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Black independent schools: an alternative educational experience for African American students in K-12 public schools in the United States

Donnisha Sanford

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

BLACK INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

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by

Donnisha Sanford

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Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Donnisha Sanford

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D, Chairperson

Gabriella Miramontes, Ed.D, Co-Chair/Committee

Maria Brahme, Ed.D, Co-Chair/Committee

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Donald E. Sanford Jr., whom I miss and love so dearly.

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I give all glory and praises to God, my Lord and Savior. Thank You for allowing me to live out my dreams, this dissertation being one of many. I am truly blessed through Your favor in my life. I appreciate the many gifts and talents You have given me.

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VITA

EDUCATION

Pepperdine University
Doctor of Education, Learning Technologies 2022

National University
Certificate of Eligibility Administrative Services Credential 2016

Teacher's College of San Joaquin
Level II Education Specialist Instruction Credential 2013

Grand Canyon University
Master of Education, Special Education, Cross Categorical (IR) 2012

University of Arizona
Bachelor of Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies 2009

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Fairfield Family YMCA 2021-Present
Board member

City of Hawthorne 2021-Present
Commissioner, Parks & Recreation/Fine Arts

Centinela Valley Union High School District 2018-Present
Special Education teacher

Inglewood Unified School Unified 2012-2018
Special Education teacher

Inglewood Unified School District 2010-2012
Substitute teacher

Varied 2009-2012
English (ESL) Teacher

AWARDS

Olaf H. Tegner Endowed Scholarship
University of Arizona's Mary Roby Student-Athlete Award
University of Arizona's Dean List Honorable Mention
Los Angeles County Commendation Award

MEMBERSHIPS

Association of California School Administrators
California Teachers Association
Centinela Valley Secondary Teachers Association
Junior League of Los Angeles
Morningside High Monarch Alumni Association
National Education Association
University of Arizona Alumni Association
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the influence and repercussions of the educational laws and policies in the United States public school system for African American students in K-12 and analyzed the alternative of Black independent schools to impact the effects of racism, segregation, and prejudice for educational equality for African American students. Despite the increased segregation in public school education in the United States, there has been little to no change or alternatives to this phenomenon. The collection of research for alternative education or all Black educational institutions for African American students in the K-12 setting is minimal in their effects of overall educational experiences, academic achievement, and overall success for African American students. Most students have focused on the idea of modifying previous laws either post Jim Crow era or post-Civil Rights era, which have both resulted in disguised or soft segregation as an academic challenge instead of a systematic problem. The emergence of Black independent schools in the United States is often negated as anti-patriotic, resegregation, or altogether omitted from educational history as well as the conversation about possible solutions. The successes of the top Black independent schools in the United States are often overlooked. Thus, a representation of these achievements and their impact on African American students, as perceived by Black independent school principals, offered a comprehensive understanding of the idea in which policy and practices can combat the effects of segregation. Therefore, this study used the hermeneutic phenomenological theory in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the best practices and the meaning of equality in educational experiences of African American students in Black independent schools versus public schools in the United States from the standpoint of Black independent school principals. The data were a combination of literary analysis and Hyncer's (1999) five step process.

In summary, the discoveries and conclusions of this study were intended to inform and educate about the best practices and successes of Black independent schools as policy alternatives and practices through data collection of the perspectives of school principals of Black independent schools in the United States.

Chapter 1: Background

Educational equality and desegregation have subsequently been the topic of education reform for more than three decades (Ravitch, 2010). African American children, just as other minority children, have been the focus of this reform because of their educational experiences, academic achievement gaps, and the racial inequalities in public school education in the United States (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Despite Supreme Court case decisions, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), where African American students attended racially integrated schools, their educational experiences were profoundly differentiated by race which ultimately led to lower academic performances and progress (Linn & Welner, 2007). This case was intended to indicate the end of segregated schools and education in America, but overwhelming evidence has shown that the phenomenon of segregation in public schools was only merely modified rather than being terminated (Losen, 1999). According to Essed (1991), based on the data collected from a children's data website, youth who experienced racial segregation during their educational experience were also at a higher risk for disconnection.

Additionally, educational laws or reforms such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which initially aimed to address the academic woes of the poor, neglected, and minority students, failed to do so; rather, this ended up furthering the lines of racism and inequality by a disproportionate representation of African American students in public schools that was established from the foundation of the educational system in the United States (Brown, 2005; Moore, 2012; No Child Left Behind, 2001). Disproportionate representation was achieved through the elevation of achievement testing in high schools and created an illusion of educational equality. Thus, this created what is currently known as the soft racism of low expectations where earlier failures of academic progress were now labeled permanent failures

(Lee, 2006). The current study examined issues with policy and best practices as they relate to the phenomenon that plagues the American public-school system, known as racism. Previous studies have either focused on racial inequalities in education between schools (district) or between districts (regions) which do not address or give attention to the overall racial inequality in the foundation of the educational system as an educational institution (Clotfelter et al., 2005).

Thus, segregation, has been defined as "the practice of requiring separate housing, education and other services for people of color" (Onion et al., 2019, p. 1). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the impact and implications of segregation on African American students by capturing and analyzing educational laws and policies for public schools in the United States. An in-depth understanding of the way in which policy and practices has widened the segregation in public schools and its impact on African American students was done through a literary analysis on the perception of school principals in *Black independent schools* which are independent (or sometimes chartered) public schools teaching African-centered curriculum to build a strong cultural foundation and conventional worldly education and skills.

What this study focused on was a new examination of experiential knowledge informed by policy and practices which enhance the educational experiences of African American students in K-12 public schools who are experiencing the effects of segregation. Black independent schools in the United States provide curriculum that is centered on their culture and accessibility for equal education that is not available in other public-school educational institutions (Darling-Hammond, 1998). The idea is to promote more Black independent schools in the United States for African American students as their importance to the educational experiences, best practices, educational inequalities, and cultural influences for African American students. By gaining the

perspectives from Black independent school principals, they are able to articulate the demonstrated impact of Black independent schools for African American students.

The official era of racial segregation in the United States ranged from 1849-1950, after the abolishment of slavery. This era was solidified by the passing of segregation laws, such as the 13th Amendment (abolished slavery), 14th Amendment (citizenship rights), and 15th Amendment (prohibits denying citizen's a right to vote based on race). Although these Amendments granted legal status in citizenship and other benefits to African Americans in the United States, there were a handful of Supreme Court decisions which aimed to offset the progression of these laws. For example, in 1896, the Supreme Court made racial segregation legal in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). As a result, African Americans were treated as second-class citizens and were separated from White people by law as well as privatization of government and public enterprises such as transportation and accommodations. Furthermore, the side effects of this decision were that separate, but equal, facilities was lawful. This was articulated throughout the United States, both North and South alike.

Foundation of Black Independent Schools

In 1976, Wright wrote, *A Psychological Theory of Educating the Black Child*, in the heart of the Black independent school movement. In it, he stated, "In developing and implementing educational programs for the Black child, the research indicates the need to understand perceptual development and functioning in order to maximize the child's learning ability" (p. 13). The rise of the independent Black schools in the public schools in the United States is a missing piece in the United States educational system and history. The acknowledgement of their existence—their purpose as an answer to the racist, segregated and discrimination public education system to African American students would suggest that the public-school system is

not equal. Their successes, which are many, convey that there are alternatives to solutions in educating African American children in the United States, where educational laws and policies have failed. Before the arrival of Black independent schools in America in the late 1960s and 1970s, the United States education system constructed the laws and system presumably to foster the educational growth in African American children in the public educational system but in reality, there were really giving them false mortality and furthering the message of compliance of African American children, as students, through prejudice, segregation, discrimination, and racism. The need for Black independent schools for young African American scholars supersedes the academic aspects of education and the inequality through the public education system. The other implications of that same system affect the mental, emotional, social, and psychological aspects of African American children through the staff, programs, and the overall system. The educational system in any country and civilization is a reflect of its society and since African Americans are still treated as unequal and second-class citizens in this country then the education system reflects that reality through terms of bridging the gap, and misrepresentation in special education. Based on this fact alone, the United States in its current state and foundations are incapable of providing adequate resources and systems to properly and fully educate the African American child in K-12 public education; thus, the need for the alternative of independent Black schools.

The concept of community schools was developed by the African-American Teachers Association (AATA) in April of 1972 at a conference hosted by the association; consequently, this conference sowed the seed for a national Black education system (Wilkinson, 1984). At this time African Free Schools were already founded throughout the country; yet, two months after this convention the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) was birthed. The CIBI had

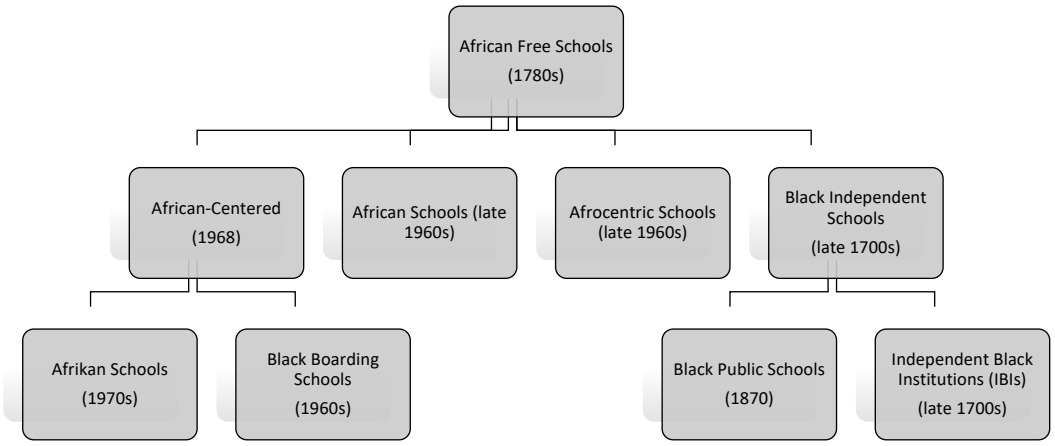
28 members who represented 14 independent schools all over the nation. According to Wilkinson (1984), the idea of this organization was to organize and unify "the existing independent schools into a uniformed pattern of educational achievement geared towards correct political objectives and dedicated to excellence" (p. 219). The goals of this organization were to:

- develop and implement the instructional methodology that ensures maximum academic achievement for Black children,
- the creation and sustainability of Black institutions providing educational, cultural, and social development for Black communities,
- commit to the training and positioning of teachers to serve in Black independent institutions,
- establish a network of mutual support and reinforcement of African values in the education of Black families,
- serve as a link to national and international institutions determined to the liberation of African people,
- serve as an accreditation agency of Pan-African Nationalist schools, and
- provide guidance and motivation for Black people through an example of nation building.

As a result, other organizations, such as the Philadelphia Council of Black Independent Schools (PCBIS) and the Black Education Archives have formed to address the needs in the local Black communities because the PCBIS had affiliations with 15 out of the 30 states from which Black independent schools are operated (see Figure 1; Wilkinson, 2011).

Figure 1

History of Black Public Schools in the United States



African Free Schools

An African Free School is a school for children of slaves and free people of color that originated in the 1780s. The first documented African Free School was established in New York City on November 2, 1787 by the New York Manumission Society with the founders being Alexander Hamilton and John Jay (Kates, 2017) funded by state legislation. This school opened before any White students had access to free education. The school fundamentally taught 40 boys and girls in one room. All students learned reading, writing, and arithmetic; additionally, the boys receiving further instruction in cartography and navigation and girls in needlework (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016). There was a total of seven African Free Schools by 1834. The start of these schools helped Black teachers obtain jobs and fostered the first African American headmaster, John Teasman. Throughout the years of African Free School, there were headmaster issues and new state and federal laws passed that favored slaves and former slaves alike. Therefore, in 1834, The New York Manumission Society ended its support of the African Free School system; consequently, the Free Schools were ultimately, transferred to the control of the White New York State public school society (Rury, 1983). With this merger the African Free

Schools became a public school apart of the New York City public school system (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016). The school's most notable graduates from the African Free Schools: Ira Aldridge (actor), Alexander Crummell (teacher), and Henry Highland Garnet (abolitionist).

African-Centered (African or Afrocentric) Schools

The birthplace of African-centered, or Afrocentric, schools is Washington, D.C. (Cohen, 2016). The first independent African school, Ujamaa, opened its doors in 1968. This school was founded by a graduate of Howard Law School who was also one of the organizers of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (Cohen, 2016). Next, the Nation House (2010), one of the oldest independent African centered schools in the United States and in the DC metropolitan area, was established in 1974 by a group of activists from Howard University. The school was to serve the specific needs of children of African heritage from pre-school to 12th grade. Generally, the purpose of the African-centered/African/Afrocentric schools was to serve families in the development and enculturation of responsible youth who are committed to their families, their community and their African culture/heritage (Nation House, 2010). Also, these schools were designed for "Black children to learn who they are, where they are, what they must to do liberate themselves and their people to be successful in the world" (Cohen, 2016, p. 1). Granted that the exact number is very difficult to calculate, it has been documented that during the peak of African-centered schools there were 400 schools in 1999. Since that peak, these schools have been on the rapid decline and closing. One of the reasons for the closing of the schools is the transition from African-centered institutions to charter schools when the emergence of charter schools started in the 1990s; thus, sacrificing their independent status in return for increase in finances and financial security that is received when accepting state and federal funding.

Today, many African-centered charters are closing down due to poor academic performance and financial mismanagement. Other problems include the bureaucracy of the charter schools with it rules and regulations that becomes increasingly worse from year to year. In addition, there is an increase in the competition of schools with an overwhelming number of charter schools to choose from; as such, most parents are opting to send their child to a more affordable school rather than the African-centered private schools which are still remaining (Cohen, 2016). The drop-in enrollment has been the African-centered school's worst nightmare. There are some schools, such as Nation House, who have refused to close its doors. Nation House currently maintains three fully functioning programs: Watoto School (serving pre-kindergarten through 4th grade students), Sankofa Institute (for 5th and 6th grade students), and the Afrikan Youth Organization (AYO) which provides after-school activities for students (Nation House, 2010). Other well-known African-centered schools that are still functioning are: Roots Public Charter School (Washington, D. C.), Roots Activity Learning Center (Washington, D. C.), Barbara A. Sizemore (1985; Illinois), Marcus Garvey School (California), Timbuktu Academy (Detroit), Sankofa Academy (Houston), Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools (Chicago), Freedom Home Academy (Chicago), Little Sun People (Brooklyn), Ile Omode School (Oakland), Imhotep Institute Charter High School (Philadelphia), and Kamali Academy (New Orleans; Cohen, 2016).

Independent Black Institutions

Since the 1700s, African Americans in the United States developed their own schools collectively called Independent Black Institutions (IBIs), because of the disfranchisement of their children in public schools designed to meet their needs (Lomotey, 1992). Parents felt as though their voices were not heard and their input was not valued in their child's education. The most

successful IBIs were established in the last 20 years and their enrollments range between 50 and 200 students. Most IBIs funding come from African American families (tuition or donations) or from thee African American communities. A few examples of IBIs are: (a) The Afrikan People's Action School in Trenton (New Jersey), (b) The New Concept Development Center (Chicago), (c) Nile Valley Shule (New York), (d) Aisha Shule (Detroit), (e) Shule Mandela (California), (e) Each One Teach One (Ohio), and (f) Nation House Watoto School (Washington, D. C.; Lomotey, 1992). These schools are also a part of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI).

The IBIs operate from three major philosophies: (a) familyhood, (b) value system, and (c) Revolutionary Pan-African Nationalism (Lomotey, 1992). The first philosophy, familyhood, focuses first on creating a family atmosphere in IBIs through the teachers and staff by ensuring they treat students as their own in every single aspect. Also, teachers are to encourage students through love, respect, sincerity, and commitment. In return, students will reciprocate this level of respect and love to their teachers. The next component of familyhood is parent involvement. Parent participation in all levels are not only welcomed but necessary because IBIs believe parents have the right and responsibility to be involved in their child's education. As such, the parent's roles are interchangeable as parents, "teachers, aides, administrative assistants, field trip chaperones, and even curriculum developers" (Lomotey, 1992, p. 458). Subsequently, the value system, is derived from a set of values called The Seven Principles of Blackness (or Nguzo Saba) from the Kawaida doctrine by Karenga (1980) which was created during the 1960s. The principles are: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. These principles are embedded into every aspect of IBIs from the curriculum to the programs offered. Lastly, the RPN highlights community and

connection/network as one with all African nations and peoples (Lomotey, 1992). This is an alternative to the mainstream education which founders of IBIs have deemed inadequate in not only educating African Americans but addressing needs outside of education (Nkrumah, 1970). Also, this philosophy promotes the African collective society and cultural nation that is important in African nations and communities alike (Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994).

First Black Public School

Paul Laurence Dunbar High is America's first Black public high school. The school opened in 1870 in Washington, D.C., as an educational mission, found by the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church (Stewart, 2013). The school was once called the Preparatory High School for Colored Youth from 1891 to 1916 also known as M Street High School (Dunbar High School, n.d.). It was not until 1916 when the school received its current name after the African-American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar, who died in 1906. The school has been a pillar of excellence in educating African-American students for 150 years. Furthermore, Dunbar's first principal was the first Black graduate of Harvard College and all of its teachers have a college degree with some holding doctoral degrees. By the 1950s, Dunbar High was sending 80% of its students to college because of their focus on academic where other schools focused on vocational and technical education or training. However, this all changed after the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) United States Supreme Court case decision that ruled for the integration of schools. According to columnist Thomas Sowell's (2016) assessment of the school, he stated,

> For Washington, the end of racial segregation led to a political compromise, in which all schools became neighborhood schools. Dunbar, which had been accepting outstanding Black students from anywhere in the city, could now accept only students from the rough ghetto neighborhood in which it was located. Virtually overnight, Dunbar became a typical ghetto school. As unmotivated, unruly and disruptive students flooded in, Dunbar teachers began moving out and many retired. More than 80 years of academic excellence simply vanished into thin air (para 16).

Being at the mercy of racist politicians who would hold funding for the school and the subjection of having the stigma for all Black schools as racist and militant, the school was standing still. In the 21st century, the school has franchised outside of the Washington, D.C. area, hosting other Paul Laurence Dunbar High schools in Baltimore, Maryland, Fort Worth, Texas, and Lexington, Kentucky, respectively (Cornish, 2013). All of these schools have a majority of African American enrollment and are important in their local African-American communities. The schools have a reputation for their excellent athletic programs in the football, track/field, and basketball. Based on the first Dunbar High School's (n.d.) website, the mission of the school is to foster a cultured level of equitable high education with emphasis in, "Social justice, safety, fairness, academic success and college and career readiness for a diverse population of students" (para. 1), whereas, the vision is, "To ensure that every student reaches their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment" (para. 2).

The once prominent school had the appearance that is said to be identical to a prison with its crumbling, brutalist-style building and the graduation rates are a little over 60% up until the first renovations (Cornish, 2013); yet, some of their policies have been the blueprint for education reform. The school received new facilities in the 1970s and again in 2013 with an extravagant $122 million budget. This new renovation is rumored to take a more holistic approach to the educational environment thanks to their varied stakeholders. The new facility embraces the school's history with over 200 plaques planted over the grounds that feature Dunbar's most memorable graduates, such as Senator Ed Brooke, Charles Hamilton Houston (architect of school desegregation), Elizabeth Catlett (artist), Billy Taylor (jazz player), Benjamin O. Davis (The first Black general in the Army), Wesley Anthony Brown (The first

Black graduate of the Naval Academy), Robert C. Weaver (The first Black presidential Cabinet member), and Charles R. Drew (surgeon and medical researcher). On the other hand, the Dunbar has hosted an illustrious faculty and staff which includes but is not limited to: Carter G. Woodson (father of Black History Month), Mary Church Terrell (one of the first women to earn a college degree), and Anna Julia Cooper (one of the most prominent African-American scholars in US History; Stewart, 2013). More specifically, the school has boasted the following principals: Mary Jane Patterson (first African-American woman to earn a B.A. degree) and Robert Heberton Terrell (attorney; second African-American man to serve as justice of the peace in Washington, D.C.), just to name a few (Cornish, 2013). Despite falling on hard times as most schools do, the institution has managed to keep its prestigious history and reputation for more than 150 years.

Black Boarding Schools

Once upon a time there was a record of 100 African American (or Black) boarding schools in the United States prior to 1970; however, as of the last decade, there were only four remaining: Redemption Christian Academy (New York), Piney Woods (Mississippi), Pine Forge Academy (Philadelphia), and Laurinburg Institute (North Carolina; Roach 2003). These remaining schools are members of the Association of Historically African-American Boarding Schools. Most of the African American boarding schools originated between the 1800s to early 1900s, and where a major part of educational infrastructure for African Americans between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. As an answer to the lack of Southern schools for African American students in the South, African American boarding schools provided rigorous and character-building experience through tradition in a sense of community and commitment to academic excellence. The underlying commonality between the various African American

schools, whether boarding school or public, is that the teachers believe in their students. This belief is shown through the teacher's own dedication to education with most African American boarding schools boasting a faculty of 6-13% with Ph.D.'s (HBCU Money, 2014). Despite that fact and their longevity, these four remaining boarding schools are on the verge of extinction. With their reputation for having an extremely competitive admissions process, tuition, and faculty their value is sorely understated in the United States.

The oldest of the four remaining African American boarding schools is Laurinburg Institute. Laurinburg Institute was founded in 1904 by E. M. and Tinny McDuffie and is a residential private, nonsectarian preparatory school located in Laurinburg, North Carolina less 100 miles south of Raleigh, North Carolina. (Miceli, n.d.). The school is a high school, 9th-12th grade, for both African American boys and girls. The school's motto "deeds not words" is derived from Booker T. Washington's philosophy of having dignity in work; he played an integral part in starting the school. Based on the school's website, Laurinburg Institute states:

> This is a unique educational institution concerned with the overall development of students. Since 1904, the Institute has educated thousands of students, primarily African-Americans, with a curriculum that follows the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and Common Core. Laurinburg Institute maintains high expectations for students…Laurinburg Institute is committed to develop the whole child by our focus on character, leadership, and integrity. We continue to expand these traits. Since 1904, when the school began, our focus has consistently been on cultivating character, leadership, and integrity as part of our legacy… Everybody at Laurinburg Institute must work weekly in a variety of jobs on the campus (para. 1).

Since 1954, 83% of the school's alumni have either graduated college or completed some other post-secondary training program. The school claims the following notable alumni: Dizzy Gillespie (jazz musician), Charlie Scott (University of North Carolina's first Black scholarship basketball star), and Sam Jones (NBA Boston Celtics legend). Besides their academics, they are well-known for their athletics program, in particular, their boys' basketball program. Hence,

graduates of Laurinburg Institute have been accepted to and attended the following universities and colleges: Duke University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Northwestern University, Tuskegee University, Howard University, Hampton University, Providence College, and Wake Forest University.

The second oldest African American Boarding school is Piney Woods. The school was founded in 1909 in Piney Woods, Mississippi, 21 miles south of Jackson, Mississippi, by Laurence C. Jones (Alexander-Snow, 2011). According to the school's website, the boarding school is co-ed and services students from 8th to 12th grade. The overall cost of tuition, room, and board is nearly $35,000 per year depending on the family's income. Scholarships and financial assistance are available based on needs. As a result, the school was quoted to have a system where all scholarship and financial aid applications are considered.

The school's slogan, "Head. Heart. Hands" is connected to the school's core values explained on their website. Their core values are: love, integrity, faith, excellence, and empowerment (Miceli, n.d.). The first, love, is the foundation in which the residential community educational institution is founded on. The premise is that love connects them all and the importance of love for self and others spans across education, communities, and generations around the world. Next, integrity is deeply rooted in self-awareness, self-discovery, spirituality, and justice. Third, because the school's principal faith in which they operate is Christianity, the school's purpose is to teach Christian values to their students that relates to them in this contemporary, multi-faceted society (Alexander-Snow, 2011). The goal is for enlightenment in the community, systems, and structures by facilitating individual fulfillment, charity, and collective harmony, whether school or community or individual and group. Next, excellence focuses on the past and present achievements and expectations of the school to transform nearly

2,000 acres of land that forms the school into classrooms. The idea of intellectual excellence is not a bounded to the classroom but is a constant exploration. To finish, the last core value, empowerment, emphasizes the power of freedom. In this case, it is the freedom from educational structural boundaries (Miceli, n.d.); although the school has the tradition aspects of any educational institutions, such as bells, schedules, and a rule. They also have the freedoms to leave campus (mainly weekends for home visits) and have the space to say and do what they feel which is encouraged.

Additionally, Piney Woods has an official alumni association, the Piney Woods International Alumni Association (PWIAA), which serves as a liaison between former graduates and the school (The Piney Woods School, 2021). The alumni association participates in fundraisers, events, and networking channels, such as career programs. Piney Woods students come from 17 of the 50 states with 16% of their student body coming from African and Caribbean countries, completing their enrollment process which is limited to 200 students. Piney Woods have a reputation for their matriculation rates, making recent news in 2015 for 98% of their graduates attending college (Whiteman et al., 2015). Some of their memorable alumni are the Cotton Blossom Singers and Five Blind Boys of Mississippi (Miceli, n.d.).

Despite the insight and examples of achievement of these various African American K-12 educational institutions in the United States, African Americans are still unsupported and failing in the public-school system. Funding, bureaucratic stipulations, attendance, lack of awareness, tuition, and the many school choices continued to contribute to the fall of these institutions. State and federal officials often demonize these institutions as racist and un-American because it represents resegregation of children in education. Most school district boards have called for the

closing of so many African American specialty schools when the academic achievement from state standardized tests is poor, yet, not as bad as integrated public schools.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the K-12 public school system in the United States has institutionalized racism, discrimination, and prejudice toward African American students in its foundation and educational policies and laws. Because of this, the K-12 educational system in the United States has been extremely flawed at the federal and state government levels. The integration of African American students with White students in K-12 public schools have resulted in vast disadvantages of African American students academically as well as mentally, emotionally, and socially when it was meant to promote equity and equality. The United States' K-12 educational system is meant to further suppress African American children as a reinforcement of societal norms; therefore, the education system acts as a reflection of society.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine how the federal government desegregation laws have hindered the overall education progression of African American students in K-12 public education and its implications and impact on African American education, fundamentally and more. The researcher explored institutionalized racism, discrimination, and prejudice roots in public school education in the United States as a means to further suppress and segregate African American people from White people, academically and socially. As a result, the researcher brought to light alternatives for the education of African American children in the United States through Black independent schools, which will improve the overall educational experience and progression of African American K-12 students. In order

to determine which alternatives are successful and appropriate for African American students in educational settings, the research developed four guiding research questions.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions and guiding questions of this qualitative study:

- RQ1: How do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students?
- RQ2: What instructionally racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibit the success of African American students?
- RQ3: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring Black independent school leaders who face similar challenges?

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is the lens in a study that is driven by the purpose and the problem (Maxwell, 2013). The theoretical aspect of this framework comes from the literature and is not often explained in terms of measurable terms, whereas the framework emerges as a result from the wide, varied, and intensive reading of relevant literature. The following theories will be used in order to frame the study: (a) critical race theory (CRT), and (b) conflict theory. Utilization of these theories, in education, as their lens to finding out if being taught in an educational institute by people who are culturally and socially alike for African Americans students are overall more beneficial for them.

For example, Black independent schools in the United States could be more beneficial for African American students rather than being in a desegregated educational institute with the laws made from a system that was not originally designed for African American students. In using this lens, the researcher examined each framework by: (a) providing a brief background, (b) defining key concepts of the research study and its relation to each theory, (c) discussing each theory based in literature review and its relation to the research study, and (d) comparing public schools versus Black independent schools.

Critical Race Theory

CRT proposes an appropriate theoretical framework for this study because it focuses on the effects of themes that are prominent in this study which are "racism, prejudice, and segregation" (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 27). CRT claims that ultimately American institutional systems are inherently built upon race (Skurk, 2020). CRT originated in the 1970s at Harvard Law School through the critical theory, initially used in American law and law studies, but has since been applied in education (Chapman & Donnor, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2011). "Specifically, a critical race theory in education challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups" (Solorzano & Ornelas, 1998, p. 4).

By using CRT as a framework in this research, the researcher could examine its validity in the K-12 public school education through policy/law, systemic racism, and resegregation of White students versus African American students (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). CRT was used to support the claim and make the argument that these themes would not be prominent in Black independent schools which give African American students a better educational experience with more equality and less tension.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, by Karl Max, holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. In terms of education, conflict theory implies that the public-school system reinforces and perpetuates social inequalities that arise from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity (Lauen & Tyson, 2008). The idea of the educational system as a means to maintain societal norms is not farfetched. For example, in education, is social/educational placement through standardized assessments (Grodsky et al., 2008), which are historically known to be bias toward minorities, and through these students are placed on differentiate educational pathways: college, vocational, or military recruitment (Ansalone, 2010). This social division goes even further in high school with classes: AP/honors, general education, interventional classes, and special education classes because of the pre-established career and college pathways embedded into the curriculum.

Conflict theory was an appropriate theoretical framework for this research topic because Conflict theory explains the existing problem with our educational system that is deeply rooted in racism, prejudice, and discrimination that ultimately leads to segregation. Conflict theory implements the reinforcement of these social and societal norms, that further divine and conflict society, through education and the educational public-school system (Turner, 1988; Mishra, 2013). This reinforcement through the educational system is meant to maintain compliance, order, and status quo but instead adds to the tension in society members and between social classes. (Mishra, 2013). Black Independent schools, much like charter schools, are flexible in their structure which can create an unique cultural experience from an educational institution where African American students can be empowered with the knowledge to attempt success, navigate through, or change the system (Wilkinson, 1984; Lomotey, 1992)**.**

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research was found in the process of reforming K-12 public school education in the United States, as well as to rid it of institutionalized racism, segregation, and prejudice irreversibly, not only for the benefit of African American students but for all minority students in the present and future. This study was also significant in the field of education because it addressed the topics of resegregation, parent choice, learning theories, behavior theories, and social theories. As researchers and policymakers increase their understanding of the implications of educational laws in relation to the institutionalized racism and its emotional, educational, social, mental, and cultural effects on African American students in the K-12 public schools, then the educational system has a chance to reform. The continued oppression of African American students in public school and the oppression of Black independent schools in the United States compared to other cultural-themes schools or independent schools needs to end for the United States to truly have equitable and equal as well as diverse education for all. Thus, the research findings might provide the necessary lens or evidence for educational reform for parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers. With the rise in equity officers in education, these findings could lead the way to changes in curriculum, educational programs, the achievement gap, opening of new schools, and educational laws.

Assumptions of the Study

It was the assumption of the study that all literature and statistics collected were true and accurate and the answers from the interviews of volunteer participants were true and correct as well as unbiased. It was also the assumptions that the public-school educational system in the United States still exists and will continue to exist after the publishing of this research. It was

under these assumptions that the study had validity and reliability that would contribute to public school education in the United States.

Limitations of the Study

This qualitative study had some limitations. The first limitation was that it would be time-consuming. Second, as an African American woman who, as a young child, experienced K-12 public school education, the researcher's experiences and knowledge could influence the conclusions with her own biases. Also, there are was not a significant volume of research on Black independent schools or similar African American themed, or centered, K-12 educational institutions in the United States. Thus, this research was intended to fill the gap of limited research since literature is limited.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this research, the following terms are defined for the reader's reference:

- *Achievement Test*. This refers to a type of standardized test that measures skill and knowledge (Hansen et al., 2004).
- *African American*. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a Black American; who is a descendant of enslaved Black people, who are from the United States (Carter, 2013).
- *African-Centered Independent Schools*. Schools that provide educational experiences to predominately Black student populations based on an African centered educational model that deconstructs the hegemonic influences of American society, promotes a positive self-concept, and acknowledges the cultural heritage of Black students (Akoto, 1992; Asante, 1991; Durden, 2007; Hilliard, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

- *African Free Schools*. A school for children of slaves and free people of color in New York City. It was founded by members of the New York Manumission Society, including Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, on November 2, 1787 (Andrews, 1830).
- *Afrocentricity.* An intellectual movement, a political view, and/or a historical evolution that stresses the culture and achievements of Africans (Early et al., 1994).
- *Black Independent Schools*. An educational institution that teach African-centered curriculum to build strong cultural foundation and conventional worldly education/skills.
- *Conflict Theory*. For the purpose of this research, in education, this theoretical framework refers to the public-school system as a reinforcer and perpetuates social inequalities that arise from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity (Lauen & Tyson, 2008).
- *Critical Race Theory (CRT)*. For the purpose of this study, in education, policies and practices grounded in racist social ideologies, values, structures, and are barriers to educational equity (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997).
- *Desegregation*. In this research, this term refers to the ending of a social and legal educational policy of racial segregation in schools (Clotfelter, 2004).
- *Discrimination*. Behavioral bias toward a person based on that individual's group identity (Cox, 1993).
- *Inclusion.* Involves a process of reform and restructuring of the school as a whole, with the aim of ensuring that all pupils can have access to the whole range of educational and social opportunities offered by the school (Mittler, 2000, p. 2)

- *Independent Black Institutions (IBIs).* A nonpublic, pre-collegiate, self-governing institution that is not dependent upon a larger public or sectarian organization. Within the context of the African American community, this definition must be broadened to include schools supported and governed by individual church congregations. They serve the African American community and have a governing board that is majority-African American (Foster, 1992).
- *Independent Black Schools*. Schools founded by African American parents who struggled over the control of their children's education in public schools (T'Shaka, 1989).
- *Integration*. In this research, this term refers the intermixing of people or groups previously segregated (Gulledge, 2006).
- *Prejudice*. An attitude of negative bias toward another person based on a characteristic (Cox, 1993).
- *Public School*. In the United States, a school supported by public funds. (Higgins & Abowitz, 2011).
- *Racial.* Grounded or connected with difference in race (Segal, 1996).
- *Racism*. An action or system of oppression that is grounded in the belief that one race is superior to any other race (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
- *Resegregation*. Separation of racial and ethnic groups within desegregated schools (Eyler et al., 1983).
- *Segregation*. The practice of requiring separate housing, education and other services for people of color (Onion et al., 2019).

- *White*. Being a member of a group or race characterized by light pigmentation of the skin; chiefly used of peoples of European extraction (Norton, 2008).

Chapter Summary

Since slavery was abolished, there has been a continued fight for African Americans to be integrated into the America's systems and laws from slaves to citizens. The American public-school system started as early as the 1830s. It is one of the oldest public systems in the United States. The public education system has always been one founded on classist, elitist, and economic inequality. One of the biggest areas of this transition for African Americans has been in K-12 public education. The federal government took the lead on this with court case ruling and laws starting in the 1950s. Since then there has been over 150 years of legislation ranging from laws, amendments, and acts that have tried to achieve the ultimate goal of free and equal K-12 public school education for all American children, especially African American children. This qualitative study looked into the history of federal government educational laws for public schools and examine the foundational ineffectiveness of the federal government's inability to deliver on its duty and promise to achieve equal education, specifically for African American students in the United States of America.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature involving (a) the history of educational laws in the United States for public education from the 1960s to present-day, (b) the history of independent school, (c) the history of Black independent schools, and (d) defines key concepts related to research study and its relation to each theory. Chapter 3 articulates the review of the methodology considered, the qualitative method, with an emphasis on phenomenology and provides rationale for its use. In Chapter 4, the researcher presents and reviews research findings

through analysis and data. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research, conclusion of the research, and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature on American education policies from the 1950s to present for K-12 public school system that dealt with desegregation and integration, the foundation of Black independent schools, history of independent schools, and the benefits of Black independent schools for African American students versus traditional public schools. CRT, conflict theory, and Afrocentricity are the theoretical perspectives that will guide this chapter of the research. Table 1 provides a history of educational policies in the United States that affected K-12 public education that is the most relevant for literature review for the purpose of this study.

Table 1

History of Most Influential Education Laws & Policies in the United States

Year	Policy, Law, or Court cases	Summary
1954	Brown v. Board of Education	The Supreme Court decision that ruled that segregated schools are to be abolished.
1954	The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) (Public Law 84-911)	Provides funding to US education institutions.
1964	The Civils Rights Act (Public Law 88-352)	Federal government to aid schools to address problems related to desegregation.
1965	The Elementary & Secondary Education Act (Public Law 89-10)	Increase federal funding and regulations. Title 1 to find schools in high poverty areas. Designed to address education inequality.
1965	The Elementary & Secondary Amendments (Public Law 89-313)	First federal grant programs for students with disabilities, granted funding for state institutions dedicated to educating students with special needs.
1966	Elementary and Secondary Amendments of 1966 (Public Law 89-750)	Established first federal grant program for students with special needs at local level. Established the Bureau of Education of the Handicapped (BEH) Created the National Advisory Council

Year	Policy, Law, or Court cases	Summary
1967	Bilingual Education Act (Public Law 90-247)	First US federal legislation for minority language speaker Granted funding for schools to address minority language speakers or limited English speaking skills.
1968	Elementary & Secondary Education*	Modified existing programs Collaboration support of regional center with districts for students with special needs Changed ESEA of 1967 Title VI to Title VII
1969	The Elementary and Secondary Education* (Public Law 91-230)	Sanctioned comprehensive planning & evaluation grants to State Education Agencies (SEAs) & Local Education Agencies (LEAs) Founded National Commission on School Finance
1971	*Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenburg County Board of Education*	Begin voluntary transportation of African American children to their new integrated school.
1972	Education Amendments (Public Law 92-318)	Title IX added Creation of new bureaus, institutes, & councils. Federal matching grants for State Student Incentive Grants Made sex bias illegal.
1974	*Milliken v. Bradley*	Supreme Court decision that rules schools may not be desegregated across school districts.
1975	The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	States are required to provide free public education for all disabled students in K-12.
1977	Elementary & Secondary Education* (Public Law 95-112)	Amendments passed.
1978	Education Amendments* (Public Law 95-561)	Founded a comprehensive basic skills program to improve student achievement.
1981	Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (Public Law 97-35)	Reduced 42 programs into 7 programs funded through the elementary and secondary block grant authority.
1984	Education of the Handicapped Act* (Public Law 98-199)	Added Architectural Barrier Established school to work transition Developed parent training & information center Provided research for early intervention/early education for special education.
1984	Elementary and Secondary Education* (Public Law 98-511)	Revision of Bilingual Education Act

Year	Policy, Law, or Court cases	Summary
1986	The Drug-Free Schools Act	Created funding for anti-drug initiative in K-12 such as increased police presence on k-12 campuses.
1986	Handicapped Children's Protection Act (Public Law 99-372)	Permitted parents of special needs students to collect attorney fees in cases under the Education & Handicap Act Prohibited Education of the Handicap Act from overriding existing legislation that similar in nature.
1988	Augustus F. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement* (Public Law 100-50)	Reauthorization of programs introduced in 1993.
1989	Child Development and Education Act (Public Law 101-239)	Approved adaptations to the expansion of Head Start programs included in Elementary & Secondary Education Act of 1965.
1992	National Commission on Time and Learning* (Public Law 102–359)	Revised provisions in civic education. Created school wide projects for education-based student with special needs.
1994	The Educate America Act	Setting national education goals
1994	The Improving America's Schools Act (Public Law 103-382)	Require states to develop federally approved education plans and assessments or risk loss of funding.
1995	Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (Public Law 104-5).	Revision of Part A of Title IX Provisions to Indian education
1998	The Reading Excellence Acts	Funds reading classes and reduced classroom sizes.
1998	Charter School Expansion Act* (Public Law 105-278)	Changes to Charter School Program
2001	Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 106-554)	Developed a new program to assist with school repairs and renovations. Gave credit advances to assist charter school repair and maintain Initiated the Children's Internet Protection Act
2002	No Child Left Behind Act (Public Law 107-110)	Implementation of student testing, teacher qualifications, Spanish language testing, and after-school programs.
2004	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Mandates the laws for equity, equality, accountability, and educating students with special needs.

Year	Policy, Law, or Court cases	Summary
	(Public Law 108-446)	
2010	Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)	Revision of Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Statewide uniformity in standards focused on global leadership and to compete globally.

Note. *****Indicates an amendment, extension, or provisions to a previous law or policy.

Educational History

It was not until the mid-1950s that change started to happen as the fight against separate-but-equal was waged by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) because of America's public-school racial discrimination and segregation (Tushnet, 2014). Initially, the purposes of the NAACP suing school districts and the government was for the benefit of African Americans children in attending African American schools in their own communities and taught by their own people instead of attending schools with their oppressors to avoid prejudices. This was due largely because African American students and parents alike noticed the disparity in facilities between Whites and African Americans public schools (McNeil & Higginbotham, 1984). It was assumed that the federal government was unconcerned with the educating of former slave children because it was irrelevant as they were, again, considered second-class citizens. This observation started a larger comparison of resources between White-only and African American-only public schools. These resources included, but were not limited to, the experience of teachers, teacher pay, adequate facilities, books, programs, and funding (McNeil & Higginbotham, 1984). Due to these disadvantages, parents and teachers had to fulfill the lack of funding with their own money out of their own pockets (Tushnet, 2014). This sacrifice by teachers extended outside of the classroom, where teachers often spent hours

educating students. During this time, the NAACP was working hard for African American teacher's pay and their right for higher education with court cases in which they won most of (McNeil & Higginbotham, 1984). The idea is that these injustices were a direct violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

1950s-1960s

The NAACP initially wanted to sue for equity for African American schools, but it was decided by their legal team to fight segregation in public schools instead of fighting each state and district one by one for equal resources for African American-only schools (Tushnet, 2014). After a few years of fighting precedent cases and building a case, it was not until the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court case ruling, on May 17, 1954, that segregation in public schools in the United States were no longer legal (Tushnet, 2014). As a result of this ruling, in conjunction with the Fourteenth Amendment, African American students attending public schools were to be integrated in White only public schools (Franklin & Savage, 2004). Because the integration was solely on the African American students integrating to White-only educational institutions, there began the foundation of institutionalized racism and prejudice. If the integration was reciprocated with White children also integrating to previously predominately African American schools as well, the opportunity for equal education would have been more obtainable because the White parents would bear witness to conditions and lack of resources in predominately African American schools and fight for more funding. Most states, especially Southern states, opposed the ruling which created a bigger rift in the relationships between the federal and state governments that left African American students disadvantaged (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). With the state's reluctance to follow the new law and mandates,

it took years for them to start integration plans for African American students into their schools (Franklin & Savage, 2004).

Eventually the federal government, not being able to control and regulate the state's implementation of school integration plans, gave the states incentives such as federal funding for schools and districts that integrated African American students into their student population (Harris, 1961). Meanwhile, African American schools were being closed leaving African American children in various areas without a home school and without receiving an education for months. Sooner rather than later, due to lack of economic support and violence, the federal judges were left to enforce the decision of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and oversee the integration plans of every school district in the United States (Patterson, 2001). Problems worsen when African American students had to walk passed a handful of White Only public schools to attend their own school (Franklin & Savage, 2004). Local government officials reinforced segregation by partnering with local school districts to construct new schools in rural areas far away from the African American populated areas and already established schools were zoned which would later attribute to more discriminating educational laws, such as attending home school near their residence or city (Delmont, 2016). As a result, for decades following African American parents have been harshly fined or imprisoned for falsifying address documents so that their child can attend better schools (which are predominately White) because their child's home school is underfunded and under-resourced (Erickson, 2017).

1960s to 1970s

In the 1960s, there would be a total of seven educational laws passed in conjunction with various Supreme Court decisions to offset segregation in public schools in the United Stated and help foster desegregation plans ranging from services for students with special needs to the

bilingual population (Ramsey, 2017). The first being The Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sec or national origin. This provision extended not only to public education, employment, voting rights, public accommodations, and many more. This law led the way to the ending of legal Jim Crow laws by securing African American equal access to everything that other citizens of the United States are privy to in the constitution. Being African American was protected under constitutional rights. The bill also included the federal government allotting money to school boards to assist school districts with desegregation like for transportation of students and increased resources for students.

Second, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Public Law 89-10) of 1965 highlighted equal access to education that will help lessen the achievement gap between ethnic groups of students by providing federal funding to support schools with student population from impoverished families and communities (such as Title 1; Alford, 1965; Paul, 2016). Title 1 funds continue to assist schools in support urban schools with educational and social/emotional resources for their students (Paul, 2016). This law was amended two more times in the mid-1960s, adding federal funding for students with special needs, establishing the Bureau of Education of the Handicapped (BEH), and creating the National Advisory Council (Jeffrey 1978; Paul, 2016). This law continues to be modified throughout decades as the needs of students and the student population in public school continues to change.

Last, the *Bilingual Education Act of 1967* (or Title VII of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*) was geared toward the overall limited English-speaking ability (Public Law 90-247). The federal government granted school districts with funding for educational programs without violating any segregation laws. Even though descendants of slaves and their grandchildren had limited English speaking and reading abilities they were no privy to benefit

from this law or the educational programs under the law's premise (Anderson, 1988). Instead, this law was completely applied to minority foreign language speakers whose second language was English. This law primarily focused on bilingual education.

Consequently, during this timeline, the development of private and charter schools was rising as a way to avoid integration. This was the response from suburban White students from affluent families to avoid their children attending the same school as African Americans and desegregating (Wells & Crain, 1994). In addition to moving schools, these same families would leave the urban city to relocate to the suburban areas outside the city. This phenomenon is known as *White flight*, which is a reaction of White people to the growing population of minorities in major cities post-Civil War and during the Great Migration (Orfield & Lee, 2005). As a result of White people's fear, due to racism, the belief is that the presence of minorities in their neighborhood would increase crime and devalue the schools they moved to from the city to the suburbs (Misra, 2016). This was prominent around the 1940s to the 1970s. The effects of White flight affected areas outside of public school; thus, contributing to the redistributing of government funding as the population decreased from the city to suburban areas funds was allocated from the city to the suburban areas (Rothstein, 2017). For example, White flight contributed greatly to the federal housing policies such as redlining and real estate practices like blockbusting (Mendez-Carbajo, 2021). These affluent White families were able to benefit from private and charter schools that were free of African American students and desegregation laws (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Those private and charter schools were high quality and further resembled the class status and class division of the White students who attended them along with their teachers and other school staff (McCray et al., 2011). The inclusivity of private and charter schools still has lasting effects even today. Fast forward, charter schools have an increased

presence in urban cities across the United States now (Reardon & Yun, 2002). Charter schools do not have to adhere to some of the rules and regulations that public schools do; yet, charter schools still receive federal funding (Frankenberg et al., 2011). For instance, public schools have to accept every student where charter schools can pick and choose which students can attend often excluding African American students, students with special needs, and other minority or disadvantaged students.

1970s to 1980s

From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, there was a shift in educational policies that were more conservative in their intent (McKeever, 2002). In order to achieve desegregation in public schools, against the challenges of segregated neighborhoods and housing, there had to be a Supreme Court ruling*, Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenburg County Board of Education* (1971), to begin voluntary transportation of African American children from their neighborhoods to their integrated school in the White neighborhoods. Prior to this decision, African American children were often denied public school transportation as a sign of rebellion of the Brown court decision (Delmont, 2016). The decision from the *Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenburg County Board of Education* (1971) court case ruling birthed the term, bussing, in which African American students faced additional racial inequalities (Erickson, 2017). Although the previous president supported desegregation, Nixon and his administration did not (McKeever, 2002). His administration began a more conservative campaign on educational policies starting with bussing and started to decrease funds to school districts where they could not afford to purchase public transportation buses to transport African American children to expedite desegregation (Erickson. 2017). Consequently, the African American families had to bear the responsibility of getting their own children to school by leaving their homes at very early times in the morning often

traveling fifteen to twenty miles to go to their new integrated school. The consequences of that were African American students were not able to experience the resources afforded to them in their new integrated school environment; for instance, extra-curricular activities, academic intervention support (tutoring). African American parents could not participate in their child's education (in the form of PTAs) or support in their child in their studies as in parent-teacher conferences (Ramsey, 2017). Furthermore, matriculation rates steadily decreased.

Without a proper or effective bussing system, the challenges of African American students continued. In the public-school system, students who are continuously absent or have frequent tardiness or truancies have attendance issues. Attendance is an important part of the education process for the student, parent and educational institution. If the student is not attending school it is assumed they are not learning. In addition, if a student is not attending, the school is losing federal funding. In extreme cases of truancy or attendance circumstances, the parent will have to show up to court and face possible fines or other repercussions, such as imprisonment (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Subsequently, many of the parents receiving truancy fines are from inner-city and urban areas where there are one income households and extreme poverty.

In contrast, bussing was successful in assisting to desegregate schools. It provided a financial relied for some disadvantaged African American parents, who could not afford to drive their child to their new school every day (Armor, 2016). Bussing also helps students with social skills, giving them another environment and situation where they can interact with their peers in a social setting (Theoharis, 2021). Lastly, bussing makes school accessible to everyone no matter where they live. The narrative about bussing, as a political term, was often negative because it inconvenienced the white families and white children; however, busing overall not only

benefitted integration but African American students (Barnum, 2019). Bussing allowed African American academically, the results were high test scores, increased high school graduation, and increased the quality of life (Barnum, 2019). Hence, there were short term and long-term benefits for African American students as an affect from bussing.

Furthermore, students were often subject to extreme racism from their White pupils and faced racial inferiority from the teachers, administration, and support staff at the integrated schools (Orfield, 1983). In return, African American students were left to navigate their new transition on their own especially with few faculties that resemble them; although, some Black faculty had to be integrated into integrated schools many did last because they lost their status (Ramsey, 2008). The ratio of White to African American students had to be 80% to 20% per the *Brown* ruling (Orfield, 2001). Without many advocates at integrated school sites and the exclusion of their parents in the education process, African American were subject to severe disciplinary actions, for often minor offenses; as a result, of racism and lack of support in all areas during this difficult transition (Bell, 1983).

This integration was supposed to be a two-way mandate; instead African American students bore the burden and consequences while schools in their neighborhoods closed at rapid rates so they could not return when faced with difficulties in their new integrated schools (Ramsey, 2017). This caused distrust in the public-school system for protective and heightened cautious African American parents as they witnessed the unfair treatment of their children. As a result, African American students in public schools did not benefit from resources, such as programs and support staff to help navigate their new environments which affected their academic, social, mental, and emotional state due to the decrease in morale and character of staff (Fultz, 2004).

During this era, the ideas of desegregation were lost and the public-school education in the United States worsened for African American students guised as academic achievement challenges. Starting with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which insured all students with disabilities have free education designed to fit their specific needs. Next came the Education Amendments of 1978, which targeted improving student achievement by mandating a comprehensive basic skills program. These laws were intended to help African American students who has disabilities and who needed intervention because of the lack of basic skills but later it is found that these laws added to the segregation in public schools because, as mentioned earlier, students with disciplinary issues, disabilities, no access to resources, and no support were misplaced in special education. Accordingly, White teachers did not have the responsibility of teaching them instead of taking advantage of the comprehensive intervention programs, dictated in the Education Amendments of 1978, to help African American students and the achievement gap.

1980s to Early 2000s

African American students, now attending White schools, are now segregated by class status and residential location. The 1980s saw less focus on desegregation and more on assessment testing. Arguably the most detrimental law passed during this time period was The Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, promoting reforms for Title I programs to provide more assistance to disadvantaged children while holding schools accountable for their results equal to other students. The end result, created major increases in bilingual and immigrant education. Again, the federal government has not passed any educational laws that promoted or funded the education directly for descendants of slaves. There have not been any provisions to ensure specifically that African American student's education is important or a priority (Orfield

& Eaton, 1996). The laws passed thus far imply that African American students would be included but in these 40-year gap, the focus has been on other disadvantaged groups; other minorities and handicap; which African American students are represented in (Ramsey, 2017). These laws did more to exclude and segregate African American students than to include them in receiving an equal and adequate public-school education.

Also, The IASA of 1994 addressed the crack and heroin pandemic which plagued African Americans and the urban cities in the 1980s (Drug Policy Alliance, 2016). This law was late in addressing the effects it had for African American students who are products of addict parents, those who had addict parents/guardians, and who were addicts or sellers. This law was to recreate safe and drug-free schools as an answer to the war on drugs, it was not until decades later that the American people found out that the war on drugs coined by former President Nixon, was indeed a war on African Americans (Drug Policy Alliance, 2016). As mentioned before, African American students in integrated public schools were disciplined more frequently and harshly than the White students, so instead of receiving counseling support or services to address their challenges faced at home or in their neighborhoods, they began to be pipelined from the public-school system, through the judiciary system, to the prison systems in efforts to create a safe and drug-free school (Dunbar, 1999).

Equally, police presence in K-12 public school campuses does more harm than good for African American students in urban and suburban areas alike (Alexander-Snow, 2010). The permanent assignment of police at a public school in the United States first appeared in 1953 in Flint, Michigan (Denton, 2019). As of October 2019, 20 states have guaranteed at least $450 million in school-security spending. To date, at least half the students in the United States have attended a K-12 public school with one or more police officers. The 1994 Drug-Free Schools Act

began in what seemed to be an overly increase of funding for police in schools. This act created the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services which, in return, afforded over $750 million in funding for $6,500 police officers in K-12 public schools from 1999 to 200. In general, the rise of school suspensions and expulsions have more than tripled since 1980, implemented more harshly to and frequently by children of color with large offenders being African American students (Ramsey, 2017). This decade-long implementation has been reinforced by police schooling in the form of disciplinary proceedings initiated by SROs, as with the justice system outside of schools. Also, African American students arrested have increased because of police schooling. Police schooling is still extremely disproportionately harming African America students as well as other minority students. If an African American student identifies or is labeled as special needs, then the odds of that student being arrested is doubled as well; also, if the African American students are classified as LGBTQ, then the likelihood of them being arrested is tripled (Nelson et al., 2016). Studies show that increase in police presence on K-12 public school campuses do not increase safety only the feeling of being safe in schools (Denton, 2019).

In schools in suburban areas, African American students are heavily stereotyped; similarly, in schools located in urban areas they are increasingly brutalized (Alexander-Snow, 2010). In recent years, social media have exposed the brutality with video footage of police officers brutalizing African American students in schools. Between the war on drugs, safe school initiatives, and school shootings, police schooling laws has been overall damaging to African American students in their K-12 public school education experience. The side effects include, but are not limited to a policing of students which led to increase of violence in urban schools,

violation of privacy laws, infuriation of law enforcement on public school campuses, and increased police brutality amongst students in public school campuses.

Early 2000s-Present

Next, the NCLB Act of 2001 (signed in 2002), is historically the most damaging law passed in the history of educational law in the United States of American to date (Rothstein, 2013a). This public law required states to create assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in various grades in order for states to receive federal funding for their schools. Although the law does not mandate or set any national achievement standard, it does require the states to establish their own achievement standards. Also, this law gave military recruiters access to 11th and 12th grade student's personal information such as their names and contact information upon their request (Burrelli & Feder, 2009). The problem embraces that most minorities enter the military services because of the barriers and difficulty in applying for colleges. The first being the college entrance exams, either SAT or ACT; next, the SAT II, PSAT, and Advanced Placement (AP) tests. Even though the testing companies offer fee vouchers for students in low social-economic backgrounds and accommodations for those students with special needs, studies have produced evidence that entrance exams are extremely biased as they were not created with minorities and economically-challenged students in mind (Fletcher, 2009). This bias has prevented students from going to college and has failed to predict success at the college level.

If it is not the college entrance exams that force African American students to skip college in lieu of joining the military, it is the high school exit exam that was implemented into legislation into the NCLB (2001), and is still used in some states, but has been ended in many (FairTest, 2019). The test was a basic skills test was developed as a compliance of the NCLB Act

(2001) but the ramifications of it were deafening. Students who could not meet the requirements or standards to pass the high school exit exams were not permitted to graduate, even if they met all of the other school district and state graduation requirements (U.S. Congress, 1992). As a consequence, for those who did not meet the passing score on the high school exit exam was a certificate of achievement rather than a high school diploma. The first couple of years in the implementation of the high school exit exam did not allow for students to retake the exit exam to eventually earn their high school diploma (Hyslop, 2014). Those students who did not pass were then left without many options for employment or furthering their education except for the military (Baker & Lang, 2013). With dropout rates increasing, it was not until 2015, nine years after the implementation of the high school exit exam, that students were given a chance to retake the exit exam to pass (Hout & Elliot, 2011). Starting a few years ago, students beginning from the first graduating class of 2006 who took the high school exit exam, and did not pass in previous years, were now eligible to retake the exam to receive their high school diploma in eight states (FairTest, 2019). The problem with this entire scenario, as with the college entrance exams, is that African American students in public schools were not passing the exit exam because of their academic performance levels and achievement. This made the exam exploit more disadvantaged students, such as African American students, who were in the majority of the group that were not passing the exit exam (Papay et al., 2010). The exit exam assessed skills in reading and math that students should have been proficient in from 8th grade to 10th grade. The data from the exit exam revealed that disadvantaged students did not know skills passed the 5th grade or lower. From 2006 to 2017 the high school exit exam, nation-wide, prevented tens of thousands of African Americans students from entering college or the work force in which a high school diploma was needed (FairTest, 2019). This action added to the increase poverty plaguing

the African American communities in America. Today, out of 50 states, 11 states (Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia) still have an exit exam or graduation test of some sort. Only seven (Alaska, Arizona, California, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, and Texas) of the 50 states have retroactively awarded high school diplomas to students who did not pass their high school exit exams. The state of Mississippi is the only state that is allowing students, who did not pass their exit exam up until 2015, to go through an appeal process to retroactively receive their high school diplomas.

The conversation of standardized tests is still on the table as the conversation continues across states and school districts. For example, the state of Colorado, in 2021, will be implementing a new high school graduation requirement in a form of an assessment as an alternative to the exit exam which is having high school students use their ACT and SAT scores act as their exit exam as an option for districts that do not have an exit exam (FairTest, 2019). In recent years, people have questioned the validity of standardized tests in education as it relates to equity, limitations, and equality across the student and regional populations (Fletcher, 2009). It has been revealed that standardized tests have been labeled as biased toward minority students, such as African American students (FairTest, 2019). The history of standardized or formal assessment tests started as early as 1838 when educators in America began circulating ideas about assessing student achievement (Fletcher, 2009). Since then the development of the IQ test, SAT, and ACT among other tests in the physical and electronic form from the 1800s to the mid-1950s during the time when slavery was still prominent in the United States and African Americans were not considered citizens and inferior in general (Fletcher, 2009). Revisiting the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, where created the opportunity for new and

increased uses of norm-referenced tests to evaluate programs for funding (Ramsey, 2017). A norm-referenced test is a test that compares a student against the performance of their peers (Princeton University, n.d.). The norm group during this time was White students in America. There has not been any legitimate reform or restructuring of standardized tests for or in K-12 public school education to reflect the vast categories of minorities, English Learners, and socio-economic disadvantaged students.

The results of these biases associated with assessments in K-12 education have led to misplacement and misrepresentation of African American students in special education (De la Cruz, 1996). Special education laws are only 45 years old. Even though *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954, the first court ruling or law for students with special needs did not occur until 1971 in the *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) ruling, where it was decided that student with disabilities to be placed in publicly funded school settings based on need and assessment (Ramsey, 2017). These assessments, known as achievement tests, that focuses on cognitive is the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and behavior assessments used by school psychologist for initial assessments and further assessments for placement in special education and related services, have been securitized by what is perceived as normal range as it related to psychologists and racial disparity (De La Cruz, 1996). The assessors and evaluators, often not African Americans, caused African American students to be misplaced in special education because of their present academic performance or lack of resources and not necessarily because African American students actually having a disability.

African American students with frequent discipline issues due to harsher disciplinary actions against them in their new integrated schools were often misplaced in special education as

well; thus, leading to the misrepresentation of African American students in special education then and today (Ramsey, 2017). Additionally, there was evaluator bias in which the evaluator measures the child (tester) being assessed against his or her own perceptions and expectations of the child's development (De la Cruz, 1996). In addition to facing the same challenges as their general education peers were faced with, African American students with special needs had it harder as the special education laws were behind and outdated for a long time in accommodating their needs. There have only been seven special education specific laws passed since 1971 and the problems surrounding African American students misplaced and misrepresented in special education despite changes in law and in assessments.

In 2010, more than 40 of the 50 states adopted to use the same academic standards for both English and Math in K-12 education (Ramsey, 2017). These standards are called Common Core State Standards (CCSS) but the name can vary from state to state and territory to territory. The idea was to have standards that were the same throughout the United States to promote students getting a quality and equitable education regardless if they moved or changed schools across states. The idea was to have standards that were aligned with a college or career-technical pathway for students to prepare for as well as compete with international primary and secondary schools. These uniform standards are a one size fits all approach to learning assuming all students will learn the same things at the same time (Armstrong, 2018). It is this inflexibility and discrimination that hinders students, such as African Americans, from urban areas of low socio-economic backgrounds and students with special needs from having the same educational experience as those in suburban neighborhoods. Again, the inequality of education across spectrums; such as race, class, or economics is still disproportional. This elitist style of education further alienates African American students.

The horrid problems and failures of the NCLB Act (2001), led legislators to pass a new educational law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. This act became the main education law for all K-12 public schools in the United States. Meant to repeal the previous NCLB Act of 2001, ESSA is actually an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Lee, 2006). The premise of the newest educational law is to put more power of accountability of how and students achieve and learn back to individual states and to provide every child with an equal education in the K-12 public school system especially students falling into these categories: students in poverty, minorities, students with special needs, and English Learners (Lee, 2006). This includes, but is not limited to, parent input (now mandatory) and meeting students where they are and having more student input in the way they are educated (Lee, 2006). It has been a little over four years since ESSA has been implemented and it has yet to address the promises of equality in education for underserved students, such as African Americans, in the K-12 public school system in the United States despite its successes in the states (Long, 2019). There have been no real significant changes against the fight for racial injustices in our K-12 public school system. In the ESSA, today's curriculum still promotes too much assessing, it still promotes inaccurate and diverse history and ethnic/cultural studies, and it is not accommodating for students with special needs, just to name a few failures (Armstrong, 2018).

Additionally, the past secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, had ideas to segregate schools by increasing violations of address verification in the enrollment process for K-12 public school education (Strauss, 2018). Also, she supported charter and private schools in which she had personal experiences through her own K-12 education experience as well as her children's educational experience. DeVos introduced more alternatives to traditionally funding public

education, privatizing education through her vouchers (Strauss, 2018). There has been an increase of private and religious educational schools in K-12 in the 2000s (Felton, 2017). K-12 public education has become more corporate than ever and has turned for profit for those in the education field, whether in the classroom or outside of the classroom. Not only is it turning corporate but it is becoming progressively political. These structural changes in K-12 public education is not student-based and are not good for any student, unless they are from an affluent background. Corporations and privatization of K-12 public education will be corporate-interest with the corporation needs overriding the needs of American most vulnerable students (Strauss, 2018). Slowly but surely the current administration, under Donald Trump, was undoing much of the civil rights laws in education in order to return to segregated K-12 public education that the Department of Justice had been overseeing (Felton, 2017).

There can be no real change in the K-12 public school system no matter how many laws are passed because the K-12 public school system was formed pre-abolition of slavery. The K-12 public school system in the United States was never built for African American students in mind and it never will be. The only real alternative is promoting Black independent schools so that African American students can avoid the racial injustices, discrimination, prejudices, and biases of the public-school system as well as from educators and service providers associated with integration in K-12 public school education in America. Likewise, the phrase resegregation has been in growing conversations in K-12 education. Many believe that this will do more harm than good as it will further widen the achievement gap and racial injustices in the United States.

Critical Race Theory

CRT as a conceptual framework offered an appropriate theoretical and analytical lens for this study to examine the relationship between race and racism, as it focuses “directly on the

effects of race and racism" (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 27) by means of the social, political, economic, and educational power structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The origin of CRT was in law in the 1970s by Derick Bell and Allan Freeman who used the framework from critical legal studies to prove that racism is endemic to the American society in American law (Chapman & Donnor, 2015; Hiraldo, 2010). It was not until 1995 that Ladson-Billings (1998) applied CRT to the field of education as an instrument in education to examine educational theory, policy, and practices used to suppress certain racial and ethnic groups as well as to increase equity and justice for the same suppressed racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Additionally, CRT addresses the traditional educational structures and systems through methods and literature through an analysis of race, racism, gender, and class in education as they impact minorities. In order to achieve this, CRT has several principles; for instance: (a) counter-storytelling, (b) centrality of racism, (c) interest convergence, (d) White supremacy, and (e) intersectionality (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). Each tenant of CRT relates to the racism, prejudice, and segregation African American students have suffered in K-12 public school system in the United States since their descendants were brought here through slavery. All tenets of CRT will be mentioned in this research; however, for all intents and purposes of this study, the researcher focused on the following specific tenets of CRT: centrality of racism, counter-storytelling, and interest convergence as it relates to the treatment of African American students in the K-12 public school system in the United States.

Counter-Storytelling

Counter-storytelling is storytelling in which the story and narratives themselves objectives are "to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, p. 144). Counter-storytelling is about the voices of

people of color, in the case African American students, not being validated and heard. In order to achieve validity and making sure African American students voices are heard about their educational experiences, needs, and wants then storytelling can be a source to support liberation through participation in studies. This storytelling will ultimately expose the racial and prejudice trends perpetrated by the majority (Chapman & Donnor, 2015). This is seen in the curriculum that is developed and implemented in States across the United States. The subject of U.S. History in high school have been the subject in recent debates (Bonilla et al., 2021). The history of African Americans in the United States has been misrepresented in history books and desensitized to appeal to the White people. Ethnic Studies have been removed from the curriculum in high schools in several states, such as Arizona, to continue to push the counter-storytelling of African American's history before and during slavery but hiding the hideous and inhumane treatment of African American people in pre and post colony history (Nicol, 2013).

Centrality of Racism

Centrality of racism in CRT contends that racism is normal and entrenched in society (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Based on this idea, racism in the United States is ordinary part of how society functions; as a result, racial experiences are a natural occurrence of this realization (Bell, 1992). Within this idea, racial hierarchical structures are the rule that guide the political, social, and economic systems in the United States (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998). According to Kendi (2019) there is no such thing as a non-racist idea or race-neutral policy, but only racist ideas and antiracist ideas (Skurk, 2020). Kendi (2019) continues by saying that every "policy in every institution in every community in every nation is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity" (p. 274). The explanation of policy is "written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people" (p.

274). Kendi insists that racial policies are guised as institutional racism, structural racism, and systemic racism and that as a society we tend to focus on the people rather than the policy. For example, when a person displays discrimination towards another person in a particular racial group, that person is only executing the policy as well as benefitting from the lack of protective policy for that person in that racial group. The centrality of racism embedded into the educational system can be used to explain the overall failures of African American children in the K-12 public school system through policies and practices such as the NCLB law and exit exams.

Interest Convergence

An example of interest convergence is the gain by African Americans due from the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court case decision (Bell, 2004). African American independent schools have consideration as victims of interest of convergence, as their purpose as educational institutions precisely for African American students are likely to be interested in the self-interests of White people in the United States. This is because African American independent schools have the choice to only cater to the educational and overall development or empowerment of only African American students. African American's purpose in the United States was initially as property and the educating of them or their children was not conducive to performing their duties as slaves (Harris, 1993). This is evident in the writing of the nation's laws and policies, such as the Constitution.

White Supremacy

In CRT, white supremacy, or white privilege, describes the intent and practice, in the Western World, in which White people interests prevail over the interests of other racial groups in areas such as social, economic, political and cultural, consciously and unconsciously (Walton, 2020) to maintain control and power. These interests can be obvious or subtle in its intent to

maintain power, social status, and experiences of prejudice as well as advantages and accessibility to things, such as educational opportunities (Cole, 2009). The idea of White supremacy is to make the dominant culture's individual experience a discussion of normalcy in a continuous effort to ignore and suppress the experiences of non-Whites. This concept of White supremacy is underlined in how racism influences white people. As a result, within the educational system White supremacy looks similar to racial isolation and inferiority in schools and in the classroom as the transformation of African Americans went from beggars pleading for decent treatment to citizens demanding for equality, as the interests of African American children for quality education did not fit the White supremacy narrative because their education does not fit the interest of White people (Allen & Liou, 2019).

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality was introduced into CRT by Crenshaw (1989) when connecting CRT to the Feminist Legal Theory. She defined intersectionality as a notion used to describe the interconnectivity between racism and other social themed categories, for example race, class, and gender (Crenshaw, 1991). When CRT started to be implied in education, Intersectionality was later defined and used to examine the barriers that are created and integrated into the public-school educational system for African American students as a means to overlap social constructs. (Bell, 1995). There have been several research studies documenting the negative educational experience of African American students in the public-school educational system ranging from educational laws to school to prison pipeline. For example, Darling-Hammond (1998), wrote an article on how color lines attributes to the equity and equality of education for African American students through public policy. The article discussed

Affirmative Action and how it places African Americans and other minorities at an overall disadvantage.

Other topics included the educational experience of African American students due to underfunding through public funding, a public policy, which affects teacher qualify and curriculum (classes offered). Other tangible measures of inequality include instructional resources, low quality books, larger class sizes, curriculum materials, computers, and class laboratories (Kozol, 1991). Ultimately, CRT in education continues the status quo of pushing the White narrative for dominance and excellence socially, economically, and racially power in society through the platform of education through policies, laws, procedures, and/or best practices (Ladson-Billings, 2005). With education in tow, the narrative continues as it leads people into the cycle that the CRT framework yields.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, first claimed by Karl Marx in 1848, is a theory which states that there is a natural disparity in society that causes problems such as wars, revolutions, violence, and various forms of injustice and discrimination (Marx & Engels, 1848). Conflict theory embraces that social order of a society is preserved by domination and power, as opposed to consensus and conformity (Coser, 1956). Initially, the theory explained that a society will always be in a state of conflict due to competition to limited resources (Barton, 1977). Because of this, those with power and wealth will work hard maintain their status by any means necessary by suppressing those that are poor and powerless. The premise is to maintain the status quo. Central tenets to the conflict theory are identified as social inequality, a division of resources, and conflicts between several socioeconomic groups (Warwick-Booth, 2013). As long as the resources, status, or power are distributed unevenly there will always be conflict or competition. This theory has been very

vital in explaining historical events in the United States and gained its popularity in the 19th and 20th centuries in sociology, respectfully.

Conflict theory in education asserts the purpose of education as a means in maintaining social inequality to preserve the power of those who dominates society (Aye, 2012). Since the fulfillment of student's education is narrowly correlated to social class, those students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are generally not afford the same opportunities as their counterparts regardless of their academic ability, desire, or effort (Taylor et al., 1991). According to conflict theorists, such as C. Wright Mills (1956), the educational system reflects the status quo of society by training the lower class to be obedient workers through a process called sorting. In conflict theory the sorting is by class and ethnicity as is society (Irving, 2007). The educational system trains the lower-class students, through a hidden curriculum, with assessments, school to prison pipelines, segregation, lack of funding, exploitation, and parent choice to train students to accept their roles and positions.

Marx and Engels (1848) believed that the educational system is duplicating social class by eliminating the attitudes and behaviors to promote division of labor. In a way education teaches the wealthy how to control the poor by producing docile workers for the benefit of capitalism. One of the key factors of his beliefs is the two types of school systems: public and private. In public school, property taxes funds majority of local schools, schools in more wealthy districts have more money; thus, more resources. More affluent neighborhoods and schools in school districts are predominately White, and because of their higher salaries and property taxes, the money is used to recruit better teachers and resources, such as accessibility to technology (Hammond, 2016). Overall, these children have advantages to higher education and a lucrative career. Furthermore, public schools are for students that cannot afford better education through

tuition. It is also considered a common mass school. On the other hand, private schools were admission is granted by a rigorous application process, and is granted based on the parent's power, wealth, and influence. Students attending private schools maintain their status for a continued better life such as legacies.

The other factor in Marx and Engels' (1848) beliefs is social mobility. Students who graduate from public schools have the least social mobility. Studies have supported the idea that assessments have been used for student placement, whether for general or special education courses, college or career courses, remedial or advanced classes, and exit exams and entrance exams. These assessments and class placements often predetermine a child's life path. Academic assessments have been proven to be racially biased, lacking neutrality for African American students and other minority students (Chernoff, 2013). Either way, these factors create obstacles or barriers in accessibility to education, thus, continuing the reinforcement of social inequality, class conflict, and racial stratification. Schools are not meritocratic, even though many may argue the individual success of some African American students in public school system; individual talent and one's hard work does not necessarily guarantee success.

While desegregation assisted with increasing the number of Black students in white schools, it left a void in the Black community. The remaining schools in the Black communities lost Black teachers and professionals due to the number of students left in the community (Fultz, 2004). Fultz (2004) argues that Black principals and administrators who were bused to white schools lost their prestige and were demoted to lesser positions, which essentially hurt the Black community. Some Black schools closed due to lack of funding and resources. White families were opposed to sending their children to schools in the Black communities due to stereotypes of violence, and due to the fact that the schools were not of the same quality. Therefore, white

parents sent their children to private schools, which meant no more resources were allocated to Black schools (Ramsey, 2017). Therefore, schools, according to the conflict theory, are a critical component of reproduction of maintaining existing power structures between blue collar, white collar, and the underclass through institutional racism and prejudice.

Afrocentricity

There is no definite origin of the Afrocentric philosophy. The earliest advocate for this philosophy was in 1954 in a book which Marcus Garvey was its biggest supporter; yet, it was not until the 1970 when Afrocentricity was coined as an abstract noun (Chawane, 2016). A decade later, Asante's (1987) Afrocentric transformation model is a theory that insinuates the process of social change through individual transformation. This theory amplifies African American individual transformation from Eurocentric hegemony to their own consciousness in historical and cultural identity (Shujaa, 1992). This "enlightenment" is often referenced as Afrocentricity. This conceptual framework extends the understanding of how African Americans "interpret their educational needs in a general societal context" (Shujaa, 1992, p. 151). Asante (1987) proceeds stating that Afrocentric is achievement by African Americans through engagement in social interactions and individual reflection. There are four levels of transformation that coincide with the social interactions and individual reflection that need to be experienced before Afrocentricity. The four levels outlined are: "skin recognition, environmental recognition, personality awareness, interest-concern, and the fifth level are Afrocentricity itself" (Shujaa, 1992, p. 150). Each of the four levels represents a level of identity awareness; although, individuals going through the levels are not necessary actively engaged in the process. It is good to note that not everyone will be Afrocentric. Although Afrocentricity has many definitions, Asante's definition and contributions emphasizes on a particular manner of thought and action in which the

centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate as an Afrocentric curriculum (Chawane, 2016).

Afrocentricity is about liberation and controlling the information perceived, including education, in a different lens through African American experiences and historical events (Lomotey, 1992). The idea is to understand the idea of Eurocentric hegemony is not the only choice, rather it is an option. The removal of Eurocentric hegemony cannot be achieved in the current public-school system under its structure, laws or policies but can be achieved in the African Free Schools, IBIs, Black independent schools, or African-centered schools (Shockley, 2007, p. 103). Even the most successful African American students in public schools with high test scores and other academic achievement still lacks the cultural attachment needed to benefit self and their community. Afrocentricity not only addressed the academic needs of African American children but the cultural, social and spiritual needs as well. For example, studies in sociology and psychology attest that African American students are more relational in their thinking while in the current educational system the reward system (PBIS) rewards analytical thinking (Hilliard, 1997). The misalignment of the cultured of public schools and Black culture is one of the main reasons African American students are largely not educationally competitive (Lomotey, 1992).

Integration vs. Inclusion

For the purposes of this research study, integration was defined, in terms of education, as the reverse of segregation. Moving forward, this term refers the intermixing of people or groups previously segregated (Gulledge, 2006). However, there are many definitions of integration based on varying ideas such as “where the child must adapt to its schools, and there will be no assumption that the school will be able to help” (UK Essays, 2018). Although the laws have

made desegregation possible so that equal and equitable education is available for all in the United States, nowhere in the Board of Education ruling did the words desegregation or integration appear. These terms have been used as a result of the effects of laws and policies to educate both White children and African American children together as a way to end segregation and racism in the United States. One must wonder why this could be. Integration is academically and humanely appropriate in education in the United States because pre-Civil Rights movements children of former slaves were not being educated equally as their White counterparts were. These disparities ranged from resources, accessibility, curriculum, funding, and teacher experience or preparedness. Because of these disparities, it caused the federal government to act in conjunction with the Civil Rights movement.

The argument for inclusion is based upon the premise that racial discrimination in public education is unconstitutional (Mittler, 2000). Inclusion education is said to be a human and fundamental right for an equal education opportunity (Kurtts, 2006). Education is referenced as a foundation to good citizenship. Also, education is credited as the principle instrument in the foundation of a child's cultural values which prepares a child for professional training and becoming a productive citizen of society (Chemerinsky, 2004). As a result, since African Americans were no longer considered property by law and were now considered citizens according to the constitution, the separate but equal aspect of their rights were no longer considered constitutional and adjustments had to be made in all areas that reflected that, including public schools. Inclusive laws exist but solely for the benefit for disabled learners and English learners. Laws such as IDEA (2004) outlines how student with special needs are to be educated within the public-school system (Kalambouka et al., 2007). There is a clear difference in integration and inclusion in this law. The idea is to not seclude or isolate students with special

needs from their peers by putting students in least restrictive environment (LRE) preventing inequality and inequity in education as well as avoiding misplacement of students in special education or inappropriate settings based on their individual needs (Labon, 1999). In doing so, everyone gets equal benefits because the focus is not solely on the student with special needs but others. This is achieved through equal participation, clear expectations, and adequate accommodations to the needs of all students as opposed to a few students (Kurtts, 2006).

In order for educational laws and policies to move from integration to inclusion there needs to be major reform as far as design (i.e. framework, application, etc.) and implementation of education in the public-school system. The system has to move from "one size fit all" or cookie cutter approach to a more customized educational system where there is more flexibility, equity, alternatives and pathways (Kamenetz, 2015). The educational system should not mirror society but cater to the needs of all students regardless of social status, gender, race or ethnicity. Public school education should be equitable and equal for all students as it is a free and for the service of all citizens (Aspis, 1998) no matter their income, where they live, or their background. This basic service to the community is the foundation for the country to progress as well as compete with other first world countries (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Moving forward, the policies for enrollment based upon residence needs to be adjusted. Children should be able to attend any public school in the United States without having to worry about county, district or city lines. Allowing parents to select the best, nearest public school will level the playing field for the Black students and parents (Bush, 1997, 2004). Black students will then have the same opportunities as their white peers, to be viewed as true college prospects. Thus, allowing parents to pick the school of their choice could help combat racism and classism as there will very likely

be more Black students, from the same socioeconomic background at that chosen public school (Bush, 2004; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987).

Segregation vs. Resegregation

Segregation is the practice of requiring separate housing, education and other services and spaces for people of color (Onion et al., 2019). When slavery was abolished in the United States, White people were not anxious to integrate newly freed slaves into the society. As a result, laws were created to give the illusions of separate but equal life for many former slaves commonly known as the "Jim Crow" laws. One of those laws were the keeping of segregated public schools in the United States' public-school system. As mentioned before, America's public-school system in one of the oldest institutions in the United States. Freed African Americans started schools in the Northern states, while Southern slaves were often taught by their families or elder slaves privately (Woodson, 1990). When slavery was abolished this tradition continued especially in the South, which was highly segregated because of their deep roots in slavery. The disparity between all-White schools and all-Colored schools in terms of teachers, resources, and facilities were highly noticeable as the funding of public schools were highly dependable other bias and segregated laws in housing and the work force (Ramsey, 2017). Starting as early as the 1930s, lawyers of the NAACP and other civil rights leaders have been fighting for equality and equity in education for not only African American children but all children in the United States with their reason being that every child deserved a first-class education (Rothstein, 2013a). However, not all schools were segregated in the South, Catholic churches desegregated their Catholic-based schools in between 1957 and 1958 (Fremont & Ludlum, 2015). Even though the religious institutions have extreme impact and influence over social policy, in this case it did not.

Before the *Brown v. Board* decision, many school districts and schools were being taken to court for lawsuits about educational equality in public schools (Orfield, 1983; Rothstein, 2013b). But it was that decision in 1954 that ultimately outlawed segregation in schools. Subsequently *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and many other legal cases across the nation have broken down the official barriers for African Americans to have access to equal education, known as integration, the achievement of this ideal has not been made easy or simple (Krovetz, 1972; Sowell, 1986). Educational policies and practices have created loopholes in public school education that have continued the problems of the past in education in the United States. These loopholes have been acknowledged through policymakers, educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders in the achievement gap between African American children and White children, facilities, school-to-prison pipeline, racial influenced pathways, privatization of public-school education, misplacement of African American students in special education, policing in schools, resources and counter-culture curriculum (Eyler et al., 1983; Losen, 1999; Orfield, 2001; Taylor, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD; 2014), desegregation is the cause of Black children having to deal with the intersection of race and poverty. Black children were bused into white schools, which caused them to be more tired and less focused due to having to leave their homes earlier, bear the burden of racism from their white peers, and experience class-related issues from residing outside of the area (Ramsey, 2017). Ramsey (2017) contends that Black children could not participate in extra-curricular activities nor could the parents be active in the schools, like attending parent teacher conferences or joining associations, because of the distance.

These issues have allowed African American students to be victimized for profit. As of recent, the parent's choice, charter/independent schools, and school vouchers have started the

resegregation of schools in the American school system (Onion et al., 2018; Ramsey, 2017). Resegregation is the separation of racial and ethnic groups within desegregated schools (Eyler et al., 1983; Orfield & Lee, 2005); for example, lack of opportunities of African American (or minority) students into Advanced Placement (AP) and honor courses in schools and lack of programs available for minorities in a school. In hindsight, African Americans educators and philanthropist already noticed the failures of integration for the overall education of the African American child early on and thus tried to not only preserve Black Institutions but build more to take control of African American children's education (Asante, 1991; Gordon, 1994; Hale, 2001).

Many people have confused the movement for opening more Black Independent Schools in an overall plan to have more Independent Black Institutions for the educational betterment for African American children in the public-school system as resegregation, but it is closely related to segregation (Bell, 1988; Hilliard, 2000, 2006). However, one wonders why African American students should be racially segregate all over again as this has been experienced before. These schools have existed for decades now (Asante, 1991; Carruthers, 1995; Murrell, 2002).

Model Schools

Black independent schools are not the first of their kind. In fact, there are other K-12 specialized public and private schools in the United States. These specializations vary from culture, religion, or race. These schools serve a purpose for their targeted population and enrollment. For example, religious schools serve a purpose of aligning academics with religious practices to reinforce religious principles and beliefs. These categories are only a few of many schools in the United States educational system. With so many options for schools, there is an opportunity for parents to use the parent choice option they have to select the more appropriate

school for their child, especially African American parents for their African American child. The following schools are well-known in the United States' educational system for their specifications and specialties as well as having longevity in student success. Their similarities to Black independent schools make them appropriate example for models.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities, commonly known by their acronym HBCUs, are institutions for higher education in the United States designed to educate Black collegiate students. They were developed before the Civil Rights era as an answer to the denied admissions of African American into traditionally White-only higher education institutions. These higher education institutions range from public to private or co-ed to same-sex. These universities, how they were first identified, were developed after the Second Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890 (Freemark, 2015), when the act allowed the creation of land-grant colleges using the proceeds of land from sales of federal lands that was partially or completely taken from indigenous tribes either through treaties, cessations, or seizures (Goodluck et al., 2020). This act also discontinued race as an admissions criterion for higher education. Colleges or universities that received federal funding either had to admit more African Americans into their higher education institution or create a land-grant college specifically for African American students or risk loss of funding (Goodluck et al., 2020). This prompted eager African Americans ministers and White philanthropists to establish schools mainly in the South for freed slaves (Freemark, 2015). Today, there are reportedly 107 HBCUs in the United States mainly in the Southern, Eastern, and Southeastern parts of the country.

HBCUs only represent 3% of total American colleges today, hence they are small institutions; however, they have graduated the most prominent African Americans in the United

States. The first founded HBCU was Cheyney University in 1837, followed by Lincoln University in 1854. By 1890, there was an upwards of approximately 200 HBCUs in the United States (Brown & Davis, 2001). HBCUs are known for their alumni of prestigious African American scholars especially in the medical and technology fields. Some infamous HBCU alumni in those fields include: Lonnie Johnson, Katherine Johnson, John W. Thompson, and Homer G. Phillips, just to name a few. HBCUs' success stems from their model: comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to educating. Not only do they excel at providing spaces for students and faculty alike through their historical and cultural experiences integrated within their academic foci, but they acknowledge American culture, art literature, and more through the Black lens, while simultaneously learning and gaining from the Black experience and narrative. The purpose of the schools was not to mimic traditional higher education institutions that already existed for White people, but to steer away from European practices and embrace the Afrocentric practices. With all their glory, such as increased enrollment, prominent alumni, lower tuition, lower debt, and more, HBCUs are possibly in a state of danger. Funding and support from the government continue to be problematic now that African American students can attend any school they choose for higher education including Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). As a result, White people and lawmakers are seeing these institutions as unnecessary and even racist in nature because they assume there is no need for Black-specific institutions anymore.

An example of what success looks like for a Historically Black College and University is Howard University, located in Washington, DC. Established in 1867, Howard University is widely known to be extremely selective in staff and students as well as their unique recruiting and enrollment process; yet, a welcoming institution regardless of race or gender (Bernard, 2012). It is known for doing what it takes for its students by making innovating and appropriate

changes through the decades that has attracted the best and brightest African American scholars (Dodson, 2016). The graduation rate is 63% and the acceptance rate is 39%. The faculty to student ratio is 7:1 and the student experience is one that is a blend of personal and historical influence (Alford, 2013). The state-of-the-art campus is filled with historic landmarks and boasts the for ultimate college experience socially and culturally in its 250-acre campus. The school is known for its acclaimed alumni, such as the current Vice President, Kamala Harris and Thurgood Marshall (Dodson, 2016). With 13 colleges, Howard offers a diverse in art, humanities, medical, and science disciplines (De Leon, 1998). Most alumni continue their education by achieving a doctorate degree in science or engineering (Bernard, 2012). Howard University is known globally for being a prestigious and excellence as a top-tier university in the world (Alford, 2013).

Jewish Day Schools

Jewish people, which were accepted into HBCUs when they relocated to the United States following the Holocaust and were outcasted by PWIs; eventually opened their own K-12 schools to teach Judaism principles to their children alongside Americanism. At first, Jews attempted to change the American public-school system, even though the first official Jewish school, operating under Jewish auspices, opened in 1731 in New York City, and was connected to a Spanish and Portuguese synagogue. The school only focused upon Hebrew studies and operated under their own entity while charging a fee for attendance. Overall the history of Jewish Day Schools is complicated because schools started off as congregational schools, then around the Revolutionary War schools closed, then more tried to reopen post war to no avail. Between the years 1917 and 1939, there were 23 educational institutions dedicated solely to the educating of Jews in the greater New York Metropolitan area (Joselit, 2018).

Moving forward toward the 1960s and 1970s, the Jewish Day School started from the more congregational schools, as a solution to the refusal of White Americans to integrate their schools. When they began integrating in public schools, the schools had little in supplementary Jewish education (Joselit, 2018). In the late 1990s, there were nearly 670 Jewish Schools and, between 2013 and 2014, the number grew to 861schools. The rise in demand and building of schools were for various reasons:

- the post-Holocaust and European Jewish wanted to relish in the freedom of a new country and focus on empowering their youth through Jewish principles to promote cultural pride,
- to integrate Holocaust history into their studies,
- to educate their own because they did not like the results of Jewish students who attended public schools, and
- the location and conditions of most public schools where Jews migrated to in the United States.

There was a constant divide between American Jews who adopted American customs and freedoms and immigrant Jews post-Holocaust who did not associate integration to the public-school system as the only way to show patriotism (Joselit, 2018). Consequently, the Jewish Day School eventually went from only Jewish subjects to a more integrated curriculum combing Jewish subjects; for example, a Jewish child at a Jewish Day School can learn the Bible in the morning and American history in the afternoon.

In order to achieve this, the Jewish people had to be organized. American Jews eventually created the Educational Alliance, and then the Bureau of Jewish Education. This brought the American Jews and the (East) European Jews together by developing their curriculum and model

with connecting Jewish tradition with contemporary American ideals and practices (Brickman, 1967). Graduates often see their success in the immediate Jewish community rather than the American workforce. Although Jewish Day Schools are more prominent, there are still problems that they face. Even though there have become more popular since the 19th century, enrollment is low as most American Jewish parents prefer public school or some other school as oppose to sending their child to a Jewish Day School (Joselit, 2018). Other problems include sustainability through the increases in tuition, constant decrease in denominationalism, lack government funding, competitive salary for staff, lacking modernization in curriculum involving technology and STEM, and increase anti-Semitisms in the United States (Brickman, 1967).

The Tarbut V'Torah (or TVT) Community Day School in Irvine, California is widely regarded as a successful Jewish Day School in the United States (Niche, 2022). The TVT is a K-12 school that has over 600 students enrolled (Tarbut V'Torah [TVT], n.d.). Established in 1991, TVT started with 36 students and has grown its 25 years of operation to a successful college preparatory school (Niche, 2022). The school boasts Mission and Vision statements that are supported by a Strategic Plan listed on their school's website. The Plan is a four-year commitment to support the vision and mission of the school through rigorous and selective faculty recruitment and retainment, lucrative staff development, state-of-the-art facilities, and 21st-Century pedagogy that includes a robust TK-12 Jewish Studies with a rigorous curriculum that will produce effective communicators and superb academic skills. In addition to this Strategic Plan (Tarbut V'Torah, n.d.). TVT Mission includes practicing the core values of: Truth (Emet), Respect (Kavod), Kindness (Chesed), Repair the World (Tikkum Olam), Justice (Tzedek), and Community (Klal Yisrael) as well as their Educational Philosophy, Pluralism and Diversity, and Curriculum Goals (Tarbut V'Torah, n.d.). The Educational Philosophy is an

infusion of the core value and preparatory college curriculum. The Philosophy focuses on an array of various areas ranging from Judaism to intentionally positive student-teacher relationships (Tarbut V'Torah, n.d.). The learning environment is individualized with a mixture of self-directed learning, project-based learning, and hands-on learning (Niche, 2022). As a pluralist Jewish school, the culture is rumored to be one of inclusion and advocacy insuring that all learners, from differentiated backgrounds, have a unique experience. Finally, the Curriculum Goals outline the design to produce excellent written and verbal communication skills, analytical thinking in STEAM, humanities, character, and collaborative learning (Imbeau, 2011).

Montessori Schools

The founding year of Montessori schools was 1907 by Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor and educator (Christle, 2017) based on her 1905 book called *The Montessori Education* (Lillard & Else-Quest, 2006). She opened her first school in Rome. Dr. Montessori found her methods worked in practice in pre-school age children and settings as well as with students with special needs. She often attributed a child's dislike for school due to the child's restrictions (Montessori, 1988).

By 1912, everyone had heard of her and her schools with nearly 100 schools opening immediately; yet, in 1920, there were no Montessori schools open in the United States. It took almost 40 years for them to return to the United States due to their overwhelming success overseas and the interest of an educator in New York, Dr, Nancy McCormick Rambusch, by not only passing her Montessori training but with the help of Dr. Montessori's son she configured a way to bring Montessori schools back to America (Montessori, 1988). This sparked renewed interest in the United States with the resurrection of Montessori schools starting with the opening of a school in Connecticut in 1958.

Montessori schools are commonly defined as schools in the educational system that focus on self-directing and purposeful activities with self-correcting materials. The premise is for students to learn naturally in their natural state, individually, and sensory enriched environments. The foundation of Montessori schools places the highest priority of autonomy and freedom of movement and choice in the classroom for students rather than the traditional pedagogy of confining students to rigid schedules, desks, and routine (Christle, 2017). Furthermore, students are allowed to do only things that interest them and other conventional school practices such as collaboration, peer teaching, and socialization are merely encouraged but not demanded. The student-led approach has made its way to the traditional school settings and teaching practices in the last decade. Montessori schools boast very elusive alumni that includes Jeff Bezos (founder of Amazon), Julia Childs (famed chef), Larry Page and Sergey Brin (co-founders of Google).

Criticisms of Montessori schools conclude that teachers are too rigid with fewer interactions with students and more hands off than the traditional pre-school teachers (Gaille, 2018). Furthermore, the critiques continue with the fact that most Montessori schools do not give homework, is more project-based, and that they do not administer assessments or quizzes; although, that has changed in recent years at Montessori high schools for the purpose of college admissions. Lastly, the Montessori name is not legally patent so any school can call itself a Montessori school and since there is no definite diction of the method or school, then it is left up to too many interruption and execution.

One of the most successful Montessori schools in the United States is a private school, Marin Montessori School in San Rafael, California (Niche, 2022). As a recognized school through the Association of Montessori International (AMI), they are considered the gold standard of Montessori school and education (Association of Montessori International, 2022).

This honor is due to their accreditation, training, and highly credentialed faculty. Furthermore, the execution of Dr. Montessori's approach is done with faith and joy. But the success of Marin Montessori comes from the student learning experiences. Their curriculum and program is founded in scientifically-grounded best practices in teaching and learning techniques and strategies (Marin Montessori School, n.d.). The classrooms as mixed aged, where younger students learn from older students so there is no grade level limitations or competition. As a result, the older students develop their leadership skills as they obtain mastery of subject matter by applying and demonstrating what they learned. The mixed group class stay together (like a cohort) for three years, building a strong social skills and bonds adding to the class and learning community. Other strategies include: (a) "Sensitivity and Mastery" for toddler school, (b) the power of focus, independence, the development of emotional intelligence, choice as motivation, and individualized learning for primary school (c) the "Five Great Lessons" for elementary school, and (d) real-world connections in instruction, unique classes and class scheduling, such as "Odyssey Projects", stress management, and chore stations for junior high school (Marin Montessori School, n.d.). Graduates of Marin Montesorri often attend the top high schools in the area or community as well as the most prestigious colleges and universities that are part of the United States Association of Montessori International (2022).

Religious Schools

For the interest of this research study, religious schools are a reference to the Catholic Christian schools in the United States. Their existence dates back to the 1600s, when settlers to the New World (now called the United States) were a mixture of Quakers, Catholics, Puritans, Baptists, and so forth. When forming schools, these settlers taught their children with the mindset of having a Christian education very similar to their roots back in English, where

schools were governed by the Catholic Church (van Pelt et al., 2012). This early years of Christian education in American consisted of Christian worldview and principles coupled with high academic standard; this is because Christianity was believed to be a cornerstone of building a society. As a result, the 1647 School Law passed which became the foundation of the United States educational system and public schools. In colonial American, the first schools originated through churches, so children were taught Scriptures and have access to biblical education (van Pelt et al., 2012). From there the focus of educating colonial children was more about religious beliefs than literacy.

Prior to being acknowledged as citizens, Africans were enslaved and considered property in the colonies; education of a slave was historically rumored to be against the law and it was noted that slaves who were caught reading would be severely punished. It was only through the rape and emasculation of slave girls and women through their male masters that fair-skinned slaves began to populate plantations. Presumed to be the master's kin, those slaves who were fair skinned were given privileges that darker complexioned slaves were not given, such as reading and writing. However, there was an allowance for slaves to learn which was through religion, as slave owners was historically guilty of using the Bible and the Christian religion to further justify and maintain the narrative that slavery was African's duty and place in the world as they were taught Christianity on the planation. Only then, slaves were allowed an education with the listening, recital, and reading of Bible scriptures as well as Negro Spirituals.

Prior to the Civil Rights movement, Catholic schools were the only Christian or religious schools in the United States. It was not until the Civil Rights movement that private Christian schools emerged in the South as an answer to the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case decision (Hiatt, 1994). These non-Catholic Christian private schools were a way to get around

the law of desegregating schools that White Southerners were opposed to because the law did not apply to private schools. These schools were racially discriminatory at their root and was a way for White families to teach White children whatever they chose, such as racism and discrimination, better known as traditional values. For example, many of the textbooks at these private Christian schools have noted American history in a way that honors White culture and people. Historical accounts often highlight slavery of Blacks and the genocide or displacement of Native Americans as a by-product of introducing them to Christianity.

Moving toward modern times, it is not to say that all Christian private schools teach racism and have foundations in racist nature, but the majority of the student populations in these schools are White. The most noted was a 3% of minority student population amongst all Christian private schools (Hunt et al., 2018). Although not racist in nature, the population of rich and privileged White student populations in these educational institutions still promote discrimination and segregation, as the student population does not have to deal with diversity which would promote appreciation for multicultural or at the very least tolerance. These educational institutions are reinforcing Old South racial and discriminatory practices in a sleek way, under the radar in the classrooms. Either way, the fight between private Christian schools versus secular public school is not going anyway anytime soon (Fremont & Ludlum, 2015).

One of the most prestigious and successful religious K-12 schools in the United States is St. Mark's School of Texas, in Dallas, Texas (Niche, 2022). Founded in 1950, St. Mark's is a non-sectarian, private, all male, college preparatory independent school with over 800 students in the K-12 institution (Norman, 1995). The student-teacher ratio is 9:1. The school boasts a 100% graduation rate with all their graduates attending a four-year college or university. The average SAT score is 1480 and the average ACT score is 33 (Niche, 2022). The school is known for its

competitiveness, focus on leadership, and values. According to the school's website, the values of St. Mark's include discipline by delaying immediate gratification to promote hard-won satisfaction, the responsibility of defending one's own ideas, respecting the views of others, accountability for one's own actions, appreciation of knowledge, and the obligation of servitude (St. Mark's School of Texas, n.d.). In 2017, the Goals for St. Mark VI was developed and involved goals in the following areas: (a) students and learning, (b) faculty and teaching, (c) enrollment, access, and affordability, (d) campus resources, and (e) institutional stewardship, and (f) civic responsibility (St. Mark's School of Texas, n.d.). As of 2019, the school had a 42 acres campus with a faculty of more than 130, and nearly two-thirds of that faculty had advanced degrees (Norman, 1995).

The Minimization of Black Independent Schools

The rise of the independent Black schools in the public-school system, starting in the 1970s, in the United States is a missing piece in the American educational system and history. The acknowledgement of their existence and their purpose as an answer to the racist, segregated and discrimination public education system to Black students would mean that the system is not equal. Black independent schools' successes, which are many, convey that they are a real alternative to solutions in educating African American children in America, where the Department of Education has failed. Before the arrival of Black independent schools in America in the 1970s, the American education system constructed the laws and system presumably to foster the educational growth in African American children in the public educational system; yet in reality, they were providing a false mortality and furthering the message of compliance of African American children, as students, through prejudice, segregation, discrimination, and racism. The need for Black independent schools for young African American scholars

supersedes the academic aspects of education and the inequality through the public education system. The history of Black independent schools in the United States is tied directly to the history of African American people in the country.

Before the end of the Civil War, even though there were efforts in the newly formed free African American communities, education of Black slaves (or former slaves) was an almost criminal endeavor. The organization and establishment of schools made it hard for the few African Americans to receive any education, especially before the Reconstruction Era, when education institutions for African Americans were poorly funded and completely ignored

With the introduction of Jim Crow laws, it was constitutional for the American educational system and public schools to be legally segregated by race. This law was further endorsed by the Supreme Court decision of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896, when the decision established the separation of public schools for African American and White students. The decision had other effects, which forced African American communities and their children deprivation of equal educational advantages and advances. The colored schools had scantly funding and questionable financial resources as well as staffing.

Called by a different name, the earliest known organized educational environment was called African Free Schools in the 1780s. Although, African American centered educational public-school institutions and their purpose have not changed throughout history, they have changed their names and branched out to have more complex purposes. The other implications of that same system affect the mental, emotional, social, and psychological aspects of African American children through the staff, programs, and the overall public-school educational system. The educational system in any country and civilization is a reflect of its society and since African Americans are still treated as unequal and second-class citizens in this country then the education

system reflects that reality through terms of bridging the gap. However, the idea of the educational institutions being regulated by African American student's oppressors is the real danger and has been for over 150 years. There is more research to suggest that previous and current laws of K-12 public education in the United States have single-handedly oppressed African Americans and their children as much as Jim Crow laws, if not more. There is plenty of research and studies supporting diversity and integrated of students in classrooms but this only works when the system is not rigged from the start. Whether there is a Democratic Party member or Republican Party member in the White House or in Congress, the system will not change (Rothstein, 2013a).

The system did not change even when we had the nation's first African American president, Barack Obama. There is still segregation and racial inequality in the United States K-12 public education system. Real desegregation does not exist in the K-12 public school education system in the United States and every law that has passed in throughout history has only further segregated African American students from their White peers. Despite all of this, there is no acceptance of Black independent schools because of the freedom, independence, and empowerment it gives African American students, families, and communities. It is not about the intellectual gains for African American children that will result in such schools, but it is the cultural and spiritual awareness that the majority of White people are threatened by because it shakes the very foundation that their religious and historical beliefs are shaped by. There is a recent term called *reverse racism*, which is defined as prejudice or discrimination directed against a person or persons on the basis of their membership in a dominant or privileged racial or ethnic group (Blay, 2017) that has developed in the last decade that has been commonly used to describe when African Americans discuss the racial injustices in the United States in various

areas. This term is used more often when African American people or communities create spaces for themselves where they can appreciate their culture and thrive successfully in an environment which they usually would not be comfortable in, such as, educational institutions (Sherover-Marcuse, 1988, p. 2). The minimalization of Black independent schools has fallen into this term as a means to eradicate their existence. While people suggest that African Americans do not need their own schools when the public schools were designed for them due to laws and movements; thus, their existence means they are trying to segregate from White people which is the meaning of reverse racism.

Policy Reform for Black Independent Schools.

In order for Black Independent schools to prevail in the public-school system in the United States, there needs to be a reform of educational policies that affect their sustainability, funding and their curriculum design. The first policy that comes to mind as the most detrimental policy that prevents Independent Black School and similar educational institutions from prevailing, is the funding policies (Baker, 2016). Today, federal and state funding is dependent upon the adoption of curriculum and academic standards among other guidelines, such as attendance and federal programs (Baker et al., 2017). While some Black Independent Schools, who chose to not adhere to federal and state policies, depend upon grants, donations, and other unconventional federal funding, there are other Black Independent Schools who have fully adopted their local school district and State curriculum and policies to get the regular federal funding (Verharen, 2000). For example, adding Swahili (or other African-centered language) to the curriculum or as a more acceptable Foreign Language class or high school requirement as well as mandating Ethnic Studies, African Studies, or Afrocentric Studies helps to provide federal funding.

In general, the US public school funding comes from a combination of three sources: local money, state money, and federal. Although, each state has a different percentage the percentages are usually 45/45/10, respectfully (Turner et al., 2016). Black Independent Schools, like the African American students they serve, are in urban areas in major U.S. cities where resources are typically low such as Brooklyn, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, and Washington, D. C. (Gooden & Thompson, 2014). The problem with the school funding system is that it relies on local property taxes and tax revenue for school funding. Through the current school funding regulations, funding is directly tied to property taxes; therefore, the lower the value of the houses, the lower the property taxes are which explains low funding for schools. As a result, houses in urban communities have lower valued houses which wields lower property taxes which in return wields lower funding for schools located in that community (Turner et al., 2016). Even though several states have stepped in to assist urban/rural schools and school districts that are suffering many other districts have recently been involved into lawsuits with their state to fight the unfairness of school funding. The responsibility has fell to the states since the federal government has "washed their hands" of the problem. The lawsuits are an attempt to balance the funding for all districts. The outcome of these lawsuits can very well affect Black Independent Schools in the US as it pertains to federal and state funding. With the increased funding as a result of these funding policy changes, Black Independent Schools can finally get the resources to be successful like the recruitment of more staff, curriculum needs, facilities, technology needs, and advertising of Black Independent Schools these are the resources and fundamental infrastructures needed in order for Independent Black Schools to be successful (King, 2005; Lee, 1992; Lomotey, 1992; Teicher, 2006).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed literature and detailed a comprehensive review of research associated with a background of educational laws and policies in the United States, past and current, and its implications to the experiences and failures of African American students in the K-12 public school system, foundation of independent Black schools, CRT, Conflict theory, and Afrocentricity as a means of literature/document analysis. The literature review identified the needs for an alternative to the Eurocentric hegemony K-12 public school system with the alternative of independent Black schools, highlighting their importance (and omission) in the educational history of the United States. Chapter 3 will articulate all of the methodological considerations while providing a rationale for their use and reliability to examine the purpose of the study. Chapter 4 provides the research findings and data. Chapter 5 summarizes the study, concluding the study with suggestions for further research studies.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological approach that guided the narrative of this study. The research design is appropriate in exposing the structural and systematic factors that ultimately led to segregation and racism African American students suffered in the K-12 public school system as a result of the United States educational laws, policies, and practices despite the efforts to end the aforementioned. The data featured in this study will assist the reader to increase their understanding of how the K-12 public education system remains segregated, prejudice, and racist toward African American students and how Black independent schools, and related schools, offer an alternative to teaching African American students in an educational environment that is conducive to their learning. Included in this chapter are the details of the research design, sources of data, the data collection procedure, the data analysis process, the process of selecting the study's participants, the rationale emphasizing the importance of the study's topic and the how the researcher approached the existing body of literature. Furthermore, this chapter examined any ethical concerns, the researcher's role, human subject considerations, and the precautions taken to ensure the study's validity.

The literature review explored the history of educational laws and the effects on African American students which consequently calls for an educational alternative. In doing so, the researcher suggested a specific alternative in the form of highlighting the history and development of Black independent schools that have been operating simultaneously in the United States under the radar, providing African American students with the education, resources, and educational experiences that eradicate racism, prejudice, and segregation.

Re-Statement of Research Questions

This chapter describes the research methods that were applied to achieve the objectives of this study, which was primarily to answer the following four research questions:

- RQ1: How do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students?
- RQ2: What instructionally racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibit the success of African American students?
- RQ3: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring African-centered school leaders who face similar challenges?

Nature of the Study

A qualitative research methodology was the appropriate approach for this study. Qualitative research has been an acceptable method of research since the early 1980s (Creswell, 2007). As such, qualitative researchers aim to understand how the participants interpret their experiences and how they associate meaning to their experiences within the world. Because of this fact, education researchers commonly utilize qualitative research method in education studies due to the aspect of the research's dependence upon human interaction, which is a fundamental educational practice (Barbour, 2008; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Generally, qualitative researchers have confidence in the value of gathering diverse perspectives from human subjects and how they view the world (DeVault et al., 2015). Qualitative research affords opportunities for raw descriptions that give details into the world of participants.

Qualitative research works best when there is a problem or issue that needs to be explored or explained (Creswell, 2013). This research places the researcher in a positioned activity that identifies the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The purpose of this study was to examine the factors, whether systematic or not, that allow the consistency of racism, prejudice, and segregation in the K-12 public school system as well as explore the gems of Black independent schools (and similar named institutions) as more of a reliable alternative form of educational option for African American students in the United States.

Strengths of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research strengths are best when studies can be clearly defined and measured with a research tool. As a result, the strengths of this research were: (a) great for studies that seek to understand phenomena deeply and in detail, (b) great for constructing a theory or theoretical propositions, (c) great for the purpose of learning from participants in a particular setting (or process) the way they experience something and the meaning (or interpretation) they attach to that experience, and (d) great for the research to make sense of a complex situation with either multi-context data or changing/shifting phenomena (Choy, 2014).

Weaknesses of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research design has its criticisms which many consider weaknesses. These criticisms are: (a) qualitative research is too subjective, (b) too difficult to duplicate, (c) has problems with generalization, (d) lacks transparency, (e) overly time consuming as personal bias can interfere with or influence observations and conclusions, (f) the design is less structured, and (g) the design relies on an inductive process (Choy, 2014). All these weaknesses address the trustworthiness, or validity, of the research study model.

Overview of Methodology, Designs, and Methods

In this research, Chapter 3 details the components of this qualitative research study. This approach grants an interpretative method to phenomena which provide a platform for the researcher to determine how people will make meaning through interactions with others and events in their world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Janesick, 2000). In this research, the researcher explored a qualitative design with a phenomenology approach. The qualitative research approach founded on the premise that "reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (Glesne, 1999, p. 5). This paradigm was selected because according to Creswell (1998), “Qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain paradigm or worldview; a basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide their inquiry" (p. 22). More specifically in this paradigm, is the Afrocentric paradigm, which employs as a lens designed to address the cultural and intellectual dislocation of African people (Asante, 2003). The Afrocentric paradigm, derived from theory of Afrocentricity and made official by Molefi Asante, establishes a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African people, “…it centers on placing people of African origin in control of their lives and attitudes about the world” (Mazama, 2001, p. 171)

Another method that was used during this qualitative research study was one that is suggested by Creswell (1998) beginning with a main research question. This qualitative research study was guided with a main question, which Creswell described as “the broadest questions that can be posed and which do not limit the emerging data. Sub-questions, then, narrow the focus of the study without constraining the research” (p. 103). A hermeneutic phenomenological approach to this qualitative study allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the impact and implications of the effects of educational laws in the public-school system for

African American students and the benefits of Black independent schools in the United States (Creswell, 1994, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1980).

Additionally, the researcher applied two methods of data collection: interviews and document analysis. Collecting data through interviews with school principals from educational institutions classified as Black independent schools (in the United States) were utilized to examine school principals' perceptions of the impact of the educational laws for public schools and its overall effect on African American students. According to Boyd (2001) two to 10 participants are sufficient to reach saturation whereas Creswell (2007) endorses "long interviews with up to 10 people as a representation of a phenomenon" (p. 161). Therefore, the researcher interviewed seven school principals from the top 10 most reputable African-centered schools in the United States. As a result, individuals selected to participate in this phenomenological interview had knowledge about the phenomenon to be the educational laws and the importance of Black independent schools. In return, the interviews assisted the researcher in capturing the participants' feelings, thoughts, and opinions about the educational laws as they related to segregation, racism, and prejudice of African American students in public school and the benefits of Black independent schools for African American students. The researcher interpreted the data using Hycner's (1999) five step process. To ensure an ethical research with validity and reliability, participants consent was required. Furthermore, full disclosure was given to participants of the intentions of this research before the consent was given and before interviews were conducted; thus, all participants were willing to participant in this research.

Another qualitative research method the researcher applied was document analysis which illustrated the history of institutionalized racism, segregation, and prejudice in the public-school system as a direction correlation with educational laws and its effect on African American

students. Document analysis assisted in developing research questions while coding content into themes to form sub-questions for each research question. This systemic procedure analyzed literature evidence and answer specific research questions (Frey, 2018).

Methodology

Although, there are a number of approaches in qualitative research along with various features, the researcher deemed the approach of phenomenology to be most appropriate to achieve the researcher's desired results. The phenomenological qualitative research approach concentrates in understanding the center of the experience, or the lived phenomena (Creswell, 2013). Because the goal of a qualitative research study is to explain, describe, and evaluate a social phenomenon (Gall, 1996), this qualitative study concentrated on the experiences of African American students in K-12 public education as a social phenomenon through interviews and literary review that highlights the experiences of African American students, the analysis of educational laws and policies, and investigation of the history of Black independent schools.

Structured Process of Phenomenology

With phenomenology, the researcher has the task of describing the experiences and explaining events as they are with no further study through direct investigation with a clear description of the phenomenon in the clear consciousness focused on the meaning of the experience through the experiencer. There are different phenomenological ways to do achieve this. The most appropriate and effective for this study was phenomenological interviewing. The structured phenomenological approach of interviewing participants of the study was where the researcher asked questions that were based on themes of experience contextualization, ultimately capturing the phenomenon and its interpretation. In this case, the phenomenological interview in this study consisted of the meeting of two people, the interviewer/researcher and the interviewee

in which they were involved in an in-depth, open dialogue about the interviewee's experience. The best way to investigate an educational institution or policies is through experience (Seidman, 2006).

Appropriateness of Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The appropriateness of the hermeneutic (or interpretative) approach of phenomenology to this study is largely due its minor difference from that of any other type of phenomenology. Although they are similar in many ways, it is their differences that determined which would be used for this study. Hermeneutics focuses on interpreting, language and reflexivity (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The interpretation aspect involves the researcher interpreting the meanings found, in relation to occurrences, or phenomena. Interpreting these occurrences, such as the pattern of educational laws and policies in the educational system in the United States as it related to equity and equality in education in K-12 public schools. According to van Manen (1997), hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science which in returns means it is the study of persons.

Assumptions of Phenomenological Approach

The assumptions of the phenomenology approach are that the study's perceptions will present readers with evidence of the world, as it is lived, and not what is thought to be through lived experiences through literary review of past and present educational laws in the United States, the history of Black independent schools in the United States, and the interviews of head of schools (or equivalent) of Black independent schools today. It is also the assumption of human existence as being meaningful and is interesting because of humans being constantly conscious of something. The word *existence* is referred to being of the world as a phenomenological phrase, which acknowledges that people are in their own worlds and are understandable to only their own context.

Strengths of Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach to the study had many strengths which included, but is not limited to the following: (a) gain an in-depth understanding of individual phenomena, (b) provides rich data from experiences of individuals, (c) insight to common experiences toward phenomenon (issue or procedural), and (d) offer an inquiry that can be descriptive, reflective, interpretative or engaging to capture the essence of an experience (Ricoeur, 1973).

Weaknesses of Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach to the study had weaknesses as well. These weaknesses were: (a) data are subjective and may be difficult to establish validity, (b) researcher bias, (c) results might not be presented in a way that could be duplicated or understandable, (d) generalization of data were not produced, and (e) sampling size could be too small (Ricoeur, 1973).

Research Design

A qualitative approach to a research, like phenomenology, aims to include knowledge as a co-construct (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). As a result, the focus of the researcher as well as the choice of the researcher's interview questions assisted in data collection equal to that of the recorded experiences of the participants in the study. In human science, where phenomenology flourishes, researchers are allowed to use common experiences that are both familiar to the researcher and the participant. This creates comparable human experiences. In retrospect, van Manen (1997) believed that the use of human science research in education should be guided by pedagogical standards (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

The researcher is an African American woman who has experience in the K-12 public school system in California from Pre-kindergarten to the 12th grade. During her educational

experiences, she recalls her experiences of racism and prejudice in the schools she attended. As an athlete in secondary school, the researcher recalls competing in schools that were primarily White and noticing the difference in staff, facilities, and resources that those schools had versus her own school. It was not until the researcher was brainstorming about dissertation topics that she realized that there are Black independent schools/institutions in the K-12 public school system that cater to African American students and their needs. Hence, the researcher objectives were to deepen her understanding of experiences of the institutionalized and systemic racism in the K-12 public school education through the ideas of leaders as well as the perspective of those same leaders of the alternative education of African American students in successful Black independent schools.

Analysis Unit

The analysis unit for this study was a Black independent school leader who had the title of head of school or principal.

Population

The population of interest in this study consisted of all Black independent school leaders who had a title off school head or principal.

Sample Size

The number of participants anticipated in the study was 15 school heads or principles of a Black independent school in the United States. Unfortunately, there has not been many guidelines on sampling sizes for this particular type of phenomenological study; however, there have been suggestions through research on sampling sizes. In researching for guidelines, there have been fewer than 10 sources that offered clear guidelines for sampling sizes for the phenomenological study. The other resources gave more of a generalized outline of what sample

sizing is and what it was not. For instance, Etikan et al. (2016) declared that purposive sampling is not solely based on a predetermined number of participants. Also, Gay and Airasian (2000) stated that for qualitative research when determining if the number of participants is enough the answer for these researchers is, it depends. Because in qualitative studies the idea is to select a small number of individuals who are willing to enhance the researcher's understanding of phenomenon in the study. As a result, in qualitative studies there can be a single participant or 80 participants with various study contexts. The only factors at matter in sampling sizes in qualitative studies are representativeness and redundancy of information.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is an intentional selection of participants based upon their capability to explain a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). This non-probability sampling technique is effective when the researcher needs to study a certain cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within (Tongco, 2007). Consequently, the researcher in this study is an educator and used her expertise in using purposive sampling. Also, this type of sampling technique is often used in research studies where there is a hard to reach population that needs to be measured.

Purposive sampling has seven steps, according to Tongco (2007):

- determine the research problem;
- decide what information is needed; for purposive sampling the information is inclusive to only certain members of the community (purposive sampling);
- define clearly the qualities of participants based on what is desirable and not desirable for the study
    - find participants based on the defined qualifications in Step 3;

- remember the importance of reliability and competency in filtering potential participants;
- use appropriate data collection techniques;
- be mindful that in data analysis and presenting the results, purposive sampling is a naturally biased method and,
- document all biases;
    - do not include interpretations outside of the sampled population.

Participant Selection

To select research participants, the researcher created a master list of potential participants for this study. The researcher used Google (https://www.google.com) to search for, "Black independent schools in the United States." There were several hits that had potential, but one website that caught the researcher's attention. The heading was titled, *Black to School: Here's a List of Several Reputable African-Centered Schools in the U.S.* in a website called Melanoid Nation. The list only had 15 schools listed complete with each school's name, school type (public, private, etc.), head of school, and school website link. Because there was no official database or number for how many Black independent schools in the US, participant selection was challenging. Recruiting participants took some skill and patience. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, recruitment efforts by the researcher where be carried out virtually. Although some schools are in-person the best way to recruit school heads or principals was to e-mail them directly as opposed to calling and getting their secretaries. Participants were recruited through a recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) that was posted on various social media platforms such as LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com), Twitter (https://www.twitter.com), and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com). In addition, the recruitment flyer was sent through e-mails or

private messaging to potential participants. The researcher used her e-mail from Pepperdine University which was used for all research business and correspondence. The university's e-mail account is password protected and e-mails are stored and saved on the university's protected server. At the end of each e-mail, under the customized e-mail signature, there was a confidentiality notice. The researcher created a post on LinkedIn for followers and their connections to view. On Facebook, the researcher created a post; however, the researcher also posted the recruitment flyer on the following Facebook groups of which the researcher is a member of: (a) Black Educators Rock, Inc., (b) Black Girl Doctorate, (c) Minority Doctoral Network, Inc., (d) Skin Folk Pursing Terminal Degrees, and (e) Eye of Inglewood. Additionally, the researcher sent a recruitment e-mail to the following professional organizations to which the researcher is connected: (a) National Educator Association (NEA), (b) California Teachers Association (CTA), (c) Junior League of Los Angeles (JJLA), (d) Black Doctoral Network, Inc., (e) Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), and (f) California Association of African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA).

The e-mail containing the recruitment flyer to potential participants and organizations had a short description of the study, the participant criteria, the duration of the study, a summary of the interview process and procedures, a description of monetary incentive that would be provided to the participants educational institution at the conclusion of the study, contact information of the researcher, and an e-mail confidentiality disclaimer.

Sampling Frame

The selection of participation process required the researcher to develop a master list of possible candidates for participation for this study. This process is better known as the sampling frame. The non-profit organization, Melanoid Nation Foundation (MNF), has a website that is

dedicated to the advocacy and equality of the Melanoid (people of African descent across geographical boundaries) people. Their website was the resource the researcher used to identify the population where the participation sample was used for the study. The website has blogs and forums dedicated to the organization's mission; as a result, there is a forum promoting a list of reputable African-centered schools that promotes a cultural foundation. Accessibility to these schools and their websites as well as school heads made this website the best source to disclose the population needed to create a sampling for this study.

Criteria for Inclusion

The characteristics of those candidates who were participants in the study were candidates who answered the screening questions accurately and completely. They also met the qualifications of: (a) being an administrator (school head or principal) of a Black independent school in the United States for three years or more, or (b) be a former administrator of a Black independent school within the last 10 years, (c) the school has been functioning for more than 10 years, and (d) their school population have to specifically be for African American students.

Criteria for Exclusion

The criteria for exclusion from the study included: (a) those who are minority but do not identify as Black or African American (or BICOP), (b) those administrators who are not head of schools, (c) those head of schools that do not work at a Black independent school (or similar), and (d) those head of schools who work for a Black independent school but the school has not been in operation for more than 10 years.

Maximum Variation

The purpose for maximum variation method for a researcher to understand a phenomenon from various lenses (Creswell, 2007). The criteria for the lenses can range from different people,

different places, or even different settings. The idea is to get about three to four maximum variation sampling that maximizes the assortment variety to the research study's question(s), problem, or situation. In this research study, the maximum variation ensured the diversity of selection based on: (a) administrators from traditional K-12 public schools, (b) administrators from private schools, (c) administrators from other Independent schools, and (d) administrators from charter schools.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher has taken the Trusted Standard in Research, Ethics, and Compliance Training through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI program) that is required for all faculty, staff, and students to ensure the protection of human subjects. The area of focus for the CITI program is adult volunteers. Participation and completion of this course produced a certification of completion of the course. The researcher submitted the research proposal as an exempt review and requested permission to conduct this study through Pepperdine's Graduate and Professional School's IRB process. The Department of Health and Human Services' decision tool was utilized in determining if this research study will involve human subjects. It was proposed that this research study would be expedited from the human subject regulations, based upon category 2 (Exemption 2) constructed on the following responses to their decision tool:

- For the purpose of this study, there was an intervention or interaction with subjects for the collection of biospecimens or data (including health or clinical data, surveys, focus groups or observation of behavior). Identifiable, private information or identifiable biospecimens would be obtained, used, studied, analyzed, or generated for the purpose of this study.

- This study involved only the collection of information via surveys, interviews, or educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement).
- The information that the investigator obtained for the study was recorded in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects could not readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers (i.e. subject and numbers) linked to the subjects and the investigator does not contact the subjects nor try to re-identify subjects. Permission was obtained from the Pepperdine University IRB to conduct the research via an approval letter (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was done using non-invasive procedures. In collecting data from potential candidates, that are adult volunteers, the researcher used qualitative interview techniques starting with a pre-interviewing form, consent forms, and Zoom that will be recorded to collect audio recordings for transcription.

Interview Techniques

The researcher used a semi-structured, or focused, interviewing technique because the researcher assumed the position of the interviewer with pre-determined research/interview questions particular to the topic of the study for the interviewee. The researcher familiarized herself with the interview questions, as to not be reading from a script or be tense, to be well-prepared and relaxed.

Purpose of Interview

The purpose of the interview was for the interviewer to ask a list of questions already predetermined to cover the topic or problem of the research study to elicit more useful

information from the interviewee. The interviewee answered honestly, based on their own expert in the subject and/or their personal experiences.

Structure of Interview

The interviews were semi-structured, in-depth, and focused interview process. The interviewer had a list of areas or questions to be covered. The interviews were held over Zoom, using the Pepperdine University student account and consisting of 10 questions that lasted for 45 minutes.

Context of Interview

The interview consisted of opening questions followed by the pre-established, open-ended interview questions, and follow-up questions such as: Is there anything else? Could you tell me more? Or, could you please explain that? During the course of the 45-60 minute interview questions, there were some neutral probes, such as please continue, and, there are no right or wrong answers, to encourage the interviewee to be themselves and put them at ease. At the conclusion of the interview, the interviewer thanked the interviewee for their time and participation as well as informed them of the next steps of the study along with planning for compensating with participant by donating to their school.

Interview Protocol

The elements of an interview protocol are as follows: (a) purpose of interview, (b) structure of interview, (c) content of interview, (d) interviewees, (e) length of interview, (f) modality and location, (g) recording and security, and (h) transcription plans. The purpose of the interview protocol is to have consistency and structure to ensure validity and reliability. The researcher's CITI certificate provided the ability for semi- structured interviews to be conducted (see Appendix C).

Relationship Between Research and Interview Questions

In Table 2, the relationship between research questions and interview questions is shown where the research questions and corresponding interview questions are listed. Because this was a qualitative research study, the interview questions were correlated to the research questions. Thus, the interview questions established to allow participants to expand upon their experiences in bettering the educational experiences of African American students through Black independent school with the absence of segregation, racism, and prejudice.

Validity of the Study

In order to validate the study as well as the content and structure of the interview, the interviewer adhered to a two-step process which were known as peer review and expert review. The peer review consisted of peer reviewers from a panel of doctoral students who provided feedback on the *prima-facie* research questions along with the corresponding interview questions. Furthermore, the expert reviewers were the Pepperdine University dissertation chair and review committee in the EIP program who reviewed and revised the research and interview questions provided to them following the peer review and were thus, finalized. These two groups reviewed the researcher's planned interview protocol to assess if the protocol ultimately led to the researcher obtaining the information for the study Similarly, the interview structure and questions should elicit what the researcher needs to answer the researcher's research questions. This process provided what is called, content validation of the interview protocol.

Prima-Facie and Content Validity

The interview protocol consisted of the following steps: (a) determining the purpose of the interview, (b) developing the content of the interview, (c) deciding who would be interviewed, (d) setting the length and location of the interview, (e) plans for recording the

interview, and (f) handling the data following the interview. The interviewer has many responsibilities and considerations to adhere to, one being *prima facie*, or first appearances (Stake, 1995). To put the interviewee at ease, first impressions are vital, in order to achieve a good *prima facie*, the interviewer must be neat in appearance and dress, punctual, courteous, create a permissive atmosphere that encourages candor, and be professional yet friendly. On the other hand, content validity, refers to the adequacy of the interview protocol to determine if it is adequate and functioning to measure what it is supposed to and yield the results are reflective of the interviewees (also known as respondents or participants; see Table 2).

Table 2

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

Research Questions	**Corresponding Interview Questions**
RQ1: How do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students?	IQ1: What resources do you have in place to assist your African American students with nonacademic challenges? IQ2: What are some of the biggest challenges that your African students face in academic and nonacademic? IQ3: What are some of your best practices that are utilized at your school?
RQ 2: What instructionally racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibits the success of African American students?	IQ4: How is success measured at your school? IQ5: What part does assessment and data play in defining, measuring, and tracking your student's success?
RQ3: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education?	IQ6: What changes do you recommend for the public-school system that can better support African American students? IQ7: What steps can the public-school system take to eliminate institutionalized racism, prejudice, and segregation against African American students? IQ8: What are current educational policies or practices in place that contribute to the continuing of racism, prejudice and segregation in the public-school system?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ4: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring African-centered school leaders who face similar challenges?	IQ9: What are the components of a successful Black independent school? IQ10: What has contributed to the success of your school?

Note. The table identifies four research questions and corresponding interview questions as developed by the researcher.

Peer-Review Validity

The peer-review validity was done by five current doctoral students in the researcher's cohort consisting of the EDOL/EDLT programs; with two of the peer reviewers being in the same program as the researcher, EDLT. First, the researcher texted the potential peer reviewers asking if the researcher could send them an e-mail. When they agreed, the researcher e-mailed them from her Pepperdine e-mail reintroducing herself and sending them a peer review form (see Appendix D). Included in the form were instructions on what was needed as a peer reviewer plus my researcher and interview questions (see Table 3). The peer reviewers were given five days to provide feedback on the research and interview questions, or the researcher would solicit another peer reviewer. All peer reviewers returned their feedback via e-mail, within the five days suggested. The results of their feedback are seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions (Peer Reviewed)

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1: How do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students?	IQ1: What are some of the biggest challenges that your African students face, academic and nonacademic? New IQ1: Keep as is IQ2: What formal education or training have you received as a leader that is specific to

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
	African American students and their challenges? New IQ2: Keep as is IQ3: What are some of your best practices that are utilized at your school? New IQ3: Keep as is
RQ2: What instructionally racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibit the success of African American students?	IQ4: What are the main differences in structure between your school and traditional K-12 public schools? New IQ4: Keep as is IQ5: What are the main differences in policy between your school and traditional K-12 public schools? New IQ5: Keep as is
RQ3: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education?	IQ6: What recommendations do you have for Black independent schools to better support African American students? New IQ6: Keep as is IQ7: How do/does your campus (es) deal with racism (i.e. incidents)? What is the protocol? New IQ7: Keep as is IQ8: What education policies and practices do you associate with contributing to the continuation of racism, prejudice and segregation? New IQ8: Keep as is
RQ4: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring African-centered school leaders who face similar challenges?	IQ9: What are the main components of a successful Black independent school? New IQ9: Keep as is IQ10: What has contributed to the success of your school? New IQ10: Keep as is

Note. Table 3 identifies four research questions and corresponding interview questions with revisions based on feedback from peer-reviewers.

Expert Validity

The expert review was conducted when the researcher submitted the first three chapters of the dissertation prior to participating in the preliminary defense and before IRB approval. Since the expert reviewers were members of the dissertation committee, their input was valuable to the success of the researcher's study. The expert reviewer's suggestions contributed to the updated and finalized research questions and interview questions that are listed in Table 4 and which was used for this study.

Table 4

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions (Revised)

Research Questions	**Corresponding Interview Questions**
RQ1: How do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students?	IQ1: Can you give examples of some students who have thrived at your school? IQ2: How do you define the success they have had? Please elaborate. IQ3: How do you measure their success?
RQ2: What instructionally racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibit the success of African American students?	IQ4: These are inspiring examples, what challenges or obstacles get in the way of more students succeeding? IQ5: Would you ascribe any of these challenges or obstacles to systematic or institutionalized racism? Please elaborate or give examples.
RQ3: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education?	IQ6: How do you overcome these challenges? IQ7: How about those challenges that are more deeply rooted and are systemic?
RQ4: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring Black independent school leaders who face similar challenges?	IQ8: In hindsight, what decisions would you reverse or actions you would do differently?

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
	IQ9: What is the one thing you wish you knew when you first started your job? IQ10: What pitfalls would you warn aspiring Black independent school leaders against?

Note. The table identifies four research questions and corresponding interview questions with revisions based on feedback from the expert reviewers (committee). Subsequent changes were made to the order and phrasing of questions within the interview protocol.

Reliability of the Study

The reliability of this study refers to the consistency of a method. Like validity is with integrity of the study, reliability encompasses the credibility, transferability and trustworthiness of a study through the methods used in data collections (Creswell, 2008). In qualitative research, these terms are interchangeable. In this study, the method used to establish reliability was data coding as data analysis. Through validating the accuracy of the information gathered through the data analysis, this established reliability. In the first step to reliability, the researcher analyzed three of the interview transcripts of interviews held independently to code, identifying the major themes. Second, the researcher recruited two other doctoral students with familiarity with qualitative research and practices with coding and categorizing themes to review initial coding. When there was a consensus between the researcher and the two doctoral students on the coding and themes, then the process continued with the rest of the recorded interviews. If a consensus was not reached, then the dissertation committee was enlisted by the researcher to resolve the matter. The process then continued with the rest of the nine interview transcripts.

Pilot Study

The researcher recruited three doctoral pupils from her EDOL/EDLT cohort to conduct three mock interviews. These pupils were e-mailed an invitation through the researcher's

Pepperdine University e-mail to participate in a mock interview. Once the pupils agreed, a Zoom invitation was sent to pupil with a specified date and time for the mock interview. Before the beginning of the mock interview, the researcher's pupils were instructed to inform the researcher if the research question was understandable or not. After each research question was stated, each pupil stated that the research question was comprehensible and made sense.

Statement of Personal Bias

This study had significant meaning to the researcher as an African American woman who is a former student and graduate of the K-12 public school system who, at many times, experienced prejudice and racism. As a current educator in the K-12 public school system, she was a witness to the African American students in the K-12 public school system's subject to racism, prejudice, and segregation. The experience, through personal observations and reflections, creates a level of bias to be considered in the formation of interview questions, and to some degree, the interpretation of the answers received from participants of the interview. Also, from the CRT lens, the researcher has a bias of intersectionality as the researcher identifies as a Black woman, who comes from an urban, lower socio-economic background. These multiple dimensions of demographics integrated in CRT, placed the researcher at risk of integrating their results in the interpretation of data or findings.

Furthermore, the use of Afrocentricity, as an added lens by the researcher, added another perspective bias to which the researcher could be subjected. Afrocentricity essentially promotes a sense of pride or emphasis in preference to African culture over other cultures and civilizations that African (or African descent) inhabit through natural migration or enslavement, including Western civilization. With this bias in mind, the researcher attempted to distance herself from personal experiences and observations to objectively research this study as well as interview

participants while collecting the data of responses as they are present without bias. The process of reduction permitted for a highly repeatable process for similar and additional research studies that could be submitted for academia.

Bracketing (or Epoché)

The interviewer must review prejudice and biases before interviews can take place (Giorgi, 1997). In order to achieve this, the research must put into place a system that will block biases and assumptions as to explain the phenomenon as is and its meaning. One by one, the researcher created transcripts for each interview and after the transcription was completed, the researcher searched the transcripts to identify any personal interests, own personal experiences, assumptions, or hunches that could influence the researcher's way of viewing the data collected in the interview or transcription. The researcher used an epoché log to facilitate the reduction and elimination of bias or personal interests, perceptions, and experiences (Wertz, 2005).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is achieved through various methods and processes. This process starts at the conclusion of each individual interview and continues when the interviews have concluded and data collection is completed. First, the researcher coded each interview by recording the interview followed by the transcription of each interview. Next, the research evaluated the transcripts for epoché and themes through bracketing, grouping, clustering, reduction, and elimination (Giorgi, 1997). Afterwards, the researcher participated in the interrater reliability and validity process with the researcher's peers (Wertz, 2005).

Interviewees

The interviewees were the 12 participants for the study who made it through the pre-interview screening and who volunteered to participate in the study as an interviewee. The

interviewee's responsibility was to respond and talk freely about the topic by answering each question honestly and freely. The interviewees were adults over the age of 18 who are administrators of a Black independent school for three years (or more) or worked for a Black independent school in a position as an administrator for three years or more. The interviewee was African American (or Black) or a person of color.

Interviewees were recruited by study participant flyers through social media outlets and through organization websites. Through these recruitment flyers candidates received an e-mail with a Google form link to pre-interview questions to determine eligibility to participate in the study as an interviewee. Once chosen through the pre-interview process, the interviewee was sent a consent form via e-mail.

Length of Interview

Each interview session lasted no longer than 45 minutes and were individualized with just the interviewer and the interviewee. There was only one session per interviewee with the interviewer asking the opening questions, predetermined interview questions and follow-up questions (if needed), neutral probes, and concluding remarks.

Location of Interview

The interviews took place virtually via Zoom (https://www.zoom.us) using the researcher's student account through Pepperdine University. The interviewees received a calendar invitation for the interview through Google calendar (https://www.google.com/calendar). The Zoom call had a protected passcode that was provided in the calendar invitation and only viewable by the interviewer and interviewee.

Data Security

The interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom with the audio and video. The Zoom interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee. The interviews were secured through passcodes. The researcher used her HP computer to access Zoom and record the interview. The interviews were saved to the personal computer of the interview, which is password protected, and saved to a password protected folder titled.

Transcription Plans

Once the interviewer finished interviewing with each participant, the interviewer began analyzing the interview data, this process is called transcription. This can be achieved by taking really good notes during the virtual Zoom interview or recording the interview and then transcribing the interview. To transcribe an interview, the researcher changed the recorded Zoom interview from audio into a verbatim written copy. This was done by replaying the recorded interview several times and typing word for word what was stated by both the interviewer and interviewee. A good transcript included nonverbal communication, such as gestures, tone, and expressions.

Coding

Once the transcription was completed, each transcript was read to determine concepts or themes. Codes and themes were organized into keywords, phrases or similarity in content or categories. Once the coding was completed, the researcher created tables that were organized by each research question to cluster related concepts. Categories were then grouped based upon their relativity to one another starting from boarder thematic concepts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Categories were color coded in the tables for easy accessibility. Concepts and themes were determined through the analysis of content that was identified as either key words or key phrases

used in the interview that has contribute to develop each construct. Following the identifying of constructs, the transcripts were reviewed and appropriate and applicable quotes from the transcripts related to a theme were selected and inserted into the table for reference. Since participants were assured of confidentiality, participants in the table were identified using a specified, assigned number (Interview 1, 2, 3, etc.). From there, themes were generated using interrater reliability and reinforced by charts and quotes from the interviews. Chapter 4 will discuss the major themes and their depiction as well as sample participant quotes that support the themes from transcription.

Interrater Reliability

In order to establish reliability and validity of the data analysis process, the researcher must continue by using the interrater reliability and validity process. This four-step process involved two peers, or researchers, whose consistency of decision in agreeing with the interpretation of the data analyzed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Four Step Process. The following themes were used to provide the interrater reliability and validity process by the peer reviewers:

- Baseline Themes: Three interview transcripts were independently coded to identify major themes.
- Interrater Review: Two other doctoral students acquainted with the qualitative research and well-practiced in coding and categorizing themes were brought in to review the initial coding of the first three interviews to accomplish consensus.
- Baseline Themes: The process of transcription, analyzing, coding, and thematizing continued with the remaining 12 interviews.

- Interrater Review: Two other doctoral students acquainted with the qualitative research and well-practiced in coding and categorizing themes were brought in to review the initial coding of the first three interviews to accomplish consensus.
- No Consensus=Expert Review: The dissertation committee served as the expert reviewing body when the two-peer reviewer did not agree on the coding analysis.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative research design using the hermeneutic phenomenology approach aligned with the CRT conceptual framework to serve as the foundation for this research study. The methodology for this research design helped the researcher to examine current strategies and practices that contributes to the success of Black independent schools to supporting their African American students that prevents them from experiencing prejudice, segregation, and racism in the educational setting, that overall effects their educational experiences. The strengths and weaknesses of both the qualitative methodology and the phenomenological approach were discussed. The data collection process and interview protocols were outlined. Interviews with Black independent school administrators captured the policies and strategies as well as what factors were needed to reproduce the educational atmosphere in other educational institutions. The chapter overviewed the protection of human subjects the researcher had developed to protect study participants as well as the statement of personal bias to protect the validity of data collection and study from the researcher's bias. The remainder of the chapter outlines the data analysis which guided the corresponding chapters and the study findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

Among the many Black independent schools (or equivalent) that were developed in the United States since the end of slavery, the closure rates of these schools are increasing and there is a decline of new schools opening to take their place. It is not only important to identify the successful and sustainability of those who are still open, but to discuss the failures of those that are closed to develop a roadmap for those that will be inspired to open a school one day. This insight will act as a preventive strategy and game plan that current and future Black independent schools can follow to sustain and be (or continue to be) successful. Furthermore, participants in this study were asked, specifically, what were pitfalls and successes of their school based upon their unique experiences and observations for leaders of Black independent schools. To achieve this mission, this research study was founded on the following four research questions:

- RQ1: How do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students?
- RQ2: What instructionally racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibit the success of African American students?
- RQ3: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring Black independent school leaders who face similar challenges?

As a result of the research questions, 10 interview questions were framed to propose a more in-depth understanding of the structure, organization, and environment of Black independent schools (or equivalent) that contribute to the successes of African American

students and, ultimately, their overall success and sustainability in the United States. The open-ended questions were created as a method to permitting the study's participant to share their experiences and observations as part of their point of view and give their insight on their schools, programs, and students' success. The interview structure was facilitated to provide for efficient coding and data analysis. The following were the 10 interview questions which were paired with the associated research question:

1. Can you give examples of some students who have thrived at your school?
2. How do you define the success they have had? Please elaborate.
3. How do you measure their success?
4. These are inspiring examples, what challenges or obstacles gets in the way of more students succeeding?
5. Would you ascribe any of these challenges or obstacles to systematic or institutionalized racism? Please elaborate or give examples.
6. How do you overcome these challenges?
7. How about those challenges that are more deeply rooted and are systemic?
8. In hindsight, what decisions would you reverse or actions you would do differently?
9. What is the one thing you wish you knew when you first started your job?
10. What pitfalls would you warn aspiring Black independent school leaders against?

If the participant had questions about the content of the interview questions or if any answers needed further clarification outside of those that indicated examples or explanations, then each participant was asked follow up questions to ensure the accuracy of their responses as possible. All of the participants were informed of the possible of follow-up questions as an "as need" basis to create a comfortable and transparent experience and environment.

This chapter outlines the results of the participant's responses to the interview questions during the interview. From the transcription of the interview, the information was coded to produce a summary for data analysis. Additionally, this chapter describes the methods utilized to collecting the data as well as the inter-rater process applied to achieve a consensus on the themes that was originated from the coding process using the participant's responses to the interview questions during the interview.

Participants

The basis of selecting 15 participants for this study was to get specific information relevant to the research; as a result, the participants had to fit a certain criterion. One of the criteria was African American leaders of a Black independent school (or equivalent) so that they can attribute their lived experiences. Furthermore, all participants had to work for (or previously worked for) a Black independent school (or equivalent) for at least three years as a leader (i.e. administrator). The participants in this study had worked in the capacity of a leader at a Black independent school (or equivalent) for three to 15 years.

The sample size of 15 participants has been identified as the point of saturation as expected when capturing the identified themes produced from the participant's responses to the 10 interview questions. However, after the 12th interview, it was determined that the point of saturation was reached as there were no more significant new themes that had appeared from the last three interviews. The combination of interviews of Participants 9, 10, and 11 produced a total of one new theme overall. The result of Participant 12's interview produced no new theme.

The selection of participants for this study required the use of social media and related platforms and groups. First, the researcher used her LinkedIn account associated with her Pepperdine student status and account to post a recruitment flyer with her IRB number, the

purpose of the study, criteria of participants, participant expectation and commitment, and her contact information. Second, the researcher posted this information on her personal social media pages and account as a post and as part of her story. Next, the researcher posted the flyer as a post on the pages of the groups she was a part of and e-mailed the administrators of the group asking if they can send the flyer through e-mail to all members. Some of the groups are (a) Skin Folks Pursuing Terminal Degrees, (b) Black Girl Doctorate, (c) Black Educators Rock, (d) Minority Doctoral Network, Inc., and (e) The African American Board Leadership Institute. Often times the recruitment flyer was seen shared and reposted on social media. Consequently, three inquiry e-mails and correspondence were received to either obtain more information that needed more clarification or to express enthusiasm and interest in participating in the research study. After implementing the criteria of inclusion and the criteria for exclusion, the three possible interview candidates were reduced to one. From Participant 1's interview, the participant shared the study information and recruitment flyer to their network. The remaining participants were subsequently recruited by word of mouth from the participants after their interview. Ultimately, there were only 12 participants from the possible 15 viable participants, who met the criteria and were able to confirm and attend to an interview. The number of possible participants was able to satisfy the indicated maximum variation calculation.

Data Collection

The interviews were conducted on Zoom (audio and video on) and were recorded, transcribed, and coded to generate the appropriate reliable themes for this study. In order to the complete this process of the study, interviews of each participant had precise times and Zoom meeting information. Two participants were interviewed on the phone and the remaining 10 interviews were conducted through Zoom with the audio and video turned on.

IRB approval was attained on May 17, 2021 and the first participant interview was conducted June 15, 2021 with the last interview concluding on June 28, 2021 (see Table 5). All participants of the study agreed to be interviewed as well as recorded and transcribed. To prove their consent, all participants were emailed an informed consent form, with the interview questions, in which they had to sign prior to the start of the interview (see Appendix E). Each interview started with a brief introductory conversation with each interviewee introducing themselves by stating their name, title or position, how long they have worked at the Black independent school (or equivalent), and their age. Also, the pre-interview protocols allowed interviewees to ask questions about the process and study at hand as well as securing and checking for the signed informed consent form. The pre-interview protocol usually lasted no more than five minutes. Once the interviews began, the participant was informed that the meeting was being recorded on Zoom with a notification on their screen and for the phone interviews, interviewees were informed verbally when the voice recorder was turned on. The interviews ranged from 1 hour to 2.5 hours. The varied range of the length of interviews was attributed to the participant's knowledge and experience in a position of leadership at a Black independent school (or equivalent). Since the interview questions encouraged the recalling of experiences and observations, the participants responded with stories as responses or stories for examples and elaboration that related to the questions or study. There is also a need to account for the probing questions or follow-up questions that were on a "as need" basis to achieve clarification.

Table 5

Dates of the Participant Interviews

Participant	Interview Date
Participant 1	June 14, 2021
Participant 2	June 14, 2021
Participant 3	June 15, 2021
Participant 4	June 16, 2021
Participant 5	June 17, 2021
Participant 6	June 17, 2021
Participant 7	June 24, 2021
Participant 8	June 24, 2021
Participant 9	June 26, 2021
Participant 10	June 26, 2021
Participant 11	June 27, 2021
Participant 12	June 28, 2021

Data Analysis

After each interview or set of interviews, if interviews were schedule closely or there was more than one interview in one day, the interview was transcribed immediately. Once transcribed, the process of creating a coding scheme to determine the theme for each interview question took place. This process included recognition of any personal biases of the researcher that could possibly affect the interpretation or analysis of the data collected. This process is called epoché or bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). The implementation of this process in the data analysis stage of the research study ensured the validity of the data and prevented the invasiveness of the researcher's perceptions and biases over the participant's experiences and descriptions. The transcribing of the interview was used to isolate the statements and phrases of the participants in the coding process, verbatim, to distinguish participants' experiences and descriptions from other unrelated statements.

Following the classification of each participant's experiences and description responses and phrases, the researcher began the procedure of clustering and thematizing the responses,

statement and phrases through a set of frequency charts. These charts are used to summarize the output of responses from each participant in every question in a salient and meaningful process. Later, the results were documented and color coded as preparation for the next phase of data analysis, the inter-rater review process. Based upon the responses of participants, some of the responses were similar in theme and therefore consolidated. As a result, most charts will show the minimum of three themes. This was not intentionally done, but rather, it was a result of the data analysis process as well as an attempt to prevent duplicate themes which may be similar in nature.

Inter-Rater Review Process

After the completion of the third interview, the researcher created a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel to create the key words and phrases from each interview questions in the transcription of each of the three participant's interview (see Table 6). The transcriptions were analyzed thoroughly to find commonalities in each statement, per interview question, to develop possible themes based on the grouping of similar responses. The responses were then color coded based on those themes to make them easily discoverable. Once completed, the color-coded themes were then shared with two other doctoral students from the researcher's cohort for review and feedback. Once the peer review was completed, the researcher reviewed the peer's feedback and discussed their suggestions with them for further clarification as needed. Depending on the feedback, modifications were made to the original color-coded themes. In the end, the coding for each interview question responses were revised, as determined by the inter-rater review process, and the resulting themes were used thereon to create an overall central theme and common understanding of the overall response for each question. Table 6 shows the following modifications made to the coding and themes during the inter-rater review process.

Table 6

Inter-Rater Coding Table Edit Recommendations

Interview Question	Items	Inter-rater Recommendations	Modification Applied
1.	The use of the term "support" when labeling the category as a code.	Consider using the word "Involvement" to describe the advocacy and support system of students in Black independent school (or equivalent).	Substituted the term "involvement" in place of "support" to clarify the coding.
2.	The use of the term "growth" when labeling the category as a code.	Consider using the phrase "Individual Success" to define success of African American students in Black independent schools or equivalent.	Substituted the phrase "individual success" in place of "growth" to clarify the coding.
4.	The use of the term "system" when labeling the category as a code.	Consider using the phrase "Programs" when describing challenges or obstacles hindering African American students from succeeding.	Substituted the word "programs" in place of "system" to clarify the coding.
6.	The use of the term "finances" when labeling the category as a code.	Consider using the phrase "Financial Support" when describing ways to overcome challenges of African American students.	Substituted the word "Financial Support" in place of "finances" to clarify the coding.
8.	The use of the term "funding" when labeling the category as a code.	Consider using the word "Finances" when describing what decisions or actions participants would reverse or do differently.	Substituted the word "Finances" in place of "Funding" to clarify the coding.
9.	The use of the phrase "high expectations" when labeling the category as a code.	Consider using the phrase "Trial and Errors" when describing what decisions or actions participants would reverse or do differently.	Substituted the phrase "Trial and Errors" in place of "High Expectations" to clarify the coding.
10.	The use of the term "accessibility" when labeling the category as a code.	Consider using the phrase "Minimum Resources" when describing what decisions or actions	Substituted the word "Minimum Resources" in place of "Accessibility" to clarify the coding.

Interview Question	Items	Inter-rater Recommendations	Modification Applied
		participants would reverse or do differently.	

Data Display

In this research study participants will remain anonymous and are referred to by the order of their interview. For example, the first participant who is the first interviewee is Participant 1. and so forth until the last participant, Participant 12. Participants remaining anonymous was part of the protection of human subjects as discussed previously in Chapter 3.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, how do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students?

The first research question identifies how leaders of Black independent school (or equivalent) leaders define and measure success for their African American students to establish a baseline. In order to define success, there needs to be a starting point. The purpose of this research question was to be informed of the definition and measure of success in a nontraditional educational setting for African American students in K-12 and possibly compare it the definition and measurements of success in the K-12 public school system. Also, the researcher can determine if the success is collective or more individualized in its nature based on the answers from the participants. In order to achieve this objective, the following three interview questions were asked:

- IQ1: Can you give examples of some students who have thrived at your school?
- IQ2: How do you define the success they have had? Please elaborate.
- IQ3: How do you measure their success?

The responses to these first three interview questions allowed the participants the opportunity to define and categorize student success for African American students.

Interview Question 1. The first interview question asked, can you give examples of some students who have thrived at your school? For this question 38 responses were recorded from 12 participants. In answering this interview question, participants were encouraged to use their best judgement to express examples of students thriving at their schools . Primarily, participants discussed examples of a collective lens. Then, as their responses continued participants narrowed the examples to small groups such as classes or a few students that stood out. Those responses usually followed an interesting story.

The responses collected from 12 participants to this interview question resulted in three main themes that were determined to be relevant to the addressing the Research Question 1 (RQ1). Those main these were: (a) bridging learning gap, (b) escalation in self-confidence, and (c) involvement (see Figure 2).

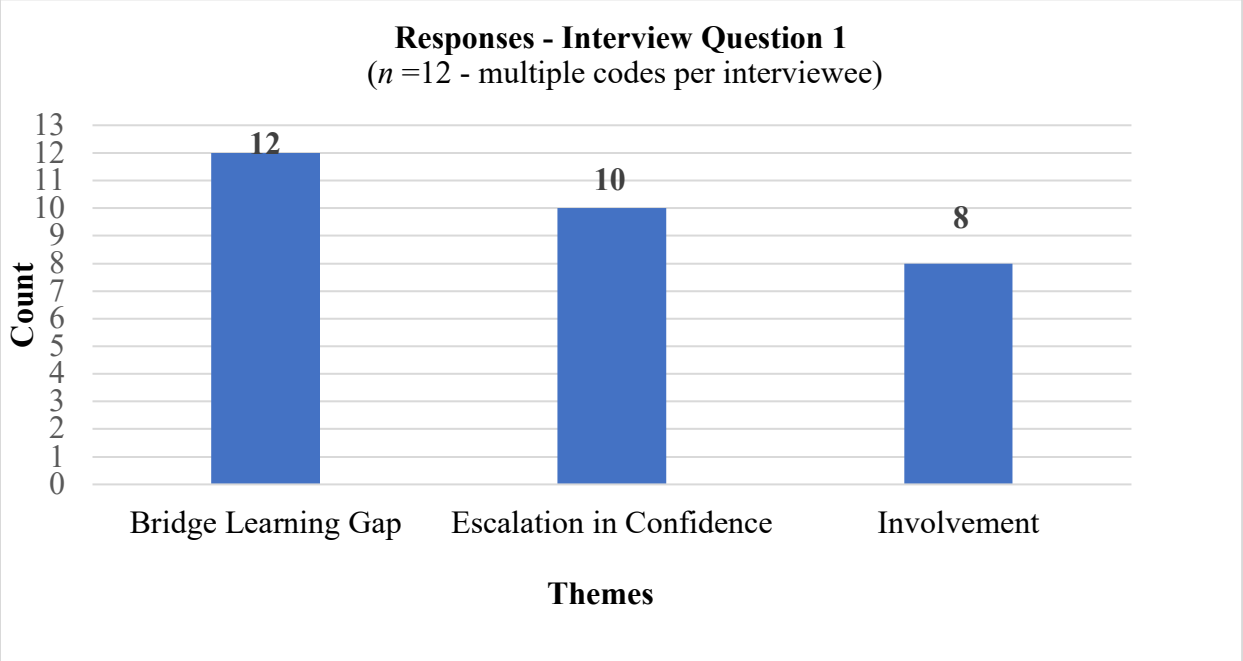
Bridging Learning Gap. This refers to the bridging the achievement gap in which a student is behind or deficit in an academic area or subject (Hunter & Bartee, 2003). The notion is to shorten or lessen the gap in deficiency so the student can be closer to a standard or desired grade level baseline (Mathis, 2005). The level can be centered in data, standard, or goal. Three out of 12 participants used the term “improvements” to describe example of students who have thrived at their school. In addition, two out of 12 participants (Participant 2 and Participant 3) used a specific skill or academic subject such as reading, multiplication, or math as examples of bridging the learning gap of a student who has thrived in their educational environment. The remaining participants referred to the gap but mentioned that they did not have to worry about it as much. The terms used by the remaining participants were advanced, advancement, grade level

and thriving to describe their overall student population as thriving already and not needing to worry about bridging the learning gap because of many factors in their education environment, especially students who started at the school from the starting grade level offered. For example, Participant 1 stated,

> The students at my school knew we had high expectations so they pretty much stand in line with those expectations. Students usually started with us from Pre-K so they knew what was expected like no D's, studying 2 hours per night, finals, and weekly assessments. We did not have to worry about bridging the gap because our students worked hard and was thriving because that was expected.

Figure 2

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 1



Escalation in Confidence. In their responses, 10 out of 12 participants marveled at the increased confidence of their students as evidence of them thriving. Some key terms or phrases indicating escalated confidence are "self-reliant" (Participant 2), "student-led" (Participant 5), "self-confidence" (Participant 6), and "behavior" (Participant 1). Based on the participants' responses, evidence of students thriving in their educational environment was correlated to a

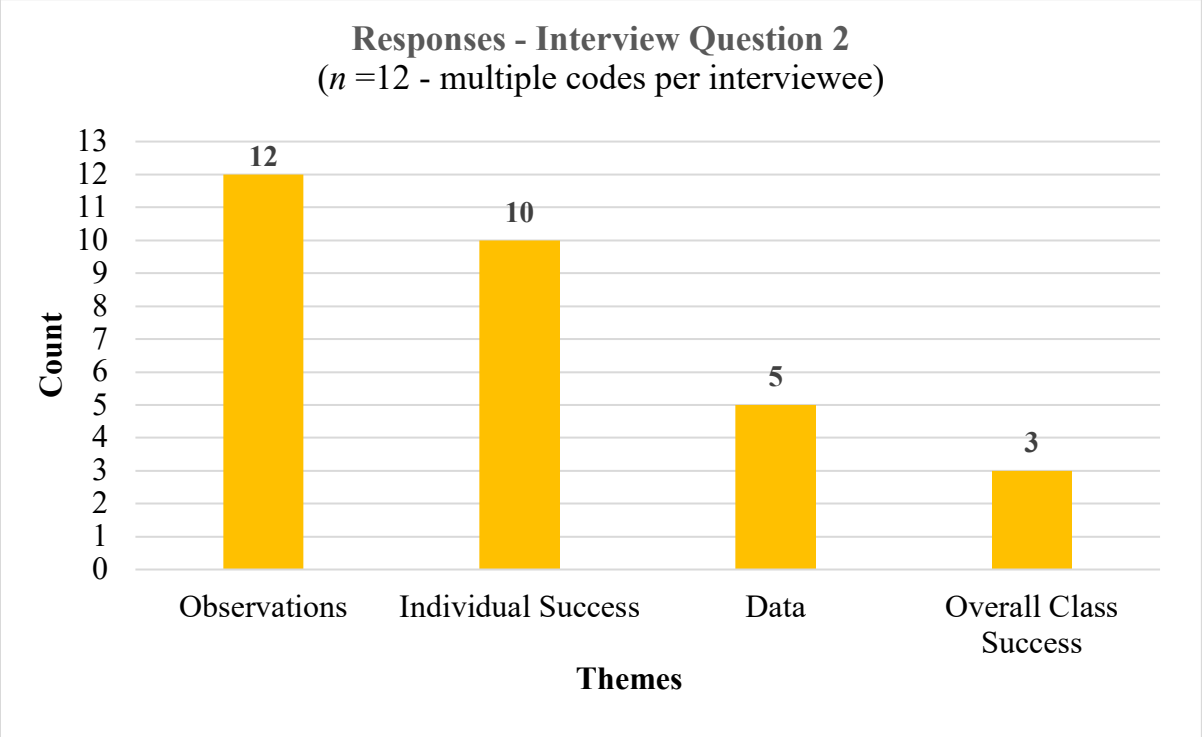
boost in their confidence as it relates to school performance or the school environment (Lee, 1992). Participants attributed this to individual or collective student(s) own doing or to the atmosphere created for students to be confident in. For instance, Participant 3 mentioned a Likert-type scale survey, the LAWSEQ, that is given to students in the beginning of the school year and one at the end of the school year to measure self-esteem. The other participants credit love, attitude, and daily affirmations are factors of escalation in confidence in students.

Involvement. As a theme, involvement can be described in various ways. In the context of this study as well as the Interview Question 1 (IQ1) in connection to the Research Question 1 (RQ1), the word involvement is associated with parent involvement, parent participation, parent commitment, staff passion/dedication, or student contribution. Eight out of 12 participants stated that their school requires a tuition fee to attend. With the tuition there is an unspoken commitment from parents and other family members to be involvement in their child's education. Participants listed community spaces (Participant 3), staff meetings (Participant 10) and parent donations (Participant 7) as indicators of involvement. Involvement was important to student success because it is indicating support, presence, and advocacy (Somé, 1999). Students are empowered by their family's involvement (Carruthers, 1995).

Interview Question 2. The second interview question asked, how do you define the success they have had? Please elaborate. This question was designed to be objective to the participant's experiences and knowledge. Interview Question 2 (IQ2) gave the participants the opportunity to identify success based on the examples of student's thriving from IQ1. Based on the responses, the following themes were determined: (a) observations, (b) data, (c) individual success, and (d) overall collective success (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 2



Note. Interview Question 2-Coding Results

Observations. All 12 out of 12 participants admitted that data was not required, therefore, their measurement of success was widely based upon observations of their students. These observations are individualized and collective but mainly at the class level. Participant 7 explained this process by describing how the observations are looking at their behavior, attitude, and progress based on daily observations and interactions with the students. Participant 10 said that even though observations are used by the school writing down those observations, such as daily journals for reference, "Facilitators are required to write daily journals of their day with students so that observations are being made." In addition, Participant 11 commented their observations were random, ranging from weekly, monthly, or yearly and that the purpose was to observe the progress of the child in their totality and not just academically. Participant 11 stated,

"You can just tell progress by observing the child's behavior, social skills, and attitude about school." Again, this was based on Participant 11's observations, and were similar to the other participants' answers.

Data. Five out of 12 participants indicated that their success was defined by the analyzing of data through various means. Participant 11 used the word observations which are another form to obtain data. Observations and homework are considered formative assessments which are what Participants 1, Participant 2, Participant 5, Participant 9, and Participant 12 mentioned. Two out of 12 other participants mentioned well known tools to collecting data like the Basic Reading Inventory (BRI) or the LAWSEQ. Participant 3 and Participant 4 mentioned an assessment such as weekly end of week assessments or finals, an assessment at the end of an academic term. These assessments are usually summative, to assess what students know and do not know. Success with data is determined on what the student knows and achieve of these assessments (Perry et al., 2003). Whatever the method, contrary to popular belief data is kept at most Black Independent schools not only to track student success but to receive funding (Lee, 1992).

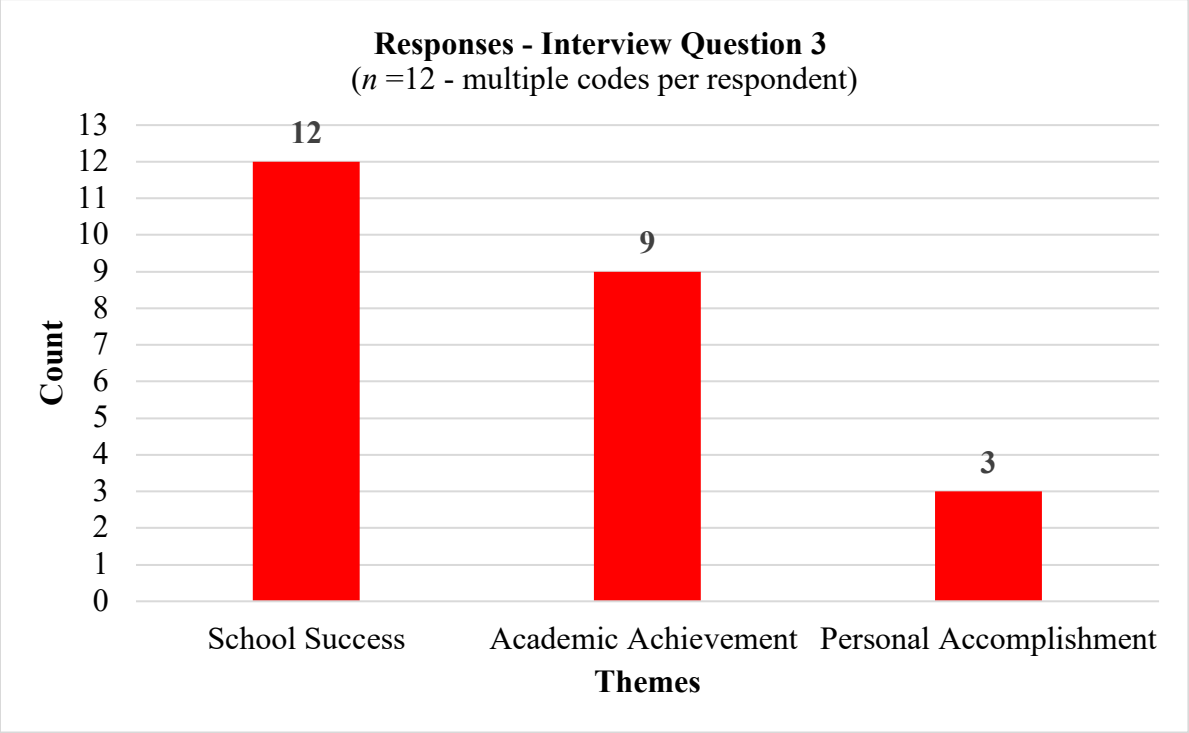
Individual Success. In conjunction with the first interview question, the second interview question acted as a follow-up. With the examples from the first interview question, the responses for the second interview questions were correlated in the sense that if the participant's response to IQ1 was about an individual student they followed up to IQ2 with a response about their individualized success. Ten out of 12 participants had individual success responses varied with examples such as: improvement on reading inventory assessment, improving math skills as seen on weekly assessments, grades, and moving up to a more advanced class. Other nonacademic individual success was mentioned, such as positive changes in attitude, increased self-confidence, and reciting daily affirmations (Hale, 2001).

Overall Class Success. Three out of 12 participants mentioned the overall success of either their school, a specific program, or the collective study body as a way to define student success**.** The collective success referred to all students enrolled or participating in the school or program. Furthermore, these students' success was categorized in three categories: (a) academic, (b) social and behavioral, and (c) self-awareness. The academics were grades and assessments. The social and behavioral aspect was the nonexistence of behavior, referral to administrators, and no disruptive behaviors in class that affected collective learning (Hillard, 1992). The self-awareness was confidence, cultural appreciation, attitude, self-love, and positive self-talk (hooks, 2013). Participant 1 mentioned that everyday students at the school would recite "Hey Black Child," quotes, the Black National Anthem, or some other type of poem or daily affirmation that was individually and culturally appropriate and empowering. Participant 3 said that student studied self-defense while Participant 6 said that students learned French and Participant 5 mentioned students learning Swahili. These factors attributed to the self-awareness which is turn was evidence of success.

Interview Question 3. The third interview question asked, how do you measure their success? This interview question was a follow up to IQ2. Once success is defined, then it must be determined how it is measured. When measuring success, it is common to have a baseline. It is important to establish what is being measured and to what or whom. Having identified several ways they defined student success in the previous interview questions, participants naturally followed their responses with how they measured success of their students. The measurement of success provides evidence that success is happening. In coding the participant's responses to Interview Question 3 (IQ3), measurement of success was recognized through academic achievement, personal accomplishment, and school success (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 3



Note. Interview Question 3-Coding Results

Academic Achievement. As previously discussed, academic achievement is achievement in academia. It is an important part of education and school. This can be defined in content knowledge, skills obtained, and knowledge or skill applied. The measurement of success in academia varies depending on personal preferences, yet studies has proven certain methods are more effective than others. The participants have various educational backgrounds and many of them do not have a teaching credential or worked through any teaching credential classes or programs and with that, their student success measurements differed between traditional and nontraditional. Thus, nine out of 12 participants who choose academic achievement as a measurement tool for student success mainly mentioned traditional methods of measurements such as assessments. These assessments were mentioned as weekly or monthly assessments

(Participant 2, Participant 4, and Participant 9), successful completion of homework (Participant 1 and Participant 2), end of year summative assessments like Basic Reading Inventory (Participant 1, Participant 7, and Participant 3), projects (Participant 10 and Participant 8), or showcases such as science fairs (Participant 1 and Participant 12). Achievement of an academic skill, goal, or standard set by the school or an individual teacher was the purpose of the measurements mentioned (Bowman et al., 2018). The idea that a successful student did not lack in any academic areas was the focus on student success. As a result, nine out of 12 participants mentioned that their student's success was largely based on this fact, that indeed their students were on the highest achievement scale according to their measurements.

Personal Accomplishment. In IQ1, when asked to give an example of student success a few participants mentioned a story about a student who's quest to accomplish something personally. Three out of 12 of these participants, success was a personal feat that required something to overcome. For instance, Participant 1 mentioned a child who she received in the 3rd grade who had moved from Chicago to Los Angeles to attend the school where Participant 1 taught 3rd grade. As she recalled the experienced, Participant 1 said that the parent of the child was concerned that "her child struggled in Math, in particular multiplication." While Participant 1 did not go into detail about how she managed to teach and assist the student in achieving the goal, Participant 1 explained that every four weeks they would assess the student to measure progress until the completion of the year where the student was proficient in the area of concern. Additionally, Participant 3 mentioned a personal accomplishment that was not associated with academics where a student with a disability was able to make friends in a classroom setting that had not been achieved in the student's previous academic setting prior to attending the school. Participant 2 stated that their students were able to start a business as a personal achievement due

to the structure and flexibility of their school's setting which differed from their student's previous traditional K-12 school which did not focus on financial and business literacy.

School Achievement. School achievement responses of the participants are divided into two sections: (a) school achieving their goals and (b) success of programs in the school. All 12 out of 12 participants stated that student achievement could be measured by the overall success of their school or a specified program or aspect in the school (Perry et al., 2003). The majority of the participants gave measurements that displayed the school achieving their goals. This can be a mid-year or end of a year measurement such as an assessment, graduation/completion, or a showcase. Participant 1 stated,

> If anyone ever wondered, I don't know if I want to take my child there. Okay, just go to the graduation, the graduation was like a showcase. You would have kids in preschool spelling, the days of the week. You have one that knew her multiplication tables through 12. People thought it was a joke. They will pick people in the audience to ask them any question. We had children in the second grade doing poetry. On a Whiteboard, we had kids in eighth grade talking about HIV, you know, just like very, very detailed, I mean the science fair; you have to park around the corner to get into the science fair.

Participant 4 said,

> The student expressed that seeing people of color in education and leadership roles was inspiring and soothing to her. Following the successful completion of her first year in the program, the student continued to attend the school for five years.

On the other hand, success of a particular program or aspect of their school served as a measure of success. Participant 2 stated that,

> The Freedom School program is six weeks, traditionally. There's an after-school model that is different from the summer. But we're going to speak to the summer program for this question. So, our program is modeled after the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project, that developed Freedom Schools, and so what this project has shown us is how young people came together to develop. So, our program has three goals: one is that the student falls in love with reading, two that we increase self-esteem, and three our students have the motivation to make a difference.

In the above quote, the program is the measurement of student success as they are assessed prior to the six-week program and at the completion of the six-week program (Cobb, 1999).

Summary of RQ1

The main idea of RQ1 was to determine and establish a means to define and measure student success in Black independent schools (and equivalent) that teach only African American students to not only compare it to how student success is measured for African American students in traditional K-12 public schools where African American students are not the only population in enrollment but to begin a discussion of changing the tools that measure and define student success in public school education in the United States. It has been long documented that the perception of African American students has been misguided and as an affect African American student are often misplaced in programs or academic pathways as well as exclusion of their culture and interests in public school's curriculum (Giddings, 2001). RQ1 relates to the internal challenges within the education system in the United States. All participants expressed belief in student success in the public-school education as well as being able to define and measure it but it is the specifics that differ from traditional K-12 public schools versus Black independent schools. Although academics and academic achievement was mentioned it was not the overall determining factor of student success for African American student in the Black independent schools. Other factors such as self-awareness, confidence, sense of community, culture, and autonomy in the educational setting were equally or, in some cases, more information that reflected in student's academic success as a by-product of the former.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, what instructional racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibits the success of African American students?

Research Question 2 (RQ2) shifts the focus of the research and interview from students to the practice and art of teaching. The word instructional also means educative, instructional, instructive, or academic. This question aimed to identify factors in primary and secondary academic practices that prevents African American students from succeeding. Inherent in the question was the overall consensus that there are racist challenges within out public-school education system that African American students face. In order to address those challenges that RQ1, along with the following interview questions, aimed to identify the challenges that are racist in nature and practice:

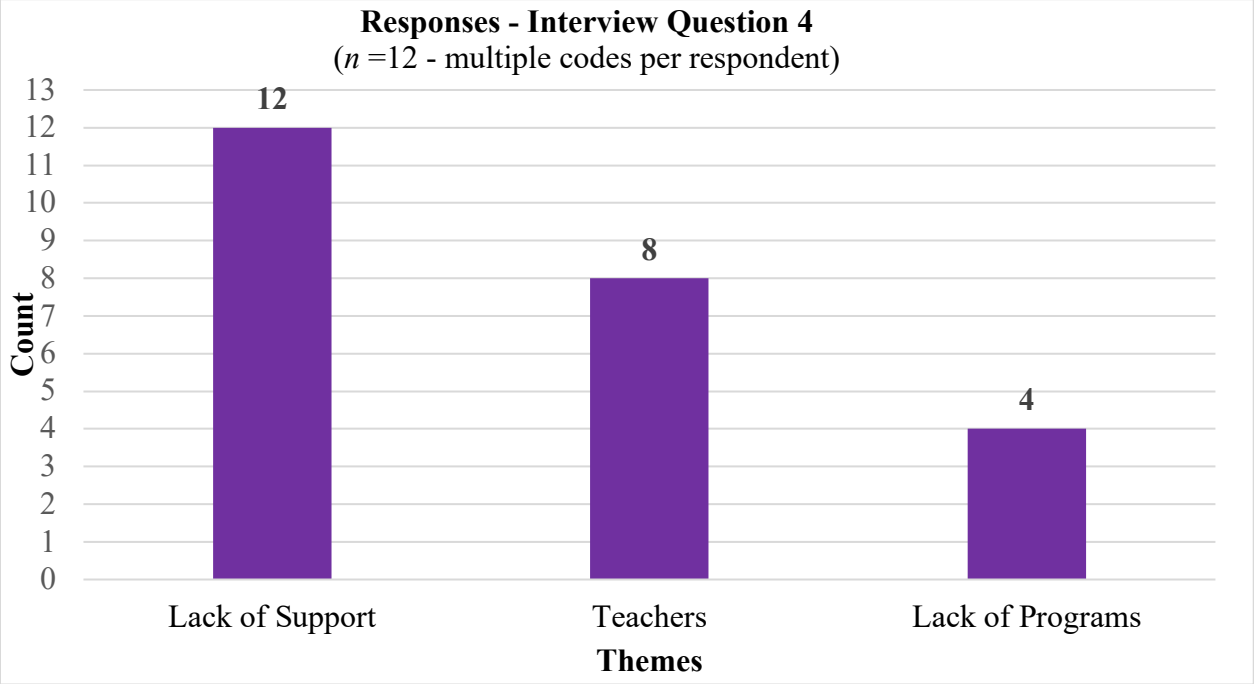
- IQ4: These are inspiring examples, what challenges or obstacles gets in the way of more students succeeding?
- IQ5: Would you ascribe any of these challenges or obstacles to systematic or institutionalized racism? Please elaborate or give examples.

The themes produced from participant's responses to the two interview questions initiate the possible identifying racist barriers in public school education that hinders the progression and success of African American students; thus, offering an opportunity to empower African American students.

Interview Question 4. The following interview question asked, these are inspiring examples, what challenges or obstacles gets in the way of more students succeeding? Having given examples of success measured in IQ3, participants were now asked to shed some light on the more severe challenges or obstacles of African American students in education. Although some participants shared stories of individual students in achieving success in IQ1, this question was encouraging participants to look through a systematic lens. The following themes were revealed in the analysis of transcribing: (a) teachers, (b) lack of support, and (c) lack of program.

Figure 5

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 4



Teachers. Eight out of 12 participants addressed this question by mentioning teacher qualifications or teaching practices, in some form or fashion, as a direct challenge or obstacle that get in the way of more students succeeding. These responses were not surprising as recent educational reform for public school has often been led with the complaint of teachers and their unions such as the privileges of tenure (Forlin, 2010). However, the reasons behind eight participants specifying teachers as a challenge or obstacle in student success was the shock. Formal education in teaching practices or teacher credentialing, is not a prerequisite for some of the participant's educational institutes that enroll an all African American student population (King, 1993). In fact, Participant 1 stated that of their entire teaching staff only person had a doctorate degree (but not in the area of education) and had no prior teaching experience before teaching at their school. Participant 1 would continue to allude that the hiring of teachers at their

institute was more about the ability than the skill. Participant 3 hires undergraduate college students who studied education and college and other that had been pursuing degrees in other fields outside of education. The participant later stated,

> A teacher can only work in the school system with students if they're credentialed. You can't teach our students and we're like, oh man. This is so problematic. Because they see their classroom. They begin to be kind of territorial. It becomes very insular. And so, you don't see the outside world and all the knowledge that's being created in the information that students have access to outside of your class or see the power that our college students have in that classroom as facilitators. And knowing if you brought those elements in, you will have a much proof on a more fruitful environment.

Participant 3 does require her teachers to go through a two-week training to learn the school's system and which tools or resources are used at the school.

Participant 4 said that the talent was missing in facilitators in the classroom with African American students. Participant 9 added to that statement by saying that teachers are often recruited to teacher in urban areas as a way to satisfy their student loans such as Teacher Loan Forgiveness programs. Non-African American teachers are guilty of this and it ultimately affects the passion and commitment to African American students such enforces the racist interactions between White teachers and African American students in public school education (Jacob, 2007). Participant 2 said that recently more African Americans parents, mothers in particular, have made the decision to start homeschooling their children. Other participants stated that the lack of love, compassion, consistency, dedication, and lowered standards/expectations of students have challenged students. All participants mentioned that their staff does not make time or even encourage Professional Development (PD) for their teachers. They also did not use their funding to purchase their teaching material from education supply companies for textbooks and programs like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) or academic interventions (Bowers,

1984). In fact, the participants were not aware of or recognized the teaching and educational acronyms used throughout the interview.

Lack of Support. Support, as a challenge or an obstacle, varied between participants, but 12 out of 12 participants was undoubtedly a very common challenge or obstacles identified to the hindrance of African American student's success. Building a support system and relationships with African American students in their learning and educational environment is a challenge in the public-school system. Although schools in the public-school system often have space for parent involvement, in theory, such as clubs, such as PTA, PTSA, and school site council, it is often an illusion of the need or welcoming of parent, family, and community input and support (Edwards, 2002). Participant 3 shared that at their school parents are welcomed and encouraged to their staff meetings by sharing a story there the parent attended the staff meeting to inform all staff members of her child's disability and social/behavior challenges the student faced and together they came developed a strategy to address the challenges that proved to be successful. Participant 11 shared their experience as a parent with a child attending a public school, although working at a Black independent school,

> You will have many school districts which are pushing parent and family engagement initiatives, but when you go to the school and sign in they never ask the parents, 'do you feel welcome?' You have to schedule a time with the school to visit campus first, you know? Legality things first, or you can't even come, so then do you feel discouraged to come? Do you feel valued? But in our types of schools [Black independent schools], it is mandatory for you or someone in your family to visit. The person has to be at least the age of 18 who can make decisions for that child in your absence. As a parent, you have to be here with us weekly. You have to be here. When we go to field trips and you have to plan our end of program ceremony. So, parents will value the schools.

Other participants mentioned public schools lack of input of parents, families and communities in curriculum development.

The other support mentioned across the board is funding. Although the state and federal governments fund public schools that the money is not being allocated to benefit African American students directly or indirectly (Lee, 1992). This is true for Black independent schools or equivalent, many are demanding a tuition for attendance to operate or those that are free to attend are not sustaining because of lack of funding because of the population the school serve or the cultural aspect of the curriculum or school's focus (Wilkinson, 1984). Participant 3, Participant 7, and Participant 5 mentioned that funding was denied because their curriculum and instructional material was not integrated they were questions for their decision to have reading material that featured only Black authors or their integration of African American culture in the curriculum like learning Swahili. When these participants refused to integrate less Afrocentric cultures into their school's curriculum their funding was denied.

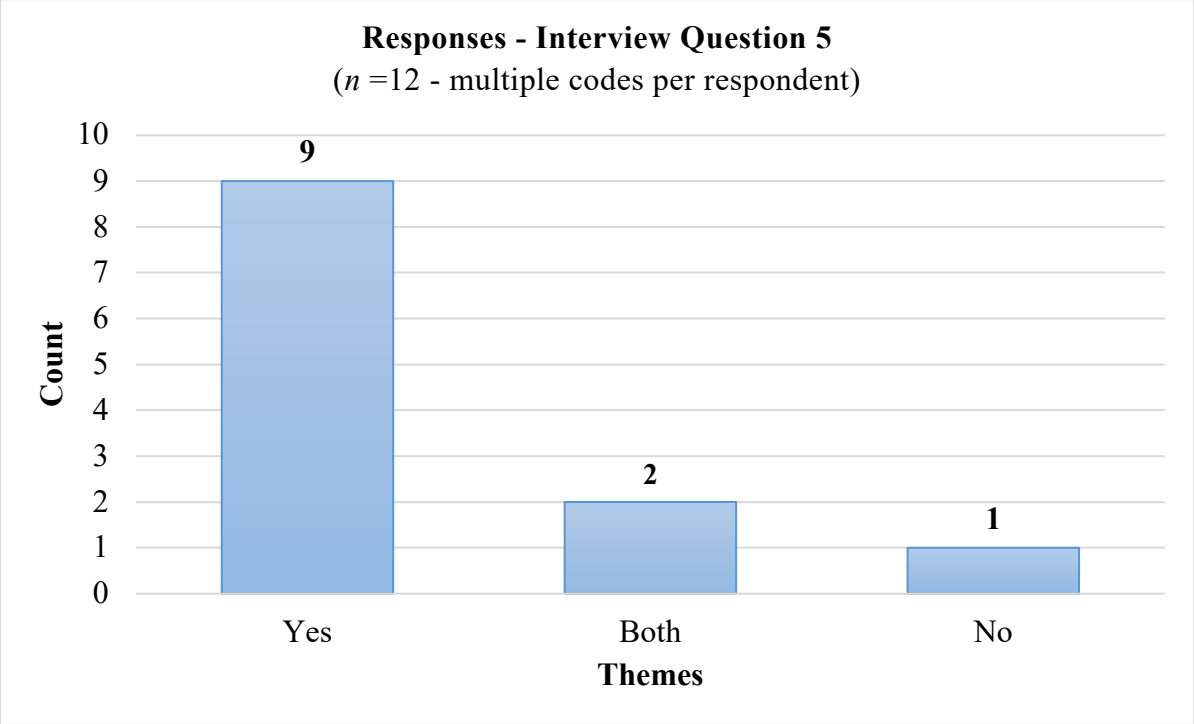
Lack of Programs. Four out of 12 participants (Participant 5, Participant 7, Participant 9, Participant 11) stated that programs, or lack thereof, were a challenge or an obstacle preventing students from succeeding. The responses were mixed with examples of their own programs versus programs at traditional public schools. Those participants that listed their own programs as a challenge by mentioning the lack of sustainability due to funding as an obstacle in ensuring their student's success (Lee, 1992). Others mentioned lack of programs specifically to assist in the success of African American students in traditional public schools (Kozol, 1991). For example, Participant 10 said that, "Latino students have had more programs in place for them due to laws specially to assist in educating them than African Americans have." African American specific programs that benefit them academically, socially, culturally, and more is nonexistent in our current education system. "It is the contrast," cited Participant 8, "there are states who have removed Ethnic Studies from their curriculum". On the other hand, Participant 3

specified sustainability of their program (due to funding), for self-defense and increase reading skills, as a challenge for their students not succeeding more. Also, Black independent schools are overall low on sustainability through K-12 schools as more and more are closing due to low attendance and funding because African American families and communities are unaware they exist (Ratteray, 1992). Because they are so few of these schools, an African American student may attend a Black independent school from K-8th grade, but they have to attend a traditional public-school high school where they are integrated back to the educational system that is not meant for them to succeed (Yancey, 2004). It is suggested that traditional K-12 public schools are not resourced to offer the support needed for African American students to succeed so the educational environment is not conducive for growth or achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Kozol, 1991).

Interview Question 5. The fifth interview question asked, would you ascribe any of these challenges or obstacles to systematic or institutionalized racism? Please elaborate or give examples. Similar to IQ4, this interview question sought to determine if there was a correlation between the challenges or obstacles faced by African American students in the educational system is ultimately attributed to systemic or institutionalized racism in the United States. It is imperative that participants who make this case do so distinctively and clearly with specific examples. The challenges and obstacles were acknowledged in IQ4 , thus this with this interview question, it is a matter of drawing a connection with more concrete examples using the same themes. Primarily, the participants answered the question with a yes or no answer hence the addition of the statement to elaborate or give examples. Consequently, based upon the participant's responses to this interview question, the themes produced are as follows: (a) yes, (b) no, or (c) both (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 5



Yes. Nine out of 12 participants (Participants 2 through 10) answered that they do believe that the obstacles and challenges discussed in the previous interview question is a direct result of systemic and institutionalized racism. As examples, they described different scenarios and practices in place in the K-12 public schools' system. Participant 3 expressed the following statement,

> We know that we have a history in this country that has denied Black folks quality education and teachers who are prepared to work with and serve our students. We're giving curriculum that does not include our history and our culture. We also know that we have school to prison pipelines.

Participant 5 responses added to Participant 3's statement by adding,

> We, as a culture, may see our behavior one way someone outside the culture to perceive them, correct? And so, once you are put into truancy or are sent home, or if not sent home, you know, law enforcement called. Something happened at the school that caused law enforcement once their name is in the system, then it's a steady decline. There're no

> interventions right away for our children. We also know that. Our young people just don't often see themselves in that space, education space, and when you don't have someone, at least you kind of looking…then that becomes a barrier to the success of sorts, those are some of the things that come to mind.

No. Only one out of 12 participants (Participant 1) did not feel that all the challenges and obstacles African American students face is a result of any systemic or institutionalized racism. The participant's reasoning is because African American students have various choices for education in K-12. Participant 1 stated,

> We open up our own schools. We cannot expect for anyone else to solve our problems. And that's bottom line, it's not going to work. The system is not set up for us to be extremely successful and so once we understand that I think we would stop having those expectations in the disappointment rate would probably drop a little bit. We cannot expect for anyone else to take care of our issues. That's something that we have to do.

In the participant's response, they acknowledged that the traditional public-school system is faulty as a system in general and not specifically due to systemic or institutionalized racism (Comer, 2004; Loder, 2006). The participant's position is that people have choices and because parents can choose what school they can send their child to that they can avoid the system with options (Bush, 1997, 2004; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987). The options are homeschooling or Black independent schools or equivalent for African American students which is currently on the rise for various reasons, most that differ from why White families decide to homeschool their children (Mazama & Lundy, 2012).

Both. Two out of 12 participants (Participant 11 and Participant 12) felt as though a combination of the systemic and institutionalized racism and other factors accounted for the challenges and obstacles African American students face. In defining systematic and institutionalized racism, they used examples, such as the overall treatment of African American students on campus, and how they perceived African Americans with bursts of energy in the classroom (Hilliard, 1992). Participant 12 detailed their observations of their student's class

before ultimately deciding to homeschool them,

> I have seen it in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten, when non-African American students get antsy they are given choices of taking a break and going outside for recreation or continuing their assignment then playing later. In turn, this will let the students know they have options and builds decision, critical thinking skills. On the other hand, when African American students displayed the same antsy energy they were threatened with calls home to their parents, told to sit down, and you know, they had recess or lunch taken away from them. They were penalized and not able to make decisions while the other students were able to develop leadership skills.

The other participant also mentioned other factors which included inactivity and involvement of parents in their child's education (Edwards, 2002). For instance, Participant 11 voiced the following,

> I was able to overcome those challenges in the public-school system because I was an active parent, so because I'm a parent that also ran education programs in my actual current job, doing Freedom schools managing, the freedom schools' program, and teaching teachers how to teach.

Summary of RQ2

RQ2 is focused on the main challenges or obstacles as well as bridging a connection between the challenges or obstacles that block the success of African American students and the systematic and institutionalized racism that exist in our K-12 public school system. Participants were asked directly if the challenges or obstacles their or other African American students faced is a directly or indirect result of systematic or institutionalized racism. This research question is supposed to find underlining origin in hopes of eliminating or lessening these challenges or obstacles to promote more success for African American students.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked, what strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education? This research question is an opportunity to start establishing solutions to the

challenges or obstacles African American students face as a result of institutionalized racism in the educational system. Participants are asked, based on their observation, experiences, and expertise, to give their strategies as part of the possible solutions. Also, participants will have a space to reflect and offer guidance for those already have and thinking about starting a Black independent school or equivalent school or program. Research Question 3 (RQ3) is comprised of the three interview questions:

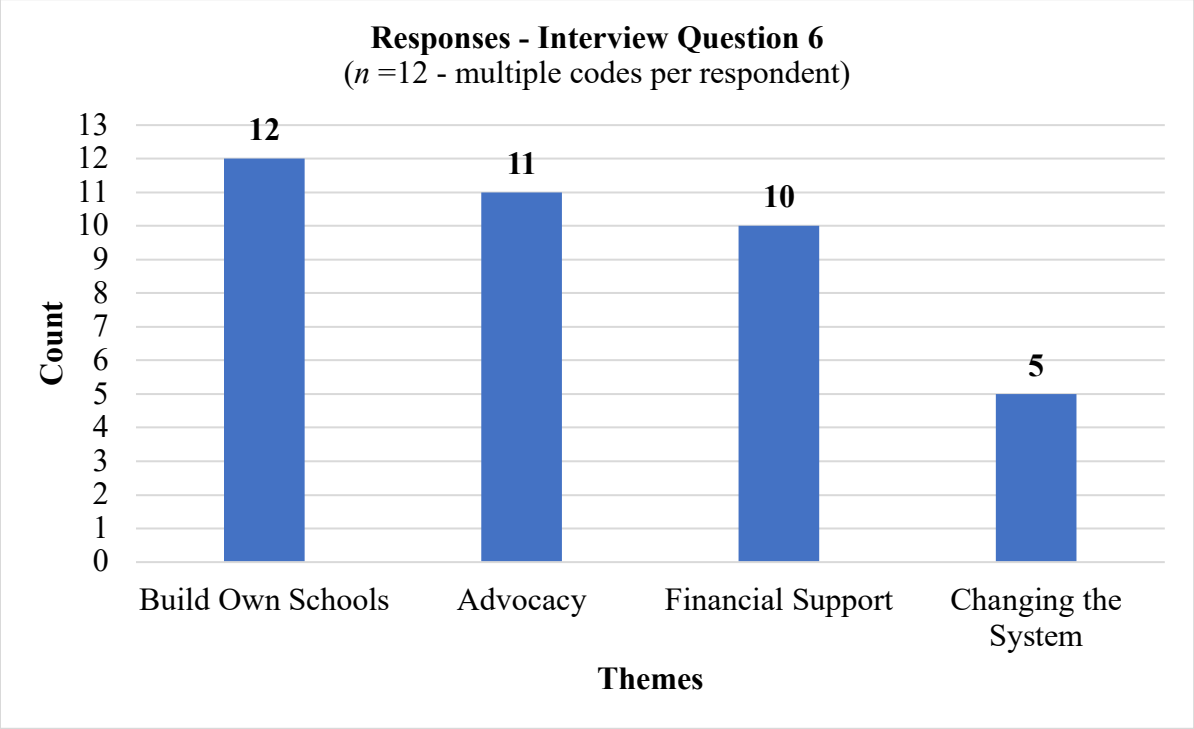
- IQ6: How do you overcome these challenges?
- IQ7: How about those challenges that are more deeply rooted and are systemic?
- IQ8: In hindsight, what decisions would you reverse or actions you would do differently?

These following interview questions will introduce the themes that were associated with RQ3.

Interview Question 6. How do you overcome these challenges? This interview question starts a series of the three interview questions associated with RQ3 that offers the participant to share their expertise and expertise in contributing a solution to prevent the challenges or obstacles that hinders African American students from success because of institutionalized racism in education. As an outcome, four interesting themes emerged from the participants responses: (a) advocacy, (b) financial support, (c) changing the system, and (d) build own schools (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 6



Advocacy. As mentioned in the previous interview question, support and advocacy are important aspects in a child's education, especially for African American children (Wilds, 1986). In an educational system that minimizes African American children's identity and, in a space, they are uncomfortable in because it was not meant for them, African American students would benefit greatly from advocacy (Edwards, 2002; Morant, 1970). To overcome the challenges or obstacles they face where their voices are not heard, African American students need those who identify with and like them–teachers, family, support providers, and communities, to advocacy for their needs (Edwards, 2002; Lynch, 2016; Morant, 1970). Eleven out of 12 participants in the research study indicated "advocacy" in their responses to this interview question. The responses were diverse as to where advocacy should be seen. Some participants suggested starting at the school site by integrated the parent groups and attending school board meeting and even holding

local volunteer offices where parents can influence the decision-making that affects their child's educational experience. As Participant 1 contributed,

> I have a problem when teachers admit that they feel suffocated in the classroom…It's a problem when you feel like you're not a part of the community because if you're teaching in the community, you are somewhat a part of the community. So, if you don't feel a part of the community, that means that you're not connected. If you're not connected, you're probably not going to reach all those children. That's a problem. So those are just a few of the things that I know for or fact that happens in our communities. And that's the reason why sometimes our children don't feel like they're validated, they don't feel that connection.

Participant 3 added, "Having representation matters. They [African American students] feel empowered." Advocacy can come from anyone and come in many difference forms, including financial (Morant, 1970).

Financial Support. Financial support will go a long way of eliminating the challenges or obstacles in the educational system. Financial support is another way of saying investing in African American student's education to address and solve the challenges and obstacles preventing them to success academically or in the educational space (Lee, 1992). Ten out of 12 participants listed examples of investing financially to the advancement of African American students' education like developing curriculum that identifies with African American Students. Participant 5 gave an example of this,

> We make sure that with our curriculum that we find authors that write books that reflect our young people. I love when I can see just the illustrations. Thus, we ensure the illustrations show brown kids, brown family, brown parenting, Black parents and villages and real situations [such as] where the dad had to leave…he was out of the home and our students can relate.

Another form of financial support is recruiting and properly preparing teachers who look like African American students to teach at your schools (Lynch, 2016; Edwards, 2002). Participant 9 revealed,

> We look and search for college students who look like the students we serve and come from their communities. But we also bring in students who may not come from the community, but can relate to our students. The desire to make a difference and wanting to ensure young people have positive adults around.

Participant 1 expressed,

> It's a problem that my son probably will only have his second African American instructor and he'll be a senior in high school. Well, he's a senior officially in high school. That's a problem. So, he honestly really does not see [representation]. Someone that looks like his mom. That looks like his dad, that looks like him. So, there's a possibility that the instructors are not necessarily really connecting with him.

Human resources need to have funding to increase recruitment techniques to attract the right people to facilitate the classrooms and other educational environments for African American students (Ballou & Podgursky, 1998). Furthermore, another part of the recruiting aspect is training, if needed. Other examples of financial support are programs and classes that connect with African American students, such as teaching Swahili (Binder, 2000; Lee, 1992). Participant 10 included in their response that teachers learned Swahili to teach African American students as part of their coursework. They made the comparison of financial support to offer languages courses to show appreciation and culture to students with many schools teaching Spanish for Spanish-speaking students and non-Spanish speaking students as well as the more affluent schools teaching French, Latin, Mandarin, Chinese, or German language classes; however, none of these language courses involve any languages that originated from the African culture (Cochran-Smith, 1997; Comer, 2004).

Changing the System. The changing of the system in the way public-school system is founded and operated, refers to the development of new systems reflecting all students and their needs and culture without any of the amendments as well as modifications previously achieved through laws. Five out of 12 participants listed this as a response to the interview question. Participant 3 stated that getting Black political leaders aware of the existence of Black

independent schools, by inviting them to observe a class or program, or African-centered program because many of them are not exposed or even heard of them. They continued but recalling a time when Civil Rights activist John Lewis visited a Freedom School before his passing and explains the experience as empowering. Participant 2 shares the same sentiment adding that, "Advocacy in the community grants connections to elected officials which offers the opportunity to connect in different ways…including our schools". Participant 9 concluded that, "we have to make it on the consciousness of Black political leaders, invite them into the educational space of our African American students, make them care, make them see it is money in the educating our children." Lawmakers, elected officials, have the power to change the system if enough of them are committed to it (Clark & Astuto, 1987).

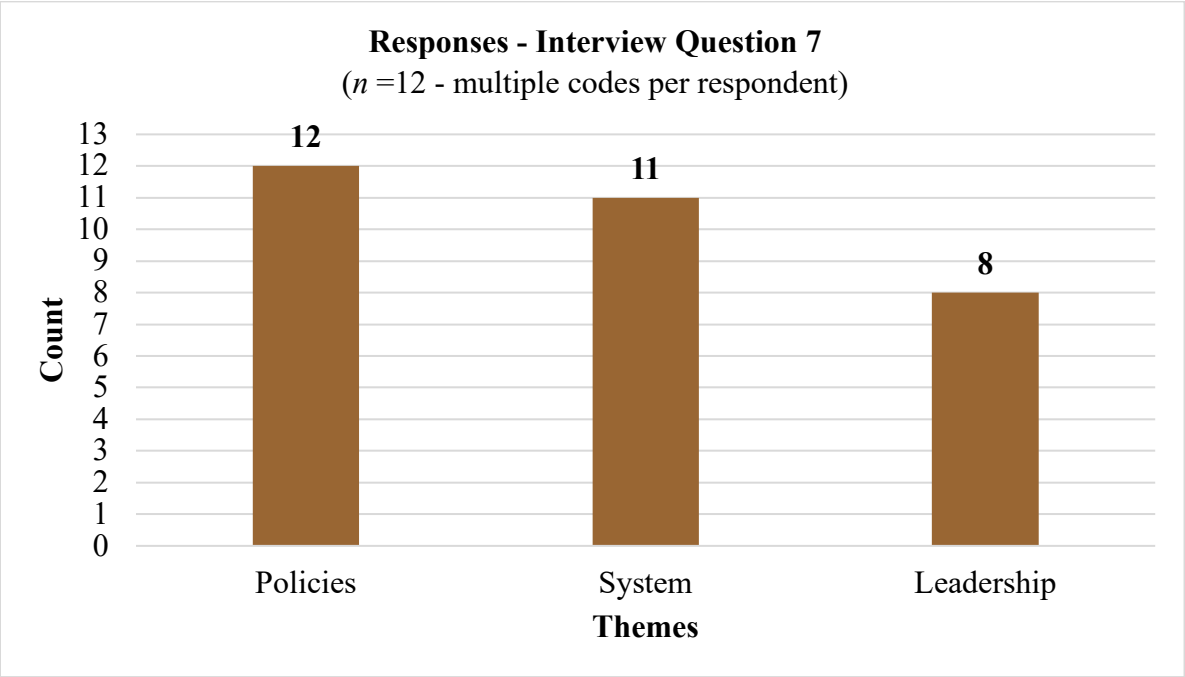
Build Own Schools. Twelve out of 12 participants mentioned that the only way to combat these challenges was to encourage more people to open up schools that cater to African American students only. Participant 3 suggested that the model has already been made, African American leaders just have to follow "the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project…a program that was intentional about changing economic and political plight of Black Mississippians in 1960s. And so, we draw on that energy on that inspiration and on that model" (Participant 3). Participant 1 said that only way is to open our own schools in our own communities as a collective effort to educate our own children. Participant 1 commented that more parents should take advantage of homeschooling their children to have more flexibility and leadership in the education setting and learning material.

Interview Question 7. The next interview question asked, how about those challenges that are more deeply rooted and are systemic? The purpose of this interview question is to dive deeper into the challenges of African American students to get to root of the problem as well as

classify those that are more deeply rooted as systemic. These three themes were derived from participant's responses: (a) system, (b) leadership, and (c) policies (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 7



System. Eleven out of 12 participants suggested developing a new educational system altogether. Participants stated that more educational setting and environment options should be offered. There is currently the traditional, homeschooling, online schools, credit recovery, continuation, and independent studies. However, a lot of parents are not told these options for whatever reason. During the recent pandemic, parents in suburban areas developed learning pods where their child was learning and having school with a small group of children from their neighborhood in one's living room (Neighborhood Villages, 2020). This phenomenon will outlast the pandemic and has sent a shock to the American educational system (Burke, 2020). Participant 2 stated,

I do believe that our school system is taking that leadership away from them, especially

> as they are, you know, Black boys because if they show too much leadership, there are threat to the teachers. If they ask too many questions, they're a threat to the teachers and I experience that a lot with both of my sons...So they ask a lot of questions and they push back a lot and the school system does not, you know, like that especially like, you know, the walking in line thing. I don't believe that kids should have to walk in line and put their hands behind their backs. It's like certain things that we're teaching our children at a young age, preparing them for prison.

Besides changing the educational setting for African American students, there needs to be a change in practices, policies, and laws (Firestone, 1989). The most common mentioned is police presence in the educational settings and procedures like attendance or wellness checks (French-Marcelin & Hinger, 2017). Police presence contributes greatly to the school to prison pipeline (Archibold, 1998). Participant 12 mentioned that Latino parents have a loophole in the attendance system where they can check their children out of school because they are visiting family or going on vacation, without any proof of traveling documents or obituary, for short term independent studies, for months without penalty but if an African American student misses a certain amount of school they can receive a ticket or even have a School Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting that may eventually lead to a School Attendance Review Board (SARB) meeting and maybe an appearance in court.

Leadership. Eight out of 12 participants believed some of the more deeply-rooted and systemic challenges African American students faced are due to leadership. In examining leadership, it pertains to those who are in positions that make decisions such as laws, policies, and rules (Harris, 1961; Ramsey, 2017). The continued leadership of those who have not changed things in the educational system but indeed make things worst is why African American students are still struggling with the same deeply rooted and systemic challenge (Gillborn, 2005). Participant 4 voiced, “even with a Black president thing did not get better.” The other seven participants whose responses contributed to this theme shared the same sentiment and even went

further saying there was not enough Black people in leadership positions in education and government but when they are they do not change anything. Participant 9 stated, “Black people in leadership positions for education sometimes makes things worst of our children.” Participant 5 added, “It is like they [Black leaders] have to be harsher to African American students to get and maintain their job.” An example of this was from Participant 8, “Even our new VP of the United States, as a state attorney general she was throwing our Black parents into jail for attendance issues…like that helped.” Participants agreed that representation in leadership is important because the leadership would be believed to help greatly but it needs to be the right representation that is founded in love, compassion, and understanding. Participant 3 mentioned that outside of representation of leadership that the type of leader is important and that servant leaders are more prominent in Black independent schools in which success rates are higher and more Black servant leaders are needed.

Policies. The theme of policies touched on an array of different levels from school site policies to federal policies so much that 12 out of 12 participants agreed that policies need to be addressed. Participant 1 detailed an experience from one of her students who came from K-12 public school to a Black independent school that has suffered, “I had a family that came from Chicago and the mom expressed, you know, she said, ‘I just want to let you know, you know, No Child Left Behind? It’s real because my child was, you know, left behind.’” Participant 1 continued by adding in other policies that has been the subject of reform for decades:

> Grades raise the bar! This teacher told me that they allowed D’s to be passing, but first of all, raise the bar do not insult us [African Americans] like that. We [African American students] are more than capable of making C’s let alone D’s.

Participant 7 conveyed that lack of urge for developing policies or programs for African American students in their response,

> It just it seems like things are always made to happening for non-Black families. They find a way for things to happen. They find the resources. They find the programs…They find things for them…our kids need assistance as well.

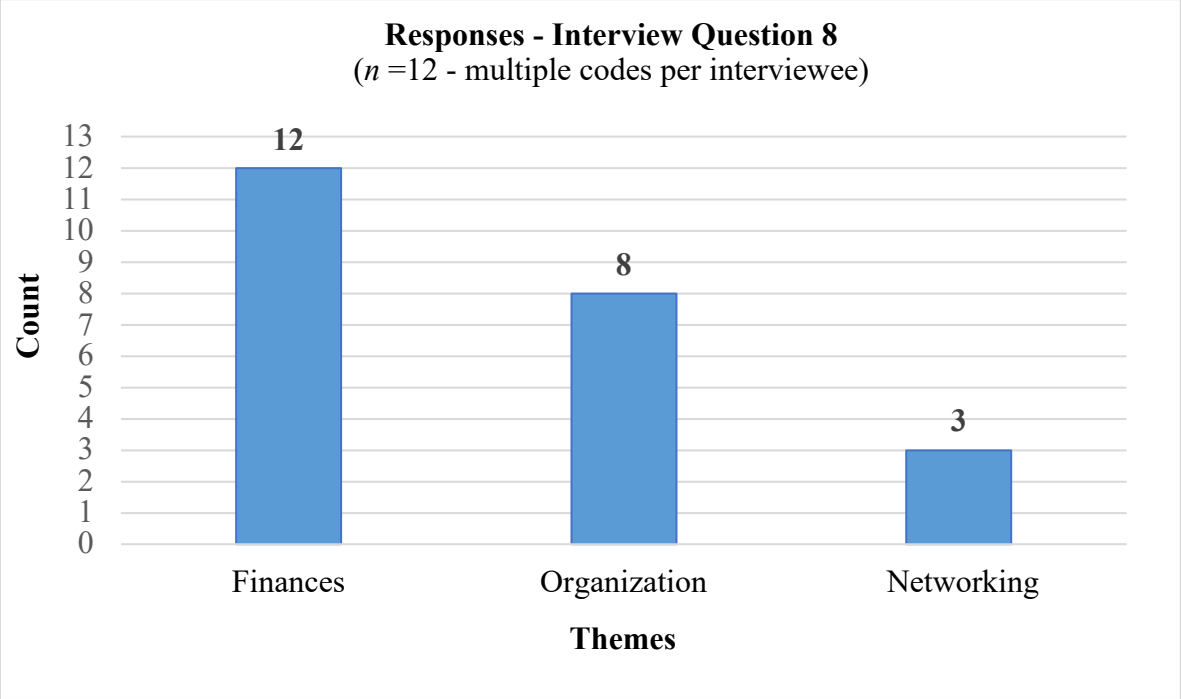
Lastly, Participant 11 response detailed the policies that referred to the school day and hours of instruction, grades, and homework,

> At the primary school students maybe 13 subjects depending on the age and was expected to spend like at least two hours of homework…they went to school from nine to five and then they had Aftercare from five to seven. We did not give them a lot of play time, maybe 30 minutes, total instructional break time including lunch. The school was for educating and play was not on the director's mind. School was open year-round, we did not get a summer break, and students attended, we expected to attend.

Interview Question 8. In hindsight, what decisions would you reverse or actions you would do differently? Interview Question 8 (IQ8) is the first of next few questions that invite participants to reflect on their journey and experiences in an effort to assist other following in their path. Opening a school is hard and maintaining a school is even more difficult, especially a specialty/alternative schools like Black independent schools (Teicher, 2006). The decline in Black independent schools occurred quickly, dating back from the 1970s (Teicher, 2006; Wilkinson, 1984). The participants' responses to this interview question, have been coded into three themes: (a) finances, (b) organization, and (c) networking (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 8



Finances. With any school, business, or organization finances are important for daily operations, services, and sustainability. Participants discussed their experiences and lessons in finances in being in a Black independent school. The finance experiences range from spending, fundraising, and budgeting. Six out of 12 participants' schools require tuition for enrollment into their educational institute. Participant 1 stated that tuition was $457 per month, per student enrolled. The tuition along with the money donated, fundraised, and funded went into paying for employees, resources and operations of the school. In the state where the participant's school is located, K-12 public schools get around $47 per day per child. In a month that has 30 days, not including weekends; a school can get around $940 a month per student. The discrepancy in funding from this school's tuition to the state's funding is $465; however, the tuition is collected whether or not the student attends whereas the school loses $47 a day each time the student is

absent. For the remaining six participants whose schools do not collect tuition payments, they expressed the stress of obtaining and managing finances. Participant 3 recalls their experience of trying to get funding,

> My first and second year was so successful. I was had a co-founder and there were so many people who wanted to support the work we were doing but over time we started losing money. Now funders decided to fund something else. The money just isn't there anymore.

Additionally, Participant 7 added their experience when trying to get funding where they were asked to change their curriculum and student population to reflect more diversity shifting the focus to African American only to including multiple cultures and student populations. The participant refused the suggestion as a requirement for funding and had to find their own funding as a result. Because finances fluctuate participants stated that had to save and spend more wisely.

Organization. In analyzing their experience, participants expressed their regret in not having organizational skills. Eight out of 12 participants revealed that the lack of organizational skills was tied to their failures. As a leader, it is the expectation to have things in order to lead and to sustain functionality (Elmore, 2000). Participant 2 started their own homeschool and said this about their experience as it relates to organization,

> I pretty much, I think, I pivoted throughout trying to have everything…having to be so structured. I have to do everything and so I started off that way and then I burned myself out. Then I realized it was burning them [students] out. It doesn't work like. Yeah, so now I am just a little bit more relaxed and organized on keeping up with a full schedule. It's more like I'm learning that what work better now.

Whether it is a daily schedule or keeping up with programs or paperwork, organization makes keeping a school operating more professionally and effortlessly.

Networking. When there is very few of something, either a school or service, competition is sure to develop. With very few Black independent schools and/or equivalent in the United States, there is no one organization or network that maintains a connection between them all.

There is one organization that exists but has not been able to connect and unify all schools under one umbrella, The Council for Independent Black Institutions (CIBI, 2006). Moreover, there is not a pipeline between any Black independent school or equivalent to any HBCUs. Because Black independent schools are so rare and spread out over the United States, there is not networking between primary and secondary Black independent schools to encourage and retain African American students to complete their K-12 educational experiences in Black independent schools (Mutiso, 1974; Rury, 1983). Instead, Black independent schools are usually independent. There is an unspoken competition between Black independent schools for funding, resources, and students (Foster, 1992; Rury, 1983). Many of these participants have witnessed the brutality of competition in trying to secure investors and funding. With limited interested from individual, communities, and companies to support Black independent schools they are always a fight to secure financial resources (Foster, 1992; Mutiso, 1974). Three out of 12 participants named, networking, as a direct correlation to the funding issues of Black Independent Schools. For instance, Participant 3 shared,

> Well, one year, there was another servant leader, who thought she could do the job better [than me and my co-founder] and just felt like we were mismanaging the organization, so she decided to start her own organization. But used all of our contacts to reach out to get funding. We called her out and we basically told all of our funders don't partner with her. I realized I was wrong. and the reason why I said was wrong…there is no space for competition...competition is limiting our growth because we don't have to have it. Everyone had some type of cash. Moving forward, whenever a young person comes to me, whether with an idea or something, I do not take ownership of it. I am willing to help them live out their vision.

Participant 2 voiced that we as a Black community take on a lot, alone. There is a need to build our communities and children to be great but they suggest we cannot do it alone. There is strength in unity, in numbers. Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 12 acknowledged that there is a lot of talent in the Black community, not just athletes or celebrities,

and Black independent schools need to recruit the talent to assist in sustaining these schools. Participant 3 Participant 5, Participant 7, and Participant 9 mentioned getting the young Black adults (college aged) more involved in these educational institutions.

Summary of RQ3

It is commonly quoted that people learn from their (or other's) mistakes. RQ3 gives insight to the trial and errors of those in leadership positions in Black independent schools. This reflection of decisions and experiences, in hindsight, does not take away from the success but gives awareness to the journey. This insight is not mention to judge or ridicule but to show appreciation for the groundwork and achievements taken by these participants in sustaining schools and programs for African American students in the United States (Whiteman et al., 2015). The participant's reflection can prove to be useful in the development and conversations of success for Black independent schools (Bell, 1988; Foster, 1992).

Research Question 4

The final research question, RQ4 asked, what recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring Black independent school leaders who face similar challenges? RQ4 seeks to give advisory recommendations to other Black leaders, or aspiring Black leaders, of Black independent schools. The recommendations will give references and success obtained in the face of adversity and conflict to achieve success. The research question was divided through the resulting interview questions:

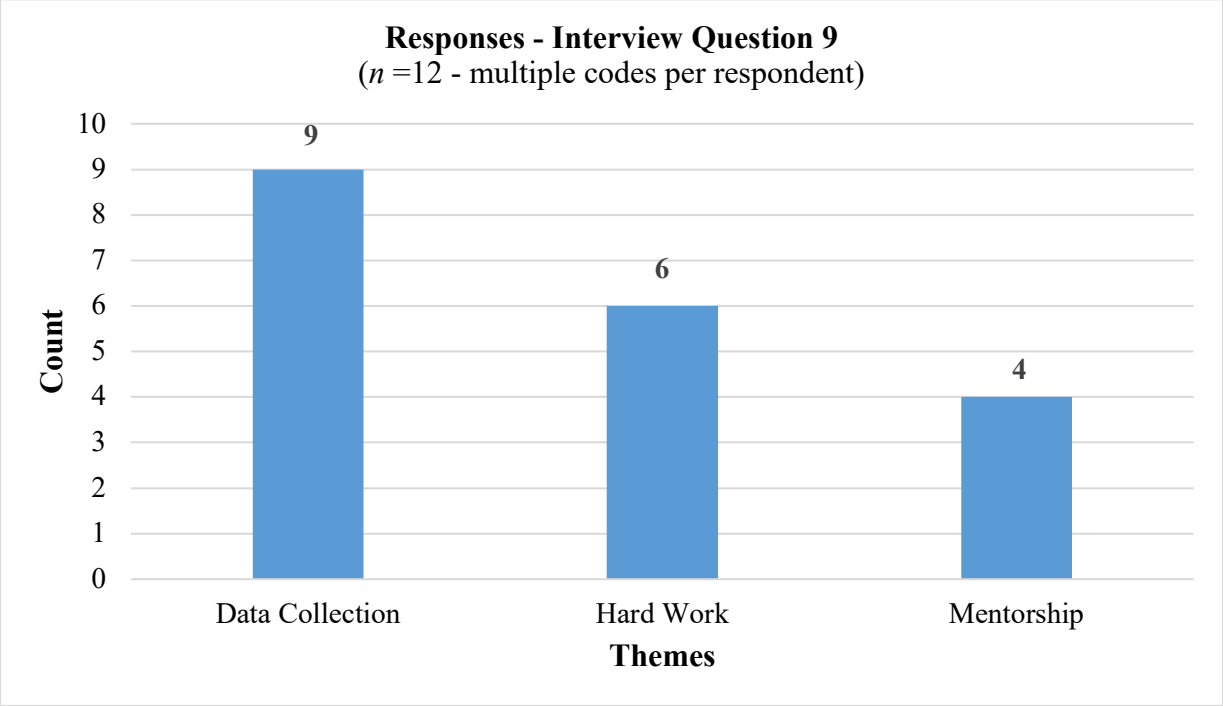
- IQ9: What is the one thing you wish you knew when you first started your job?
- IQ10: What pitfalls would you warn aspiring Black independent school leaders against?

Interview Question 9. This interview question asked, what is the one thing you wish you

knew when you first started your job? Again, IQ9 continues with the conservation of reflection and growth. The participants were asked to reflect individually, first inwardly, then outwardly to the environment they are in from where they started. Also, the idea was to give others the insight to the journey to inform and to advise. In the participant's responses I was looking for a commonality that connected these participants together created by their experiences after reflection. Upon review, these are the themes constructed with the participant's responses collected: (a) hard work, (b) data collection, and (c) mentorship (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 9



Hard Work. Six out of 12 participants have multiple roles and responsibilities in the school they work in, besides being leaders; they may also be class facilitators (educators, teachers, etc.), founders, director, or coordinators of the school or programs (Andrews, 1830). Whatever their leadership title is and the responsibilities they hold, they have made it to this

point at the school or their career where they have accomplished much to be there. With the specialness that comes with not only leading but, in most cases, founding a Black independent school it is not without it challenges (Bowers, 1984; Lomotey, 1992). When presented with IQ9, participants did not hesitate to advise that it is indeed hard work, often times, more than they realized or even signed up for with being a leader of a Black independent school. The underestimating of hard work it is to establish and lead a school designated for African American students is quite common (Alexander-Snow, 2011; Rodgers, 1975). Participant 6's response may offer some encouragement, "Do not stop because…you're going to get some pushback. You're going to get a lot of push back." Participant 3 stated,

> And here again, we're talking about the erasure of Black people, Black culture, Black children. Erasing Black people is problematic. I was thinking… [during the hard times] don't stop because our children need it. With everything we do or attempt to do, there will be hard times. It is almost humorous that there is an assumption that it is not hard to run a school, especially a Black independent school.

Participant 5 suggested that it may be even harder because it is a Black independent school operating in the United States.

Data Collection. Data collection is one of the most vital components in education. Data collection benefits the students, facilitators, and educational institutions equally (Sizemore, 1985). The multipurpose and use of data collection in education is what allows for reflection, improvement and adjustments (Schmoker, 1999). Data collection benefits students to monitor achievement and indicate areas of challenges (IQ2). Data collection for facilitators communicates what the student knows or does not know as well as where one needs to adjust or design their lesson plans, instructional strategies, and what a teacher might need to reteach when it comes to their student (Fletcher, 2009; Grodsky et al., 2008). In addition, data collection feeds information from students to teachers in both formal and informal ways. For leaders of

educational institutions, data informs leaders how effective a teacher or program is (Clotfelter et al., 2005; Gay, 1993, 2000); it is the evidence needed to make changes or redirect funding. Data is almost always needed for funding or investment of schools from private, public, or government sectors (Lee, 2006; Ravitch, 2010). Nine out of 12 participants, in IQ4, acknowledged that a background or credential in teaching is not necessarily a requirement for being a teacher, educator, or facilitator in most Black independent schools, when either founding or being a leader at a Black independent school, data collection is not something that is assumed. Participant 3 testifies that their lack of educational background was signified when founding a school that it was not until later, when requesting funding from potential sponsors, that the request for data was often asked,

> See, the work here is valuable. You know, we're recognizing now data is important in education and I wish I would have known some of this sooner, you know, like…how to present your data, how to even collect your data, what data you even need. Those things would have been very good.

Other participants regrettably did not keep their data in the beginning of certain things that they now wish they had, Participant 1, replies, “I can't even really say that they kept data, which is something that is, you know, always something that you want to keep. But I keep my own data.” Participants cringed at the thought of lost data or lack of data collected that will show the amazing work Black independent schools are doing for African American students.

Mentorship. While only four out of 12 participants (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 4) implied this need, Participant 3 gave an almost tearful response when they talked about the importance of a mentor and how they wished they had a mentor when founding their school, “One thing I wish I knew before is navigating public education system, you know, I was like 21 [years old]. I did not know how to fundraise to get half a million dollars. If I had a mentor.” As mentioned in Interview Question 8 (IQ8), networking is an important

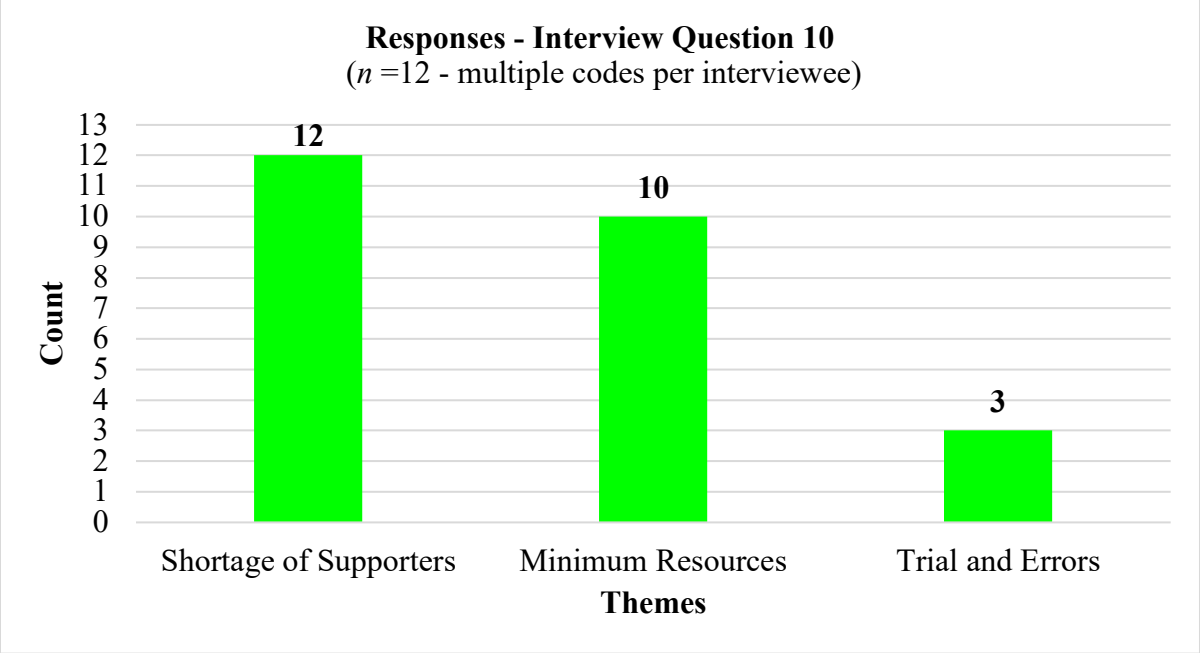
component in this small category of K-12 schools and programs that serve African American students only in the United States; that is missing. Other Black independent schools do not unite to support or even collaborate with each other; as a result, the opportunity to develop a mentorship is missed (Chao et al., 1992; Mertz, 2004; Moberg, 2000; Murrell, 1999). The benefits of mentorship are sustainability and professional (and individual) growth (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2014). These benefits are greatly needed with Black independent school leaders. The need is a two-way street, as current leaders needed a mentor (some participants expressed the current need) for guidance, networking, and development (Goleman et al., 2002; Reyes, 2003). These current leaders also need to be a mentor to those aspiring to follow this career path. Looking at the IQ8 and IQ9, when participants were asked to reflection on decisions and actions they would have done differently or on the advice they would give others, most of their challenges may have been avoided with a good mentor. Participant 2 train and mentor other teachers from Freedom Schools which has helped in her journey in opening a homeschool for African American students. Their interests include mentoring other Black parents who are interested in homeschooling or opening up a school (Rury, 1983; Wright, 1976). Participant 3 is in the process of organizing a "virtual platform for her network of friends, family, and other folks she has run across in this profession to, you know, who've done the research to share with the community."

Interview Question 10. The final interview question asked, what pitfalls would you warn aspiring Black independent school leaders against? As IQ10 states, the purpose of this question is to give caution of advice for those who aspire to create or be a leader of a Black independent school. Continuing with the subjects of reflection, growth, networking, and mentorship, this final question encourages participants to pass what they have learned in their journey as a warning for

other who seek to go on the same journey of leaders in Black independent schools. From the participant's responses form this question, the following themes were formed: (a) shortage of supporters, (b) minimum resources, and (c) trial and errors (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Themes from Responses to Interview Question 10



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Shortage of Supporters. All 12 participants, when asked Interview Question 10 (Q10) responded with the disheartening shortage of supporters for their choice of either founding or being a leader of a Black independent school. Many participants have admitted that it is Black people in their circle of friends that warn them of failure or will say they are supportive but do not support them either emotionally, financially, or mentally. Other shortages of support are community leaders, businesses and residents (Wilkinson, 1984; Williams, 2020). Participant 9 commented, "It be your own people, Black people are my worst critics." Additionally, Participant 7 seconded that commented by saying, "My family and friends thinks it is commendable what I am doing, but they do not donate or volunteer at my school." In IQ4, IQ6,

and IQ8 responses prompted a theme of either support or finances in some aspect. It is no secret that the Black community has buying power; however, when it comes to education, we will invest in higher education by taking out loans and pursuing the highest degrees but the investment in K-12 education is extremely low in comparison (Bell, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2005). Participant 3 encourages those in the field to "do not stop doing what is right for the community, even if the community does not appreciate it." Other types of shortages of support often missing are like enrollment of students, which are mentioned by three participants (Participant 1, Participant 9, and Participant 10).

Minimum Resources. When trying to go against the system that is already in place, there is the risk of finding resources. Ten out of 12 participants attest to have minimum resources in place to maintain their school or program. For example, when the pandemic hit, many participants recalled how their schools and their programs have suffered due to lack of resources that included personnel, volunteers, and technology. Accessibility to resources, both tangible and intangible, has been a pitfall of Black independent schools since their origin. For instance, K-12 public schools can offer free or reduced lunches through federal programs, yet most Black independent schools offer free breakfast, lunch, and snacks from their budget because they do not want to ask Black families for money. Participant 3 has "spent money because of our programs…we bring in counseling, engagement field trips, and assessments." More participants have claimed they spend more money than they would like to sustain the school. Participant 1 stated, "Teachers are responsible for their own resources, workbooks, assessments, and other things that are needed to be successful in the classroom. We may have textbooks and we may not, some years." As a result, most educational materials and resources are not Afro centered in culture or nature, so obtaining such resources would be a task and costly which makes it difficult

to teach Afro centered information to students.

Trial and Errors. The academia of Black Independent (or equivalent) Schools are still very rare. The successes of the schools that have been around since the 1970s but are not often publicized or easily accessible so much that many blueprints for Black independent schools are nonexistent (Kates, 2017; Lomotey, 1992). Only three out of 12 participants listed "trial and error" as a general response. Participant 3 mentioned that their Freedom School is modeled by 1964 Mississippi Freedom School originally developed to change the economic and political plight of Black Mississippians through work-shop style courses [ranging] from basic reading and math, civics, African-American history to modern Africa and French (Nelson et al., 2016). In education, techniques and methods change as much as policies and procedures and as participants mentioned in previous interview questions about navigating the public-school system, and without a guide on how to open and run a school without background knowledge or a background in education can be daunting. All of the participants come from traditional K-12 public schools and as Participant 3 confirms,

> I, too, came up [in] public [school] education and learned how to be a contributing citizen based off of the principles of White ideology and masculinity and so capitalism was at the forefront. And when trying to go from the ideologies you know to ideologies of that of your culture that is a hard transition often faced by Black leaders in Black independent schools.

Participant 2 has used their work with Freedom Schools to assist open their own school. Participant 3 trains their staff for two weeks to learn the Freedom School model and familiar the staff with the resources and materials used. Participant 1 said that there were on professional development opportunities and teachers were tasks to learn Swahili on their own when they were tasked with teaching their students. Failure to have any reference points of success for Black leaders of Black independent schools results in a more than usual trials and errors and aspiring

Black independent school leaders should be aware of this (Asante, 1991; Hoover, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Summary of RQ4

RQ4 and its corresponding interview questions, IQ9 and IQ10 focused on the sharing of advice due to experiences and knowledge from participants to aspiring Black independent school leaders. The purpose of this was not to scare off aspiring Black independent school leaders, but to inspire them and advise them so they could have a chance to be successful. In order to do so, participants had to be transparent in the recollection of experiences, good and bad, in the Black independent school settings in order to forewarn aspirants of the same challenges and obstacles they faced.

Chapter Summary

The focus of Chapter 4 was to gain a deeper understanding of the Black independent schools and their African American student populations as seen through their Black leaders. The strategy of attaining this perspective insight, the lived experiences of Black leaders of Black independent schools, utilized in a qualitative phenomenological study, was interviewing. An interview was conducted to obtain the most accurate and insightful experiences and responses influenced by the central questions the research study was targeted to address.

A series of interview questions was prepared to acquire the responses used to reveal the key themes that are relevant to answering the four research questions. Following the identification of 12 individuals as potential participants for this study and soliciting their participation, interviews were arranged. During the interviewing process, a meticulous process of transcription of the interview for each participant followed by the coding and analysis process to determine the key themes of each interview question. As key themes were discovered for each

question for each participant, they were documented and quotes were captured for each participant. As the interviews continued, it was observed that themes for each question were reoccurring. After the sixth interview, it was recorded that there were no new themes were introduced for the 10 interview questions from the responses of the participants. Even after the sixth interview, interviews for Participants 7 through Participant 12 continued with the hopes of new themes or to add more content to the study. On completion of all 12 interviews, there was no new themes introduced and the qualitative study was determined to reach the point of saturation. For this reason, no new interviews were conducted after Participant 12. At the conclusion of the interview process, a total of 12 interviews were administered with more than 500 minutes of video and audio transcribed. In the end, the shortest audio recording was 65 minutes and the longest audio recording was 148 minutes.

Next, the coding and analyzing of each of the 12 participant's interview transcripts progressed and a chart was created to provide an organized visual method of the key themes collected from the coding and analysis on transcription. Between the four research questions and 10 interview questions, nearly 75 individual themes were identified then analyzed for deeper understanding and significance in answering the central research questions. Starting with RQ1, which defines and measures the successes of African American students in Black independent schools, the three interview questions (IQ1, IQ2, and IQ3) associated with RQ1 yielded responses from participants that resulted in grouping together ten themes. Next, RQ2 focused on identifying the challenges or obstacles African American students faced in the educational system. The two interview questions (IQ4 and IQ5) resulted in six separate themes. RQ3 addressed the association of the challenges or obstacles African American students met in the educational system to systemic or institutionalized racism in three interview questions (IQ6, IQ7,

and IQ8), which led to 10 new themes. Lastly, RQ4 intended to offer admonishment for aspiring Black leaders of Black independent schools based on the experiences and insight of the participants through two interview questions (IQ9 and IQ10); thus, producing six more different themes.

The subsequent themes and frequency charts are the findings of this study and functions as a response to the inquiry to affirm the researcher's conclusions and determine further recommendations. While a total of 32 separate themes (see Table 7) were identified in this research study, most of the themes appear to either repeat themselves or have slight similarities depending on the specificity of the interview question. The natural grouping of theme integration will be examined and highlighted in Chapter 5.

Table 7

Summary of Themes for Four Research Questions

RQ1 Measuring & Defining Success	RQ2 Identifying Challenges/Obstacles	RQ3 Association of Challenges/Obstacles	RQ4 Admonishment
Bridging Learning Gap	Teachers	Advocacy	Hard Work
Escalation in Confidence	Lack of Support	Financial Support	Data Collection
Involvement	Lack of Programs	Changing the System	Mentorship
Observations	Yes	Build Own Schools	Shortage of Supporters
Data	No	System	Minimum Resources
Individual Success	Both	Leadership	Trial and Errors
Overall Collective Success		Policies	

RQ1 Measuring & Defining Success	RQ2 Identifying Challenges/Obstacles	RQ3 Association of Challenges/Obstacles	RQ4 Admonishment
Academic Achievement		Finances	
Personal Accomplishment		Organization	
School Success		Networking	

Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Implications, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Black Independent Schools as an alternative educational institution for African American students from the traditional K-12 public schools face a variety of unique; yet, not so impossible challenges (Lee, 1992, 2005; Carruthers, 1995). This research study sought to bring awareness of the continued systemic and institutionalized racism that continue to hinder the success of many African American students in the traditional K-12 public school system and educational institutions. By addressing this injustice, this study sought to show that an alternative, in Black Independent Schools, that will provide African American children with the educational setting, practices, and resources for them to achieve success as these schools are designed to do so compared to the traditional K-12 public schools (Lee, 1992; Teicher, 2006). Scholars have provided research for the ideologies and pedagogies that suggest African American students development under the current educational system damages their development (Lee, 1992; Hale, 2001; Hilliard, 1998). Other scholars have made the case for either African-centered education (Asante, 1991), the infusion of Afrocentric curriculum (Asante 1992; Giddings, 2001), or a separate Black School System (Bell, 1988) altogether. Black Independent Schools have existed, despite their societal unpopularity, with many having success and sustainability through decades such as Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools (Chicago, Illinois), Piney Woods School (Piney Woods, Mississippi), and Marcus Garvey (Los Angeles, California), respectively. This study interviewed 12 Black leaders from Black independent schools regarding the challenges or obstacles African American children in the K-12 public school system, the root of these challenges or obstacles, how to overcome these challenges and obstacles, and their recommendations for other aspiring Black leaders in the Black independent schools (or equivalent schools) or programs, based upon their experiences. The leaders participating in this

study have experienced at Black Independent Schools as leaders and facilitators and experience in the K-12 public school system as students and as parents. Their titles range from administrator to CEO/Founder or board member. These leaders have the distinct and special perspectives regarding to the operations of Black independent schools. The insights these leaders have provided highlights the amazingly successful programs and infrastructure in Black Independent Schools for African American children. Thus, this chapter will summarize the research study and its findings. The results can be applied to educational institutions whose learning in founded toward the educational, economic, or civic growth of African American students.

Summary of the Study

The objective of this qualitative phenomenological study was to make the connection of the challenges or obstacles of African American students to the systemic and institutionalized racism, based on CRT and Conflict Theory, in the K-12 public education system in the United States while offering an educational institution alternative that is Black independent schools. The selection of participants of this study was based on a specified criterion for sample selection that permitted for the highest level of credibility in the findings. The sample criteria included: (a) age 21 or older, (b) an administrator (school head, principal or equivalent) of a Black independent school in the United States for three or more years, (c) a former administrator of a Black independent school within the last 10 years, (d) an administrator at a school where the school's population is specifically for African American students, and (e) an administrator at a Black independent school that has been in operation for 10 or more years. The final sample consisted of 12 Black leaders who contributed very profound and detailed responses to 10 interview questions. The data provided over 500 minutes of interviews.

There were 11 interview questions that were derived from the four research questions, which were asked of each of the 12 participants. Each of the 12 interviews was recorded via Zoom and later transcribed. As noted by Creswell (2007), the data analysis process used to review the interview transcriptions and highlighting "significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61), is referred to as horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Next, are the steps to the identification of meaningful themes within these statements, sentences, quotes, or phrases, called the clustering process. This clustering process resulted in 32 themes that aligned with the central research questions. Upon further analysis of the 32 themes, the themes contributed for sufficient answering of the four central research questions. Therefore, the identification of these themes provided solutions that meet the study's premise of eliminating the challenges or obstacles of African American students in the K-12 public school system by identifying the causes and offering an alternative educational system or institution.

Discussion of Findings

During the clustering process, where the grouping of similar and relevant statements, sentences, quotes, or phrases of each participant, at set of themes was developed for each of the 10 interview questions. The themes derived from each of the 10 interview questions were organized to represent the assortment of themes associated with the four central research questions. For instance, RQ1 includes a collection of 10 themes resulting from IQ1, IQ2, and IQ3. This process continued for remaining three central research questions and seven interview questions. The coding and data analysis of interview data discovered four key areas of focus that would benefit African American students in the K-12 public school system. Each theme was individually identified through its close relation that connected it to the common areas of interest

or focus. The themes that are aligned with the research question are listed in Table 7.

Results for RQ1

RQ1 asks: How do Black independent school leaders define and measure success for their African American students? The overall themes outlined in the responses to the Interview Questions 1-3 (IQ1, IQ2, and IQ3) pertaining to RQ1 are listed in Table 7. The 10 themes that are directly connected RQ1 assists in Black Independent School leaders defining what success is or looks like for African American students attending Black independent schools. The second part of that connection describes how Black Independent School leaders measure African American student's success at Black independent schools. Participants gave examples of students who have thrived at their schools. Their responses varied but were categorized into three themes: (a) bridging learning gap, (b) escalation of confidence, and (c) involvement. The first two themes are examples of students thriving internally into two areas: (a) academic and (b) self. The third theme is an example of students thriving due to external forces due to: involvement, the student was able to thrive due to the increased involvement of a support system that was present as well as the student's presence (i.e. consistent attendance, amount of time in academic environment).

The underlining issue of challenges and obstacles for African American students are systemic and institutionalized racism, discrimination, bias, and prejudice that are integrated into the public-school system (Bell, 1995; Chemerinsky, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Losen, 1999). As the participant's responses focused largely on the positive examples of triumph of African American students that attributed to their success, the first interview question created a recognition and discussion of these major barriers in their way.

Discussion of RQ1

Systemic and institutionalized racism were recognized by the participants of this study to be effective barriers preventing the highest success for African American students in K-12 public school education. As Shedd (2015) exposes in her study of Black Chicago youth, how they struggle daily to acquire a decent education by addressing what has often held them back for so long-the navigation of school. The study examines this paradox through the experiences of these Black leaders in a relationship between race and urban education. Systemic and institutionalized racism in education cannot always be directly proven, but according to the participants of this study, this is no doubt that these ideologies exist and their existence has affected many. According to Love (2019) and other scholars, systemic and institutionalized racism in our educational system is intentional because those in power profit by and for the miseducation of African American students. Thus, trying to find success in a system where there are institutions can be challenging. We know how success is measured in the public-school system: achievement gaps, achievement tests, mastery of standards, grades, and graduation rate to name a few (Rothstein, 2004; Schmoker, 1999). These are measurements that is connected to the system but are those same measures used in Black Independent Schools? If so, why and are they effective measures of success. If not, how are the measurements of success differ in Black Independent Schools compared to the traditional public schools in the K-12 public school system. Based upon the three themes received, two of the three themes (Bridging Learning Gap and Involvement) listed coincides with the measures of traditional schools that are part of the system (Taylor, 2005); yet, the one theme is something more that is a necessity and unspoken measure of success: escalation of confidence. Bridging Learning Gap is another term for Bridging/Closing the Achievement Gap, which is another way of identifying the success rates among groups of

students. Because of systematic and institutionalized racism in the K-12 public school system in the United States, African American children has progressed academically much slower and lower than other ethnic groups (Ravitch, 2000; Rothstein, 2004). The idea of measuring student achievement in Black Independent Schools is essential to see the effectiveness of Black Independent Schools in essentially educating African American students. Other themes like escalation of confidence and involvement are key factors scholars have mentioned that are benefits of Black Independent Schools for African American children. It is the Afrocentric, African centered, or Afrocentricity aspect of that Black Independent Schools offer in its curriculum and community that cannot be seen in traditional schools (Asante, 1991; Giddings, 2001; Lomotey, 1992).

Participants shared personal, cultural, community and individual challenges and obstacles; hinderance to success that are in the African American student's control. Lack of support system involvement, low self-esteem, and lack of commitment to prioritize education are all sabotaging elements that exist in conjunction where the racist environment may exist. On the other hand, Thomas Sowell (2019) debunks the notion that systemic racism exists in general, especially in education, by introducing a definition of disparities, which he supports by saying systematic racism does not exist. He uses disparities in various areas including the education system in the United States and argues African American student failures cannot be directly or solely blamed on systematic racism but other factors, such as failed ability to nurture student initiatives, current school culture, and lack of school competence. Sowell also states that there has been no overall educational improvement in Black children as a result of seating them next to each other in the classroom.

Results for RQ2

RQ2 asks: What instructionally racist challenges do Black independent school leaders identify that inhibit the success of African American students? In analyzing RQ2, the overall themes indicated are listed in Table 7. In their responses, participants described the most prevalent challenges or obstacles that hinder more African American students from succeeding. Participants also specified if those prevalent challenges or obstacles are a direct result of systemic and institutionalized racism. Triumphantly, the participants believed the challenges or obstacles that were more of a barrier than others were a direct result of systemic and institutionalized racism (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Higgins & Abowitz, 2011).

Discussion of RQ2

In identifying the most significant challenges or obstacles, participants recalled observations and experiences, to separate the categories of challenges or obstacles into level of impact groups. The challenges or obstacles were grouped in a matter that examined their impact on African American student failure, low or high. Once the two groups were formed, participants reflected on the origin of that challenge or obstacles to align it to their understanding of systemic or institutionalized racism.

Dumas's and Ross's (2016) article on examining anti-Blackness in education policies and discourse refers to school as a location of suffering for African American students because of the not willing to acknowledge or interrupt the intricacies or annoyances of Black people's position in society. In K-12 schools, the racialization of policies and discourse is a direct effect of the continued disregard for the culture and disgust of Black people in their entirety. This is seen in policy conversations where policies, practices, and laws are formed through an anti-Blackness lens which not only adds on to the challenges or obstacles Black children face but creates new

ones in the educational system (Linn & Welner, 2007; Lomotey, 1990; Love, 2019).

On the other hand, some participants did not attribute the most significant challenges or obstacles of African American students in education to systemic and institutionalized racism, even though they unanimously believe it exists. Participants felt as though some of those challenges or obstacles reflected individual or collective choices or actions. In contrast, Williams (2020), in *The Tragedy of Black Education Is New*, defends Sowell (1986) by adding that the acceptance of rotten education is not preordained is a problem in the Black community and if that is the case then he wonders when the Black community will demand an educational system that condemns their children to mediocrity. He also adds that the real issue is school climate where violence is more prominent in large urban schools and the blatant disrespect of teachers from pupils as early as kindergarten. These issues displace the blame from systematic and institutional racism to individual or community choice. This conclusion suggests that Black people self-sabotage their own education.

Based upon the answers from participants, the ways in which instruction inhibits African American students from being successful is in content and curriculum. The continued practice of not incorporating and properly appropriating African American culture in curriculum and content such as foreign language classes or content in U.S. and World History classes based upon European cultural ethos. The lack of representation in content and curriculum not only affect African American students intellectually, but social and emotionally as well. (Mazama, 2001). Also, the continued lack of resources and classes offered (both general and accelerated) in major minority attended schools that affects instructions and prohibits African American students from accessing the curriculum contributed to the lack of success (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Dreeben and Gamoran (1986), conducted a study documenting the relationship between educational

opportunities and student performance as well as student performance and minority students' access to those educational opportunities. The outcome of the study revealed that, typically, the equality of instruction given to African American students was much lower than that of their White peers (Barr & Dreeben, 1977; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Dreeben & Gamoran, 1986). The finding suggests this is still going on in public schools across the nation.

Results for RQ3

RQ3 asks: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges their African American students face with institutionalized racism in education? In response to RQ3, the overall themes are presented in Table 7. The associated area of focus is included examples of solutions that were successful in combating the challenges or obstacles that were discussed in RQ2 from the Black leader's experiences in Black independent schools. The purpose of this research question was not only to start a conversation of resolution but offer effective strategies and solutions are successful for African American students. The interview questions linked to this research question are designed to get detailed and specific solutions that are effective in its application to real life scenarios or situations of challenges or obstacles that are more deeply-rooted in origin to systematic or institutionalized racism. In addition, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences to offer suggestions or modifications based on what they would have done differently or what they learned in their experience.

Participants were consistent in naming the deeply rooted challenges or obstacles, African American students face in education, as systematic structure of the education system, failed leadership, and faulty policies (Bell, 1995; Felton, 2017). Participants perceive these themes to be founded in systematic and/or institutionalized racism. These themes are a by-product of the systematic or institutionalized racism; as a result, is too great of a challenge and obstacle to

overcome which makes them their greatest barrier for success. The American educational system consists of three different hierocracy levels: federal, state, and local. Each level comes with its own systematic and institutional racism although they overlap in most areas or intensify in other areas which create the issues seen in the educational system today. (Chemerinsky, 2004; Harris, 1961).

Discussion of RQ3

Participants believed this hierocracy model of our educational system is purposely designed to not only discourage African American students from navigating the education system but to further confuse and abuse African American students in the education environment. Furthermore, participants recognized the tools and instruments used in this hierocracy to reinforce systematic and institutionalized racism: policies, laws, practices, and rules. Our legal and political systems are culprits in this continuous mass racial structure as two complementary systematic and institutionalized systems of the education system. Participants believed the challenges and obstacles in this area were too massive to be handled so they decided to create or be leaders of Black independent schools, where they can control the narrative at the local level in the education environment ensuring direct impact with African American students. Again, Sowell (1986) documents, in a series of collected papers, the academic excellence of two schools which, by definition, are considered Black independent schools. His observations insist that these schools, although successful, lacked in comparison to other integrated public schools in many areas including resources. However, despite those limitations African American students were excelling. Williams (2020) seconds the notion and urges Black parents to demand more for the child's education.

The findings answered the research question about what Black Independent Schools for

African American students as an answer to the research question of overcoming institutionalized racism in the school system. There has been a push for more Black Independent schools as well as a case for a separate Black school system in Minnesota according to the Bell (1989) study. With these schools or the case of separate school system, Black Independent school leaders are able to have more flexibility in their policies/rules, curriculum, content, classes, resources/materials, and overall structure and daily operations at their school site. Although these schools operate in the same school system that has historically failed African American students, within their category (i.e. charter, independent, private, boarding, etc.) they can service their students in ways that make up for the areas that were often like instruction and curriculum (Alexander-Snow, 2011; Lomotey, 1992; Wilkinson, 1984). In Wilkinson's (1984) study about Black Independent Institutions being a reality for alternative education, she not only discussed the beginning of the prominence of Black Independent Schools but also their curriculum, structure, and system of Black Independent Schools that were the focus of the study.

Results for RQ4

RQ4 asks, What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for aspiring Black independent school leaders who face similar challenges? The overall themes identified in the interview questions associated with RQ4 are listed in Table 7. IQ9 and IQ10 based upon RQ4 continues with the participants reflecting upon their experiences and offers them an opportunity to advise aspiring Black leaders of Black independent schools. As the last two questions of the interview, it is almost appropriate to end with asking participants about things they would have done differently and what advice they would give others aspiring to do what they do. It is fitting to conclude the interview with a way to pay it forward to others instead of asking participants if they had anything else to say or add to the conversation. With these two last questions, it gave

participants an opportunity to reiterate that they have said before while clarifying previous key points in detail.

RQ4 starts off with participants give a cautionary warning in way of explaining what they would have done differently. Each participant paired their responses with a story or example that followed shortly after their response. The responses highlighted either the things participants wished they had or wished they knew before starting the journey of being a Black leader of a Black independent school. In addition, RQ4 produced thorough advice for aspiring Black leaders of Black independent schools to avoid much of the pitfalls that the participants experienced. The themes derived from this research question is often consist with the lack of support and mentorship that is often missing for Black leaders in Black independent schools based upon the participant's reflection and experiences (Chao et al., 1992; Reyes, 2003; Rury, 1983; T'shaka, 1989).

Discussion of RQ4

In answering the research question, the advice that Black Independent School leaders will give to aspiring K-12 Black Independent School leaders ranged from support to mentorship. Black Independent Schools are still very new in concept and research, so their successes are not often highlighted. As a result, support, financial and otherwise, for K-12 Black Independent Schools is far and in-between. In 2014, the HBCU Money publication publish an article about four declining African American Boarding Schools in the United States. The article suggests that HBCUs act as a support of Black Independent Schools, in this case African American Boarding Schools, as a way to invest in the core student population that can be future scholars to the HBCUs as an educational pipeline. Miceli (2010) wrote an article on four African-American Boarding Schools. She noted that a St. Petersburg columnist once quoted that there were nearly

100 African American Boarding Schools in the United States at one time. Yet, when she wrote the article in 2010 there were only four remaining. Besides accreditation issues, Black Independent Schools lack support in other areas such as enrollment, funding, and exposure. Mentorship is important in any profession. Mentorship, or mentoring, has many definitions in research literature depending on the context. For the purpose of this research, the definition from Reyes (2003), that mentoring is "a career development opportunity that socializes new members of profession while developing the skills and behaviors of dynamic leaders" (p. 46) will be used. There has been a plethora of research literature on the benefits of mentorship, especially in K-12 education leadership. However, mentorship of Black leaders in K-12 education has been an issue for a while especially in the areas of recruitment and retention (Gardiner et al., 2009). In particular, mentorship for Black leaders in education has focus on the benefits for not only the mentor or mentee, or protégé (Eby et al., 2006), but for the African American students of the school (Moberg, 2000).

Instead, what is not commonly discussed is the notion that not all mentoring is good mentorship. According to the research literature, there are various types of mentorship; depending on the situation or setting, a certain mentorship style is required (Chao et al., 1992). If the wrong mentorship type or program is used in a situation and setting, the results can be negative. Also, with each mentorship type, formal or informal, it comes with its own challenges. For example, in the formal mentorship program one of the most common issues were the lack of time and a discrepancy in pairing between mentor and mentee (Ehrich et al., 2004). If not done correctly, a mentor can not only affect the mentee (Mertz, 2004), but can also affect the school's culture and environment as well as the students (Spillane et al., 2004), in this case Black leaders at Black independent school and African American students. No matter the challenges of

mentoring, it still yields more benefits than not having an efficient mentorship program since mentorship provides guidance and support for students, as well as the faculty and staff in these schools.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study reveal not only the often-hidden K-12 gem and educational institutions, Black independent schools in the United States, but their successes and struggles for sustainability as they continue to promote the educating of young African American students in the United States. This study can be used to further investigate the blueprint of Black independent schools to duplicate more successful Black independent schools in urban areas and to prevent the continuous closing of Black independent schools. The impact of this study can be widespread to education, educational practices, Black educational leadership, African American students and their matriculation rates and achievement gap. Besides education, this study can be impactful in these other academic disciplines: social science, and humanities.

Study Conclusion

This study has uncovered key concepts regarding what African American children needs to reach the fullest potential and succeed in the K-12 public school system and Black Independent Schools in the United States. It also has exposed the lost and often forgotten about Black Independent Schools that, despite their rarity and their social unpopularity, have had major successes in providing the educational environment, educational experience, instruction, instructional design, and curriculum to African American children (Murrell, 2002). In doing so, African American children have to experience the same issues derived from systematic and institutionalized racism often experienced in the traditional K-12 public school. Most successful Black Independent Schools are able to achieve this feat even with the lack of adequate funding,

resources, traditional educational practices, and traditionally trained teachers (Lee, 1992; Lomotey, 1992; Teicher, 2006). Despite the many benefits of Black Independent Schools, their success as well as their importance, in the public education system in the United States, there has been a rapid increase of closures of Black Independent Schools (and their equivalent) due to lack of sustainability since the 1970s (Hoover, 1992; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994). Even in their success, Black Independent Schools have struggled to receive notoriety from the U.S, Department of Education (federal government), the public-school system, state governments, and the Black community, in some cases. With Black parents and families having the choice to send their children to any school very few are choosing to send their children to Black Independent Schools across the nation as opposed to the traditional public schools where their children are subject to continued systematic and institutionalized racism in the forms of education and instructional practices and laws, increased achievement gap, increased police presence on campuses, lack of resources for their child's needs, inequality, misplacement in Special Education, and school-to-prison pipeline (Blanchett, 2006; Kewel Rammani et al., 2007; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987) .

Black Independent Schools is what integration was supposed to be and do for African American students (Barnett, 1951; Bell, 2004; Chemerinsky, 2004; Cohen, 2016). The government and school district had many decades to procure integration correctly and ensure all children are receiving free equal and equitable education, but instead segregation is increasing in a desegregated system through the support of parent choice and vouchers as well as learning pods, homeschooling, and technology accessibility (Felton, 2017; Long, 2019, Skurk, 2020; Williams, 2020). This has been further exposed in the recent pandemic where many African American students, who were already generally behind academically, achievement gaps widen

when did not have access to education or the curriculum through technology (Wi-Fi or laptop) and tutors (learning pods; Williams, 2020). The idea would be to integrate Afrocentric or African-centered curriculums into the public-school system we have in place right now but the original design of said system and the monetarization of the miseducation of African American students will not allow for it (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Kozol, 2006; Oakes, 1985). Scholars have discussed this for years (Asante, 1991; Bell, 1988). Black Independent Schools are not the answer to all the challenges African American students face in K-12 education, but it is a good start. Scholars and African American leaders such as Dr. Asante, Marcus Garvey, James Baldwin and W. E. B Dubois have long supported and proven that the educating of African American students must be best deliver by African Americans and for African Americans, whether through schools in their own communities or through their own school system (Bell, 1988; Durden, 2007; Giddings, 2001; Hale, 2001). Because schools of similar purposes already exist in the United States, the call for more Black Independent Schools is not considered segregation or resegregation. Yet, Black Independent Schools should be supported and able to thrive in this current public-school system especially as HBCUs are becoming more popular with support from philanthropists such as Robert F. Smith and MacKenzie Scott with their large donations along with African American celebrities and athletes like Oprah Winfrey and LeBron James opening their own schools in the United States and abroad, respectively. The focus on the education of African American children is on notice more than ever now and as more schools are being built, there needs to be a space for Black Independent Schools (Lee, 2005; Nobles, 1990).

The idea of resegregation of African American children to either Black Independent Schools or a separate Black School System is why unsupported because of the implications behind segregation and the fear of what will be lost due to integration. Black Independent

Schools have largely been criticized for its focused on a particular race, or ethnicity, with the exclusion of all others. Although other specialized schools such as religious schools excludes other religious practices and require enrollees to attend chapel as a term of their enrollment, they do share the criticisms of race-specific schools. In the summer 1987, a group of African American parents, educators and legislators in Milwaukee, Wisconsin proposed to their intention to get legislation for a Black School system (Bell, 1989). This proposal was condemned by the local school district, the NAACP, and many more because opposers view it as unconstitutional because it supports a "separate but equal" educational system by violating the Civil Rights law, Section 1981. Although many have agreed that legislation and policies have failed to even the playing field for African American students in public school education, it is widely believed that the public-school system is still the right and only choice for African American students (Bell, 1989; Moses, 2017). Also, studies show that more African American children, along with other minority group children, are attending schools with children of the same race. As a result, public, private, and charter schools are becoming more inherently segregated (Clotfelter, 2004). Yet, the thought of race-specific schools is seen as a reversal of integration and a sign of going backwards instead of a solution, academic and otherwise, to the disparities of education between African American students and other minorities in the public-school educational system (Bell, 1989; Clotfelter, 2004).

Application

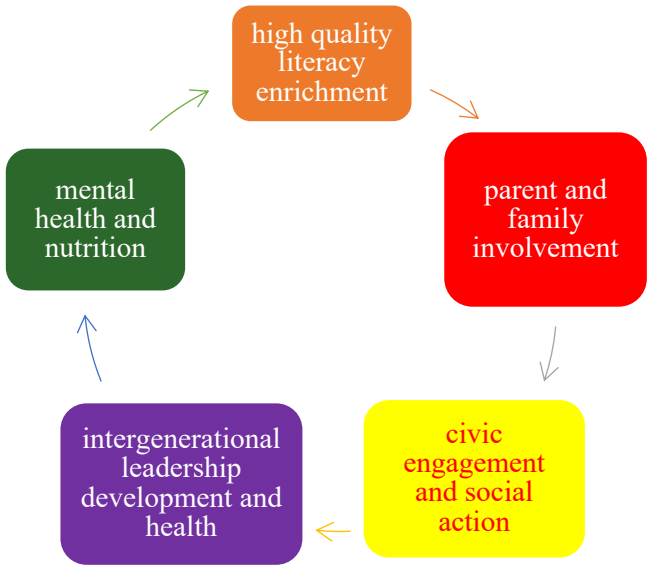
Ultimately, there are three action plans resulting from this study in order to combat systematic and institutionalized racism in the public-school system in the United States. The first plan of action is a need to be a funding to open more Black independent schools nationwide. The federal government needs to acknowledge and support the Black Independent Schools that are

already operating while developing a plan to open many more. This initiative should extend to charter schools and boarding school alike. With their support, the federal government needs to allow these educational institutions to operate without trying to interfere or to impose traditional practices and barriers but embracing Afrocentric and/or African centered curriculum and practices. Through trials and errors along with research there have been proposed models from various sources like The Black Panther Party and their Liberation Model established at their Oakland Community School (OCS) in 1973, African Centered Education (ACE), and the Freedom School Model established in Mississippi in 1964.

The Freedom Model was created as more of a six to eight-week program, whether it is summer or after-school for K-12th graders (Hale, 2016); however, this model can be used for a comprehensive Black Independent School in terms of trimesters (such as credit recovery programs and schools) in K-12 instead of semesters. Freedom Schools are sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund which started the Freedom Schools summer program in the 1990s (Howard, 2016). The Children's Defense Fund supports the Freedom School Model. Figure 12, depicts the components of The Freedom School Model as it is the more common of the models that promote Afrocentric or African centered curriculum model.

Figure 12

The Freedom School Model

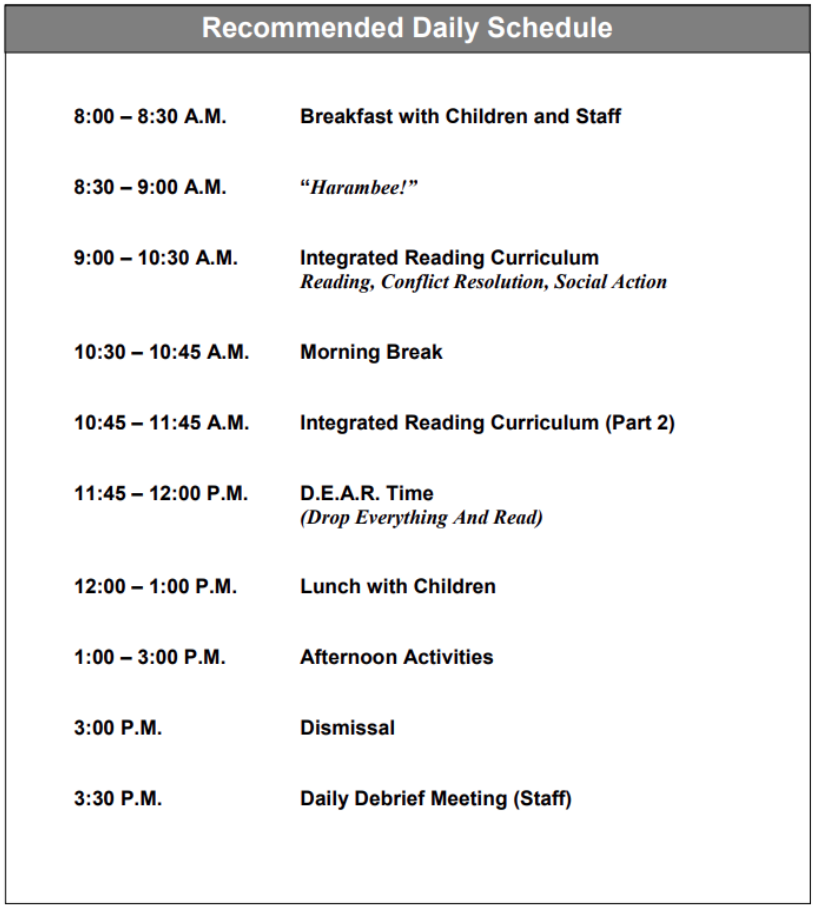


The Freedom School Model was developed in 1964 in Mississippi with the idea of Freedom School combining both political and educational objectives into a curriculum to give African American children a more enriched educational experience other than the "sharecropper" education that Mississippi's public school was offering African American students at that time (Perlstein, 1990). The Freedom School Model is a 6-8-week free (no cost) program which runs Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm, focusing on the Integrated Reading Curriculum meant to be an out of school enrichment program. The model focuses on five aspects: (a) high quality literacy enrichment, (b) parent and family involvements, (c) civic engagement and social action, (d) intergenerational leadership development and health, and (e) mental health and nutrition (Jackson & Howard, 2014). The first aspect, high quality literacy enrichment, is directly connected to the Integrated Reading Curriculum (IRC). The IRC is a literacy reading curriculum that engages children in books and activities that celebrate a wide variety of cultures and focuses on the students (Jackson & Boutte, 2009). The curriculum is

meant to promote critical and analytical thinking skills as well as conflict resolution skills through an excellent collection of books that reflect images that are similar to them (Jackson & Howard, 2014). One book is read and taken home each week during this program so that students can build their own home library. Literacy is measured by the Basic Reading Inventory in the beginning of the program and again at the end of the program. Achievement is measured with the results of that assessment looking at the difference between the initial score and the end score. Also, there is a "showcase" at the end of the program that allows students to embody all the things that they learned and what the Freedom School is about for parents, families and community.

Figure 13

Recommended Daily Schedule



Recommended Daily Schedule	
8:00 – 8:30 A.M.	Breakfast with Children and Staff
8:30 – 9:00 A.M.	*"Harambee!"*
9:00 – 10:30 A.M.	Integrated Reading Curriculum *Reading, Conflict Resolution, Social Action*
10:30 – 10:45 A.M.	Morning Break
10:45 – 11:45 A.M.	Integrated Reading Curriculum (Part 2)
11:45 – 12:00 P.M.	D.E.A.R. Time *(Drop Everything And Read)*
12:00 – 1:00 P.M.	Lunch with Children
1:00 – 3:00 P.M.	Afternoon Activities
3:00 P.M.	Dismissal
3:30 P.M.	Daily Debrief Meeting (Staff)

The next aspect is parent and family involvement. Involvement is sometimes replaced with the word development in the second aspect. The parent and family involvement include being a volunteer and chaperone for field trips and social action projects. Parents also had workshops available for them to assist them to become learning partners. Because the Freedom School Model places an emphasis on parents being an important partner in their child's education, parents are invited to read aloud to children in the classrooms, help with afternoon activities, be on the playground with the children, participate in meal and nutrition, and support in their scholar's social action projects that range from relevant issues like donating to local animal shelters to making food to feed the homeless (Green, 2014).

Parents are also very encouraged to participate in weekly educational workshops that will empower parents and to overall building of family success. The workshops varied in topics, some of the topics includes but is not limited to: child development, finances, parenting skills, and community outreach. To increase parent involvement and participation, childcare in provided on-site at the Freedom School during workshop times and all workshops are concluded with a family style meal (Green, 2014; Howard, 2016). The third aspect is civic engagement and social action. This aspect of Freedom School is about projects and developing relationships with community partners. Social action projects are projects designed to show students, parents, staff and community members/partners how they can indeed make a difference. Projects are assigned based upon the age of the student and relevance of issues in the community. Students are committed to participating during the afternoon activities 1-2 times weekly. These projects are integrated into the Integrated Reading Curriculum as well and scholars, parents and staff are encouraged to continue service and engagement in the community outside of the Freedom School. These projects are meant to empower the community through their service and projects

and empower the students through connectedness to their community (Jackson & Howard, 2014).

The fourth aspect of the Freedom School Model is intergenerational leadership development and health. The first half of this aspects pertains to the staff. The staff are recruited and developed through the Intergenerational Leadership Model and/or Servant Leadership Model (Jackson & Howard, 2014). As a result, staff of Freedom Model School are primarily college students (interns) or recent college graduates. The staff have a diverse educational background and a teaching credential or former education degree or background is not required. Before being able to work at a Freedom School staff are trained in a professional development in the Freedom School Model. Staff, or Servant Leaders, are trained for one week typically through the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) or in Tennessee through the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute. From this training they become learning facilitators as Servant Leader interns (Green 2014; Perlstein, 1990). The program boasts a 10:1 students and servant leader ratio. The other half of this aspect is health. There is a registered nurse, school psychologist, and social worker on the school site at all times.

The last aspect of the Freedom School Model is mental health and nutrition. In the beginning of the program, students are given a Likert-type scale survey to measure their self-esteem. Similar to the Basic Reading Inventory, this survey is given at the end of the program as well to measure and compare the data and effectiveness on a student's self-awareness and self-esteem. In conjunction with those measurements, students participate in "Harambee!" every day. *Harambee*, in Swahili, means "let's pull together." This activity is in the morning and lasts from thirty minutes to an hour. This activity is a self-care and community activities that is considered a celebration that consist of but is not limited to: songs, cheers, chants, stomps, or a Read-Aloud

guest (Jackson & Boutte, 2009). The chants vary from Swahili inspiration words to daily self-affirmations or a school mantra such as *Something Inside So Strong* by Ladi Siffre. The idea is to build a learning community that is unified in their purpose and to get scholars excited and motivated to learn. As far as nutrition, scholars receive a free nutritious breakfast and lunch daily and one (or two) healthy snack later on in the day. As mentioned, sometimes there is a family meal that coincided with a parent workshop as well. Nutrition is important to promote a healthy lifestyle and to fuel the brain and body do that it can learn. Most Freedom Schools have their own community garden where they grow the food they serve. (Hale, 2016) The parents and students are coached into learning healthier food and meal choices for them and their families. At the conclusion of the program, there is a closing ceremony program where students have the opportunity to share what they have learned and showcase the program. Parents, families, community partners, and donors are all invited. Servant Leaders and parents work with students to prepare their showcase in a song, dance, poems, or continued social action project. This is considered their "commencement".

The second plan of action, the Black independent schools that already exist will need to develop a pipeline and partnership to HBCUs, in hopes of African American students having more options to continuing their education at an institute such as HBCUs, where they can continue to get the culture-centered educational experience as they have been in the K-12 from attending a Black independent school (Alexander-Snow, 2010; Brown et al., 2001). This partnership can be having local Black Independent School students taking college courses in-person or virtually at their nearest HBCU, students getting vocational experience on campus such as jobs and internships, facilitator internship programs, and more. From this partnership, an opportunity of sponsorship, from HBCUs to Black Independent Schools could help sustain the

important aspects and programs needed at the respective Black independent schools that benefit African American students the most (Riley, 2008). This sponsorship can assist Black independent schools in their fight to keep their doors open (Ravitch, 2000).

The last plan of action for application of this research study is having all the Black Independent Schools united under one organization to assist in supporting one another as well as to share resources, funding, and provide what is needed to sustain and be successful. This organization can assist in an internal mentorship program. There is one organization called Council for Independent Black Institutions (CIBI, 2006), but not every Black Independent School or equivalent is officially associated with this organization (Hotep, 2001). When looking into this organization for this research study a website could not be found, only a Facebook page. According to their social media page, their last activity was in 2020 (CIBI, 2006). This organization could benefit from new leadership and redirection since it is the only and longest organization of its kind. CIBI can organize its efforts and help promote schools for funding, donors, supporters, enrollment, volunteers, and staff through national marketing and recruitment practices (Hotep, 2001). This organization was once pivotal in the development and survival of Black Independent Schools (Shujaa & Afrik, 1996) and its necessity in today's society with the movements, such as "Black Lives Matter," "Black and Missing," and other Black (or equity) professional organizations, the CIBI could use some reinventions and be useful again.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study can be used as a foundational research study to continue the academic research into Black independent schools. Additionally, recommendations for future research can begin by conducting research into the graduation versus matriculation rates, post-graduation success, academic achievement, and school models of Black independent schools. International research

needs to be included with other countries and their success with educating Black students in a similar educational school or environment. Cross research is recommended with similar cultural and religious schools and Black independent schools which can range from school model, school practices, academic achievement, student support, or support from the government.

Final Thoughts

When the decision of a dissertation topic was needed, I could have written on topics that I was more familiar with, such as special education and athletics. I decided upon this topic because of the continued injustice faced by African Americans in this country and the systematic and institutionalized racism witnessed firsthand as a special education teacher in the public-school educational system within the United States. Prior to this dissertation, I did not know that Black independents schools existed. During my research on these institutions, I gathered information that sparked interest along due to my own love of teaching and my dedication to educating young African American children. I was determined to find a research topic in this area for my dissertation. I am extremely interested in my culture as an African American and to find alternatives in education. I had immense pleasure in conducting this research study.

Nevertheless, there is still more research to be done. There is still a need for advocacy for our African American children and Black independent schools in our educational system in the United States. Systematic and institutionalized racism still exists. It is still a prominent barrier in the lives of African American students preventing them from reaching their fullest potential and success. Also, systematic and institutionalized racism affects the school climate and their education experience. Observing this has not only been disheartening but very daunting as well. I do not believe that the system can be changed from within as there is too much to benefit from the miseducation of African American students, such as the ingrained racism that has built this

country. However, I do believe in the alternative in the form of Black independent schools and equivalent schools designed for and with African American students in mind. My wish for this study is for it to grow from a conversation and the foundation of advocating for Black independent schools and schools alike to much more for the culture, and for the children.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Script

[Date]

Dear [Candidate Name],

Hello, my name is Donnisha Sanford and I am a doctoral student from Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I am seeking candidates to participate in a Black independent school research study that I am conducting as an alternative to K-12 public school education for African American students in the United States. This study targets long-standing Black independent school that have been successful in supporting their African American students that is contrary to the treatment of segregation, racism, and prejudice in traditional K-12 public schools. The purpose of this research is to assist in suggesting Black independent schools as an alternative educational school and environment for African American students in terms of support and overall positive educational experience. The information gathered from this study may help to improve existing Black independent schools and traditional K-12 public schools and may be used for academic research publication.
I am seeking candidates who meet the criteria outlined below:

- At least the age of 21 or older?
- An administrator (school head, principal or equivalent) of a Black independent school in the United States for three years or more?
- A former administrator of a Black independent school within the last 10 years?
- An administrator at a school where the school's population is specifically for African American students?
- An Administrator at a Black independent school that have been in operation for 10 years or more?

Participants will be interviewed in a Virtual (Zoom) meeting room for a duration of up to 20 minutes. For qualifying participants in the study who complete the interview, undisclosed donation will be donated to the Black independent school, where they are employed. If requested, participants will be provided a summary of the research findings when the study is complete.

All information obtained within the study will be treated with confidentiality. All interested individuals will need to first complete the participant screening questionnaire in order to verify eligibility for participation. If they meet the criteria, they will be asked to participate in the study. The link for the questionnaire is listed below. Please click here to gain access to complete the Participant Screening Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation,

Donnisha Sanford, Doctoral Candidate
Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Learning Technologies

APPENDIX B

IRB Approval Notice

PEPPERDINE

Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: May 17, 2021

Protocol Investigator Name: Donnisha Sanford

Protocol #: 21-04-1587

Project Title: Black Independent Schools: An alternative educational experience for African American students in K-12 public school education in the United States.

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Donnisha Sanford:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

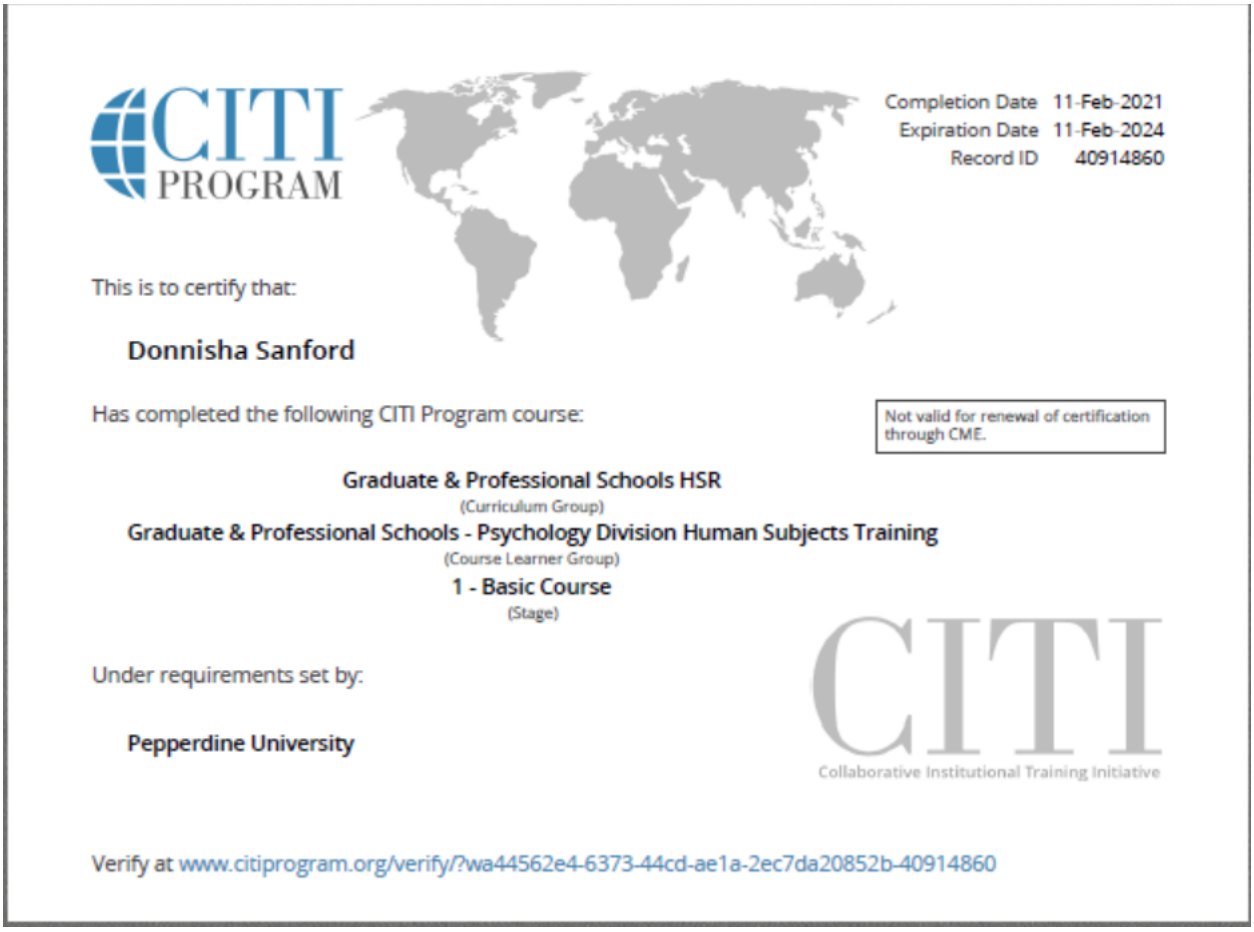
Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

APPENDIX C

Human Subjects Training Certification



CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 11-Feb-2021
Expiration Date 11-Feb-2024
Record ID 40914860

This is to certify that:

Donnisha Sanford

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Graduate & Professional Schools HSR
(Curriculum Group)
Graduate & Professional Schools - Psychology Division Human Subjects Training
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Pepperdine University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wa44562e4-6373-44cd-ae1a-2ec7da20852b-40914860

APPENDIX D

Peer Reviewer Form

Date:

Dear Reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The table below is designed to ensure that my research questions for the study are properly addressed with corresponding interview questions.

In the following table, please review each research question and the corresponding interview questions. For each interview question, consider how well the interview question addresses the research question. If the interview question is directly relevant to the research question, please mark "Keep as stated." If the interview question is irrelevant to the research question, please mark "Delete it." Finally, if the interview question can be modified to best fit with the research question, please suggest your modifications in the space provided. You may also recommend additional interview questions you deem necessary.

Once you have completed your analysis, please return the completed form to me via email. Thank you again for your participation.

Research Question	**Corresponding Interview Question**
RQ1: What strategies do Black independent school leaders use to overcome the challenges of their African American students?	IQ1: What resources do you have in place to assist your African American students with nonacademic challenges? IQ2: What are some of the biggest challenges that your African students face in academics and nonacademic? IQ3: What are some of your best practices that are utilized at your school? a. The question is directly relevant to Research question: □ **Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to research question: □ **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: _____ _____ I recommend adding the following interview questions: _____ _____

Research Question	**Corresponding Interview Question**
RQ2: How do Black independent schools define, measure, and track success for their students?	Placeholder a. The question is directly relevant to Research question: □ **Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to research question: □ **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: _____ _____ I recommend adding the following interview questions: _____
RQ3: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for K-12 public school leaders to help support African American students against institutionalized racism, prejudice, and segregation?	IQ6: What changes do you recommend for the public-school system that can better support African American students? IQ7: What steps can the public-school system take to eliminate institutionalized racism, prejudice, and segregation against African American students? IQ8: What are current educational policies or practices in place that contribute to the continuing of racism, prejudice and segregation in the public-school system? a. The question is directly relevant to Research question: □ **Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to research question: □ **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: _____ _____ I recommend adding the following interview questions: _____

Research Question	**Corresponding Interview Question**
RQ4: What recommendations do Black independent school leaders have for other African-centered schools?	IQ9: What are the components of a successful Black independent school? IQ10: What has contributed to the success of your school? a. The question is directly relevant to Research question: □ **Keep as stated** b. The question is irrelevant to research question – □ **Delete it** c. The question should be **modified as suggested**: _____ _____ I recommend adding the following interview questions: _____

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Donnisha Sanford Doctoral Candidate of Education in Learning Technologies with Dr. Farzin Madjidi, Committee Chair, at Pepperdine University, because you identify as a Black (African American or Person of Color) and are an administrator (or equivalent) at a Black independent school (or equivalent). Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine how the federal government desegregation laws have hindered the overall education progression of African American students in K-12 public education and its implications and impact on African American education, fundamentally and more. The researcher intends to explore institutionalized racism, discrimination, and prejudice roots in public school education in the United States as a means to further suppress and segregate African American people from White people, academically and socially. As a result, the researcher will bring light to alternatives for the education of African American children in the United States through Black independent schools, which will improve the overall educational experience and progression of African American students in K-12.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a 60-minute semi-structured virtual interview with approximately 10 questions virtually via Zoom video conferencing at a determined date and time agreed by both parties (scheduling the interview online via Google calendar on the researcher's calendar). The researcher will ask you a series of questions aimed at figuring out what strategies are used in Black independent schools with their African American students. The interview will be recorded only for purposes of data collection and coding and will be kept confidential. You may choose to opt out of the study at any time without any consequences. The responses gathered during the interview will assist the researcher in exploring best practices and educational environments of Black independent schools as it relates to providing education institution alternatives for African American students in K-12 public education; as a result, African American students can have a more positive

educational experience. The interview protocol was created by the researcher and reviewed by a panel of doctoral candidates as well as the dissertation chair and committee.

The following interview protocol will be used:

Interview Protocol

1. Can you give examples of some students who have thrived at your school?
2. How do you define the success they have had? Please elaborate.
3. How do you measure their success?
4. These are inspiring examples, what challenges or obstacles gets in the way of more students succeeding?
5. Would you ascribe any of these challenges or obstacles to systematic or institutionalized racism? Please elaborate or give examples.
6. How do you overcome these challenges?
7. How about those challenges that are more deeply rooted and are systemic?
8. In hindsight, what decisions would you reverse or actions you would do differently?
9. What is the one thing you wish you knew when you first started your job?
10. What pitfalls would you warn aspiring Black independent school leaders against?

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include are no more than minimum risks involved in day-to-day activities. This research presents minimal risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the interview involves questions about systemic and institutionalized racism as well as educational experiences. There are also no anticipated financial, personal, social or legal risks to the participants.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to the participants and society which are as follows:

1. The compilation of results of the study will be beneficial to the learning and practitioner communities at large.
2. Findings of the study will shed light and inform scholars and practitioners on systemic and institutionalized racism in the K-12 public school educational system in the United States.
3. The research study will provide a greater body of literature regarding the past and present Black independent school or equivalents, as well as the resegregation or Black independent schools as an alternative for African American children for education in K-12.

4. Other emerging leaders might also benefit from any additional recommendations that are shared through this process

In addition, upon your request, a completed copy of this study will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Based on your selection below, I will keep your records for this study anonymous or confidential as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be mandated to disclose information collected about you.

If you agree with the following arrangement, please initial your name below:

_____ (please initial) I agree to permit the researchers to refer to me only by a pseudonym from a "generic organization." I understand my identity and the name of my organization will be always kept confidential and in all circumstances any research based on this interview is presented.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in my possession and my place of residence. The data will be stored for one year, after which it will be permanently destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable. Should you choose this alternative, your relationship with your employer will not be affected whether you participate or not in this study.

INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Donnisha Sanford via email if I have any other questions or concerns about this research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional School Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

Please see below for required signatures needed for your participation in this research.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHS

Because we will be conducting our interview virtually via Zoom, I will be able to record our conversation for data collection purposes. If you agree to such recording, the audio file will be destroyed within one year of the study's completion. Transcription will take place by the researcher herself. Under no circumstances will the recording be released to a third party.

□ *I agree to be audio-recorded.*

□ *I do not want to be audio-recorded.*

_____

Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my Judgment, the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

_____

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date