991). Second, students must manage and control their efforts on classroom academic tasks (Pintrich & DeGroot). Third, the use of a variety of cognitive strategies for students to learn, remember, and understand (i.e., different cognitive strategies such as rehearsal, elaboration, and organizational strategies) have been contributed to cognitive engagement and higher levels of achievement (Miserandino, 1996). However, knowledge of cognitive and metacognitive skills is usually not enough to foster student achievement. Students must also be motivated to use these skills as well as regulate their cognitive efforts (Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983; Pintrich, 1988, 1989; Pintrich, Cross, Kozma, & McKeafchie, 1986).

In their study of self-regulated learning, Deci, Ryan, and Williams (1996) hypothesized that "autonomous self-regulation (i.e., intrinsic motivation and identified or integrated regulation) would be associated with more positive outcomes than would controlled (i.e., external and introjected) regulation" (p. 170). Their findings were consistent with Deci, Vallerand, et al. (1991) and found intrinsic motivation to be more representative of self-determination behavior and that through a process of internalization[12], some forms of extrinsic motivation were representative of self-determined behavior.

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[12] Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (1991) theorized, "that people are inherently motivated (out of the three basic needs) to internalize and integrate within themselves the regulation on uninteresting activities that are useful for effective functioning in the social world and (b) that the extent to which the process of internalization and integration proceeds effectively is a function of the social content (pp. 328-329).

Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) conducted a correlation study to examine the relationship between motivation orientation, self-regulated learning, and classroom academic performance. The subjects included 173 seventh-grade students in a predominantly White, middle class, small southeastern Michigan city. The study group was comprised of 57.8% girls and 42.2% boys. The researchers used the MSLQ (Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire) to record the students' responses. From this study it was concluded that "Self-efficacy and intrinsic value were positively related to cognitive engagement and performance" (p. 33).

School Engagement

Self-determination theory, as an organismic dialectical theory, is grounded in satisfying the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in social contexts. In the social context of schooling, research has linked active engagement to school performance. Miserandino (1996) identified evidence of school engagement as "energized behavior (e.g., initiation, effort, concentrated attention, persistence, and continued attempts in the face of difficulty or failure) and positive emotion (enthusiasm, happiness, curiosity, interest)" (p. 204). Miserandino theorized, "to the extent that the social context supports these needs [autonomy, competence, and relatedness] in an individual, that individual will be engaged within a particular context such as family, school, or work" (p. 204). On the other hand, Miserandino posited "to the extent that the social context undermines these needs, an individual will show disaffection …manifested by enervated behavior (e.g., avoidance, passivity, resistance, riving up, fleeing) and negative emotion (boredom, anger, anxiety, fear)" (p. 204).

Miserandino (1996) conducted an investigation to discover if children will disengage from school if the basic needs of competence and autonomy are not met. Specifically, children

identified as having above-average academic abilities but who were uncertain of that ability (low

perceived competence) and above-average children who were externally motivated (low

perceived autonomy) would show a loss of interest, disengagement, and eventual decrement in

actual performance over the course of the school year. This study included 77 above-average

elementary students, 40 boys and 37 girls. Students were identified as being above average in

ability by selecting those children who scored above the population median on the Stanford

Achievement Test (SAT) of all students (N = 187) who took part in a longitudinal study

conducted by the University of Rochester. Participants were assessed through questionnaires that

measured perceived competence, autonomy, perceived engagement or disaffection in school. The

results indicated that children who reported experiencing a lack of competence in their abilities

or a lack of autonomy reported more negative affect and withdrawal behaviors than did children

who perceived themselves as having ability or who perceived themselves to be autonomous.

Skinner, Connell and Wellborn (1990) found that children who believe that effort is an

important cause and that they are capable of exerting effort, who believe that they have ability

and access to powerful others, and who believe that they are lucky tend to be actively engaged in

classroom activities. On the other hand, children who believe that they are incapable of exerting

effort; believe that they are not smart; believe that they have no access to powerful others or luck

show disengagement in school. To test this theory, Skinner, Wellborn, and Connell (1990)

examined perceived control (autonomy), student engagement, and achievement in school to test a

motivational model of the links between children's perceived control and their academic

achievement. A process model was examined in which teacher involvement and contingency

were hypothesize to influence children's perceived control, which in turn would have an impact

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on their academic performance (i.e., grades and achievement) through its effects on their school engagement. The study included 200 suburban elementary students. The study generated the conclusion that teacher behavior influenced child perception of being control, which can undermine engagement and thus affect school and academic performance.

Walker, Greene, and Mansell (2005) examined the concept of identification with academic, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation and self-efficacy as predictors of cognitive engagement. They predicted that self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation would have a positive correlation with high identification with academics and cognitive engagement. The study participants were 191 college students chosen from two undergraduate classes. The findings were consistent with the predictions that identification with academics, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation were positively correlated with cognitive engagement.

Self-Determination and Relationships of Parents and Teachers on School Performance

Self-determination theory embraces the assumption that school performance is maximized when students have secure and satisfying relationships with significant adults (i.e., parental involvement, teacher support, peer support). Considerable studies have supported the importance of autonomy, supportive environments for students as they interact with parents (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), and teachers (Deci, Spiegel, Ryan, Koestner, &Kauffman; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987).

Autonomous supportive parents value their children's autonomy, encourage their children to solve their own problems, understand their children's perspectives, and minimize the use of pressures. On the other hand, controlling parents value obedience and compliance, solve their children's problems for them, and use parenting skills of their own, rather than from the

perspective of children (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987). Grolnick and Ryan (1987) investigated how parental practices are associated not only with achievement, but also with the development of attitudes, motives, and self-evaluative outcomes that facilitate negotiation of the social and cognitive demands of schools. It was hypothesized that both self-regulation and competence-relevant outcomes could be linked to the parents' style of motivating and supporting the child's school-related behavior. The study included children, parents, and teachers from a White, middle class community. Self-report scales and interviews were the primary sources for data collection. The findings indicated that parental autonomy was positively related to children's self-reports of autonomous self-regulation, teacher-rated competence and adjustment, and school grades and achievement. Maternal involvement was related to achievement, teacher-rated competence, and some aspects of behavioral adjustment, but no significant relations were obtained for father involvement.

Teachers play an important role in developing autonomous students. Research has shown that teachers vary in their interpersonal styles in teaching and motivating students (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman & Ryan, 1981). Self-determination theory distinguishes between teachers who are controlling and teachers who are autonomy supportive. Teachers who target a way of thinking, feeling, or behaving and then offer extrinsic incentives and consequences are considered controlling. Teachers who teach and motivate by identifying and supporting students' interests and by supporting their internalization of the school's values and agenda are autonomy-supportive (Deci, et.al, 1991).

Teacher style has been shown to influence students' school-related motivation, emotion, and performance (Deci & Ryan 2002). Likewise, students who are in classrooms with autonomy-

supportive teachers when compared to classrooms with controlling teachers are more likely to

stay in school (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997), show greater perceived academic competence

(Deci, et al., 1981), enhanced creativity (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984), a preference

for optimal challenge (Shapira, 1976), greater conceptual understanding (Benward & Deci,

1984); more positive emotionality (Skinner, Wellborn & Connell, 1990), higher academic

intrinsic motivation (Deci, Schwartz, & Sheinman, 1981), better academic performance

(Boggiano, Plink, Shields, Seelback & Barrett, 1993), and higher academic achievement (Flink,

Boggiano, Main, Barrett, & Katz, 1992).

Reeves, Bolt, and Cai (1999), in a series of studies investigated autonomous supportive

teachers. In the first study, they examined the motivating styles of teachers. In a second study,

they investigated how an autonomy-supportive teacher, once identified by the Problems in

School questionnaire, teaches and motivates students. A third study was designed to assess

teachers' self-reports of their actual teaching behaviors. From the three studies, the following

conclusions were drawn: Preservice teachers who scored as autonomy supportive on the

Problems in School questionnaire Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman & Ryan, 1991) demonstrated strong

listening skills, allowed students to work in their own ways, and supported the students' intrinsic

motivation and internalization. Teachers who scored as autonomy supportive on the Problems in

School questionnaire (Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman & Ryan, 1991) indicated on their self-reports

that they teach and motivate by supporting students' intrinsic motivation and internalization.

Student Drop-Out

Approximately one third of all students will drop out of high school without receiving a

high school diploma (Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997). Self-determination theory links

motivation as a factor that influences whether a student will graduate or drop out of school (Bean, 1985; Rumberger, 1987; Tidwell, 1988; Tinto, 1975). Vallerand, Fortier, and Guay (1997) theorized that the behaviors and attitudes of teachers, parents, and the school administration exhibited toward students, influenced students' perceptions of competence and autonomy. It is this perception that causes students to be motivated to stay in school or to drop out of school.

To test this theory, Vallerand, Fortier and Guay (1997) conducted a study using 4,537 ninth and tenth grade French-Canadian students as subjects. The researchers used three measuring instruments: (a) The Teacher Autonomy Scale, (b) The Perceived Competence Scale, and (c) The Academic Motivation Scale. The results showed that students who dropped out of school had lower levels of intrinsic motivation, perceived their parents, teachers; school administrators as being less supportive of autonomy, and perceived themselves as being less competent and autonomous at school activities.

In sum, Self-determination theory, in the realm of education, has been shown to impact student performance. Intrinsic motivation, behaviors that are engaged in for pleasure or satisfaction, is linked to positive educational outcomes; whereas, extrinsic motivation, behaviors that are initiated because they are believed to instrumental to some separable consequence, is assumed to be antagonistic to intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Gender and Race in Context of School Performance

Much attention has been devoted to understanding the effects gender and race have upon student academic and social performance in school. In terms of gender, many researchers have viewed it from a social constructive perspective, in which masculine qualities are culturally

attributed and defined (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Connell, 1995; Ferguson, 2000; Thomas, 1990). In many instances, boys are more apt to have poor school performance. Researchers have identified key factors that impact teaching and learning for boys and have also documented how these factors evolve as boys grow and develop (Hopson, 1993; Barr & Parrett, 2003). In general, boys tend to have lower standardized scores in language arts (NAEP, 2005), have higher reported instances of discipline related issues in elementary and high schools (Digest of Education Statistics, 2004), and are more likely to be identified for special education (Hosp & Reschly, 2004; Barr & Parrett, 2003). In a study of learning styles for boys and girls, Barr and Parrett (2003), argued the following about boys:

> Schools in general are not user-friendly to boys. Boys perform best academically when they can move around the classroom….Young boys love to talk and have classroom arguments or discussions. Unfortunately, these traits are often discouraged in classrooms. (p. 58)

Similarly, Barr and Parrett (2003) have found boys tend to have higher deductive reasoning than inductive reasoning skills, to be more abstract and like philosophical and moral debates, become easily bored, demand more learning space, and are more adept in using diagrams and graphs. Hernandez (2004) argued "there is a tendency to treat boys as a homogenous group, [but] all boys are not alike" (p. 19).

When race is included as a variable, African Americans males are further impacted for school failure, as schools are places where students learn the meaning of race (Noguera, 2003). Vast research studies have addressed what some scholars have identified as discriminatory practices that target African American males enrolled in our nation's public school systems.

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Prominent among the theorists and investigators of the institutional practices that contribute to problems of African American males is Kunjufu (1985, 1986, 1990). Kunjufu (1985) used the terms "conspiracy and genocide" to suggest "a deliberate and systematic destruction" of African American males (p. 1). Although he used historical examples where there appeared to be a deliberate and systematic process to eliminate African American males, he also suggested that public schools were designed to destroy African American males. Kunjufu (1985) cited examples of high discipline rates, placement in special education classes, low completion rates, tracking, and low teacher expectations as institutional practices contributing to poor school performance of African American males.

Noguera (2003) linked gender identification to poor performance of African Americans males. Many from this group [African American males] have been socialized by peers, family and society to believe that school related activities as feminine and irrelevant to their masculine sense of self (Noguera, 2003).

Consistent with this theory, Davis (2003) argued "one reason commonly mentioned for the disengagement, alienation, and poor academic performance of Black males is that they perceive most educational activities as feminine and irrelevant to their masculine identity and development" (p. 519). For these reasons, many Black males do not engage in activities that are outside of their sense of comfort, as they do not want to appear "weak", "effeminate", or "selling out" (Noguera, 2003).

This belief has been termed "oppositional behavior" in which Black students, particularly males, hold themselves back for fear of being ostracized by their peers (Ogbu, 1987, Fordham, 1996). As a part of this oppositional behavior, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) have contended that

many African Americans, particularly males, do not achieve at their levels of potential because they equate high achievement as "acting White". Because of the history of racial discrimination within this county, many African Americans males "began to doubt their own ability, began to define academic success as white people's prerogative and began to discourage their peers, perhaps unconsciously, from emulating white people in academic striving, i.e., from 'acting White" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Our nation's schools have placed African American males in special education classes at a disproportionate rate. Harry and Anderson (1994) have argued that "African American males have been disproportionately represented in special education since its inception" (p. 603). Noguera (2003) addressed this problem when he wrote, "the situation in special education mirrors a larger trend in the education for African Americans generally and males in particular" (p. 56). Webb-Johnson (2002) argued that U.S. schools, in general, are not meeting the educational needs of all students, especially students with perceived discipline problems. She posited, "many African American males are believed to be too active, and frequently referred for BED and attention deficit with hyperactivity (ADD/ADHD[13]) services, when in fact they may be demonstrating a dimension of African American culture called "verve"[14]. Even as young children, African American males are more likely to be labeled as having serious behavior problems and less intelligent (Hilliard, 1991).

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[13] The National Institute for Mental Health(2006) defines ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) as a condition that makes it hard for children to control their behavior and/or pay attention; ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADD as an outdated term for the disorder.

[14] Webb-Johnson (2002) defined "'verve" as the propensity toward high levels of activity (Boykin, 1983). Children who are vervistic are socialized to be active and dynamic learners " (Boykin & Bailey (2001);Webb-Johnson, 2002), (p. 634)

For these reasons, African American males have faced inequities in their school experiences, and "[They] are seen as both victims and participants in their own educational demise" (Davis & Jordan, 1994, p. 571).

Education and African American Males in the U.S.

The Journal of Negro Education from 1932 through 2007 was chronicled as the primary source for conducting this literature review of education and the African American male in this country.

1932–1939. Two studies associated with schooling and African American males were published during this particular period. One study examined mental ability and personality differences as determinants of educational attainment and factors leading to juvenile delinquency among African American males, while the other study examined the educational backgrounds of transient African American males.

Daniels (1932) was concerned with the increase in maladjusted behaviors among boys and the impact that these behaviors had upon the schooling of these boys. He viewed juvenile delinquency as a social concept having both psychological and educational implications. Daniel (1932) argued,

> The psychological implication is seen in the belief that the   factors that contribute to delinquency reflect themselves in personality traits….The educational implication is seen in the belief that the discovery of maladjusted tendencies incipient in the behavior-problem boy in the schools should readily call forth directive and adjustive procedures designed to save him before he commits an offense which brings him into the court as a delinquent. (p. 381)

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The studies used to test his theory did not include African American boys as subjects.

Daniel (1932) conducted a study to examine the differences in character and personality traits among African American males, and to "ascertain the differences in character and personality traits between groups of delinquent, behavior-problem, and non-problem Negro boys" (p. 382). His study revealed that the greatest difference between delinquent and non-delinquent was found "in the things they do and the way they feel" (Daniels, 1932, p. 386). Daniel found delinquent boys to have tendencies toward unsociable traits, conflicts relating to home, abnormal anger, morbid depression, stealing urges, high superiority feeling, and low trustworthiness. On the contrary, non-delinquent boys showed high tendencies to indecision, self-control, a lack of morbidity, high personal adjustment in school and home, and trustworthiness.

Outland (1937) conducted a study to examine the educational attainment of 317 transient boys registered at a Federal Transient Service[15]. The boys came from six states, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. To measure the educational attainment of this group, a comparative group of White boys and boys from a foreign country was created. From his study, Outland concluded the following: (a) African American males have a lower average of formal schooling than Whites boys and foreign boys, (b) African American parents had a lower education attainment than White boys and foreign boys' parents, and (c) African American boys had higher degrees of mental retardation than White boys and foreign boys.

1940-1949. Watts (1941), posited that causes for juvenile delinquency was "low intelligence, emotional instability, psychopathic personality, and poor home and other

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[15] Federal Transient System was a federally funded facility to house boys who were transient (run-aways)

environment conditions" (p. 190). He applied his theory in a study of two groups of African American boys. One group included delinquent African American boys from a home established for delinquent boys, and the other group included non-delinquent African American boys from the District of Columbia Public Schools. Watts examined the differences in competency to concrete situations on standardized tests, differences in emotional stability and tendencies toward problem behavior on personality tests, differences in social maturity and relationships among the various among the various tests, and differences in interest, habits, and attitudes. Watts (1941) concluded there were no significant differences between the two groups in their mental abilities emotional stability and social maturity. However, there was a difference in the interests, habits, and attitudes of the two groups. In addition, the demographic surveys indicated that delinquent boys experienced less parental or adult control than non-delinquent.

1950–1959. There were no studies regarding education and the African American male included in the *Journal of Negro Education* during this period.

1960–1969. Two studies focused upon education, self-concept[16], and mental retardation among African American males. Knight (1969) conducted a study to examine if differences between 43 White and 40 African American mentally retarded students enrolled in special education classes. The subjects were asked to state things that they liked about themselves and things they did not like about themselves. The results indicated that no significant difference existed between the self-concepts of the groups.

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[16] Knight (1969) defined self-concept "as a set if of predispositions to behave according to anticipations of acceptance or rejection by self or other" (p. 143).

During this period, IQ tests were considered the main source for identification and placement of students in special classes for mental retardation. Mann (1969) questioned this practice and wrote,

> While many accept the fact that our diagnostic instruments today are far from being both adequate and culture free, some educators still continue to treat intelligence test scores as though they were infallible. Emphasis on intellectual factors especially where the Negro child is concerned has resulted in many cases in a parenthetical interest in personality factors. The Negro educable mentally retarded child is seen as problem in intellect, and sight is lost of the fact that he is also a product of a dynamic environment that involves affect interaction. (p. 135)

Mann (1969) also concluded,

Special education placement in most systems is based on a standardized individual test I.Q. score of 70-75 or below. Since it is widely accepted that the Negro in our society is somewhat penalized by I.Q. tests, it not unreasonable to assume that a "behavior program" becomes an important factor when special placement is being considered for many of these Negro children. (p. 140)

1970–1979. The 1970s reflected a shift in the focus of the literature on the educational attainment for African American males. Four studies on education and African American males were published in *The Journal of Negro Education* during this era, and the focus included environmental, economic, home environment, self-concept among African American males, and

"Black Awareness" and cultural acceptance as factors influencing the schooling of African American males.

Schab (1971) compared the attitudinal differences between Black and White boys concerning home, school, religion, and morality. His study revealed that Black boys reported that their parents were strict with them twice as often as White boys. On the other hand, White boys had to keep let their parents know where they were more often than Black boys. One noticeable difference between the White and Black high school boys was their attitudes about school. Black boys indicated that good grades were important to them while White students wanted good grades and popularity, and more Black boys indicated that they wanted to make the honor roll than White boys. The study also revealed that White boys were more faithful in church attendance than Black boys, but Black boys had a higher indication that religion was important to them. From the data collected in this study, Schab (1971) concluded,

> Negro boys claimed a greater sensitivity to the home situation. They also believed school
> was more important to them than did the white boys. The same could be said in the area
> of religious activity. If this is true, home, church, and school should play a lot in the
> improvement of the Negroes…. (p. 110)

Similarly, Kapel (1970) examined environmental parameters (i.e., number of African Americans in school, types of community, and geographical location) and post high school employment of African American males. Kapel (1970) posited that student achievement is strongly related to the educational backgrounds and aspiration of the other students in the school. Specifically, he argued, "Negroes in schools with a higher proportion of Whites have a greater

sense of control over their environment and future than those who attend schools with smaller proportions of Whites (p. 333).

It was during the 1970s that the emergence of the Black Awareness was reflected in the literature. The civil rights movement and the development of a Black cultural ideology generated a sense of cohesion and positive attitudes among Black Americans. Sciara (1972) wrote, "the slogan, 'Black is Beautiful', with the accompanying focus of Afro-American cultural symbols such as distinctive hair styles has attempted to generate more positive self-identification and an acceptance of blackness" (p. 151). To understand this phenomenon, Sciara (1972) conducted a study to determine the acceptance of Black Awareness existed among African American males by administering an instrument called the Projective Picture Inventory (P.P.I.). The instrument included pictures of Black males who were "judged to be light, medium, or dark" (Sciara, 1970, p. 152). A sample of 70 fourth grade boys participated in this study and the participants responded to the survey created by the researcher. Sciara (1972) concluded,

> It is evident that a greater effort needs to be made or help Negro children in general, and boys in particular, identify more positively with blackness, if the effects of years of white racism are to be overcome….A school curriculum designed towards these ends might include a continued exposure of successful male Negro identity models, contributions of Negroes to the development of American (historical, cultural, etc.), the use of multi-media materials which aid in black identify, and a consistent approach by teachers which promotes self acceptance among students. (p. 154)

In addition to the home, school, and church having a positive influence on the school performance of African American males, self-concept emerged as a theme in two of the studied

during this era. Researchers reported that there was a direct relationship between self-concept and academic achievement (i.e., Brookover, 1965). Dales and Keller (1972) conducted a study that was designed to show the developmental growth of self-concept using African American and White adolescent males. Using a sample of 1,213 subjects over a three-year period, Dales and Keller (1972) found, "Among culturally deprived youth, Blacks surpassed Whites in self-concept scores from grade ninth through grade twelve. Two of these years revealed that the scores of Black youth were significantly higher than the scores of the White adolescents" (p. 34).

1980–1989. During the 1980s, *The Journal of Negro Education* reported two studies related to African American males. Self-Concept and its impact upon student performance continued to be a focus of researchers. For example, Alston and Williams (1982) conducted a study to investigate whether a relationship existed between father absence from the home and self-concept of school performance of Black adolescent males. They also investigated the relationship of the students' self-concept, their socioeconomic status, and grade point average. The study included 35 Black adolescent males of whom 21 had fathers present in the home and 14 whose fathers were absent from the home. Alston and Williams (1982) concluded,

> The finding that father absence is significantly related to the self-concept of Black
> adolescent boys is consistent with previous research on father absence and self-concept.
> …. It does seem clear that a father-son relationship facilitates the adoption of an adequate
> self-concept by the boys who are able to model after their fathers and are, in addition,
> given training by them. The boys whose fathers are at home have a significantly higher
> and more positive self-concept than those boys who came from homes in which the father
> was not present…High GPA and low GPA as compared to levels of self-concept were

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related to the father present group…. There was no significant differences between levels of self-concept as compared to SES may be attributed to a low economic status, which nearly all respondents shared. (p. 137)

Trotter (1981) investigated the relationships between attitudes and peer pressure of academically able and low-performing Black male adolescents. His study revealed "efforts to find research literature comparing the peer perceptions of high achieving and low achieving academically able Black male adolescents were fruitless" (p. 54). However, Trotter (1981) theorized that peers can influence the attitudes, ambitions, and academic achievement of adolescents. To test his theory, he used a sample of 80 subjects, 40 high achievers and 40 low achievers. Trotter concluded that lower-performing students had a higher perception of negative attitudes about school than that of higher-performing students, lower-performing students had a more negative perception of their peers' attitudes toward school than those of higher-performing students, and higher-performing students viewed their peers' attitudes toward school as much more negative than their own. Perhaps the most significant finding of this study indicated that higher-performing African American males perceived themselves to be in a peer environment which valued academics less than they do.

1990–1999. The 1990s was reflective of a vast increase in the literature related to African American males found in *The Journal of Negro Education*. During this era, there were eleven studies related to African American males, six of these studies were found in a 1994 special publication entitled *Focus Articles: Black Male and Education*. The literature was replete with studies that documented: (a) effective programs and organizations for African American males (i.e., basketball, mentoring programs, computer-related activities); (b) cognitive and non-

cognitive factors fostering student achievement of African American males; (c) motivation and African American males; (4) effective and responsive teaching of African American males; (d) disproportionate placement of African American Males into special education classes; (e) and school structure and its impact upon African American males.

The common trend reflected in the literature of the 1990s documented the plight of the African American male as being in a crisis mode which has been referenced as "endangered species" (Gibbs, 1988) , "hopeless and impossible to salvage (Garibaldi, 1992), "an epidemic of failure" (Holland, 1998; Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard, 1994), and "institutional decimation" (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Gordon, Gordon, and Nembhard (1994) found, "a significant body of literature addresses what some scholars have identified as discriminatory practices within our nation's schools that specifically target young Black males and negatively affect their academic performance" (p. 520). An example would be the disproportionate representation of African American males in special education classes. Harry and Anderson (1994) posited,

> Special education programs continue to be used frequently as alternatives to regular education for African American males….The disproportionate placement in special education of African American males is increasingly evident in racially mixed school districts. It is also becoming a central aspect of, rather than a small corollary to, the general education system in many large urban school districts that serve predominantly non-White populations. (p. 615)

Polite (1994), in a study of African American males, examined the educational attainment of African American males using Chaos Theory [17] as a framework and found, "urban educationalists have clearly noted that schools and school systems that serve large percentage of African American males are often beleaguered by widespread chaos and academic underachievement" (p. 589). Garibaldi (1992) contends "even if one doubts that a "crisis" truly exists or questions whether African American males may one day become an "endangered species", few systematic solutions have been offered to address realistically the problems that at least one-third of young Black men experience" (p. 4). Similarly, Davis and Jordon (1994) addressed this issue when they wrote,

> Many believe that schools are not only failing to meet the particular social and developmental needs of African American Males but are academically abusing them (Holland, 1998; Polite, 1994). Out of the alarming discourse surrounding this issue has emerged an urgency to address the problems of black males' schooling experiences. Unfortunately, much of this discussion is neither data-centered nor theoretically driven. (p. 271)

The research of the 1990s offered intervention strategies that foster improved societal conditions and academic success among African American males. Rosa, (1994) observed differences in the cognitive styles and reading comprehensive levels of elementary African American male students and found differences in reading comprehension for low and high field-independent students. Okwumabua (1999) theorized that many African American males engage

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[17] Chaos Theory stems from the work of Gleick, 1987), who "failed to predict with accuracy the position and momentum of particles or the dramatic structural changes that occurred as molecular matter evolved from minuscule to massive proportions (Polite, 1994, p. 588).

in dangerous behavior (i.e. drug abuse, fighting, and sexual activities), particularly during adolescent years, when having good decision-making skills is crucial. He tested his theory in a study of 217 African American males in the third through the sixth grade in a west Tennessee middle school. Okwumabua (1999) tested the students' levels of understanding of the decision-making process. He concluded that "the boys in this study were generally not able to apply the four-step decision-making process to health and social decision situations" (p. 162).

Washington (1996) also was concerned with the disproportionate involvement of African American males in violent activities as either victims or perpetrators. He posited, "young Black males who perceive that they live in a hostile environment view violence as necessary for their survival (p. 405). Washington (1996) believed, "what is crucial is that the young Black men develop viable strategies that resolve conflict without violence" (p. 406).

Holland (1998) also linked school failures of African American males with the involvement of at-risk situations such as crime and violence. He theorized that schools in general have failed to provide African American males with the educational tools needed for survival in a technologically oriented world. He indicated, "key among those tools are the abilities to read, to write, and to perform computer operations at ever more rigorous levels of proficiency" (p. 315). The context of early computer learning for African American males was also investigated in a study by Carver (1994), who found "while a lack of resources and opportunities will prohibit many African Americans from large-scale involvement in the Information Age, young African American males will be most significantly affected (p. 532). In an era that has been defined as the Information Age, Carver (1994) concluded that schools should expand their expenditures and curriculum to improve the computer competence of African American males.

Another factor that impacts the school performance of African American males involves their participating in sports, particularly basketball programs. Mahiri (1991) has found, "for Black males in American, basketball has almost a mystical or religious quality" (p. 307). Mahiri (1991) also found, "the discourse of basketball can be viewed as including specific language terms, cognitive images, and other interactional speech modes" (p. 309). Mahiri (1991) also found "it [basketball] also includes abstract concepts and feelings that are sometimes not perceived consciously as the sense of belonging and accomplishment and of being affirmed" (p. 309). Thus, Mahiri (1991) posited that basketball had a high motivational value for African American males, and it inspired these boys to engage in a number of collateral activities, "some of which have strong implications or consequences for literacy" (p. 312).

2000–2006. Between 2000 and 2006, three studies concerned with the education of African American males were included in *The Journal of Negro Education.* Bush (2004) examined the roles that Black women play in helping their sons' development of manhood and masculinity. Bush (2006) found this study to be unique in that "50% of all Black households with children under the age of 18 are headed by Black women" (p. 381). Lawson argued,

> The trajectory of the body of work concerning Black mothers and sons …(a) suggests that Black mothers play a significant role in the healthy development of manhood and masculinity, (b) it demonstrates how Black mothers participate in healthy development of manhood and masculinity, and (c) it challenges our notions about mothers and fathers, males and females, and masculinity and femininity by blurring traditional lines of separation. (p. 388)

Patterson (2005), concerned with disproportionate number of African American males served in special education classrooms, examined interventions for increasing positive outcomes for African American males placed in special education classes. Specifically, she conducted a study of the effects that guided notes had upon the academic performance of African American boys identified as having emotional/behavioral disorders and learning disabilities. Patterson (2005) concluded that students showed improvement in their academic performances when guided notes was used as an intervention strategy.

In a similar study, Corey and Bower (2005) studied effective interventions for improving the math performance of African American males. They examined "if learning mathematics at a distance, within a Web-supported environment, provided a more effective learning atmosphere than the traditional classroom for an African American male student" (p. 322). Corey and Bower (2005) argued that the European culture may present a challenge for African American males who "may not possess the ability to conform to what is considered the 'appropriate behavior' for succeeding with the mathematics classroom" (p. 322-232). From this study, Corey and Bower (2005) concluded that "in certain cases, the Internet and other distance-education technology can provide students with a less culturally foreign environment" (p. 330).

In sum, *The Journal of Negro Education* served as the primary source for reviewing more than 25 historical studies of education and African American males. The review included classic literature from the 1930s through contemporary literature of the early 2000s. The literature reviewed the failures and triumphs of African American males and their plight of educational opportunities. The literature documents this historical plight of unequal access to formal education, beliefs that African American males lack mental abilities and intelligences needed for

academic success, African American males are social deviants who engage in delinquent behaviors and activities, African American males have higher rates of mental retardation, the influences of home, school, and family upon academic success for African American males, particularly the influence of fathers, culture, Black Awareness as contributors to self concept of African American males, socialization factors and their effect on African American males, institutional and systematic practices that are geared toward African American males, sports, particularly basketball motivates many African American males to do well in school, and the disproportionate number of African American males placed in special education. A content analysis of the literature related to the schooling of African American males included in Journal of Education since the 1930s can be found in Appendix A.

<center>*School Failure among African American Males*</center>

African American males have encountered a multitude of challenges in obtaining a quality education. Most scholarly literature concerned with the education and African American males has attempted to identify specific factors that challenge the school of this group. Kunjufu (1985) attributed the following factors contribute to failure in school among African American males.

Decline in Parental Involvement

One factor that is prominent in the literature relating to school failure of African American males is the link between parental involvement and school performance. When there is active parental involvement, African American males have positive experiences in school and when there is a lack of parental involvement, African American males have negative school experiences. Kunjufu (1985) theorized that parental involvement decreases as their children get

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older and argued, "We need parents that will remain involved in their son's growth and development from infancy through age 18 and beyond" (p. 19). Thus, Kunjufu argued that African American males are in dire need of continuous parental involvement as they grow and develop. Garibaldi documented that one-fourth of the parents of struggling African American males whom she surveyed indicated that they [parents] had never attended conferences to discuss their children's progress. Garibaldi recommended, "parents of these young men [African American males] must motivate, encourage, and reinforce their sons so that they will use their talents and ability to perform successfully in the classroom" (p. 8).

Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) documented that some parents tend to become discouraged when their sons do not live up to their expectations; and often these parents do need support in rewarding, punishing, motivating their sons. Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif found parental involvement to be critical to the academic success of young Black males when they documented, "the critical ingredients appear to be active parental involvement in the child's life – loving, encouraging, challenging, and supporting the child as the number-one priority…" (p. 202). Davis (2003) argued that as parental involvement declines, African American males become more involved with peer groups. Thus, a lack in parental involvement impact results in poor school performance among African American males.

Increase in peer pressure

Another factor that influences the school performance of African American males is the increase in peer pressure. According to Kunjufu (1985), children are more influenced by peers than by parents, teachers, or ministers, and that peer pressure does not necessary have to be perceived as negative. For African American males, Kunjufu (1985; 1986; Kirk, 1995) argued,

"peer pressure has reached such negative proportions that when our children are doing a good job in school, many of them are teased, especially when a boy is doing well" (p. 20). Noguera (2003) theorized, "peer groups play a powerful role in shaping identity because the desire to be accepted by one's peers and 'fit in' with one's peers often becomes a paramount concern for most adolescents" (p. 62-63). In fact, research has shown that when African American males experienced negative attitudes and expectations, they respond in negative ways "and turn to their peers for approval in nonacademic ways" (Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998, p. 12). Other researchers have also concluded that when African American males experienced school failure, they sought out peer groups for self-esteem and sense of belonging (Hare & Castenell, 1985; Davis, 2003).

Harris and Duhon (1999) have documented that many African American males purposely fail in school so that they will not be subjected to ridicule by their peers when they wrote,

> Should the African-American male student achieve honor roll status, their peers tease them and assign them the label of "sissy". To avoid this affront of their masculine integrity, many black males students will deliberately fail to do the required assignments, and thus, retain their masculine status. (p. 13).

Many African American males succumb to negative influences of their peers and experience poor school performance.

Decline in Parental Nurturance

The literature is replete with examples where African American males lack the parental discipline as they grow and develop. Kunjufu (1985) associated nurturance with being able to discipline children effectively, particularly as the children become older. As a result, teachers

and parents who are insecure in their roles may be intimidated by males as they grow older. Kunjufu (1985) posited, "This situation requires a parent or teacher who is very confident and assertive. This gives very clear messages about who is in control in the classroom as well as in the home" (p. 22). Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) expressed similar findings and found that parents setting strong limits and discipline played a significant role in the development of African American boys. Many African American males are reared by adults other than their mothers for a variety of reasons. Prominent among these reasons is the high teenage pregnancy rate among teenage African American females. Harris and Duhon (1999) found,

Because of the plethora of teenage pregnancies, many of the African American males students are under supervision of some adult relative other than their mother….Often the relative is elderly and unable to control the child" (p. 11). In addition, many African American males grow up in homes where fathers or male figures are absent. As a result, many grow up without male role models to guide them as they grow and develop. This lack of positive male role models in the lives of African American males deprives them of critical levels of support needed for their success in school (Roderick, 2005).

Decline in teacher expectations

Kunjufu (1985), like other researchers (i.e., Garibaldi , 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ferguson, 2003), has found teacher expectation as a predictor of academic performance for African American males and has argued that teachers, particularly White female teachers, who represent the largest percentage of the elementary and secondary public school teachers in this country (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2004), generally have low expectations for African Americans, particularly African American males. Kunjufu (1986) noted, "For White women it

becomes very complex because their Black students may be the first Black males with whom they have ever had direct contact" (p. 12). Kunjufu (1986) believed that many of teachers of African American students, particularly males, associate "family demographics, school per pupil expenditures, and innate ability" (p. 68) as factors that contribute to poor performance of these students. However, Kunjufu (1985) argued,

> Teacher expectations are the most important factor in academic achievement…I believe that what teachers see in the child is what they produce out of the child. If teachers see in Black boys' future engineers, computer programmers and doctors, if they see Benjamin Carson and Walter Massey, then they will produce those kinds of practitioners and scholars. (p. 23)

Fergurson (2000) had similar beliefs when he found, "stereotypes of black intellectual inferiority are reinforced by past and present disparities in performance, and this probably causes teacher to underestimate the potential of black children…" (p. 312).

Some researchers have linked "understanding culture" to the school performance of African American males (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Irvine, 1990; Webb-Johnson, 2002). Webb-Johnson contended that African American children are often stigmatized by teachers who do not understand the cultural dynamics of African American learners, particularly African American males. She argued, "teachers often do not know to respond to the behavioral tenets that are different from the socialized norm of public school settings" (p. 654). Kunjunfu (1985, 1986) postulates that many African American male students who have behavioral problems are referred to special education classes.

Lack of Understanding of Learning Styles

Kunjufu (1985) also argued that teachers, in general are not responsive to the unique learning styles of African American males. He argued, studies indicate that low-achieving Black boys are given very few clues and little feedback when answering questions incorrectly….I believe that low-achieving African American boys can also answer questions correctly with this kind of prodding, nurturance and attention" (p. 23). He also advocates classroom comprised of only African American males. Kunjufu (1985) stated, "if we cannot do a better job of developing African American boys to their fullest potential, then I recommend an extreme solution – the design of a Black male classroom" (p. 26).

Harris and Duhon (1999) found, "African-American male students rely upon visual stimuli much more than auditory…the lecture method of teaching will not motivate these male students…They are more tactile and kinesthetic" (p. 17). Environmentally, African American males tend to have higher levels of academic productivity in orderly classrooms. Harris and Duhon (1999) posited "For optimum learning, the Black male student requires a classroom devoid of noise, therefore the teacher should maintain strict discipline to maintain a quiet atmosphere" (p. 17).

Lack of Male Teachers

Kunjufu (1985) advocated for an increasing the number of African American male teachers in schools, particularly at the elementary levels. He argued, "in order to be a Black man you need to see Black men" (p. 24). Kunjufu (1990) posited, "I strongly believe that only when we understand what is taking place in the lives of African American boys at the age of 9 will we then rectify it [Fourth Grade Failure Syndrome] (p. 29). Cooper and Jordan (2005) disagreed that

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having more black male teachers would improve the school performance of Black males when they wrote,

> …merely increasing the number of Black male teachers alone is not the answer. Instead, we suggest that shared cultural knowledge generated by coming from the same racial and gender group can provide a value-added dimension to teaching and learning, holding constant a teacher's ability to teach, his or her educational credentials, and level of experience. (p. 11)

Thus, the literature supports Kunjufu's (1985) assertions that school failure among African American males results when (a) there is lack of parental on-going parental involvement, (b) African American males succumb to negative peer pressure, (c) there is a lack of consistent parental nurturance and guidance, (d) teachers have low expectations about the academic abilities of African American males, (e) teachers lack knowledge and understanding about the uniqueness in the learning needs and learning styles of African American males, and (f) there is a lack of African American male teachers and role models in the lives of African American males.

The Learning Culture Associated With Successful African American Males

Hrabowski, Maton and Greif (1998), utilizing the perspective of successful African American males, attributed the following as qualities of successful African American males: (a) parental academic involvement and contributions, (b) effective parenting skills, (c) racial awareness and identity, (e) Black male identity and community resources, and (e) involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Parental Academic Involvement

The African American males interviewed in a study by Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) focused upon active involvement of their parents in their academic affairs. This parental involvement included a focus upon reading at an early age, emphasizing the importance of doing well in school, assisting with homework and monitoring time spent on completing homework, participating and being involved with school activities, encouraging their sons to participate in extra-curricular activities, and making arrangements for optimal environments for their sons.

For example, to get the students focused upon the developing effective reading skills, parents of successful African American males were involved in activities where reading was a main focus. Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) found "nearly 90 percent of the students indicated that their mothers read to them…with more than half reporting that their fathers did so. More generally, three quarters of the sons indicated that reading was more important than watching TV…." (p. 139). Successful males also reported that their parents monitored their completion of homework. Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) documented, "about three quarter of the parents, according to the sons, monitored to some extent the amount of time they spent studying in elementary and middle school, with almost half of the parents still doing so in high school" (p. 140). Not only were the parents of successful African American males involved with the learning activities at home, but they were also actively involved in activities at school. This involvement included, "…contact with the classroom teacher…involvement in the PTA and volunteer work" (p. 140-141). Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) found, from the sons' perspective, one of the most important factors of parental involvement in their success was encouragement and support for involvement in extracurricular activities. Finally, sons indicated

that their parents were determined to ensure that they were placed in schools that promoted a strong academic environment.

Effective Parenting Skills

The successful African American males included in Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif's (1998) study cited effective parenting skills rendered by their parents also as a contributor to their success. These parenting skills included providing love and nurturance, setting disciplinary limits, having high expectations for their sons, and fostering open, consistent, and strong communication.

Many of the successful African American males cited examples of how their parents, particularly their mothers, were loving, nurturing, and understanding. Even though their parents were loving, nurturing, and understanding, they set clear limits regarding appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) found, "parents consistently employed limit setting to guide their sons' behavior and to instill in them a sense of right and wrong" (p. 142). Many successful African American males have established strong and open lines of communication with their parents. Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) found, "Many [parents] talked with them [sons] about such difficult issues as sex, drugs, and crime" (p. 142)

Racial Awareness and Identity

Successful African American males demonstrate a strong sense of being aware of their racial identity. As a part of this awareness, parents of successful African American males taught their sons how to deal with racial barriers and discrimination, and parents taught their sons how to cope with negative stereotypes about being an African American male. For examples, Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) wrote,

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Some sons reported that their parents emphasized the importance of 'knowing your

roots.' They exposed their sons to African American culture and conveyed to them the

idea that being Black is something to be proud of. (p. 145)

Black Male Identity

Successful African American males have positive Black role models, usually their fathers

who instilled values about being a successful Black male. Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif, (1998),

found "one father taught his son the importance of being aggressive. Another told his son not to

back down from a challenge. Still another father taught his son about responsibility" (p. 145).

Most importantly, "some of the sons credited their fathers with instilling in them the ambition

and the desire to succeed" (p. 145).

Community Resources

Many successful African American males are surrounded by positive influences in their

lives such as extended family members, teachers/coaches, members of their churches, and their

friends as a contributor of their success. Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) found, "in terms of

extended family, nearly half of the sons visited their relatives at least once or twice a month.

Grandmothers and aunts were identified as being especially influential in the sons' upbringing

and in their academic focus" (p. 146). Hrabowski, Maton, and Greif (1998) also found, "for most

sons, church attendance was a regular, shared family activity [and a]...critical structure and

….source of support in their lives" (p. 146).

Parents and teachers are very instrumental in the development of successful African

American males. Lester (2004) examined the perceptions of nine inner city, low income, 12th

grade African American males and found higher academic performance when (a) their parents

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provided positive, consistent, interactive feedback about academic and school activities; (b)

school personnel demonstrated an ability to relate to cultural, racial and community

backgrounds, and demonstrated a capacity to care and support the personal and academic needs

of Black males, and (c) there were evidence of positive influences from peers. Leak (2003) found

in his study of resiliency in African American males found that many of the study participants

had parents and caring adults as a part of their support system. In homes where there is an

absence of fathers or other significant males, African American males reached out to other

family members for support. Roderick (2005) found that many African American males

developed strong relationships and ties with Grandparents and uncles for support and

encouragement.

Researchers (i.e., Douglas, 1995; Daily, 2001; Harris and Duhon, 1999) examining

successful African Americans found there are specific factors that impact the schooling of this

group. For example, Harris and Duhon (1999) posited, "The classroom teacher is the second

most influential figure to the African American male student, second on to his mother" (p. 23).

Harris and Duhon found,

> The teacher's personal beliefs have a profound effect upon the student performance of
>
> male students. The teacher who believes that she has the ability to influence student
>
> achievement regardless of current or previous student performance will inspire her black
>
> male students to achieve the impossible. The classroom teacher who…believes that her
>
> black male students are capable of learning…will demand the completion of educational
>
> tasks which foster higher-order thinking skills. (p. 25-26)

Therefore, teachers who believe in the ability of African American males provide motivate this group to perform at higher levels in school.

Outside of the family, many African American males experience strong relationships with their pastors or mentors who represented various organizations. Carson (2004) investigated the perceptions held by successful African American males raised in homes where fathers were absent. These participants attributed their success to faith in God, their mothers, grandmothers, other extended family, including male mentors.

Involvement in Academic and Extracurricular Activities

The literature associated with successful African American males in school is replete with examples of how involvement in extra curricular activities, particularly sports, impacts the engagement and performance of this group. Bass (1999) conducted a study designed to examine and compare African American males who participated in extracurricular activities to those who did not participate in terms of what effect participation will have on attendance rates, number of office referrals, level of achievement on the state assessment, and grade point average. The sample included twelve African American ninth grade students who were randomly chosen from each of the 4 high schools in an urban school district. Six students from each school were involved in extracurricular activities and six were not involved in extracurricular activities. Within the context of this study, involvement in extracurricular activities had a positive effect on academic and behavioral performance of African American males. Extracurricular activities were found to be an arena for the development of leadership skill and self-confidence which have been shown to have a positive impact on academic performance. In addition, participation

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in extracurricular activities can give students a sense of belonging at school which would have direct impact on school attendance and school behavior.

In sum, African American males have consistently experienced difficulties in their school performance. There is theoretical literature which may serve as a basis of investigating this school difficulty. The literature has identified a range of factors linked to successful school performance. Successful African American males are highly motivated and self-efficacious when they have strong relationships with in school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, administrators). There is a strong need for perceived competence among this group. African American males who participate in out of school activities (e.g., sports, clubs, specialized programs) were shown to experience successful school performance and engagement for this group.

Many successful African American males benefit from positive black role models and/or mentors. Successful African American males were shown to be affiliated with religious activities. Family support, particularly mothers and male role models, contributed to personal motivation, academic success, and school engagement. Successful African Americans were more engaged in school work when pedagogical practices that are autonomous supportive as opposed to controlling for this group, and when learning activities are challenging and reflecting of cultural identity for this group. Successful African American males also were more successful in school environments where teachers understood their unique learning style. This study builds on this literature to explain factors which may be critical to school success of African American males.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study investigated whether differences existed in self-determination between higher and lower achieving African American high school males in an urban school district in Central Texas. The study also tested for a difference in achievement motivation for the same two groups. The study was conducted in an urban Texas school district. At the time of the study, the school district had an overall enrollment of 80,655. Of this number, 10,778 (13.4%) were African Americans. The total number of African Americans in the district's 11 high schools was 2,700 (3.35%); and there were 1,374 (1.70%) African American males enrolled in the school district (Texas Education Agency, 2006).

On the 2005 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills tests (TAKS), 69% of the district's high school students passed the language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies exit-level tests, matching the average for the State. For African American students, 44% passed all tests at the exit level (Texas Education Agency, 2005). The 2006 PEIMS (Public Education Information Management System) data compiled by the Texas Education Agency reported that the graduation rate for the school district was 80.1% as compared to the State average of 84.6%. Of this number African Americans graduation rate was 78.9%. The 4-year dropout rate for the State was 3.9% and for the district 5.1%. For African Americans, 5.1% of the students were reported as dropouts over a 4-year period.

According to 2005-2006 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data, 19.9 % of Texas students were enrolled in advanced courses/dual enrollment courses. At the district level, 25.5% of students were enrolled in advanced courses/dual enrollment courses; for African

Americans, only 15.3% were enrolled in these courses. The State's Mean SAT score was 980. For the school district, the mean SAT score was 1032; but for African American students the mean SAT score was 825. Similarly, the mean ACT score for the State was 20.1 and for the district 21.1. For African American students, the mean ACT score was 17.3 (Texas Education Agency, 2006).

Access and Permission

A request to conduct this study and to use human subjects was submitted to the Institutional Research Board of The University of Texas at Austin. A request to conduct the study at two district high schools was also submitted to the Austin Independent School District. Upon approval from the University and the school district, the researcher met with the principals of the two high schools selected for this study to explain the nature of the study, to give them a copy of the dissertation proposal, to solicit their assistance in conducting the study on their campuses, including the distribution and collection of parent permission forms for the participating students.

The two schools selected for the study were a part of the district's Blueprint initiative to provide extra money, staff, and support services to improve these schools' academic programs. The researcher also requested that the principals sign an information letter that was included in the packets being mailed to parents of selected study participants. Both principals were also asked to sign a permission slip acknowledging their agreement with the study being conducted on their campuses. Upon receiving approvals from both principals, the researcher contacted the School District's Office of Program Evaluation, to begin the process for identifying study participants. Table 2 shows the demographic data for both schools.

Table 2

Demographic Data for Two High Schools

	School A	School B
Student Enrollment	1009	1666
% African Americans	33.9	29.2
% Econ Disadvantaged	79.7	48.9
% At-Risk	81.7	50.1
Dropout Rate	1.5	1.2
SAT Mean Score	814	1113
ACT Mean Score	15.1	21.7
Graduation Rate	70.4	91.4

Research Design

This study employed a mixed research design using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) found validity was enhanced by both methodologies. They found, "qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in tandem to study the same or different phenomena…used with the same participants or with different participants depending of the purpose of the inquiry" (p. 40). For this study, the quantitative design utilized a demographic questionnaire, the Needs Satisfaction Scale, and the Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey for data collection. The qualitative segment of this study included individual case studies of 4 higher-performing African American males who volunteered to give voice to what they perceived contributed to their successful school performance.

Measures

The following instruments were used to assess data: (a) a demographic questionnaire (b) the Needs Satisfaction Scale (Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne,

2003) (c) The Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993). The demographic

scale was administered at the first meeting with the students, and the other two scales were

administered at the second meeting with the students.

Demographics Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed to provide insight into the background of the participants.

The researcher wanted to examine whether there were common trends or differences within the

two study groups based upon demographic differences among the students. The questionnaire,

modeled after a demographic survey used in a study by Hicks (2001), was used to identify grade

levels, family structure, economic status, parental educational attainment, school, community

and religious affiliations, and academic programs in which the students were enrolled. The

questionnaire required students to write their names on the surveys to match names to the

appropriate coding used for grouping the students into the two groups.

Needs Satisfaction Scale

The Needs Satisfaction Scale (Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000;

Gagne, 2003), a scale used to measure need satisfaction at work was adapted for high school

students. The instrument includes 21 items to measure the need for competence, autonomy, and

relatedness. Participants in the Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan study rated their opinions on a

seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 meaning "Not At All True" to 7, meaning "Very

True". For this study, the scale was adapted to a 5 point Likert-type scale from 1 meaning

"Strongly Disagree" to 5 meaning "Strongly Agree" to simplify the students' understanding of

agreeing and disagreeing with the statements. This adaptation was recommended by 9th grade

African American males who participated in a pilot test of the instrument. The modification

improved the readability of the test, as the students were accustomed to 5-point Likert-type

ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" because of their experiences with school

district's surveys designed in this manner. The students who participated in the pilot test using

the revised scale did not indicate any problems in completing the survey. Fowler, (2002) found,

> There is a limit, however, to the precision of discrimination that respondents can exercise
>
> in giving ordered ratings. When the number of categories exceeds the respondents' ability
>
> to discriminate their feelings, numerous categories simply produce unreliable noise. (p.
>
> 101)

The Needs Satisfaction Scale has not been documented in studies including African

American males as subjects. The researcher had reasons to believe that the content of the

instrument may have cultural bias in some to text, but no changes were made in the wording of

the scale to ensure standardization. The researcher found no comparative studies using African

American males as sole subjects. Gagne (2003) used the Needs Satisfaction Scale in a study of

121 (77 women, 42 men, and 2 unreported) undergraduate psychology college students. The

Needs Satisfaction Scale has been used primarily to measure basic needs at work (Deci, Ryan,

Gagné, Leone, Usunov, & Kornazheva, 2001; Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Kasser,

Davey, & Ryan, 1992) and in measuring adult needs in various types of relationships (La

Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000).

The Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey

The Student Opinion Survey /Education Survey (Murdock, 1993) was used to measure

achievement motivation. This scale has been used in studies to measure the degree of

achievement motivation with African American subjects, but the researcher found no studies

where the instrument was used exclusively with African American males. The Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993) was employed to test the hypothesis on achievement motivation indicators, and it includes the categories of information: (a) school engagement, (b) personal motivation, (c) parental encouragement, (d) peer support, and (e) teacher support. Salley (2005) used the Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993) as a 50-item questionnaire to measure achievement motivation of African American high school students, but not exclusively African American males.

Quantitative Design

In the first stage of the study, the school district's Office of Program Evaluation provided lists that included only the names and addresses of students classified as ninth and tenth grade African American males enrolled in two distinct high schools (N = 210). The Office of Program Evaluation also provided a second list containing the names and addresses for African American males who participated in the 2005 administration of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test for both schools (N = 185). The potential of eligible subjects decreased from 210 to 185 for this study because of absenteeism on the testing dates or because of approved testing exemptions for certain students.

Study Population and Sample

For this study, two study groups were created. One group consisted of ninth and tenth grade African American males who were considered "higher-performing" because they: (a) had a numerical average of 70% or higher in each core class taken, (b) passed the Math and Reading portions of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test, (c) were enrolled in at least one advanced academic course or an advanced academic program, (d) met or exceeded the

school's attendance standards, and (e) participated in various organizations. The other group consisted of students who were considered "lower-performing" because they: (a) failed one or more portions of the TAKS test, (b) had not earned enough credits to be on grade level, (c) had documented evidence of discipline and attendance problems as filed in their discipline file, (c) and earned a numerical average of below 70% in each core class taken.

The researcher utilized data from the district's Office of Program Evaluation to identify the students for the two groups. The group of higher-performing students consisted of eligible ninth and tenth grade African American male students from both schools (N = 61), while the group of lower-performing students included eligible ninth and tenth grade African American male students from both schools (N= 124) resulting in the total sample for this study (N= 185). However, there were several factors that resulted in a lower number of eligible student participants. For example, 11 students whose information cards did not include home, work, and emergency contact telephone numbers were eliminated as possible study subjects. All 11 (5 from School A and 6 from school B) students represented the lower-performing group. In addition, 9 students included on the list of eligible students (5 from School A and 4 from School B and all from the lower-performing group) were no longer enrolled in their perspective schools because they had been placed in an alternative school and 5 student from School B received a transfer revocation from the higher-performing group. In addition, 10 students enrolled at both schools (6 from School A and 4 from School B) withdrew and returned to their home in New Orleans. Six of those students were in the higher performing group and 4 were in the lower-performing group. As a result, the eligible number of potential subjects was reduced by 11 students (N = 50) within the higher-performing group and was reduced by 24 students within the lower-performing groups

(N = 100). Thus, a convenient sample of 150 students (50 higher-performing and 100 lower-performing students) was chosen for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

In February 2006, packets outlining this study were mailed to the parents of 150 selected students for this study to provide an overview of the study and to solicit their participation in this study. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was included for the parents to return signed permission slips. Counselors at both schools made personal contacts with the selected students to stress the importance for students to participate in the study. The researcher made phone calls each weekend in February, March, and during Spring Break to solicit parents and students to return signed permission slips to participate in the study to ensure an adequate sampling size.

Of the 150 packets mailed, a total of 112 permission slips (N = 47 representing the higher-performing group; N = 65 representing the lower-performing groups) were returned by the March, 2006 deadline. Only students who returned signed permission slips were participants in this study.

The researcher arranged for an introductory meeting at both schools during the last week of March, 2006 to explain the process and to set a schedule for administering the surveys to students during the first two weeks of April, 2006. At one high school, the principal agreed that the surveys could be completed by the students during the 30-minute advisory period and 30 minutes of the next class period. He made arrangements for any student needing more than 30 minutes to get an excused tardy to class. At the other high school, the principal arranged for the students to be excused during the last 30 minutes of their first period class and overlapping

through the first of second period, which included 30 minutes for homeroom activities and for listening to the morning announcement.

On the first day of administering the surveys, the researcher met with the students in previously assigned room and requested the students to complete the demographic survey. They were instructed to put their names on the demographic survey. The researcher read the directions for completing the survey, and then asked the students to read over the survey for clarification purposes. They were instructed that once they completed the demographic survey, they were to bring the completed survey to the researcher to receive the final survey, pre-numbered with an identification code of 1 to 112 to ensure confidentiality for the participants. The researcher wrote the exact identification code number on the demographic survey for coding, data analysis, and creating comparison groups. The average time for completion of the demographic survey was 12 minutes. Next, students were given the survey packet that included the Needs Satisfaction Scale (Ilardi, Leone, Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003) and the Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993). The participants were instructed not to write their names on the survey to ensure confidentiality of their responses. The average time for completion of the two surveys was 25 minutes.

The completed demographic surveys were inspected for accuracy and completeness. Four Surveys (3 from the lower-performing groups, and 1 from the higher-performing group) were found to have incomplete demographic data and were discarded, thus reducing the sample even more for higher-performing (N = 46) for higher-performing males and for lower-performing 62 (N = 62) lower-performing for a new sample size (N = 108) respondents to the demographic

surveys. However, the researcher examined the discarded surveys to see if a pattern existed among the incomplete surveys.

In tabulating the responses to the Need Satisfaction Scale ((Ilardi, Leone, Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003) and the Student Opinion/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993), the researcher requested the SPSS data system to reject partial survey forms that had missing responses on any of the items. An additional 28 surveys were discarded, 2 from the higher-performing group and 26 from the lower-performing group. This was done so that the same number of cases (the same students) would be reported in all analyses instead of having different numbers of students in each analysis. However, the data regarding levels of self-determination and academic motivation were not impacted by incomplete responses. The sample size was reduced from 108 to 80 after 28 incomplete surveys were discarded. The sample included lower-performing students (N = 44) and higher-performing students (N = 36).

An analysis of the 28 surveys that contained incomplete responses revealed that one student in the high achieving group did not answer any of the survey items after completing the demographic data. Another student in the high achieving group only answered items found in the Student Opinion/Education Survey (Murdock, 2003) and none of the items in the Needs Satisfaction Survey (Ilardi, Leone, Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003). Three students from the lower-performing group did not respond to the questions in the Needs Satisfaction segment of the survey. The other 23 students (higher-performing student N = 8 and lower-performing student N = 15) attempted the majority of the survey items without a noticeable pattern of the missing responses.

Statistical Analysis

To organize and describe the data collected from the sample of African American males in this research study, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2002). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of the sample population. Inferential statistics were utilized in making comparisons of the samples (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2004). To evaluate the hypotheses for this study, tests of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were computed to determine whether significant differences existed in mean scores of the two groups in their self-determination which included the components of competence, autonomy, and relatedness and achievement motivation, which included school engagement, personal motivation, parental encouragement, peer support, and teacher support. The dependent variables used in this study were observations from the two tests given; and the independent variable for this study was the level of school performance as either higher or lower-performing.

The assumptions of the MANOVA statistical test, as well as the resulting statistical indices, are discussed in detail in the next chapter, along with the results of this study. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software (v.14.0 for Windows) was used to compute the descriptive and inferential statistics of the MANOVA.

Qualitative Design

The second stage of this study was qualitative in nature which included individual case studies of 4 successful African American males from the higher-performing group who volunteered for exploratory interviews. Interview research is often used to enhance quantitative survey findings and to give voice and insight into the participants' experiences (Ritchie & Lewis,

2003). For this study, the researcher did not include students who were considered "lower-performing" as a comparative group in the interviews because of the vast research studies that have documented many causes for poor school performance for African American males.

An opportunity was extended to all of the students identified as "higher-performing" at both schools to participate in individual interviews, but only four of these students volunteered to participate. The 4 young men who were interviewed in this study were all sophomores. Two of the young men (referred to as Marquese and Latrell) participated in the advanced academic program at one of the high schools. The other two young men (referred to as Darnard and Gregory) were enrolled in the comprehensive program at that same high school. All were considered successful students based upon the predetermined criteria aforementioned.

The higher-performing students responded to 13 questions modeled and modified using a format in a qualitative studies focused upon factors influencing successful school performance of African American males (Hicks, 2001; Hrabowski & Maton, 1995). Open-ended questions were included as interview questions as a method of providing an opportunity for the students to elaborate upon their responses. The questions were framed using the following guidelines (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003): (a) they were clear, intelligible, and unambiguous, (b) focused and not too narrowed, (c) capable of being researched through data collection, (d) relevant and useful, (e) informed and connected to existing research or theory, (f) feasible, and (g) of interest to the researcher

The questions were categorized into various headings which included: being autonomous in their decisions regarding their personal and academic affairs being competent as learners and as participants in extra-curricular activities, being personally motivated to achieve and having

personal relationships with significant others. Finally, the students were asked to list factors that contributed to their successful school performance.

The questions were reviewed by ninth and tenth-grade English teachers from one of the high schools included in the study. The interview questions were also used in a pilot study where two ninth grade African American male students from a different high school were interviewed using the questions designed for this study. These two practice interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to become familiar with the interview process and to become comfortable with the question delivery, as well an opportunity to observe student comprehension of the questions and the amount of time students used to respond to the questions.

The interview procedures were guided by the work of Ritchie and Lewis (2003) who describe the interview process as having six stages: (a) arrival, (b) introducing the research, (c) beginning the interview, (d) during the interview, (e) ending the interview, and (f) after the interview. Each is described in the Procedures section of the study.

The intent of the interviews was to explore the unique cultures and values that African American males in context with their school performance. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) have found validity in exploratory interviews for understanding underlying values, cultures, and norms; and they also found exploratory interviews are, "likely to involve a number of very broad questions, encouraging the participant to take lead and to shape their own narrative" (p. 110). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) also found,

> Data collection is likely to be less structured in a very exploratory study- perhaps in an
> area about which little is so far known, or if a key objective is to understand how

participants' conceptions or values emerge through their speech and their narrative.(p. 110)

Therefore, the qualitative nature of this study included exploratory interviews with 4 of the higher-performing African American males to give voice to what they perceived contributed to their successful school performance. This method was used to clarify and supplement findings presented in the quantitative portion of the study. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) have also found, "interviews are often used in combination with observation methods so that there can be an understanding of how events or behaviors naturally arise as well as reconstructed perspectives on their occurrence" (p. 38).

Although there is a debate among social research about whether or not qualitative and quantitative research should be combined, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argued,

> There can be value in bringing the two types of data together….Each of the two research approaches provides a distinctive kind of evidence and used together can offer a powerful resource to inform and illuminate policy or practice. (p. 38)

Procedures

One of the high school counselors scheduled the student interviews at a time that would not interfere with the students' final examinations. When the researcher arrived at the schools, the students were called to the principal's conference room at their designated time. All of the students were present at school; therefore, there was no need to plan for an alternative time to conduct the interviews. The researcher welcomed the students and again reminded them about the nature of this study. The researcher used the first few minutes to establish rapport with the students to ease their comfort levels. Once the students appeared to be at ease, each student was

told about the importance of this research and how valuable their comments were to the success of this study. The researchers told each participant that the interviews would be tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Notes were also taken as an additional method of data collection. Each student was reminded that they did not have to respond to any question that they did not want to answer.

Each interview began with the researcher asking the students about their school background as a way to ease into the interview process. The researcher used several prompting techniques to get students to elaborate and clarify their responses. At the end of the session, each student was thanked for his participation and assured that his responses and identity would be regarded as confidential information. Each cassette tape was carefully labeled with the student identification code.

After all interviews were completed, the researcher contacted all participants to thank them for participating in the study. The students and their parents were sent thank you notes, along with a $10.00 McDonald's gift certification to the interview participants.

Qualitative Analysis

Content analysis was used as the main focus of the analytical process (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) in three distinct approaches: (a) data management, in which the raw data are reviewed, labeled, sorted, and synthesized, (b) descriptive accounts, in which the analyst makes use of the ordered data to identify key dimensions, and (c) explanatory accounts in which the analyst builds explanations about why the data take the forms that they are found and presented.

The researcher carefully transcribed the data into verbatim text. The researcher shared the verbatim text with each student interviewed to validate that their responses were accurate.

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Multiple readings of the transcribed data were done to allow the researcher to become familiar

with the data set for building the foundation for coding the data. As concepts were emerged, the

researcher manually coded them into major headings forming a matrix of key concepts. Next,

the researcher sorted through the matrix to identify recurring ideas and concepts among the

students' responses. After several review of the key concepts, the researcher organize the coded-

data into 4 recurrent themes: (1) parental encouragement and expectation, (2) involvement in

extracurricular activities, namely sports, (3) personal motivation to do well, and (4) sustained

relationships with significant adults in their lives. From these themes, the researcher was able to

make conclusions about factors influencing successful school performance of African American

males.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Because the interviews reflected personal views and circumstances, the researcher took

every possible precaution to protect and maintain the identity of the participants, as well as the

school the participants attended. For this study, the students' names were changed in order to

maintain anonymity and confidentiality. The audio tapes, notes, and written summaries collected

through the interview process were securely stored in a locked file cabinet in the home of the

researcher.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Ninth and tenth grade African American males were categorized as either higher-performing or lower-performing students in high school. The following criteria defined higher-performing students: (a) achieved a numerical average of 70% or higher in each core academic class taken, (b) passed both the math and reading portions of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test, (c) enrolled in at least one advanced academic course or an advanced academic program, (d) exhibited good school attendance and discipline as indicated by the school administrators, and (e) participated in community or school activities. The criteria for identifying the lower-performing students included the following: (a) failed any portion of the TAKS test, (b) had not earned enough credits to be on grade level, (c) documented by the school administration as having discipline and attendance problems, (d) had a numerical average of less than 70% in each core class taken, and (e) participated in community and school activities.

The dependent variables for this study were self-determination, which included the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness; and achievement motivation, which included school engagement, parental encouragement, personal motivation, peer support, and teacher support as indicators. The independent variable was higher or lower school achievement.

This chapter presented the results of the descriptive and inferential statistics results from the survey data, as well as from the data analysis from the case studies that emerged from the exploratory interviews.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample was divided into two distinct groups, lower-performing and higher-performing students as shown in Tables 3 and 4 respectively. For the lower-performing group, nearly 75% of the study participants were either in the ninth grade or tenth grader for the first time, while the other 25% were repeating their respective grades. The majority of the participants (83.9%) were enrolled in regular, comprehensive academic programs. Two students from the lower-performing group were enrolled in the Magnet Program, an advanced academic program to serve students in language, arts, math and science.

Table 3

Academic Programs for Lower-Performing Group

Grade	Frequency	Percent
First time 9th Grade	23	37.1
Repeating 9th Grade	11	17.7
First time 10th Grade	23	37.1
Repeating 10th Grade	5	8.1
Total	62	100.0
Academic Program		
Magnet	2	3.2
Comprehensive/Regular	52	83.9
AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination)	6	9.7
AP (Advanced Placement)	1	1.6
Not Identified	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

For the higher-performing group, only one student was repeating his grade level. Ninety-eight percent of the study participants were first time ninth or tenth grade students. The majority

of the students were enrolled in the Advancement Via Individualized Determination (AVID), an

advanced, college readiness program for first generation eligible students to attend college.

Others from this group were either in the Magnet Program or Advanced Placement (AP), an

advanced academic program aligned with the College Board. This data can be viewed in Table 4.

Table 4

Higher-Performing Demographic Data

Grade	Frequency	Percent
First time 9th Grade	22	47.8
Repeating 9th Grade	1	2.2
First time 10th Grade	23	50.0
Total	46	100.0
Academic Program		
Magnet	9	19.6
AP (Advanced Placement)	4	8.6
Comprehensive	5	10.9
AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination)	16	34.7
AP (Advanced Placement)	12	26.1
Total	46	100.0

Over half of the students participating in this study came from homes headed by mothers

only. Tables 5 and 6 show that, for both the high and low performing students, households

headed by mothers only are prevalent within the participating sample.

Table 5
Lower-Performing Family Structure

Home Parent	Frequency	Percent
Mother and Father	19	30.6
Mother Only	29	46.8
Father Only	4	6.5
Other (Grandparents, Aunts/Uncles)	10	16.1
Total	62	100.0

Table 6
Higher-Performing Family Structure

Home Parent	Frequency	Percent
Mother and Father	10	21.7
Mother Only	30	65.2
Father Only	1	2.2
Other (Grandparents, Aunts/Uncles	5	10.9
Total	46	100.0

The majority of students participating in this survey came from homes where at least one parent was a high school graduate. For the lower-performing groups, the student responses indicated that 62.9% of their mothers, regardless if they live with or not them, were at least high school graduates with another 32% indicated that their mothers attended some college. However, there were no reports of any of the mothers being college graduates among this group. Many of the fathers of the low performing students were high school graduates with some having some formal college experience, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Parents Level of Educational Attainment for Lower-Performing Students

Mother's Highest Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Some College (Associate Degree or Some College Hours)	20	32.3
High School Grad	39	62.9
Junior high school	1	1.6
Don't know	2	3.2
Total	62	100.0

Father's Highest Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
College Grad (Bachelor Degree)	4	6.5
Some College (Associate Degree or College Hours)	18	29.0
High School Grad	23	37.1
Junior high school	3	4.8
Don't know	14	22.6
Total	62	100.0

Table 8 shows the distribution of level of educational attainment for the parents of the higher-performing students, regardless of whether these students lived or did not live with their actual parents. Nearly 50% of the participants from the higher-performing group indicated that their mothers had college experience, with 34% indicating that their mothers had earned at least an associate degree or had some college hours. At least 8.7% of the students indicated that their mothers had earned professional or graduate degrees. For fathers, nearly 20% of the students indicated that their fathers had attended college, either earning an associate degree or some college hours, but not a degree. An additional 20% of these students indicated that their fathers were college graduates, with 2.2% having some professional or graduate school training. With both groups, the students' responses indicated that the "other" category was larger than the "father" category. Because "other" emerged once the data had been completed by the

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respondents, the researcher did not include an opportunity for students to list the educational attainment for parents or guardians listed as "other" which may be a limitation to the research design.

Table 8

Parents Level of Educational Attainment for Higher-Performing Students

Mother's Highest Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Professional/Graduate School	4	8.7
College Grad (Bachelor Degree)	3	6.5
Some College (Associate Degree or College Hours)	16	34.8
High School Grad	21	45.7
Junior high school	1	2.2
Don't know	1	2.2
Total	46	100.0

Father's Highest Level of Education	Frequency	Percent
Professional/Graduate School	1	2.2
College Grad (Bachelor Degree)	8	17.4
Some College (Associate Degree or College Hours)	9	19.6
High School Grad	23	50.0
Don't know	5	10.9
Total	46	100.0

Student responses revealed that lower-performing students had more reported instances of being involved in serious discipline matters. Table 9 reveals that more than half of the lower-performing students indicated that they had been suspended from school at least once during this school year, and nearly another 20% of the students had been removed from their regular high school and placed in the District's alternative program designed for students with severe discipline infractions.

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Table 9

Discipline Infractions for Lower-Performing Group

	Frequency	Percent
Suspended from school at least once this year	32	52
Removed to the alternative school this year.	12	19
No discipline record this year	18	29
Total	62	100.0

In contrast, only 4% of higher-performing students were suspended from school during

the current year and none were removed to the district's alternative school for serious discipline

offenses, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Discipline Infraction for Higher-Performing Students

	Frequency	Percent
Suspended from school at least once this year	2	4
Removed to the Alternative Learning Center	0	0
No discipline infractions	44	96
Total	46	100.0

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics were used to organize the students' responses to the Needs

Satisfaction Scale (Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003) and

the Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993). A multivariate analysis of

variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the mean differences between the two groups on

each variable within the Needs Satisfaction Scale (Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003) and Student Opinion/Education Survey scales. For the Needs Satisfaction Scale, Table 11 shows the descriptive statistics of the levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness for both groups.

Table 11

Descriptive Group Statistics of Components of Self-Determination

	Level of Achievement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Autonomy	Low-performing	44	22.18	3.320	.525
	High-performing	36	22.98	3.602	.525
Competence	Low-performing	44	20.13	4.142	.604
	High-performing	36	21.45	2.943	.465
Relatedness	Low-performing	44	29.11	4.478	.653
	High-performing	36	31.18	4.006	.633

The responses indicated that the higher-performing group had higher mean scores on all three variables. For autonomy, the lower-performing group had a mean of 22.18 while the mean of the higher-performing group was 22.98. This variable was characterized by statements such as "Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do" and "People I know tell me I am good at what I do." For competence, the lower-performing group had a mean score of 20.13 while the higher-performing group achieved a mean of 21.45 on this variable. Competence was characterized by statements such as "I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life" and "I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions." For the last variable, relatedness, the lower-performing group had a mean score of 29.11 while the higher-performing group had a mean score of 31.18. This variable was characterized by statements such as "People in my life care about me" and "There are not many people that I am close to."

Next, a MANOVA was used to test the differences between the two groups of students in

self-determination and its measured components Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness.

However, several assumptions *must* be met in order to appropriately use the results of the

MANOVA. The first assumption is that the dependent variables should be normally distributed

within the groups. The MANOVA also assumes that there are linear relationships among all

pairs of dependent variables, all pairs of covariates, and all dependent variables-covariate pairs in

each cell (Frankfort-Nachmias & Guerrero (2002). If these assumptions are violated, then the

MANOVA test should not be used. MANOVA is considered robust to violations of its two other

assumptions – the assumption of multivariate normality and the homogeneity of variance-

covariances matrices – when the size of the largest group is not more than 1.5 times the size of

the smaller group. Based on the design of this research study, it is appropriate to assume that all

assumptions have been met.

The Wilks Lambda multivariate test of overall differences among groups was statistically

significant (p=0.018), as shown in Table 12. The effect size associated with the multivariate test

is the partial eta squared (η^2) or 1 minus the value of Wilks lambda. The value of 0.114

indicates a very small relationship between self-determination and the linear combination of the

dependent variables of competence, relatedness, and autonomy.

Table 12
Multivariate Test

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Self-Determination	.886	3.545(a)	3.000	83.000	.018	.114

Since the multivariate test, overall, was significant, Table 13 presents separate univariate

ANOVAs for each component to determine which contributed to the overall significance of

difference in the two groups. Relatedness was significant (p=.027), but not autonomy (p=0.285)

or competence (p=.095). These analyses were tested against the 0.05 level of significance. It

should be noted that the effect size for relatedness is quite small, raising the question of real

meaning of the significant difference observed.

Table 13

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Autonomy	13.959	1	13.959	1.156	.285	.013
Competence	37.785	1	37.785	2.849	.095	.032
Relatedness	92.470	1	92.470	5.077	.027	.056

MANOVA was used to measure the differences in levels of motivation between the two

groups. Table 14 displays the means and standard deviations for the levels of motivation as

measured by school engagement, personal motivation, parental encouragement, peer support, and

teacher support.

Table 14

Descriptive Group Statistics of Variables of Achievement Motivation

	Level of Achievement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
School Engagement	Low-performing	44	24.39	4.957	.747
	High-performing	36	25.56	4.205	.701
Personal Motivation	Low-performing	44	25.00	3.828	.577
	High-performing	36	26.22	3.727	.621
Peer support	Low-performing	44	20.20	3.455	.521
	High-performing	36	19.83	4.109	.685
Parent Encouragement	Low-performing	44	50.36	8.699	1.311
	High-performing	36	52.64	8.146	1.358
Teacher Support	Low-performing	44	48.08	9.784	1.631
	High-performing	36	50.55	8.421	1.269

Higher-Performing students had higher mean levels of school engagement (25.56 vs. 24.39), personal motivation (26.22 vs. 25.00), parental encouragement (52.64 vs. 50.36), and teacher support (50.55 vs.48.08). Lower-Performing students indicated a higher mean level of peer support (20.20 vs. 19.63). Parent encouragement had the largest mean for both student groups. The Wilks lambda was calculated for the components of achievement motivation. There was statistically significant differences between the lower and higher performing students, as displayed in Table 15, was statistically significant (p=.019). However, the effect size was small (η^2=0.164). Therefore, this significant difference may not be meaningful.

Table 15
Multivariate Tests

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Achievement Motivation	.836	2.907(a)	5.000	74.000	.019	.164

Table 16 shows the separate univariate ANOVAs for each of the variables of achievement motivation to determine which ones contributed to the overall statistically significant result. None of the variables showed a significant difference between the lower and higher performing students. Although surprising, this result is possible. The overall multivariate test takes into account linear combinations of all the dependent variables, whereas the univariate ANOVAs take each dependent variable separately and compares the differences of that variable with the independent variable. Therefore, in this case, the univariate ANOVAs are "neglecting" information that obviously the multivariate test is using to its advantage, thereby concluding with an overall significant result.

Table 16

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
School Engagement	27.067	1	27.067	1.260	.265	.016
Personal Motivation	29.578	1	29.578	2.067	.155	.026
Parental Encouragement	2.728	1	2.728	.193	.662	.002
Peer Support	102.500	1	102.500	1.434	.235	.018
Teacher Support	120.028	1	120.028	1.463	.230	.018

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data included 4 separate case studies with students who were considered to be "successful" according to the pre-determined criteria found in this study. As aforementioned, interviews were limited to those students identified as "successful", not as a comparative analysis but more as an exploratory process for identifying perceived factors contributing to the successful school performance of successful African American males. This approach was used to explore the phenomena of successful school experiences and to provide a clearer understanding of the quantitative data found in this study. A complete transcription of the students' responses to the range of questions can be found in Appendix G/

Case Study #1: Marquese

Marquese was a sophomore, honor student who was enrolled in an advanced academic program at one of the high schools. He also excelled in football. At the time of this study, Marquese was living with his mother who is a college graduate and is employed by a state governmental agency. Marquese and his mother lived in a neighborhood in the Northeast section of this community where the majority of the residents are of lower to middle income.

In school, Marquese has obtained a 3.2 grade point average during his freshman year and sophomore years while enrolled in advanced classes. He met the standards on all portions of the TAKS test during his freshman and sophomore years, and he has demonstrated excellent school attendance and has not been suspended from school. He had been assigned after school detention for minor infractions such as tardiness and skipping a class during his freshman year. He was identified as an excellent football player, starting defensive end on the freshman and junior

varsity team. He started in one varsity game when the star defensive end was injured. In addition

to his active school schedule, Marquese is also involved in Top Teens, a leadership development

group for African American teens, as well a member of his church choir.

Marquese attributed his success to the high expectations set by his mother. For example, he felt,

"She [his mother] went to UT. She would expect for me to at least go to college and to do

something positive with my life. She pushes me real hard to do the best I can in school."

Marquese indicated he was motivated to do his very best in school because he did not

want to disappoint his mother. He stated,

> I failed one of my classes. I didn't fail for the year, but I received a 60 something on my
>
> report card for the sixth weeks. It was hard cuz my Mom was looking at me real hard. I
>
> know she wants me to go to college and I felt like I let her down. I love playing football,
>
> so when I failed, I had to sit out for sixth weeks. The coach would let me practice with
>
> the team, but I couldn't play. I was embarrassed. A lot of friends on the team said that I
>
> let the team down. So that's when I realized that grades and school are important.

In addition, Marquese also had strong bonds with his football coaches and attributed this

relationship to his academic success. He stated, "My football coaches, also. They tell me all the

time that you should work to be the best player you can; but if you don't have the academics,

then there is no reason to play." He also admitted that being able to participate in sports required

him to maintain passing grades.

> Just trying to keep my grades up in order to play sports. I just keep trying to do all my
>
> work and doing the right thing. Sometimes after practice, I am really tired and don't feel

like doing a lot of school work. So, I found that I can do my work during lunch sometimes or right after school. I also like to go home and eat, take a shower. Then I feel a little more relax and then I can do my work. My coach keeps reminding us that if we get scholarships in football we have to keep our grades up or we will flunk out of college and lose our scholarships.

Marquese's success also involved his setting realistic goals. He stated,

I really want to be an engineer, but being a professional football player is a real high dream for me. But, I know that football last only 15 years and I can be an engineer a lot longer. So I don't want to spend my life dreaming about being a football player. I got to make sure that my grades are straight and that I am on top of my game.

Finally, Marquese attributed having strong personal values as a part of his successful school experience. He stated,

I try to think out and try to look at the whole picture. I try to make decisions that will help me do what I plan to do with my life. I listen to what my mother and other adults say and I take their words into consideration before making the final decision.

Case Study # 2: Lattrell

Lattrell was a sophomore enrolled in the advanced academic program in his high school. He participated in the marching band during his freshman year in high school. He and his family lived in a middle class community at the time of this study. During his sophomore year, he played on the high school tennis and soccer teams. He was involved with the Science Olympiad team, a team that competes in state and national competition in the area of science and robotics.

He also is an accomplished pianist. Latrell is very involved with the German Club. In school, Latrell received recognition for perfect attendance. He has not received any been assigned detention or suspension for any type of discipline infractions. Latrell was recognized for his outstanding performance on the 2005 TAKS examination in math. He maintained a 3.8 grade point average and was recognized as one of the top African American males in the school district.

Latrell has a younger sister in elementary school. His mother is White and his father is African American. Both parents have professional positions at a major computer industry in this community. Latrell indicated that his parents were in the process of getting a divorce. Latrell credited his parents and his personal desires to do well in school as factors contributing to his successful school experience. He mentioned, "Well, a lot of it is myself, like knowing that if I can do well in school then I can do well in life also."

He believed that his parents instilled strong values within him. He stated, "I try to live my life like my parents have taught me. I try to treat everybody with dignity and respect. I try to treat everybody like I want them to treat me." He also stated, "It always has been all about my parents helping and supporting me. I have also been fortunate to have good teachers who took special interest in me."

As a successful student, Latrell learned at an early age the importance of having control over his study habits and the importance of personal dedication to hard work.

Well, in sixth grade I went to an elementary school, and it wasn't that hard. I made really good grades and I really didn't have to try very hard. And during 7th grade, I went to middle school, and that was the hardest year for me. There was a lot of homework every

night, and I had to work real hard. My parents helped me a lot. And I made good grades, but not like I really wanted. So I had to study and learn stuff a lot on my own. I didn't like asking questions, because the other kids thought you were stupid. This was an honors class, and I wanted the kids to think that I was just as smart as everybody else. I was able to make good grades and I learned how to get my homework and stay on top of my school work. That helped me to gain confidence; and since then I try to do my very best.

Lattrell also believed that his teachers contributed to his success when he stated,

Also teachers throughout the years have helped me by making learning interesting and fun. For example, instead of lecturing they may show interesting videos and movies, and the give us a lot of hands on activities. Their classes are fun and not boring like some classes. Some of my teachers know me personally and that kind of helps.

Because of his success, Latrell has set goals for his future.

Well I want to go to college, and also, I am taking German. I want to apply for a scholarship to study in Germany for a year after I graduate from high school. Then I will come back and finish college here. I will keep making good grades and I can make reach this goal.

Case Study # 3: Darnard

Darnard was a sophomore in the Comprehensive Program at his high school, and he has been an AVID student since middle school. He has an older sister and a younger brother. He and his siblings lived with his grandmother and mother at the time of this study. He and his sister

were youth leaders in the Young Adult department within their church. Their mother is a school nurse.

Darnard played on the freshman football team and on the Junior Varsity football team during his sophomore year. He was very involved on the Chess team. He developed a passion for engineering and was involved with TAME, Texas Alliance for Minority Engineering program. Darnard has a 3.0 grade point average. He has been assigned detention for a minor classroom disruption during his freshman year. During his freshman year and sophomore year, he met all of the standards of the TAKS test.

Darnard has determined that encouragement from significant adults, including his mother, accounted for his successful school experience.

> My mom and my auntie because right now they are in school too, and they are showing me that education is the way to go, because it will make your life a lot easier. And you don't have to struggle like the folks who do not have a high school education.

He acknowledged the work of his church members contributed to his academic success when he stated, "My youth pastor also has influenced my life. He believes in me and teaches me a lot about how important school is."

Darnard contributed his successful school experience to learning from his sibling's mistakes as a means for heightening his personal motivation. He recalled,

> I have a sister here at this school. Her sophomore year, she wasn't doing as well as she could do. She was failing classes and not going to classes. She was always in trouble with my Mom at home. She and my Mom were always arguing and almost in fights. My sister was always grounded and she always said she was going to kill herself. I could hear my

mom crying at night time in her bedroom. And I saw what this was doing to the family so

I said that I would never do that. So I decided then and there that I would get focused,

and I won't let this happen to me. She is a senior this year and she will graduate in the

Delta Program. But I will never forget hearing my mom crying that night.

Darnard has learned the importance of making good decisions as a part of his successful

school experience. He stated,

Sometimes, I get confused when my mom tells to make a decision for myself. I get scared

because I don't know if I am making the right decision. I try to do what I think is right,

then I make the decision. So far, I have been doing a good job. I don't think I have made

any bad mistakes about my life.

Darnard has stated that he wanted, "To go to college on an academic or sports

scholarship. I play football. I am going to major in engineering to start my own business. I know

that I have to take a lot of math and engineering courses. I took engineering last year too."

For Darnard, his success was associated with undertaking challenges. He felt,

"I always like a challenge and I like things that are difficult. I use that to try to build my

knowledge. Like I am taking Spanish right now and it is a challenge. But I took it because I

wanted the challenge."

Case Study # 4: Gregory

Gregory was a sophomore in the comprehensive program at the time of this study;

however, during his freshman year, he was in the advanced academic program but later exited

from the program. During his sophomore year, he was enrolled in honors and AP classes in the

comprehensive program and maintained a 3.0 average during his sophomore year.

In school, Gregory was the manager for the freshman and sophomore football teams. He has studied Japanese since middle school. He had an opportunity to spend two weeks in Japan as a part of an exchange program sponsored by a community organization during his middle school years. Gregory also participated in many community activities such as Top Teens, a national leadership development organization for African American teenagers. He has also competed in the NAACP Act So competition in dramatic interpretation.

Gregory is the only child. His parents divorced when he was a baby, and he lived with his mother, who is a teacher in the school district, at the time of this study. Gregory has not been referred to the office for disciplinary infractions. He has met all standards on the TAKS test during his freshman and sophomore years.

He believed that his mother had the most influence on his academic success.

Probably, my Mom because she is a teacher. And she has done all of these things in her life, and she wants that for me. She has gotten her Masters. So now, she is helping me to make all right decisions about what I want for my career. So she is helping me to make the right academic decisions to get me ready for my career.

He also indicated that his older friends who were successful in college inspired him to do well in school.

Also, I am influenced by friends who have gone to college and come and tell me how much fun they have in college. And people in my church who get a chance to go to good colleges. Like this one friend at my church goes to Morehouse. That's where I want to go. So I try to find out kind of decisions he made so that I can follow in his footsteps.

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Gregory also revealed that learning to balance all of the activities in his life was essential to his success, especially while transitioning from elementary to middle school.

So when I went to this junior high school for 7th and 8th grade, that's when I learned that it is difficult to change from school to school. I had to make changes to fit into the new school. So the transition from elementary to junior high school was difficult for me. I had to learn how to balance a lot of things like clubs, and dances and making good grades. Also, I had to deal with this growing up stuff, like being scared and embarrassed to take showers after PE.

Gregory was goal oriented. He stated, "I know I want to go to Morehouse. I am not sure that Morehouse has the type of courses that will help with career plans in multimedia productions and PR [public relations]."

Finally, Gregory attributed his success to being resilient when met with adversities in school.

Sometimes I have the tendency to start off good and then slack up a little, not enough to fail, but enough to get my attention and get me refocused. Sometimes I may fail in one class while working hard in another class. You have to balance yourself and be well-rounded.

Data Analysis

Student responses confirmed Deci and Ryan (1985) theories that maximum school performance will occur when psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are met, and the social environment that allows the satisfaction of these needs support the needs

while social environments that block these needs become antagonistic in nature. For example, autonomy was reflected in students such as "They [African American males] are successful because they dedicate themselves by giving a lot of effort."

Still, another student demonstrated high levels of autonomy when he stated, "I try to think out and try to look at the whole picture. I try to make decisions that will help me do what I plan to do with my life."

Successful African American males felt competent in their abilities to do well in academics and extracurricular activities. For example, one student wrote, "I play football very well. I am good in math. I am already ahead of my class." Another student wrote, "I am really good in math and English." Still another student wrote, "I am also good at public speaking."

Having strong relationships with significant adults was a major finding in the data. In most instances it was consistent with the literature on African American males in that parents (in most instances, mothers) were very important to the subjects. One student talked about his strong connection with his youth minister when he stated, "My youth pastor also has influenced me. He believes in me and teaches me a lot about how important school is." But all of the students agreed that their parents, particularly their mothers, were very instrumental in their doing well in school. For example, one student wrote, "She [mom] would expect for me to at least go to college and to do something positive with my life." Yet, another student wrote, "Of course, my mother. She pushes me real hard to do the best I can in school." Some students cited other females as instrumental in their success. For example, one student wrote, "My mom and my auntie because right now they are in school too, and they are showing me that education is the way to go because it will make your life a lot easier." This finding is consistent with the work of

Grolnick and Ryan (1987), which associated maternal involvement with achievement. On the other hand, some students attributed their success to their coaches. One student wrote, "My football coaches. They tell me all the time that you should work hard to be the best player you can; but if you don't have the academics, they there is no reason to play."

The findings about having strong relations is consistent with the work of Kunjufu (1985) who theorized that African American experience failure in school when there is a lack of parental involvement; and the work of Hrabowski and Maton (1995) who found that successful African American males have close relationships with one or both parents and other significant adults.

The responses from the students also revealed that successful males are goal oriented. They have set goals for themselves, both academic and personal goals, and they are aware of how to work towards reaching their goals. For example, one student wrote, "Hopefully go to college either academically or on an athletic scholarship. I really want to be an engineer." Another student wrote, "Well I want to go to college, and also, I am taking German. I want to apply for a scholarship to study in Germany for a year after I graduate from high school." Another student expressed, "I am going to major in engineering to start my own business. I know that I have to take a lot of math and engineering courses."

In addition, successful males had the innate ability to cope with adversities. One student wrote, "I just keep trying to do all my work and doing the right thing. Sometimes after practice, I am really tired and don't feel like doing a lot of school work. So, I found that I can do my work during lunch sometimes or right after school." Another student wrote, "Homework was very difficult for me when I was in the advanced academic program last year. I had so much

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homework that I could barely keep up. This year, I am taking both regular and advanced classes to ease the load. I can handle the homework a lot easier and it is not stressing me and Mom out this year."

Finally, interview data revealed that successful African American males are actively engaged in school, extracurricular, and community activities. One student wrote, "I am doing peer mediation now. In church, I am doing the youth choir and ushering. I am in a community service group called Kudos. I am also in Top Teens of America. I also play football and the manager for the basketball team." In addition to playing football, one student wrote, "I sing in the youth choir at my church and University Outreach for minority students with high GPAs. We do a lot of volunteer stuff in the community."

Consistent with the findings of Kunjufu (1985, 1986) the successful students indicated that they encountered instances of scrutiny from peers for being good students, but they remained focused upon their goals. One student wrote, "See at the beginning of school, I didn't work as hard as I could and my grades slipped. Then, I started doing my work and not hanging out." Still, another student wrote, "They call me a name like "nerd". But that doesn't bother me. A lot of it happened in middle school when we were on the bus."

The quantitative data showed significant differences in the levels of self-determination and achievement motivation between higher and lower-performing students. In measuring the components of self-determination, the researcher found largest difference in the *relatedness* component. With achievement motivation, the higher-performing group had higher levels in each component, except for peer support.

Qualitative data recorded from the interviews with the successful students provides more insight in understanding the significant differences in self-determination and achievement motivation found in the quantitative student responses. The higher-performing group demonstrated higher levels of self-determination with the component of *relatedness* having the largest significantly statistical difference. *Relatedness,* as mentioned in Chapter 1, refers to feeling connected to others, being cared for by those others, having a sense of belongingness with others and with one's community. Interview data from successful students had strong ties with their families, particularly with female family members to include mothers, grandmothers, and aunts. As a part of their extended families, these students also were very connected to their coaches and church members such as youth pastors and youth leaders. Successful students in this study also spoke of having strong relationships with their teachers. Some of the data showed that these students felt comfortable in seeking extra help when needed. Likewise, successful students indicated that they had positive support and relations with peers who had similar goals and expectations of doing well in school. Thus, higher performing students mentioned that their peers had positive influences that contributed to their successful school experiences.

The higher-performing group also demonstrated higher levels of achievement motivation in the components of school engagement, *personal motivation, parental encouragement, and teacher support.* However, the higher-performing group had lower levels of peer support. The components of *Parent, teacher and peer support* fall into the category of relatedness which was addressed in the previous paragraph. *School engagement* was measured in the descriptive and inferential data sets. Higher-performing students reported higher enrollment in advanced or specialized programs to include AP, Magnet , and AVID courses. Higher-performing students

reported lower instances of discipline infractions to include out of school suspensions and removal to alternative programs. Higher performing students also reported lower numbers of students repeating a grade. In the personal interviews, the higher-performing spoke about being actively engaged in many school activities. Several spoke about how being involved in sports kept them focused upon their academics. The students also mentioned that they were involved in various school clubs, as well as community and civic organizations.

Higher-performing students also responded in the quantitative surveys higher levels of *achievement motivation*. Their interviews provided explicit evidence of this finding. The students spoke of being motivated to do well after becoming academically ineligible to participate in football. Each expressed how their parents had instilled strong values and work ethics within them and caused them to be motivated to do well in school and in life. One student also mentioned that they he became motivated to do well in school because he did not want to make the same mistakes that an older sibling had made.

The qualitative data provided additional clarification and examples to explain why the African American males in this study experienced successful school experiences by examining self-determination and achievement motivation as predictors.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Discussions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there was a difference in the school performance of higher and lower-performing African American males based upon their self-determination and motivation to achieve. The following hypotheses were investigated in this study:

1. There are significant differences in the perceived levels of self-determination between higher-performing and lower-performing African American males.

2. There are significant differences in the perceived levels of achievement motivation between higher-performing and lower-performing African American males.

The researcher used the responses to the Needs Satisfaction Scale (Illardi, Leone, Kasser & Ryan, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003) to determine whether a difference existed in the levels of self-determination between the two groups of African American males. The researcher also used the Student Opinion Survey/Education Survey (Murdock, 1993) to measure the levels of degrees of achievement motivation between the two groups. The researcher found significant differences between the two groups supporting both hypotheses. It was concluded that there are significant differences in the both self-determination and achievement motivation between the African American males in this study but the effect was relatively small in both instances.

Four themes were generated from the case studies in which successful students identified factors contributing to their success: (a) parental encouragement and expectation, especially from mothers, (b) relationships with significant adults, (c) involvement in extra curricular and community activities, (d) personal motivation to do well in school. These themes were very

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similar to the ones identified by Hrabowski, Maton and Grief (1998) that parental involvement, parenting effectiveness, racial awareness, black male identity, and community resources are prime factors influencing the success of the African American males in their study. In this study, parental involvement and parenting effectives were linked to the general theme of parental encouragement. Community resources were linked to the theme of relationships with significant adults. Racial awareness and black identity were linked to personal motivation. Therefore, the successful males in the exploratory interviews answered the question, Why do some African Americans do well in school when so many others do not?

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

Statistically significant differences were found between the two groups of African American males for both self-determination and achievement motivation. However, the effect size was quite small. This small effect size introduces concerns as to why the instruments did not generate a greater significant difference between the two groups of students. One concern could be that the instrument's language and content were not appropriate for this African American high school male samples. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the researcher found no instances in which the instruments used in this study had been used in other studies where African American high school males were sole subjects. It may be possible that the language and content may not have been presented in a way that identifies with the culture and experiences of African American males in high school.

Some of the content may have been culturally biased in the context presented. For example, African American males may not be accustomed to statements such as, "People I interact with on a daily basis tend to take my feelings into consideration." Or, "There is not

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much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to do things in my daily life." In general, this language in this context may be assumed to be unfamiliar to the linguistic or cultural experiences of many African American males. The intent of the first statement was to generate data about having strong relationships with others. The intent of the second statement was to generate data about being autonomous. The students, when interviewed, had not difficulties in talking about taking control of their lives or having strong relationships with other. Perhaps, more research should be done to examine the effectiveness of the instruments in terms of linguistic and culture appropriateness.

Another concern generated from the small effect size could be that the African American subjects may not have understood the ideas behind the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Conceptually, relatedness is an idea that many African American males understand and internalize, and this concept contributed mostly to the significant differences found. When interviewed about things did they do well, the successful African American students in this study articulated that they believed in themselves and their abilities to perform exceptionally in the classroom, as well as in clubs, sports, and civic/religious responsibilities. The students talked about having a determination to do well in school because they felt that a good education would help them attain opportunities to attend college and prepare them for successful jobs in the future. In many instances, they took the initiative to seek help from teachers, parents, or peers when faced with academic or social problems. They had concrete goals about their future, and they knew how to work towards meeting those goals.

In terms of achievement motivation, the higher-performing group also had higher levels of school engagement in school activities and extracurricular activities, personal motivation to do

well in school, consistent encouragement from their parents, and constant support from their teachers. All components, with the exception of peer support, directional towards the hypotheses about achievement motivation. This small effect size leads to the previously expressed concerns about language, content, and cultural appropriateness of the instrument.

In their interviews, the successful African Americans shared stories about triumphs over adversities, taking advantage of opportunities to excel in and out of school, staying focused upon academic. These successful students took pride in doing well in academics and extracurricular activities, especially sports. They felt that sports was one of the primary reasons to do well with their academics, as regulations and guidelines dictate that students meet certain academic standards to be eligible to participate in competitive sports.

The students indicated that they were often faced with challenges when trying to sustain good grades while also participating in extracurricular activities, for example, using their lunch hour and after school time to complete assignments or get additional support from either teachers or peers. One student talked about how he rebounded from being academically ineligible to participate in sports. He viewed this as a turning point in his life. He felt that he had disappointed his mother, coaches, and the team, all who were very important to his life. He was able to develop a more consistent work habits and regained his eligibility. From this point, he realized that education "was important if I wanted to reach my goals".

The question becomes, What can schools do to support African American males? This study does not suggest that special schools, classes, programs, and considerations should be solely devoted to African American males, but the higher achieving students were enrolled in specialized programs that tend to be more rigorous and challenging than regular programs.

These specialized programs offered innovative curriculum and instructional activities. Similarly, those programs, in most cases, had selective and exclusive criteria with options to withdraw students who do not meet academic or behavior standards. In addition, it is the practice of most schools to staff specialized programs with teachers with more experience and content training. However, one must ask, are the higher-performing students enrolled in specialized classes in the two schools involved in this study, particularly those students enrolled in Advanced Placement classes, performing at the same level on AP exams as African American males in schools with higher achievement and higher income factors? In contrast, lower-performing students were typically enrolled in the regular academic programs that served all students. Being enrolled in these special classes may contribute to school performance.

A related question would be, is it possible that the teachers in the specialized programs are more experienced and better prepared than those teachers in the regular program? More research is needed to attempt to answer both of these questions.

It can be inferred for this study that higher-performing students were surrounded by peers who possessed common academic performance. For achievement motivation, the lower-performing students reported higher degrees of support. However, this study did not identify whether this support impacted this group in a positive or negative way. The question remains, What can schools to increase peer support that will positively affect African American males?

Many high schools have implemented zero tolerance related to school offenses. Zero tolerance requires automatic suspensions and expulsion for serious behaviors. The idea has merit, but the reality is many African Americans fall behind in their academic classes because African American males are more likely to be disciplined at higher rates than other subgroups.

School policies such as uniforms, dress codes (especially the policy for sagging pants), disrespect, and fighting may impact the academic performance of African American males as violation of these policies often lead to out of school suspension. Schools should explore alternative practices to suspensions without lowering discipline expectations for all students, especially African Americans who are already marginalized as disruptive forces within schools.

Schools seemingly embrace African American males who are skilled athletes, and athletics was identified in this study as significant to African American males. However, it is not uncommon that upon graduating from high school, many of these athletes must attend community or junior colleges while they develop the academic standards required by Division I universities, and it is not uncommon for many athletes to be dismissed from college for discipline or academic reasons. Does athletics distract or server as artificial support for African American males' academic performance? More research is needed to explore ways in which high school athletics can support African American males' academics as an intricate part of the process of obtaining future goals. African American males may see having great athletic ability as sufficient to reach their goals of being prosperous professional athletes. As a result, does this group enroll in courses or programs that prepare them for college? School districts ensure that coaches are certified teachers who share the belief that students must also demonstrate strong academic commitment. Coaches should be encouraged to use their influence for students to be good athletes and good students. In addition, school officials should offer prep classes for athletes preparing them for college entrance exams just as they prepare extra training to be good athletes. Academic prep classes should not be optional for the student athlete. In addition, school officials should insist that counselors, coaches, parents, and students devise academic

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plans which assure graduation for athletes. The plan must have the necessary course work to be eligible for college, particularly Division I colleges.

Most students in this study lived in homes without fathers. Schools should support these students by engaging professional African American men as mentors. This effort could provide more enriched and personalized opportunities for African American males to have effective males as a part of their cognitive and personal development. If schools are going to help African American males to experience successful school experience, more research is needed about effective practices for building strong relationships with this group, especially relationships with mentors.

Research must continue to explore attitudes as to why many African American males are excluded from advanced academic programs but disproportionately included in programs for students with disabilities. Research must continue to examine if the current policies and procedures for special education placement and gifted and talented identification biased and/or appropriated for African American males.

This study found that higher performing African American males had statistically significant differences in their perceived levels of having strong relationships with significant adults. School leaders could address this issue by creating personalized instructional programs, perhaps through that high schools organized into smaller learning communities that have academic or career-base themes. Within these smaller learning communities, students could be provided an advisory, a common core of teachers, and involved with the same peers throughout their high school careers. Teachers would serve as advocates for students and develop strong bonds with students and their families.

Two of the student spoke of involvement in church-related activities. They indicated that they received encouragement and support from members in their churches, namely their youth minister. Schools should find opportunities to work with youth ministers and other key church members of the church as an additional support for African American males. This study did not identify the youth minister or church members by gender. More research on how gender of church members may influence the school performance of African American males.

Recommendations for Further Research

The students in this research study came from an urban school district with a small percentage of African American males. A larger district with higher numbers of African Americans would increase the availability for random sampling of African American males. Larger sample sizes might improve the effect size in differences between groups. Additionally, larger samples could provide the opportunity for structuring and testing scientifically hopeful interventions that have emerged from this study

Also the principles of self-determination should be continued to be researched for African American males. This could lead to the development of appropriate instruments that reflect the unique linguistic and cultural experiences of African American males.

This study was conducted in two high schools with high concentration of African American males. A similar study should be conducted in schools that are predominantly white to see if there are similarities in both the qualitative and quantitative data sets.

African American males continue to be disproportionately represented in classes for students with disabilities. Further explanations of self-determination theory may provide

effective methods for understanding and addressing disproportionate representation of this group in classes for special needs students and African American males with disabilities as subjects.

This study included both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The qualitative segment included only interviews with successful African American males. Interviews should be expanded to include unsuccessful African American males as a comparative group to examine if there are similarities in the types of emerging themes. Additional studies should include information from parents, teachers, and peers. Such information could suggest strategies which would build strong relationships for African American males, particularly those who struggle in school.

Limitations of Methodology

This study presented the following limitations:

1. The scales that were included in this study had not been designed for exclusive use with African American males.

2. The scales may have been culturally and linguistically biased in its content.

3. The sample size was reduced significantly because students did not complete all items of the surveys.

4. The exploratory interviews with the 4 students may not be significant to make generalizations about all African American males.

5. The demographic survey did not provide the opportunity to collect data for "other" category in the parent demographic data. This could have been of importance in the demographic data about "fathers' educational attainment" in which the "other" category was larger than that of the "father" category.

APPENDIX A

Content Analysis of The Journal of Negro Education

Era	No. of Articles on Schooling and African American Males	Researchers	Major Findings
1932-1939	2	Daniels (1932)	Delinquent African American boys had higher degrees of unsociable traits, home/family conflicts, abnormal anger and lower levels of trustworthiness
		Outland (1937)	Troubled African American boys had lower formal schooling and higher degrees of mental retardation.
1940-1949	1	Watts (1941)	There is no difference in the mental abilities between delinquent and non-delinquent boys; but, there is significant difference in their interests, habits, and attitudes.
1950- 1959	0		
1960-1969	2	Knight (1969)	No difference between self-concept perceptions of mentally retarded and regular special education males.
		Mann (1969)	Standardized IQ tests are not valid measurements for the placement of African American males in special education classes.
1970-1979	4	Kapel (1970)	Black males have higher levels of achievement when they attend school with high percentage of white students.
		Schab (1971)	African American boys are found to have positive attitudes about home, school, religion, and morality.
		Sciara (1972)	Black males are found to positively identify with the concept of "blackness" through curriculum, role models, historical and cultural context.
		Dale & Keller (1972)	Black males are found to have higher degrees of self-concepts than their white counterparts.
1980-1989	2	Trotter (1981)	High achieving African American males perceived themselves to be among peers who have lesser academic values.
		Alston & Williams (1982)	Absence of father has a negative impact on the self-concept and achievement of African American males.
1990-1999	11	Mahiri (1991)	By participating in Sports, particularly basketball, African American males develop high motivational values and increase in the area of literacy.
		Garibaldi (1992)	Academic failure among African American males

			begin early and leads to disinterest in school and increased student drop out rates.
		Harry & Anderson (1994)	African American males are disproportionately placed in classes for special education.
		Rosa (1994)	Differences among African American males in the way they analyze, organize, and reorganize visual information in reading comprehension.
		Gordon, Gordon, & Nembhard (1994)	African American males are in trouble at a higher degree than other subpopulations.
		Polite (1994)	Chaotic school environments adversely affect the academic performance and engagement of African American males.
		Davis & Jordan, (1994)	Negative school structural and contextual factors affect the academic performance of African American males.
		Carver (1994)	Computer learning at an early age improves engagement and competence of African American males.
		Holland (1996)	Effective mentoring programs positively impact the academic performance and engagement of African American males.
		Washington (1996)	African American males are disproportionately involved in violent and criminal activities.
		Okwumabua (1999)	African American males lack knowledge of effective decision-making skills in dealing with social and academic issues.
2000s	3	Bush (2004)	Black mothers play a significant role in the development of sons' manhood and masculinity.
		Patterson (2005)	Guided notes is an effective intervention in improving the academic performance of black males in special education classes for emotional/behavior and learning disabilities.
		Corey & Bower (2005	Online/Web-based instructions in mathematics can be an appropriate learning tool for African American males.

AISD Program Evaluation Letter

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of Accountability

Department of Program Evaluation
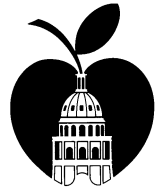
December 16, 2005

Leroy Davis
1303 Quail Park Drive
Austin, Texas 78758

Research Project: <u>R06.42</u>

Dear Mr. Davis,

This letter is to let you know that I have received all necessary forms and to notify you of the final approval of your research project entitled, "Self Determination, Achievement Motivation, and Self Regulatory Styles as Predictors of School Performance Among African American Males."

Please feel free to contact me whenever you are ready to begin coordinating data collection. When data collection is complete, please be sure to send a copy of the attached form. It allows us to closely track and limit the number of projects that require participation from our campuses at any given time.

Please also remember to submit a copy of your research findings and/or a copy of the final report to our office when it is complete. Remember, as specified in our Access to Confidential Data Agreement, it is imperative that the anonymity of staff and students be maintained in your final report.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Catherine A. Malerba, Ph.D.
Coordinator of External Research

Demographic Survey

Directions: Your responses to this survey will be held confidential. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

Your Name   _____

1.   Date of Birth: _____/_____/_____

                    mm/dd/yyyy

Place a check by the your choices

2.   Church Affiliation

        _____a. Baptist

        _____b. Methodist

        _____c. Pentecostal

        _____d. No Affiliation

        _____e. Other_____

3.   What is your current grade classification?

        _____a. First time 9th Grade

        _____b. Repeating 9th Grade

        _____c. First time 10th Grade

        _____d. Repeating 10th Grade

4.   What academic classes/program are you currently enrolled in?

        _____a. Advanced Academic Program

        _____b. AP

        _____c. AVID

        _____d. Comprehensive

        _____f. Other, please specify_____

5.   What is your race?

        _____a. Hispanic/Latino

_____b. African American/Black

_____c. White

_____d. Oriental/Asian

_____e. American Indian

_____f. Other, please specify _____

6. Which of your parents do you live with?

_____a. Mother and Father

_____b. Mother only

_____c. Father only

_____d. Other, please specify _____

7. Check the highest amount of education completed by your mother or female guardian.

____a. Professional/Graduate School (Doctorate or masters degree)

____b. College Grad (Bachelor degree)

____c. Some College (associate degree or college hours)

____d. High school grad

____e. Junior high school

____f. Elementary school

____g. don't know

____h. Other, please specify _____

8 Check the highest amount of education completed by your father or male   guardian.

____a. Professional/Graduate School (Doctorate or masters degree)

____b. College Grad (Bachelor degree)

____c. Some College (associate degree or college hours)

____d. High school grad

____e. Junior high school

____f. elementary school

____g. don't know

____h. Other, please specify _____

9. Do you or your family members qualify free or reduced lunches at your   school?

_____a. yes

_____b. no

10.   What activities do you participate in school?

_____a. Band

_____b. Choir

_____c. Football

_____d. Basketball

_____e. Track

_____f. Baseball

_____g. Clubs (please specify_____)

_____h. None

_____i. Others (please specify_____)

Needs Satisfaction Scale

Please read each of the following items carefully, thinking about how it relates to your life, and then respond by using the following scale to rate the items from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There are no correct or incorrect responses

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Cannot Decide or No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life.					
I really like the people I interact with.					
Often, I do not feel competent.					
I feel pressured in my life.					
People I know tell me I am good at what I do.					
I get along with people I come into contact with.					
I pretty much keep to myself and don't have a lot of social contact.					
I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions.					
I consider the people I regularly interact with to be my friends.					
I have been able to learn interesting new skills recently.					
In my daily life, I frequently have to do what I am told.					
People in my life care about me.					
Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do.					
People I interact with on a daily basis tend to take my feelings into consideration.					
In my life I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am.					
There are not many people that I am close to.					

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Cannot Decide or No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel like I can pretty much be myself in my daily situations.					
The people I interact with regularly do not seem to like me much.					
I often do not feel very capable.					
There is not much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to do things in my daily life.					
People are generally pretty friendly towards me.					

Student Opinion/Education Survey

Please Note: Each of the items below states an opinion. An opinion is a point of view. Therefore, no opinions are right or wrong. The purpose of this survey is to find out your opinions for research purposes only. Your responses will NOT be shown to your teachers and won't affect your grades in any way.

Directions: Please answer the following questions honestly as possible. Think carefully and check one box for the answer that best fits your opinion for each statement.

Part I: Parents, School, and Me

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Can't Decide or No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My father/male guardian encourages me to study.					
My school is a good place to study.					
Doing well in school is NOT important to me.					
My mother/female guardian tells me the only way to get a good job is to get a good education.					
Getting a school education is NOT for people like me.					
I don't care if I get into trouble in school.					
My mother/female guardian encourages me to study.					
Sometimes I do things at school that I know will get me in trouble.					
Getting an education is NOT for me.					
My father/male guardian tells me the only way to get a good job is to get a good education.					
School is a boring place to be.					
I believe school will help me to become a success one day.					
I like to study.					
I know that getting an education is important					
I go to school only to hook-up with my friends.					
I skip school when I think I can get away with it.					

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Can't Decide or No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel good when I learn things that will help me get a job.					
My father/male guardian does not care if I skip school.					
I believe my teachers are glad when I skip their classes.					
I think that going to school 3 days a week is more than enough.					

Part II: School and Teachers

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Cannot Decide or No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers usually think my opinions are wrong.					
My teachers can't usually understand people like me.					
Teachers get on my case more than they should.					
My teachers are always waiting for me to do something they don't like.					
Teachers don't care if I think something they do is wrong or unfair.					
When I get punished in school, I usually deserve it.					
My teachers expect I will do well in the future.					
I am one of the students teachers believe will be successful.					
My teachers believe I will graduate from high school.					
My teachers consider me to be pretty smart.					
My teachers don't think I'll go to college.					
Teachers want me to speak out when I think something isn't fair.					
Teachers typically want to know what I think about things.					

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Cannot Decide or No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers generally encourage me to speak my mind in class.					
When I want to say something, teachers usually call on me.					

Part III: School and Peers

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Cannot Decide or No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Most of my good friends will quit school when they are old enough.					
Most of my good friends plan to go to college.					
Most of my good friends won't drop out of high school.					
Most of my good friends will get a high school diploma.					
I don't think many of my good friends will graduate from high school.					
Lots of my good friends won't be able to go to college.					
My good friends tease the kids who do their homework.					
My good friends don't like to hang out with kids who study.					
My good friends make fun of kids who are concerned about grades					
Most of my good friends don't really care about school.					
My good friends help each other study for tests.					
I can call my friends for help with homework when I'm stuck.					
My good friends are the type of students teachers like to have in class.					
My friends work pretty hard in school.					
Most of my good friends try to do well in school.					

Interview Questions

1. What do you think are the reasons some African American males have successful school experiences? [Reasons for Success]

2. Name the people who have had the most influence on your academic career and how did they influence your academic success? [Relatedness]

3. Describe an incident or turning point that contributed to your academic success. [Coping With Adversities]

4. What have been some challenges you have faced in high school and how did you handle those challenges? [Coping With Adversities]

5. How do you solve problems at home or school? [Autonomy and Coping]

6. Have you ever been referred to as a Nerd or school boy or any other derogatory terms by other students? [Personal Motivation]

7. What are your goals upon graduating from high school and how will you reach those goals? [Personal Motivation]

8. What activities do you participate in high school or within the community? [Personal Motivation]

9. How do make decisions about how to live your life? [Autonomy]

10. What things or what classes do you feel that you are exceptionally good in? [Competence]

11. What advice can you offer me in assisting other African American males to be academically successful? [Reasons for Success]

12. Are there any other concluding comments you would like to share about your academic success?

13. How do you deal with conflict in your life? [Coping]

Transcribed Exploratory Interview Results

Question 1:

What do you think are the reasons why some African American males have successful school experiences? [Reasons for Success]

"Some of them receive a lot of encouragement from parents Like my mom, she went to UT. She would expect for me to at least go to college and to do something positive with my life. I guess some boys who don't do well in school don't have that at home where their Mom or Dad or someone they look up to gives them that kind of encouragement. Some of Black guys like the idea that are good in some subjects and that they are in those really difficult classes."

"A lot has to do with their parents' involvement. Like if their parents are always at school or involved in their school activities. Then, they are motivated to do well in school. Also their participation in activities in and outside of school helps them do well in school. A lot of it has to do with wanting to do well. It takes a lot of hard work and lot of studying. Sometimes, some guys just don't want to study, they just want to hang out."

"Because they see how we as Black people have been treated; so a lot of Black guys want to get an education so that they can do better. The ones that don't do good in school are trying to find the easy way out. They deal in drugs and other stuff cuz they don't want to work hard in school. They think that is an easy way to get rich. Sometime, you make it up in you mind that you are going to make something out of yourself – so you work hard in school."

"They are successful because they dedicate themselves by giving a lot of effort. Even if they are not strong in a subject, they still give it effort. The ones who are not successful usually give up or don't seek help. Sometimes, you have to make friends with other people who are good in a subject, especially one that you are not good in. So, you can always get that extra help from your friends."

Question 2:

Who are the person or persons who have had the most influence on your academic career and how did they influence your academic success? [Relatedness]

"Of course, my mother. She pushes me real hard to do the best I can in school. My football coaches. They tell me all the time that you should work to be the best player you can; but if you don't have the academics, then there is no reason to play. People at my church. They know that I can be someone that I am going to do something good with my life. Those are the people who have the greatest influence over me."

"Probably my parents. Well, a lot of is myself, like knowing that if I can do well in school then I can do well in life also. Also teachers throughout the years have helped me by making learning interesting and fun. For example, instead of lecturing they may show interesting videos and movies, and the give us a lot of hands on activities. Their classes are fun and not boring like some classes. Some of my teachers know me personally and that kind of help".

"My mom and my auntie because right now they are in school too, and they are showing me that education is the way to go, because it will make your life a lot easier. And you don't have to struggle like the folks who do have a high school education. My

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Youth Pastor also has influenced my live. He believes in me and teachers me a lot about how important school is."

"Probably, my Mom because she is a teacher. And she has done all of these things in her life and she wants that for me. She has gotten her Masters. So now, she is helping me to make all right decisions about what I want for my career. So she is helping me to make the right academic decisions to get me ready for my career. Also, I am influenced by friends who have gone to college and come and tell me how much fun they have in college. And people in my church who get a chance to go to good colleges. Like this one friend at my church goes to Morehouse. That's where I want to go. So I try to find out kind of decisions he made so that I can follow in his footsteps."

Question 3:

Will you describe an incident or turning point that contributed to your academic success?

[Coping]

"I failed one on my classes. I didn't fail for the year, but I received a 60 something on my report card for the sixth weeks. It was hard cuz my Mom was looking at me real hard. I know she wants me to go to college and I felt like I let her down. I love playing football, so when I failed, I had to sit out for sixth weeks. The coach would let me practice with the team, but I couldn't play. I was embarrassed. A lot of friends on the team said that I let the team down. So that's when I realized that grades and school are important."

"Well, in sixth grade I went to an elementary school and it wasn't that hard. I made really good grades and I really didn't have to try very hard. And during 7th grade, I

went to middle school, and that was the hardest year for me. There was a lot of homework every night, and I had to work real hard. My parents helped me a lot. And I made good grades, but not like I really wanted. So I had to study and learn stuff a lot on my own. I didn't like asking questions, because the other kids thought you were stupid. This was an honors class, and I wanted the kids to think that I was just as smart as everybody else. I was able to make good grades and I learned how to \get my homework and stay on top of my school work. That helped me to gain confidence; and since then I try to do my very best."

"I have a sister here at this school. Her sophomore year, she wasn't doing as well as she could do. She was failing classes and not going to classes. She was always in trouble with my Mom at home. She and my mom were always arguing and almost in fights. My sister was always grounded and she always said she was going to kill herself. I could hear my mom crying at night time in her bedroom. And I saw what this was doing to the family so I said that I would never do that. So I decided then and there that I would get focused and I want let this happen to me. She is a senior this year and she will graduate in the Delta Program. But I will never forget hearing my mom crying that night."

"A big turning point was going to junior high school. When I went to elementary school, I went to one of the rare elementary schools that went from K through sixth grade. So I stayed there for sixth grade and I did have the experience of maturing quicker in middle school like some of my friends did. So when I went to this junior high school for 7th and 8th grade, that's when I learned that it is difficult to change from school to

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school. I had to make changes to fit into the new school. So the transition from elementary to junior high school was difficult for me. I had to learn how to balance a lot of things like clubs, and dances and making good grades. Also, I had to deal with this growing up stuff, like being scared and embarrassed to take showers after PE."

Question 4

What have been some challenges you have faced in high school and how did you handle those challenges? [Coping]

"Just trying to keep my grades up in order to play sports. I just keep trying to do all my work and doing the right thing. Sometimes after practice, I am really tired and don't feel like doing a lot of school work. So, I found that I can do my work during lunch sometimes or right after school. I also like to go home and eat, take a shower. Then I feel a little more relax and then I can do my work. My coach keeps reminding us that if we get scholarships in football we have to keep our grades up or we will flunk out of college and lose our scholarships."

"A lot of it is mostly English. Keeping with the fast pace of the reading. I handled this by trying to get the book ahead of time, and trying to stay ahead of the reading schedule. I like to read, but some of the stuff we have to read is boring. I sometimes try to make some of the characters come to life by relating them to people I know. I learned that in ninth grade. This helps, but English is still really a challenge for me."

"All of my teachers challenge me to do my best and make something out of myself. My engineering teacher keeps telling everybody in our class that I am going to be the one to take it the distance in engineering."

"Definitely homework. Homework was very difficult for me when I was in the advanced academic program last year. I had so much homework that I could barely keep up. This year, I am taking both regular and advanced classes to ease the load. I can handle the homework a lot easier and it is not stressing me and my Mom out this year. Most teachers want give you an extension. So I just buckle down and do it so that I want get behind. One time, I copied someone else's homework, and the teacher caught me. She called my mother to tell her, and I got into a lot of trouble at home."

Question 5:

How do you solve problems at school or home? [Autonomy]

"Most times I try to figure things out and solve problems on my own. If it is really big, I talk to my Mom or someone that I trust to help me. At school, I also talk to the teacher or someone who knows that subject pretty good to get additional help if it related to school work. I don't know my counselor very well. I also go to tutoring when I need to."

"Well, lot of times I am my friends to help. I have a couple of friends that I really trust. One guy, I have known all my life. Sometimes, my parents also help me as much as they can, especially with school work. Some of the stuff they have forgotten. So I look on the internet, or talk with my teacher about stuff I don't understand at school."

"If I don't understand it, I tell my teacher or go for one on one tutoring after school."

Question 6:

"Have you ever been referred to as a "Nerd" or "School Boy" or some other derogatory comment by other students? Please explain your answer. [Coping and Personal Motivation]

"Yes, some of the students, their grades are not as good as mine, tease me sometimes. See, at the beginning of school, I didn't work as hard as I could and my grades slipped. Then, I started doing my work and not hanging out. That's when they tease me and call me "sissy boy" or "school boy". But, sometimes they want to use my work and I don't let them. I don't pay them any attention, because I don't want to have to tell my mom that I failed a class."

"Oh yeah, like all the time. They call me a name like Nerd. But that doesn't bother me. A lot of it happened in middle school when we were on the bus. Most of them were students in the regular [comprehensive] program. They think that we are all kind of nerdy because we take hard classes and try to make good grades."

"They say that I am a school boy because you are always doing your work. Usually these are my friends and people that I hang out with. I think they be playing with me. So I would say something like 'how am I going to make it without an education and they laugh'"

"No I have not been teased. In fact, most of my friends encourage you to make good grades and give you compliments when you get a good grade on an

assignment. I am really lucky that a lot of my friends at school and at my church are use to making good grades. We kind of expect that from each other. In fact, we tease each other when we make a low grade in a class."

Question 7

What are your goals upon graduating from high school, and how will you reach those goals?

[Personal Motivation]

"Hopefully go to college either academically or on an athletic scholarship. I really want to be an engineer, but being a professional football player is a real high dream for me. But, I know that football last only 15 years and I can be an engineer a lot longer. So I don't want to spend my life dreaming about being a football player. I got to make sure that my grades are straight and that I am on top of my game."

"Well I want to go to college, and also, I am taking German. I want to apply for a scholarship to study in Germany for a year after I graduate from high school. Then I will come back and finish college here. I will keep making good grades and I can make reach this goal."

"To go to college on an academic or sports scholarship. I play football. I am going to major in engineering to start my own business.   I know that I have to take a lot of math and engineering courses. I took engineering last year too."

"Actually, I am little shaken on my goals right now. I know I want to go to Morehouse. I am not sure that Morehouse has the type of courses that will help with career plans in multimedia productions and PR [public relations].

Question 8

What activities do you participate in at school, church, or in your community? [Competence]

> "Football. I sing in the youth choir at my church and University Outreach for minorities with a good GPA. We do a lot of volunteer stuff in the community."

> "I am in German Club. I played tennis and soccer last year. I am also involved with the Film Club."

> "I play chess. After football season, I am going to join the Chess Club. I go to church all of the time. I and my sister are in charge of the Youth Department. Me and my sister make decisions about what we are going to do on certain days or how are we going to pay for trips."

> "I am doing peer mediation now. In church, I am doing the youth choir and ushering. I in a community service group called Kudos. I am also in Top Teens of American. I also play football and the manager for the basketball team."

Question 9

How do you make decisions about how to live your life? [Autonomy]

> "I try to think out and try to look at the whole picture. I try to make decisions that will help me do what I plan to do with my life. I listen to what my mother and other adults say and I take their words into consideration before making the final decision."

"I try to live my life like my parents have taught me. I try to treat everybody with dignity and respect. I try to treat everybody like I want them to treat me."

Sometimes, I get confused when my mom tells to make a decision for myself. I get scared because I don't know if I am making the right decision. I try to do what I think is right, then I make the decision. So far, I have been doing a good job. I don't think I have made in bad mistakes about my life."

Question 10

What things or what classes do you feel that you are exceptionally good in? [Competence]

"Football, I play football very well. I am good in math. I am already ahead of my class. I am taking Algebra II and most of my friends are taking Geometry. In middle school, my coach was my Algebra I teacher. He always helped me and a couple other players out."

"Right now, I am really good in math and English; I am struggling but not failing. Right now I am taking guitar and I am good at it. I use to be good in playing piano, but I don't lessons any more. I like the guitar better."

"I am good at history and math and all kinds of sports."

"I think I am pretty good in world history, and that's surprise me. I am usually not that good in history. This history class is not like other history classes. We do a lot of projects instead of reading, memorizing, and taking a test. Like yesterday we were studying Islam and we are creating a book as a project. I am also good in English. English is my strongest subject. I am also good at

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public speaking. I have entered a lot of contests to compete in public speaking

and motivational speaking. I like mixing music."

Question 11

What advice can you offer me to assist African American males to become more focused upon

their academics?

"Try to be like a role model to them. If they need something, there is a

difference between a need and a want, to help give them what they need. Not

money, but encouragement and support'.

"Get to the parents! Try to get their parents more involved. And try to

find different ways to motivate them."

"I try to surround myself around people who are not negative. We should

have programs that are fun and exciting for kids. Get them more involved in

sports. If they participate in sports then they will have to keep their grades up to

play.

"Talk about the importance of being committed to what you are doing.

Never do any thing half-way. You will get half of what you want. Commitment

and being focused on activities. Ask for help from teachers or classmates. Tell

teachers what is the best way in which they learn.'

Question 12

Are there any other concluding comments you would like to share about your academic success?

"It always has been all about my parents helping and supporting me. I

have also been fortunate to have good teachers who took special interest in me."

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"I always like a challenge and I like things that are difficult. I use that to try to build my knowledge. Like I am taking Spanish right now and it is a challenge. But I took it because I wanted the challenge."

"Sometime I have the tendency to start off good and then slack up a little, not enough to fail, but enough to get my attention and get me refocused. Sometimes I may fall in one class while working hard in another class. You have to balance yourself and be well rounded."

Question 13

How do you deal with conflict in your life? [Coping]

"I think about what I am going to say. Sometimes I get mad and say things before really thinking about it. Now, I really try to think through before I say or do something. If it's not necessary, I keep it to myself."

"Well like right now, my parents are getting divorced and my dad is moving into his girlfriend's house. I have to stay focus and not let that interfere with my academics. I try to stay connected them both and continue to ask both for help."

"Last week, I was in my IPC class, and I was sitting down and talking to this girl behind me. We were just talking. The next thing we knew, the teacher walked out of class and called campus security. The police told me to come outside in the hall, and he said that they found marijuana under my desk. I didn't argue and went with them because I knew that I didn't have any drugs. I don't do drugs. So I did not let this distract me from staying focused on my school work. I

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told my Mom about this situation, and she took care of it. It turned out; they

thought I was another student."

GLOSSARY

Achievement Motivation   An intention to engage students in various types of academic
                          activities based upon interests, perceptions of education,
                          and their goals for the future (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Advanced Academic   A name given referring to specialized academic, application-
                          based program offered by the district.

African American: A person of African descent who was born and reared in   the
                          United States (Leak, 2003).

Advanced Placement   High school courses that have been sanctioned by the National
Classes   College Board as rigorous and aligned with
                          college readiness standards.

Advancement Via   Is special college prep program geared toward disadvantaged
Individual Determination first generation students eligible to attend college.

Comprehensive   An academic program that offers core academic courses
Program   available at all high schools in the District

Dialectic View   A perspective as to how individuals cope with the various forces
                          with his or her social environment (Deci &Ryan, 2002).

Engagement   Children's initiation of action, effort, and persistence on
                          schoolwork, as well as their ambient state during learning
                          activities (Connell & Wellborn, 1990).

External   A regulatory behavior that is performed to obtain rewards or to
Regulation   avoid punishments (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Higher-Performing   Students identified as higher-performing by the school counselor
Students   based upon a GPA of 3.0 or better, passing all portions tested on
                          the 2005 TAKS, enrolled in one advanced academics classes or
                          honors courses, and good attendance and discipline records.

Identified   A regulatory behavior that causes a person to value a goal or
Regulation   regulation and acceptance of that behavior as personally important
                          (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Integrated Regulation	A regulatory behavior in which identification with goals or regulations have been evaluated and brought into congruence with ones personal values, goals, and needs (Ryan & Deci, 2002).
Internalization	A natural process in which people work to actively embraces external regulations into self-regulation (Schafer, 1968).
Introjected Regulation	Refers to taking in but not accepting a regulation as one's own (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
Lower-Performing Students	Students identified as lower-performing students by the school counselors based on having a GPA of less than 2.5, not having ample credits to be on grade level, failing any portion of the 2005 TAKS, and having discipline and attendance issues.
Organismic View	A perspective which focuses upon how humans grow and develop (Deci & Ryan, 1985).
School Performance	Performance will include data from the 2004-05 school year to include sixth weeks grades, attendance records, discipline records, participation in extra curricular activities, type of elective classes taken, placement in academic program, and scores on the State assessment (TAKS).
Self-Systems	A process by which individuals cumulatively construct and revise views of themselves and their social/physical worlds (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

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