

## Abstract

ELLERBE, JAMES C. A Case Study of a Single-Gender Public Charter School. (Under the direction of Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli).

African-American male students' scores are among the lowest in public schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2009), and these students are less likely to earn a high school diploma (Gewertz, 2008) let alone be admitted to a four-year college or university. Boys are more likely to drop out of school, obtain lower grades and lower class ranks than girls, and are more likely to suffer from learning disabilities. Men are less likely to attend college and, while in college, they spend more time than women exercising, partying, watching TV, or playing video games. Consequently, they are less likely to graduate from college than women. As a whole, boys are not doing well in school, which is probably an understatement if we were to consider high-risk youths (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010).

This research study investigated an urban public charter school in the northern part of the United States that uses a single-gender setting approach to address the lack of performance and success in African-American male students. Furthermore, this research study explored how this school constructs conditions and factors to obtain success in graduating college-ready students. Moreover, the faculty, administrators, and board members have established a framework of support and work collaboratively to assist their students' success, so what they perceive to be the factors that contribute to the success of these African-American male students is paramount.

The overall perception of the single-gender school in this case study is that it creates a more educationally focused environment that targets the learning style of the student. Based on the findings, this single-gender setting has experienced success in educating African-American males for college, based upon the significantly higher graduation rate as compared

to the district average in this urban school district. Furthermore, the board members, administrators, teachers, and majority of the students interviewed indicated a favorable disposition toward the single-gender setting.

There are studies on single-gender educational programs, but few studies give “voice” to the targeted population and its supporters; therefore, this research study conducted an exploratory case study of Boys’ Achievement Academy and is important because this school is having success with a population that has historically done poorly. The system of practice framework this particular case study participant practiced suggests that leaders use artifacts to establish structures that facilitate a culture of success in the teaching and learning environment.

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A Case Study of a Single-Gender Public Charter School

by  
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## **Dedication**

I want to dedicate this dissertation to all of my family, extended family, professors, and friends who have supported me through this entire process.

## **Biography**

James C. Ellerbe was born in a small country town in South Carolina. The eldest of three children born to Mr. and Mrs. David and Sarah Crosland, James realized early in life that a relationship with God and an excellent education was his way out of poverty and to accomplish the goals that he set for himself. Those goals were: teacher, assistant principal, principal, associate superintendent, and then his ultimate goal, superintendent. With these goals in mind he started on an upward spiral to become the best in his field that he could be. Currently, James serves as the supervisor of state principal coaches across the state of North Carolina with the Department of Public Instruction

James graduated with honors from Marion High School in Marion, South Carolina. After graduating high school, he entered active duty with the US Army where he traveled extensively, both home and abroad for several years. After active duty, James joined the US Air Force Reserve while completing college and serving as a teacher assistant and bus driver. He began his college career at the University of Maryland and continued his education at Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he earned a Bachelor's of Education degree and Master's degree in administration. Currently, James has completed his Doctorate Degree Program at North Carolina State University.

We all have influences and or memorable encounters in our lives that set a pattern based on their beliefs. James has had three great encounters. First, his mother felt it best to raise him in church and always told him, "Son, always keep God first and study and do well

in school so you will make something out of yourself.” Feeling the sincerity and care of these words still drives him today.

Secondly, Ronnie Rice, assistant principal and football coach, now deceased, taught James trust and responsibility. Coach Rice was a father figure who truly knew the meaning of unconditional love.

Thirdly, Dr. John Godbolt and Vertell Godbolt, whom James considers the most influential mentors in his life, took him in as their own son and taught him the ways of Godliness. They instilled and nurtured in James a sense of integrity and belief in yourself. Integrity has allowed Chris to be free from the fear of failure.

James is well on his way to accomplishing all the goals he set for himself. He is very ambitious and has a “Heart of Gold”.

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I want to thank God for giving me this privilege and opportunity to grow and develop as a liberal American. Without God's grace and mercy, I know that I could not have maintained the strength, virtue, and vitality to complete this task and add to the well-being of our human race. It's with these thoughts that I humbly submit myself to perform the higher call on my life to research a topic which seeks to improve the quality of life enjoyed by humanity.

Second, I thank both my biological and spiritual families who have prayed, supported, and cared for me during this research. My mother always will be remembered in my life as teaching me two important lessons -- to love God with all my heart and always strive for a better education. My spiritual father and mother have taught me about the wisdom of God and treated me as if I was born into their family. I also owe debts of gratitude and apologies to family and friends who have understood when I said I could not make certain gatherings because of the need to read, study, and write because they always showed love even when they did not understand. I also want to give thanks to my editor, Julie Malcolm, for always being willing to proofread my material and offer a wealth of knowledge about the content.

Next, I would like to thank my academic family at North Carolina State University, which includes the professors in the Educational Leadership Program, my advisory committee, and the many friends I have met along the way. I truly can say we worked as a



collaborative unit. Many of the professors made my tenure at NC State pleasurable and rigorous. I chose to attend NC State because I knew it was a renowned research facility, and I desired to prove to myself that I could obtain my doctorate from such a prestigious institution. The professors guided me toward excellence with their quality assignments and continuous collaboration. I must mention the respect and gratitude I have for Drs. Bonnie and Lance Fusarelli. Dr. Lance Fusarelli was so inspiring about building capacity that I had to ask him to be a part of my advisory committee. It was his unerring wit, positive disposition, and enduring vision of excellence that really sold me. His wife, Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, however, taught me to enjoy my dissertation process and value the daily learning experiences which helped me re-discover and re-define certain beliefs and goals in life. I was inspired to expand the body of knowledge and to leave a positive legacy behind when I left this life. I must say, Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, you told me the truth, and this is why Dr. Lance Fusarelli is the “other” Fusarelli.

Finally, I would like to proudly salute the many Americans of all races who laid down their lives or suffered various types of wounds in their struggle to ensure me the freedom to pursue my dreams. My passion to “strive for excellence” is invigorated when I think of my experience of touring Alabama from Selma to Montgomery. I remember meeting a lady in charge of the Civil Rights Museum by the name of “Big Mama” who described her experience of *Bloody Sunday*. She was a small child who was trampled upon by the crowd when all the chaos broke out; however, she vowed that if God spared her life, she would

work to ensure that all people within her reach would hear the story of struggle and the subsequent victory of human rights.

It is with these sentiments that I am honored to be chosen by God as an African-American male who has valued his dissertation experience, worked to achieve his professional goals, maintained his academic integrity, and completed the research he was called to do while adding learning for the improvement of humanity.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Gibbs (1988) found that “[b]lack males are portrayed . . . in a limited number of roles, most of them deviant, dangerous, and dysfunctional. . . . This constant barrage of predominantly disturbing images inevitably contributes to the public’s negative stereotypes of black men, particularly of those who are perceived as young, hostile and impulsive” ( p. 3). Literature in elementary school presents a picture of males as “aggressive, argumentative, and aggressive” according to a study of 97 stories in a number of reading series (Evans & Davies, 2000, p. 263).

Kunjufu (2002) states “[w]e are very much aware that African-American[sic] females are also underachieving. . . .The reality is the number of males who go to special education, remedial reading, are suspended, drop out, and go to prison exceed the number of females” (p. vii). The 2006 edition of *The Praeger Handbook of Special Education* states that approximately two thirds of the individuals who receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act are male, although males and females are equally represented in the school age population (Freire, 2001). A 1994 U. S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights Elementary and Secondary School Compliance Report stated that males account for 69.3% of the Specific Learning Disabled students compared to 30.8% female. In the Mentally Retarded category, 59.0% are male and 41.6% female. The Emotionally Disabled group is 79.4% male and 21.0% female (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).



Males appear to perform less proficiently than females according to national and state assessment results. The National Assessment of Educational Progress measures the achievement of students in reading and math annually. Scores from 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2007 indicate higher reading scores from 6 to 11 points for fourth and eighth grade female students than for males. Math scores were slightly higher by 1 to 3 points for males during the same period (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008).

Meanwhile Kunjufu (2002) found “the number of African-American[sic] females exceed the number of African-American[sic] males in college” (p. vii). On a national level, statistics indicate that 72% of female students and 65% of male students graduate from high school, and female students graduated at a higher rate in each major racial group than male students (Green & Winters, 2006).

### **Statement of the Problem**

AJ is a fourteen year old challenged African-American male student from a single-parent home and currently in high school. His mother is worried sick about his current status and future. AJ has no positive male role model in his life and faces an identity crisis. According to his records, he has repeated a grade and experienced challenges passing standardized assessments. His eighth grade reading teacher had referred him to the Student Services Team (SST) because of his difficulties with reading assignments, poor academic performance, and behavioral issues. The teacher has described him as a behaviorally-challenged, extremely energetic child who has limited critical thinking skills. Ultimately, the teacher wants AJ out of her class and in a special educational setting. According to the

teacher, AJ is at-risk. AJ instigates arguments with other students, has trouble staying focused on assignments, becomes confrontational when verbal corrections are made, and persistently presents a host of other challenges. At times, AJ has shown the ability to control his temper and to work independently on tasks of interest to him. He is popular among his peers, especially the girls, and has a desire to learn when he feels successful with his efforts.

Many teachers would have predicted AJ's destiny: suggesting him as a possible long-term suspension to an alternative school, a potential dropout, a potential drug dealer, an eventual candidate for prison, or an early graveyard. However, a voice cries, "What can we do to save this child's life? How can we help AJ become more cognizant about making better choices in life? What can we do to assist this child in becoming a better educated person, who has plenty of positive choices? Can an alternative setting such as a single-gender program serve to be more applicable for AJ's learning?"

### **Background and Context**

Across every category of testing, utilizing almost every assessment type (SAT, ACT, NAEP and local standardized tests), African-American male students across the country do not achieve academically at the same rate as other subgroups (Achilles, Finn, & Gerber, 2000). By the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, African American male students are two years behind their wealthier, predominately white peers. By eighth grade, they fall behind three years. By their senior year, they are behind by four years (Cole, 1995).

African-American male students have a greater percentage of disciplinary actions against them in public education, and, compared to American Europeans, they are twice as

likely to drop out of high school and are suspended three times as often (Irvine, 1990). In many school districts throughout the United States, African-American male students are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from school. When compared to their white peers, African-American male students lag significantly behind in both grade point average and on standardized tests (Noguera, 2006).

Still, African-American male students heavily populate exceptional children's programs across the nation. For instance, African-American youth make up 17% of the student body population of public schools; interestingly, they comprise 40% of the population of special education programs (Achilles, Finn, & Gerber, 2000). African-American male students are more likely to be classified as mentally retarded or suffering from a learning disability and placed in special education and, conjunctively, more likely to be absent from advanced placement and honors courses. In contrast to most other groups where males commonly perform at higher levels in math and science related courses, the reverse is true for African-American male students (Noguera, 2006).

Since African-American male students are behind in all academic performance measures and overrepresented in special education due to behaviors, school districts across America have sought alternative ways such as single-gender programs to support educating these at-risk students but not without challenges. Salomone (2006) reports:

For almost three decades, the Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Education adhered to a policy prohibiting public schools from separating girls and boys for all or part of the school day with few exceptions. That position relied primarily on the OCR's[sic] reading of Title IX, the 1972 sex discrimination statute, and more specifically on regulations adopted in 1975 that remain in force today. In March 2004, the federal Department of

Education issued proposed Title IX regulations that promise to provide public school districts and charter school organizations considerable flexibility in establishing single-gender classes and schools. (p. 778)

The status of gender-based education as an educational alternative began to change when *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) included a provision, specifically sections 5131 (a) (23) and 5131 (c), that was intended to authorize single-gender education in public schools. The new regulations allow coeducational public schools to offer single-gender schools or single-gender classrooms within coed schools (Federal Register, 2002). The federal Department of Education submitted proposed Title IX regulations that promised flexibility to public school districts establishing single-gender classes and schools in March 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). These regulations provide opportunities to address some of the legal ambiguities surrounding single-gender educational programs by relieving school districts of lawsuit fears. Single-gender classes and programs are now legally permissible provided they are used to promote school reform efforts.

According to the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the Department of Education, educators must consider the educational needs of all students and create strategies to close the achievement gap between Caucasian and African-American children (2002). Since education in public school is deemed as the most accessible way to achieve academically, culturally, economically, socially, and politically, this dissertation focuses on theoretical contexts of cognitive and social indicators as measures of the various single-gender research studies in order to reveal the perceptions of African-American male students who participate in single-gender programs.

Presently, African-American male students are being identified and placed in exceptional children programs at an alarming rate when educators should instead be seeking to find ways to motivate these students to learn (Kunjufu, 2002). Male students, especially African American male students, have some basic emotional disadvantages in a competitive class room environment due to natural differences in the thinking process (Slocumb, 2004). As corporate leaders worldwide pay millions of dollars to fund team-building projects within their organizations in an effort to create a sense of unity and buy-in, the same practice must apply in education with the building of positive human relationships with African-American male students being of paramount importance (Young, 2002) in order to educate them. Teachers are in a unique position to advance the use of healthy cultural teaching practices and to promote these practices by incorporating culturally-relevant, enabling text into their instructional practices. Through the utilization of culturally-relevant text, African-American male students will develop transformative ideologies concerning their own efficacy regarding academic achievement (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1990, 1994, 1995, 1995a; Pang, 2001; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

### **Purpose of Study**

African-American male students are less likely to earn a high school diploma (Gewertz, 2008) but this particular single-gender setting is experiencing success graduating these students compared to the national average. More importantly, this particular setting not only sets a goal for graduation but evaluates itself by the number of African-American male students who are admitted to a four-year college or university. Therefore, the purpose of this

research study was to explore the factors that contribute to Boys' Achievement Academy's success in graduating college-ready students. Just like what is needed in the open scenario with AJ, educators should exhaust all alternative options before dismissing African-American male students in the educational environment.

For this exploratory research case study, Boys' Achievement Academy was the targeted population. Boys' Achievement Academy's student population is predominately African-American males and is the first privately funded public charter school of its kind. Moreover, the faculty, administrators, and board members work collaboratively to support their students in successfully completing high school and entering a college or university, so what they perceive to be the factors that contribute to the success of these African-American male students is paramount to this study.

There are many studies on single-gender educational programs, but few studies give "voice" to the targeted population and its supporters; therefore, I conducted an exploratory case study of Boys' Achievement Academy. This research is important because this school has had success with a population that has historically performed poorly in academics and behavior in this urban school district. In the end, this research study provides a lens for educators who seek alternate ways of supporting African-American male students for success and serves as an avenue to disseminate knowledge to its readers about what African-American male students perceive works in supporting their ability to academically and behaviorally succeed.

## **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined to provide clarity and understanding for potential readers:

*Academic Success* – African-American male students scoring at or above on grade level standardized assessments and pursuing some type of post-graduation school or career.

*African-American male students* – the terms black males and black boys are used in some documents, but the term African-American male students will be used throughout this dissertation for consistency.

*At-risk students* – students who are potential dropouts based upon behavior, attendance, grades, etc. in American public schools.

*Culture of success* – “..... is the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make the persona’ of the school” (Cromwell, 2002, p.4).

*Culture of poverty* – people of a low socio-economic status who share values, ethos, and a worldview that dictate their lifestyle (Kunjufu, 2002).

*Single-gender education* – the term single-gender education may refer to the gender composition of the school, classrooms, or teaching staff (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994), but through this dissertation the term “single-gender” will be used.

## **Significance of the Study**

“A Call for Change!” School districts across the United States have struggled to find ways to close student achievement gaps, especially for African-American male students.

According to The Council of the Great City Schools (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, &

Casserly, 2010), as an effective, successful contributor in society, the future situation for African-American male students appears bleak and/or even extinct. The nation's young African-American males are in a state of crisis. They do not have the same opportunities as their male or female counterparts across the country. They are more likely to live in single-parent homes and less likely to participate in early child care programs. They are less likely to be raised in a household with a fully employed adult, and they are more likely to live in poverty. As adults, African-American males are less likely than their peers to be employed. At almost every juncture, the odds are stacked against these young men in ways that result in too much unfulfilled potential and too many fractured lives. Much of this story has been told before. Still, there has been little work focusing specifically on the academic attainment of African-American males in our schools and how it is contributing to destructive patterns we see. Indeed, the need to find alternative ways of educating African-American male students is paramount and vital for school districts in America (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010).

In 2000, Cornelius Riordan declared that boys are less likely than girls to be in an academic (college preparatory) curriculum since they have lower educational and occupational expectations, have lower reading and writing test scores, and expect to complete their schooling at an earlier age (Meyer, 2008). It has long been recognized that African-American males are doing quite poorly in today's America. According to statistics provided by the Editorial Projects in Educational Research Center (Gewertz, 2008), 46.2 percent of African-American males graduate with a general high school diploma, as compared to 72.3



percent of white and 52.3 percent of Hispanic males. Although the percentage of U.S. African Americans, both male and female, is approximately 12%, African-American males make up 50% of the public school dropout population and more than 40% of the federal prison population (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

All students must be afforded the opportunity to receive an exceptional education with equality in mind. Students must be highly skilled and trained to compete in our evolving technological and information economy (Carnegie Forum, 1986). However, many school districts still ponder how to close the student achievement gap between African-American males and their white counterparts, but few attempts have been made to create the setting and pedagogy to support these students in college readiness and enrollment, professional degrees, wages, and adequate living conditions to avoid extinction.

One option some public schools are currently exercising is single-gender education. The term single-gender education may refer to the gender composition of the school, the classrooms, or the teaching staff (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994). More importantly, this research study focused on whether or not it is the single-gender setting, curriculum, extracurricular activities, small school setting, pedagogy, professional practices, teaching and learning practices, private funding, or some other factors that cause these once considered at-risk African-American males to better perform academically and behaviorally. By examining the Boys' Achievement Academy, both schools and districts can evaluate the effectiveness and make decision about future settings such as this. This case study

contributes to the meaningful body of available research by examining the perceptions of stakeholders and the performance of student in this setting.

### **Organization of the Study**

In Chapter One, groundwork is laid with statistical data to support the statement problem and show the purpose for this research. In Chapter Two, a literature review explores the history, laws affecting single-gender programs, boys' and girls' learning styles, perceptions, and other schools similar to the case study school. Chapter Three describes the methodical process for studying this phenomenon. Chapter Four discusses the analysis of the data collected and the factors found. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes and discusses the results.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

One of the most pervasive threats to the welfare of all Americans occurs when one or more segments of its population are uneducated. Even more pervasively, not only is there a disparity between Caucasian and African-American students in achievement, but an even greater student achievement gap between African-American male students and every other ethnic group, socio-economic group, race, and/or gender. As an effective, successful contributor in society, the future situation for African-American male students appears bleak and/or even extinct. Therefore, the need to find alternative ways of educating African-American male students is paramount and vital for school districts in America.

#### **History of Single-Gender and Coeducational Programs**

While there are no reliable counts of single-gender schools in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the best estimates are that most were schools for white boys. Many of the girls' schools that did exist early on served as "finishing" schools rather than preparation for college. James Coleman, University of Chicago sociologist wrote: "Single-gender school was, at the outset, schooling for boys. . . . Boys' schools, however, were dominant, and the elimination of single-gender schooling could be seen as elimination of that dominance" (Meyer, 2008, p.15). In 1645, King Charles I gave the Reverend John Eliot a charter to start a school in Boston to "fit [students] for public service both in church and common-wealth in

succeeding ages”; therefore, the Roxbury Latin School is recorded as the oldest continuously operating [all boys] school in America (Meyer, 2008).

According to Leonard Sax, executive director of the National Association for Single-Gender Education, before 1965, a large number of public and private schools in this country were single-gender. But over the next 30 years, almost all public and private schools became coeducational (Sax, 2005a).

For most school districts in America, coeducation began not because of any firm belief in its sound education effect but rather because of financial constraints (Riordan, 1990). James Coleman, University of Chicago sociologist and author of *Girls and Boys in School: Together or Separate?* noted that there were times when “a societal consensus dictates that one institution is right and coeducation is such an institution (Meyer, 2008, p. 15). In other words, coeducational schools were more efficient economically. Consequently, in the American society, only boys were allowed to receive an education. However, by the end of the 19th century, coeducation was all but universal in American elementary and secondary public schools (Riordan, 1990). Only private and parochial schools preserved a long history of providing single-gender educational opportunities until the early 1970s.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the civil rights and feminist movements combined their equality crusade fervor to “open” previously exclusive men’s schools to women, and white schools to blacks. Public single-gender schools were all but eliminated in the process. Central High School in Philadelphia, founded in 1838, may have been the last all-boys public school in America when it finally went coed in 1983. The coeducation sentiment was

intense; in 1969, even Yale University went coed, as did dozens of colleges and universities (Meyer, 2008).

Although insulated from laws governing public schools, private schools felt the pressure as well, and many single-gender institutions, often fighting for economic survival, opened their doors to both sexes after 1970 (Meyer, 2008). Rosemary C. Salomone, professor of law at St. John's University and author of the 2003 book *Same, Different, Equal: Rethinking Single-Gender Schooling* concedes "[s]ingle-gender schooling seemed to be dying a slow but certain death" (Meyer, 2008, p. 17). Even though single-gender schooling remained an option for private schools, it continuously declined until around 1985 when it was revived in the private sector in the United States.

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* was published and alerted the nation that our educational systems were failing (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The emphasis began to fall upon state and federal elections of school boards, school leaders, and government leaders as the best means for achieving excellence (Fischetti, 2002). This report challenged the traditional democratic method and directed policies to support teacher preparation, curriculum standards, student achievement, and change the state of American schools. Hence, ways to improve our educational system became an ongoing debate, and policymakers began to seek alternatives by tackling some major concerns.

As an alternative option and strategy, during the early 1990s a number of school leaders in Detroit, Rochester, New York, Ventura, California and other places tried to set up single-gender schools or single-gender classes. In all those cases, it was a sad story. The

programs were driven out or shut down by principals, teachers, and parents. The program in Detroit fought the trend in court, but it too was shut down by political pressures and threats of legal action. Nevertheless, both Riordan and Salomone say 1996 was the turning point in the single-gender school wars (Meyer, 2008).

At one point, it appeared single-gender schools were done; simultaneously, the gender fights occurred almost exclusively in the coed arena. The American Association of University Women (AAUW, 1998) published a series of studies in the 1990s called *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*. The AAUW report sparked an intense national debate with its findings that girls were disadvantaged in classrooms by many inequities, being called upon less frequently, and encouraged less than male students (Meyer, 2008). According to Meyer (2008), this study examined and concluded biases against females were the cause of the lack of educational achievement and self-development for women. Given the findings of this study, one would consider the burden of proof to be upon coeducational schools to demonstrate freedom from gender bias in terms of achievement and gender equity; however, this study indicated single-gender schools were more effective.

Since political correctness can and often overrides educational research and sociological theory in the formation of education policy, Rosemary Salomone (2003) identified reasons why single-gender schools should be combined with other structural reforms to benefit both boys and girls. Furthermore, according to Meyer (2008), boys were often seen as “teacher’s pets” who could challenge the teacher’s educational opinion and were better than girls with science and math curriculum. Meanwhile, girls aged 9 to 15

suffered from lower self-esteem, were less willing to stand up for their views with teachers and showed lower interest in science and mathematics than boys. Nevertheless, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) presumed something must be done to improve the science and math curriculum to better interest girls as it was so favorable toward boys.

In June 1996, the Supreme Court declared Virginia Military Institute's (VMI's) all-male admissions policy unconstitutional while noting the advantages of single-gender education. All the justices – from Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Antonin Scalia – agreed that single-gender education offers positive educational benefits. Surprisingly, a few weeks after the Supreme Court ruling, Community School District 4 in New York City announced the opening of The Young Women's Leadership School (TYWLS) in East Harlem. While it was the VMI case that grabbed most of the nation's attention for seeming to strike a final blow against single-gender schooling in the United States, TYWLS seems to have won the day (Meyer, 2008). Because an intense focus was set by the AAUW and civil right movement, a crisis was created for boys. Cornelius Riordan commented that “[b]oys rather than girls are now on the short end of the gender gap in many secondary schools outcomes” (Meyer, 2008, pg. 12). In 2000, Riordan declared that boys are less likely than girls to be in an academic (college preparatory) curriculum since they have lower educational and occupational expectations, have lower reading and writing test scores, and expect to complete their schooling at an earlier age (Meyer, 2008).

The inconsistencies in federal policy and literature reviews have caused interpretational challenges and heated debates between agencies. Salomone (2006) addresses the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education's old policy prohibiting public schools from separating females and males during the instructional school day but for a few exceptions such as physical education and special education. She acknowledges the first sign of reshaping through the No Child Left Behind Act in which Congress approved funds for innovative educational programs for at-risk students to include same gender schools and classrooms. Along with this, the federal Department of Education also proposed Title IX regulations that promised flexibility to public school districts establishing single-gender classes and schools in March 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

According to Leonard Sax, executive director of the National Association for Single-Gender Education, in 1995, there were just three single-gender public schools in the United States; by 2007, there were 86, with an additional 277 public schools offering all-girls or all-boys education programs within their coeducational buildings (Meyer, 2008).

### **Laws and New Regulations Affecting Single-Gender Programs**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. The regulation stated that “. . . no person in the United States, on the basis of sex, can be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (20 U.S.C. 1681 as cited in the Federal Register, 2002). Categorical exceptions to this general



prohibition of single-gender classes, or activities, included physical education classes that involved physical ability or bodily contact, classes that dealt exclusively with human sexuality, and choruses based on vocal range and quality (34 CFR 106.34 as cited in the Federal Register, 2002). The Supreme Court has decided three significant constitutional cases specifically concerning single-gender education.

In *Vorcheimer v. School District of Philadelphia* (1976) an evenly divided court let stand a decision allowing, under the Equal Protection Clause, a school district that also operated coeducational high schools to have two comparable single-gender high schools. The advent of the women's movement stimulated more cases. In *Mississippi University for Women v. Hogan* (1982) involving a state-sponsored female-only nursing school and in *United States v. Virginia* (1996) involving a state-sponsored, male-only military college, the courts ruled the schools were in violation of the Equal Protection Clause. Both institutions were compelled to admit both sexes into their programs (Federal Register, 2002).

The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment reads, “. . . nor shall any state . . . deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (American Bar Association, 2004). The Fourteenth Amendment, which was proposed and ratified after the Civil War, was intended, among other things, to establish the citizenship of former slaves and to ensure that states did not deny equal rights to any person. The Supreme Court often has relied on the phrase “equal protection of the laws” as the basis for its civil rights rulings (American Bar Association, 2004). The requirements of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution also protect the rights of

public school students who may be subject to sex-based classifications (Federal Register, 2004).

Salomone (2006) sought to discover and promote school politics to influence judicial decisions about organizational structure in schools by decentralizing authority in hopes of increasing the autonomy of school districts and individual schools to educate both males and females whether in single-gender or coeducation settings. The status of single-gender education began to change on January 8, 2002, when President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson, an advocate of single-gender public education, was responsible for introducing Senate Amendment 540 as a subsection of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It was adopted by unanimous consent.

According to Rosemary Salomone, a change was formalized by the historic rewriting of Title IX of the federal Education Amendments in 2006. The new rules gave local districts the option of offering single-gender public schools and programs for the first time in more than 30 years. Districts may operate a single-gender school as long as they provide equal services either in a coed school or a school for the opposite gender (Meyer, 2008).

Meanwhile, on March 9, 2004, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) of the United States Department of Education published the proposed framework for determining under what circumstance single-gender schools and classes may be provided in public elementary and secondary education. The OCR overview explained that current regulations (prior to NCLB) were designed to prevent discriminatory practices. Over the past 30 years, the situation has

changed dramatically in that schools are far more equitable in their treatment of females, thus greater flexibility is warranted (Federal Register, 2004). The proposed framework establishes standards to be used by the OCR of the U.S. Department of Education to determine whether recipients of federal financial assistance provide single-gender schools and classes that are consistent with Title IX regulations. The amendments require that a recipient of federal aid that operates a non-vocational coeducational elementary or secondary school may provide non-vocational single-gender classes, if each single-gender class is based on the following objectives:

- (a) to provide a diversity of educational options to students and parents provided that the single-gender nature of the class is substantially related to achievement of that objective, or
- (b) to meet the particular, identified educational needs of its students, provided that the single-gender nature of the class is substantially related to meeting those needs. (Federal Register, 2004)

The re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (No Child Left Behind) has encouraged and provided funds for a variety of innovative educational programs. Among these programs were single-gender schools and classes. This new language was released by the USED on October 24, 2006 (Federal Register, 2002). These new regulations provide an expansion of single-gender schools in the public sector and an opportunity to conduct the much needed research. The policy shift made possible by No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) designated “same-gender schools and classrooms [consistent with federal law]”

an innovation for which public school districts could use federal funds (Federal Register, 2004). The NCLB core provides rewards and sanctions for school productivity. The Act requires both minimum levels of performance and the integration of empirically proven models of practice and federal financial support (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

In a June 14, 2001, press release Senator Hutchison stated the following:

The Department of Education must step up to the plate and open the gates to make single-gender education available to all those who want it, not just those who can afford it. We want parents who might not be able to afford private school or might not have the option of a parochial school, to be able to access such [single-gender] programs in public schools. We want public schools to be in compliance with the law without having to go through a lot of red tape and bureaucracy. (Hutchinson, 2001)

Along with Hutchison, Senator Hillary Clinton also emerged as a strong proponent of single-gender education in her remarks: “Public school choice should be expanded as broadly as possible. There should not be any obstacle to providing single-gender choice within the public school system” (Sax, 2005, p. 108).

### **Intellectual, Physiological, and Social Consequences of Males versus Females in Single-Gender and Coeducational Schools**

When it comes to presenting the uncoupling of African-American males from public school educational programs and investigating alternative teaching methods and programs, many questions arise. Providence College sociologist Cornelius Riordan asks some essential questions: “Just what are the consequences of single-gender and coeducational schools for those who pass through them? Specifically, what are the intellectual consequences, the psychological consequences, and the social consequences?” (Meyer, 2008, p. 13).

Neurobiological and psychological research suggests that young males learn ideas and concepts differently than females of the same age group. This gender disparity has been shown to be race-neutral (Riordan, 2002). Research from the early 1960s on how desegregation affected the intellectual performance of black students, largely by Irwin Katz and his colleagues (1964), shows the sizable influence on black intellectual performance of factors that can be interpreted as manipulations of stereotype threat. For African-American male students the act of taking a test purported to measure intellectual ability may be enough to induce this threat. It is frustration that makes the stereotype -- as an allegation of inability -- relevant to their performance and thus raises the possibility that they have an inability linked to their race (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

According to Kunjufu (2002), African-American male students must receive a curriculum that is relevant. For instance, a teacher should play a rap CD and ask students to write all the words. The oral skills of African-American youth exceed their written skills; however, they must learn to spell everything they say. Writing the words of a rap tune will be enjoyable for youth because it is what they talk about before and after school. They are now excited because there is synergy between their neighborhood life and school. After the children write all the lyrics, the master teacher will select the words that will be used for this week's spelling test. We as educators simply want to teach our children how to spell. Why not use words that are part of the children's culture?

A physiological difference in males and females that has the potential to impact learning is hearing. Cassidy and Ditty (2001) of Louisiana State University conducted a

study of hearing in 350 normal newborns. At 4000 Hz, the amplitude threshold for girls was three times softer than the threshold for boys who have a shorter, stiffer cochlea. These findings have implications for the classroom. Girls hear more keenly than boys and generally function better in a quieter setting. Boys benefit from the stimulus of a louder volume (NASSPE, 2004b). In its 2004 report *Advantages for Boys*, the NASSPE reported “[g]irls have a sense of hearing which is two to four times better than boys.” Additionally, Cone-Wesson and Ramierez (1997) found “[f]or a 4 kHz tone, these investigators found that the average baby girl could hear tone 10 decibels softer than the softest 4 kHz tone audible to the average boy.” This results in girls hearing the same sound four times louder than boys. As a result, girls often feel that male teachers are shouting at them, while boys are often unable to hear female teachers due to their softer tone.

Girls also cope differently with stress than boys. Taylor and Klein (2000) described the female reaction to stress as “tend and befriend.” This response accompanies a decreased heart rate, decreased brain blood flow, and perhaps dizziness or nausea. Boys, on the other hand, react with a “fight or flight” mentality. They experience an increased heart rate, increased brain blood flow, and increased arousal and alertness. Stress actually enhances learning in males, while it impairs learning in females. A report from the National Institutes of Health (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001) disclosed that gender differences in personality were evident across all cultures studied, including China, Africa, Malaysia, the U.S., Europe, and others. The gender-specific personality and emotional characteristics affect how boys and girls perform in school. Boys tend to receive more attention than girls,

and teachers ask higher order questions of males. Boys tend to participate more in whole-group activities and to dominate class discussions (Weiman, 2004).

### **Boys and Girls Brain Research**

Salomone (2006) devised a research study which focused on theoretical contexts of cognitive and social indicators as a measure of the various single-gender research studies. Scientific evidence has shown that males and females utilize their brainpower in different ways, in addition to differences that may exist in thought processes and behavior that in some part is generated by differences in the hormonal chemicals of the male and female anatomy. Males were shown to use the cortical areas of the brain more for regulating spatial and mechanical functioning, while females were shown to use these areas more for language processing and emotional response. Males also were found to have less serotonin than females and more testosterone, making them less apt to sit still and remain focused, as would be required in a traditional classroom setting.

According to Doreen Kimura (1996), “The evidence from structural brain differences between the sexes, sex hormone influences, and similarities in sex differences across cultures, combine to suggest that men’s and women’s brains are to a significant extent wired differently from the start” (p. 260). Achiron, Lipitz, and Achiron’s (2001) research has proven that differences in the male and female brain begin in the womb. About midway through gestation, the sex hormones of males (androgens) that give rise to masculinity bind to brain tissue and begin to transform it. By the 26th week of gestation, the developing male brain is permanently and irreversibly transformed. Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

invented in the late 1980s, scientists have been able to study which areas of the brain are active when people engage in particular activities. The studies have shown that males and females listen, read, process information, and experience emotions differently. For example, the male and female brains respond differently while listening to a passage being read: In males, only a small area of the brain “lights up,” whereas in females both frontal lobes of the brain “light up” (Phillips, Lowe, Lurito, Dzemidzic, & Matthews, 2001).

Hanlon, Thatcher, and Cline (1999) examined brain activity in 508 normal children—224 girls and 284 boys—ranging in age from two months to 16 years. They documented striking and consistent sex differences in the speed with which the brain matures. While the areas of the brain involved in language and fine motor skills mature about six years earlier in girls than in boys, the areas of the brain involved in targeting and spatial memory mature about four years earlier in boys than in girls. These researchers concluded that the areas of the brain involved in language, in spatial memory, in motor coordination, and in getting along with other people develop at different rates and times and in a different order for males and females.

Killgore, Oki, and Yurgelun-Todd (2001) determined that emotional activity is processed in completely different areas of the brain in boys and girls. In young children, the locus of emotional activity lies deep within the brain in the amygdala. As girls get older, the locus of emotional activity moves up to the cerebral cortex. This is the same part of the brain involved in reasoning, language, and higher cognitive skill. In boys, the locus of emotional activity remains in the amygdala, the primitive subcortical area of the brain. Thus, girls are



more likely than boys to be talkative and expressive. It is easy for girls to link emotions with ideas, whereas boys seek action (Killgore, Oki, & Yurgelun-Todd, 2001).

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Kunjufu (2002) in his book *Black Students-Middle Class Teachers* acknowledges an appreciation for Ogbu Murrell's work in his book *African-Centered Pedagogy*, which exposes that many African-American children associate being smart with acting White. The black mind set is not shaped solely by our "arrival status" but includes staff demographics, expectations, pedagogy, curriculum, role models, family, media, and community viability.

The studies of Ladson-Billings, however, present the basic assumption that learning is culturally situated and teachers should incorporate the cultures of students into everyday instruction for them to be able to learn effectively (Banks, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2001). It was Ladson-Billings (1990, 1994, 1995, 1995a) who popularized the term of culturally relevant pedagogy, which included the proactive utilization of culturally relevant literature. This term has been used in relation mainly to teachers who use this pedagogy for successful instruction and learning practices for African-American students. Ladson-Billings emphasized using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitude regarding reading instruction. In addition, "contrary to predictions from the social role model, gender differences were most pronounced in European and American cultures in which traditional sex roles are minimized" (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001).

Furthermore, a dispute made by school reformers suggests there is a lack of connectedness with the traditional ways in which knowledge and learning are defined in

school. Reformers who argue that curriculum and teaching should reflect a greater emphasis on students' deep understanding of content also argue that "understanding" is manifested when students engage in intentional learning or the active management of different types of knowledge and thought processes around concrete problems (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthy, 1996). Students should not only acquire factual knowledge but understand what this knowledge means and how it applies in a broader context. To ensure the intended audience, the student, has a clear understanding of what has been taught, he or she must be allowed to demonstrate learning through application. Improved outcomes, professional development, pedagogical improvement, and student learning need to be tightly interwoven for schools to be effective (Harris & Chrispeels, 2006).

According to Tom Carroll, founder of Brighter Choice Charter Schools (BCCS), prescribing a gender specific curriculum is essential for academic success (Meyer, 2008). Also, Meyer (2008) states: "Well, no matter where you want to bring the kid at the end of the day, you have to start where they are. So, if you have a boys and girls English class, you have to drop that class initially down to the level of the boys, who have no idea what you're talking about. But when you do that, you're shortchanging the girls. They're already a half a year, year, ahead of the boys. And in math class, where the boys are picking up quicker, you're disadvantaging the boys to dumb the class down to the girls. So, paradoxically, by separating the kids by gender, we've almost totally eliminated the gender gap in both subjects" (p.18).

## **Influence of Gender Learning**

The National Foundation of Educational Research studied the effects of school size and type (single-gender v. coed classrooms) in English in 2,954 high schools. The researchers found the following:

1. Controlling for academic ability and student background, both sexes had greater achievement in single-gender than in coed classrooms. In assessing the academic gains made by boys, boys at the lower end of the ability scale showed a significant increase in academic gains.
2. Schools of medium size (about 180 students per grade) achieved the highest gains. At smaller schools, there was an inadequate amount of course offerings at the advanced level. At larger schools, performance in single-gender classrooms declined. (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2005)

In a comparison of single-gender and coed classrooms, researchers found that in a study comprised of fourth grade single-gender and co-ed classrooms having matched parameters for class size, school, curriculum, student demographics and teacher training, the results from the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test were: boys in coed classes - 37% proficient; boys in single-gender classrooms - 86% proficient (NASSPE, 2007).

Dr. Leonard Sax, executive director and founder of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE, 2004e), is a strong advocate for single-gender education. In his opinion, 30 years ago, many educators believed the best way to ensure equal educational opportunities for girls and boys would be to insist on educating boys and girls in the same classroom. Nevertheless, the best evidence now suggests that coeducational settings actually reinforce gender stereotypes, whereas single-gender classrooms break down gender stereotypes.

In June 2005, Cambridge University released the results of a four-year study of single-gender classrooms in 50 schools, comprised of students from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, coming from either schools displaying improved performance while narrowing the gender gap or schools showing inadequate performance. Results from the study indicated that “the single-gender classroom format was remarkably effective at boosting boys’ performance particularly in English and foreign languages” (NASSPE, 2007, <http://singlesexschools.org/research-singlesexvcoed.htm>).

### **Supporters and Opponents of Single-Gender Education**

Supporters of single-gender education (Dean, 1998; Gordon, 2000; Perry, 1996; Rowe, 2000) point to data and anecdotal evidence that demonstrate the positive outcomes of single-gender private schools and the observed advantages for at-risk students. A research review was undertaken by the American Institutes for Research in 2005 that culled the most reliable studies from a decade of research on single-gender education. Most of the research had been done on Catholic Schools and more on girls’ schools than on schools for boys. The review found that roughly one-third of studies favored single-gender schools on measures of short-term academic accomplishment. They found little support, however, for coeducational schooling being more effective (Meyer, 2008).

Among some of the proponents for single-gender education who supported changes to Title IX in the No Child Left Behind Act were Senators Hillary Clinton, Kay Bailey Hutchison, and Dianne Feinstein. Senator Hutchison, a product of coed schooling, wrote in a 2001 *American University Law Review* article, “Talk to students and graduates of single-

gender schools (mostly private and parochial), and almost all will say with gusto that they were enriched and strengthened by their experience. . . . Study after study has demonstrated that girls and boys in single-gender schools are academically more successful and ambitious than their coeducational counterparts. Minority students in single-gender schools often show dramatic improvement and attitudes toward school” (Meyer, 2008, p. 20). Meyer (2008) goes on to share from an advocate: “A growing body of research shows that single-gender, especially at the middle school level, works, says South Carolina Superintendent of Education Jim Rex, who campaigned on a platform that included making single-gender schools an option in every school district in the state” (p. 20).

In spite of the evidence suggesting the need for gender-based education, there are opponents to the practice. Opponents of gender-based instruction tend to contribute observed improvements to factors other than single-gender grouping (American Association of University Women, 1998; Datnow, Hubbard, & Woody, 2001; Gentry, Gable, & Rizza, 2002). Some educational researchers suspect that not enough information is available to make a firm judgment on the impact of this pedagogical method.

Researcher Pedro Noguera is involved in a study that will compare the single-gender education of African-American males with the education of a co-ed group from a similar demographic region (Gewertz, 2008). He believes that socioeconomic and ethnic factors need to be considered as they relate to the differences observed between single-gender and co-education programs. There are also legal opponents who argue that single-gender based education in public schools is against the law.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) opposes the proposed Title IX amendments as unconstitutional and failing to offer compelling justification for how the changes will improve educational opportunities for American students while ensuring that there will be no discriminatory impact. The ACLU argues the current proposal made by the Department of Education is not based on conclusive research about how to better educate children. They claim that not only has Title IX been instrumental for more than 30 years in closing the gender gap in education but also in broadening social equality for women in general (ACLU, 2004). The New York Civil Rights Commission and the ACLU have been involved in local and federal inquiries concerning the legalities of gender-based education.

According to Emma Willard, founder of the first schools in the country to offer girls an academic curriculum, (Meyer, 2008) “[t]hey know what’s good about single-gender education. It’s not about empowerment, but about getting a good education” (p. 12).

Because education in public school is deemed as the most accessible way to achieve academically, culturally, economically, socially, and politically, Salomone’s (2006) article argues there is a nexus between academic performance and social deficits across gender and race, especially for at-risk minority males (Hispanic and African-American). For example, Doug Willms’s national longitudinal study in Canada of “vulnerable children” is the hypothesis of what he called “double jeopardy”. This hypothesis holds that children in low SES [socio-economic status] families are more likely to be vulnerable, but children from low SES families who also live in low SES communities are especially vulnerable of being academically and socially successful (Fullan, 2006).

### **Benefits of Single-Gender Educational Programs for Boys**

Single-gender settings also have been reported to have a positive effect on the attitudes of students, especially boys Colley et al., 1994, James & Richards, 2003; (NASSPE, 2007; and Rowe, 2000). In 2000, the principal of Thurgood Marshall Elementary School in Seattle, Washington changed his school from coed to single-gender. Discipline referrals dropped from approximately 30 per day to one or two per day. The boys' assessments went from the 10% to 30% range to 73%, and the boys outperformed the state in the writing component of the test (O'Reilly, 2000).

Sax (NASSPE, 2004a) also cites benefits of single-gender education for boys. One advantage is it enables teachers to custom-tailor their teaching styles to boys. In order to teach effectively, the teacher's first task is to get the boys interested. Boys like the classroom to be energized. Confrontation works well with most boys. A direct challenge such as "Prove it to me!" motivates boys to work harder. The all-boy classroom provides a more diverse and well-rounded educational experience that addresses the male learning style.

Researchers at the University of Michigan reported that the positive effects of single-gender education do not end after graduation from high school. The researchers found that boys and girls from single-gender schools were more likely to go to a prestigious college and attend graduate school than those from coed institutions (Lee & Marks, 1990). A University of Virginia study also found that boys attending single-gender classrooms were twice as likely to take such classes as art, music, drama, and foreign languages as boys in coed classrooms (James & Richards, 2003).

Researchers have wondered which single-gender schools offered the best services intellectually, physiologically, and socially for all boys. Sociologist Cornelius Riordan did not hesitate when asked which single-gender schools represented the best of the breed, “You have to see Roxbury Latin. They have been doing it longer than anyone else” (Riordan, 1990, p.187). So successful has Roxbury Latin been that it now has one of the largest endowments of any private secondary school (more than \$140 million for 290 boys – 50 percent comes from alumni) (Meyer, 2008). Salomone (2006) states:

It is true, that sometimes “same is equal”, other times “different is equal,” and still other times, “more is equal.” Part of what single-gender schools do is redress historic and historical inequities; another part is minimizing the distractions that come from mixing the sexes; and a final ingredient is addressing gender differences in learning. (p. 32)

Cornelius Riordan conducted a research study comparing outcomes of graduates of single-gender Catholic schools with those for graduates of coed Catholic schools. He found that single-gender schooling helps to improve academic achievement and that under-privileged children derived the most benefit. Rosemary Salomone (2003) and Leonard Sax (2005) tout the new research on social dynamics and the different ways the brain functions and develops, particularly in boys, as a basis of support for single-gender education.

### **Perceptions of Students, Teachers, Administrators, Proponents, and Opponents of Single-Gender Educational Programs**

Since some writers and proponents of single-gender programs viewed schools as having become arguably anti-boy, *Time* magazine published Von Drehle’s report with the provocative headline, “The Myth About Boys.” In his report, Von Drehle writes, “More



boys than girls are in special education classes. More boys than girls are prescribed mood-managing drugs. This suggests to her (and others) that today's schools are built for girls, and boys are becoming misfits" (Meyer, 2008, p. 19).

The Brighter Choice Charter Schools (BCCS) was founded by Tom Carroll, opened in 2002, and is a K-4 school with separate classes for girls and boys in Albany, New York. Recently, however, the school undertook an \$8 million renovation and reopened as an all boys' school. The charter school students are 98 percent black and 98 percent poor. The founder perceives his school will be successful based upon four elements:

1. Single-gender schooling eliminates social distractions
2. Single-gender schooling will take the fear out of performing educational tasks such as boys' reading poetry
3. Single-gender schooling allows alike genders to develop mentally and physically together
4. Single-gender schooling allows alike genders to overcome curriculum shortcomings in math and literacy. (Meyer, 2008, p. 38).

The school has gotten top honors in the city on the math and English language arts tests. Carroll had this to say about his school:

"One thing that I think we've shown is that race and economics need not predict outcomes" he says, matter-of-factly. "It often does in life, but it's because those children are often consigned to the crappiest schools and therefore they have the crappiest results. Which shouldn't shock anybody" (Meyer, 2008, p. 18).

Carroll asked Cornelius Riordan to evaluate the school, from opening day in 2002. Riordan was given complete independence and has just completed five years of data-gathering. Riordan says that the preliminary results confirm Carroll's approach.

Students attending Brighter Choice Charter Schools score far below average at the beginning of kindergarten, confirming their at-risk status," he says. "But by the end of

third grade they are scoring above the national average in reading math, and science. (Meyer, 2008, p. 18)

### **Similar Single-Gender Schools in America**

**The Eagle Academy for Young Men.** The Eagle Preparatory Academy for Young was founded in 2004, located on 4143 Third Avenue in Bronx, NY. With a place like Bronx, NY, African-American males will need to have the characteristics of an eagle to soar out of a low place that is known for drugs, crime, and, in some regards, hopelessness. Eagle Prep refers to their students as scholars, causing more positive self-esteem as well as a paradigm shift to take place in their thinking. Their focuses are:

1. Scholars train scholars to soar beyond high school graduation
2. Scholars dress with excellence going against stereotypes
3. Scholars aim high with AP curriculum

***Scholars Train to Soar Beyond High School Graduation.*** One of the ways to give hope is through mentoring, and Eagle Prep has a mentoring program as one of the resources that is available to their students:

The Eagle Academy Mentoring Program is a school based comprehensive program that allows students to be mentored by professional individuals. Mentors participate in group sessions with students during Saturday Institute, as well as partaking in a number of scheduled activities that take place outside of the school (<http://www.eagleny.org>).

Eagle Prep causes transformation to come about in the lives of these young men, which causes a paradigm shift, so that they will refer to themselves and think of themselves as scholars. They start as early as the sixth grade by having Summer Bridge Step Up

Programs throughout the summer, allowing for there to be a smooth transition within their academic careers. This Summer Bridge program helps young boys to achieve academic success and to maintain focus throughout the summer.

- Memorization of the Eaglet Pledge
- Completion of **ALL** homework assignments
- Completion of Me Letter (6<sup>th</sup> Grade Letter, <http://www.eagleny.org>)

***Scholars Dress with Excellence Going Against Stereotypes.*** Since Eagle Prep is training these young boys to be scholars, then there are standards in place concerning their attire, which helps them think of themselves as being scholars. The policy supports that “Scholars should wear: Light blue shirt, Blue or Black tie, Gray pants, and Black shoes.” (<http://www.eagleny.org>). If the students at Eagle Prep think that they are scholars, then they will act like it and dress like it. This will help to bring down stereotypes of the dress codes of African-American boys. As summed up by the Parent Associations of Eagle Prep, there is a nexus between appearance and performance:

The Parents' Association of the Eagle Academy for Young Men is dedicated to supporting our young Eagles in their preparation for leadership roles. We are parents who realize the academic journey of our students requires our presence and commitment (<http://www.eagleny.org>).

***Scholars Aim High with AP Curriculum.*** Eagle Prep has the basic levels of curriculum for students to pass and to succeed, but, in order to prepare them for the next level of education and life beyond high school: there are various Advanced Placement (AP) courses that they can apply for. However, there are stipulations and requirements:

The curriculum is given at a faster pace than a regular course and is designed to be a rigorous curriculum in which you are prepared for the Advanced Placement classes you will eventually take in your high school career. Pre-requisites: 75 or higher on the ELA Regents exam AND a completed Teacher recommendation form (<http://www.eagleny.org>).

The classes available through the AP curriculum are: Pre-AP English, AP Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP Human Geography, AP U.S. History, and AP World History. In a video presentation the administrative and faculty team of Eagle Prep gives encouragement to students as they transition from this academy to college and beyond, admonishing them to strive for the best in life and to not stop but to continue on in their endeavors for success. There are also clips from students giving their appreciation of those who have imparted wisdom and other life principles to them during their tenure at Eagle Prep (<http://www.eagleny.org>).

**Madison Preparatory Academy for Young Men.** Madison Preparatory Academy for Young Men is a charter school that was established to prepare African-American and Latino boys to experience success beyond grade school and to be scholars for college and beyond. One true aspect of effective training and preparation is the lasting effect it has on an individual: to be able to use principles learned and gained that can transcend different phases of life. This is a charter school that is located in Madison, Wisconsin, which is authorized by the Madison Metropolitan School District.

The primary purpose of Madison Prep's existence "is to prepare scholars for success at a four year college by instilling excellence, pride, leadership and service"

(<http://www.ulgm.org>). The students who have and are attending the Madison Preparatory Academy for Young Men definitely have been trained and are being trained to succeed in life. This success occurs because students are not only prepared for the present but have a successful future by: “(1) Being challenged to change, (2) Using high school graduation as a foundation, and (3) Preparing students for college success and beyond”

(<http://www.ulgm.org>).

In order to fulfill the mission and reach the goals for success through Madison Prep, there are four components that this charter school offers in order for students to be successful: excellence, pride, leadership, and service. School literature explains that

Madison Prep will employ seven educational strategies to achieve its mission: a special focus on young men, the International Baccalaureate curriculum, a college preparatory focus, Harkness Teaching, an extended school day and year, mentoring and community support, and a Prep Year (for students that are more than one year behind academically in reading, language arts, and/or math) (<http://www.ulgm.org>).

Madison uses an extended school day and school year, as well as the mentoring and community support because this is very necessary in the success of young men, especially men of color. Having extensive training in the classroom and throughout the year, as well as outside of the school with the support from family and community members, is what has distinguished the young men from Madison Prep from any other school in this area. They believe if there is not enough reinforcement within the homes and communities of these young men, the work will be harder once they enter back into the academic setting.

African-American and Latino Boys, were the least likely to succeed academically in the Madison area. The hope and future of minority males was at an all-time low. According to statistics,

- In 2009, just 52% of African American boys and 52% of Latino boys graduated on-time from Madison Metropolitan School District compared to 81% of Asian boys and 88% of White boys.
- In the class of 2010, just 7% of African American seniors and 18% of Latino seniors were deemed “college-ready” by ACT, makers of the standardized college entrance exam required for all Wisconsin universities. (<http://www.ulgm.org>).

However, to develop college-ready students is the primary reason that Madison Prep was established because its target is to reach and serve 420 students in grades 6 through 12 by the time it reaches full enrollment in 2017-2018. The International Baccalaureate® (IB) Middle Years Programme is designed to help them find a sense of belonging in the ever-changing and increasingly interrelated world around them and to foster a positive attitude to learning (<http://www.ulgm.org>).

The school uses the Harkness Method of teaching, which helps to foster one-on-one teaching with the male students at Madison Prep, group methods of training, as well as developing communication skills that can be used for other aspects of life. In fact,

Over 75 years ago, this Academy was transformed by a generous gift from Edward S. Harkness, a gift that changed our classrooms and the experiences within them. The open give-and-take of Harkness pedagogy has enabled not only students but also faculty and staff to consider together what "great end and real business of living" really means. In this process, students have learned from teachers and teachers have learned from students, both inside and outside the classroom (<http://www.ulgm.org>).

**Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men.** Just this summer, Urban Prep Academy has been and is being successfully represented by its African-American males with increasing graduation and college attendance rates. In a time where it seems like all hope is lost for black boys, this academy has lived out its motto “Failure is not an option”. This idea of single-gender school settings has proven to be very helpful, especially to minority groups such as African-American males.

Urban Prep Charter Academy for Young Men, Englewood Campus was founded in 2006. However, it derived from the Urban Prep Academies, which is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 2002 by Tim King and a group of African-American education, business, and civic leaders. The Englewood Campus is our country’s first public charter high school. This school is located in Chicago, IL, and, according to the history, Urban Prep’s schools are the only all-boys public schools in the state of Illinois. Urban Prep also has two other campuses. The West Campus that was opened in 2009 and the Bronzeville Campus which opened its doors in the fall of 2010.

Restraints represent boundaries, defining moments, targets, and other things to aim for. This academy does not only have a vision to cast off restraints by envisioning “Belief”, but it also has a mission which, “. . . is to provide a comprehensive, high-quality college preparatory education to young men that results in graduates succeeding in college” (<http://www.urbanprep.org/about/history/index.asp>).

***Producing High Graduation Rates.*** In his article written and “CBS Highlights Chicago Charter School with High Graduation Rate for Black Students,” Brad Wilmouth (2011) highlights the success of Urban Prep as it relates to its increasing graduation rates. This report was filed by Cynthia Bowers documenting the success of this school’s increasing graduation rate of its African-American males in comparison to other high schools in the city. Anchor Russ Mitchell also commented in this report saying, “In a city where most African-American males don't make it through high school, every member of this graduating class is going on to college” (<http://www.urbanprep.org/about/history/index.asp>).

According to this article, in a latter introduction of this report, Wilmouth (2011) said, “When it comes to African-American high school graduation rates, Chicago's Urban Prep is a shining standout, boasting a rate of almost 70 percent. And that's only the beginning of its success story as we hear from Cynthia Bowers” (<http://www.urbanprep.org/about/history/index.asp>).

***Increasing College Attendance.*** As further reports from this same article submitted by Brad Wilmouth on June 14, 2011, Wilmouth highlights success for the African-American males a part of this great Urban Prep Academy as it relates to the graduation rates, but he underscores the significance of furthering their education by making that transition to college. Members of the Academy share the impact of the school:

“CYNTHIA BOWERS: In Chicago's tough Englewood neighborhood, in this high school, these students are starting to believe. This is Urban Prep, the only all African-American male charter school in the city. But what makes this high school stand out is the fact that each of its 104 seniors is headed to college. Cedric Abdul Hakeem is



going to Grinnell College in Iowa. And when you got your acceptance letters, how was that?

CEDRIC ABDUL HAKEEM, HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR: It was very exciting.

BOWERS: Urban Prep's 100 percent college acceptance rate began last year with the school's first senior class. School founder Tim King says Urban Prep demands high achievement from each student and has created an environment where failure is not an option.

TIM KING, URBAN PREP ACADEMY: It can't be less than 100 percent because we really do have to aggressively and actively change the lives of the young men we're serving" (Wilmouth, 2011).

### **Single-Gender Educational Programs as Contemporary Post-Modern Programs**

According to Salomone (2006), courts are presently focusing on issues of equity rather than race in determining whether the education provided by public schools is "appropriate". In exploring equity, one issue being debated is school financing and the distribution of funds collected via property taxes, which charge a larger amount to areas having higher property values. As a result, areas with lower income and lower property values have less school funding than wealthier communities. This leaves schools in low income communities that have a greater need for programs and services short of the resources necessary to run their schools adequately. Unfortunately, a large number of African Americans reside in these neighborhoods. Hence, some public school districts have found it relatively difficult to offer single-gender settings as a "choice".

While few advocates assert that such programs represent a fundamental reform strategy for improving education overall, most believe single-gender schools are one promising answer to some of the problems facing public schools today (National Association

of State Boards of Education, 2004). Moreover, according to Meyer (2008), the two notions of peer effect – race and gender – have been joined as more and more attention is being paid to black boys and schools that culturally cater to them.

James Coleman, sociologist at the University of Chicago, probably would have appreciated the cultural shifts that have made the single-gender school take on new meaning, considering he was one of the first modern academics to propose that coed schools offered a false promise of equality. As those who have studied the racial educational gaps in our public elementary and secondary schools have noticed, throwing children together does not solve problems of dominance; it can, in fact, exacerbate them (Meyer, 2008).

### **Summary**

African-American male students being in trouble is rampant across the nation, and school systems must do better to meet their educational needs since all students must be afforded the opportunity to receive an exceptional education with equality in mind. Historically, males and females have been educated separately in many cultural and religious groups around the world and the perceptions of its impact have been favorable and unfavorable. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and accompanying regulations now make it possible to implement single-gender education in public schools (Salomone, 2006).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DESIGN AND METHOD OF THE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

Throughout history, it has been virtually impossible to conduct research in public schools addressing the many questions regarding the relative effectiveness and perceptions of single-gender programs due to the threat of lawsuits. However, new regulations support single-gender programs as an alternative option for education in public schools. Even though opponents have continued to point to the lack of evidence favoring single-gender programs, many proponents perceive its effectiveness as prevalent. Therefore, since no specific conceptual framework is identified due to the uniqueness of this type of single-gender setting at Boys' Achievement Academy, the qualitative research was be an exploratory case study. Similar schools in America like Boys' Achievement Academy have also been experiencing some incredible results with African-American male students; however, Boys' Achievement has adopted teaching and learning practices from these schools and more to develop its own "Culture of Success" model for specifically African-American males.

#### **Qualitative Research Questions**

Even though school districts consider single-gender programs as an alternative method for learning, these programs are also criticized by various groups because they separate the sexes. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School in Rochester, New York began offering some single-gender classes in 1989. The principal introduced single-gender classes as a means of raising the achievement scores of this school that

performed at the bottom of the district. After the implementation of single-gender classes, test scores improved, absence rates were lower, there were fewer suspensions, and parental participation increased. However, the school became the target of legal challenges by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Organization of Women (NOW) who questioned the separation of sexes in public school classes. The single-gender classes were eliminated at the school and the achievement gap between African-American students, especially the males, continued to widen. Furthermore, the progress of establishing single-gender classes in public schools in Michigan, California, and New Jersey was stopped during the 1990's due the actions of ACLU and NOW (Salomone, 2006).

In 2001 the legality of single-gender programs was addressed in the No Child Left Behind Act, and accompanying regulations now make it possible to implement single-gender education in public schools (Salomone, 2006). A number of scholars have researched and written about the academic disparities that exist between African American students and white students in the United States, such as differences in standardized test scores, grades, and high school graduation rates (Carter, 2005; Diamond, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee, 2002), but it is much wider for African-American males.

Perceptions of effectiveness are best addressed using a qualitative approach. School culture and climate are best described by those who experience it daily. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) note “[w]hen you want to understand how people think about their world, a researcher should become involved with them listening to conversations, and observing them in their routines” (p. 113). Thus, this research study will examine the following research questions:

- What factors do the Boys' Achievement Academy faculty, administrators, and board members perceive to contribute to the academic and behavioral success of the African-American students at Boy's Achievement Academy as measured by the increase in the percentage of high school graduation rates in college-readiness courses?
- What factors do the African-American students, who attend Boys' Achievement Academy, perceive to contribute to their academic and behavioral success as measured by the increase in the percentage of high school graduation rates in college-readiness courses?

### **Qualitative Research Methodology**

For this research study, I used a qualitative case study approach. According to Patton (2002), qualitative methods

. . . facilitate study of issues in depth and detail [and] typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This increases the depth of understanding of the cases and situations studied, but reduce generalizability. (p. 14)

To gather knowledge, qualitative research occurs in the actual setting of the targeted participants (Patton, 2002). My purpose was to understand and explain the phenomenon the targeted participants are experiencing and their perceptions of what they are experiencing. In order to accomplish this, I immersed myself in the participants' world in order to gain knowledge of how the participants feel about being an African-American male student in a single-gender setting. While in the single-gender setting, I strove for depth in the

understanding of this context by collecting data through observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials.

A case study approach conforms to the conventions of empirical, interpretive, or critical traditions (Piantanida & Garman, 1999). It requires the inquirer to have clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of each case (Creswell, 2007). In addition, a case study is a distinctive form of empirical inquiry and offers a rich, holistic account of the participants, their experiences, and the environment (Stake, 2005).

Merriam (1998) describes case study design as a method to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. Moreover, case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Pagin & Westerstahl, 2010). Patton (2002) states a case study is not only methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. A case study is defined by interest in an individual case not by the methods of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Yin (2003) suggests that a holistic case study design is beneficial when the researcher seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of the case.

In other words, a case study develops an in-depth description and analysis of one single case or multiple cases which can provide insight or substantive information about and educational phenomenon. Creswell (2007) states “[t]he goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). In this study, a thick, rich description method will be used to describe this phenomenon of

producing a culture of learning through a single-gender setting and a public charter school that receives private funding. An exploratory case study is a strategy that may be used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 1994). Since there is little research to explain the phenomenon of Boys' Achievement Academy, this approach allowed the researcher to give "voice" to those participants who are currently experiencing the phenomenon.

### **Site Selection**

**Boys' Achievement Academy in the Northeastern Region of the United States.** In order to conduct this research study at Boys' Achievement Academy, approval to conduct this research was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at North Carolina State University (see Appendix O). More information about the IRB is included in a later section of this chapter. Permission for this study was also obtained from the school administration prior to the study (see Appendixes A and B). Since Boys' Achievement Academy is a public, single-gender charter and given that this setting is rather unique, there is little research exploring the experiences of African-American males in this setting; therefore, an exploratory investigation of this school was most appropriate.

### **Description of School Setting**

Boys' Achievement Academy with its single-gender setting for African-American males outperforms other schools in this large urban district who serve African-American males. This setting maintains a great deal of information about how to develop, maintain, and evaluate this unique school for effectiveness. It can be described as an information-rich

case. According to Patton (2002), “[i]nformation-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance with the purpose of the research” (p. 46). For its uniqueness and information-rich setting, the exploratory case study of Boys’ Achievement Academy qualified as a purposeful sampling research because it is successful at closing the achievement gaps between African-American males and other subgroups on standardized assessments.

More importantly, not only does the school evaluate its success based upon the high school graduation rate but also by the number of high school graduates who successfully enter post-secondary schools or four-year colleges and universities. The first graduating class of Boys’ Achievement Academy graduated with 100% of their African-American male students with 92% of them earning scholarships. The school seeks to support these African-American students with obtaining scholarships for post-secondary schooling and was successful in obtaining 2.3 million in scholarship funding for its students.

Boys’ Achievement Academy is a college preparatory school dedicated to the development of confident and independent learners who will be actively engaged as global citizens in an interdependent world. The enrollment, according to school officials, is approximately 500 students in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 with the first graduating class in the 2010-2011 school year. With its small student body and 16:1 student/teacher ratio, Boys’ Achievement Academy offers an intimate learning community in which each young man is encouraged to be “the architect of his own fortune” by pursuing excellence across a range of



endeavors. Students are admitted through rolling admission, and parents contact the school to attend the Information Session. Eighty percent of the school's teachers are certified. School hours are as follows: (a) Monday, Tuesday, Thursday – 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; (b) Wednesday – 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. [(Professional Learning Community (PLC) for teachers in evening)]; (c) Friday – 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.; (d) Saturday (twice each month on a rotational basis for teachers) – 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (<http://www.boysachievementacademy.org>).

The Boys' Achievement Academy curriculum, which blends traditional and progressive elements, is enhanced by extensive support services and extra-curricular programs. The curriculum uses Latin as a foundation to promote vocabulary and reading comprehension. All of the students who attend Boys' Achievement Academy are required to take Latin each academic year.

Situated on a 3-acre campus in the northern region of the United States, Boys' Achievement Academy is ideally suited for its numerous project-based learning opportunities, career exploration initiatives, and community service efforts. The facility is a newly renovated historic building in the heart of a neighborhood where the school and community join in the belief that they can make a difference. The curriculum highlights are four years of Latin Language and Culture, English divided into Composition and Literature, Public Speaking as a requirement, voluntary Saturday School twice monthly, mandatory Outward Bound experience, SAT preparation, and a Summer Reading Program.

Boys' Achievement Academy prides itself for its six athletics teams in soccer, football, cross-country, Crew, basketball and baseball, outdoor challenge activities, and performing and studio arts options – programs that ensure that all students can find opportunities to broaden their horizons. Boys' Achievement Academy is especially proud of the addition of Crew to its sports programs. Crew was first offered in 2009, and, in its inaugural year, the newly formed water rowing team took home a second place prize against five other experienced teams. In 2010, Crew won a first place prize. This is significant because students have gained a new level of confidence because they competed well in a sport which was considered to be white privilege.

Boys' Achievement Academy has mandatory afterschool activities such as drama, technology, debate, music, chess, science, Virtual Media, Economics, robotics, bicycle repair, Government, rock climbing, fencing, model trains, and Mock Trial. Students select an after-school activity according to interest. To further the students' interests, athletic superstars such as Dasean Jackson, wide receiver for the Philadelphia Eagles, and business icon James Wallace, founder and CEO of Electro-Soft, Inc., visit and support the school.

Boys' Achievement Academy values the use of Latin to develop in their students the ability to read significant works of Roman authors in Latin while growing in their understanding of and appreciation for the English language. They believe in the intrinsic value of Latin literature and thus they focus upon those skills that enable students to delve into the literature of the Romans such as vocabulary building and grammar acquisition.

Through the study of Latin grammar and syntax, students master the richness of English as a language and a literature as well as gain a historical overview of how language and its structures develop and work. In addition, students also learn some of the arts of precision, self-criticism, and building conceptual models. In advanced courses, class discussions regarding translation and multi-faceted projects are incorporated into each trimester. The goal is to have students, by the end of their senior year, able to appreciate and read original works of Latin authors so that they might be able to take an advanced level college class.

### **Data Collection**

During the proposed study, data was collected to help develop a rich description of the school. This data is presented in Chapter 4. Data was collected during an intensive a five-day site visit during 2011. Data for this study includes interviews with Boys' Achievement Academy board members (see Appendix D), school administrators (see Appendix E), teachers (see Appendix F), and students in focus groups (see Appendix G & H). Throughout the data collection process, informal classroom and walk-through observations were conducted. In addition and with the school's permission, documents such as excerpts, quotations, websites, program records, memoranda and correspondence, and official publications and reports from Boys' Achievement Academy were collected, read, and analyzed. Each of these data sources are described in more detail in the following sections.

Qualitative findings for this study grew out of four kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) informal observation; (3) documents; and (4) student focus groups. "Interviews provide researchers with information about a phenomenon directly from

those people who have experienced it and provide information about the participants' feelings and opinions as it relates to their experiences" (Patton, 2002, p. 4). For this study, the approximate total subjects interviewed equaled 30: two board members, two school administrators, and six teachers for an overall total of ten adults. Also, I facilitated interview sessions with two student focus groups, which had a total of 16 high school students. Data from observations consisted of detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experiences. Documents included: excerpts, quotations, websites, program records, memoranda and correspondence, and official publications and reports. Therefore, data for this research study was obtained via individual interviews, student focus group interviews, observations, and documents.

### **Individual Interviews**

Most commonly, case study interviews are of an open-ended nature, in which an investigator asks key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents' opinions about events (Yin, 1989). Additionally, Briggs (1986) suggests that good interviews are those in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view. Good interviews produce rich data filled with words that reveal the respondent's perspectives. The interviewer may ask for clarification and probe if the respondent mentions something that seems unfamiliar in order for the respondent to be more specific.

Furthermore, interviews allow for open-ended questions and transcription which can be reviewed by participants to ensure understanding and clarity of significant statements, sentences, or quotes (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews or interviews in which the same general questions are brought up and where additional questions may occur depending upon participant responses are a common practice (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

For this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with voluntary participants such as board members, administrators, and teachers. Questions were asked of each participant depending upon their responses. In such cases, the interview remained open-ended. During these interviews, I had a set interview guide; however, I used flexibility to explore additional questions based upon each participant's responses. All interviews were transcribed and all recordings will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

### **Selection of Individual Interviewees**

The subjects chosen to be interviewed to explore particular emerging themes and working hypothesis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) were adult participants in the Boys' Achievement Academy setting. For this particular research study, the following method and participants were a part of the research design and data collection process: I made a site visit to Boys' Achievement Academy to individually interview two board members out of eleven, two administrators out of four, and six teachers out of thirty-five. Each was interviewed on "individual terms". "Individual terms" means that individual quotes from interviews may be

used in writing research reports. The total number of adult individual interviews was ten which was sufficient to develop a rich, thick description of the school environment.

For the adult teacher and administrative participants, I sent to the CEO the Informed Consent, explanation letter, and envelopes through mail. A Boys' Achievement Academy designee shared the purpose of my visit at a faculty meeting and solicited any volunteers for interviews. Afterwards, the CEO's secretary distributed these letters and envelopes to the teachers and administrators by placing all items in their school mailboxes in the lounge. When the voluntary teachers and administrators decided to participate, they signed the Informed Consent, secured it in the provided envelope, and placed the sealed envelope in the locked box located in the dining facility. Once I gathered all envelopes, I contacted the voluntary adult participants to schedule an interview. Once again, I reiterated that participation in this research is "voluntary".

For the individual adult board members interviews, I obtained a board roster from Boys' Achievement Academy and the CEO's secretary who has been identified as a support with this process. The CEO's secretary assisted me in securing interviews with board members who have supported the development of this school. I kindly requested an interview with the CEO who serves as an administrator and board member because he is the one with the vision for Boys' Achievement Academy and has been instrumental in establishing this single-gender setting for African American males. Each participant received

the letter of explanation and signed the Informed Consent form, when he or she agreed to participate. Once again, I reiterated that participation in this research is "voluntary".

Next, I scheduled board member interviews based upon their availability with the guidance of the CEO's secretary. Two to three board members were asked to participate in a voluntary 45-minute interview with open-ended questions. Since the board members are responsible for developing and enforcing policies and laws, their expertise on the types of policies and laws which need to be considered before attempts are made to open a single-gender school is paramount. Additionally, the board members have knowledge about the history of Boys' Achievement Academy and this information will support the development of a rich, thick description of the environment. Even further, Boys' Achievement Academy is a public charter school and is funded on the one side by state and federal funds while on one side additional resources are provided by private and community members. One of the more pervasive reasons for challenging the establishment of more single-gender schools is the lack of funds, so learning how the board manages to secure funds for supporting Boys' Achievement Academy is essential for readers who would seek to replicate a similar process.

Two administrators were asked to participate in a voluntary 45-minute interview with open-ended questions; however, I kindly requested an interview from the administrator who leads in Curriculum and Instruction because of the emphasis on pedagogy, especially Latin. This research is important because this school has had success with a population that has historically done poorly in a large urban district both academically and behaviorally.

Ultimately, I hoped to learn why and how a school system could develop a single-gender setting in its district so programs like this can be replicated.

Since administrators hire and evaluate teachers who can develop and facilitate an environment for teaching and learning, their perspectives on how to identify the type of teacher to serve in single-gender setting environment is crucial. The administrators also develop and monitor the scheduling process for academic support so this information will serve well to explore the strategies and techniques considered to create and maintain a productive atmosphere.

The adult teacher participants, who serve within the single-gender environment at Boys' Achievement Academy, were selected according to agreement to voluntary participation in this study. However, in order to capture a balanced sample and diverse representation of the veteran teacher interviewees who have worked in the single-gender and public setting, I requested a roster and support from the school to identify those individuals among those who have volunteered to participate in this study.

After obtaining a faculty roster ensuring a diverse group and collecting any Informed Consent forms of adult teacher participants, I scheduled interviews with the teachers during their planning period. Teachers - at least six "voluntary" teachers and from all grade levels - were asked to participate in a voluntary 30-minute interview with open-ended questions. Since teachers have more of the direct contact with the students, their perspectives on this phenomenon provided a lens for students' needs.



I ensured each voluntary adult participant signed a consent form for participating in this research study. Before each interview session, the participants were asked for permission to record. I closed the interview sessions by giving thanks for their time and responses. Additionally, I informed the interviewees of the letter of appreciation I submitted to the school who emailed it to all participants along with an invitation for a cake and ice cream social at the end of the week during their lunch period as a gesture of gratitude for participating. Furthermore, since the practices of school and classroom leaders are essential to this research, my email address was given to them for the purpose of sharing any other information they would like to share about their school experiences they may have missed during the interview session. These emails were used as another form of data.

### **Student Focus Group Interviews**

The primary source of data for this research study was student focus groups. According to Morgan (1997), focus groups are group interviews that are structured to foster verbal communication among the participants about particular issues. Usually a focus group consists of seven to ten people and a facilitator. They are particularly useful when the topic to explore is general and multiple perspectives are sought so the researcher can learn what the range of views are or to promote talk on a topic that informants might not be able to talk so openly about in the individual interviews (Morgan, 1997). Additionally, group participants can stimulate each other to articulate their views or even to realize what their own views are.

For the student focus group interviews at Boys' Achievement Academy, I facilitated two student focus group sessions. In each student focus group interview, each group met with me for one hour in an open and comfortable setting. The interviews involved an open-ended style of questioning (see Appendix L) to learn more about what the students perceive as the factors of what is working and what is not working so that educators can learn more about successful school models.

### **Selection of Student Focus Group Interviewees**

The eligibility requirement for the student subjects in this research study was that the participants must be African-American males between the grades of 9 and 12, who were currently enrolled or had attended Boys' Achievement Academy. For this study, there were two sessions held, based on the school's ability to accommodate the time and space, and approximately 20 students were interviewed in this process. The first group was a group of approximately ten 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. The second group was a group of approximately ten 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Each student participated on a voluntary basis. Students were required to complete and submit a consent form signed by a parent/guardian and themselves.

I submitted envelopes, letters of explanation, and Informed Consent forms to the school by mail for student participants in this research study. The school made an announcement about participating in the research study and asked student volunteers to sign up during lunch. The school sent a letter of explanation and Informed Consent form to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students who signed up. As an additional safeguard, the school

called the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students who desired to participate in this research study to ensure they were aware of the information their child was bringing home.

Once the parent(s)/guardian(s) signed the Informed Consent and sealed it in the envelope, the students who participated in the focus groups placed the sealed envelope in the locked box located in the dining facility. Later, these students were contacted when it was time to participate in the focus group and were asked to sign as well the same Informed Consent form as the parent(s)/guardian(s) before participating. Once again, I reiterated that participation in this research was "voluntary". The school and I will maintain a secured copy of these forms.

For the student focus group interviews, I obtained a student roster from Boys' Achievement Academy of those African-American male students whom the school and I confirmed their participation with their parent(s)/guardian(s) by signed consent forms and phone calls. The roster was used to determine the participation of a diverse group of 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the focus group interviews. Recruitment of each group remained open until the at least the desired number of participants was achieved, and then recruitment for each group was closed. I scheduled with the school the appropriate time to host these focus group sessions.

When the students arrived at the interview session, I informed them about my study and ensured I had an Informed Consent form signed for each participant. I received permission from the students to record the session; then, I began the interview. I closed by giving thanks for their time and responses. Additionally, I gave the students an invitation for

a pizza party at the end of the week after their lunch period as a gesture of gratitude for participating.

Furthermore, since students are the primary source of information for this research, my email address was given to them for the purpose of sharing any other information they would like to share about their school experiences they may have missed during the interview session. These emails were used as another form of data. The next section discusses additional data that was collected from the Boys' Achievement Academy environment.

### **Documents**

Another approach for collecting data for this research study is finding and reviewing documents. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), documents refer to materials such as photographs, videos, films, memos, letters, diaries, clinical case records, and memorabilia of all sorts that can be used as supplemental information as a part of a case study. Documents can provide valuable insight into a person's perceptions and/or an organizational process which can range from personal to legal. Some of these documents may "serve as sources of rich description of how the people who produced the material think about their world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 124). There are many types of documents used in qualitative analysis; however, this study will mainly examine the following types of documents:

1. *Official documents*: produced by organizational employees for record-keeping and dissemination purposes (for example, memos, newsletters, files, yearbooks.)

2. *Popular culture documents*: produced for commercial purposes to entertain, persuade, and enlighten the public (for example, websites, audio or visual recordings to understand the techniques Boys' Achievement Academy used to draw the attention of students, teachers, and parents.)
3. *Entry essays*: as an entry requirement students who apply for Boys' Achievement Academy are required to write an essay explaining their personal goals for attending the school. These documents will be used to establish some background information and potential goals of the student.

### **Observations**

Observations were conducted during a five-day site visit at Boys' Achievement Academy. Patton (2002) considers that describing a setting, like a program setting, begins with the physical environment within which the program takes place. Patton (2002) states "[t]he description of the program setting should be sufficiently detailed to permit the reader to visualize that setting" (Patton, 2002, pp. 280-281). Indeed, the physical environment of a setting can be important to what happens in that environment.

In a similar fashion, the ways in which human beings interact create social-ecological constellations. According to Moos and Insel (1974), the social-ecological view as "the social climate perspective assumes that environments have unique 'personalities', just like people" (p. 4). In describing the social environment, the observer looks for the ways in which people organize themselves into groups and subgroups. Patterns and frequency of interactions, the direction of communication patterns, and changes in these patterns tell us about the social

environment. During informal interactions and unplanned activities, participants have the greatest opportunity to exchange views and to talk with each other about what they are experiencing in the program (Moos & Insel, 1974). Consequently, social and behavioral scientists have reported at length the importance of both verbal and nonverbal communication in human groups' (Patton, 2002) effect on the social environment.

For this study, I conducted observations to gather data to write a rich, thick description of the setting. The observations occurred during the school day, and I observed instruction in the classrooms and a board session, participation during extracurricular activities, and transitions throughout the halls. Since two of Boys' Achievement Academy foci are to provide an environment conducive to learning and involve students in social activities and events, I sought to observe and describe the program setting, physical environment, and the social environment to include informal interactions and nonverbal communications.

### **Data Analysis**

This research study data analysis involved multiple sources of data including interviews with students, teachers, administrators, and board members; document reviews; and informal observations. The investigation of Boys' Achievement Academy was a qualitative, exploratory case study that was emergent in nature. Data is in the form of interviews, documents, and observations. Merriam (1998) describes data collection and analysis as "a simultaneous activity in qualitative research. Analysis begins with the first

interview, the first observation, the first document read” (p. 151). According to Miles and Huberman (1984), the analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of conducting case studies. Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2007). Wolcott (1994) discusses the importance of forming a description from the data, as well as relating the description to the literature and cultural themes. This research study used the following techniques for data analysis: (1) interview data base, (2) constant comparison analysis, (3) document analysis, and (4) triangulation of sources. My ultimate goal was to treat the evidence fairly, to produce compelling analytic conclusions, and to rule out alternative interpretations.

First, verbatim transcriptions of the interviews comprised the majority of the data collected. A database was developed to organize and house all notes, interview tapes, tables and graphs, and other school documents. The database consists of a matrix. The matrix allowed me to create categories and provide evidence within each category. Also, data displays such as flowcharts were created and displayed which allowed for the examination of timelines.

The constant comparative analysis was utilized to generate a theory, or set of themes. Constant comparative analysis gives researchers analytic tools for analyzing data; assist researchers in understanding multiple meanings from the data and gives a systematic and

creative process for analyzing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In essence, the constant comparative analysis helps the researcher code and organize data. According to Strauss & Corbin (1998), constant comparative analysis offers strategies to analyze talk-based data and observations. Once the observations have been written down, the words can be chunked and coded, and then the codes can be organized into themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2005). For the research study at Boys' Achievement Academy, I used constant comparative analysis to analyze all data sources since it helps identify similarities/differences, create codes, group codes to develop themes, and determine how information fits in the overall thematic development.

Constant comparative analysis was used to analyze: (a) personal documents such as letters, essays, photos, emails, blogs, and applications; (b) official documents such as organizational documents (memos, flyers, agendas, minutes, report cards, attendance records, or student test scores); (c) popular culture documents such as videos, newspaper articles, magazine articles, media clippings and the like (Patton, 2002). These documents served as an excellent source of data to help triangulate the interview and observational data.

By using multiple sources of data, I was able to triangulate and add credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn. Furthermore, triangulation increases credibility and quality by countering the concern that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single investigation (Patton, 2002). Triangulation offers methods for reducing systematic bias and distortion during data analysis as suggested by Patton (2002). The



collection of sources will be compared and contrasted against each other. Hence, I was able to confirm and validate information provided by the participants. The interviews were checked against program documents, other written evidence, and observations that could corroborate what the interview respondents reported.

Ultimately, I utilized comparative analysis. The sequential exploratory design adapted to structure data collection and analysis includes: (1) qualitative data collection, (2) qualitative data analysis, and (3) final interpretation. The findings and recommendations are reported in Chapter 4 of the dissertation.

### **Trustworthiness: Validity and Reliability**

It is not uncommon to hear people ask whether a particular study is a “good” study. “Good” is, of course, a relative term open to interpretation, but what people usually mean by that question is whether the study was conducted in a rigorous, systematic, and ethical manner, such that the results can be trusted (Merriam, 2002). Researchers aspire to produce valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam, 2002), and there are so many perspectives that exist regarding the importance of validation in qualitative research, the definition of it, terms to describe it, and procedures for establishing it (Creswell, 2007).

In qualitative research, internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality and in order “[t]o have any effect on either the practice or the theory of education, research studies must be rigorously conducted” (Merriam, 1998, p. 199).

According to Merriam (2002), the findings that are represented are really the researcher’s

interpretation of participants' interpretations, or understanding of the phenomenon of interest. It is important to understand the perspectives of those involved, uncover the complexity of human behavior in context, and present a holistic representation of what is happening. Because qualitative researchers are the primary instruments for data collection and analysis, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through observations and interviews. When reality is viewed in this manner- that it is always interpreted- internal validity is a concern that needs to be strengthened (Merriam, 2002).

Since the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection in qualitative research study, a system of balance and checks is established to effectively represent the African-American male students' perceptions about the factors which intrinsically motivate academic achievement and positive behavior at Boys' Achievement Academy and the adult educator participants perceptions of the ways in which the school's philosophy and structure impact African-American male student outcomes. There are a number of strategies that qualitative researchers can employ to shore up the internal and external validity of a study. Triangulation and peer examination will be used in this research case study (Merriam, 1998).

1. *Triangulation* – using multiple data, multiple sources, and multiple methods to confirm emerging findings. Interviews will be checked against documents relevant to the investigation and what is observed.

2. *Peer review or peer examination* – asking colleagues to comment on the finding as they emerge. My dissertation chair will scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data collected.

Another concern in qualitative research is the number of inferences that can be made by the researcher. Because of the lack of understanding, sometimes a researcher can “infer” the meaning of certain situations and explanations (Yin, 1994). This brings up the question of whether or not reported results are consistent with the data collected and the findings of previous studies; therefore, there is an issue of reliability. In qualitative research, reliability refers to the extent to which the findings can be replicated. Since reliability assumes a study is more valid if it can be replicated with the similar results, “the results might be accepted as providing strong support for the theory” (Yin, 2003, p. 37). In order to establish reliability, I established consistency and dependability in this research study. Therefore, I determined how valid my research study was by analyzing whether or not reported results were consistent with the data collected and the findings of previous studies to avoid “inferring” and inconsistencies.

Because qualitative research draws from different assumptions about reality, generalizability needs to be thought of differently than in quantitative research. Moreover, a case study provides little basis for scientific generalization (Yin, 1994). External validity or generalizability refers to the extent in which the research study can be generalized to individuals beyond the scope of this study (Merriam, 2002). Since the researcher is the

primary instrument of data collection and analysis, Boys' Achievement Academy was selected using purposeful sampling. This school was specifically selected because of its ability to promote academic success with African-American male students.

To justify the qualitative inquiry in terms of generalizability, the researcher employed two strategies as suggested by Merriam (2002). The first strategy to ensure external validity or generalizability was providing a rich, thick description of the case study so that the readers can determine how close their situations match this context and whether these findings can be transferred. Therefore, by conducting interviews with the teachers, administrators, and board members, I was able to collect data to richly describe the Boys' Achievement Academy environment. The second strategy was to maximize variation. If there is some diversity in the context, then the researcher ensured that diverse participants or groups were interviewed so the reader can determine if the results can be applied to a greater range of situations. Furthermore, I used the faculty roster to identify the gender, race, teacher status, content area, and the grade level of the teachers. As for the administrators and board members, I conducted interviews based on their availability. For the students, the primary source of data, I sought students at each grade level and socio-economic status.

### **Ethical Issues**

In qualitative research, ethical dilemmas may be problematic with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings. The researcher must consider how to protect the fidelity of the research process in order to conduct a "good" study. Merriam (2002)

acknowledges that a “good” qualitative study is one that has been conducted in an ethical manner. In this case study, a method to safeguard against ethical issues has been anticipated and discussed even though there is no way to determine all possibilities. The process includes: assumptions about the context, participants, data, and the dissemination of knowledge gained through the study- situational possibilities. The following safeguards as outlined by Creswell (2007) will be applied to protect participants’ rights:

1. The research objectives were clearly defined and articulated verbally and in writing so that the participants understood the purpose of this research (see Appendixes A, B and C);
2. Written permission to proceed with this qualitative, exploratory case study research was received by participants (see Appendices D, E, F, G, and H);
3. A research approval form was filed with the Institutional Review Board of North Carolina State University;
4. The participants were informed of all data collection devices and activities (see Appendices D, E, F, G, and H);
5. Verbatim transcriptions and written report interpretations were made available to participants;
6. The participants’ rights, interests, and wishes were considered first when choices were made regarding reporting the data; and

7. The final decision regarding participant anonymity rested with the participant.

To support the fidelity of the research study process, I exercised several practices to guard against ethical issues such as: (1) approval of the advisory committee, (2) permission granted from Boys' Achievement Academy to accomplish this research study, (3) informed consent by the North Carolina State University Internal Review Board (IRB), (4) member checks, (5) verbatim transcription, and (6) pseudonym for the school and protection of identity of the interviewees who may be quoted.

The chair of the advisory committee and I collaborated about my research study. I organized and developed my study to meet all standards and guidelines in order to prepare to defend my research proposal. Then, the chair of the advisory committee and committee established a setting, place, and time for me to present my proposal. Additionally, I consistently contacted the chair of the advisory committee throughout the entire process.

Upon approval from the advisory committee, I requested permission to obtain access to Boys' Achievement Academy to conduct this research study (see Appendixes A) from the CEO of Boys' Achievement Academy by an email letter. Boys' Achievement Academy emailed a letter to me confirming its willingness to participate in this research study, and I included the letter in the attached documents for the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) review. Also, the school and I collaborated about the explanation letter for the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students who were willing to participate in

the focus groups and the faculty, administrators, and board members who were willing to participate in this research study.

The explanation letters outlined the purpose for this research and clearly communicated to potential participants that participation in this research was "voluntary". Those who decided to participate signed and sealed their forms in an envelope which was provided and then dropped their sealed envelope in the locked box that was located in the dining facility to provide physical protection.

In specific reference to the students, the school contacted the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students who were willing to participate in the focus groups by phone and submitted a letter of consent and explanation to the parent(s)/guardian(s) for signature. Once the parent(s)/guardian(s) signed the letter of consent and sealed their envelopes, the students who participated in the focus groups placed the sealed envelope in the locked box located in the dining facility as well. Later, these students were contacted when it was time to participate in the focus group and were asked to sign as well before participating. Once again, I reiterated that participation in this research was "voluntary". The school established the place and time of the focus group interviews.

Next, a request of written permission was submitted and approved by the IRB (see Appendix M) along with the granted letter of permission and letters of explanation for the research study from Boys' Achievement Academy. The IRB reviewed the research proposal, checking that the proposed research insures proper informed consent and safety for the

participants. The Board members also asked for information that allowed them to weigh the risks that informants might face against the gains they and the larger society might accrue (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

When I was granted permission to conduct this research study by the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board, I contacted Boys' Achievement Academy for site visit dates and mailed copies of the approved letters of explanation about the purpose of this research and Informed Consent forms to Boys' Achievement Academy. Written consent was obtained from the board members, administrators, and teachers who participated in interviews; adult students who were eighteen or older (see Appendices D, E, F, and G); and the parents of the students who participated in the focus groups (see Appendix H). Participation in this research study was voluntary.

Data for this study included interviews with board members, school administrators, teachers, and the student focus groups. Another method I used to safeguard against ethical issues was verbatim transcriptions. Data from the individual and focus group interviews was recorded, transcribed, and stored on audiotape to be kept in the possession of the researcher and locked in a file cabinet at home. Audio tape recordings from each interview were transcribed. Verbatim transcriptions will also be made available to the advisory committee, if requested. Data from field notes and interviews will be stored on computer memory storage devices accessible only through passwords. The data from all sources will be destroyed three years after the study is completed.



The process of regular updates and approval by the advisory committee, granted permission from Boys' Achievement Academy, and approval by the IRB along with other supports served as member checks. Member checks were used as a method of safeguard for the participants. The participants were informed of all data collection devices and activities. More importantly, the participants gained a deeper understanding of the participants' rights and interests throughout this process.

In order to protect the school's identity and individual identities, pseudonyms were used. Also, I maintained a "code book" for all my documentation, which has the real names to the pseudonyms, and secured on my computer at home with protected passwords.

### **Limitations to the Study**

Of course, qualitative research has its typical limitations because of its subjective nature; therefore, I addressed some of these limitations for this study at Boys' Achievement Academy. As Patton (2002) explains qualitative findings are highly contextual and case dependent. The honesty and openness of the participants affects the quality of the study's findings, and the representation of the findings is strongly impacted by the objectivity of the researcher. A weakness of a case study design is that it is limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. Thus, as an African-American male, I was careful not to taint the fidelity of this study and acknowledged because I am an African American I was hoping to find this type of educational setting will help save my race and gender from being productive citizens. In this qualitative, exploratory case study research of Boys'

Achievement Academy, a good way to deal with this problem was by involving participants in member checks to understand how, or if, the text reveals the perspective of the author.

Another limitation is that my study relied heavily on participants who were interviewed. For example, according to Bogden and Biklen (2007), a major problem with focus groups can be that individuals may not share important experiences they have had because they are too embarrassed to share them in the group; therefore, you may lose in the quality of data. Other problems can include individual members who talk too much and the difficulties of keeping the discussion topic. To ensure as much information as possible was collected from these interviews, I created an environment of comfort and ensured the participants clearly understood the intent of the interview. Furthermore, I discussed and provided anonymity for the participants prior to the interviews being conducted. Then, participants were involved through member checking and could request their interview not be shared. Also, my email address was left for all participants just in case they desired to share any additional information for this research study.

Finally, another limitation to this study was external validity or generalizability due to this case study design being single, or one of its kind and not common in setting. Because qualitative research draws from different assumptions about reality, generalizability needs to be thought of differently from quantitative research. If one thinks of what can be learned from an in-depth analysis of a particular situation or incident, and how that knowledge can be transferred to another situation, generalizability in qualitative research becomes possible

(Merriam, 2002). Therefore, the qualitative, exploratory case study of Boys' Achievement Academy was a small sample selected precisely so we could gain a better understanding in depth.

### **Research Subjectivity**

Qualitative research is subjective because the researcher is the primary instrument (Merriam, 2002). Patton (2007) states “[t]he quality of qualitative data depends to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher” (p. 5). The researcher for this study is an African-American male who desired to close and bridge the student achievement gaps between African-American male students and other subgroups. Also, the researcher piloted two single-gender classroom settings while serving as a middle school principal. Even though the researcher had to diligently seek ways to protect the fidelity of this research project, being an African-American male also served as a strength because it allowed a better immersion into the environment and understanding of the culture. Since the researcher had some experience with single-gender setting, this experience also served as a strength since the first-hand experience alerted the researcher to the type of data to seek in the single-gender environment.

Even though certain strengths are identified by the researcher, the same strengths may also impact data collection outcomes. Therefore, the researcher identified strategies to control bias issues. First, the researcher utilized member checks to support the fidelity of the research process. Second, the researcher provided rich description and thoughtful sequencing which allowed the reader to develop his or her own interpretations. Third, the

researcher practiced detachment (Patton, 2002) while being immersed in this case study's environment. Finally, the researcher used triangulation as a strategy since it offers methods for reducing systematic bias according to Patton (2002).

### **Summary**

This chapter presents a synopsis of the research methods which were used to collect and analyze personal interview, focus group interview, observation, and document data from this qualitative, exploratory case study of Boys' Achievement Academy. Outlined in this chapter is how data was collected and analyzed and how the researcher ensured internal validity, reliability, and external validity. Further, this chapter describes ethical issues related to qualitative research, significance of the study, the limitations and subjectivities, and the strategies the researcher used to address these limitations and subjectivities. The next chapter will report findings in both aggregate and individual terms.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

This case study was developed to examine adult and student perceptions of factors that contribute to academic and behavioral success at the Boys' Achievement Academy. For the purposes of the study, academic and behavioral success is defined as the increase in graduation rates of African-American male students enrolled in college-readiness courses at Boys' Achievement Academy since it was perceived by adults in the traditional urban school district that these students would have a slight chance of graduating high school.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors do the Boys' Achievement Academy faculty, administrators, and board members perceive to contribute to the academic and behavioral success of the African-American students at Boys' Achievement Academy as measured by the increase in the percentage of high school graduation rates in college-readiness courses?
2. What factors do the African-American students, who attend Boys' Achievement Academy, perceive to contribute to their academic and behavioral success as measured by the increase in the percentage of high school graduation rates in college-readiness courses?

The purpose of the study was two-fold. The first purpose was to report the factors school board members, administrators, and teachers perceived to contribute to the academic

and behavioral success of the African-American male students at the Boys' Achievement Academy.

The second purpose of the study was to report factors that the African-American students perceived to contribute to their academic and behavioral success, as a result of being enrolled in the Boys' Achievement Academy, as measured by the increase in the percentage of students graduating from high school with a college ready diploma. The findings are revealed through personal interviews, classroom observations, and school documents.

A sequential exploratory approach was used to gather qualitative data from participants in the study. Participants identified for the study were interviewed, classrooms observations were conducted, and school documents were collected in order to compare and contrast the different perceptions of factors that contributed to the academic and behavioral success of the students. A constant comparative method was used to analyze the data.

This chapter begins with a narrative describing how and why the Boys' Achievement Academy was chosen for the study. A historical background of the Boys' Achievement Academy, along with a description of the Academy, is also provided. Data are presented according to four major themes which emerged through the data collection process in the study and are listed in tables along with the factors that contribute to the high graduation rates as identified by participants interviewed. Then, the factors are described in detail. Included are examples from the data to support the findings. Selected excerpts from interviews and student focus groups, classroom observations, and the review of documents typical of events and patterns across the research data are included.

### **Identifying the Site for Case Study**

In July 2008, a professor shared with me a brochure promoting a single-gender conference to be held in Philadelphia the following October. The concept of single-gender schools had always been of interest to me because throughout my educational career I noticed the student achievement performance gaps between African-American male students and other subgroups. The conference provided an opportunity to learn more about the single-gender concept and whether this alternative educational option provided better learning outcomes for African-American male students. Consequently, I registered and attended. It was at this conference that I met and conversed with leaders of the single-gender education movement from across the nation.

At the conference, I was able to visit presentation booths that were on display highlighting single-gender schools in America. As I listened to the presentations, I noticed the Boys' Achievement Academy presenter was so excited about some of the accomplishments of its program such as the recognition it was receiving by the media for positively changing the lives of African-American males. I had the opportunity to further discuss the mission of Boys' Achievement Academy with its representative and the presenter took the time to explain the Academy in further detail. He discussed the operational support, funding resources, flexible scheduling, student and teacher incentive programs, and positive relationships between the school and community. I expressed an interest in the school and the

presenter handed me his business card and invited me to come and visit the school. We began to communicate through emails and phone calls.

In March 2009, I scheduled a visit to the campus of Boys' Achievement Academy. During my visit, I established a professional relationship with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), his secretary, and the principal. I began to familiarize myself with the school's system of operation. I was impressed with the organizational structure, the financial support the school received, and the impact the school environment appeared to have on influencing African-American males to set goals for graduating with a high school diploma and being college ready. The school was impressive, especially considering that many of these students had not performed academically or behaviorally well in the traditional school setting. It is for these reasons that I decided to conduct a case study of the school.

### **Boys' Achievement Academy**

Boys' Achievement Academy is located in a northeastern urban area in the United States. Many of the students who have attended schools in this district have endured extreme hardships including: inadequate healthcare, poor nutrition, neglect, abuse, and other morbidities associated with growing up in poverty. These outside factors placed undue stress upon students. The district began to look at creative ways to alter how teaching and learning should look to help these students become successful. The school district partnered with community organizations and decided to develop, expand, and restructure many of its supports for students by instituting the Children Achievement Initiative which involved seeking and implementing strategies to improve the academic performance of African-



American males in school. This initiative was a comprehensive school reform effort that prompted the district to find ways of closing the academic achievement gap between African-American males and other subgroups.

In 2006, a report issued by Project U-Turn indicated this urban school district was graduating 52% of its students. Additionally, it was reported that there was a significant gap of 29% between the graduation rates of African-American male students and other subgroups. Reports such as these fueled the future founder's and a board member's (Board Member #1) passion to develop a single-gender school that would promote high quality education for the African-American male. They named the school Boys' Achievement Academy and its mission was to educate, graduate, and develop college-ready African-American male students. Board Member #1 commented, "I have two African-American sons as well, and saw a need to give back because I was blessed to be able to offer a sound education for my sons so why not for these boys who were not as blessed as mine."

After researching and carefully considering the challenges of educating African-American males in this northeastern urban school district, the future founder, along with Board Member #1, decided to take action and establish a program at Boys' Achievement Academy that would commit to graduate college-ready African-American males.

In the initial stages, Boys' Achievement Academy was a public school. The school's future founder and Board Member #1 submitted an application to convert the public school to a public charter school. The application was denied by the School Reform Commission (SRC) due to a concern of sufficient funding resources to support the initial program design.

The founder and Board Member #1 led a petition drive and were able to meet the funding requirements that the SRC required. The SRC granted the school's charter in 2007.

Boys' Achievement Academy opened in 2007 with 144 ninth grade students scheduled for graduation in 2011. As one board member stated, "Ultimately, I began to develop this school because I wanted to give back. What I quickly learned in the struggle to establish it, is its overwhelming gift given to all of us – hope. This notion of hope is a motivation given to a group of students who would not normally succeed" (Board Member #2).

**Architectural Design of the Boys' Achievement Academy.** Once I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I scheduled a five day visit to Boys' Achievement Academy to collect data for the study. I looked forward to the opportunity to visit Boys' Achievement Academy to study the school's infrastructure.

Boys' Achievement Academy is a single-gender school designed to address the unique social and academic issues experienced by urban African-American males in school. As a strategic strategy to develop a culture for learning, the founder and Board Member #1 thought it important to establish a location and building where adults and students would feel pride in attending. The location selected was a three-acre hilltop campus which overlooked a scenic river. The building selected was a two-story brick building that is rectangular in shape with a veranda that surrounds the exterior. Capitalizing on the sloping terrain of the site, this large masonry structure is elevated from the street level lending to its impact of grandeur.

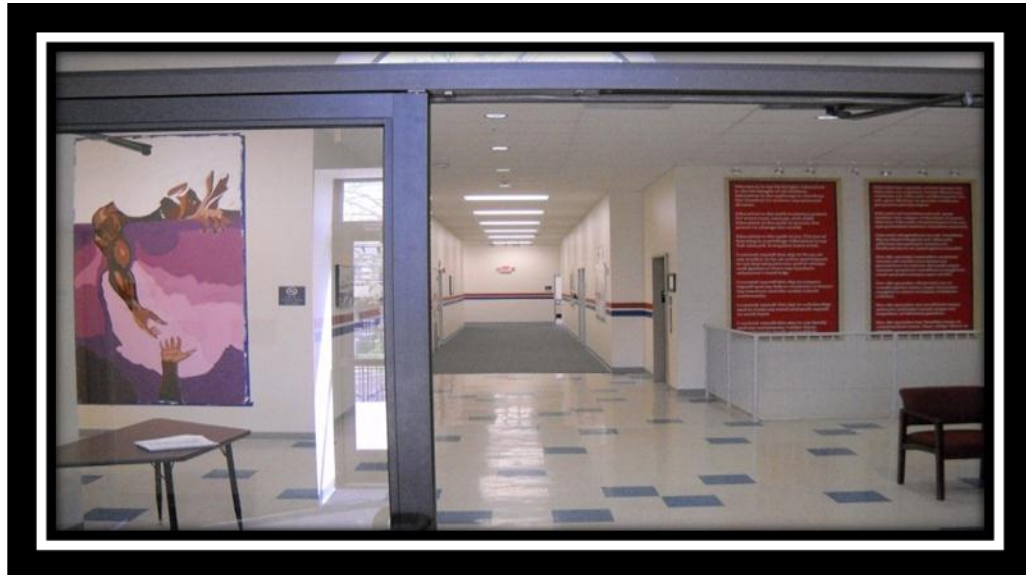
Furthermore, the location has a low retaining wall that edges the property to the street. The retaining wall is a perfect segue to the guarded entrance and security area where visitors gain access and sign in. As the first single-gender charter school approved in its area, and the first publicly and privately funded school in this urban school district that required students to take Latin, the school has established itself as an alternative educational option for young African-Americans and other minority males. As a result, the location lends credence to the phrase ‘a city on the hill’ in a high-poverty community as represented in Figure 1. Please note that the whited out sections serve to protect the anonymity of the school in the case study.



**Figure 1** Boys' Achievement Academy

The building has also been equipped with state-of-the-art classrooms, a library and media center, a large group meeting area, a space for presentations, and a large dining room. Modern science laboratories, a music room, and a modern computer laboratory have also been provided to the school. Facility additions in 2010 included a full-sized gymnasium and gated parking space. As a result, all of these facets of the building's structure have allowed Boys' Achievement Academy to provide sufficient spacing and efficient equipment to support the infrastructure of the school and, most of all, to develop a sense of pride throughout the school and community.

As a visitor enters the corridors of the school, the student's pledge is strategically placed in the entrance of the building. The pledge is written in Latin and reminds the students of their responsibility and mission at Boys' Achievement Academy. The words "We Believe in You" resonate with the philosophical framework of the school and are posted all around the school building. The "We" referenced in the phrase refers to the faculty, administration, and school resource officers who are ever visible and vigilant. Figure 2 shows the entrance hallway of Boys' Achievement Academy.



**Figure 2 Boys' Achievement Academy Entrance Hallway**

As I arrived at Boys' Achievement Academy for my first day of data collection, I was greeted by a welcoming party, which included the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the principal, the school's secretary, the student government president, and the security guard. Once inside the building, I noticed school resource officers were busy greeting students, quickly correcting inappropriate behavior, and facilitating traffic flow, while the administration and faculty exchanged "how are you" and gentle "get to class" reminders with the students. As students scurried to class, they sported lanyards with student identification badges and in their hands were novels they were responsible for reading that month.

Dressed in navy blazers, khaki pants, white dress shirts, and maroon ties, the students tucked their shirts in and tugged up on their pants before entering their classrooms. Throughout the class exchange period, I noticed certain students sporting gold ties which represented they were an honorary member of the Ultimate Warriors Incentive Program

which will be addressed later in this chapter. The school blazer with the school emblem on it was a prime symbol that teachers hold the authority and students have the responsibility to abide by the school rules. With book bags in tow, students were quick to display a friendly smile to visitors. The orderly climate of the school was apparent to me when one student took the time to correct me as I made my way down the wrong staircase. A student said to me, “Sir, you are coming down the up staircase and you can find the down staircase on the other side of the building” – as he pointed to the direction of that staircase. Apparently, it was an expectation for adults and students to follow the same set of rules.

**School’s Profile.** The school’s profile section is devoted to an overview of the characteristics of the school and its clientele. First and foremost is the process for student admission. Next is the process for identifying student interests to support the Individualized Educational Work Plan. An explanation of “off the chart resources” is shared. Also included are school operations and set-up, attendance and academics, graduation matriculation, adult and student demographics, and school and community stakeholders at Boys’ Achievement Academy. Table 1 provides a snapshot of the school’s profile.

**Admissions Process:** Students at Boys’ Achievement Academy are admitted through rolling admission. The students and parents contact the school to attend an information session where the enrollment process and expectations are shared. As stated by administrator #1,

**Table 1****School Profile**

Students Enrolled	466
Grades Served	9-12
Student Daily Attendance Rate	97%
Free/Reduced Lunch	82%
Teacher/Student Ratio	13:1
Percentage of Certified Teachers	76%
School Founded	2007
Neighborhood	Low socio-economic urban city
Facility	Newly renovated
Seniors Who Graduated On-Time (4 year cohort)	96%
Students Admitted to 4-year college or university	93%
Attrition Rate	3%
Per Student Expenditure	Unknown
Percentage of Students Identified for Exceptional Children's Program Services	19%
Technology Resources in Every Classroom (SmartBoard, LCD projector, Laptops, etc.)	100%

“Each young man is encouraged to be ‘the architect of his own fortune’ by pursuing excellence.” Once the students and parents have attended the information session, they are allowed to utilize computer labs to fill out applications and organize other documents such as a proof of residence, lunch application, birth certificate, and student records from their regular school setting. Staff members are available in the labs for assistance. Additionally, the students are given an essay question to respond to and submit along with the application. A committee of counselors, social workers, teachers, administrators, and board members review and screen the applications for completion and accuracy. The committee’s objective is to select students based upon their potential to achieve. Even though academic and behavior assessments are reviewed from the student’s

records, these assessments are not the major source for admission. The major sources for admission are the student's desire to learn as evidenced in his essay, the parents' willingness and involvement by signing a letter of agreement, the student must be entering the ninth grade, and the accuracy in residential documentation. The committee uses a rubric to score each student's essay and assess his passion for achievement. Once the screening process is completed, all applicants receive a letter of admission or a letter of rejection. The application process is competitive as out of the approximately 250 applications received only about 150 freshmen are admitted. Furthermore, incoming freshmen are required to attend a 4-week academic prep program the summer before they matriculate.

**Identifying Student Interests/Individualized Educational Work Plan:** Another part of the admissions process is to identify student interests in order to customize an Individualized Educational Work Plan. Students at Boys' Achievement Academy are administered a technology-based career assessment during the summer academic prep program. This assessment basically asks questions of students about things they like to do. After all questions are answered and submitted, the data base produces a report ranking the students' career option choices. A counselor reviews this information with the incoming freshmen and asks probing questions to ensure the accuracy of this report. Then, the counselor assigns the student an adult mentor based upon the student's career interest and the adult's experience in this career field and assists the student in devising his own Individualized Educational Work Plan. If no adult on campus is experienced or familiar with the student's career interest, then a Boys' Achievement Academy administrator finds an adult from the community. Student #8



shared, “To me this school is special because they understand me. In my old school, I was doing terrible and wanted to drop out just as soon as I was old enough. I didn’t know what I wanted in life but I like that my teacher and counselor helped me decide what I wanted to do in life and because I can work on what I want to be during school, it makes me want to come to school.”

### **Off the Chart Resources**

Interviews with board members, administrators, and students provided data to substantiate that Boys’ Achievement Academy is inundated with resources. The primary source for the resources stems from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will be discussed later in the data analysis section. Along with the CEO are board members who are instrumental in giving and finding resources to donate to the school. Even though the researcher was not able to ascertain the average student expenditure, information about state and federal funding, federal and private grants such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and monetary donations from board members were deemed the major contributors of resources. Replicating an environment that secures these types of resources may be difficult due to the fact the CEO is well connected and supported by affluent board members, high profile celebrities, educational members in Washington, DC, and community stakeholders.

The additional funding resources have allowed Boys’ Achievement Academy to recruit and retain teachers from across the country by offering recruitment stipends, relocation packages, tutoring stipends, and student academic achievement bonuses. Securing

mentors to address the students' career interests has been successful because of stipends paid. Qualified students are hired for summer jobs. The school is able to host numerous after-school and weekend events to continuously involve parents and the community. The facility has been newly renovated to accommodate a conducive learning environment. The facility is also equipped with technological programs and equipment throughout the entire school.

**School Operations and Set-Up.** The school currently has 466 students enrolled in grades 9-12. The school's hours of operation are non-traditional. Students at Boys' Achievement Academy attend an extended day of classes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, a partial day from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, and from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday. Mandatory Saturday school is held twice monthly from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. School meals are provided during these hours of operation.

The school's 13:1 student/teacher ratio is another indication of the school's mission to offer each student the level of personal attention and engagement that is conducive to helping a student become "the architect of his own fortune," a slogan that is posted throughout the school. This slogan is also referenced on the school's recruitment DVD which expresses a message of pride and purpose that drives this school mission.

In addition to classroom teachers, students are also assigned to faculty advisors. The expressed purpose of the faculty advisors is to address student academic, social, and moral development in a safe and supportive environment that encourages the students to take challenges and explore their potential in academics, athletics, and the arts (music, band, choir, theater, and drama).

**Attendance, Academics, and Extracurricular Activities.** The school also has a compulsory attendance policy that is heavily monitored by the school's student services department. The compulsory attendance policy addresses supports provided for students to regularly attend school and consequences if they do not. In addition, the school demands that each student must meet graduation and college entrance requirements in order to graduate from high school so attendance is paramount to stay enrolled. Boys' Achievement Academy maintains an attendance average of approximately 97% according to documents viewed during the data collection process.

Along with attendance expectations are students individualized educational work plan expectations. Tables 2 and 3 below present the level of coursework at each grade level the school expects students to master in order to be prepared for college.

Students are required to enroll in one elective course each tri-semester such as physical education and health, the arts (music, band, choir, theater, or drama), mock trial, robotics, economics, student government, Keyboarding I and II, and/or Technology I and II. Students are required also to participate in at least one extracurricular activity such as soccer, cross-country running, fencing, rugby, tennis, bowling, football, basketball, baseball, or crew, or students may choose a club sport such as technology, drama, debate, choir, science, economics, robotics, or mock trial. According to one teacher, the extracurricular activities and clubs help to make connections between the students' interests and learning. She noted: "We care so much for our students and realize that offering extracurricular activities and

**Table 2****Grade Level Matriculation to Meet Graduation and College Entrance Requirements**

Grade Level	Latin	English	Math	Science	History	Keyboarding
9 <sup>th</sup>	Latin I	Reading/Literature I & Composition I	Math-Concepts/Pre-Algebra or Math Reasoning/Algebra I	Physical Science	Civics	Keyboarding I
10 <sup>th</sup>	Latin II	Reading/Literature II & Composition II	Geometry/Algebra II or Math Analysis/Algebra II	Biology or Chemical Science	World History	Keyboarding II
11 <sup>th</sup>	Latin III	Literature III (Honors Available)	Advanced Algebra/Trigonometry	Chemistry (Honors Available)	US History (Honors Available)	Technology I
12 <sup>th</sup>	Latin IV	Literature IV (Honors Available)	Pre-Calculus or Calculus (Honors Available)	Physics (Honors Available)	Art or Black History	Technology II

**Table 3****Grade Level Matriculation to Meet Graduation and College Entrance Requirements**

Grade Level	Elective Course	Extracurricular Activity	Laptop Issued	Participation in After-School Program	Graduation Project
9 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
10 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
11 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Begin
12 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

clubs of their interest helps them to better focus on learning during the school day. Students understand that in order to participate in extracurricular activities and clubs, they must first

perform well in the classroom or will miss participating in these extracurricular activities and clubs until their academic performance is good” (Teacher #3).

Additionally, life skills and technology are woven throughout the curriculum and are used to support teaching and learning in all content areas. The school provides tools for learning including personal laptops (10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders only), game-like academic software programs, and rubrics for student-based projects.

Furthermore, Boy’s Achievement Academy builds opportunities for classroom-integrated service-learning experiences with students. The school requires community service each year from freshmen and sophomores. Freshmen are responsible for 20 hours of community service, and sophomores are responsible for 25 hours. Providing community service means students are encouraged to volunteer as peer tutors in subjects in which they perform well, volunteer services at churches and/or shelters, design holiday cards throughout the year for senior citizen centers, and/or adopt a highway or playground for area clean-ups. All juniors participate in two weeks of planning for their final year of high school and prepare for the college application process during the summer. All seniors are required to spend time after school with their adult mentor to prepare for the presentation of their graduation project.

A local urban magazine in 2009 named the school’s after-school program as “Best in Region”. According to the article, the senior service learning opportunities offer students personal growth and the prospect of making a difference in their community. To support the academics, each student in grades 10 - 12 receives a personal laptop computer for his use.

The freshmen are scheduled to attend computer labs during their daily schedule. Not only do the freshmen receive instruction in computer skills during the computer lab time, but techniques are also shared for maintaining the personal laptop for the time when they are eligible. Incoming freshmen also attend a four-week academic preparation program in the summer to familiarize themselves with the adults, policies, and procedures of Boys' Achievement Academy before they matriculate to the high school.

Though a fairly young institution, the success of the school and its students has been measured by the 4-year cohort graduation rate and the number of these graduates who are eligible for admission to college. Board Member #1 stated that according to academic reports 96% of the students from the first graduating class graduated on-time and 93% of these students were admitted to college.

### **Demographics, Certifications, Licenses, and Trainings of Interviewees at Boys' Achievement Academy**

During the data collection process, I had to secure the subjects I desired to interview such as board members, administrators, teachers, and students. Therefore, I used the consent letter and form approved by the IRB to support the volunteer recruitment process and ensure as a safeguard to the participants that I would take all precautions for confidentiality's sake, which was a key in getting many of them to interview. I also noticed it was helpful to have formed prior professional relationships at Boys' Achievement Academy because by their knowing me and anticipating my visit, the school communicated within the school and in the community the purpose of my visit. It also helped to offer the participants incentives such as a luncheon for the adult interviewees and a pizza party for the student interviewees. In

essence, I had to refuse some subjects because I had more than enough adult volunteers to choose from according to the number the IRB had approved for me to interview. The students on the other hand were a little challenging to secure because students who had volunteered forgot to return signed permission forms from the parents. Since I had a number of adults to choose from to interview, I focused on selecting participants that would offer some diversity (See Tables 4 – 7). The tables below demonstrate the types of diversity associated with this study. It was with these voluntary participants at Boys’ Achievement Academy I was able to secure an interviewing schedule during my five day data collection visit.

The Board Members had all completed Master Board Certification training by the state and reported no additional training in order to support their role as a board member. Two of the three Board Members had previously worked in both co-educational and single-gender educational settings, and none of them had any specific training for developing or maintaining a single-gender learning environment (See Table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Board Member (Certification and Trainings)**

Board Member #	Gender	Race	Completed Board Certification Requirements	Worked in Both Co-Educational and Single-Gender Settings	Any Other Trainings to Become a Board Member of a Single-Gender Setting
1	Male	Black	Yes	Yes	No
2	Male	Black	Yes	Yes	No
3	Female	White	Yes	No	No

The school had three administrators, and the first two administrators who volunteered to be interviewed were selected. The building administrator and the assistant principal in charge of curriculum and technology both held an administrative certificate from the state. Both administrators had experience working in a co-educational setting as teachers and administrators. Additionally, Boys' Achievement Academy was the first and only single-gender setting in which both administrators had worked. The administrators had received no specialized training to work with single-gender settings (See Table 5).

Teachers were asked to volunteer to be interviewed for the study as well. Diversity among the teachers was important because the teachers have a direct impact on students' learning. The student population at Boys' Achievement Academy was predominately Black but the teacher make-up was predominately White. Moreover, diversity among the teachers offered a better objective lens. Boys' Achievement Academy administrators suggested teachers are selected based upon their content knowledge and ability to build relationships to transfer this knowledge to its intended audience, the student.

**Table 5**

**Administrator (License and Training)**

Administrator #	Gender	Race	Completed Administration Certification Requirements	Worked in Both Co-Educational and Single-Gender Settings	Any Other Trainings to Become an Administrator in the Single-Gender Setting
1	Male	Black	Yes	Yes	No
2	Female	White	Yes	Yes	No



Many teachers were willing to participate in the interviewing process but six teachers were chosen based upon diversity characteristics outlined in the IRB approval form. Of the six, three were male and three were female. Two of the male teachers were white, and one male was black. Two of the female teachers were white, and one female teacher was black. With the exception of one male black teacher, they were all certified teachers. Of the six teachers, three held career status and three held probationary status. Five of the teachers had worked in both co-educational and single gender settings, with the exception of the white male (See Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Teacher Demographics**

Teacher #	Gender	Race	Completed Teacher Certification Requirements	Probationary or Career	Worked in Both Co-Educational and Single-Gender Settings
1	Male	White	Yes	Career	Yes
2	Female	Black	Yes	Career	Yes
3	Female	White	Yes	Career	Yes
4	Female	White	Yes	Probationary	Yes
5	Male	Black	No	Probationary	Yes
6	Male	White	Yes	Probationary	No

Student demographics are represented in Table 7. Please note that all the students are African-American males; therefore, the student demographic table represents pertinent additional information for this case study. Once again, it was more difficult to obtain the diverse make-up and number of students desired because some of them forgot to return their

signed parent permission form. There were sixteen students that volunteered to be interviewed for the study. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade had four students volunteer, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade had five students volunteer, the 11<sup>th</sup> grade had one student volunteer, and the 12<sup>th</sup> grade had six students volunteer. All the students had previously attended a public co-educational setting. Fourteen of the sixteen students admitted to having prior discipline problems in school, and thirteen of the sixteen students admitted to having poor grades. Of particular note, most of the students interviewed in the student focus groups admitted to having behavioral challenges while in the traditional co-educational setting; however, all students admitted their academic achievement performance improved since their induction to the Boys' Achievement Academy environment. One student who was doing well with grades in the public co-educational sector admitted, "When I was in my public school, I was an A/B student, but now since I am at Boys' Achievement Academy I am a straight A student" (Student #12).

**Table 7**  
**Student Demographics**

Student #	Grade Level	Behavior Issues Prior to Induction	Poor Academic Performance Prior to Induction	Behavior Improvement After Induction	Improved Academic Performance After Induction	Enrolled in Latin Course	Enrolled in Double Math Courses	Participate in Extra Curricular Activities	Attended a Co-Educational Setting Prior
1	9 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	9 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	9 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	9 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	10 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	10 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	10 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	10 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	10 <sup>th</sup>	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	11 <sup>th</sup>	No	No	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
11	12 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
12	12 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
13	12 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
14	12 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
15	12 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
16	12 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

**School's Stakeholders.** The school's design was not realized without the support of the community. According to the recruitment pamphlet, the school's Board of Directors consists of respected business, education, and community leaders who are dedicated to ensuring the success of the students graduating college ready. Furthermore, the Boys' Achievement Academy's community recognizes that student learning happens best when

there is a partnership among the stakeholders (community, educators, students, and parents). Therefore, the school community focuses on identifying supporters who believe that the program design at Boys' Achievement Academy makes a difference in the educational development of the African-American male student.

The school and community supporters exchange services. Community supporters will fund many of the school's programs and in return the school advertises these partners through websites and publications. As Board Member #1 stated, "Without our supporters, many of our after-school activities and events would be obsolete." These stakeholders are honored each year at the school's banquet.

### **Contributing Factors to Academic and Behavior Success**

Interviews with board members, administrators, teachers, and students provided data that were analyzed through a constant comparative method which revealed patterns and themes of factors that the participants believed contributed to African-American males successfully graduating from high school with a college ready diploma.

I began analyzing interview data by listening to the taped recordings and reading the transcribed transcripts over and over again, only to realize certain themes were constantly mentioned. As a result, I reviewed research related to school reform (Brown, 2010; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many, 2006; Fullan, 2006; Kufuju, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Muhammad, 2009; Riordan, 2002; Sax, 2005; Salomone, 2006; Slocumb, 2004). I found that the research and Boys' Achievement Academy's data revealed that effective school reform

programs shared the four major themes that emerged: 1) School Climate/Infrastructure, 2) Culture for Learning (Staff/Teaching and Learning), 3) Student Needs, and 4) Parental/Community Context.

The research and participants believe that the school climate/infrastructure support should be provided by effective leadership from the top of the organization down to the bottom which is the first theme that emerged. School climate/infrastructure includes providing effective leadership at all levels, the interaction among the adults and students to provide a safe, supportive environment, the process for strategically planning and devising budgets to support school improvement plans, and the ability to make adjustments to plans as needed. Because of the belief that boys and girls learn differently, the school supported an educational infrastructure that was tailored to support the male learner.

The second theme was the culture for learning. The culture for learning describes the staff's ability to maintain high expectations for teaching, learning, and behavior despite most students coming from high poverty situations. In other words, the teachers refused to lower their expectations for teaching, learning, and behavior based upon the fact that the students were poor and could not do the academic work. Learning was also emphasized for adults as the faculty utilized professional development and technology to integrate the curriculum and technology into their daily lessons.

The third theme, student needs, identified strategies to address change, model the expected outcomes, and motivate students intrinsically to be in charge of their own learning. This theme was highly important according to the teachers interviewed because the teachers

as mentors have spent time listening to what challenges the students face. As a result, the adults spend numerous hours problem solving ways to individualize supports for students to protect the learning environment.

The fourth theme addressed the importance of the parental/community context which communicates the expectations of the parents and the community in developing and supporting this single-gender environment. The school maintains constant communication with the parents and community to keep them informed of school activities and successes. However, it appears that the best asset for building support for the Academy comes through school members being public relation agents. The students are known for sharing personal life-changing testimonies with their parents and the community.

As educators, we can readily agree that effectively addressing these themes is essential in an innovative school reform program, but I want to propose an additional set of qualifiers, dispositions, values, and sensibilities based upon my analysis of the data collected. In fact, they are shared through the factors the participants believed contributed to the African-American male students successfully graduating college ready from high school.

Additionally, I noticed that the factors which will be described in this research were constantly mentioned by the participants. So, in order to organize the factors under each theme according to the level of importance, I began to quantify the factors mentioned by the participants with a tally point each time they appeared in the transcripts. In the end, the factors were placed under the theme they fit according to research findings and data analysis. Then, the factors' tally points were arranged in the order of greatest to least under the

appropriate theme. This method of organizing the data collected and analyzed defines what is meant by the factors being arranged according to the level of frequency.

Listed under each one of these themes are factors to support the theme. The factors are listed according to the level of frequency as measured by the number of times the factor was mentioned by participants during the interviewing process.

### **School Climate/Infrastructure**

According to data analysis, the first emerging theme that supports a high graduation rate and college readiness at Boys' Achievement Academy is school climate/infrastructure. In Table 4.1 the factors are listed according to the level of frequency. In *Rooms of the Mind* (Brown, 2010), one component for a successful school community is organized around its climate and infrastructure. When the adults were asked the question during the interviewing process about the factors that produce a graduation and college ready environment, one of the board members mentioned, "We did lots of research through book studies and studying environments similar to ours. Through our studies, we found that having a positive climate and a supportive infrastructure did wonders for creating a culture of success" (Board Member #1). Listed in Table 8 are the factors that support Boys' Achievement Academy's meaning behind school climate and infrastructure.

The first factor that emerged under the theme school climate/infrastructure was ensuring effective school building leadership. An effective school building leader must first be an individual who passionately believes that he/she can make a difference in the lives of

others. Effective school leaders must holistically understand the most important variable in a healthy learning environment is staffing the environment with professionals who believe and support the vision and mission of the school by modeling these behaviors through effective communication (Muhammad, 2009). According to teacher interviews at Boys' Achievement

**Table 8**

**Theme - School Climate/Infrastructure**

Factor	Board Members	Administrators	Teachers	Students	Documents	Observations
Effective Building Leadership	√	√	√	√	√	√
360 Degrees of Support		√	√			√
Safe and Supportive Environment	√	√	√	√	√	√
Strategic Planning Processes for Improvement	√	√	√		√	√
Vision/Mission	√	√	√	√	√	√
Budget and Funding Flexibility	√	√			√	√
Effective Communications	√	√	√	√	√	√
Academic-focused School Name	√	√				



Academy, teachers became attracted to the school because they viewed the school leadership as effective. Specifically, when I asked teachers to identify factors that cause the school's African-American males to be academically and behaviorally successful, many teachers referenced the focus of effective leadership. The following are some of the quotes from teachers:

The CEO, administrators, and lead teachers shared such a vision and passion for the mission of educating African-American males who would otherwise fail in less prescriptive settings. This is why I came to this school and why the students are so successful. (Teacher #6)

I was in the Teach for America (TFA) program and was told about the school but I made the decision to come here when I learned of the visionary leadership. Because there is such a strong vision, it becomes contagious and the students catch on, but it starts with the leaders. (Teacher #2)

Even further, school building leadership at all levels was mentioned as being essential for Boys' Achievement Academy to be productive and succeed according to the administrators. During their interview sessions, the administrators acknowledged that leadership from the CEO whose office is located in the building was a true support and a factor to the school's positive climate. Administrator #2 summed up the reason for choosing to work in the single-gender environment at Boys' Achievement Academy by saying, "I also came because the CEO is open-minded, competent, and ambitious and provided sound leadership." Leadership by the CEO even made a difference according to Administrator #1 who said, "I interviewed and was impressed with the CEO and his vision for this school."

### **The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Champion of Boys' Achievement Academy**

As observed throughout the data collection process, the CEO is the key component to the success of this whole operation. The CEO is located in the main office of the facility. He can be described as a charismatic leader who facilitates the process for building positive relationships with all stakeholders and making the school work. For instance, on days during the data collection process, the CEO was observed in the hallways with the teachers and administrators encouraging students to be on-time for class. He called all members in the environment by their first name when speaking to them. The administrators often sought his advice on decisions made throughout the daily operations. When parents came out to the school, they required his presence. He greeted many parents and visitors with a huge smile and hug. Even at the board meeting, the members allowed the CEO to generate the agenda and control the flow. The CEO is most often the first and last person at the school. Most of all, the CEO has been a champion, or winner, in finding and obtaining resources to support the school. According to interviewees, the CEO is proof an effective leader makes a difference.

Boys' Achievement Academy has factored into its infrastructure a comprehensive approach to educating the whole child. "The support for the students at Boys' Achievement Academy is similar to that of a circle; it provides 360 degrees of support," stated Teacher #5. The philosophy behind the premise of 360 degrees of support emerged as one of the school's factors because the school's faculty is concerned about educating the whole child. The school staff finds ways to be involved in their lives in and out of school, similar to being a surrogate

parent. Additionally, the school has developed what it calls a “family-like” atmosphere to build levels of trust and support with the students. One teacher remarked that, “I can truly say we have 360 degree support at this school because we treat these kids like our own family. Some of the students even refer to us as their moms and dads” (Teacher #6).

Another factor that emerged from the Boys’ Achievement Academy was that students must have the mindset that they can be academically and behaviorally successful. Administrator #1 shared, “In our communications with the community, we stress the academic side so heavily that parents and students already come with the mindset that you must behave well in this school in order to be academically sound. Part of our work is to get our parents and students to believe they can achieve.”

The faculty and staff mentioned consistently the importance of changing student mindsets throughout the interview process. It was common to hear teachers remind students to change their mindset as a strategy to refocus behaviors in a positive direction. These types of conversations supported the school’s resolve that in order for a student to achieve academically and behaviorally, a student’s mindset often needs to be changed in order for that student to believe that he has the ability to be successful. Student #5 shared, “I just have faith that I can accomplish anything . . . nothing’s going to stop me and being at this school helps me believe that...my teachers believe in me.”

Developing and maintaining a safe and supportive environment by fostering positive, trusting relationships between adults and students has emerged as another factor. Teacher #2 stated, “Our most important factor for ensuring a safe and supportive environment is our

positive relationships. I can't say enough about the relationships here. Again, it is just like a close family here and the expectations of family-like relationships are something we feel is effective. We make decisions for our students based on what we would do for our own children." To further set the tone for a safe and supportive environment, each student at the school chooses a teacher or adult mentor on the school campus whom he perceives would be a good mentor and with whom he could build a positive, trusting relationship.

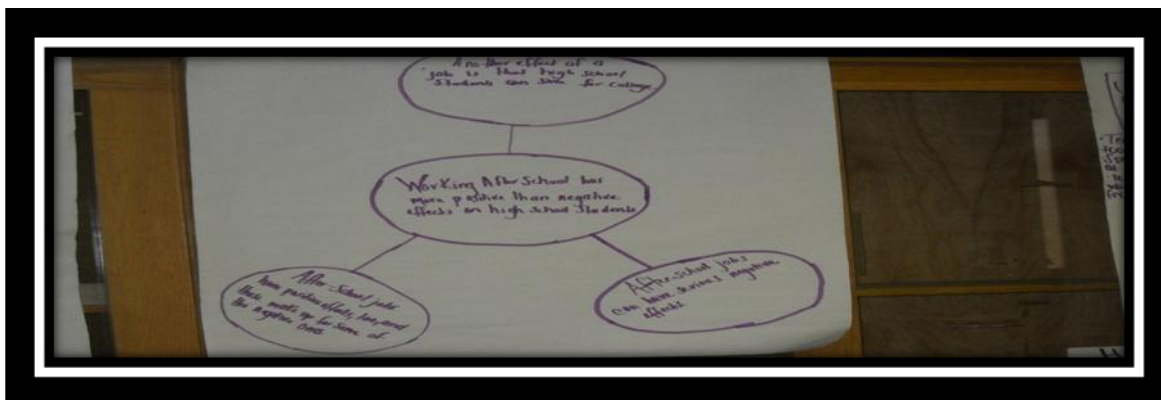
Of course the adults shared their perception of a safe and supportive environment but would the students reflect the same sentiments? To answer this question, students were asked to share their thoughts about the factors that caused them to academically and behaviorally succeed. Students stressed a need to feel safe and supported, especially since they live and travel through potentially stressful neighborhoods. Students mentioned that they had found it challenging to deal with other students who do not attend the single-gender school. The support provided by the mentors at Boys' Achievement Academy has helped the students deal with these difficulties. The Academy students felt students in their neighborhoods were jealous because Academy students are recognized by the media as doing well academically and behaviorally. Student #14 stated, "Students from West \*\*\*\*\* High have attacked us, basically because we go to a single sex school."

I think we are attacked basically because we are a single sex school and this is our first couple of years as a school and we are doing better than most schools, and we have a lot more benefits than the others. That's one of the problems that I've encountered. I usually feel safe except for walking home from school or whatever because students have attacked us because of who we are, what we wear and how we present ourselves in the \*\*\*\*\* community. (Student #13)

Overall, students responded that school safety, administrative support, and a positive emotional school climate contributed to their academic and behavioral success. Many of the students also mentioned how the environment was “family-like” to them. Student #12 stated that, “The faculty is family to me because I am here more than being at home. I have father figures, moms here, I have cousins, and other types of people and we all protect each other.”

Interviews with board members, administrators, and teachers identified strategic planning as another crucial factor that is part of the school’s climate/infrastructure. Administrators #1 and #2 described the school’s strategic planning process heavily involved developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Result-Oriented, and Time-bound) goals. The administrators further reported that the goals are constantly monitored and adjusted as needed. To facilitate the strategic planning process, the administrators scheduled collaborative meetings with teachers and sometimes board members on Wednesday afternoons within the school’s operational hours since students are dismissed from school at noon. In these collaborative meeting, the team focused on using data to drive instructional practices, assessing the school’s climate and culture, and ensuring the senior class is on track for meeting graduation requirements. Board Member #1 stated, “One important factor for ensuring the success of these students is to effectively plan the outcomes and expectations. This is why the board, administrators, and teachers are a part of our strategic planning process.” Figure 3 displays an artifact of the adults’ collaborative diagram for better student outcomes.

An additional factor was the vision/mission statements of Boys' Achievement Academy. The school's mission statement is written in Latin and all students are required to



**Figure 3 Adults' Diagram of a Strategic Collaboration**

learn the mission statement in Latin. As the foreign language requirement for students, the study of Latin offered students the opportunity to study the root meanings. This strategy prompted in-depth discussions about beliefs and values. The mission statement, written in Latin, gave credence to the choice of words that were chosen for the mission statement. Through the interview processes, class observations, and school documents, adults and students felt the school's success was encapsulated in the school's vision and mission statement.

The staff stressed the importance of communicating a common value and belief system to the students. During the interviewing process, teachers emphasized that communicating to students a common language supported the school's vision and mission to

graduate students with a college ready diploma. Listed below are statements about the school's vision/mission that were mentioned during the interviewing process:

We discuss the mission of the school often with our teachers and most of us know it all in Latin. (Student #10)

In our PLCs (Professional Learning Communities), we often address our core beliefs as it relates to the vision and mission. We may not always agree but we have agreed that it's okay to disagree behind closed doors but once we walk out, we are one to our students by sharing our vision and mission. (Teacher #6)

Our school's vision and mission give us a common language. (Teacher #3)

So, when I noticed the mission of the school on the website, I knew it was a match for me and vigorously pursued becoming a part of the mission (Teacher #1)

A part of the school's climate/infrastructure theme was the factor that the school has been granted a budget that allows for flexibility. The ability to obtain and maintain school funding is basic to sustain building operational flexibility. Board Member #1 explained, "Embedded in the school's infrastructure is the availability to obtain consistent funding resources. Since approximately 60% of the school's funding resources are through private funding, such as the Bill Gates Foundation, or supporters of all males' single-gender schools, political figures, church-based organizations, and grants, the school is granted budget and funding flexibility." One example of the school's fiscal flexibility, according to documents presented by Administrator #2, was to school's ability to provide transportation for all its students. Administrator #2 reiterated that the ability to "provide monthly bus passes enables students to catch the bus at any time during busing hours. This prevents students from having excuses about not being able to participate in extracurricular activities after school; providing transportation becomes a staple for the school to be successful."

Emerging as another factor was effective communication. Effective communication was stressed as an essential component to the success of the students at Boys' Achievement Academy. This meant that the school uses multiple strategies to ensure the school and community are informed about what is happening at the school. Effective communication was identified in relevant lessons, collaborative meetings, websites, Wiki pages, Facebook pages, correspondence, monthly letters and updates, phone calls, and Skype. Listed below are statements collected during the interviewing process that support the Academy staff's understanding of effective communication:

I can't help but to say that effective communications has made me feel more involved in our school. (Teacher #3)

A culture like this cannot be built unless you have effective communication from the top down and all around. (Board Member #1)

Communication is different because we can relate to students on more competitive issues to spark interest in learning. The underlying camaraderie with all males is anecdotal evidence. For example, during instruction, we are able to frame questions differently than if girls were in the room. Language references are huge in effective communication. We are able to interest students in learning based on relevant gender scenarios which better focus the learning. (Teacher #6)

What is it about a name that makes it so special to us? Well, according to Boys' Achievement Academy, choosing a school name that represents an academic environment was essential in the strategic planning stages of an academic environment and is another factor. As Board Member #1 mentioned,

One factor that stands out for me is the emphasis on our name, Boys' Achievement Academy. Our school name suggests academia. In our communications with the community, our leadership stresses the academic side so heavily that parents and students already come with the mindset that you must behave well in this school in order to be academically sound.



### **Culture for Learning (Staff/Teach)**

Table 9 provides a list of the factors identified as creating a culture for learning. The results identified these factors as a support for producing high graduation rates and in a college readiness environment. The factors are listed according to the level of frequency as measured by the number of times they were mentioned according to the recorded and transcribed interviews.

During the interview process, administrators and teachers stressed the importance of having high expectations for themselves and the students as the number one factor for developing and maintaining a culture for learning. Teacher #2 stated that, “Another factor to our school’s success is our level of high expectations. Many of our students have come from places of low expectations but we present and nurture a culture to believing that we can achieve which is contagious and students rise to the occasion.” Administrator #1 supported this by sharing “not feeling sorry and lowering performance expectations based upon the students high poverty and low socio-economic status is key to assisting students with learning and behavioral goals.”

Another factor acknowledged that boys and girls have different learning styles. Several of the male students at Boys’ Achievement Academy admitted they missed having

**Table 9**  
**Theme – Culture for Learning**

Factor	Board Members	Administrators	Teachers	Students	Documents	Observations
High Expectations	√	√	√	√	√	√
Acknowledgement that Boys and Girls Learn Differently	√	√	√	√	√	√
Curriculum	√	√	√	√	√	√
Professional Development		√	√		√	√
Professional Learning Community (Connected Teacher within the Learning Environment)		√	√		√	√
Student/Teacher Ratio	√	√	√	√	√	√
Technology Program and Resources		√	√	√	√	√

females at the school because they missed the socialization; however, many of these male students stated that by not having females at the school they have fewer distractions to learning. When the students in the focus group were asked to respond to, “Please tell me how you became involved with this single-gender program,” some of the students stated that their parents learned about the program and thought it was best for them to attend because other boys who were attending were receiving a good education. To the students a good education meant that the teaching and learning environment took into account that boys learn best when

they are interactive and allowed to be competitive. Interestingly, 87.5% of the students interviewed admitted that their education has become important and that having females at the school would be a distraction, cause less production, and a loss of focus on learning. The students also felt the single-gender setting erased the myth that girls are smarter than boys because boys learn differently. Students share their thoughts about the learning environment with and without girls:

In co-ed schools, girls are the problem and that's why so many fights break out in co-ed schools. Girls will cause boys to start arguing with things like that's my girlfriend which I think it's a waste of time. But here we don't have to worry about impressing the girls and that's why our classes make the lessons more active and competitive so we have a good chance of learning. (Student #4)

In a co-ed school it is always said that girls are slightly smarter than boys naturally. You come here and they expect everybody to be on the same level. (Student #1)

Well, when I attended a co-ed school. It was like . . . I was a girl chaser. I was always kept getting in trouble. Grades were dropping and now I am here. So it's like the only thing to do is focus on my work. I focus on my work now. (Student #12)

According to adult interviews, another factor was a relevant curriculum. The adults also believed in customizing the curriculum according to student interests in order to intrinsically motivate student learning. Boys' Achievement Academy uses Latin to build vocabulary, reading comprehension, and critical thinking skills thus setting the base for a curriculum that supports the learning environment. The study of Latin ensures students understand the root meaning of words in order to build the foundation for learning. Board Member #3 supported this, "I also think the learning of the Latin language really supports the

academic achievement of the students because Latin is rich in vocabulary and builds reading comprehension and critical thinking skills.”

The administrators also supported a curriculum based in Latin as a contributing factor in the success of the students, especially on the standardized SAT:

Another key part to our curriculum is that our students score very well on the SAT in the vocabulary section because of the Latin base. Latin transcends into all languages and having a good foundation in it allows you to define words at another level. Our students must take four years of Latin and actually produce a project which is Latin based prior to graduation. (Administrator #1)

Furthermore, the administrators believed because their books and projects were primarily technology-based, it made learning from them fun for the students.

To me a curriculum should inform motivation and productivity differently. What I mean by this is that we specifically research studies that address diverse ways of educating males and African-American males and revise our curriculum to motivate interest in learning. For instance, some of our students desire to become engineers so we customize a curriculum for the student where engineering is embedded in all their subjects. (Administrator #1)

Latin is filtrated throughout the curriculum of all content areas and lesson plans. The curriculum standards provide an avenue for differentiation and rigor by allowing teachers the flexibility to modify learning objectives based on the learners’ needs. Most of all, teachers find ways to provide relevance to the curriculum by keeping up with current events that interest students, then adjusting their lessons to use the current event as a learning opportunity while still accomplishing objective goals. For instance, during my visit, I noticed an English teacher had adjusted the lesson from the previous day to address the boys’ questions about why there was not a Girls’ Achievement Academy. The teacher had changed

the lesson to become a student project-based assignment and the assignment was to develop a marketing plan to convince the school leaders to start a Girls' Achievement Academy.

Students felt they did well on standardized tests such as the SAT because the Latin courses helped to enrich their vocabulary. When students were asked to share, "What performance outcomes can you attribute to this single-gender environment," students felt the use of Latin as a second language aided them academically. Students overall felt their grades were better because learning was relevant and knowing Latin was beneficial. As stated by Student #12, "I feel I scored high on my SAT because I knew the meaning of many of the words I saw on the test that I had learned in Latin."

Students also felt good about learning because of the integration of the curriculum, Latin, and technology. More importantly, they could see how the lessons and student-based projects related to real life and supported their success on the SAT as reflected by the following statements:

Learning is fun because I can see how to use it in real life. (Student #2)

Oh yeah, I did really well on my SATs too because I think knowing Latin made me better with the vocabulary words. (Student #13)

I like the projects we do around here because we can use our own laptops. Since I am so good with computers, doing my classwork and homework with them helps me to stay focused. (Student #12)

We have articles, various news journals about our successful academic performances on state exams, SAT, and Latin competitions. (Student #12)

The Boys' Achievement Academy adults believed in friendly classroom competitions to ensure students are actively engaged and recognized for their work. This strategy to

support the curriculum and learning emerged as an important trait when developing lessons that targeted the students. The adults believed that competition works well with most boys and this belief was supported by the studies conducted by Sax. Sax (NASSPE, 2004a) cites that classrooms need to be energized when education is focused on single-gender education for boys. Here are some of the teachers' comments about developing competitive classrooms as a motivation strategy to get students to learn the curriculum:

Because of the study of Sax's research in our PLCs, we (teachers) intentionally have classroom competitions because it helps the boys get engaged in learning. They just love it. (Teacher #1)

Playing referee can sometimes be a challenge. All of my students want a forum to share their opinions and they certainly have some strong ones! (Teacher #2)

Male students need more freedom to move and use bodily-kinesthetic to learn along with musical-rhythmic. Most of these behaviors are considered off-task behavior and in traditional classrooms are frowned upon. (Teacher #5)

The teaching methodology is different from the normal practice of lecture method because male students are traditionally more involved in sports competitions, so competitive learning works. (Teacher #1)

Most of all, we attempt to bring their world into learning such as TV, music, movies, and technology, for example, instead of saying Poetry Night have Song Lyric Night, then show students to see the poetry in the lyrics of the song. (Teacher #6)

In the Boys' Achievement Academy environment, professional development is another factor. Administrators and teachers responded to the importance of receiving professional development surrounding technology, boys' learning styles, and single-gender education as helpful but did acknowledge that more was needed. Riordan (2008) has acknowledged that since 2004, yearly professional development conferences held by the

National Association for Single Sex Public Education about single-gender education has increased. The need for professional development was identified by the administrators and teachers as an essential factor for school success. The following are responses by the staff when asked about their professional development experiences:

I have received all types of training such as the International Boys Coalition, At-risk training, Effective Communication Skills, Teach for America Program, Cultural Sensitivity, Dr. Tatum's research on African-American males, Technology courses (This is the language of our digital student society), Best teaching practices, and a host of others but you could never receive enough professional development if you seek continuous growth. (Teacher #1)

"The Language of Love" especially as it relates to males and how they socialize with adults at this particular age was very helpful with my adjustment to the single-gender environment. (Administrator #2)

Being a male teacher, I have witnessed how males are sometimes treated more harshly in schools. I have had Ruby Payne training on the effects of poverty, and it taught me a great deal about teaching to the needs of any demographic different from my own. (Teacher #6)

A few teachers at my school attended the "Habits of the Mind" training, which involved teachers learning as role mediators how to enhance students for continuous learning, helping students manage, monitor, and modify their behavior, and learning how to communicate effectively on student's growth habits. This was an excellent course which all teachers should obtain as part of their professional development. (Teacher #2)

According to the interviews, connecting adults in the learning environment through a Professional Learning Community (PLC) was a highly important factor. Boys' Achievement Academy did not want to do a PLC but be a PLC. The staff's idea of a PLC was it was naturally done and not forced. A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a group of educators who are committed to working collaboratively in a continuous process of collective inquiry and action research designed to achieve better student outcomes, both academically

and socially (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). A PLC consists of six characteristics: 1) shared mission, vision, values and goals; 2) collective inquiry; 3) collaborative culture; 4) action orientation and experimentation; 5) continuous improvement; and 6) focus on results. According to the teachers, developing PLCs encouraged faculty collaboration, teamwork, and commitment and enhanced the quality of instruction offered to students.

As evidenced by comments made by teachers and observations, teachers shared their commitment to develop and maintain professional relationships that connected them with each other for the purpose of achieving the intended learning outcomes at Boys' Achievement Academy. This factor of success was supported by Teacher #2's statement, "Our professional relationships within our Professional Learning Community (PLC) supported us in developing a chemistry with each other that varies teacher to teacher." For example, on a Wednesday students were allowed to leave early so teachers and administrators could participate in PLCs. The PLC I attended celebrated student achievement data which reported that a targeted number of students had reached targeted learning goals. The teachers hugged and shared food.

Another example of how the teachers are connected happened one day after school during the data collection period. A teacher was outside working with four students developing an engineering project. Another staff member who was headed home dropped his bags off in the car and came back to support the teacher and the students. This teacher offered some good advice on the engineering project as indicated by the lead teacher.



The importance of collaborative teaming in the improvement process is essential especially when it comes down to assisting new teachers in becoming connected to the school culture. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) state, “Collaboration is a means to an end, not the end itself.” (p. 126) Structuring effective collaborative teams was a goal of contemporary schools, such as Boys’ Achievement Academy because it aids in recruiting and retaining teachers. The PLC model at the Academy is utilized to support teacher development and retention according to the staff.

The next factor that emerged as shared by the adults and students under the culture for learning theme was the student/teacher ratio. Teachers and students felt the 13:1 student/teacher ratio was effective in accomplishing student learning goals and building relationships. For example, Teacher #2 stated, “We are small enough that teachers are accessible and in some way all of our teachers can connect with a student or some students. I love the fact that most of our teachers know every student’s name at the school which to me says a lot about this family environment.” Administrator #2 supported the notion of a low student/teacher ratio and stated, “Our teacher to student ratio allows us to do things that I was not able to do when I was an administrator in the public sector.”

Interestingly, students at Boys’ Achievement Academy stressed that they love the class sizes. According to many of the responses, a smaller class size allows them to stay more focused on learning. Also, the students feel they receive more attention from the teacher in a smaller class. One student stated, “I was in the regular public school and did not like it because the classes were too crowded and it was so easy to get into trouble” (Student #15).

Another factor within the culture for learning theme was the integration of technology and the curriculum. The school environment was technology-rich and both teachers and students used technology as a tool for learning. Even student books were located on their laptops. Students especially loved the use of technology with their lessons and reported how they interacted with the SmartBoards and other technology devices on a daily basis. One student stated, “I love that we get to do our own competitions in the classroom using the SmartBoard and technology games. All of our teachers find a way to use technology in our classes which to me makes learning fun” (Student #11).

While observing the instructional environment at Boys’ Achievement Academy, I noticed evidence of an instructional model that was consistent among all classrooms. Each classroom structured lessons around Latin terms which were posted. The terms were: DIES - which is the date; AGENDA – what activities will take place during the instructional time; RATIO – what objectives and learning outcomes to expect; AGITE NUNC – how will learning be measured; and PENSUM – follow-up assignments expected. Therefore, this instructional model would be represented in the lesson plan as DARAP, (DIES, AGENDA, RATIO, AGITE-NUNC, and PENSUM).

According to some lessons which were reviewed, teachers concentrated on ensuring learning was chunked and opportunities for movement were provided. Additionally, the lesson plans reflected questions to address higher order thinking skills according to Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy.

The following two examples are representative of the classroom learning environment of modeling high expectations, making learning relevant, embedding Latin into the content, ensuring low student/teacher classroom ratios, and using technology to support the curriculum that I observed during my data collection visit.

In a physical science class, 12 African-American male students were conducting a science lab dealing with what material is best suited to separate oil from water. The students were in three groups, and there was much discussion at this time about the best method to remove oil from the ocean. The teacher circulated from group to group. As I observed one group of students, the students discussed using heat to boil the water out; however, another student in the group shared that would not be a good idea because, “You can’t boil the ocean!” Therefore, the group cut off the hot plate and proceeded to use a coffee filter. They were challenged by getting the filter to stay on the beaker which had the water and oil so they used rubber bands to hold the filter in place. Another group progressed even further because they used rocks to filter the water from oil. The students showed me the clear water they had already drained. The final group recorded results in a table on the laptop and discussed which method proved to be a better process for separating water and oil. In addition, I observed the DARAP frame was posted and filled out. I noticed that all students were expected to participate in the Science Fair and must have 80% mastery on all objectives as indicated by the banners hanging in the room.

Another example was in a Latin class. There were two African-American male students in this tutoring session with the teacher. They were planning to build a *trebuchet*

with a trajectory machine. From what I could understand, the students were to build a machine which would take a tennis ball and project it to a precise location and, eventually, in a trash can 100 yards away. As the teacher facilitated conversation and drew illustrations on the whiteboard, the students used trial and error on the computer simulated *trebuchet* on their laptops. The students along with the teacher determined what materials needed to be purchased from Lowe's to build this *trebuchet*. The machine would need to be six feet in length the teacher estimated; however, a student decided to get out of his seat to lie down on the floor and said, "Mark 3 inches from me because I am 5' 9"." The teacher praised the student for such quick thinking. Even though the teacher teaches Latin, it is my understanding that he was supporting these soon-to-be engineers in a project that could go towards their senior project.

### **Student Needs**

Boys' Achievement Academy finds ways to develop an environment to address student needs which emerged as a theme from data analysis. Table 10 lists the factors that supported the student needs theme. These factors were mentioned as a support for producing a high graduation rate in a college readiness environment. The factors are listed according to the level of frequency as consistently mentioned by the interview participants.

According to the student focus group interviews, students have developed a belief that they can academically and behaviorally obtain success because they see success modeled by the adults who are willing to become transparent and share their successes and failures. Therefore, modeling high expectations emerged as a factor to support students' needs.

Students felt the adults were real because they not only shared their successes in life but their failures as well. The students felt it was the failures shared that meant the most to them

**Table 10**

**Theme – Student Needs**

Factor	Board Members	Administrators	Teachers	Students	Documents	Observations
Modeling High Expectations (Adults as Positive Role Models for Students)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Customized Individual Educational Plan	√	√	√	√	√	√
Student Incentive Programs (Especially the Ultimate Warrior Program)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Extra-Curricular Activities and Athletics	√	√	√	√	√	√
One-to-One Counseling (Listening to student's goals and ambitions)	√	√	√	√	√	√
One-to-One Tutoring		√	√	√	√	√
Strategies for Change	√	√	√	√	√	

because it helped them to see the adults as humans who also make mistakes but demonstrate resiliency to overcome those mistakes. Most importantly, the students viewed the adults as

well accomplished and did not really think about the challenges the adults may have faced in life until the adults shared with them. Consequently, the students developed a new level of respect for the adults and gained a new hope for their own lives because they saw these adults as good role models. As mentioned by students, the following statements support the premise that students trust the adults and see them as supportive family members because they model the high expectations they expect:

I like my teacher because he is real. When he told me about some of the mistakes he made in life, I knew I could trust him for advice. (Student #9)

Since we are like family around here, I trust my teachers because they are good role models for me. (Student #11)

I aspire to be the best I can be and I look for role models who are what I desire to be. They (my teachers) encourage me with what they say and how they help me. They make sure I am okay. (Student #16)

Furthermore, teachers also brought up the fact that it was important for the adults to possess high expectations and model these expectations through their acts, deeds, and communications for the students. The following comments from teachers lend support to this statement:

As far as I see it, in order to develop a mutual respect and discourage drama, students don't need friends but role models. (Teacher #1)

First I'd like to acknowledge that relationships are huge here. We maintain a casual teaching style, we serve as role models, we mentor, and so many things we do to connect with students. We are like family around here. (Teacher #2)

Modeling the expectations (Learning is doing) motivates students to have open conversations about their goals and ambitions. (Teacher #4)

Customizing students' Individualized Educational Work Plan (IEWP) emerged as another factor. Students are immersed into this environment through motivation tactics. This customization process begins by identifying student interests in order to connect them to the learning environment. The interests are determined by students taking an online survey about likes and dislikes, parents completing an online survey about their child's likes and dislikes, committee members reviewing the student's entrance essay, and questioning tactics by faculty members such as guidance counselors, social workers, and teachers to engage students to talk about personal life goals. Once these interests are identified, students are paired with adults who specialize in that interest. If there is not a faculty member who possesses the same interests, then community members are identified to support and paid a stipend and some volunteer to work with the student after-school hours. It is at time counselors, social workers, an administrator, teachers, parents, volunteers, the student, and adults as needed come to the table to devise the student's IEWP. Administrator #1 shared:

We are proud to say that we connect the students to the learning environment and generate an educational plan based upon their interests.

Another factor that emerged as being important was having a Student Incentive Program. Students and teachers felt opportunities for students to be rewarded for meeting and exceeding desired educational outcomes was embedded within the environment. One teacher shared:

I love the well-developed incentive programs for students like the Ultimate Warrior Incentive Program which is a great reward for students. (Teacher #3)

According to data resources, the Ultimate Warrior Program recognizes students for their academic accomplishments, excellent behavior and attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, and citizenship. To be selected, students and teachers are allowed to write an essay of support with specific examples for a particular candidate. The student services ensure this candidate meets the academics, attendance, behavior, and service hour requirements. Then, the candidate meets with the Ultimate Warrior advisor for an interview. Next, the candidate meets with a group of student members of the Ultimate Warrior Program for a second interview. Finally, at the end of the tri-semester, the candidates approach the Ultimate Warrior Bulletin Board with anxiety in search of their name indicating they have been selected.

Posted in the school is the Ultimate Warriors Bulletin Board. One administrator explained that, “One of our most prized programs where the boys enjoy competing against each other is our Ultimate Warriors Program, where the students wear a gold tie and receive special privileges for excelling academically and behaviorally and their commitment to excellence. You should see the excitement when a student finds his name listed” (Administrator #2). The board is displayed in the main hall and currently posts ten names of students that have been recognized as Ultimate Warriors. Not only are the names of the students posted, but the board also recognizes why the student was selected to be a member of The Ultimate Warriors (See Figure 4). Please note that the whited out sections in the picture serve to protect the anonymity of the students in the school of the case study.



Ultimately, the students in this program are role models for other students and represent the school in school functions and community events. The students parade around school wearing their special jackets and gold ties. There are also privileges such as being first in lines, representing the school, becoming a member of the selected Ultimate Warriors Club, and free time given within their schedule. The program serves as a motivator for other students to achieve as stated by a teacher, “I have noticed other students trying to do well in



**Figure 4 Ultimate Warriors Bulletin Board**

their academics and other areas especially in order to receive the recognition of being an Ultimate Warrior” (Teacher #3).

Based upon the data collected through interviews, documents, and observations, the students in the school are competitive and take pride when they have earned the privilege of

wearing a gold tie. One administrator noted, “Most boys come with deficits in reading and math but by the teachers’ tutoring and connection with the students, these students end up excelling in all academic areas, in sports, and in extracurricular activities.” The student focus groups shared these thoughts about what it meant to be an Ultimate Warrior:

Because at our school we have what is known as Ultimate Warriors which means we have statuses, high GPAs and we know how to handle a problem when a problem comes around. So when people see us it’s like they want to ask us for advice. Even our peers in school some of them don’t like what we’re trying to do and that is what I think they feel is a threat to them. So I guess that means to me that they are not going to be here for a long period of time. But we know that if we are striving for a future and if we make ourselves look presentable then we’ll have success. (Student #10)

I have not been an Ultimate Warrior yet but I do plan to make it next tri-semester. I want to be one ‘cause you get special privileges at school and people respect you. (Student #4)

Creating opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities and athletics was another factor. The students that attend Boys’ Achievement Academy typically come from urban communities that do not often extend the opportunity to young boys to participate in extracurricular activities. According to the student focus group interviews, students enjoy being given the opportunity to experience extracurricular activities and athletics to which they may have not been exposed. The opportunities also provide a diversion from the highly concentrated academics in which they are enrolled. For example, when members of the student focus group was asked about their participation in extracurricular activities and athletics Student #1 responded, “It’s the extra things we do around here, like sports and clubs that make me do well in my classes. Other students responded:

I would say the extracurricular activities that we have here help us achieve what we want to because if our grades aren't correct like he said, academic probation prevents you from going to that club. 'Cause that last hour is where your club is. If your grades are like F's and C's and all that they will put you in academic probation for that hour so you can't go to African Dance, Drama whatever you have. (Student #4)

The things we do after-school really make me love being here. (Student #14)

Another board that is prominently displayed in the hallways at Boys' Achievement Academy is the Extracurricular Activities and Athletics Bulletin Board. This board lists every student's name and the activities or athletics in which he is involved. This bulletin board served three purposes. The first was to recognize the students and the activities in which they are involved. The second was to promote extracurricular activities and athletics that are available for student participation. The third was to recognize the accomplishments and acknowledgements of how the groups were performing to include newspaper articles and pictures. Figure 5 displays the Boys' Achievement Academy Extracurricular Activities and Athletics Bulletin Board.

Within the theme of student needs, one-to-one counseling is valued by both adults and students. The following statements reflect how administrators, teachers, students, and parents value one-to-one counseling support:

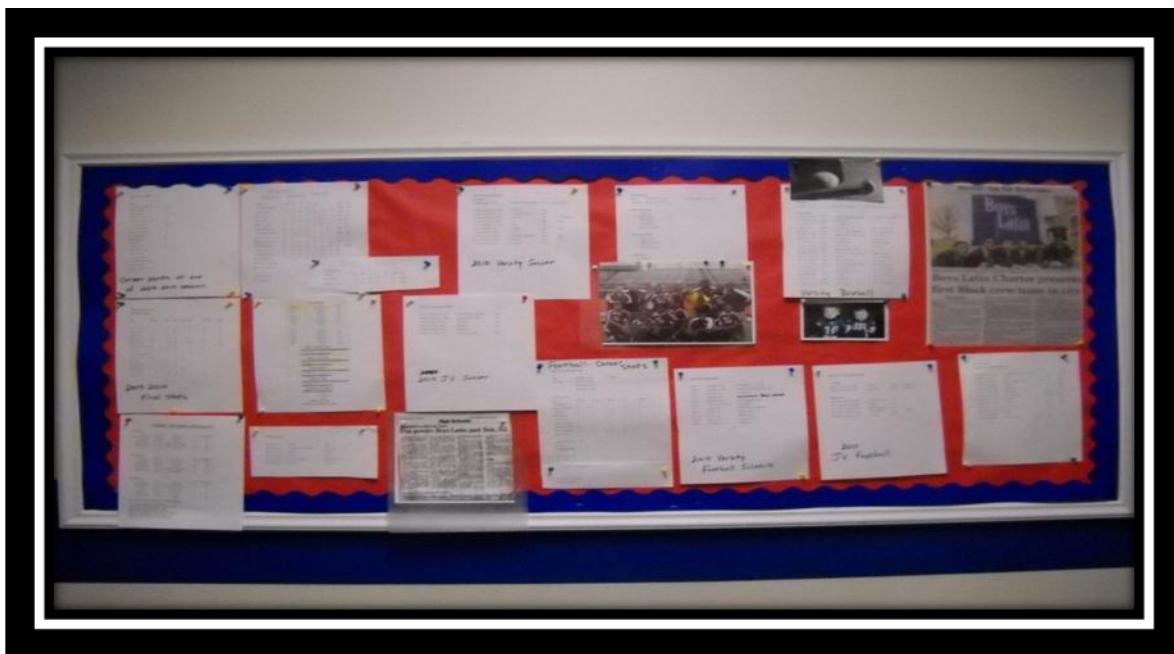
The parents and students here love the fact that we mentor our student and provide one-to-one counseling where students are paired with an adult they trust in the school and can share any thoughts or opinions they may have. The adult can even be a secretary, security guard, or custodian. (Teacher #4)

At times no one listens to me at home but I know my teacher Mr. \*\*\*\* will always listen to what I have to say. (Student #16)

My cousins, family, and I really don't talk a lot and they don't realize I go to this fortunate school. But it's like they see me when I come home from school and they be like why do you have a tie on, why do you have a dress shirt on, why do you have on a polo shirt? And the reason for that I give them is that this school is getting us ready for the business world and how they see you is communicated by the way you dress and carry yourself as a person. My teachers and parents say the same thing. (Student #3)

What helps me stay motivated in this school is that my teacher cares about me and I feel I can go to them at any time for help like when I was looking at colleges to attend. (Student #11)

Teachers in our building are closely connected with their students and offer them counseling. (Administrator #1)



**Figure 5 Extracurricular Activities and Athletics Bulletin Board**

Another factor that was listed under the student needs theme was the importance of one-to-one tutoring opportunities provided to students. The following statements show that one-to-one tutoring is valued by the students and parents:

My mom loves that we have tutoring here so I can get extra help when I need it from my teachers which is a big help. (Student #3)

In middle school there is one class and one teacher. So here you get one on one time and you get extra help. Like after school you get help with your work. Teachers take the time out here to explain what you got to do, how you got to do it. After school they talk to you about something totally different. (Student #6)

According to the participants, another factor was strategies to address change within the school and outside community. Some community members were concerned about the boys' safety since some believed that these boys would be targeted and subject to abuse because of the homosexuality stereotype. Other concerns mentioned were the boys' safety traveling to and from school as they were required to participate in extracurricular activities and athletics. According to Board Member #1, "We have to educate the community that this school is an alternative method for educating African-American males who were not performing and dropping out in the regular school setting." So, the topic of how to embrace change was the center of many discussions. In the comments below, strategies to address change were shared:

Rumors of the single-gender school in this community created lots of anxiety so as a team of supporters we had to develop ways to combat these stereotypes. We did things such as hiring security guards, setting standards for behavior, requiring parents to attend regular support group meetings for their students to participate, inviting on the regular senators, lawyers, sports icons, and other role models to visit and assist in marketing our school. (Board Member #1)

Some of the parents even participate in some of our safety programs like a parent volunteer to ride on the public bus to and from school to assist students in dealing with outsiders who do not have the children's success at heart. This was needed because of the on-going challenges of violence perpetuated on our students because they were professionally dressed and a part of the so-called white boy or homosexual school. Parents rallied to support student safety and to preserve the environment they feel will make their kids successful. (Teacher #4)

Students were asked if they had encountered difficulties attending the school. Many of them shared the challenges with being viewed as a homosexual and some made suggestions how the school could help change the way they are viewed at times. Student #13 recommended that, "I think our school could do a better job helping our communities understand the school by going to more churches to talk about the good things in our school." Student #12 spoke to the climate of the school, "First, I feel in the school we must do a better job of not calling each other gay because if we do it in here why do we expect others to be different." In addition, Student #12 went on to recommend that, "I think we should ask more black men to volunteer in our school so the other men who call us gay will see that we have real men in our school." Educating the students and adults through media tactics was suggested by Student #13, "I think we should make a DVD that shows us how to deal with bullies who talk about us and our school."

### **Parental/Community Context**

Table 11 provides a list of factors that supported the parental/community theme. These factors were mentioned as a support for producing a high graduation rate and a college readiness environment according to the data collected at Boys' Achievement Academy.

These factors are listed according to the level of frequency as consistently mentioned by participants.

To ease the anxiety and tension placed on this single-gender setting, the Boys' Achievement Academy discipline philosophy focused mainly on safety and self-discipline. This factor was reflected in the school's recruitment DVD, in which the school makes the parents and community aware of certain challenges when in a single-gender environment but heavily focuses on the parameters the school has in place to protect the students and teach self-discipline. Moreover, the school's philosophy focuses on equipping the students with a mindset that people will not always be favorable when things are going well for them. Therefore, there is a high concentration on activities to improve self-awareness and self-esteem embedded within the school discussion groups. According to Board Member #2,

Parents needed to know that their children were safe in this school since that was a huge issue for them. Many parents feared the students would be picked on for their involvement in a single-gender setting. We had to ensure the safety of our students and the first place we looked was our discipline philosophy. We had to ensure it was consistent with our and the parents beliefs. Because of the environmental challenges when it comes down to safety, ensuring students are in a safe and supportive environment is a crucial element and this means from their home to the school and back.

**Table 11****Theme – Parental/Community Context**

Factor	Board Members	Administrators	Teachers	Students	Documents	Observations
Discipline Philosophy	√	√	√	√	√	√
Public Relations	√	√	√	√	√	
Orientations	√	√	√	√	√	√
Talent Showcases	√	√	√	√	√	√
Positive Role Models (High Profile)	√	√	√	√	√	

Public relations is listed as a factor because it was used to promote the school's successes which developed a sense of buy-in within the school and community.

Administrator #1 stated, "In order to communicate expectations to the students and parents, we had to put a lot of time in public relations." The Academy believed that a positive promotion of the school was highly important for its success. Moreover, the adults believed that once the students enjoyed and did well in this environment, they became the best public relations agents. The following statements support that the school's success has been a factor in recruiting students:



In the end, parents literally knock down our doors to have their children admitted because we have done a good job in educating them about this environment and the students who are or have attended have gone home to share really positive things. It's the students' meaningful experiences that promote this school as a positive school climate. (Board Member #1)

The parents view this as a good opportunity for their children to be successful. We receive good publicity about the program as you can see by the articles all around the school. The proactive efforts by the school to educate the community really help the parents understand what we are all about but our best public relations agents are the students themselves. (Teacher #6)

Hosting school orientations for the parents became another factor that was important under the parent/community theme. The students shared that they believe their parents were equally as concerned about their safety as well as whether or not their interactions with the staff are positive. With the staff hosting orientations, the parents became more comfortable with the school. Students further shared that their parents were required to attend such events like Freshman Orientation in order for them to be admitted to the school. The orientation helps them understand the mission and vision of Boys' Achievement Academy. Parents are informed about school expectations for parents of the students enrolled in the school. As student #14 stated, "My parents appreciated the information orientation provided for them. It helped my parents make an educated choice when deciding whether to let me attend this school."

Showcasing the talents of the students was another factor that drew the attention of the parents and community. Students thought the school's ability to provide opportunities for them to prepare and showcase their innovative and creative sides was a good strategy to

involve their parents and community because they loved to show their parents and community what they do well.

The administrators and teachers believed that hosting such events as the Talent and Performance Nights, Athletic Events, and Curriculum Night have motivated the parents and community to get involved. They also believed that the preparation for these programs was another opportunity to expand learning opportunities since there was a lot of behind the scenes planning and work needed to sponsor these programs. Sponsoring these programs allowed the adults and students to develop processes and procedures to ensure the success of each program. Listed below are some statements made by teachers about showcasing student talents:

Students get the opportunity to showcase their talents through these clubs which at times can be a tedious process. Just last Friday, our students hosted a Talent Showcase which was a great success. The teachers and students really worked hard to produce this quality program which gained rave reviews by the public. But I do not think a program like this would be possible if we had not established a culture where emphasis is our learning first, then showcase our talents. (Teacher #5)

We should also showcase the school more. For example, this past Friday a Talent Show was held to raise funds for a student who was in a car accident (They raised \$4,000) – The student in hospital was able to see through a webcast. (Teacher #2)

Also the adults believed that the students received opportunities to showcase their talents through posting student work, student-based projects, and displays. Posting student work is prevalent throughout the school and serves as a strategy to showcase students' talents and academic accomplishments. Teachers assign student- based projects based upon the school's thematic unit for that tri-semester. One teacher shared this comment:

Students are rewarded for presenting student-based projects showcasing what they have learned in their reading selections and how they plan to apply those readings to the real world. You should see the creativity and time placed in these projects. (Teacher #4)

Board Member #3 stated, “I also believe that all our students must be connected to the learning environment and to do this all students and teachers are required to do some type of display of their course and clubs. This provides another opportunity for students to showcase their talents.” Represented in Figure 6 is an art display designed by the students in an art class at Boys’ Achievement Academy. The art display is located in the hallways for all to view.



**Figure 6 Art Display**

Another factor students and parents found helpful and inspiring in this environment were the high profile role models who sponsor and visit the school. Some of the students

have had to learn that even high profile role models have made mistakes, and that these role models have learned from those mistakes, which is an opportunity to teach others about life.

This is evidenced by Student #8's reflection about a high profile role model and the lesson he learned:

Michael Vick . . . talked about his prison experience. What most students do at our age, they probably don't like to read books. He said, if you don't like to read books, then don't go to prison. So that might have stuck with some males in our school. But most of us know the difference between right and wrong. Whether we choose to do right or wrong that's a whole different story.

In summary, Chapter 4 has revealed the analysis of data collected at Boys' Achievement Academy. From the data emerged four themes and twenty-six factors that supported this single-gender environment in producing an increased high percentage of African-American males graduating on-time and college ready. The analyzed data will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Five begins with a summary and discussion of the results found through data analysis in Chapter Four. This exploratory case study examined factors perceived by the participants that contributed to the academic and behavioral success of African-American males at Boys' Achievement Academy as measured by the high school graduation success rates and college preparation. The two research questions that guided the study were:

(1) What factors do the Boys' Achievement Academy faculty, administrators, and board members perceive to contribute to the academic and behavioral success of the African-American students at Boys' Achievement Academy as measured by the increase in the percentage of high school graduation rates in college-readiness courses?

(2) What factors do the African-American students, who attend Boys' Achievement Academy, perceive to contribute to their academic and behavioral success as measured by the increase in the percentage of high school graduation rates in college-readiness courses?

After the discussion of the results, there is a discussion about the interpretation of findings, along with the relationships of current study to previous research, an explanation of unanticipated findings, recommendations for educators, and suggestions for additional research followed by the conclusion.

### **Single-Gender Contentions**

There has been sizeable research and policy about whether single-gender schooling yields academic and social advantages. While most public schools will likely continue to be co-educational, there may be good reason to offer single-gender schools in the public school sector, particularly those with underprivileged students and producing continual poor academic performance.

The interest in single-gender schools as a solution for low-income and minority students is supported by research that shows that students' educational experiences vary by gender. It is claimed that girls and boys have different patterns of brain development and processing, hearing understanding, and respond to stress in different ways, and their differences can best be responded to by differentiating their instruction and learning environment in single-gender schools.

Furthermore, it is argued that co-educational schools encourage gender stereotypes and studies have shown that students who have been educated in single-gender environments have a stronger preference for subjects that are stereotypically aligned with the opposite sex. In other words, proponents of single-gender schools maintain that by removing the distractions of the other sex, students learn more effectively and feel better about their education.

Opponents maintain that co-educational schools in contrast are important in that they prepare students better for the real world and do not attempt to segregate students from the realities of adult life. However, an effective single-gender environment like the case study in

this paper not only supports disadvantaged and minority students obtaining a high school diploma but also prepares them for college.

There are also constitutional limits on public institutions embracing the concept because of federal funding requirements. Nevertheless, the single-gender school in this case study would not accept no for an answer and secured financial resources to continuously funnel into this environment.

In evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of single-gender schools, it may be concluded that single-sex schools are indeed a viable option for minimizing the achievement gap within schools with a majority of disadvantaged and minority students. However, offering qualified teachers, more funding for resources in these schools, diversity amongst the teachers and the student body, and more parent involvement are the most essential ingredients to be incorporated in either single-sex schools or co-educational schools in order to address some of the immediate issues that disadvantaged and minority students are facing, which are causing them to perform poorly in school.

### **Summary of the Results**

Throughout the study, the adults and students displayed an interconnectedness which appeared to support a sense of belonging. Moreover, the atmosphere appeared to be “family-like” where the adults and students shared responsibilities for positive relationships, valued learning time, and learning outcomes ownership. Therefore, strong interpersonal relationships appeared to be a significant factor for establishing and maintaining an environment conducive for learning. However, some adults did question whether or not the

single-gender factor would benefit the African-American males in the long run since eventually they would have to interact with a more diverse world.

Based on the findings of this study, the single-gender setting at Boys' Achievement Academy appears to demonstrate success in educating African-American males for college, based upon the significantly higher graduation rate as compared to the district average in this urban school district. Furthermore, the board members, administrators, teachers, and majority of the students interviewed indicated a favorable disposition toward the single-gender setting at Boys' Achievement Academy. The ability to maintain a culture of learning, a safe and supportive environment, and an educational infrastructure that acknowledges that boys and girls learn differently are key elements that the faculty, administrators, and board members perceived contributed to the sizeable percentage of high school graduation and college admission rates. Students recognized that the one to one counseling, teachers modeling high expectations, extracurricular activities, and Ultimate Warriors Program, were key factors that they perceived contributed to the sizeable percentage of high school graduation and college admission rates.

### **Discussion of the Results**

**Interpretation of the Findings.** The data analysis process revealed patterns which eventually resulted in four major themes being identified. The themes were supported by factors which the adults and students believed were important in the students being successful with graduating college-ready. The themes and many of the factors were supported by research-based practices. A discussion of these themes in relation to previous



research will be shared in this section. These themes were: 1) School Climate/Infrastructure, 2) Culture for Learning (Staff/Teaching and Learning), 3) Student Needs, and 4) Parental/Community Context.

According to the analyzed themes and their supporting factors, in order to develop an environment conducive for African-American male students who are at “at-risk” to succeed academically, effective and passionate adult leaders and financial resources are paramount. Furthermore, accomplishments were not realized without the support of the community. According to the recruitment pamphlet, the school’s Board of Directors consists of respected business, education, and community leaders who were dedicated to ensuring the success of the students in this single-gender environment. Even further, parents supported their children attending this setting based upon safety and opportunities for success.

The next section will discuss the relationship between Boys’ Achievement Academy and research-based practices.

### **Relationships of Current Study to Previous Research**

*School Climate/Infrastructure.* Leaders are “viewed as persons of character when they advocate a set of purposes and ideas that are sufficiently unique to challenge the status quo but still close enough to be accepted by followers” (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 17). Wheatly (2006) elaborated on the need for the leader to “help the organization become the standard that it has declared itself” (p. 130) and evidence of becoming the standard was found in the Boys’ Achievement Academy environment among the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), administrators, and lead teacher through their leadership in the Professional Learning

Community which focused on student outcomes, their modeling of the expectations, and their passion to ensure the protection of the learning environment.

The philosophy of Boys' Achievement Academy centered on the belief that in order to be successful sometimes there needs to be a change in one's mindset. According to Muhammad (2009), believers are educators who believe that all of their students are capable of learning and that as an educator they have a direct impact on student success. In other words, the educator must be a "Believer" himself or herself. According to Kunifuji (2002), the Black mindset is not shaped solely by our "arrival status" (past school history) but includes staff demographics, expectations, pedagogy, curriculum, role models, family, media, and community viability. Muhammad (2009) suggests a positive school culture and climate is a place where evidence of these practices was found in the single-gender environment:

1. Educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all of their students to achieve success, and they pass that belief on to others in overt and covert ways.
2. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the ability of every student.

Even further, Marzano's (2003) research purported that a safe and orderly atmosphere is conducive to a positive learning environment, especially one which practices positive reinforcement to make the school climate productive. Boys' Achievement Academy uses programs like the Ultimate Warrior Program as a strategy to reward students for meeting and exceeding academic, behavior, and citizenship goals.

Boys' Achievement Academy has embraced a philosophy that boys and girls learn differently and that boys are better supported by having more friendly learning competitions and fewer distractions from girls in this environment. According to Kimura (1996), "The evidence from structural brain differences between the sexes, sex hormone influences, and similarities in sex differences across cultures, combine to suggest that men's and women's brains are, to a significant extent, wired differently from the start" (p. 260).

*Culture for Learning (Staff/Teaching and Learning)*. In *Transforming School Culture*, Muhammad (2009) suggested that students want teachers who believe in them and teach in ways that they learn best. It is clear that teacher expectations played an important role for student learning and high expectations can be a powerful tool for helping students replace their existing belief system with a more informed and accurate assessment of student potential. Teachers demonstrated this belief system not only through words but actions and deeds. Based upon the data collected and analyzed at Boys' Achievement Academy, this belief system was evident throughout the school community.

Sax (NASSPE, 2004a) cites that one of the benefits of single-gender education for boys was to enable teachers to custom-tailor their teaching styles to boys. In order to teach effectively, the teacher's first task is to get the boys interested. The all-boy classroom provides a more diverse and well-rounded educational experience that addresses the male learning style. Male students have some basic emotional disadvantages in a competitive classroom environment due to natural differences in the thinking process (Slocumb, 2004). With these suggestions in mind, board members and administrators have emphasized

constantly that caring, supportive teachers who customize to the students' learning styles is another important factor to support a high graduation rate and college-ready learning culture. Since boys learn well when they are competitive and interactive, the teachers find ways to incorporate friendly competitions and student-based projects.

According to Kunjufu (2002), African-American male students benefit from a curriculum that is relevant. Therefore, integrating a Latin-based curriculum, technology and student-centered topics provided relevancy. Also, because the students receive Latin throughout all content areas and learn root meanings of words which builds the students' vocabulary, reading comprehension, and critical thinking skills, they perform well on standardized tests such as the SAT.

The studies of Ladson-Billings (2001) support a basic assumption that learning is culturally situated and teachers should incorporate the cultures of students into everyday instruction for students to become effective learners; therefore, this is an assumption the teachers at Boys' Achievement Academy consider when developing lessons that provide relevancy. Lesson plans and lessons demonstrated that teachers reflected on ways to making learning relevant by considering current hot topics of students' interests. As stated by Teacher #3, "I keep up on the current events that my students are interested in so I can incorporate them into my lessons."

Critics and researchers who write about cultural relevancy might question the use of Latin as a required course for all students every year they are in this setting because of issues with the individual customization of learning that is culturally situated. How well do

students learn when they are required to take a course with which they cannot culturally relate? Well, Boys' Achievement Academy chose Latin as a foundation for learning because Latin transcends into many languages and is the root for defining vocabulary words. They teach the students about "code switching" which is a knowing how to communicate on all levels and situations. In other words, students are taught to adjust your communication style according to your audience. So, in order to connect students into seeing the relevancy of knowing Latin, the school begins with the mission statement which everyone in this environment must know. During homeroom periods, teachers facilitate conversations and activities with students concerning learning the mission statement in English, then learning the mission statement in Latin, discussing the meaning of each word as it relates in English and Latin, and fostering a belief that Latin will assist in developing academic success, especially on the SAT. Students view the SAT as a part of the college admission process so each student supports that knowing Latin will assist him in advancements. Like Student #12 mentioned, "I feel I scored high on my SAT because I knew the meaning of many of the words I saw on the test that I had learned in Latin."

Professional Learning Communities in schools have been identified as a best practice in effective schools. According to Sparks (2002), teachers are far more likely to remain in their positions when they feel supported by administrators, have strong bonds of connection to colleagues, and are aggressively pursuing a collective vision for student learning about which they feel passion and commitment. Administrator #1 reported, "When it truly comes

down to staffing our environment, it is our teachers who recruit and support each other.”

Teacher #2 simply stated: “Everyone in the learning environment has to be connected.”

In a study conducted by Riordan (2008), teachers believed some of the benefits in a single-gender environment were: better peer interactions; a greater emphasis on academic behaviors; a greater degree of order and control; socio-economic benefits; a safe, supportive environment; greater sensitivity to sex differences in learning and maturation; more leadership opportunities; more participation opportunities in extracurricular activities; a strong sense of collaboration amongst the entire school staff and students; and commitment to identifying and refining teaching strategies that support pedagogy. Several of these same belief systems were demonstrated at Boys’ Achievement Academy as evidenced by the interviews, documents, and observations during the data collection process as reported in the case study.

*Student Needs.* Riordan (2008) suggested the following strategies for increasing student achievement and socio-emotional development: reducing class size, reducing school size, lengthening the school day and/or school year, increasing parent involvement, upgrading teacher training and teacher quality, and offering single-gender schools. Each of these structural and pedagogical reforms has the potential to contribute in some small way to increasing student achievement and increasing equality of educational outcomes. Interviews with adults and students, documents reviewed, and observations provided an account that some of these strategies were in place at Boys’ Achievement Academy that led to increased student graduation rates with a college ready diploma.

Also, Riordan (2008) suggested lengthening the school day to increase learning time as a strategy for improving student achievement. In essence, students at Boys' Achievement Academy spend approximately 168 hours per month at school while the average school hours in this urban school district are approximately 140 hours per month. The school has extended the school days to better connect the students to the learning environment by making it a requirement to participate in extracurricular activities and athletics. Therefore, increased learning time appears to be factor in developing an academic culture that is focused on ensuring the success of students.

*Parent/Community Context.* Riordan (2008) also suggested the following strategies for increasing student achievement and socio-emotional development: increasing parent involvement and upgrading teacher quality and classrooms. Boys' Achievement Academy connected parents to the learning environment by providing mandatory orientations in order for the students to attend the school. By providing an experience that excited students, the parents became convinced they had made the right decision for their children based on the children's testimony. Subsequently, parents came out to the school more to see all the good things that were going on in the school.

Marzano (2003) stated that in order to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction, effective classroom management must be in place. Marzano surmises that classroom management involves (1) maintaining effective teacher and student relationships, (2) maintaining an appropriate mental set for management of a safe and orderly atmosphere, (3) establishing and enforcing rules and procedures, and (4) carrying out

discipline actions consistently through positive reinforcement. The Boys' Achievement Academy staff has been innovative in developing an environment where behavior tactics focused on self-discipline and positive re-enforcement. According to data analysis, the parents desired the school to have a discipline philosophy that provided safety and an orderly environment and established positive, trusting relationships with the adults.

**Explanation of High Impact Findings.** Many of the factors found in this case study that supported high graduation rates and college readiness fundamentally can be found in any achieving school throughout the United States. However, in this single-gender setting at Boys' Achievement Academy, there were some factors which stood out as a catalyst for making this environment successful. This section will discuss the factors appearing to be highly impactful.

One high impact finding immersed in the Boys' Achievement Academy environment was the charismatic leadership of the Chief Executive Officer. The CEO was the key person to identify and secure resources to support the vision and mission of this school. He has established positive relationships with all stakeholders in this environment and is viewed as the one who makes this school successful. If the CEO was removed from this environment, the school probably could not operate at such a high level.

Another high impact finding was the use of the summer academy. Incoming freshmen were afforded the opportunity to connect with adults and become acclimated with the high expectations this environment supported. It is during this time as well that counselors and teachers are able to individually meet with students and parents to find the



students' career interests and customize the students' Individualized Educational Work Plan. Of course, having budgeted funds to support this academy was essential.

Kinesthetic learning is another high impact finding. Staff members at Boys' Achievement Academy summarize kinesthetic learning as a learning style in which learning for the male students is carried out in a physical activity, rather than listening to a lecture or watching a demonstration. In other words, the staff members describe kinesthetic learning as being "do-ers". Therefore, this style of learning can be observed throughout the environment because it is so high energy in the classrooms and hallways.

One very important high impact finding was the family-like atmosphere. Adults in this environment intentionally worked to develop positive relationships with each other and the students. On many occasions throughout the data collections process, students could be heard calling teachers "mom" or "pop". According to student focus group data, the students felt they had an advocate in the teachers who mentored them and could go to them to share any good news and challenges they faced. More importantly, the teachers embraced the fact that they were viewed as a parent figure and took it personally as they supported the students' learning process. Also, many of the teachers whom the students call "mom" and "pop" are Caucasian which dispels some research that suggests that students must have teachers of their race and ethnicity in order to relate. These teachers appear to be so successful at building "mom and pop" relationships with these students because they passionately show they care. Throughout the study, the adults and students displayed an interconnectedness which appeared to support a sense of belonging. Moreover, the "family-

like” environment in this case study appeared to be a place where the adults and students shared responsibilities for positive relationships, valued learning time, and learning outcome. Therefore, strong interpersonal relationships appeared to be a significant factor for establishing and maintaining an environment conducive for learning.

Student Incentive Programs have a high impact in this environment. For example, the students love the Ultimate Warriors Program and strive to become a member. On the days when new members to the Ultimate Warriors Program are revealed, students literally crowd the Ultimate Warrior Bulletin Board to see if their name is listed. One important fact about this program is that it is cool to be smart because you have to be excelling academically in order to be considered. This program gives the students a sense of pride in doing well in school.

Finally, the 13:1 student/teacher ratio has a high impact for kinesthetic learning and the differentiation of learning. Since teacher plan lessons that will incorporate these types of activities having a low class size supports preparation, facilitating, and evaluating outcomes of the learning process. Students do not feel overcrowded in the classroom and feel the teachers are better able to address their needs.

**Explanation of Unanticipated Findings.** One unanticipated finding while immersed in the Boys’ Achievement Academy environment was the impact the Chief Executive Officer had on the environment. It was surprising the CEO’s office was located in the building on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and the principal’s office was in the building on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. I expected the principal to be the sole leader of the building; however, the responsibility was

shared with the CEO who was one of the original advocates for the single-gender environment at Boys' Achievement Academy.

Another unanticipated finding was many of the teachers' professional development was individualized and not whole group. While administrators and teachers did not receive any specific professional development training focusing on educating the males in the single-gender environment, the focus on the school's core values of high expectations enabled the teachers to still address the needs of their students. The teachers and administrators discussed the selection of professional development needed for the individual teacher.

Additionally, the fact that the student focus groups were mostly students whose parents are better connected to the school was another unanticipated finding. On the one hand, I did not expect as many parents to be heavily involved with the school. On the other hand, I expected more students in the focus groups to have parents who rarely got involved with the school. To my surprise, more parents than expected were involved with the school on a regular basis.

Many of the teachers are not from colleges or university in the urban school district. There was a college board in the hallways at Boys' Achievement Academy that was designed to encourage students to attend college and display where the teachers had attended college. It is a question of interests as to how Boys' Achievement Academy was able to attract highly qualified, energetic teachers from across the nation. Figure 7 displays the Teacher College Board which is located in the main hallway at Boys' Achievement Academy.



**Figure 7 Teacher College Board**

The Teacher College Board pinpoints where the teachers who teach at Boys' Achievement Academy attended college. The colored sticky pin represents the college location from which the teachers at Boys' Achievement Academy graduated while the colored string represents the flight from their alma mater to Boys' Achievement Academy.

**Implications for Practice.** An initial reaction to the review of literature concerning co-educational and single-gender education tended to concentrate on policy makers adjusting policies to allow American school districts to seek alternative and cost effective solutions to closing the achievement gap between African-American males and other sub-groups. Some of the literature reflects opponents' belief that single-gender schooling does not reflect the real world and damages the students' socialization abilities for those who attend it. But, at

another level, the existing research also reflects the current academic and socialization benefits for single-gender schooling as an alternate method for educating low socio-economic and minority students.

Education is a service for consumers, the students, and one size does not fit all. These consumers, our students, provide us information each day about their cognitive, social, and developmental growth needs. It is a viable argument that funding innovative programs has the potential to reduce student achievement gaps through the creation of unique educational settings within a district in order to meet the needs of all students with quality, equity, and equality in mind.

The quality of education speaks to ensuring students acquire knowledge, capacities, skills, and attitudes which are necessary to equip them for adult life. Therefore, the curriculum, teachers, school organization, academic achievement results and their measurement, and resources must be supported and aligned. Quality also recognizes the presence of supportive teachers and advisors, students' views of gender equality, and a respect for how learning should address gender perspectives. All are essential within a classroom.

In our democratic society, equity is recognized as fair treatment for a very abstract "all." However, the fair treatment for all does not mean all the same and definitely does not mean that all students are placed in the same educational environment and receive the same educational program but rather in the environment that meets the needs of all our consumers, our students. Just as teachers have to decentralize their control of what is learned in the

classroom allowing learning to be an exploration, so ultimately policy makers must decentralize their control of policies and budget restraints that prohibit educational reform efforts within school districts, specifically, giving local units the authority and autonomy to generate empowerment to train the community in gender issues. Furthermore, there needs to be a clear understanding that equity and equality do not mean the same treatment but treatment according to student needs when equalizing the playing field.

The time is now that all stereotypes and disbeliefs are dealt with accordingly because the school in this case study has tremendously impacted the lives of African-American males in this urban area where most were academically failing and misbehaving in the traditional co-educational environment. Some critics could argue a single-gender program such as the one in the case study would be challenging to replicate due to the abundance of resources this school has provided by reaching out to politicians, entertainers, and community leaders to provide resources to support their mission to close the achievement gap. The school uses research-based best practices to differentiate instructional strategies and build a positive mind-set to make a difference in the lives of its students. Bottom line, these once potential dropouts are exceling both academically and behaviorally.

Boys' Achievement Academy decided to do something about the startling statistics concerning African-American male students. The school sought resources and provided an alternative educational single-gender setting to specifically address the needs of the once struggling African-American males in this urban area. The staff intentionally found ways to support the needs of the African-American males by affording opportunities to connect to an

environment that addresses their learning styles and strategically fosters an intrinsic passion for academic and behavioral success. Most importantly, the school graduated 144 African-American male students with 88% of these students in danger of being a potential dropout. Moreover, 142 members of the graduating class were admitted to a 4-year college or university with over 2.6 million dollars being awarded to students in scholarships.

In the end, who would want to deny any American student the opportunity for a free and appropriate education that leads to graduation and choices, enhancing the quality of his life? Well, if the policy makers really want to see a closing of the achievement gap between African-American males and other sub-groups, then there must be no signs of regression in public policies refusing to acknowledge the social construction of gender in schools and how it impacts curriculum, pedagogical practices, and relations with and between adult educators and students. These minority disadvantaged students could be lost, in terms of having a quality of life. Single-Gender Education may not be the best viable solution for all school districts; however, this approach did make the difference in the lives of 144 African American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy.

**Recommendations for Educators.** Education is a service for consumers, the students. These consumers, our students, provide us information each day about their cognitive, social, and developmental growth needs. Now it is time to use this information to differentiate instructional strategies to educate all students, especially those low-performing subgroups. It is a viable argument that funding innovative programs has the potential to reduce student achievement gaps through the creation of unique educational settings within a

district in order to meet the needs of all students with equity and equality in mind. This does not mean that all students are placed in the same educational environment and receive the same educational program but rather in the environment that meets the needs of all our consumers, our students. There needs to be a clear understanding that equity and equality do not mean the same treatment but treatment according to student needs when equalizing the playing field.

Additionally, politicians seek methods that are a quick fix and low in cost. The first recommendation will give some advice about starting a public charter school based on the research finding, data analysis, and the researcher's experiences. To begin a school similar to Boys' Achievement Academy, the following information should be considered:

- (a) Start with reviewing current research and case studies;
- (b) Identify and establish a school board;
- (c) Review and discuss current research and case studies as a team;
- (d) Find funding resources and secure them;
- (e) Find a facility conducive to learning and ensure it is updated, especially with technological supports;
- (f) Develop a process for hiring an effective building leader, then hire that person;
- (g) Identify similar schools to the one you wish to open and go visit them;
- (h) Meet with school board and other stakeholders to develop a strategic plan;
- (i) Establish a public relations committee and conduct a public relations campaign;
- (j) Develop an attractive teacher recruitment and retention program, then hire them;



- (k) Hire counselors, social workers, and other supporting staff members;
- (l) Identify and facilitate staff professional development;
- (m) Host seminars and information sessions to promote the school; and
- (n) Enroll students.

Even though a school such as the one studied in this paper would benefit disadvantaged and minority students, there are other considerations. One consideration is to establish a program to address the homosexual stereotype by strongly promoting the program for academic reasons in order to address the harassment and other safety concerns. Another consideration is that good teaching is good teaching in any environment but emphasize this program will use kinesthetic learning to connect and motivate the male students to do well. Outline the environment to be a competitive learning environment where it is cool for boys to be seen as smart.

What has made Boys' Achievement Academy more successful in graduating more African-American males who are college-ready? This case study presented themes and factors which could support any school and/or school district with developing discussions around how to replicate things this environment does. The first would be to find additional funding that allows flexibility. The second would be to hire effective leadership for the building and classroom. The leaders would need to be skilled at their craft whether it is administrative or teaching and most importantly, be able to build positive relationships with adults and students. Finally, the team of adults would need to be able to apply research-based

practices to their environment as a method to customize the support needed for their specific environment.

Based upon data collected from Boys' Achievement, the most impactful factors that coincide with my own professional experiences of twenty years were the ability to change a culture by building a believer's mindset within the staff members. As an educator who has had the experience of successfully transforming a school from a needs improvement status because the student achievement outcomes were below standard to one which exceeded growth standards, the one factor that had a high impact was facilitating professional development that allowed staff members not only to share their disbeliefs as the students' learning barrier but, more importantly, supporting them as they made footsteps to operationalize a passion of commitment to take the students from where they were academically to the place where we desired them to be. Consequently, our professional development provided a description and explanation of the students and the community we served and providing workable strategies for addressing and removing the negative image that our students could not learn which was all about getting the adults to believe in their minds that we could make a difference.

**Suggestions for Additional Research.** The study used a qualitative approach which examined the research problem, questioned assumptions about the context, and identified with the participants in the context. The study also collected and analyzed data, evaluated for the fidelity of the process, disseminated knowledge gained, reported the research findings,

made recommendations about future studies, and referenced the future of innovative educational programs.

Based upon findings, the following recommendations are suggested as future studies:

1. It is recommended studies are conducted to determine the long-term outcomes for the African-American males who attended and participated in this setting.
2. It is recommended studies are conducted to assist single-gender programs in dealing with the homophobic stereotypes to remove stigma and build culture understanding.
3. It is recommended studies are conducted to address how America should provide more funding for education in the early years of schooling instead of funding for incarceration.
4. It is recommended studies are conducted to use empirical research to gain quantitative data on the impact of single-gender programs.
5. It is recommended studies are conducted to replicate and build an environment such as Boys' Achievement Academy.
6. It is recommended studies are conducted for the type of professional development program needed in order to prepare teachers for teaching and learning in a single-gender environment.
7. It is recommended studies are conducted to determine what type of teacher best serves students in a single-gender environment.
8. It is recommended studies are conducted about kinesthetic learning.

## **Conclusion**

The research data was analyzed in order to determine the factors that the adults and students believed were effective in supporting African-American male students in a single-gender setting with increased high school graduation rates and college readiness. The research design was an exploratory case study based on constant comparative analysis and indicated themes that were supported by factors.

The findings suggest that students believe single-gender schooling is helpful as an alternative educational program. The perception of the single-gender school is that it creates a more educationally focused environment that targets the learning style of the student. Some of the lessons learned as contributing to the academic and behavioral success of African-American male students were: (1) increased self-esteem and self-awareness through a mind-set change; (2) improved aptitude - as children of impoverished, single-parent households, crime and popular culture, which often fosters the image that academic excellence is not cool and non-masculine for boys; (3) positive academic and behavioral interactions between teachers and students resulting in less distractions to learning; (4) experiential learning opportunities coupled with mentorship fosters greater self-concept and aspiration for college, and/or career pathways; (5) the involvement of the stakeholders provides resources to sustain supports; (6) effectively communicating the vision, mission, expectations, and goals of the teaching and learning environment through a public relations campaign; and (7) reducing class sizes so students can receive the attention deserved.

The importance of conducting studies on differentiated program designs, such as single gender education, will help future educational systems to develop programs that are tailored for the individual students. Educational systems continue to struggle with identifying instructional strategies that target closing student achievement gaps. This study suggests that the answer may be two-fold. The first phase of educational success is creating instructional strategies in the classroom that target high levels of achievement. The second phase of educational success is to look at how school environments can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners within school district, and allow parents the choice to enroll their students in those schools.

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**APPENDICES**

*Appendix A. Letter of Permission to CEO*

May 10, 2011

Dear CEO:

First of all, I am highly grateful to learn about the single-gender program at Boys' Achievement Academy. As you may recall from my visit last year and our previous discussions, I am intrigued by the structure that is developed at your school to support African-American and other minority male students in obtaining academic success. It is my hope that I can contribute to educators' understanding of the impact single-gender schooling has on today's society. According to my perceptual visit, you have truly built a school that will provide children unprecedented opportunities and will serve as a catalyst for revitalizing one of America's greatest cities. I believe future generations will look back on this time and marvel at what the present stewards of education were able to accomplish in creating an ambitious public urban charter school that uses an ancient language as a formula for learning. For this cause, it is of interest to me to further study the work you do at Boys' Achievement Academy.

As you know, I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at North Carolina State University (NCSU). For my dissertation, I hope to conduct a case study of the single-gender program at Boys' Achievement Academy. I seek your permission to engage in the research during the 2010-2011 school year. I am requesting your permission to conduct individual interviews with adult educators, focus group interviews with students, informal observations, and collect any documents or artifacts pertinent to this research to possibly include the examination of grades, attendance records, and discipline reports, as well as biographical and demographical data.

Through interviews, observations, and documents, I will record the perceptions of the African-American male students in your program and gain insight into the students' perceptions through the adult educators who serve in this facility. I realize that time is of the essence during an instructional day and to conduct interviews at your school will require effort to schedule blocks of time for this process to occur. However, I hope to confirm opportunities to collect data for this research for empowerment of educators to develop the culture of learning that is established at Boys' Achievement Academy.

All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. It is my hope that this research study on the perceptions of African-American male students in single-gender settings reveals "best practices" in order to support other school districts. Upon completion of my report, you will be provided a copy. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this proposed research, please contact me at 910-273-5079 or email at james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov or Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, NCSU dissertation committee chair, 919-835-3535 or email at bonnie\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu or the NCSU IRB office at 919-515-4514. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,  
James C. Ellerbe  
Doctoral Candidate  
North Carolina State University

*Appendix B. Letter of Research Explanation for Adults*

May 10, 2011

Dear Adults:

First of all, I am highly grateful to learn about the single-gender program at Boys' Achievement Academy. Moreover, I am very much intrigued by the structure that is developed at your school to support African-American and other minority male students in obtaining academic success. It is my hope that I can contribute to educators' understanding of the effects single-gender schooling has on today's society. According to my perceptual visit, an atmosphere has truly been built at the school that will provide children unprecedented opportunities and will serve as a catalyst for revitalizing one of America's greatest cities. I believe future generations will look back on this time and marvel at what the present stewards of education were able to accomplish in creating an ambitious urban public charter school that uses an ancient language as a formula for learning. For this cause, it is of interest to me to further study the work you do at Boys' Achievement Academy.

Currently, I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at North Carolina State University (NCSU). For my dissertation, I hope to conduct a case study of the single-gender program at Boys' Achievement Academy. I seek your permission to engage in the research during the 2010-2011 school year. I am requesting your permission to conduct individual interviews with adult educators, focus group interviews with students, informal observations, and collect any documents or artifacts pertinent to this research to possibly include the examination of grades, attendance records, and discipline reports, as well as biographical and demographical data.

Through interviews, observations, and documents, I will record the perceptions of the African-American male students in your program and gain insight into the students' perceptions through the adult educators who serve in this facility. I realize that time is of the essence during an instructional day and to conduct interviews at your school will require effort to schedule blocks of time for this process to occur. However, I would like to confirm opportunities to collect data for this research for empowerment of educators. If you decide to participate, please return the letter of consent signed and enclose it in the envelope provided. You may place the sealed envelope in the locked box located in the dining facility.

All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential, and there is no punitive actions if you decide not to voluntarily participate. It is my hope that this research study on the perceptions of African-American male students in single-gender settings reveals "best practices" in order to support other school districts. Upon completion of my report, you will be provided a copy. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this proposed research, please contact me at 910-273-5079 or email at james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov or Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, NCSU dissertation committee chair, 919-835-3535 or email at bonnie\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu or the NCSU IRB office at 919-515-4514. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,  
James C. Ellerbe  
Doctoral Candidate  
North Carolina State University

*Appendix C. Letter of Research Explanation for Parent(s)/Guardian(s)*

May 10, 2011

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Your child is invited to participate in a research study about the single-gender program at Boys' Achievement Academy. Your child was selected as a participant because his biographic and demographic profile fits the scope of the research to be conducted by North Carolina State University doctoral candidate James Ellerbe. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to have your child take part in this study.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to educators' understanding of the effects single-gender schools have in today's society. According to the perceptual visit by Mr. Ellerbe, the school has truly built an environment that will provide children unprecedented opportunities and will serve as a catalyst for revitalizing one of America's greatest cities.

If you agree to have your child participate in this study, Mr. Ellerbe will record the perceptions of the African-American male students and gain insight into the students' perceptions through the adult educators who serve in this facility through interviews, observations, and documentation.

Your child's participation is *voluntary*. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Boys' Achievement Academy. If you decide to allow your child to participate, please return the letter of consent signed and enclose it in the envelope provided. Your child may place the sealed envelope in the locked box located in the dining facility during his lunchtime. You are free to withdraw your child at any time without affecting your relationship with the Boys' Achievement Academy. Furthermore, your child may also discontinue participation at any time. If you are interested in having your child participate, please contact the researcher, James Ellerbe, at james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov. Additionally, should you have any questions or concerns regarding this proposed research, please contact me at the above email or Dr. Bonnie Fusarelli, NCSU dissertation committee chair, 919-835-3535 or email at bonnie\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu or the NCSU IRB office at 919-515-4514.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

James C. Ellerbe  
Doctoral Candidate  
North Carolina State University



*Appendix D. Informed Consent to be a Research Participant (Adult – Board Member/CEO)*

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INFORMED CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT  
(Adult – Board Member/CEO)

**Title of Study:** A Case Study of a Single-Gender Public Charter School

**Principal Investigator:** James C. Ellerbe

**About the Study**

School districts across the United States have struggled to find ways to close student achievement gaps, especially for African-American male students. However, single-gender programs have gained popularity as a strategy to achieve academic success with African-American male students. Since the African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy appear to be academically successful, the research study focuses to explore the factors which support this success.

**Purpose for Research Study**

James C. Ellerbe is working toward a doctoral degree at North Carolina State University and is conducting the study as a part of his dissertation requirement. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived benefits and experiences of the single-gender setting of African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy. This research study is conducted for the 2010 - 2011 school year.

**What will happen to subjects who take part in the study?**

Subjects who take part in this study will be asked questions about their school that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. I understand that there will be no penalty or reward for answering or not answering questions. With permission, the interview will be recorded for transcription. I understand that I am a voluntary participant in this study and there are no punitive actions or consequences for my participation. I also understand that James C. Ellerbe may visit classes to informally observe and learn about the class and/or school setting.

**Risks to subjects who participate**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating.

**Benefits of the study**

The data collected should benefit education policymakers who consider the implementation of single- gender programs. Furthermore, the "voice" of the targeted population should reflect the effects of the program.

**Confidentiality**

All information from this study will be kept confidential. I understand that James C. Ellerbe may use some things said in his report. However, he will not provide information that would reveal anyone's identity.

### **Compensation**

I understand that I am invited to participate in the adults' cake and ice cream social. There is no other compensation offered for participation in this study.

### **What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact me, James C. Ellerbe, at 5411 Morning Creek Way, Apt #307, Raleigh, NC 27610 or by phone 910 273 5079. My email address is [james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov), or you may contact my dissertation advisor at [bonnie\\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu](mailto:bonnie_fusarelli@ncsu.edu).

### **What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

### **Consent to Participate**

***"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."***

Board Member's/CEO's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*The individual board member interview will most likely take place in the administrator's conference room.**

*Appendix E. Informed Consent to be a Research Participant (Adult – Administrator)*

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INFORMED CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT  
(Adult - Administrator)

**Title of Study:** A Case Study of a Single-Gender Public Charter School

**Principal Investigator:** James C. Ellerbe

**About the Study**

School districts across the United States have struggled to find ways to close student achievement gaps, especially for African-American male students. However, single-gender programs have gained popularity as a strategy to achieve academic success with African-American male students. Since the African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy appear to be academically successful, the research study focuses to explore the factors which support this success.

**Purpose for Research Study**

James C. Ellerbe is working toward a doctoral degree at North Carolina State University and is conducting the study as a part of his dissertation requirement. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived benefits and experiences of the single-gender setting of African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy. This research study is conducted for the 2010 - 2011 school year.

**What will happen to subjects who take part in the study?**

Subjects who take part in this study will be asked questions about their school that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. I understand that there will be no penalty or reward for answering or not answering questions. With permission, the interview will be recorded for transcription. I understand that I am a voluntary participant in this study and there are no punitive actions or consequences for my participation. I also understand that James C. Ellerbe may visit classes to informally observe and learn about the class and/or school setting.

**Risks to subjects who participate**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating.

**Benefits of the study**

The data collected should benefit education policymakers who consider the implementation of single-gender programs. Furthermore, the "voice" of the targeted population should reflect the effects of the program.

**Confidentiality**

All information from this study will be kept confidential. I understand that James C. Ellerbe may use some things said in his report. However, he will not provide information that would reveal anyone's identity.

**Compensation**

I understand that I am invited to participate in the adults' cake and ice cream social. There is no other compensation offered for participation in this study.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact me, James C. Ellerbe, at 5411 Morning Creek Way, Apt #307, Raleigh, NC 27610 or by phone 910 273 5079. My email address is [james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov), or you may contact my dissertation advisor at [bonnie\\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu](mailto:bonnie_fusarelli@ncsu.edu).

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

**Consent to Participate**

***"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."***

Administrator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*The individual administrator interview will most likely take place in the administrator's office.**

*Appendix F. Informed Consent to be a Research Participant (Adult – Teacher)*

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INFORMED CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT  
(Adult - Teacher)

**Title of Study: A Case Study of a Single-Gender Public Carter School**

**Principal Investigator: James C. Ellerbe**

**About the Study**

School districts across the United States have struggled to find ways to close student achievement gaps, especially for African-American male students. However, single-gender programs have gained popularity as a strategy to achieve academic success with African-American male students. Since the African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy appear to be academically successful, the research study focuses to explore the factors which support this success.

**Purpose for Research Study**

James C. Ellerbe is working toward a doctoral degree at North Carolina State University and is conducting the study as a part of his dissertation requirement. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived benefits and experiences of the single-gender setting of African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy. This research study is conducted for the 2010 - 2011 school year.

**What will happen to subjects who take part in the study?**

Subjects who take part in this study will be asked questions about their school that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. I understand that there will be no penalty or reward for answering or not answering questions. With permission, the interview will be recorded for transcription. I understand that I am a voluntary participant in this study and there are no punitive actions or consequences for my participation. I also understand that James C. Ellerbe may visit classes to informally observe and learn about the class and/or school setting.

**Risks to subjects who participate**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating.

**Benefits of the study**

The data collected should benefit education policymakers who consider the implementation of single-gender programs. Furthermore, the "voice" of the targeted population should reflect the effects of the program.



**Confidentiality**

All information from this study will be kept confidential. I understand that James C. Ellerbe may use some things said in his report. However, he will not provide information that would reveal anyone's identity.

**Compensation**

I understand that I am invited to participate in the adults' cake and ice cream social. There is no other compensation offered for participation in this study.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact me, James C. Ellerbe, at 5411 Morning Creek Way, Apt #307, Raleigh, NC 27610 or by phone 910 273 5079. My email address is [james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov), or you may contact my dissertation advisor at [bonnie\\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu](mailto:bonnie_fusarelli@ncsu.edu).

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

**Consent to Participate**

***"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."***

Teacher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*The individual teacher interview will most likely take place in the teacher's classroom.**

*Appendix G. Informed Consent to be a Research Participant [Adult – Student (18 years or older)]*

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INFORMED CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT  
[Adult – Student (18 years or older)]

**Title of Study:** A Case Study of a Single-Gender Public Charter School

**Principal Investigator:** James C. Ellerbe

**About the Study**

School districts across the United States have struggled to find ways to close student achievement gaps, especially for African-American male students. However, single-gender programs have gained popularity as a strategy to achieve academic success with African-American male students. Since the African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy appear to be academically successful, the research study focuses to explore the factors which support this success.

**Purpose for Research Study**

James C. Ellerbe is working toward a doctoral degree at North Carolina State University and is conducting the study as a part of his dissertation requirement. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived benefits and experiences of the single-gender setting of African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy. This research study is conducted for the 2010 - 2011 school year.

**What will happen to subjects who take part in the study?**

Subjects who take part in this study will be asked questions about their school that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. I understand that there will be no penalty or reward for answering or not answering questions. With permission, the interview will be recorded for transcription. I understand that I am a voluntary participant in this study and there are no punitive actions or consequences for my participation. I also understand that James C. Ellerbe may visit classes to informally observe and learn about the class and/or school setting.

**Risks to subjects who participate**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating.

**Benefits of the study**

The data collected should benefit education policymakers who consider the implementation of single- gender programs. Furthermore, the "voice" of the targeted population should reflect the effects of the program.

**Confidentiality**

All information from this study will be kept confidential. I understand that James C. Ellerbe may use some things said in his report. However, he will not provide information that would reveal anyone's identity.

**Compensation**

I understand that I am invited to a pizza party for actively participating in this study. There is no other compensation offered for participation in this study.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact me, James C. Ellerbe, at 5411 Morning Creek Way, Apt #307, Raleigh, NC 27610 or by phone 910 273 5079. My email address is [james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov), or you may contact my dissertation advisor at [bonnie\\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu](mailto:bonnie_fusarelli@ncsu.edu).

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

**Consent to Participate**

***"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."***

Adult Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*The student focus group interview will most likely take place in the school's technology lab.**

*Appendix H. Informed Consent from Adult for a Student to be a Research Participant  
(Students with Parental Consent)*

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INFORMED CONSENT FROM ADULT FOR A STUDENT TO BE A RESEARCH  
PARTICIPANT  
(Students with Parental Consent)

**Title of Study: A Case Study of a Single-Gender Public Charter School**

**Principal Investigator: James C. Ellerbe**

**About the Study**

School districts across the United States have struggled to find ways to close student achievement gaps, especially for African-American male students. However, single-gender programs have gained popularity as a strategy to achieve academic success with African-American male students. Since the African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy appear to be academically successful, the research study focuses to explore the factors which support this success.

**Purpose for Research Study**

James C. Ellerbe is working toward a doctoral degree at North Carolina State University and is conducting the study as a part of his dissertation requirement. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived benefits and experiences of the single-gender setting of African-American male students at Boys' Achievement Academy. This research study is conducted for the 2010 - 2011 school year.

**What will happen to subjects who take part in the study?**

Subjects who take part in this study will be asked questions about their school that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. I understand that there will be no penalty or reward for answering or not answering questions. With permission, the interview will be recorded for transcription. I understand that I am a voluntary participant in this study and there are no punitive actions or consequences for my participation. I also understand that James C. Ellerbe may visit classes to informally observe and learn about the class and/or school setting.

**Risks to subjects who participate**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating. At no time will your child be left alone with the researcher.

**Benefits of the study**

The data collected should benefit education policymakers who consider the implementation of single-gender programs. Furthermore, the "voice" of the targeted population should reflect the effects of the program.

**Confidentiality**

All information from this study will be kept confidential. I understand that James C. Ellerbe may use some things said in his report. However, he will not provide information that would reveal anyone's identity.

**Compensation**

My child and I understand that he is invited to a pizza party for actively participating in this study. There is no other compensation offered for participation in this study.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study, you may contact me, James C. Ellerbe, at 5411 Morning Creek Way, Apt #307, Raleigh, NC 27610 or by phone 910 273 5079. My email address is [james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov), or you may contact my dissertation advisor at [bonnie\\_fusarelli@ncsu.edu](mailto:bonnie_fusarelli@ncsu.edu).

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919-515-4514).

**Consent to Participate**

***"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."***

Parent's/Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*The focus group interview will most likely take place in the school's technology lab.**

*Appendix I. Board Member Interview Questions*



## Board Member Interview Questions

### Subject: Single-Gender Educational Programs

Script: Greeting of the day. Before we begin is it okay to record this interview session and take some notes? I would like to thank you for participating in this research study about the single-gender educational program here at your school and your support for the African-American male students you serve. I would like to share that I am in graduate school at North Carolina State University, working toward a doctorate in Educational Leadership. When I visited your city in October 2008, I attended the Single-Gender Conference where I learned about your school. In my research, I want to determine the perceptions of African-American male students who participate in this single-gender program as it relates to their academic success.

You will not be identified by name in the report of my findings. Since you signed the Informed Consent, you know you may stop with the interview at any time or decline to comment on any question you choose. \_\_\_\_\_Do you have any questions before we proceed?  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Can you tell me the history of Boys' Achievement Academy?
2. Can you please describe ways you obtained funding for this program?
3. What are some of your biggest challenges in this single-gender setting?
4. What are some of your thoughts about the factors which cause the African-American male students here to be academically successful?
5. If I were to ask the boys what they think about the school, what response do you perceive given?

6. Describe the reactions you noticed from the parents/community about the single-gender setting.
7. Would you recommend a single-gender setting to policy makers and school districts as a way to gain better academic outcomes for African-American male students and, if so, why?
8. Is there any other information you would like to share with me about this single-gender program that I may not have asked?

Script: Thank you for talking with me. Should you think of anything else, here's my email address: james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov.

*Appendix J. Administrator Interview Questions*

## Administrator Interview Questions

### Subject: Single-Gender Educational Programs

Script: Greeting of the day. Before we begin is it okay to record this interview session and take some notes? I would like to thank you for participating in this research study about the single-gender educational program here at your school and your support for the African-American male students you serve. I would like to share that I am in graduate school at North Carolina State University, working toward a doctorate in Educational Leadership. When I visited your city in October 2008, I attended the Single-Gender Conference where I learned about your school. In my research, I want to determine the perceptions of African-American male students who participate in this single-gender program as it relates to their academic success.

You will not be identified by name in the report of my findings. Since you signed the Informed Consent, you know you may stop with the interview at any time or decline to comment on any question you choose. \_\_\_\_\_Do you have any questions before we proceed?

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Can you tell me how and why you became involved with this single-gender program and whether or not you were at another school prior to this one?
2. Can you please describe specific preparations and trainings you received to prepare for this all male school, especially if they are different than any other training you have received as a professional?

3. How do you select your staff, and what kind of teachers do you want?
4. What are some of your biggest challenges in this single-gender setting?
5. What are your curriculum and teaching methodologies, and why is it important to your content?
6. Describe the reactions you noticed from the parents/community about the single-gender setting.
7. Would you recommend a single-gender setting to policy makers and school districts as a way to gain better academic outcomes for African-American male students and, if so, why?
8. Is there any other information you would like to share with me about this single-gender program that I may not have asked?

Script: Thank you for talking with me. Should you think of anything else, here's my email address: james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov.

*Appendix K. Teacher Interview Questions*

## Teacher Interview Questions

### Subject: Single-Gender Educational Programs

Script: Greeting of the day. Before we begin is it okay to record this interview session and take some notes? I would like to thank you for participating in this research study about the single-gender educational program here at your school and your support for the African-American male students you serve. I would like to share that I am in graduate school at North Carolina State University, working toward a doctorate in Educational Leadership. When I visited your city in October 2008, I attended the Single-Gender Conference where I learned about your school. In my research, I want to determine the perceptions of African-American male students who participate in this single-gender program as it relates to their academic success.

You will not be identified by name in the report of my findings. Since you signed the Informed Consent, you know you may stop with the interview at any time or decline to comment on any question you choose. \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have any questions before we proceed?  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Can you tell me how and why you became involved with this single-gender program and whether or not you taught at another school prior to this one?
2. Can you please describe specific preparations and trainings you received to prepare for this all male school, especially if they are different than any other training you have received as a professional?
3. Do you perceive any differences between the teaching methodology in the single-gender setting and the public setting?

4. According to data, how are the African-American male students academically performing?
5. Have you observed any significant differences in the social behaviors African-American male students in the single-gender setting exhibit versus the public setting? If so, what are they?
6. What are some of your biggest challenges in this single-gender setting?
7. What are some of your thoughts about the factors which cause the African-American male students here to be academically successful?
8. Describe the reactions you noticed from the parents/community about the single-gender setting.
9. Is there any other information you would like to share with me about this single-gender program?

Script: Thank you for talking with me. Should you think of anything else, here's my email address: james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov.



*Appendix L. Student Focus Group Interview Questions*

## Student Focus Group Interview Questions

### Subject: Single-Gender Educational Programs

Script: Greeting of the day. Before we begin is it okay to record this interview session and take some notes? I would like to thank you for participating in this research study about the single-gender educational program here at your school. I would like to share that I am in graduate school at North Carolina State University, working toward a doctorate in Educational Leadership. When I visited your city in October 2008, I attended the Single-Gender Conference where I learned about your school. In my research, I want to determine the perceptions of African-American male students who participate in this single-gender program as it relates to their academic success.

You will not be identified by name in the report of my findings. Since you signed the Informed Consent, you know you may stop with the interview at any time or decline to comment on any question you choose. \_\_\_\_\_Do you have any questions before we proceed?  
\_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe the environment in which you are raised.
2. Please tell me how you became involved with this single-gender program.
3. Were you ever in a coeducational setting prior to this single-gender program and, if so, how were you academically doing in your classes in both settings?
4. Have you encountered any type of discipline problems in the coeducational and/or single-gender setting? If so what types?
5. Describe the atmosphere in your school and your relationship with the staff members.
6. Have you encountered any difficulties related to the single-gender setting here from your peers, parents, community, etc.?
7. What performance outcomes can you attribute to this single-gender setting?

8. What factors do you perceive support you in being academically successful in this single-gender setting?
9. Tell why you stay here at Boys' Achievement Academy.
10. Do you have any unanswered questions or answers that you would like to explore or have addressed?

Script: Thank you for talking with me. Should you think of anything else, here's my email address: [james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:james.ellerbe@dpi.nc.gov).